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STRATEGIES OF REPRESENTATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN ANTI-APARTHEID DOCUMENTARY FILM AND VIDEO FROM 1976 TO 1995

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

This thesis focuses on strategies of representation in South African anti-apartheid documentary film and video from the late 1970s to 1995. It identifies and analyses two broad trends within this movement: the first developed by the organisation called Video News Services; the second developed in the Mail and Guardian Television series called *Ordinary People*. Two history series are analysed against the backdrop of transformations in the television broadcasting sector in the early 1990s. South African documentary film and video is located within a theoretical framework that interweaves documentary film theory, theories of Third cinema and of identity, and working class cinema of the 1920s and 1930s.

The concepts of 'voice' and the 'speaking subject' are the two key concepts that focus the discussion of strategies of representation in detailed textual analyses of selected documentaries. The analysis of three documentaries that typify the output of Video News Services reveals how these documentary texts establish a symbiosis between representations of the working class as black, male, and allied to COSATU, and the liberation struggle. The analysis of selected documentaries from the *Ordinary People* series highlights those strategies of representation that facilitate perceptions of the multiplicities of identities in South Africa. This focus on representations of identity is extended in analysing and comparing two television series. The strategies of representation evident in the Video News Services documentaries and the meanings they produce about identity are repeated in the series called *Ulibambe Lingashoni: Hold Up the Sun*. In *Soweto: A History*, strategies of representation that follow the trend towards representing identity as multiple are used to present history as if from the perspective of 'ordinary' people.

The thesis creates an argument for South African documentary film and video to

move towards strategies of representation that break down the fixed categories of identity developed under apartheid. With policy moves for creating more 'local content' films and television productions there is opportunity to re-shape the documentary film and video movement in South Africa using representational strategies that blur the boundaries between documentary and fiction, and between individualised, discrete categories of identity.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



Jacqueline Maingard

31st day of March, 1998.

For Susan

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACI	*Alliance du Cinéma Indépendant*
AEAR	*Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires*
ANC	African National Congress
CGT	*Confédération Générale du Travail*
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
Comintern	Committee of the Communist International
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPH	Communist Party of Holland
CVET	Community Video Education Trust
FAWO	Film and Allied Workers Organisation
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
FOWFS	Federation of Workers' Film Societies
FPL	Film and Photo League
FuL	*Film und Lichtbilddienst*
IAH	*Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
KPD	*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
PCF	*Parti Communiste Français*
PSOP	*Parti Socialiste Ouvrier et Paysan*
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACP	South African Communist Party
SFIO	*Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*

SPD	*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*
Ufa	*Universum Film A.G.*
VFV	*Volksfilmverband*
VNS	Video News Services
VVVC	*Vereeniging voor VolksCultuur*
WIR	Workers' International Relief

Introduction

This study aims primarily to describe and document the development of South African anti-apartheid documentary film and video from 1976 to 1995. The period 1976-1995 is significant for a number of conjunctural reasons (which will become clear in this Introduction). In the mid-1970s the state initiated television broadcasting in South Africa. In the same period scholars in Soweto and elsewhere in the country revolted, initially against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools. This revolt marks a significant point in the development of the anti-apartheid movement. At about this time video equipment became easily accessible and available relatively cheaply which made it possible for anti-apartheid activists and filmmakers to access equipment and to create independent film and video images of the rapidly changing face of apartheid.

Charting the development of South African documentary, though seemingly simple and linear, is a complex process. The beginnings of anti-apartheid documentary film in South Africa have been traced back to the making of *Come Back Africa* (1959) in the 1950s and the few documentaries made in the 1960s. The first significant anti-apartheid film of the 1970s was *Last Grave at Dimbaza* made by Nana Mahomo in 1974 (Unwin & Belton, 1992:277-299). Its significance was largely due to its subject matter which represented the 'genocidal' effects of the bantustan policy, but also to the clandestine way in which it was made and the filmmaker's membership of the Pan Africanist Congress in exile. Later however, the film was seen to represent particular stylistic features that South African anti-apartheid documentary filmmakers were to oppose. One of these, for example, is the use of a didactic, seemingly omnipotent, narrator's voice, a strategy which anti-apartheid filmmakers in the 1980s and 1990s

seldom use [1].

In the late 1970s (and before) foreign television producers such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) were engaged in producing films about South Africa for foreign audiences. The films *In Search of Sandra Laing*[2] (1979) and *The White Tribe of Africa* (1980) are two examples. There are a number of significant stylistic elements to these: they are characterised by a strong narrational presence in the form of an omnipotent off-screen male voice speaking in what is perceived to be a 'white' English accent; they represent South Africans in stark categories - all blacks are victims of oppression, all whites are oppressors; and they rely on crude statistics and images of apartheid. Although *Last Grave at Dimbaza* was not a BBC film it shares these characteristics. These characteristics do not necessarily diminish the value of the films. Rather, in representing apartheid on international television screens and especially in underlining the exploitative nature of foreign businesses in South Africa, these kinds of films played a crucial role in relation to the international pressure that was brought to bear on apartheid. For example in *Last Grave at Dimbaza* British-owned companies in South Africa are represented as being complicit in the state's apartheid policies and the hunger, poverty and infant mortality rate associated with them.

From the late 1970s and into the 1980s the unprecedented growth of independent documentary filmmaking as well as a number of organisational developments in South Africa, entrenched the documentary movement against apartheid in the country[3]. There are a variety of approaches to defining this movement. Firstly, there

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[1] Nevertheless the film's impact was extraordinary: see Gabriel (1982:19 & 45-47), and Pfaff (1988:195-204).
[2] One of three parts in *The South African Experience* series made by Anthony Thomas in 1979.
[3] The existence of a movement is ascribed here with hindsight and was not necessarily perceived or experienced by anti-apartheid filmmakers in this period.

are a number of individual documentary films that may be identified as especially important in developing this movement and which may be isolated for analysis as texts in specific contexts. A second approach to defining this documentary movement is to identify the organisations that developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s and examine the films they made. A third means of definition might be to identify individual filmmakers and trace their work over the period. In this study my focus will be on the first approach. Thus a first aim of this study is to identify significant films and videos and analyse their textual strategies with reference to the contexts within which they were made.

A second aim of this study is critically to apply an examination of contemporary film theory and particularly documentary film theory to the development of anti-apartheid documentary. In doing so I will also examine questions of identity, arguing that representations of race and gender have been limited in particular ways and for particular purposes in anti-apartheid documentary film and video.

The choice of the period 1976-1995 does not mean that this development was an entirely linear one and that there was homogeneity in the types of documentaries made. Rather this study will show that the opposite is true and that there were many diverse trends in this period. These are marked to some degree by different points within the period i.e. 1976-1985, when a state of emergency was declared; 1985-1990, when the state unbanned the African National Congress and a number of significant political organisations; and 1990-1995, after the first democratic election and when anti-apartheid films and videos gained access to national television screens. In each of these time-frames the socio-political context shaped and structured the ways in which anti-apartheid documentary developed. Filmmakers working within organisational units such as Afrascope, Video News Services and others, were very closely and consciously aligned with specific political movements or ideological

positions in the time-frames within which they were established. These alignments were strongly influential in the anti-apartheid film work that emerged.

In the 1990s the first democratic election was held and apartheid met its official demise. As Currie and Markovitz explain (1993:90-105), in the transitional phase prior to the election in 1994, there were organised and concerted efforts on the part of anti-apartheid film and broadcasting organisations and activists to engage in a campaign to 'free the airwaves' and also to shape constitutional policies on film and broadcasting. For example, in this period the Film and Allied Worker's Organisation (FAWO) established a Film and Broadcasting Commission and a number of consultative conferences were organised which made submissions to the negotiators of the transitional constitution through CODESA 1 and 2. As a result of this work legislation for the establishment of a new SABC board and an Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) was effected and the processes to complete these changes were put in motion. By the end of 1994 the IBA was hearing representations on questions of 'local content' in broadcasting and thereby paving the way, at least potentially, for greater access to national television for local documentary producers. Also in this transitional period a number of anti-apartheid documentary filmmakers and organisations within the anti-apartheid movement gained access to national screens. The fact that it was only in 1995 that some of the anti-apartheid documentaries of the 1980s were screened nationally supports the closure of the time period for this study as 1995.

The overall intention of this thesis is to add to the notable studies that have begun to document the development of anti-apartheid documentary[4] and to extend this work especially in relation to theoretical concerns raised by contemporary film theory.

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[4] See for example: Blignaut and Botha (1992), and Tomaselli (1989).

There is an important body of film theory in general and documentary theory in particular that has evolved in the last decade almost entirely outside of the developments in film in South Africa. Writings on black cinema and third cinema for example are located mostly in Europe and the United States. Bill Nichols, the most significant documentary film theorist of this period, has written theory that focuses on strategies of representation, especially ideological strategies, but makes no reference to developments in South African documentary film and video. This study will therefore create a place for writing (or re-writing) some of this theoretical work in relation to South African film.

As well as describing the diverse development of an anti-apartheid documentary 'movement' my study will focus on specific notions of 'identity' as a means of critically analysing the documentaries that emerged in this period. The concept of 'identity' is one which in recent years has become an important focus in cultural studies, notably in Europe and the United States and in the writings of African philosophers. I will examine the work of theorists like Mouffe and Bhabha, specifically in relation to subjectivities, as well as African theorists like Mudimbe and Appiah.

South Africa provides a valuable 'laboratory' for the study of identity for many reasons but particularly because apartheid ideology was based on racial and ethnic identity. Coupled with the period of time that I will specifically examine, a study of identity in South Africa becomes interestingly complex. For in this period the anti-apartheid movement gained momentum both within the country and outside of the country. In August 1989 FW de Klerk became the state president and his administration introduced state reforms that played a significant part in the process which culminated in this country's first democratic election in 1994 and a new political dispensation. With unbanned organisations free to campaign for the

elections, where South Africans had been defined primarily by racial and ethnic differences now we were being defined as 'one nation', 'a rainbow nation', 'non-racial', 'non-sexist' etc. and questions of identity shifted focus. At the same time access to national broadcasting became a political focus and some of the anti-apartheid documentarists of the 1980s won access to national screens for their work.

I am interested in how South African anti-apartheid documentaries have represented identity in the period I have chosen to study. This is a complex task given the diversities (socio-political, organisational etc.) noted above and the diverse trends in documentary aesthetics and style, as well as content in this period. It is the interweaving of these very diversities, however, that make this an important terrain for the study of representation. We live in a highly-mediated world and anti-apartheid documentaries were made to be viewed by audiences both within and outside of the country, thus the potential for these strategies of representation to shape how South Africans perceive themselves and are perceived by others is significant.

My chapters are presented as follows:
Chapter One: 'Documentary Film', examines selected aspects of the history of documentary film theory and practice, particularly in relation to the notion of the 'blurred boundaries' between documentary and fiction, and focusing largely on the work of Bill Nichols. Chapter Two: 'Third Cinema and Identity', is an overview of the theory of Third Cinema, noting some of the important 'moments' in its development, and building towards a discussion of questions of identity. These first two chapters form the primary theoretical basis for the thesis as a whole. In Chapter Three: 'Working Class Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s', this theoretical basis is supplemented by examining strategies of representation in the international development of working class cinema in the 1920s and 1930s. The next three chapters specifically examine strategies of representation in selections from South African

anti-apartheid film and video. Chapter Four: 'Subjects who Speak? Selections from the Documentaries of Video News Services', analyses four documentaries made by the Video News Services collective. This is followed by Chapter Five: 'From the Representative to the 'Ordinary' Subject: Selections from the *Ordinary People* Series', which analyses strategies in this series of documentaries. Chapter Six: 'Representations of History for National Television in the 1990s: *Ulibambe Lingashoni - Hold up the Sun* and *Soweto: a History*' presents some of the policy transformations in the television broadcasting sector in the early 1990s, and against this backdrop compares two history series, one made for the ANC and the other a history of Soweto. The conclusion brings the various strands of the study together with a view towards future documentary film and video production for a democratic South Africa.

Chapter One

Documentary Film

In this chapter I will firstly provide a general theoretical framework for the analysis of documentary film and secondly discuss in detail Bill Nichols' writings on documentary film. It is important to note at the outset that there is considerable debate amongst film theorists and practitioners about the plausibility of separating documentary film from other film forms as a discrete unit of study. In this regard in a recently published book on documentary film, Trinh T. Minh-ha writes: "there is no such thing as documentary - whether the term designates a category of material, a genre, an approach, or a set of techniques. This assertion ... needs incessantly to be restated despite the very visible existence of a documentary tradition" (Trinh, 1993:90). Indeed, a brief overview of what is called 'documentary' or 'fiction' film strongly confirms this point of view. For example, the work of some feminist filmmakers, black filmmakers, and avant-gardists may be identified as incorporating both fictional and documentary elements. The work of Oliver Stone which combines both fictional and documentary modes in a way that renders them inseparable as one or the other is another useful example of this. Looking back a little, the cinema of the neo-realists or the French New Wave may be similarly invoked.

Nevertheless I will here provide some of the 'evidence' of the documentary tradition to which Trinh refers, in order to place the theoretical works I select within a broader context of the debates in documentary film theory. Here, it is necessary to mention that documentary film theory and the practice of documentary film are difficult to separate. Any attempt to reflect upon significant developments in one area will inevitably need to measure itself against developments in the other area. Bearing this in mind, I will not attempt to provide a comprehensive global picture of the history of documentary film practice and

theory. Rather, I will here elaborate some of the significant issues and debates in this history both as they have been identified in writing on documentary film history and as they are relevant for my particular study.

There are two major areas of debate in the study of documentary film - representation(s) of reality/ies and subjectivity/objectivity. The first of these concerns the expectations of both audiences and filmmakers (especially traditionalists) that documentary film reflects reality. This view holds that the camera simply records what is before it and that what the viewer sees is close to a mirror reflection of the external reality that has been filmed. Linked to this point is a debate about the definition of 'realism' in the cinema, which I will briefly explore here since it is relevant in this context. Many films that have been made seemingly in the tradition of reflecting reality have been described as 'realist' - the reality/ies that they purportedly reflect are visibly evident in the film's content. There appears to be little intervention on the part of the filmmaker in creating the film's content. Realism is defined, however, in two other ways that are important for this discussion. Firstly, realism is the term ascribed to a style of film-making most related to the classical Hollywood style, that creates an illusion of reality providing audiences with a seamless sense of the film's reality. Specific filmmaking strategies for achieving this are used, notably filming on the 180 degree axis, and the system of shot/reverse shot. Secondly, and in seemingly direct opposition to the first ascription, realism is a term ascribed to the creation of cultural works that seek consciously to reveal the realities of life from an historical materialist perspective. For example, a Marxist perspective of societal structural relations would claim a particular view of material reality and history based on class and ideology. The renowned theatre practitioner and theorist, Brecht, was an important proponent of this view of realism, as were some of the Soviet cultural

theorists and filmmakers[1]. Hence to describe films as realist is to engage in a critical terrain that needs to be carefully negotiated.

Questions of Realism

In broad terms this question of defining realism is also linked to definitions of reality and truth. In effect there is no truth or reality independent of some or other form of mediation, representation or interpretation, thus to propose that film is a reflection of reality presupposes the prior existence of an already unmediated reality. Since this is not the case, the representation of reality in film is clearly far more complex than this view would allow.

The second area of debate - subjectivity/objectivity - is related to the first debate on realism. Films that are described as realist, based on their content, are also often described as objective representations of truth or reality. The filmmaker is said to be non-judgmental and presenting the facts as they are without bias. On the other hand, films that are subjective, that are seen to represent a point of view, are often said to be biased. Bias is seen to be negative where the ideal, for holders of this point of view, is for films to be value-free so that viewers can make up their own minds. This issue is related to the myths that surround questions of ideology. In effect the so-called realist film is no less biased or ideologically determined than the film that reveals the means of its construction as a film. The important point however is that these films give an illusion of being unbiased or ideology-free. Having given a brief sketch of these two areas of debate in documentary film I will now proceed to broaden this framework by examining some of the significant points in documentary film history.

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[1] Willett (1964:109) quotes Brecht on realism as follows:

> Realism means: laying bare society's causal network/showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the dominators/writing from the standpoint of the class which has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting human society.

Definitions: Realism and the Soviet School

One of the ways in which documentary film is defined is by formulating the categories Realism and Formalism as Giannetti has done, and then fitting significant films into one or other category. Giannetti categorises the work of Flaherty as realist and the work of Dziga Vertov as formalist (1982:342-9). Many film critics and theorists have adopted this approach, which is extremely limited given the issues around terminology described above. Having said this, however, if for the moment we accept a simplistic approach to defining documentary film, this form of definition has some usefulness. If we look at the work of Soviet filmmaker, Dziga Vertov, as exemplifying the formalist tradition, this view immediately identifies the work as being concerned to manipulate the formal elements of film. Indeed, the film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) achieves both a visible relationship between the filmmaker and the film's formal elements, and a foregrounding of the fact that the film is constructed. On the other hand, Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934), represents an apparently seamless reality that is at pains neither to reflect upon itself nor to reveal its means of production. Its purpose is to create the illusion of being a mirror reflection of that reality as it is lived. As we shall see later, this illusion has been shattered by one critic who visited Aran and examined at first hand the ways in which Flaherty's film was made.

In looking at Vertov's work as a filmmaker it is especially important to acknowledge and understand his relationship with a revolutionary social and political consciousness that informed his filmmaking. He was initially involved in making newsreels having "issued forty-five *Kinonedelia* (*Cinema Weekly*) newsreels (1918-1919) and also from 1922, nearly twenty 'film newspapers' under the title *Kinopravda - Cinematruth, Cinémavérité*" (Winston, 1995:164). This was an approach to news that would later be emulated in South African anti-apartheid documentary with the making of video pamphlets for worker audiences in the 1980s by Video News Services. Vertov's engagement with cinema was however extremely complex since he consciously strove to reveal the means of film

production within filmic representation itself and at the same time to "shield the proletariat from the corrupting influence of artistic film-drama" (Vertov, quoted in Winston, 1995:165). It is also important at this juncture briefly to reflect on his relationship with another significant Soviet filmmaker of the time, Sergei Eisenstein. Eisenstein wrote that Vertov was "a film hooligan" (Eisenstein, quoted in Winston, 1995:166) and the LEF Arena to which Eisenstein belonged noted that Vertov's work was not "artistically progressive" because "he cuts up newsreels"[2] (Winston, 1995:166). With the advantage of historical hindsight, however, it is noteworthy that both Eisenstein and Vertov were on a quest to demystify reality for workers through film. Vertov's approach was to manipulate film form in using footage of lived experience, while Eisenstein's approach was to teach workers the method of Marxism by using montage dialectically. Both filmmakers were to play significant roles in the development of cinemas in other parts of the world in later decades - thus the French filmmaker, Godard, in the 1960s invoked Vertov as his film mentor, and some Third Cinema filmmakers in the 1960s and 1970s, Glauber Rocha for example, invoked Eisenstein in their textual strategies.

The point I am making here is that Vertov's historical significance for the development of documentary film is contested. Not enough is known (certainly in Western writing on the subject) of the development of Soviet cinema and the issues and debates that occurred within it and that surrounded it. In recent work on this period of documentary film, however, and increasingly as definitions of documentary film become more complex, a broader view is being represented. Brian Winston in his book *Claiming the Real: the Documentary Film Revisited* (1995) focuses on the fact that the work of Soviet filmmaker, editor and writer, Esfir Shub has received very little attention, although like Vertov she saw her work as "a form of agitation for the new concept of documentary cinema, a

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[2] This is an interesting point in relation to the emphasis on precisely this - cutting up newsreels - in working class cinema in other countries in the 1920s and 1930s, which I focus on in Chapter Three.

statement about unstaged film as the most important cinematic form of the present day" (Shub, quoted in Winston, 1995:167). Significantly within her own context, her work was seen as "beyond suspicion" (Winston, 1995:167) by the LEF critics and Winston places her influence on documentary film history very strongly alongside that of Vertov.

In his recently published book called *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (1994), Bill Nichols presents a chapter on Eisenstein's film *Strike* called 'Eisenstein's *Strike* and the Genealogy of Documentary'. It elevates Eisenstein to a position in documentary film history that he has never before been accorded. The significance of this is that it points to a 'new' and extending moment in contemporary documentary film history which is exemplified by Nichols' footnote on the subject of this chapter:

> I have structured this discussion of *Strike* as though the film were released today in order to emphasize its similarity to the ways in which boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, narrative and non-narrative, have blurred. *Strike*, from this retrospective angle, is as fully part of the genealogy of documentary filmmaking as those Soviet films that were described as precursors and foundations in earlier historical periods when the very conception of documentary was distinct from what it is today (Nichols, 1994:168).

So we now have a number of interrelated points to contend with in the delineation of issues in documentary film history: the implausibility of separating documentary from fiction; the difficulty of separating theory from practice; questions on the representation of reality, and debates on definitions of reality and truth; and questions of subjectivity/objectivity, and how ideology functions in film. Essentially the distinction between documentary film and other forms of film is not an easy one to make. In line with this view in his chapter on Eisenstein's *Strike* and its careful placement within the 'genealogy of documentary' Nichols is both noting the new moment mentioned earlier - implying that 'the very

conception of documentary' is far more complex now than it was previously - and actively pushing the limits of documentary as it has been conceived until now.

It is important to bear in mind that Nichols is writing in the vein of 'blurred boundaries', so he is consciously seeking to discover the nebulous terrain between one film mode and another. And this betweenness is precisely what is significant for my study of documentary film. In Nichols' words: "*Strike* makes incarnate the space between" (Nichols, 1994:110). Here Homi Bhabha's perception of the '*entre*' (the in-between) as a Third Space from which to act culturally, which I shall be discussing in detail in the next chapter, is an important reference. For Bhabha, this Third Space extricates the cultural critic, theorist, artist or activist from being bound into one positionality or another and opens up the potential to be located in a more hybrid position[3]. *Strike* is for Nichols "neither fiction as we have known it nor documentary as it has come to be defined..." (Nichols, 1994:109). He derides the work of western film writers who relegate Vertov to the category of documentary filmmaker and Eisenstein to the category of fiction filmmaker. In his celebration of *Strike*, Nichols proposes that Eisenstein's representation of the workers using dialectical montage arriving finally at the statement 'Remember, Proletarians!', "attains that form of embodied knowledge that is so crucial to innovative work in documentary today" (Nichols, 1994:113). To provide some basis for this crucial point Nichols notes that Eisenstein relies on re-enactment - "it is not the documentary record of a real strike, or the true story of an imaginary one" (1994:109), but essentially it is the way in which the workers are represented that underlies the sense of 'embodied knowledge' that the film exudes. They are workers, not cast in the mould of workers signified as oppressed and exploited, but rather represented as workers ready-for-action. They are not as they have been in the past but represent what they might be in the future. And in this very in-betweenness the film opens up an excess beyond its own frames that calls viewers to 'Remember, Proletarians!' and thus to transform their historical

[3] See Bhabha (1989:111-132).

consciousnesses.

Other important theorists are also engaging with the conception of documentary film in similar ways - notably Trinh T. Minh-ha, to whom I shall return later. And before continuing this discussion of the 'blurred boundaries' between documentary and fiction, and the spaces that this blurring makes possible, I need first to return to the Realist category as advocated by Giannetti, with reference primarily to the work of Flaherty and Grierson.

Definitions: Grierson and Realism

In examining this half of the binary model which Giannetti proposes, it is interesting to note that it also raises questions about definitions of documentary film. I will make a few references here to these questions before focusing on Flaherty's and Grierson's work. Recent writings on documentary film suggest that the use of the term 'documentary' to describe film cannot be clearly ascribed to a single individual. Brian Winston in *Claiming the Real: the Documentary Film Revisited*, makes the point that 'conventional accounts' of documentary film usually begin with Grierson's use of the phrase 'documentary value' in his review of Flaherty's film *Moana* in 1926. As Winston shows, however, Grierson was not the first to use the term, Matuszewski having done so in 1898 and Curtis in 1914 (Winston, 1995:8-10). For Winston it is the vision of these writers which informs the contemporary reception of documentary film as "essentially and most critically in the realm of evidence and witness" (Winston, 1995:10). The question of where the term 'documentary' was first used clearly depends on how the fo of documentary film is defined. If we broaden out the definition of documentary from simply 'evidence and witness', (and with reference also to my earlier discussion on the 'blurred boundaries' of documentary film and other film forms), it is noteworthy that in *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies* (1996), Susan Hayward begins her definition of 'documentary' with a reference to the travelogues of the Lumière brothers in the 1890s which were called '*documentaires*' (Hayward,

1996:72)[4]. Not only is the definition of documentary dependent on how broadly its parameters are viewed but also in a sub-textual reading of both these writers it is clear that defining documentary as a film form, and perceptions of the influence of these definitions, has as much to do with the geographical and cultural location of the writer (or filmmaker) as it does with the film form itself. Having said this however, I would cautiously propose that it would be useful to examine the work of Flaherty and Grierson within the Realist category proposed by Giannetti, since it is a categorisation that has been influential in film studies[5]. This influence, as a specific kind of realism, is also derived from the writings on documentary of Grierson himself. In his paper 'First Principles of Documentary', Grierson enumerates three principles which underline his view that documentary film is a form created from real lived experience in its location. In summary the principles are:

> 1. That the cinema's capacity for getting around; for observing and selecting from life itself, can be exploited in a new and vital art form...Documentary would photograph the living scene and the living story;
> 2. That the original (or native) actor, and the original (or native) scene are better guides to a screen interpretation of the modern world;
> 3. That the materials and the stories thus taken from the raw can be finer (more real in the philosophical sense) than the acted article (Hardy, 1946:79-80).

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[4] Hardy, who documented Grierson's writings, uses the term '*documentaires*' as a precursor of what he calls the 'new word': documentary, which emerged in the early 1930s, in his Introduction to a collection of Grierson's writings (1946:11).

[5] It is interesting to note that more recent editions of Giannetti's *Understanding Movies* no longer include the chapter on documentary film where he proposes the opposite categories of Realist and Formalist. See Giannetti (1996), where he has a short section on 'nonfictional narratives'. Here he discusses the 'realistic documentary', proposing that it is best illustrated by the *cinéma vérité* or direct cinema movement (whereas in previous editions he used Flaherty as his chief example of the realist documentary), and the 'formalistic or subjective documentary' with Vertov as the example (1996:339-343).

Grierson's views were as much derived from his own work as a documentary filmmaker as they were from his reviews of the work of others, including Flaherty, whom he met in the United States in the late 1920s after he had made *Nanook of the North* (1922). At the time Flaherty was experiencing difficulties with Paramount: "Hollywood wanted to impose a ready-made dramatic shape on the raw material" (Hardy, 1946:80) and Grierson's repeated concern to identify the place of documentary within the real world in opposition to the studio is surely related to this as well as to the increasing economic power of the studios at that time, and to the focus on studio-made films.

Grierson was impressed by Flaherty's intimacy with the people about whom he made films and commented on how he lived with them for a year or two at a time (Hardy, 1946:81). Others however were later to critique Flaherty's imperialist style, as Winston makes clear in his account of Flaherty's approach to his film-making: "...the filming trips became family outings in a particularly imperial mould, replete with nannies and large rented houses - even a palace on one occasion" (Winston, 1995:20). Four points typify the discussion on Flaherty: his exploitative attitude to the people he filmed; his exploitation of sponsors and producers; the implicit support for the existing order; and the self-image of the documentarist as artist (Winston, 1995:22). This last point is one that was central to Grierson's vision of documentary film as we shall see later in this discussion.

In the early 1930s when Grierson was employed by the Empire Marketing Board's film unit, he engaged Flaherty to work on *Industrial Britain* (1931). His account of this experience as it is represented in Hardy's biography, reveals how difficult it was for Grierson to get Flaherty to complete the work within the assigned time and budget, and at the same time highlights how devoted Grierson was to Flaherty's apparent genius as filmmaker:

> (Flaherty) spoke almost mystically of the camera's capacity for seeing beyond the mortal eye to the inner quality of things...(he) talks also of the movements in peasants and craftsmen and hunters

> and priests as having a special magic on the screen because time or tradition has worn them smooth...his own capacity for moving the camera in appreciation of these movements is an essential part of the magic (Hardy, 1946:57).

It would seem in reviewing Grierson's published writings that his view of what documentary film could and should achieve was very much exemplified by the kinds of films for which Flaherty became famous, despite the more negative aspects of Flaherty's practice. Although Grierson alludes to these in limited measure in his own writings, within the context of his romanticised notion of Flaherty as filmmaker, it seems that it is only with hindsight that Flaherty's unethical filmmaking methods have been noted. In this vein, Winston makes the point that it is surprising that writers and critics seem to gloss over these points in reviewing Flaherty's work. Commenting on Flaherty's filmmaking career as an 'imperial' one Winston writes that:

> The mystery is how untainted by this is his reputation - as if the cinema were too puny, its pantheon too insecure, to support the vicissitudes suffered by other imperial artists...No mistake must be made about this imperialism, though, for Flaherty was not a man to rise above his time...beneath the veneer of sympathy and understanding for the peoples he filmed there is nothing but the strong whiff of paternalism and prejudice (Winston, 1995:20).

Many years later the renowned and influential documentarist George Stoney made a film called *The Man of Aran: How the Myth was Made* (1978) which was first presented at a conference in Australia in the 1970s. In it, he revealed how Flaherty had manipulated the people of Aran and their lives and environs to achieve the apparent realism for which the film had been applauded. Though this was not precisely the intention of Stoney's film, within the context of heated debates on documentary and ethnography in the late 1970s, his film was received as a revelation of the flaws in naming Flaherty's work 'realist'. In the context of the

1920s through the 1950s however, when Grierson was intent upon developing a documentary film movement, initially in Britain, then Canada and ultimately internationally, his vision was for what he perceived to be a documentary film movement of realism[6]. And being also a 'man of his time' he was not critical of the imperialism within which much of the work of the documentary filmmakers that he trained was developed. Indeed, he actively sought to fulfil the aims of Britain's Empire Marketing Board, in the film unit he was invited to develop there "to bring the Empire alive" (Hardy, 1946:99).

Grierson's authority and power over the development of documentary film internationally and its typification as realist has been considerable. Through a series of historical events too complex for this study, Grierson was to have the opportunity to develop documentary film in a career of powerful positions which he occupied after leaving the Empire Marketing Board. Firstly he moved to the GPO Film Unit where he continued what he had begun at the Empire Marketing Board and then took on a commission to survey film developments in Canada for the Imperial Relations Trust (Hardy, 1979:90). He later established the National Film Board of Canada, which has had, in its own right, enormous influence on the development of documentary film through the decade. since it was established. He also worked for UNESCO in 1946 and 1947. Through the influential positions he held he became an international consultant and it was due to this that he visited South Africa in 1949 as part of his work for the Imperial Relations Trust. This was the year after the National Party had come to power, a 'moment' in South African history which was to have devastating consequences in the following four decades as this National Party government entrenched itself and its policies of apartheid, until the historic first democratic elections in 1994. Grierson's main purpose then was:

> to inquire into the existing national film facilities and to recommend a scheme best calculated to give the government a film

[6] See Hardy (1946:132-144) for an article by Grierson entitled 'The Course of Realism'.

> service which would do justice to the presentation of South Africa at home and abroad (Hardy, 1946:176-177).

In a brief reference to Grierson, Tomaselli in *Cinema of Apartheid* (1989), notes that his report (1954) stressed the need for film to be experimental and democratic and was ignored by the South African government. Hardy, however, describes the outcome of Grierson's investigations in more detail. He notes that Grierson proposed that what was needed was "conviction in high quarters that the film could and ought to be developed as an instrument of national policy; an objective appreciation - free from mere film interest and film enthusiasm - of the relationship of the film to the larger and deeper processes of public information; and a plan of action, which he proceeded to set out in detail" (Hardy, 1979:177). In relation to the point made earlier, however, about Grierson being like Flaherty a 'man of his time' it is interesting to note the colonial imperialist spirit in which he conveyed his thoughts on Africa some years later:

> The commanding and abnormal fact is that a black wave of insurgence is sweeping over the white man in Africa, and from sources so little understood and with an eagerness so uncomprehended, that all reactions can be fitted with difficulty into any Western European pattern of thought (Hardy, 1979:177).

With no prior knowledge of Africa and colonialism, one would be forgiven for thinking that Africa was first inhabited by 'the white man' and that it was blacks who were the imperialists. In addition the imperative to 'fit' things into 'western European patterns of thought' confirms the position from which Grierson undertook his work. In this context, Tomaselli's reference simplifies the potential outcomes of Grierson's report. In effect, Grierson's report was written for the apartheid government and his proposals for developing national cinema in South Africa would arguably have been used to further entrench it. I would propose that beyond the parameters of this study, and in addition to the work already written by Tomaselli and others, there is a need for more complex perspectives on the history of the development of national film in South Africa.

Having sketched some of the background to Flaherty and Grierson it would be useful to return to Grierson's views on documentary film before leaving the discussion on Giannetti's formulation of the realist tradition in documentary film. In relation to this imperialist background, it is interesting to note the seeming anomalous position that Grierson had with regard to the subjects of documentary film. For him, documentary film was to be "documentary of work and workers" (Hardy, 1946:114). He appears in his writings to be intent on elevating the status of industry and of workers through documentary imagery. His critique of Vertov on this point is instructive, where having said that Vertov in *Enthusiasm* (1930) told "how wonderful the worker's life was" he goes on to state that he "failed to observe what the men were doing" (Hardy, 1946:116).

For Grierson, what was important was precisely to show in detail the life of the worker, by representing him (and in his writings it is always 'him', never 'her'), his actions at work, his tools, his environs in realist intimate perspectives. At the same time, however, Grierson believed in documentary as a form of art. This is a point that much of the writing on Grierson seems to return to repeatedly. The following quote is important here:

> ...Realist documentary, with its streets and cities and slums and markets and exchanges and factories, has given itself the job of making poetry where no poet has gone before it and where no ends, sufficient for the purposes of art, are easily observed (Hardy, 1946:84).

Winston deals with this point of documentary as art, with reference to Grierson, at some length. This is important since from his point of view it put his documentary work into a higher category and relegated other forms of documentary to lower categories. Thus it separated his work and his movement from the leftist projects of the filmmakers who engaged in making radical newsreels in the 1920s and 1930s, whose work I shall return to later in this chapter and in great detail in Chapter Three. Grierson's views on newsreels as documentary were in any case disparaging: "...dim records they seem now of only the evanescent and the

essentially unreal, reflecting hardly anything worth preserving of the times they recorded" (Hardy, 1946:134). But I shall return to this part of the discussion later. Rather for now I will expand a little more on Grierson's perceptions of documentary as art and his related belief in the 'social purpose' of documentary.

In discussing Grierson's views on documentary as art the central feature that needs noting is that for him documentary film differed from fiction film in that it dramatised the real, rather than constructing fictional dramas. This is a point that refers back to the early beginnings of Grierson's documentary perspectives when Flaherty was at loggerheads with Hollywood about the style of his documentaries. In a sense, reading through Grierson's writings, and referring to his documentary principles summarised above, it is possible to surmise that he was proposing and embracing an oppositional perspective on film to that of Hollywood. In doing so, however, and given the influence and power he achieved, he elevated documentary film (as he perceived it and defined it) to a status that it might not otherwise have had in film history. All the more reason to assess his perceptions on documentary film not only as art but also in terms of what he hoped it would achieve.

I have already mentioned one of the seeming contradictions revealed in writings on Grierson: the fact that although he was an imperialist he believed that the lived experience of workers needed to be documented. This belief could be seen as progressive, if not revolutionary. Yet the work of Grierson's documentary filmmakers has rather been perceived as 'social integrationist'. Indeed, he was marginalised by left-wing documentarists. As Winston puts it, Grierson's work was "running from social meaning" and the way he achieved this was to "concentrate on individuals and thereby avoid the alienating and repetitive realities of the world of work" (Winston, 1995:38). Essentially, it was social propaganda bolstering the designs of the Conservative government, which apart from a few years in the late 1920s and early 1930s, was successively in power in the period when Grierson was developing his documentary approach. As Lovell

and Hillier note, one of the key elements from which British documentary emerged was "the development of mass political democracy and the consequent need to educate and inform the electorate" (Lovell and Hillier, 1972:10-11).

Winston describes in some length how Grierson's work achieved its propagandist role on the basis of its 'run from social meaning' in the 1930s by its use of two strategies: firstly, its representation of workers as victims "which allowed for the poetry of poverty and the exoticism of the underclass to be displayed washed over with 'social purpose'" (Winston, 1995:40); and secondly, its 'problem moment' structure, where the social problem being documented is represented as a brief moment that will pass, and is passing (Winston, 1995:42-43). As Winston points out both of these elements were to become significant legacies in the history of documentary filmmaking, as well as precursors of the 'balance' that was to be the hallmark of British television documentaries in later decades. These were also to various extents elements within the development of South African anti-apartheid documentaries, especially those made by or influenced by British documentarists in the 1970s.

The movement to develop anti-apartheid documentary film and video by South Africans (as opposed to foreign film crews) began by attempting to break away from the conventions of 'balance' and 'impartiality' that were so important in the development of British documentary. *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, mentioned in the Introduction, had incorporated a didactic voice-over as a strategy of representation in the mid 1970s, and had arguably represented apartheid in the same terms that Winston describes as 'victim documentaries': all blacks were victims; all whites oppressors. It did not use the 'problem moment' structure however. The movement that began to develop within South Africa in the early 1980s made conscious choices against strategies of representation like a didactic voice-over narration, and narrative closure. The most extreme example of this approach is the film *Mayfair*, made in the early 1980s by a small collective (including Brian Tilley who later formed Video News Services). The film documents the views of people

in the suburb called Mayfair about the government's decision to relocate residents in terms of the Group Areas Act[7]. The film defies convention in radical ways: there is no title, rather the suburban board bearing the name 'Mayfair' is the 'sign' acting as title; there is no narrational voice-over; and the camera is hand-held throughout the film. The documentaries that followed, and that are the subject of this thesis, never shifted conventions in such a totalising way, but as we shall see they kept the self-consciousness of strategic intervention at the stylistic and formal levels that the making of *Mayfair* had begun. This self-consciousness was crucially and significantly linked to the ideological framings, or 'voice', of the texts and the political meanings they produced. The focus, at least initially, was on representing resistance to apartheid by the black working class (or parts of it), rather than perpetrating the notion that black people were merely victims.

Since Grierson was primarily a British documentarist who in a sense 'pioneered' the realist tradition in documentary film, mention must be made at this juncture of others in Britain who were also documentarists but whose work was closely linked with social critique and left-wing perspectives. Humphrey Jennings who had done some work for Grierson at the GPO Film Unit is one of these. He made films for the Mass Observation Unit "set up by left-wing thinkers to observe ordinary people through registering accounts of their lives and feelings" (Hayward, 1996:73). The left-wing Free British Cinema grouping, also needs to be mentioned. This group of significant filmmakers including Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson created a programme of documentaries in the late 1950s. One of these, in September 1956, included a film called *On the Bowery* (1956) made by Lionel Rogosin. Rogosin's name is intimately linked with the development of South African film, since in the late 1950s he clandestinely directed a film called *Come Back Africa* (1959), about Sophiatown in Johannesburg. Sophiatown was later demolished under the National Party's

[7] A notorious piece of apartheid legislation that relocated communities on the basis of the population group to which they 'belonged'. Population groups were defined by race.

apartheid policies and all its inhabitants were forcibly relocated in Soweto and other townships. Cultural work representing memories of Sophiatown has ascribed it a legendary status: the place where all races mixed freely in its clubs and bars, and where the careers of many creative artists, writers and journalists, as well as gangsters, were begun[8]. The film *Come Back Africa* is an important marker and document of those times, made within the period itself. It is significant to note here, in the context of this discussion on documentary realism that although it is primarily a fiction film it has a strong documentary feel, including documentary footage of a young Miriam Makeba, and a young Bloke Modisane, important artists of the time. These documentary representations have been re-used in documentary films about Sophiatown made by anti-apartheid filmmakers. So, beyond Grierson, the influences of the realist documentary film-making tradition established in various strands in Britain had reverberations within South Africa and on representations emanating from it.

Practice: Documentary Newsreels

There was however another area of documentary film that was significant at the time Grierson was developing his ideas, in the 1920s and 1930s, in Britain but also in other parts of Europe as well as in the United States. This was the radical newsreel groups who were ideologically orientated towards the perspective of the worker. As I have already noted Grierson was not in favour of the newsreel as documentary and the two movements developed and grew independently of each other. This newsreel movement established itself in opposition to the mainstream commercial newsreel-makers who were not engaged in any way in social critique. Rather, these radical newsreel-makers were concerned to further the cause of revolution. Winston (1995:81-84) identifies three points that delineate the difference between the left-wing newsreel-makers and the commercial ones:

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[8] The play *Sophiatown* created by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company is one example of this: see Purkey and Stein (1993); the documentary *Freedom Square and the Back of the Moon* (1987) directed by Kentridge and Gibson is another example.

1. The film-makers were part of the events they were documenting, people within the political movement. This meant a committed editorial voice, expressed in inter-titles which owed more to the Soviets than to commercial practice.
2. The films were not limited by the event being covered (which) is but a peg on which to hang other material.
3. The films were sponsored 'independently' - 'independence' describes nothing more or less than a certain type of private sponsorship (Winston, 1995:81-83).

Having noted these differences, however, it is interesting to mention also that some of the left-wing filmmakers straddled both worlds (in the United States). Winston makes this point with reference to questions of sponsorship. So that when they were working for the so-called 'official' documentary movement (for Lorentz who made *The Plow* (1936) and *The River* (1937)) they were "as inhibited as were their British counterparts" and "when they were working as 'independents' they were independent" (Winston, 1995:83).

These points are significant because they might be written similarly to identify the work of Video News Services in South Africa in the 1980s. They are also significant because in the development of the South African anti-apartheid documentary film movement there were individuals and groups that at times engaged in work for the state's South African Broadcasting Corporation (for example, Angus Gibson's documentary on Khosi Bay) in order to make sufficient funds to make the more radical documentaries to which they aspired or in some cases simply to have access to video skills. But the relationship between the documentaries of the anti-apartheid film movement and the radical newsreel documentaries is most significant, for this study, in terms of the imagery they both employ. Incidentally, this is one place where there is a link between all the different documentary filmmakers of the 1920s and 1930s, and its roots are in the Soviet films of Vertov and Eisenstein. So that Grierson too, despite his social integrationist approach, emulated the low angle shot and the close-up detail shots

of the Soviet films giving the worker an heroic status. An addition in the radical newsreels however was the representation of masses of workers marching and striking. These were all elements that some of the South African anti-apartheid documentaries, especially those concerned with representations of workers in the 1980s, emulated. In later chapters I shall explore and analyse this in detail.

Practice: The Colonial Film Unit

Before moving from this discussion about realism and British documentary it is important to identify yet another significant development, namely the Colonial Film Unit, based on the work of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment which operated in Africa from 1935 to 1937. Significantly The Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment was funded in part by some of the mining companies and its work included showing films to African mine workers. This had already occurred in South Africa in the early 1920s, according to Tim Couzens. He writes about the missionary, Rev. Ray Phillips, who used films as a means to 'moralize the leisure time' of mineworkers living in single-sex compounds. Phillips' own account suggests that during the miners strike of 1922 he rushed out to the compound at New Primrose Mine and showed Charlie Chaplin films: "there was no murder that night at the New Primrose" quotes Couzens (1985:97). The Chamber of Mines had already found the film viewings 'gratifying' and had funded the purchase of equipment and an annual expenditure (presumably for the cost of films)[9]. With regard to the Colonial Film Unit, Smyth refers to one document which notes that Arthur Creech Jones, who was a prime motivator of the Colonial Film Unit which succeeded the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment, had suggested "the possibility of adult education being used as a weapon against rising urban unrest in 1940 in the context of industrial disturbances...on Northern Rhodesia's Copperbelt" (Smyth, 1992:163). This initiative led to a report called *Mass Education in African Society* (1944). Significantly the report noted "the great

[9] See Couzens (1985:93-97) for more details on the screening of films.

popularity of films", acknowledging that they were the "most popular and powerful of all...visual aids" (Smyth, 1992:163). The use of film in the colonial context and its significance for developments in South Africa specifically is a rather complex area, which requires a study of its own. In addition it was not only Britain that engaged in colonial film programmes but also France and Belgium (Diawara, 1987:61). I will however focus here on the British approach specifically, since it developed within the same period that Grierson was developing his ideas on realism, and was to some extent shaped by these.

The Colonial Film Unit was established in 1939, after war had been declared, as part of the British Ministry of Information and its establishment was seen as "tangible recognition of the potential power of the screen in mass persuasion" (Smyth, 1988:285). The unit was first housed in the same building as the GPO Film Unit which was led by Grierson, so it is reasonable to surmise that there would have been inter-connections on production issues. Smyth points out that in the 1930s Stephen Tallents, who had first engaged Grierson at the Empire Marketing Board and who later moved to the GPO where Grierson joined him, had proposed film as a means of mass education. She also develops a strong argument for her view that Stephen Tallents had been the first to promote the 'Projection of England' genre when he was at the Empire Marketing Board, which presented the idealised English artisan as a role model. This style of film was emulated by the Colonial Film Unit beginning with its first film *Mr English at Home* (1939). In addition to films like these the Colonial Film Unit used newsreels as propaganda.

The 'story' of the Colonial Film Unit is well documented in Smyth's accounts (and those to which she refers) and I will not repeat it here other than to note a few significant points. The first of these is that the Colonial Film Unit seemed to have managed to reach wide audiences especially in rural areas by using cinema vans. This is a method that has been used in other parts of the world also for overtly

political purposes but of a different sort - in Latin America by Third Cinema practitioners, in Mozambique by Frelimo cultural activists, and in South Africa by the Film Resource Unit. The second significant point to note is that the Colonial Film Unit generated debate - some of it through the journal *Colonial Cinema* and in conferences - about Africans engaging in productions at various levels. In a sense the colonial 'experiment' from the coloniser's perspective was seen to have failed if we take the point made by one of the Colonial Film Unit's chief supporters at a conference in 1958 as reported by Smyth: "...he confessed...that films were more likely to be effective if they were made 'entirely by Africans'. Though the CFU films had been 'technically and pictorially' of high quality, many had aroused 'little emotional interest in the minds of illiterate rural audiences'" (Smyth, 1992:175). Various methods of integrating Africans into film production and various kinds of training schemes and programmes were attempted, perhaps the most significant of these being the Accra Film Training School, but always apparently with a view to continuing what had begun under colonialism. Diawara confirms this point of view in his attack on "patterns of racist filmmaking (that) emerge in the work of some of the most influential African directors and managers of production companies" (Diawara, 1987:63). He mentions two of these specifically: Aryety, manager of the Ghana Film Corporation and Halilu, manager of the Nigeria Film Corporation. The third important point is on the question of style and aesthetics. The colonial filmmakers had decided that since Africans were not familiar with film, films should be shot in long takes, using unedited sequences, simple characterisations, plots and themes. As Diawara points out, the ideology of the colonial units that perceived Africans from the superiority of a Eurocentric perspective as backward and illiterate prevented them from seeing "the obvious: their films were boring and clumsy" (Diawara, 1987:62). This point ties up with the development of Third Cinema, which I shall discuss in the next chapter, and which promotes an interior cinematic perspective to bring about transformation. The increasing establishment of African cinema, at least within Africa, in the 1990s also relates to this point. The fourth point I wish to refer to

here, in relation to the Colonial Film Unit and similar programmes, is that their influence is not only complex, as I have already mentioned, but also that part of this complexity emanates from the fact that some of what was established, while they were in operation, has been useful for the development of post-colonial cinema in Africa. And there is further complexity in that each European country operated differently and had differing effects on cinema in Africa, so to generalise about colonial approaches to cinema in Africa tends to over-simplify this history. On this point of noting the complexities of colonial film programmes, I will now return to the broader parameters set up for this discussion and depart from the focus on British realism. If we maintain Giannetti's binary model for the present and continue to explore the significant areas in which realism has been appropriated and debated in documentary film then we must also look to the field of anthropology. This is the area on which I will now focus. It is within the field of anthropology that much of the contemporary cutting-edge debates on documentary film have been taking place, so a focus on this area will provide some context for examining these debates.

The Ethnographic Film Effect on Theory and Practice

The name that is most closely tied to the beginnings of documentary film in anthropology is that of Jean Rouch, the French anthropologist, who first took a camera to Africa to document his research in the late 1940s. His anthropological film work, up until the 1960s, was in large measure fairly rudimentary - handheld, unedited footage. He increasingly constructed camera experiments with the subjects of his films, setting up encounters between people, and then filming them. He also increasingly became convinced of the power of synch-sound and this became a significant feature of his later work. In 1960, in Paris, he made a film with sociologist Edgar Morin called *Chronique d'un été*, in which they used a reflexive style revealing themselves and their technological apparatus within the film itself. This type of cinema became known as '*cinéma vérité*' - claiming in its naming as *vérité*/truth to be closer to truth than other forms of documentary

filmmaking. This claim however was not in the Griersonian sense of realism but rather because the filmmakers represented themselves within their films, or at least were not at pains to hide the means of production - if only by allowing the shakiness of the handheld image. As Winston puts it: "They tried...to guarantee the 'truth' of their own observation because we, the audience, could observe them apparently in the act of observing" (Winston, 1995:164). In time this approach to documentary film was to become significant as one of the ways in which France expanded its documentary filmmaking expertise across the world, including in South Africa. Here, the development of the Direct Cinema Programme first arising from a film training course at the Federated Union of Black Artists (FUBA) in Johannesburg in the early 1980s and then attached to the University of the Witwatersrand's Centre for Continuing Education needs to be mentioned. The history of this particular programme and its relationship with French filmmakers, the French Cultural Ministry, and local politics and communities is an important document still to be written. But at least one point needs to be made here to show the relationship between the legacy of Rouch and the work of this programme in the South African context. In 1987 the group of South African participants in this programme, finally completed (in studios in Paris, it must be noted) a documentary film called *Chroniques Sud-Africaines* (1987). So in the film's name as well as in ideology and methodology the link with Rouch was fixed. The film was co-produced by a number of European television broadcasters guaranteeing at least a European television audience[10]. Since the film was not however presented

[10] The French executive producer of the film has used it as an example of a 'successful co-production', stating that "good pre-financing guarantees that the film will be seen. It is already financially viable before being distributed, which ensures it will have a real life of its own" (my emphasis) (Bourelly, 1993:52). Unfortunately, that 'real life' did not include South African audiences, and anti-apartheid filmmakers in the 1980s criticised the Direct Cinema Programme for its apparent dependency on French expertise, as exemplified by the film's credits. So while the film was shot by South African filmmakers in the Programme, its design and editing was accomplished in France by French filmmakers. Given the amount of money going into the project, there was a strong sense of a need for some accountability to South African audiences and filmmakers outside the project. Under apartheid it was not viable nor indeed possible to establish co-production bases for projects of this nature. This is no longer the case. But the point stands that the Programme did not take responsibility to show the film to those who had participated in it as subjects, nor to broader South African audiences.

publicly in South Africa this raises serious questions about the ways in which foreign funders have influenced the work of documentary filmmakers in South Africa. While they might have guaranteed foreign television audiences this did not necessarily mean that local or national audiences would see the film. The group has recently made another film, with a similar co-production basis, about the South African 1994 elections.

In Anthropology, film has been used since the beginning of cinema. Winston (1995:170) documents this early anthropological history beginning with a film of a Berber woman making a pot, shot at the Colonial Exposition in Paris in 1895. Since then film has had a significant place in anthropology for various reasons, but often as a record of research and as a teaching tool. Since the 1960s however there has been a great deal of contestation and debate in anthropological circles about documentary film. One of the strands of these debates which is most pertinent for the present study is the place of indigenous people about whom documentaries are made in the production process. Another strand pertinent for this study is focused on questions of aesthetics. The exploration of these two issues - subjectivity and aesthetics - is an important theme for this thesis. With regard to questions of subjectivity, as we shall see in the next chapter, the concept of a so-called Fourth World is becoming increasingly significant, as are representations from indigenous Fourth World voices. In relation to aesthetics, as documentary becomes more diversified and as its definitive boundaries become more blurred so the 'content of the form' demands greater attention.

At this juncture it would be valuable to name and expand a little on some of the significant developments within anthropology that relate to documentary film to provide some context for ongoing discussion of the issues arising from these. But first it is important to note that the naming of documentary film in anthropology is itself an issue. It is sometimes called 'visual anthropology' and at other times 'ethnographic film'. For some the distinction between these relies on a

concomitant (false) distinction between ethnographic film as "the recording and gathering of data and of people's testimonies" (Trinh, 1993:102) and anthropological film as not merely showing activities being performed but "explain(ing) the 'anthropological significance' of these activities" (Trinh, 1993:102). In some instances documents of cultural events may be thought of as merely (unedited) 'record-footage' as Winston points out (1995:175). It would seem that the term 'ethnographic film' put most simply and literally means: "a representation of a people on film", from *ethnos*, a people, and *graphe*, a writing, a drawing, a representation (Weinberger, 1994:4). For Weinberger, ethnographic film contentiously straddles the margins of both documentary film and anthropology, the "fuzzy border of 'documentary value' and 'documentation'" (1994:5). Nichols takes a more definitive stance. In his definition, ethnographic film refers to "films that are extra-institutional, that address an audience larger than anthropologists per se, that may be made by individuals more trained in filmmaking than in anthropology, and that accept as a primary task the representation, or self-representation, of one culture for another" (Nichols, 1994:62). The term 'ethnographic film' in this definition is therefore broader than 'visual anthropology' and stands back a little from the fixation on anthropology as a science, that is objectively positioned to analyse the behaviour of (other) cultures, but at the same time the overlapping of anthropology with documentary is implied. These problems and questions of definition are the beginning of much more complex debates, that are beyond the scope of the present project. Nichols (1994), Trinh (1993), Weinberger (1994) and Winston (1995) provide detailed and useful discussions of these issues while Weinberger (1994) and Winston (1995) also provide valuable and different overviews of anthropological and/or ethnographic film.

As I have already mentioned the issue of subjectivity is central in debates within ethnographic film. It has been debated in various forums over a long period of time, and I will highlight only a few of these. One of the significant inputs to this

debate came from MacBean in a paper called '*Two Laws* from Australia: One White, One Black', published in the *Film Quarterly* in 1983. In it MacBean discusses how a film made in Australia about the Borroloola incorporates participation from representatives of the Borroloola themselves. In effect, the film is theirs, while they have assistance from ethnographers/filmmakers, Strachan and Cavadini. According to Winston, some of the Borroloola had been present in 1978 at the conference in Canberra where Stoney's *Man of Aran: How the Myth was Made* had been presented. At that conference there had been heated debate about the place of indigenous people in films made about them, both arising from Stoney's film and also because as Winston states: "the subjects, tribal people, were also participants - and they made it clear that they were not best pleased with what the ethnographers had done to them over the years" (Winston, 1995:193). So when the Borroloola decided to make a film about their land dispute they were conscious of the possible pitfalls in handing over their story to ethnographers. In Winston's account, the film was very much their own, for example in the choice of wide angle lens and long takes, although another reading of MacBean's account might suggest a participatory mode rather than 'ownership' of the film's decision-making processes.

But perhaps one of the most historically significant orchestrated and organisational moves to put film into 'the hands of citizens" (Hénaut, 1970:9) was through the National Film Board of Canada's Challenge for Change Programme. Strictly speaking it was not an anthropological project but it warrants some mention in the context of this discussion on subject participation. This programme began in 1966 and pioneered an approach to documentary filmmaking whereby the subjects of the film were shown the film in the editing phase so that they could decide how they wanted to be represented, as well as to prepare themselves for how they might be perceived in public representation. This approach was later extended to incorporate training programmes so that the subjects of films could in effect make films about themselves and their social concerns, without needing or

relying on the expertise of professional filmmakers. George Stoney pioneered this approach when he became head of the programme in 1968 (Winston, 1995:201). As the Programme became more facilitative and less directly engaged in filmmaking, as Winston wryly comments, it became too much of a challenge for the National Film Board and the programme was closed. George Stoney went on to New York University where he founded the Alternate Media Center, training students in access television, which became a strong feature of regional television programmes in the US. But again in Winston's words "the challenge for change was a little too strong" (Winston, 1995:273): the programme's work was redirected and Stoney ousted.

A crucial feature of the Challenge for Change programme was that the films were always made on the basis of their social purpose, primarily as a means of documenting reality to support social and political actions in relation to the state - to use as evidence in negotiations with government officials. This might explain how representatives of the Programme came to visit South Africa in the late 1970s to meet with community activists and leaders and to promote the Programme's approach to filmmaking. This visit had a significant impact on the development of South African documentary filmmaking, particularly through the establishment, with funds from Canada, of the Community Video Resource Association (CVRA) at the University of Cape Town. Later the Association became independent from the university and was re-named the Community Video Education Trust (CVET). When it was first established it engaged in training programmes for community activists, much the same as the Programme in Canada had done. The first director, Mark Kaplan, perceived as a threat to the state, was deported to Zimbabwe in the early 1980s and the directorship changed hands. Liz Fish, who replaced Kaplan and who by her own admission had little or no knowledge of film and video, learned on the job, and became as she puts it "the people's video camera"[11]. Her

[11] Liz Fish. Personal Interview. Johannesburg, September 1988.

approach was to make herself available to community activists and groups to film whatever they selected for filming. Much of the work never reached completion and was often relegated to shelves as 'record-footage'. A few significant videos were made and completed however, and one of these, *Wanne Dan* (1987), about a union go-slow, made with the participation of the union's media officer, points towards one of the ways in which documentary film and video might have played a more polemical role in South Africa in the 1980s, since it represented not so much of an ideologically closed text, but rather offered different views, even contradictory views, from workers on the union's positions. This particular film was however never publicly viewed[12]. In the latter part of the 1980s CVET began to develop training courses so that community-based activists could engage directly in representing themselves and their struggles on video, returning to the original mission of the Challenge for Change Programme. This is yet another example of how developments in documentary film in other parts of the world had some impact on developments in South Africa. The CVET programme was one of a number of left-wing training initiatives established in South Africa in the 1980s. Interestingly, Video News Services did not engage in training programmes when it was first established, but rather developed a style of filmmaking that made clear the obvious ideological alliance with the subjects of their films - mostly black, male, urban workers within the Mass Democratic Movement[13].

So far this discussion on ethnographic film and visual anthropology has focused on one of the significant strands in debates that emanate from it - subjectivity. The other strand of debate mentioned earlier is around aesthetics. At this point it would be useful to merge these two strands in my ongoing discussion. For in recent and

[12] In my interview with Liz Fish (1988) she commented on the viewing of the video that: "...the union has control over it and the union hasn't shown it to their workers yet which is a great frustration to me but I have to wait for their processes...". With hindsight, the issue here is that the union was more than likely holding the video back precisely because it represented contradictory perspectives on the part of workers.

[13] Later however, they did incorporate a training programme into their activities.

contemporary debates on documentary film (within ethnographic film but also more broadly) questions of subjectivity and aesthetics have been inextricably bound together. To refer back to Giannetti's model once more, in this way the realist and formalist traditions which he proposes can be seen to combine.

Bill Nichols and Documentary Film Theory

One of the most significant and influential contemporary documentary film theorists, at least in the United States and perhaps in Europe, is Bill Nichols, who has written widely on documentary film, both within anthropological frameworks and also beyond these. His work has developed outside of the South African context yet it is highly relevant to South African documentary film in ways which will become clear, but mostly because of his concern with ideology. In addition his most recent book, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (1994), which is on the cutting-edge of debates on subjectivity and identity, read with the South African context in mind, points towards possibilities for transformed documentary-making strategies within the new television structures currently being put in place in South Africa.

Through various papers and books he develops significant concepts and theoretical approaches for the study of documentary film. I will look at these in two parts: firstly, the concept of 'voice'; the integration of history, myth and narrative into documentary strategies; and strategies for developing 'magnitude' in documentary film-making; and secondly, issues of subjectivity and identity.

The first part of Nichols theories with which I am concerned here are derived especially from three journal articles and a book: 'The Voice of Documentary' (1983), 'Questions of Magnitude' (1986), 'History, Myth, and Narrative in Documentary' (1987), and *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (1991). I will make mention of his earlier book *Ideology and the Image* (1981) but will not focus on it specifically.

Beginning with the significant concepts derived from 'The Voice of Documentary': in this article Nichols is initially concerned with identifying four types of documentary filmmaking that represent an historical lineage of documentary styles. The first of these is the direct address style which in its extreme form involves a 'voice-of-God' off-screen narration addressing the audience directly. The second is the *cinéma vérité* (cinema of truth) or direct cinema style which purports not to 'interfere' with the material captured and therefore to have strongest access to reality as it is experienced. The third is the interview-oriented style, where the filmmaker employs a string of interviews interspersed with illustrative visuals. The interviewees replace, to some extent, the narrator now addressing the audience directly but visibly in front of the camera as 'witness-participants'. The fourth style is self-reflexive documentary which seeks to reveal the processes of production and to make clear the fact that documentary film is a re-presentation of reality not a mirror image of reality. In his later work, *Representing Reality*, Nichols develops these four stylistic approaches into modes of documentary filmmaking, which I will expand on later in this chapter.

Having identified and briefly explicated these four styles of documentary film, Nichols moves on to discuss his notion of 'voice', which for him has been the central question in the "contestation of forms" (Nichols, 1985:260). He defines 'voice' as:

> that which conveys to us a sense of a text's social point of view, of how it is speaking to us and how it is organising the materials it is presenting to us (Nichols, 1985:260).

In relation to this definition of 'voice' Nichols moves on to suggest that many filmmakers have lost their voice and confuse the making of documentary film with the representation of reality, rather than acknowledging that they are engaged in re-presenting reality or, indeed, mediating reality. This point of view on Nichols' part is not a simply modernist one, but is specifically and ideologically purposeful:

> to fashion documentaries that may more closely correspond to a contemporary understanding of our position within the world so that effective political/formal strategies for describing and challenging that position can emerge (Nichols, 1985:261).

This principle seems to drive all Nichols' writing and is further explicated in his paper 'History, Myth, and Narrative in Documentary'.

The basis of this paper is a film called *Roses in December* (1982) which concerns the life and death of a nun working in El Salvador. The issues surrounding the absence of the body (as in the absence of this nun since she is dead) for the making of documentary provide the impetus for Nichols' ideas on history, myth and narrative in documentary. Despite the specificity of the basis of the paper however, its conceptual terrain resonates with relevance to South African documentary. Indeed, Nichols proposes in the paper that *Roses in December* points to three possibilities that underlie all documentaries. These are:

> 1. Reference to the historical body of a social actor,
> 2. The representation of a narrative character, and
> 3. The transformation of the body through the iconography of the heroic or mythic (Nichols, 1987:10).

Using these 'possibilities' derived from *Roses in December* Nichols identifies three axes at right angles to each other:

> 1. The 'x' axis - narrative, which determines the movement of the film, the resolutions of its enigmas and its closure;
> 2. The 'y' axis - history, the referential axis which testifies to the open-endedness of the historical realm within which the 'story' is rooted; and
> 3. The 'z' axis - myth, the creation of spectacle, and identification with the 'to-be-looked-atness' of the image (Nichols, 1987:13).

Nichols proposes further that a film text may adopt positive or negative values along each axis, for example, on the narrative axis, narrative and anti-narrative.

Each film will have its own positions on each axis. Each of the three 'possibilities' that Nichols identifies is supported by extensive film theory within which any film text can be located. Thus for example, in relation to narrative, the critical analyst might examine questions of narrative open-endedness and narrative closure, the inevitability of a narrative opening and closing for any text, the positing of a problem or series of problems to be solved, and all of this within a theoretical framework that incorporates narrative theory across a broad spectrum of ideas.

In his paper entitled 'Questions of Magnitude' Nichols develops the arguments of 'History, Myth, and Narrative in Documentary' further with an extended focus that seeks to explore how documentary film can "be of an order of magnitude commensurate with the magnitude of what it describes" (Nichols, 1986:107). Virtually by definition, documentary film tends to miniaturise or reduce the historical reality it intends to convey without necessarily giving the viewer a sense of this act - in other words, it re-defines the referent. Thus Nichols asks: "what structure might documentaries have that will conjure or restore for the reader those orders of magnitude appropriate to the full dimensionality of the world in which we live?" (Nichols, 1986:107). In this paper Nichols deals with the crucial ideological question that separates evidence from argument, that of rhetoric. He is concerned with how the rhetorical act of the often implied 'don't you agree?' in documentaries sutures the viewer into the ideology of the text, while simultaneously limiting the viewer's resistance to it.

In developing this theoretical work, Nichols focuses on the viewer's subjectivity - magnitudes of subjectivity - which position the viewer in existence. He then links this to the possibility for a text to transcend the closure of narrative and increase the potential for praxis (a term which I shall elaborate upon shortly): to "alert us to the gap between resolution by praxis and by narrative closure" (Nichols, 1986:111). Here the subjective experience of a "magnitude of existence beyond containment" (Nichols, 1986:111) is the crucial element. This, I would argue, is

linked to Nichols' work on the 'voice' of documentary where he proposes that recruited voices are often favoured over the filmmaker's own ideological voice in the text. Now, in extending this point, Nichols proposes that in addition to the styles identified in 'The Voice of Documentary' two others have emerged:

> 1. A deconstruction of the codes of documentary itself, which involves a complex relationship between documentary and the avant-garde; and
> 2. Certain fictive conventions of narrative in a documentary context.

He then explores these as 'new' forms of rhetorical persuasion weaving this exploration into further discussion on the relationship between the three axes of history, myth and narrative:

> the problem for documentary is...the need to represent an historical person, an agent of social activity, within a narrative field as a character, an agent of narrative functions, and within a mythic or contemplative field as an icon or symbol, a recipient of psychic investments (Nichols, 1986:115).

In a complex theoretical exposition of the subjectivity of the viewer linked to specific documentary texts Nichols outlines how in documentary the historical realm can exceed the work of narrative and myth to contain it, thereby opening up questions of magnitude that are "the stuff to which only praxis can attend" (Nichols, 1986:122).

The concept of 'praxis' is central to this paper on 'Questions of Magnitude' and to the following two works by Nichols. For him, 'the challenge of praxis' is what will emerge from a text that inscribes possibilities for excess within its discursive frame, meanings that exceed the frame, that exceed the inherently miniaturising effects of image-making. Nichols' work is primarily orientated towards representational, textual strategies that will make praxis possible, even probable, for the viewer. He invokes the concept in this paper, yet he does not focus on what

his notion of 'praxis' encompasses. The implied meanings are rather simply that the consciousness of the viewer will be transformed and she or he will be challenged to take action within historical reality, in terms of the new consciousness she or he now has. Thus the focus on praxis is most significant for this study of anti-apartheid documentary film and video, and demands therefore further elaboration as to its meaning. For these documentaries were made, not for their own sake, but with a consciousness on the part of the filmmakers to facilitate more 'truthful' perceptions of South African society and particularly to promote transformative behaviour on the part of viewers towards action against apartheid. As we shall see, Nichols develops his focus on strategies of representation most extensively in the next two of his works that I will examine here, but still does not elaborate his definitions of the concept of 'praxis'.

In my exploration of the concept I have come across various interpretations of it, based on the term's derivation from its meaning in Greek: 'action' (Scruton, 1996:433). For some, it relates to Aristotle's distinction between *praxis* and *theoria*, where *praxis* denotes "practical reasoning" and *theoria*, "theoretical reasoning" (Scruton, 1996:434). For others, it is the distinction between *praxis* and *techne*, also made by Aristotle, that is significant, where *techne* is more concerned with "the skilled production of artifacts and the expert mastery of objectified tasks" (Habermas, quoted in McGuigan, 1996:187), while *praxis* adds "sense to the making" (McGuigan, 1996:187). To discuss this now in relation to politics, the concept of 'praxis', through its use by Hegel and Marx has come to denote "the general capacity to act so that one's projects and beliefs are in harmony with the world represented through them, together with a presumption that belief and action are not so sharply separable as empiricist theories of knowledge would require them to be" (Scruton: 1996:434). Developing the link with Hegel and Marx further, Golding asserts that "Gramsci cl ose to refer to marxism as the 'philosophy of praxis' rather than continually use the more colloquial expressions 'dialectical materialism' or 'historical materialism' - or

even the term 'marxism itself'" (1988:543). 'Absolute historicised immanence', that is, the immersing of the subject in history, is central to Gramsci's philosophy of praxis. He confirms the making of 'man' (sic) in and by history or reality.

The making of humanity and its meaning cannot be outside of history. It is a meaning therefore that is in 'the process of becoming'. Gramsci's politics thus incorporates "not only a historicized rationality and necessity but the realm of the possible" (Golding, 1988:555). To follow Golding's argument, based on Gramsci's notion of the 'philosophy of praxis' it is possible to apply her view of Gramsci's proposals for the synthesis of the rational and the real to develop Nichols' implied perspectives on praxis. The following quote is pertinent here:

> ...the struggle to create society...is...always a political struggle, a struggle of becoming, a struggle around potentiality...a struggle to unite...the rational and the real into a 'unitary moment' (Golding, 1988:556).

And further: politics is the "complete historicization of the rational and the real" (Golding, 1988:558), the active synthesis of their unity, in other words the basis of praxis. Now, Nichols' concern with questions of magnitude becomes clearer. For if a text only miniaturises reality, does not make possible a full(er) sense of history, then such limited perceptions of that reality can only reduce, indeed forestall, the potential for action in that history, the potential for praxis. Thus if documentary film and video is to propose possibilities for praxis, it follows that its strategies of representation need to be consciously considerate of the text's power to produce 'questions of magnitude'. In this regard the notion of the text's 'voice', that Nichols first developed in 'The Voice of Documentary' and that I discussed above, is central to the critique and the making of documentary film and video. As we shall see, anti-apartheid documentary film and video, and the meanings it made in its contemporary context, its historical reality, is crucially determined by the ways in which the texts are inscribed with the filmmaker's 'voice'.

Having examined some of the background of the concept of 'praxis', I shall now turn to describe two further theoretical works written by Nichols: *Representing Reality* and *Blurred Boundaries*. In *Representing Reality*, Nichols extends the points raised in the three papers I have identified above, in examining "the styles, strategies, and structures of documentary film" (Nichols, 1991:ix). While noting the structure of the book and the broad terrain it covers I will focus in detail only on those parts which resonate most clearly with the development of South African documentary.

The book is divided into three parts: Axes of Orientation; Documentary: A Fiction (Un)Like Any Other; and Documentary Representation and the Historical World. There are three chapters in Part 1: Axes of Orientation. In the first chapter 'The Domain of Documentary' Nichols explores the broad sweep of documentary under a number of headings that together can be seen as embracing documentary film, including the image and ideology, defining documentary, a community of practitioners, an institutional practice, a corpus of texts, and a constituency of viewers.

In the second chapter, 'Documentary Modes of Representation', Nichols identifies and explains four modes of representation which "stand out as the dominant organizational patterns around which most texts are structured" (Nichols, 1991:32). These are: expository, observational, interactive and reflexive. In a footnote Nichols indicates that the four modes he presents originate in his earlier book *Ideology and the Image* (1981) where he distinguishes between direct and indirect address. His typology referred to in 'The Voice of Documentary' (reviewed above) would also seem to be linked, at least in part, to concerns with direct and indirect address and the present chapter therefore has some relation to this earlier attempt at categorising documentary film. In the lineage of Nichols' work and its significance for my study, this chapter therefore has special importance. It allows the complexity of Nichols' theoretical positions on ideology

and magnitude to find their location within the naming or identifying of a given text in relation to its mode of representation.

In the expository mode the viewer is addressed directly with the 'voice-of-God' narrated text being the most familiar examples. In the observational mode the non-intervention of the filmmaker is significant and the events that occur in front of the camera are all-important. In the interactive mode the filmmaker's interaction with the film's subjects or with the events that the film records is evident or implied. In the reflexive mode representation itself is the topic of the text. Such a text is self-conscious not only about "form and style...but also about strategy, structure, conventions, expectations, and effects" (Nichols, 1991:57). These four modes identified by Nichols are of crucial significance for the analysis of documentary film since they provide a clear basis for naming different kinds of documentaries. While general categories can also be problematic, precisely because they are generalised, some kind of typology can also be useful for differentiating between different documentaries and broadly different styles of documentary filmmaking. They are also measures against which some documentaries can be identified as not fitting, and so highlighting new forms and styles of filmmaking for which Nichols (and others) may not yet account.

The third chapter in this part of the book is called 'Axiographics. Ethical Space in Documentary Film'. In a complex exposition of how one might approach ethical questions in documentary film, a major portion of this chapter focuses on the gaze: "how the documentary camera gaze takes on distinctive qualities and poses concrete issues of politics, ethics and ideology in terms of space" (Nichols, 1991:78). Nichols extends this focus into questions of ethical accounting in relation to each mode of documentary representation and the chapter incorporates a section on ethics, politics and ideology.

Part Two, Documentary: A Fiction (Un)Like Any Other, is divided into three chapters. The first chapter, 'Telling Stories with Evidence and Arguments' focuses centrally on differentiating between fiction and documentary: documentary "addresses the world in which we live rather than worlds in which we may imagine living" (Nichols, 1991:112). In the second chapter 'Sticking to Reality. Rhetoric and What Exceeds It' Nichols draws on his earlier work from *Ideology and the Image* (1981) by identifying three forms of artistic proof used to gain support for any argument: ethical, emotional and demonstrative. On this basis Nichols examines rhetoric, excess, the indexical bind (between referent and representation), subjectivity and identification, and historical recognition and authenticity. From this he further examines the relationship of fiction to documentary in the third chapter 'The Fact of Realism and the Fiction of Objectivity'. Not only does this chapter focus on a crucial issue and debate in documentary film and the representation of reality, but it also further textures Nichols' theoretical terrain.

The complexities of Nichols' theoretical terrain are strongly evident in the last part of the book Documentary Representation and the Historical World. The first chapter in this part (co-written with two others) focuses on 'Pornography, Ethnography, and the Discourses of Power', concluding that both documentary forms are not defensible. The final chapter called 'Representing the Body. Questions of Meaning and Magnitude' is an extended rewriting of the 'Questions of Magnitude' paper examined above, where the issues and debates that Nichols has focused on throughout this book are drawn in, in order to question how magnitudes might be evoked in the relationship between referent and sign.

The second part of Nichols' theories on which I will focus relate to questions of identity and subjectivity, and it is here that I will weave into the discussion the issue of aesthetics, that I identified earlier in this chapter. This part of Nichols' theories are derived from his most recent book *Blurred Boundaries*.

This book is essentially and consistently exploring the boundaries and blurred zones within which film increasingly finds itself. This refers back to the point I made earlier on in this chapter about the ways in which documentary incorporates fiction and fiction incorporates documentary. Stark categories are no longer possible and perhaps no longer feasible. Nichols is correct to propose that documentary is 'a fiction (un)like any other'[14]. The way he writes this proposition encapsulates the paradoxical position of documentary film - it is both 'like' and 'unlike' other forms of fiction. In this ever-shifting terrain of blurred boundaries Nichols presents seven chapters. Two of these refer specifically to television so I will not expand on them at this juncture. A third focuses on Eisenstein's *Strike* which I used extensively in an earlier section of the present chapter. A fourth deals with the theories he proposes throughout the book through the detailed analysis of four specific texts. The three remaining chapters have most focused and significant resonances for this thesis and I will represent them here, specifically with reference to questions of subjectivity and aesthetics.

In the first chapter 'Embodied knowledge and the politics of location' Nichols evocatively and poetically lays out the book's terrain, drawing on quotes from a number of writers and subjects of films, as well as analyses of films that reflect the subjectivity that he is applauding in documentary film. It is therefore difficult to summarise or even interpret this chapter and my approach will be to highlight here a few of the key issues he raises, which he weaves into the remainder of the book:

1. Nichols compares 'traditional' documentary with more recent documentary. The former, he proposes, suggested wholeness and completion. Recent documentary on the other hand suggests 'incompleteness and uncertainty, recollection and impression,

[14] This is in fact the title of Part 2 of *Representing Reality* (1991:105). It is echoed in *Blurred Boundaries* (1994:x), where Nichols asserts that: "one of the most blurred of recent boundaries lies precisely between fiction and nonfiction".

images of personal worlds and their subjective reconstruction'. Former 'objects of scrutiny' in documentary film have now become the subjects of self representations that reflect a realm of 'specificity and corporeality', 'embodied knowledge' and 'existentially situated action'.

2. Questions of magnitude are sharpened by the tensions created in this realm between representation and represented. The relationship between the image as icon - standing for itself and others like itself or typical of itself - and the image as indexical, and therefore connotative and ideological, is heightened, raising a number of crucial questions: 'To what extent can the particular serve as illustration for the general? To what extent is the general a misunderstanding of the concrete, the everyday and what this means for historically located individuals? The body is a particularly acute reminder of specificity and the body of the filmmaker even more so. Where do filmmakers stand and how do they represent this stance? Do they represent their own knowledge as situated or omniscient? What consequences follow?'

3. Nichols represents his concern with the 'absent filmmaker' who 'urges us to draw larger lessons from the specific ones he or she learned and filmed'. The kinds of films that embody knowledge are self representations not based on the appropriation of the experience of others, or the construction of others.

4. First-person, oral testimony - first-person filmmaking - is important in films that testify to the politics of location and specificity rather than the global.

5. The body is the most localised aspect of ourselves, so a politics of location calls the body into question. Nichols quotes Devereaux on this: "To know the other without knowing the self, without

opening the self to being known, is truly an act of taking possession" (1994:11).

6. Nichols discusses the concept of 'being-in-action' (which he uses in relation to the workers in *Strike* discussed earlier) as an image or icon not frozen nor a character in someone else's narrative but as a vehicle for the representation of self. He quotes de Lauretis: "The subject...is the place in which, the body in whom, the significate (sic) effect of the sign takes hold and is real-ized" (1994:12) (Nichols, 1994:1-16).

Following on the key elements of this first chapter of *Blurred Boundaries*, one of the most important chapters for this thesis and the terrain I wish to traverse on questions of identity is 'The Ethnographer's Tale'. In it Nichols is making the point that ethnographic film/visual anthropology needs to learn from the documentary films that are being made by, as he puts it, "those who have traditionally been objects (and blindspots) of anthropological study: women/natives/others" (Nichols, 1994:63). He calls these 'auto-ethnographies' and includes examples of films, some of which have been written about and presented in Britain and the US (and have attained some significance in film debates), such as: *Handsworth Songs* (Akomfrah, 1986) and *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989).

One of the key questions with regard to subjectivity focuses on power and authority to represent others. In other words who has the right, by what means and for what purposes, to represent another? And further, in Nichols words: "In what way does this representation matter to those it represents" (Nichols, 1994:65)?

In exploring these questions it is useful to highlight firstly one of the key concepts to which Nichols refers in his book *Representing Reality* - 'discourses of sobriety' - which he invokes here in 'The Ethnographer's Tale'. The concept seems to

derive from Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Althusser's identification of Ideological State Apparatuses. For Nichols, 'discourses of sobriety' refer to those discourses of society that have a sobering effect and are located within institutions like law, economics, welfare etc. At times, documentary film tends to be located or to locate itself as a discourse of sobriety. In effect, documentaries that can be so assigned do not ask any questions, rather they present a rational, resolved relationship between themselves and the world, thereby reinforcing dominant forces of power and authority. One of the ways that documentaries achieve this is by processes of disembodiment. An example of this is the implied but seldom revealed presence of the filmmaker, who in effect constructs the camera's gaze, but remains according to Nichols a "disembodied intelligence" (Nichols, 1991:89). The same can be said of modes of direct address where the off-screen or even on-screen narration fetishises the power of the word, in the sound track over the image, and reinforces the separation of knowledge from the body that produces it - disembodies the knowledge.

In contrast to this idea of 'disembodied knowledge' Nichols comments on the different ways in which some cultures embody knowledge and on this point quotes Trinh T. Minh-ha who writes in *Woman/Native/Other* (1989a):

> The words passed down from mouth to ear (one sexual part to another sexual part), womb to womb, body to body are the remembered ones. S/He whose belly cannot contain (also read 'retain') words, says a Malinke song, will succeed at nothing. The further they move away from the belly, the more liable they are to be corrupted. (Words that come from the MIND and are passed on directly from 'mind to mind' are, consequently, highly suspect...) (Trinh, 1989a:136).

Nichols extends his point by proposing that disembodied documentary film also works to mask the filmmaker on the basis of race and gender. This is a crucial point for my examination of South African documentary film and although

Nichols is referring here specifically to anthropological film the reference has significance beyond this specific field. Political film has its own codes and conventions that, as we shall see, some South African anti-apartheid film followed. Given however that in South African anti-apartheid film there was a predominance of (white) male filmmakers, Nichols' comments on the effect of disembodiment of the filmmaker in relation to race and gender are useful. Here he is making the point that the ethnographic message can act as a mask that shrouds the body and body knowledge. Thus:

> ...reference to the body and the experience of the ethnographic fieldworker/filmmaker may mask the white male bodies of most anthropologists along with their distinctive ways of seeing and knowing (Nichols, 1994:70).

Linked to this point about identity and subjectivity are questions of aesthetics. For, as Nichols makes clear, ethnographic films, but also I would argue many documentary films, follow the already-prescribed canon of narrative structure that establishes character and situation and moves through various familiar stages towards closure and resolution. This narrative structure appears to be non-aesthetic, but in effect it is based on considered aesthetic (and ideological) choices. Projection by the filmmaker of realist representations onto people and places outside of the self ensures a coherence that works against the kind of 'knowledge from the belly' that Trinh T. Minh-ha describes: "these realist conventions and narrative structures rupture the phenomenal, experiential bond of passing stories from one mouth to another, of a knowledge that is fully embodied" (Nichols, 1994:73). It is important to note here how Nichols cleverly privileges the position of embodied knowledge by writing from within that perspective about the way in which disembodied knowledge poses a threat of 'rupture' to it. Many film critics write about the dominance of realist narrative structures but never seem to in fact 'embody' the alternative perspective as Nichols has managed to do in this piece of writing. In Nichols' rendition the 'other' of disembodied knowledge i.e.

embodied knowledge, now has the position of dominance and power - his very writing assumes a position of embodied knowledge.

Nichols extends his argument further by proposing that debates around shifts in ethnography towards new paradigms that include cultural studies and textual theory are not adequate to account for the 'nausea and excess' which ethnographic film can produce. He cites a number of examples where responses and reactions to particular films viewed in particular cultural spaces have had the effect of raising the repressed unconsciousness of viewers to the point, in one of the cases he cites, of nausea and vomiting.

But, Nichols proposes, "there is no reason why nausea should lead to protracted sickness" (Nichols, 1994:83). This is how he sums up his views on the embodying of knowledge in documentary film. In other words, he is proposing that the very strategies that seem to lead to excess and nausea, might suggest ways in which ethnographic film can engage the filmmaker in embodied representations and viewers in embodied responses. This means that there needs to be an engagement with the 'content of form' - in effect with aesthetics: "...a much needed reorientation toward questions of form and their inextricable relation to experience, affect, content, purpose and result" (Nichols, 1994:83).

Although Nichols does not use the term 'hybridity' in this paper, his representation of the new forms and strategies that ethnographic/documentary film has taken/might take, suggests that this would be a useful term to apply to his exposition of film that is neither self nor other but located in the realm of in-betweenness that Bhabha proposes, and which I will expand on in the next chapter. He does however refer to the Bhaktinian concepts of dialogism and heteroglossia which invoke similar nuanced qualities to the concept of 'hybridity'. But more of this in the next chapter - for now the important point to make is that the films to which he refers in detail, which I will not have space to reflect here, as

examples of new forms of documentary that provide so strong a challenge to ethnographic filmmakers, are films:

> ...with use-value for those of whom they speak; they come from women/natives/others; they reconfigure the imaginary geography of cross-cultural representation itself and place ethnographic film as one, marginalized voice among many...Others are no longer the objects of study...they are now themselves the founding voices - the pioneers, provocateurs and poets - of a discourse of their own making... (Nichols, 1994:90).

Again Nichols reflects a privileging of the embodied film by speaking/writing from within it so that it is now conventionalised approaches to ethnographic film and similar disembodied forms of documentary film that become 'other'. In other words, he privileges and makes dominant in the form that his writing takes, new types of documentary film being made by anthropology's former subjects. And it is this embodied film that for Nichols proposes a serious challenge to the assumptions of ethnographic film that its subjects/objects cannot represent themselves and need to be 'given' voice[15]. In his chapter called 'Performing Documentary', Nichols proposes a new, additional mode of documentary film which he calls 'performative documentary'. Now for Nichols the four modes of documentary film that he has previously defined - expository, observational, interactive and reflexive - no longer suffice. Given contemporary developments towards films that embody knowledge, that differ from reflexive films, a new mode needs to be proposed.

Before defining this mode Nichols refers back to the modes previously defined in terms of their key features and 'deficiencies', which each successive mode attempts to overcome. Noting that each mode is not in effect distinct from the others - a documentary may use some or all modes although one mode is usually

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[15] This refers back to Diawara's point that I cited earlier on the Colonial Film Unit, its paternalism and its racism.

dominant - Nichols also provides time-frames for each mode. As I mentioned previously this kind of categorisation is useful for situating South African documentary film, especially since these categories have been defined outside of reference to South African documentaries. Whether and how South African documentaries can be appropriately placed (or not) within the modes of documentary film is an extended discussion that mostly goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but that is nevertheless tied into it through the issues and debates raised by reflecting on the modes as defined by Nichols, and in particular on the mode of performative documentary.

First making the point that documentary arises as a response to fiction, Nichols' table on documentary modes, their key foci and their 'deficiencies' looks like this (Nichols, 1994:95):

Hollywood fiction

-absence of "reality"

Expository documentary (1930s): directly address the real

-overly didactic

Observational doc. (1960s): eschew commentary, observe things as they happen

-lack of history, context

Interactive doc. (1960s-'70s): interview, retrieve history

-excessive faith in witnesses, naive history

Reflexive doc. (1980s-formal and political): question documentary form, defamiliarize the other modes

-too abstract, lose sight of actual issues

Performative doc. (1980s-'90s): stress subjective aspects of a classically objective discourse

-possible limitations: loss of referential emphasis may relegate such films to the avant-garde; "excessive" use of style.

The chief difference between the first four modes and performative documentary is that while they "share a common emphasis on the referent" (Nichols, 1994:95), the performative mode "marks a shift from the referential as the dominant feature" (Nichols, 1994:94) - the 'Referents R Us' says Nichols. In other words, performative documentary challenges responses in the viewer that (at least potentially or ideally) dialectically create/demand a new social subjectivity with the historical world.

In order to explicate this I will list in summarised form the key elements of performative documentary that Nichols proposes in this chapter:
1. The first key element regards the threat that performative documentary poses to ethnographic film. Since it challenges and devalues realism it in effect challenges realist epistemology. Because documentary is located within the heart of the discourses of sobriety (and so is realism) this disturbance to ethnography has an unexpected magnitude. This epistemological shift poses questions of comprehension as well. The viewer is challenged to consider the 'content of the form' which creates a potential for performative documentaries to be incomprehensible when viewed within the 'institutional framework of documentary and the discourses of sobriety it emulates'. This is because performative documentary suspends realist representation. It puts the referential aspect of the message in brackets, under suspension. This potential for incomprehensibility, Nichols proposes, is more to do with categorisations of films,

since these documentaries are more comprehensible as fiction or formal experiments than as documentary[16].

2. The second key element of performative documentary concerns the paradox it embraces. It both diminishes its focus on the referential - it is poetic and evocative, personal and embodied - and at the same time it is tied into the historically referential. In short, performative documentaries "address the challenge of giving meaning to historical events through the evocations they provide for them" (Nichols, 1994:98). They embody an 'existential situatedness' through their form, that paradoxically makes possible what Jameson calls 'figurability' - making the underlying class structure representable in tangible form[17], or that makes possible the representation of what Williams calls the 'structure of feeling' - "as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it is based in the deepest and often least tangible elements of our experience" (Williams, 1987:18)[18]. Performative documentary attempts to reorient the viewer into an affective, subjective relation with the historical world it evokes. In Nichols' words: "to defamiliarize a previous relation opens the possibility for a change of habit, a transformation of awareness, a 'raised' consciousness in these visceral and existential terms that are part of figuration" (1994:99).

3. The third key element focuses on the turn towards the viewer as referent and away from 'reality' as referent. Performative documentary achieves this by

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[16] Nichols is always at pains to refer back to ethnographic film, to how questions of subjectivity affect it, and also to note the fluidity of categorising film - always keeping the border zones in mind.

[17] Here Nichols uses Jameson's (1985) paper, 'Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film', as the reference for his appropriation of the term 'figurability' into this discussion of performative documentary. In this paper, Jameson indicates that he is borrowing the term 'figurability' from Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where it is used to mean "representability in visual images" (Freud, 1976:459).

[18] See Williams (1987:16-21) for a more detailed presentation of this concept with regard to the relationship, or tension, between experience and form in analysing drama; see also Williams (1977:128-135) for an earlier version of the concept. In *Blurred Boundaries*, with regard to 'performative documentary', Nichols describes 'structures of feeling' as "a possibility that takes form in a liminal moment prior to any empirical gesture toward verification" (1994:98). 'Structures of feeling' may be seen therefore, as hardly visible or identifiable in the present, but nevertheless as having presence, at least in an individuated way with a potential-to-be-generalised as they become articulated.

focusing less on how truthful its representation is with regard to historical referentiality but rather on its performative force. It shifts its referential concerns to its relation to its viewers - 'we are what such films refer to'. Performative films do not subject themselves nor can they be subjected to the logic of the discourses of sobriety (which is usually the case with documentaries that have expressive qualities). They do not explain and argue but rather suggest and imply: "the stress is on the referential turn toward, not a historical domain, expressively enriched, but an experiential domain, expressively substantiated" (Nichols, 1994:100).

4. The fourth key element refers to the ways in which performative documentary while stressing the local, the specific, also contextualises its subject matter. Here Nichols refers to Hayden White's (1973) use of formism and contextualism - where 'formism' refers to the unique characteristics of situations and events, and 'contextualism' refers to setting events in context but not taking this as far as deriving general principles (Nichols, 1994:103-104). In performative documentary then, there is an insistence on the dialectical relationship between the specificity it fully evokes and overarching conceptual categories such as exile, racism, sexism or homophobia, which are usually tacitly evoked. The links are not made but are usually left to the viewer: "as a dialectical representation, performative documentary addresses the fundamental question of social subjectivity, of those linkages between self and other that ... ive as fully as they are conceptual" (Nichols, 1994:104). This kind of social subjectivity refers to ways in which subjects can both act and be constituted in the process of acting: a subjectivity that creates or transforms subjectivity itself. As such it is, according to Nichols, a category of collective consciousness: "it transforms desire into popular memory, political community, shared orientation, and utopian yearning for what has not yet come to be" (Nichols, 1994:105).

5. The final key element deals with what Nichols terms 'A Shift in Praxis: From Unity to Affinity'. Without some connectedness into questions of magnitude, to which documentaries are ideologically bound if praxis is to be achieved, performative documentaries could merely engage an individuated subjectivity that

makes no shift towards a social or collective subjectivity. This is especially so since performative documentary would apparently have no political base within which to be received - as some would have it there is "no Left left" (Nichols: 1994:106). For Nichols however the Left is now not so much perceivable as a 'united front' but is rather "dispersed across a wide field of organisations and issues (that) overlap and coalesce in unpredictable and unstable ways" (Nichols, 1994:106). This relates to Mouffe's (1988) views, on the multiplicity of subject relations in the social formation. She proposes that it is no longer possible to privilege class relations over other forms of social subjectivity, and that transformation towards democracy is effected in a range of social antagonisms that emanate from within various social subjectivities (Mouffe, 1988:89-104).

Nichols, the increasing power of globally interactive, hierarchically organised communication systems, of a late-capitalism that continues to reproduce itself, to 'dwarf' local struggles around identity politics is what performative documentary addresses. It seeks to revise this perception "by restoring a sense of the local, specific, and embodied as a vital locus for social subjectivity", in evocative and expressive ways, while still giving figuration to "dimensions of the political unconscious" (Nichols, 1994:106) - addressing the gap between the specificity of the here and now and the utopia of what might be.

In this chapter, I have focused on specific aspects of documentary film theory, primarily exploring notions of the blurring of boundaries between documentary and fiction. In particular, I have been concerned to explicate the writing of Bill Nichols on documentary film as a means of theoretically framing this study of anti-apartheid documentary film and video. Nichols' formulations of the historical devlopments of styles and modes of documentary filmmaking raise questions about: definitions of reality, and the relationship of a text or texts to it; the subjectivity of representations; the embodied knowledge that a text inhabits - its performativeness - and evokes; and the extent to which strategies of representation

make praxis possible. In the next chapter, I extend the discussion begun here, from a different direction, with a focus on Third Cinema and theories of identity that address questions of the subject and her or his multiplicity.

Chapter Two

Third Cinema and Identity

In the field of cinema one of the theories (and cultural practices) that has emerged as useful for analysing cinematic developments in South Africa is Third Cinema[1]. The concept was first identified in the 1960s as a means of naming cinema of the Third World that was born of, or sought to promote, political struggle for socialism. In the first Third Cinema 'manifesto' two filmmakers and film theorists Solanas and Getino wrote, in 1969, that Third Cinema "recognises in (the anti-imperialist) struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time...the decolonisation of culture" (Solanas and Getino, 1983:18). For them Third Cinema was a militant, didactic cinema that opposed the cinema of Hollywood, which they termed First Cinema, and the cinema of film artists, such as the films of the European film circuit, which they called Second Cinema. In Solanas and Getino's terms these kinds of cinema were ideologically unsound, particularly First Cinema, being a cinema that promoted the passive consumption of bourgeois values in audiences across the globe. Third Cinema was represented as a cinema that should promote the cause of socialism by representing the experiences of colonialism and its more contemporary forms.

Shifting Debates: 1982-1986

In 1982 the concept was elaborated by Teshome Gabriel in his book *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation.* In this work Gabriel identifies a number of themes in Third Cinema and discusses questions of style and ideology as well as the cultural and ideological coding of specific films. He proposes the major themes of Third Cinema as: class, culture, religion, sexism and armed

[1] See: Maingard (1991a, 1991b, 1994, 1995); Prinsloo (1996); Tomaselli and Prinsloo (1992); for applications of Third Cinema in the South African context.

struggle. He defines revolutionary film through a reading of selected Third World films and examines style and ideology in various ways, including a comparison between two South African films: *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, made by Nana Mahomo in exile in 1976, and *Journey to the Sun*, which was made by the South African Tourist Bureau in 1975. Finally he examines cultural codes vs. ideological codes in the work of specific filmmakers and in a variety of specific films from China, Cuba and Africa. The chief question raised by Gabriel's book, as the title itself implies, is on the separation of Third Cinema as both concept and practice from the term Third World Film. In other words, if we assume the definitions of Third Cinema proposed by Solanas and Getino, the two terms/practices - Third Cinema and Third World Film - are not as easily conflatable as Gabriel might suggest. So, the slippage in Gabriel's use of the terms needs to be unravelled.

This is what the next significant 'moment' in the development or application of the concept Third Cinema seems to have achieved. Some time after Gabriel's book was published, the concept of 'Third Cinema' was further elaborated in relation to the cinema of marginalised groups in other parts of the world. In the late 1980s in Britain, where black cinema had begun to emerge, at least two conferences were held, that sought to debate the relevance of Third Cinema for cinematic practices developing at that time.

The first of these conferences, hosted by the Edinburgh International Film Festival in 1986, facilitated a number of polemical interventions in debates about Third Cinema. Published reflections of the conference[2], identifying some of the different positions taken, are valuable for the exploration of the relevance of Third Cinema in the South African context. One of these is the concern with the term being 'kidnapped' out of its Third World context and ascribing it to essentially First World cultural developments thereby entrenching First World cultural

[2] These include: Cooper (1989); Kleinhans (1986); Mercer (1986); Will (1986), and the response to Will by Taylor (1987).

imperialism[3]. Taylor for example, notes how the report on the conference by Will (1986), "sets out to kidnap the concept of third cinema, to save it from 'rabid populists' of the third world and give it the protection of first world sanctuary" (my emphasis) (1987:141).

Another concern is the role of theory in relation to Third Cinema practices explicated in the argument that "rather than search for a black or third world film esthetic we should interrogate the *western* concept of esthetics as such, should recognize its determination through specific western historical experiences and cultural exigencies" (Taylor, 1987:141). Both these concerns are important in elaborating Third Cinema within the South African context. Firstly, the context within which the original conceptualisations of the term were developed are not entirely matched within South Africa, nor indeed outside of colonial contexts such as those in Latin America that gave rise to Third Cinema theory and practice, thus its relevance needs to be cautiously examined and its usefulness carefully negotiated. Secondly, the issue of aesthetics and the relationship of aesthetic concerns to western notions of aesthetics touches on questions pertaining to the development of any epistemological basis outside of the west and begs a further question as to the possibilities for the development of an aesthetic independent of western aesthetics.

The book *Questions of Third Cinema* (1989) brings together a number of the papers presented at this conference and I will refer here to three of these. The first is entitled 'The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections' written by Paul Willemen. It provides a framework for the papers that follow by tracing some of the lineages of the concept 'Third Cinema' and raising some significant issues and theoretical links. It begins with some background detail on the reasons for the

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[3] The use of the terms 'First World' and 'Third World' have in themselves been problematised by some writers. Homi Bhabha is "convinced that, in the language of political economy, it is legitimate to represent the relations of exploitation and domination in the discursive division between First and Third Worlds" (1989:112).

Third Cinema conference, which was "addressing the idea of a Third Cinema and its relevance to contemporary film culture" (Willemen, 1989:1). More specifically it was concerned to address developments in cinema practices in Britain and the USA especially outside 'the white Euro-American sphere'.

Willemen's paper carefully notes some of the 'origins' of the concept 'Third Cinema' primarily in Latin America, and identifies three key elements:

> a) the authors of the 'classic' manifestos forcefully state their opposition to a sloganised cinema;
> b) the manifestos refuse to prescribe an aesthetics; and
> c) the notion of Third Cinema was based on an approach to the relations between signification and the social (Willemen, 1989:6-8).

Willemen then traces some of the theoretical lineages that he perceives in the Third Cinema manifestos of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in Marxist and, in his terms, Marxist-inspired cultural theories. The most direct connections he says 'for a European reader' are with German cultural theory of the 1930s, with what he calls the 'Brecht-Benjamin nexus'. He takes pains to spell out some of the similarities and differences between these theorists and the Third Cinema manifestos. I will briefly summarise these here, even though they are noted specifically by Willemen with a European readership in mind. By contrast I wish to present a vastly more generalised view of Third Cinema than this suggests. Nevertheless some significant points are raised which relate to other areas of my discussion in this thesis so some mention of the relationship between the ideas of Brecht and Benjamin and the development of the concept of Third Cinema is in fact valuable.

In explicating the relationship between the 'Brecht-Benjamin nexus' and Third

Cinema Willemen firstly highlights this quote from Benjamin: "The events surrounding the historian and in which he (sic) takes part will underlie his presentation like a text written in invisible ink" (Willemen, 1989:11). For Willemen, it evokes the relationship between filmmakers and their contexts, a relationship that is significant for Solanas and Getino in their manifesto. Indeed the primary function of Third Cinema, as opposed to First and Second Cinemas, as they define it, is to make the relationship between cinematic representation and social context accessible to viewers. Secondly, Willemen proposes that Benjamin's theory on dialectical images, although not directly quoted in the Third Cinema manifestos is in their margins. Here Willemen suggests that the cognitive process is 'propelled' not within the cinematic discourse but "in the spaces between the referential world it conjures up and the real" (Willemen, 1989:11). Thirdly, Willemen mentions the possible relationship between the avant-garde and utopian liberatory mass culture, on which Benjamin reflects. Willemen takes it further back to the Soviet avant-garde noting that there are 'clear continuities' from them to Brecht to the Latin American Third Cinema makers.

Willemen cites four dissimilarities between the 'Brecht-Benjamin nexus' and the Latin American manifestos. Using a strange choice of vocabulary and writing clearly from a European (Eurocentric?) perspective Willemen proposes that "in the displacement of the political-cultural avant-garde from Europe to Latin America" (my emphasis) the following occurred: Firstly, a shift in 'technological utopianism' so that 'poor cinema' was equated with the political ends of Third Cinema. Secondly, there was a stronger focus on 'lucidity' in the integration of art and life, compared to the Soviet and German socialist avant-gardes. Thirdly, the absence of fascism and its aestheticisation as exemplified by Nazi Germany, and the absence of Stalinism and the repression of cultural workers in relation to the central Party bureaucracy - in other words the different political contexts of the Latin American filmmakers and theorists - led to reformulations of the relationship between art and life, in a way which was not possible for their

European counterparts, who, Willemen implies, were sceptical of avant-gardist 'rhetoric' on the fusion of art and life. It was the Latin Americans, according to Willemen, who put the relationship between art and life back onto the political-cultural agenda. Finally, the Latin Americans, unlike their European counterparts, pioneered a critical practice. They wrote manifestos as well as engaging in a critical reconstruction of their cinema histories. The critical equivalent has only recently gained ground in the West, according to Willemen, and he notes that interestingly it is in the work of those who are examining or extending the debates of German cultural theorists of the 1930s. This link he proposes is related to the rediscovery of the work of Bakhtin.

It is important to note here that Willemen seems to want to propose that the Latin American theorists/filmmakers were specially significant in the history of political cinema and were able to achieve directions which had not been possible in Europe. While in some respects this may well be the case, the problem with his approach is that he tends to conglomerate all of Europe, while apparently writing specifically of Germany and the Soviet Union. His comparison between the Latin American filmmakers and their European counterparts therefore has a certain forgetfulness about it. In particular, he seems to have forgotten the work of the French avant-gardes as well as the French New Wave. This, coupled with the way in which he suggests that the political-cultural avant-garde was 'displaced' from Europe to Latin America, suggests that he is over-concerned with the links between European and Latin American cinemas, conceiving of each of them as broad homogeneous entities. In effect he attempts to propose strong lineages for Latin American cinema in Europe, a project which has some value but which he overstates and which further highlights the necessity for Third Cinema to be examined as a theory and practice in itself rather than in relation to something beyond itself, whether that be Hollywood Cinema or developments in Europe.

In the second section of his paper Willemen begins with a detailed reflection on more recent theoretical work on Third Cinema, particularly that of Teshome Gabriel. He critiques Gabriel's work on the following bases:

> a) that he defines Third Cinema in terms of its difference from Euro-American cinema, thereby using Hollywood as a yardstick; and
>
> b) that he demonstrates that the various non-Euro-American cinematic regimes organise time and space in their own specific ways. This suggests a generalised homogeneity of time-space constellations in both Euro-American cinema and non-Euro-American cinema which is problematic, when specific films are examined (Willemen astutely notes at this point the problems with his own homogenising terminology) (Willemen, 1989:15-17).

For Willemen, Gabriel's avoidance of 'the national question' is problematic, and since the development of documentary film and video in South Africa is potentially one way of representing national identity, it is important to dwell a little on the points that Willemen raises here. For Willemen, Gabriel brushes aside the complexities of homogenising Third Cinema on an internationalist basis while at the same time it is in effect a cinema that is profoundly national as well as regional. Willemen's approach to 'the national question' is to examine the relationship between some of the aspirations of Third Cinema and Hollywood. He makes the point for example that often national bourgeoisies called for a national-dominant cinema, or a national authorial cinema in opposition to the dominance of Hollywood. In Third Cinema terms, Willemen suggests, the split between these two types of national cinema is reflected "in the split between a politically oriented militant cinema opposing mainstream entertainment cinema and a personal-experimental cinema opposing the literariness of author-cinema" (Willemen, 1989:11).

Willemen then looks at the effects of imperialism/colonialism in inventing nationalism and proposes three ways in which national-cultural identity has been formulated: firstly, colonised elites colluding with the hegemony of the colonisers, by identifying with the culture of the coloniser; secondly, representing pre-coloniality nostalgically and idyllically, by focusing on traditions of the pre-colonial past; and thirdly, elevating particular cultural aspects as symbols of national identity. In effect, Willemen is explicating the various and multiple lineages of the anti-imperialism of the Third Cinema manifestos, even to the point of extending those of which the manifesto writers were not necessarily conscious, such as particular cultural practices in India in the 1920s and 1930s. Surprisingly though, in pointing out what he refers to as the marginalisation of African cinemas by the Latin Americans, he proposes (indeed declares) that Rouch and his film *Moi un noir* (1957) mark the beginning of the emergence of Third Cinema in Africa - a point surely contested by African cineastes.

Still concerned with the lacunae in Gabriel's theoretical exposition on Third Cinema, Willemen then moves on to a summary of Bakhtin's 'theoretical elaboration of the interplay between utterances and their socio-historical settings'. Having done this he arrives at a proposition that Third Cinema is:

> neither of nor for 'the people'...it is a cinema made by intellectuals who, for political and artistic reasons at one and the same time, assume their responsibilities as socialist intellectuals and seek to achieve through their work the production of social intelligibility (Willemen, 1989:27).

Elaborating on the value of outsideness with regard both to Bakhtin and Trinh T. Minh-ha, he concludes with a postulation that the experience of otherness/ outsideness is in his terms, the only vantage point from which a viable cultural politics can be negotiated (in the UK). This is a point to which I will return later in this chapter.

The second paper in the collection called *Questions of Third Cinema* that I will deal with here is by Teshome Gabriel and is called 'Third Cinema as Guardian of Popular Memory:Towards a Third Aesthetics'. This is an especially important paper firstly because Gabriel is confronting the relationship between popular memory and the cinema. This raises questions about indigenous voices in the cinema, and self-representational cinema or performative documentary, in Nichols' terms. In this paper Gabriel makes a distinction between representations of official history and representations of popular memory, within a broad framework that suggests that there are and can be various types of Third Cinema depending on the prevailing social conditions in specific places. This is an important point because it validates the embracing of the term Third Cinema as a means of identifying, naming and claiming a consciously transformative 'space' for cinemas in parts of the world that, at least geographically, would not be defined as being in the Third World. It thus, for example, validates the use of the term in defining black British cinema. In many ways this was precisely the project of the Third Cinema conference and its location in Britain - to consider the relationship between black British cinema and the theory and practice of Third Cinema.

Secondly, Gabriel deals with questions of aesthetics that raise important issues for the conceptualisation of Third Cinema in general. In a section called 'Towards a Third Aesthetics' he examines a number of films and attempts to identify elements of a Third aesthetics as a way of illustrating the potential for Third Cinema to challenge official versions of history, as an 'alternative to Western classical norms': the open-ended narrative; the closed but 'different' narrative that invites the audience to consider one alternative among many; the collective subject giving collective testimony; multiple points of view; participative viewing or critical spectatorship; style that grows out of the material of the film; and the deliberate choice to focus on the story rather than the action - meaning resides in the relation of the work to its situation (Gabriel, 1989:57-59).

In a further section called 'The Aesthetics of Criticism', Gabriel extends his dichotomous critique of the cinema (mainstream cinema vs. Third Cinema) towards a critique of what he calls 'mainstream criticism'. Here, he proposes that criticism generated within the 'semiotic-structuralist' impulse, seems to be located only within the text, thereby diminishing the text's social context and allying itself with official versions of history. He then develops this critique into an exposition of the role of the Third Cinema critic, who should be "aware of the relationship between the work, the society and the popular memory that binds them together" (Gabriel, 1989:62).

It is useful at this juncture to move onto a discussion of the third paper I have selected from *Questions of Third Cinema*, 'The Commitment to Theory' by Homi Bhabha[4]. In a seeming indictment of Gabriel's stance on 'mainstream criticism' Bhabha begins with the following:

> There was a damaging and self-defeating assumption circulating at the [1986] Edinburgh 'Third Cinema' conference...that theory is necessarily the elite language of the socially and culturally privileged (1989:111).

Further than this however, Bhabha's paper, which has since been published more broadly[5], and its inclusion in *Questions of Third Cinema*, marks a point at which questions of identity and subjectivity are consciously integrated into questions of Third Cinema. Two other papers in this collection add to this sense of the integration of questions of subjectivity into questions of Third Cinema - one by Trinh T. Minh-ha called 'Outside In Inside Out', and another by Geeta Kapur on 'Articulating the Self into History: Ritwik Ghatak's *Jukti takko ar gappo*'. This is significant to note because at the next gathering in Britain in 1988, after the 1986

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conference, the slant of the papers presented seemed to be entirely towards issues of identity. So there is a sense in which Bhabha's polemic (and the not so polemical but equally significant further two papers mentioned) opens the way or predicts a trend for extended debates on Third Cinema[6].

Seemingly challenged by his perception of the 'damaging and self-defeating assumption' about theory at the Third Cinema conference, Bhabha's paper develops around a discussion of the role of critical theory, and the role of the Western academy. Bhabha takes the reader through a complex argument based on the premise that the (op)positioning of theory vs. politics, as an essential dualism, is limited. The first section of the paper locates his argument in what I would propose is a politics of theory. In other words, Bhabha claims for himself as the 'committed intellectual' a validity as theorist within the world of politics, or to put it differently, within the work-space of political transformation. How he achieves this is by noting the existence of a discursive hybridity in-between the political polarities of right and left as well as between theory and political practice. He suggests, based on Stuart Hall's ideas, that hegemony implies "a politics of identification of the imaginary" (Bhabha, 1989:114). It is this imaginary that is discursive. Critical theory then, or the act of criticism, needs to engage from the position of this discursive hybrid space rather than from the position of one space or the other. And criticism is then an act of negotiated translation, which transcends essentialist, binarist dualities and moulds itself from within the potentially-transformative hybrid space in-between positions of duality. The problem here is that Bhabha himself is assuming an essentialist position, albeit a new one, in relation to that which he critiques, without enough of an extended explication of his assumption of this position. So for the purposes of his argument the reader is drawn into an acceptance of his perspective, without having enough

[6] No doubt this is also because of the general trend in cultural studies towards questions of identity and subjectivity.

access to the thought processes behind the position he claims for transformative or politically engaged critical theory.

In the second section of the paper again using a complex argument, and again not always with enough lucidity, Bhabha invokes the linguistic notion of enunciation (developed primarily by Lacan although Bhabha does not reference Lacan), implying that it is within an enunciative Third Space that the role of critical theory in the Western academy can be redeemed. The development of critical theory within the acknowledgement of this space may, Bhabha proposes, somewhat idealistically, lead to the conceptualisation of an international culture, with the emphasis on the 'inter', the *entre*, the hybrid space that is neither One nor Other.

Having sketched the basic elements of Bhabha's argument in his paper 'The Commitment to Theory' I will now provide a more detailed presentation of his ideas, since they are the basis of my critical framework in analysing representations of identity and subjectivity in South African anti-apartheid documentary. This will lead into a discussion of the second conference on Third Cinema in 1988, which seemingly developed what Bhabha had begun, since it focused on Third Cinema on the basis of a politics of location, raising questions of identity and subjectivity. I will then return to Bhabha's conceptualisation of hybridity and provide a more specified reading of it in relation to conceptualisations of Third Cinema.

At the outset of 'The Commitment to Theory', aligning himself with those who criticise theoreticism as elitist, Bhabha makes it clear that he is convinced of the legitimacy of representing "the relations of exploitation and domination in the discursive division between First and Third Worlds" and also that "there is a sharp growth in a new Anglo-American nationalism (NATO-nalism?) which increasingly articulates its economic and military power in political acts that express a neo-imperialist disregard for the independence and autonomy of Other

peoples and places, largely in the Third World" (Bhabha, 1989:112). What needs to be looked at anew, he suggests, is whether Western theory - what he calls "the 'new' languages of theoretical critique (semiotic, post-structuralist, deconstructionist and the rest)" (Bhabha, 1989:112) - reflects the geopolitical divisions of First World and Third World and whether its interests are necessarily collusive with the interests of the hegemonic power of the Western bloc.

Taking the "cultural and historical hybridity of the post-colonial world" as the "paradigmatic point of departure" (Bhabha, 1989:113) Bhabha asks: what might the function of a committed theoretical perspective be? In a detailed and complex answer to this question Bhabha firstly spells out the limitations of representing politics and theory as binary opposites: "...there are many forms of political writing whose different effects are obscured when they are divided between the 'theoretical' and the 'activist'" (Bhabha, 1989:113). Rather he proposes that "the language of critique is effective...to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of 'translation': a place of hybridity.. where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the Other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the 'moment' of politics" (Bhabha, 1989:117). Here "the progressive 'reading'...is effective because it uses the subversive, messy mask of camouflage and does not come like a pure, avenging angel speaking the truth of a radical historicity and pure oppositionality" (Bhabha, 1989:118). In this

> heterogeneous emergence...of radical critique...the function of theory within the political process becomes double-edged. It makes us aware that our political referents and priorities - the people, the community, class struggle, anti-racism, gender difference, the assertion of an anti-imperialist, black or third perspective - are not 'there' in some primordial, naturalistic sense. Nor do they reflect a unitary or homogeneous political object. They 'make sense' as they

> come to be constructed in the discourses of feminism or Marxism or the Third Cinema or whatever, whose objects of priority - class or sexuality or 'the new ethnicity' (Stuart Hall) - are always in historical and philosophical tension, or cross-reference with other objectives[7] (Bhabha, 1989:118).

This brings to mind the chief point of Mouffe's paper on 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects' where she proposes that "each social agent is inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations" (Mouffe, 1988:89) and that "each subject position, is itself the locus of multiple possible constructions, according to the different discourses that can construct that position. Thus, the subjectivity of a given social agent is always...sutured at the intersection of various discourses" (Mouffe, 1988:90). Here Mouffe is in fact taking a more complex view than Bhabha of the inscription of the subject within discourse(s), so that as Mouffe would have it the political referents that Bhabha identifies may be/probably would be constructed in the discourses of feminism and Marxism and Third Cinema and so on - giving extended meaning to Bhabha's own point (made above) that the "'objects of priority' of these various discourses" are always "in cross-reference with other objectives".

Bhabha's perspective is one of the "necessity of heterogeneity" (Bhabha, 1989:119), which demands the "'negotiation' of socialist democratic politics and policies", where "there is no given community or body of the people, whose inherent, radical historicity emits the right signs", where there is "no space for the 'unitary' or single political objective which offends against the sense of a socialist *community* of interest and articulation" (Bhabha, 1989:119), and where "there is no simple political or social 'truth' to be learned, for there is no unitary representation of a political agency, no fixed hierarchy of political values and

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[7] This point echoes some of the debates that took place in the *South African Labour Bulletin* in the mid-1980s on worker theatre/media and the 'organicism' of some black consciousness perspectives on literature and theatre: see Sole (1983:37-84) and (1984:54-76).

effects" (Bhabha, 1989:120). For Bhabha, the "'hybrid' moment of political change" is important, where the "transformational value of change lies in the re-articulation, or translation, of elements that are *neither the One...nor the Other...but something else besides* which contests the terms and territories of both". This involves a "negotiation between them *in medias res*, in the profound experience or knowledge of the displaced, diversionary, differentiated boundaries in which the limits and limitations of social power are encountered in an agonistic relation" (Bhabha, 1989:120). Bhabha arrives at this point on the basis of the specific example of the 1984-5 miners' strike in Britain and the women within it. The complexity of the women's testimonies read in *The Guardian* a year later, suggests to Bhabha the impossibility of containing them "simply or singly within the priorities of the politics of class or the histories of industrial struggle" (Bhabha, 1989:120). In effect, the women do not construct themselves within a unitary sense of identity, based on class, but constitute their identities in terms of a hybrid sense of both their class positions and their gender. To dichotomise their identity positions therefore as being either class-based or gender-based is not valid.

Here, it is useful to turn to a similar formulation, this time based on race, in the work of Paul Gilroy and his articulation of race in British working-class politics, and in relation to Marxist theories of the state. In *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987), for example, he argues that the surplus value economy of former economic times, on which Marxism was based, no longer exists. It follows then that the singular, class-based analysis of capital and labour no longer makes sense. For Gilroy, there is a need for theorists to recognise race in analyses of society, to view the class relations of British/English society through the prism of race. For him, race opens up class questions in 'new' ways. He argues that:

> Locating 'race' and racism in a Gramscian analysis based on hegemony poses the question of class in an acute form. It points to a view of class as a complex, multi-determined process in which

> racialization currently plays a key part. The positions of dominant and subordinate groups are ascribed by 'race'. It assigns and fixes their positions relative to each other and with respect to the basic structures of society, simultaneously legitimating these ascribed positions. Racism plays an active role, articulating political, cultural and economic elements into a complex and contradictory unity (1987:29-30).

Further, he invokes Stuart Hall's (1980) statement that "race is the modality in which class is lived" in contemporary Britain and shows how an emphasis solely on the class element of struggle is inadequate. The point here however, and its conjoining with this study is not merely that race needs to be located within analyses of 'struggle' but that "the notion of an articulated ensemble of social relations structured in dominance" (Gilroy, 1987:32), which Hall (1980) proposes, incorporates a shift from perceptions of social relations as being primarily based on economic exploitation to a focus on "the effects of subordination based in forms of power which have at best a partial and ambiguous connection with the extraction of surplus value" (Gilroy, 1987:32). This includes then those 'struggles' more strongly based on gender, sexuality, generation, race and so on. Gilroy does not disregard class within these however, and indeed poses crucially the interrelationship between such struggles and class. In other words, it is the 'ensemble of social relations' (my emphasis) proposed by Hall (1980) that is the central factor. These forms of analysis proposed by Hall and Gilroy relate closely to ways in which Mouffe (1988) proposes the existence of multiplicities of social positions. For Gilroy the miners' strike and the organisation of women in it, reveals how "forms of struggle move beyond the particularity in which they originate" (1987:32), in the same way that Bhabha uses this strike (following Gilroy) to propose that the women's experience revealed "different and more complex" understandings, beyond the politics of class (Bhabha, 1989:120).

Gilroy extends his argument further in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), where, to some extent mirroring Bhabha, he proposes that the challenge for contemporary cultural critics is to choose against 'ethnic absolutism' - the perception, as it were, of blacks and whites as separate cultural entities - and to choose for "the theorisation of creolisation, métissage, mestizaje, and hybridity...the processes of cultural mutation and restless (dis)continuity that exceed racial discourse and capture by its agents" (Gilroy, 1993:2).

Back to Bhabha where, following his analysis of the women in the miners strike, he looks to cultural critic Stuart Hall and his arguments for a counter-hegemonic power bloc (at least in the British political landscape of the late 1980s). Bhabha proposes that for Hall this counter-hegemony might be formed out of the historical experience of fragmentation: a "structure of heterogeneity" (Bhabha, 1989:121) on which to build an alternative, or, to put it another way, fragmentation that would result in the imperative to construct a form of symbolic identification resulting in a collective will. Here the problem is around the 'split subject' or 'divided social movement' that has to negotiate the in-between of hegemony/counter-hegemony, a counter-hegemony that is not yet articulated (as in Williams' concept of 'structures of feeling'). And put from another perspective: how does the (not yet formed) 'collective will' articulate its representative-ness - "stabilise and unify its address as an agency of *representation*, as representative of a 'people'" (Bhabha, 1989:122)? Here Bhabha notes three 'possibilities' (and it will become clear that since they hinge on each other they are both separate and not-separate from each other). The first of these is a glance towards the direction of those whom he appears to be criticising. "Perhaps", he says, "we need to change the ocular language of the image in order to talk of the social and political identifications or representations of a 'people'"(Bhabha, 1989:122). Talking of a 'people' is the kind of position that certain filmmakers and theorists at the Edinburgh conference on Third Cinema, such as Teshome Gabriel, Clyde Taylor and Haile Gerima appeared to occupy. By contrast Bhabha now appears to place himself within this

argument but to occupy a hybrid position. In presenting how this 'ocular language of the image' might be transformed, he both extends this view (the importance of talking of a 'people') or at least pays some allegiance to it while at the same time he averts his glance towards alternative possibilities. So that the apparently limited sociological sense (or what Bhabha calls elsewhere in this paper, "less problematic...theory of cultural and ideological interpellation" (1989:119)) of conceiving of a 'people' is both extended and transcended. The second 'option' he finds 'worth noting' is Laclau and Mouffe's "turn(ing) to the language of textuality and discourse, to *différance* and enunciative modalities" (Bhabha, 1989:122) in their attempts at understanding hegemony. And linked to this he raises a third 'option', which he does obliquely, through Gilroy's discussion of performer and crowd in the performance of black expressive cultures. Here Bhabha notes Gilroy's reference (1987:214) to Bakhtin's theory of narrative and emphasises his use of the term 'dialogic' to describe rituals that involve spectators as participants in collective processes thereby reinforcing a sense of community.

The challenge by implication is how to articulate and represent in recognisable, fixed, stable forms this now fragmented collective will. Pre-empting his own move towards contemporary theories of language, such as Lacan's, what Bhabha does here is to note this challenge and present two examples where similar theoretical stances are invoked, namely Laclau and Mouffe and their interest in enunciation, and Gilroy and his reference to Bakhtin's notion of dialogism in examining a specific form of black culture.

In a theoretical leap that is perhaps too hasty and incompletely explained Bhabha moves on from this point to reiterate his view that politics and theory cannot be separated. In a sweeping final paragraph to the first section of this paper, he incorporates Fanon and Sartre on the separation of the theoretical from the political and aligns himself with Lacan on the lack of fixity in identity. He declares here that he is arguing for a "certain relation to knowledge which...is

crucial in structuring our sense of what the *object* of theory may be in the act of determining our specific political *objectives*" (Bhabha, 1989:123).

In the second part of the paper, in a seemingly further direct response to Gabriel's paper, Bhabha deals with issues at stake in naming critical theory as 'Western'. Critical theory, he proposes, often uses knowledge of the Other in 'strategies of containment' where the site of cultural difference has no space or power: "the Other text is forever the exegetical horizon of difference, never the active agent of articulation". Furthermore,

> it is its *location* as the 'closure' of grand theories, the demand that, in analytic terms, it be always the 'good' object of knowledge, the docile body of difference, that reproduces a relation of domination and is the most serious indictment of the institutional powers of critical theory (Bhabha, 1989:124).

This recalls the discussion on anthropology in the previous chapter of this thesis and also engages a critical space with which other writers/filmmakers were concerned in the collection of papers called *Questions of Third Cinema* (1989). One of these, as I have already mentioned, is Trinh T. Minh-ha, who in 'Outside In Inside Out' takes the position of the unfixed subject and examines the relationship between subjectivity and representation. She makes some crucial points that I will mention here since they refer specifically to the idea of 'hybridity' that Bhabha is proposing and that enrich the present discussion. I am thinking in particular of Bhabha's assertion against binary categorisations of Self and Other, and his proposal of a Third Space that is in-between. Similarly,Trinh T. Minh-ha examines the divide between insider/outsider beyond a binarist perspective. She refutes the essentialism that proposes that only an insider has the legitimate authority to represent the inside perspective. She proposes that this kind of essentialism is rooted in an applauding of realism, a search for the 'truth'. She also refutes simplistic categorisations of subjectivity on dichotomous terms. Her paper seems to repeatedly imply/state the complexity of identity and subjectivity

that cannot separate itself on the simple basis of insider/outsider. "Differences", she proposes, "do not only exist between outsider and insider - two entities - they are also at work within the outsider or the insider - a single entity" (Trinh, 1989b:147). She makes the point that many filmmakers aware of the need for self-reflectivity and reflexivity in filmmaking pay it a kind of surface allegiance by revealing the narrator, the filmmaker, and the natives. For Trinh T. Minh-ha this "practice of subjectivity" is still unaware of "its own constituted nature...its continuous role in the production of meaning...of representation as representation...the Inappropriate Other within every 'I'" (Trinh, 1989b:148). This so-called Inappropriate Other is recognisable, I would propose, as Bhabha's hybrid subject - the Other who is insider on the inside and who when she steps out is no longer merely insider, and who is outsider on the outside but when she steps in is no longer merely outsider. She,

> refuses to reduce herself to an Other and her reflections to a mere outsider's objective reasoning or insider's subjective feeling. She knows...that she is not an outsider like the foreign anthropologist. She knows she is different while being Him...She is this Inappropriate Other/Same who moves about...affirming 'I am like you' while persisting in her difference...reminding herself 'I am different' while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at (Trinh, 1989b:145).

With regard to the debates noted in the previous chapter arising from the practice of ethnographic film, and following Trinh's position on insider/outsider questions, it is valuable to provide some input on what has been called 'indigenous media' or media in the Fourth World. There are a number of important points to be made here. First, the term 'indigenous media' is in itself oxymoronic, as Shohat and Stam point out, on the basis of a paper by Faye Ginsburg (Shohat & Stam, 1994:34). It implies both the self-empowering action of making media of one's own political and cultural persuasion, and an engagement with the often

disempowering media institutions. But having said this there is considerable concern in a range of cinema histories and across a range of countries with the notion of subjective representations of cinema. This refers specifically to the people who are the subjects of media representation gaining access to film training and education, as well as the technological means of production, in order to create images of their own about themselves. It does of course also refer to ways in which images can be created to represent subjective points-of-view, but at the moment I am using the term in the first sense rather than the second. The cinemas that I focus on in this thesis, for example Third Cinema and working class cinema, have grappled with this issue of 'ownership' of the image to very large extents. Similarly, in the South African context, in the development of anti-apartheid cinema and beyond there has been considerable focus on questions of empowerment and access with regard to film and video production. Developments such as the Newtown Film and Television School, for example, are an outcrop of this concern. The second point to be made about 'indigenous media' is that while it may shift relations between a specific community and anthropologists, or filmmakers, it can also create new divisions in the community itself. This links up with Trinh's ideas on insider/outsider. The insider is, in effect, never entirely on the inside, although the views (re)presented may arguably be more located within community experiences than, say, those of an anthropologist, who is more of an outsider, though not entirely so either. The third point to be made, is that 'indigenous media', as a form of media-making, is in the main discussed within the domain of anthropological concerns. Shohat and Stam, for example, indicate that Ginsburg and Turner are the leading analysts of 'indigenous media' (Shohat & Stam, 1994:35) and it is interesting to note here that both are academics in anthropology departments in the USA[8]. In relation to questions of Third Cinema and identity, and in the context of Shohat and Stam's focus on the notion of a

[8] See Turner's (1990) paper 'The Kayapo Video Project: A Progress Report' where he describes his work in establishing the Kayapo 'video self-documentation programme' as a way of "simultaneously supporting and studying the Kayapo struggle..." [my emphasis] (1990:7).

Fourth World, it would be valuable to open up issues arising from 'indigenous media' and its relationship with anthropology/ists, and to transcend its limits into broader cinematic excursions, by considering a new category of cinema called Fourth Cinema. Using Shohat and Stam's definition of Fourth World people as a starting point: "the still-residing descendants of the original inhabitants of territories subsequently taken over or circumscribed by alien conquest or settlement" (Shohat & Stam, 1994:32), Fourth Cinema would be positioned to consider questions of 'indigenous' cinema alongside colonial and post-colonial histories, which in the African context (along with other contexts) could yield formerly uncharted results.

To return now to Bhabha's paper: he pursues his questions of subjectivity to extend into questions of the Western academy, and its potential for transformation, by noting the distinction to be made between the "institutional history of critical theory and its conceptual potential for change and innovation" (1989:124). This possibility for transformation may come from looking at the "continual reference to the horizon of Other cultures" (Bhabha, 1989:125) as 'ambivalent' - it is a sign that "such critical theory cannot forever sustain its position in the Western academy as the adversarial cutting edge of Western idealism" (Bhabha, 1989:125). So that what is needed is a "different engagement in and with the politics of and around cultural domination" (Bhabha, 1989:125). Two points, Bhabha proposes, will make this clearer. Firstly, a recognition that many of these post-structuralist theories are themselves opposed to Western Enlightenment humanism and aesthetics. Secondly, "we must rehistoricise the moment of the 'emergence of the sign', or 'the question of the subject', or the 'discursive construction of social reality'" (Bhabha, 1989:125). And, says Bhabha, the only way to do this is to "relocate the referential and institutional demands of such theoretical work in the field of cultural difference - *not cultural diversity*" (Bhabha, 1989:125). Bhabha uses an historical colonialist text to illustrate how the process of translation [here he means discursive translation] "is the opening up of

another contentious political and cultural site at the heart of colonial 'representation'" (Bhabha, 1989:126). So, for Bhabha, cultural diversity "is an epistemological object - culture as an object of empirical knowledge - whereas cultural difference is the process of the *enunciation* of culture as 'knowledge*able*', authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification" (Bhabha, 1989:126). So the focus for Bhabha is on "enunciation" - where "the act of cultural enunciation - the place of utterance - is crossed by the *différance* of writing or *écriture*" (Bhabha, 1989:128). This is to do with the 'structure of symbolic representation' which ensures that "meaning is never simply mimetic and transparent" (Bhabha, 1989:129). Here Bhabha refers to what he calls the ambivalent Third Space of enunciation, the space between "the subject of a proposition (*énoncé*) and the subject of enunciation" (Bhabha, 1989:129). The 'temporal dimension' implied by this enunciative split is especially important, since it challenges the Western notion of history as homogeneous. In Bhabha's words: "It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised, and read anew" (Bhabha, 1989:130). Thus for Bhabha, the way to conceptualising an *inter*national culture, "based on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" is to remember,

> the 'inter' - the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between*, the space of the *entre*...that carries the burden of the meaning of culture...it is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this 'Third Space', we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves (Bhabha, 1989:131).

To refer back then to Willemen's scene-setting paper at the beginning of the book *Questions of Third Cinema* it is interesting to note that he frames his conclusion in

terms that are like Bhabha's notion of the '*entre*' but with a specific focus on Third Cinema in Britain. He notes that the in-between position of being both 'other' and being 'in and of' the culture at the same time is the place where "social intelligibility thrives, at least as far as socialist cultural practices are concerned" (Willemen, 1989:28). So for Willemen, the fact that black filmmakers in Britain have negotiated "the problems involved in otherness as a positional necessity (which) is the precondition for a critical-cultural practice" (Willemen, 1989:28) is significant. But he does not stop here, rather he draws further conclusions about the relationship between Third Cinema and cinema in Britain, by mentioning the work of some individual filmmakers that appear to be made from the position of inhabiting the in-between cultural space he has described. In this vein he further proposes that "theoretical-critical work also needs to address its Englishness, its parochial limits, its ethnocentricity and insularity" (Willemen, 1989:29). In this sense the notion of Third Cinema is useful for infusing debates within Britain with a sense of the relationship between 'the social' and the cinema, as well as for its 'otherness' as a challenge to 'the English Ideology'. Although Willemen's interests here are clearly towards a socialist cultural practice in Britain he is here in a sense representing what some critics have voiced as their concerns - that Third Cinema might be 'kidnapped' and appropriated into the First World, thereby reinforcing and colluding with the economic hegemony that exists in the world already. If Bhabha's more sophisticated and complex representation of the in-between is to be the basis of an exploration of Third Cinema and its usefulness then at least as a starting point the reciprocity that the in-between invokes needs to be examined in any specific example. Thus using Willemen's own example of the work of black filmmakers in Britain he might have examined not only how Third Cinema is something to be learned from and about as an 'otherness' (which he implies is not English), but how the work of black filmmakers in Britain may be seen as extending and developing already-conceived and already-received notions of Third Cinema. So that the concept itself is not perceived as a static one, but one that is dynamically available for, as Bhabha might suggest, rehistoricisation. No

doubt such an exercise raises to the surface a range of problematics - and this is precisely what the concept of the in-between, in my view, demands. An acknowledgement of the in-between, or more fundamentally its inhabitation as the very space from which to propose meanings, makes the discursive negotiation and translation that Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' proposes inevitable. And this means a commitment to raising problematics, within a recognition of the unfixity of history, and the fluid, dynamic nature of culture.

I shall return to a critical discussion of Bhabha's proposition of a discursive Third Space later in this chapter, after explicating some of the issues that emerged in and from the presentations and discussions at the second conference on Third Cinema held in 1988. These issues help highlight the problems with which Bhabha is grappling.

Shifting Debates: 1988 and Beyond

Questions of Third Cinema was published in 1989, the same year that a collection of papers and reports of discussions held in the second conference in Britain dealing with Third Cinema was published in a special issue of the journal *Framework*. The accounts of this second conference seem to confirm that the direction for conceptualising Third Cinema in the late 1980s in Britain was focused closely on questions of identity[9]. In opening the first session of the conference, one of the organisers, John Akomfrah, made the point that in the previous three years in England there had been an attempt to 'place' black film and Third World film and that Third Cinema had been the way of doing this. He proposed however, that the certainty of place, location and subjectivity with which the term had originally been inscribed could no longer hold and proposed that the aim of the conference was to 'return' to third cinema with uncertainty in mind.

[9] There is a great deal of slippage in identifying the location(s) of discussions on Third Cinema in Britain, which relates to its own politics of space. The specifics of this conference are that it took place in Birmingham, England, as part of the Third Cinema Focus of the Birmingham Film and Television Festival.

That uncertainty for Akomfrah, was what he called the 'dark side' of Third Cinema's rhetoric as a point of departure for "a re-examination of location and subjectivity" (Akomfrah, 1989:6). There was however an added complexity to the conference proceedings since it seems that each presenter had been asked to address her/himself to a quote by Adrienne Rich proposing the importance of 'location' and to questions around it[10]. I will highlight here some of the key elements raised by the papers presented, in an attempt to provide an overview of how the concept Third Cinema was re-elaborated in this particular conference around questions of 'location' - or the specificity of subjectivity.

The first paper by Coco Fusco is called 'About Locating Ourselves and Our Representations'. She begins by criticising the framing of the conference with the Adrienne Rich quote as an 'odd beginning' for the conference, and makes the point that it both alludes "to the priviledged (sic) location of the white Euro-American subject, while emphasising the limits of white middle-class feminism" (Fusco, 1989:8). Other speakers at the conference also pick up this point which I will refer to later.

Fusco proposes that to avoid complex issues pertaining to the use of concepts that refer specifically to race or ethnicity she intends to use the term 'subaltern'. Her interest is in what she calls 'subaltern media'[11] reflecting specifically upon Latin

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[10] The full quote is:

> (There is an important) need to examine not only racial and ethnic identity but *location* in the United States of North America. As a feminist in the United States it seemed necessary to examine how we participate in mainstream ...cultural chauvinism, the sometimes unconscious belief that white North Americans possess a superior right to judge, select and ransack other cultures, that we are more "advanced" than other people of this hemisphere...It was not enough to say 'As a woman I have no country; as a woman my country is the whole world'. Magnificent as that vision may be, we can't explode into its breadth without a conscious grasp on the particular and concrete meaning of our location here and now... (Akomfrah, 1989:5).

[11] The concept of 'subaltern media' is however a contradiction in terms: oxymoronic like the term 'indigenous media', referred to earlier in this chapter. It implies some form of ownership of the media or, at least, access to the media by the subaltern. But the term 'subaltern', and its usage, emanating from within studies of colonial history in India, precludes such a sense of ownership on

American cinema and the questions it raises for a 'politics of location' in the cinema. In relation to the regard paid to Third Cinema in conferences in the US and England she proposes that there has been a tendency to romanticise Latin American films and critical perspectives: "to salvage them as the least corrupted vestiges of new left radicalism" (Fusco, 1989:9). On the contrary they were, she proposes, fragments that had conditions of production in common rather than style or theme. For the most part they involved men from middle and upper class elites, whose sense of oppression was global and political not local or sexual. Their work was made known mainly through European film circuits rather than in the audiences they declared to be their focus[12].

Fusco also points out some of the significant ways of thinking about cinema in this period (1960s and 1970s) as exemplified by the work of the Latin American filmmakers and critics. They were aware of the necessity of a multi-dimensional critique and the effect of Hollywood's dominance; they addressed race through class and class through race and understood how colonialism and capitalism bound the two, but they almost always forgot about gender; they thought about cinema in relation to audience; they confronted the ethical issues of exposing the experience of one sector of society to another (those audiences that could afford to attend the cinema); they espoused a variety of attitudes towards mainstream

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the part of the subaltern: see Spivak's (1988) paper 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Guha and Spivak (1988) *Selected Subaltern Studies*; and Spivak (1989) 'Who claims Alterity?'. On the other hand, Fusco's use of the term 'subaltern media' has a polemical edge to it, precisely because of this contradiction in terms.

[12] In general terms this may be true, but the point raises a number of issues. Firstly, the political nature of the films themselves meant that they were either banned or that it was dangerous to screen them publicly under the repressive regimes of many of the Latin American countries. Secondly, this in turn raises questions about the distribution of Third Cinema films in the specific communities within which they were/are made. Thirdly, the generalisation of Latin American cinema prevents a closer look at specific countries and places. For example, Sanjines in Bolivia worked very closely with specific local communities and accomplished, in some measure, the creation and screening of films within these communities: "sometimes the peasants took the initiative of projecting the film to other peasants...during these showings, we experienced the phenomenon of cultural identity. The film really was appropriated by them; it was no longer a technical product made for them which they considered strange and intrusive" (Sanjines, 1987:159).

narrative as a viable form avoiding conflation with the forms of Hollywood. Fusco notes that Third Cinema has changed considerably since it was first formulated in the 1960s and that limited access to Latin American cinema since then has contributed to the sense that the New Latin American cinema is the sole point of origin. She then presents a critical argument against the seeking of an original, genealogical moment that makes it possible to equate a contemporary cinematic practice with the Third Cinema of the 1960s, which is a crucial point for this thesis:

> This need to establish a tradition connects with a desire, sometimes latent, sometimes apparent, to conceive of the aim of critical discourse as the locating of third cinema's essence in a particular text, or kind of text. Sometimes the evaluation of a film's relation to third cinema relies on the ethnicity and sexuality of the film's director more so than on addressing third cinema as a network of relationships between conditions of production, visual strategies, subject matter, audience, and the larger political context, a network that shifts as the film travels from one place to another. We get stuck trying to fix the meaning of a text and that text to a certain maker. This kind of enquiry participates in the old, and quite futile search for the truly radical film produced by the truly radical subject which is supposed to catalyse the truly immanent revolution (Fusco, 1989:11).

Making the point that subaltern media needs to be looked at within a critical discourse that integrates all aspects of production and reception, Fusco identifies some of the key issues for such a critical discourse: the role of the critic; the interpolation of subaltern media - how and why subaltern media are appropriated by the dominant media; the theorisation of subaltern spectatorship and the experience of watching subaltern cinema; the theorisation of subaltern spectatorship - how different films draw on the psychic resources of several

experiential categories; the theorisation of subjectivity in relation to political cinema, especially with reference to individual agency and desire (Fusco, 1989:13-14).

bell hooks, in the second paper called 'Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness', starts from a personalised perspective - "'the politics of location' necessarily calls those of us who would participate in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practice to identify the spaces where we begin the process of revision" (hooks, 1989:15). The first of those 'spaces' that hooks identifies is that of language - language chosen to speak about location and how that can be the oppressor's language and can also be black vernacular speech.

hooks then reflects on a film called *Freedom Charter*[13] and in particular the statement that recurs in the film: 'our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting'. For hooks this statement represents "a politicisation of memory that distinguishes nostalgia, that longing for something to be as it once was, a kind of useless act, and that remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present" (hooks, 1989:18). Based on this sense of the statement hooks traces back her life to her choice to leave 'home' proposing that "home is no longer just one place" (hooks, 1989:19) but that it becomes 'locations', a place of fragmentations, where 'frontiers of difference' are discovered. She examines also the experience of entering universities as 'poor black folks' whose presence is a disruption, yet in this 'other' space there is a sense of isolation and aloneness, and who "invent spaces of radical openness...a margin - a profound edge" (hooks, 1989:19). She confirms her point that she is in a sense celebrating her location in the margin, not wanting to move away from it, not wanting to be in the centre, because the space

[13] hooks does not note the film's date. It could be 1986, if it is a film produced by a company called Terra Vision, (listed in the Filmography in *Movies - Moguls - Mavericks*, 1992:D-31, as "a media analysis of the Freedom Charter") or 1980, if it is the film called *Isithwalandwe: The Freedom Charter*, produced by the International Defence and Aid Fund, (listed in the same Filmography, 1992:D-43 as "the story of the ANC Freedom Charter as told by those who struggled for it".

of the margin is the space of radical possibility, of resistance, not forgetting that it is also the site of repression.

In the report of the discussion that followed these two papers some interesting comments emerged. One of them which is useful to note at this juncture was made by Coco Fusco and relates to reflections on cinema in South Africa. Speaking about the binarism that she had alluded to in her paper - that a text is seen as either a text of resistance or a failed text - Fusco proposes that critics need to recognise and accept ambiguity, accept texts that have no answers. The search for the definitive revolutionary text which Fusco discusses matches some of the debates that have taken place in South Africa[14]. The point can be taken further than Fusco does however, since it is not only critics that need to accept ambiguity, but also filmmakers, who might not only accept it but work with it and consider consciously inscribing their films with ambiguity.

There were two further papers of the Third Scenario conference presented in the *Framework* issue on the conference. The first of these by filmmaker Laleen Jayamanne, explored her forthcoming film projects, which I will not dwell upon, other than to mention, in the context of subjectivity, that she presented herself as originally from Sri Lanka, "operating in a state of displacement and I do not see that as an impoverishing or marginalising thing" (Jayamanne, 1989:34). This may well be because of her middle-class background, by her own admission, which enables her to "...straddle two worlds (traditions) with a certain degree of comfort or a quite tolerable degree of discomfort..." (Jayamanne, 1989:34-35).

The second of the final papers was presented by Michelle Wallace. Her approach was primarily to debate the quote by Adrienne Rich presented to the conference

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[14] To a large extent, *Mapantsula* (1988) was seen as the truly South African film: see Maingard (1994:235). Similarly, the documentaries of Video News Services were seen to be the representations of South African realities defining the revolutionary 'moment'.

participants, and to represent her need to dislodge its validity since, for her, Rich represents the disjuncture between "...white mainstream academic feminism...and a marginalised, activist-oriented black feminism..." (Wallace, 1989:48). For Wallace, subjectivity and location is 'schizophrenic' - "it is more than one process, more than one location, perhaps three or four, none of which necessarily connect in a self-evident manner" (Wallace, 1989:49).

In these four papers from the Third Scenario conference, a useful identification of different ways of perceiving subjectivity emerges, partially fuelled by responses to the quote from Adrienne Rich. These range from the ambiguity proposed by Fusco, across the duality of hooks' perspective - the margin as a place of both oppression and resistance, to the ease with which Jayamanne 'straddles two worlds' and the 'schizophrenia' which defines identity for Wallace.

In the introduction to the last two papers, reported in the journal, Stuart Hall confirms the validity of this range of perspectives on identity when he implies that questions of identity, subjectivity and place have become more complex than they were previously. He notes that in earlier discussions on Third Cinema or Third Scenario "it seemed appropriate simply to locate oneself in some space outside that thing called the west, as it were, and that would give us our identity" (Hall, 1989a:32). In a paper included in this issue of *Framework* (though not presented at the conference) called 'Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation' Hall (1989b) extends this position in a discussion of two ways of seeing cultural identity, which I will expand on briefly here since it is valuable to this discussion. One way which he argues cannot and must not be underestimated is to perceive cultural identity as a binding, unifying force in the lives of (a) people, as exemplified by post-colonial struggles. This kind of cultural identity he equates with national identity. The second way of perceiving cultural identity is in terms of difference - the discontinuities of the diasporic experience. And here he makes clear that he is not referring to the sense of diaspora that holds up a homeland as

the sacred point of origin to which its scattered peoples must return, rather he is defining diaspora in terms of heterogeneity, identity formed in difference, by hybridity. In relation to the cinema then, Hall is proposing that new (in this case Caribbean) cinema needs to recognise the ability of representation not only to reflect common cultural identity but also to participate in the active, dynamic transformation of identity in difference - "allowing us to see the different parts and histories of ourselves" (Hall, 1989b:81). Bhabha too, in 'The Commitment to Theory' proposes the value of both these positions, although his paper largely explicates the latter view.

To develop this further: the dominant thrust of his 'intervention' in the form of the paper 'The Commitment to Theory' at the Third Cinema conference in Edinburgh is to represent questions of cultural identity from a perspective that incorporates discourse and language, from a psychoanalytic point of view, in the very construction of identity. So that, although he pays allegiance to the all-embracing sociological and contextual perspectives on identity that writers/filmmakers like Gabriel, Gerima and Taylor propose, he approaches the concept 'third' from outside of its meanings in the elaboration of the concept 'third cinema' especially in relation to the early formulations of Solanas and Getino. Their formulation was to propose 'third' in opposition to, or different from, 'first' and 'second'. It was a proposition that was strongly if not completely located in the Third World. The concept 'Third Cinema' was therefore most specifically forged within a geographically defined framework. The socio-political and economic conditions of that framework were also specific to its formulation as a revolutionary, militant, experimental, 'poor' cinema.

Bhabha's formulation of 'third' on the other hand derives from the 'Third Space' of enunciation. This is not a geographically located space, in the naturalised sense of geography, but is rather located in the 'geography' of language and discourse. It is the Third Space that is constructed in the relationship between enunciation and

that which is enounced, in the almost indefinable space between the 'I' of enunciation and the 'I' of that which is enounced. Since the 'I' of enunciation is unconscious and the 'I' of that which is enounced is conscious it is the space that is created in a mix of subjective consciousness and unconsciousness, in an in-betweenness, a hybrid space, sometimes called the split subject or the divided subject. So although the term 'third' looks the same, the signifier is the same, in both Bhabha's formulations and the formulations of Solanas and Getino, and those who later reproduced their formulations in different contexts, the derivations of the term in each set of formulations are entirely different. The same can be said of the term 'space'. It implies a definable geographical location but in Bhabha's usage of the term that definability (or indefinabilty) is concerned with subjectivity in discourse, and the relationship between the unconscious self and conscious self, in representation. The extrapolations from this theory into cultural representation is what becomes significant for a discussion of Third Cinema. And this is where the polemical approach of Bhabha's paper has the potential to make its mark.

To clarify now how this Third Space that Bhabha proposes is defined in cultural terms: what he proposes is that in cultural enunciation it is not the content of the enunciation that is significant so much as how that enunciation is made - the structure of symbolic representation or symbolisation itself. So that the act of cultural enunciation - the place of its utterance - is 'crossed' by its writing or *écriture*. This difference/*différance* is what constitutes the Third Space of cultural enunciation, and ensures enunciation's lack of transparency or mimeticism, a point which relates back to the discussion in the last chapter on realism. In this construction of difference, and how meanings are made, there is further confirmation that sign and referent cannot equal each other, can never mirror each other. Meanings can never be absolute or determined - they are in(de)terminably infinite. For interpretation of meaning(s) requires a "passage through a Third space" (Bhabha, 1989:129), where the utterance itself and its context are locked in a binding relationship. And that context is not one that can be read off enunciation

for it is unrepresentable though discursively present. It would seem that in this formulation of the unconscious subject of enunciation it is not merely a psychological construct but one that is socially determined, and that therefore has multiple contextual strands embedded within it.

In Bhabha's conceptualisation of this Third Space cultural meaning(s) then, as well as cultural acts, are derived from engagement with this uncertain ambivalence within which history cannot be a fixed, unified entity. And so concomitantly the conceptualisation of 'a people' fixed in time and space in the (r)evolutionary order of things, that is invoked by some writers/filmmakers in the 'tradition' of 'Third Cinema' cannot hold. Although Bhabha initially indicates his respect for this position his paper arrives at a clearly and significantly different point in his interpretation of 'third'. Yet both formulations are significant as Stuart Hall (1989b) makes clear.

Bhabha's argument is encapsulated in his final sentences where he talks about 'Ourselves' and 'Others', each of which in hybridity move beyond their uniqueness so that "we may emerge as the others of ourselves" (1989:131), as he puts it. This points to the 'problem' with the concept of 'hybridity': it implies a binarism that limits conceptualisations of identity to a dual positionality only, conscious/unconscious self, self/other, and so on, while it is the multiplicity/ies of identity/ies that is surely at the basis of an examination of identity and representations of identity, certainly in the South African context, but also arguably anywhere in the world.

Having spelled out some of the explorations of the concept 'Third Cinema' (as well as the use of the concept 'third' in some of these debates) especially in the records of its re-elaborations in the British context, it is useful to turn some of these questions to the South African example with which this thesis is most concerned.

Theory and Anti-apartheid Documentary

As I noted in my Introduction to this thesis there are different approaches to analysing South African anti-apartheid documentary film and video as a 'movement' - by examining individual films as specific examples, by examining the films of particular organisations that were established, and by tracing the work of specific filmmakers. My approach in this thesis is to examine specific exemplary texts but not entirely with disregard for the organisations within which they were made nor the filmmakers who made them. The theoretical developments and their histories examined in these first two chapters open up the terrain for analysing South African anti-apartheid documentary film and video within a framework that encompasses issues and debates in documentary film theory and practice and in Third Cinema theory and practice, as well as contemporary concerns with questions of identity and subjectivity that both these fields are now embracing or into which they have moved.

The chapter on the histories of documentary film and the issues and debates that emerge in looking at these histories provides a theoretical umbrella for my critical analysis of documentary films. It establishes an historical basis for placing the documentary film and video developments that I analyse, framing my analysis with the issues identified in that chapter pertaining primarily to the relationship between documentary film and realism. Within this broad framework specific concerns with the relationship between documentary film and historical reality, and the ability of documentary film to represent the magnitudes of the world in which we live despite its seemingly inherent miniaturising abilities, are significant.

Since South African anti-apartheid documentary was consciously made within a specific political ideology, albeit a broad one, that framed the texts that were produced, it lends itself to analysis on the basis of questions of magnitude. This is where Nichols theoretical work is so important because he is strongly focused on

the ways in which documentary texts break the boundaries of convention or practice that miniauturise the historical realities that are represented. His question about the ways in which documentary film can function to represent the full dimensions/magnitudes of our lives and facilitate praxis - a certain sense of agency - in the spectator, is a deeply crucial one in projecting towards the future, and especially a post-apartheid, democratic future. South African anti-apartheid documentary represents a particular narrative of apartheid and of its resistance and as such it is in itself selective of particular events, people and processes. No single cultural form is able to express the full experience of apartheid although specific representations may seem to fulfil a sense of the totality of the experience (for a specific audience). Documentary film however, unlike fiction film, claims a certain access to reality. As we have discussed this is one of the key issues in debates about documentary film. Reality is so contested an issue that on the one hand its representation cannot stand for reality itself. Yet on the other hand, because documentary film represents reality or aspects of reality so directly it is often perceived to be reality itself. The potential for documentary film to represent truth(s) therefore needs to be noted here since this feature is significant in analysing the meanings that South African anti-apartheid documentary has produced about apartheid. In a major sense, this issue relates to the representative-ness of documentary subjects and subject matter (as well as who makes documentary).

In addition, because of the shape of political developments in South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s and the concomitant need for identifying and defining political positions, anti-apartheid documentary film can be seen to have been 'burdened' with the need to be representative. The films of one organisation, Video News Services (VNS), exemplify this documentary approach. In the films made in the mid to late 1980s VNS tended to use representatives of workers such as union organisers and shop stewards to speak on their behalf with images of mass meetings to verify and illustrate the point being made. The documentary

Compelling Freedom (1987) exemplifies this. Here, individual workers are not represented as speaking subjects but are rather spoken about in representative terms by union officials.

As we shall see, in my discussions of the notion of the 'speaking subject' later in this thesis, questions of who speaks? and how? are complex, especially in relation to the 'voice' of the text. The fact that a subject speaks, does not necessarily empower her/his position as subject within the text. Isabel Hofmeyr's (1995) work is instructive in this regard. Although she is writing about the relationship of oral testimony to written documentation, there are important parallels and resonances with the 'spoken word' in documentary, especially those documentaries that purport to ascribe agency to the subject through her/his oral presentations, as a 'witness-participant', to use Nichols' word. In (Southern African) historiography, Hofmeyr proposes, the 'oralness' of the evidence, is valorised and privileged as "the pure and authentic essence of national cultures" (1995:16). She extends this further to comment upon how there has been some virtue in extending written histories with spoken ones. There is an especially strong conjoining of her perspectives with those of the present study where, writing about the 'audacious example' of the oral worker life histories of the 1970s and 1980s, she asserts that:

> Often presented as the spontaneous words of workers themselves despite the manifest degree of mediation in transcription, translation, editing, and printing, these books claim a special authenticity *because* they are based on the spoken word (Hofmeyr, 1995:20).

The incorporation of the 'spoken word' into anti-apartheid documentaries might be seen as operating in a similar fashion. As a specific strategy of representation it certainly relies on the idea that the words of the subject him or herself carry weight. It is also proffered at times, by its very absence and the fact that others speak on behalf of the ordinary worker or person, as a more valid strategy of

representation. But this view in itself needs problematising, as Hofmeyr proposes. She presents her argument on the privileging of orality as a 'wailing for purity', where orality is perceived as representing a non-literate perspective of reality, and in so doing it is a reflection of a voice untainted by the written word, the media, literacy, and so on. It is in these terms perceived to be, and used or appropriated as, a 'genuine', authentic, 'pure' voice. Furthermore, the effects of strategies that shape these kinds of oral texts, for example selection, editing, and narrative interventions, are not taken into account in this perspective of orality.

This view strongly matches considerations of the 'speaking subject' in anti-apartheid documentaries. In the VNS documentaries for example, the words of the 'speaking subject' are used precisely in the way that Hofmeyr describes oral histories: to authenticate the representations of the working class that the 'voice' or ideological statement of the text seeks to convey. What becomes important in these instances is to unravel how these purportedly 'genuine' subjective experiences are used within the context of the text's other strategies of representation; in other words, the incorporation of the 'pure' voice of the 'speaking subject' can be analysed both as a strategy of representation in itself and in combination with the other strategies that a text displays. This is the kind of analysis that is presented in Chapter Four on the VNS documentaries. In the *Ordinary People* series, oral testimonies are incorporated into the documentaries in much larger measure than in the VNS documentaries. This strategy authenticates the 'ordinariness' of the subjects themselves. As in the VNS documentaries this subjective 'ordinariness' is entrenched because it is both a conscious strategy in its own right and it is combined with a range of strategies of representation, such as the narrativising of each documentary and the use of hand-held cameras following each subject. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

To continue the discussion on representative-ness: ironically, documentary film has also been constructed and 'read' as being representative even when it purports

to represent 'ordinariness'. The documentaries in the *Ordinary People* series are an example of this. The farmer in the documentary *Tooth of the Times*, is forcefully represented as an individual in his own personalised human circumstances, but is constructed, and therefore 'read', as being like many other white farmers by the voice-over narration at the beginning of the film. The policeman in the documentary called *The Night Shift* is 'read' as representing all (white) policemen and his representation as being kind, helpful and non-violent is open for questioning by audiences. The divide between the personal and the political, which was so strongly represented in the VNS documentaries of the 1980s has given way to an integration of the two in the *Ordinary People* series of the 1990s. This series seems to suggest to viewers that the stark categories of the political struggle of the 1980s now have to be re-examined and new forms of identifying people and processes have to be tested. In this regard, the *Ordinary People* series could be seen as making visible Mouffe's conceptualisation of subjectivity as multiple.

Here it is useful to add to the theoretical framings already presented and to examine some recent theories of African identity and their implications for a study like the present one. The work of Mudimbe and Appiah, and others like them, may be seen as incursions into questions of African philosophy, and concomitantly deep and serious questions about the foundations of epistemology and their relationship to colonialism, modernity and post-modernity in Africa. For my purposes, I am concerned more directly with the questions of identity that these writers raise.

It is not difficult to see how the work of these two writers relates to the theoretical framework I have developed thus far. Identity, on the basis of the work I have presented, cannot be singularly defined. It is rather a more 'incoherent' construct: multiple, plural, hybrid, fluid, flexible, unstable. Bearing this in mind, the following comment from Mudimbe will confirm the importance of his work for an

examination of questions of identity: "identity and alterity are always given to others, assumed by an I- or a We-subject, structured in multiple individual histories, and, at any rate, expressed or silenced according to personal desires vis-a-vis an *episteme*" (1988:xi). My emphasis in this quote from Mudimbe highlights his view that identity is 'structured in multiple individual histories', a position closely aligned to that of Mouffe. Put differently, identity in this formulation is not a homogeneous, singular cons[illegible] Appiah's formulations on identity in his book *In My Father's House* (1992) a[illegible]iar. Based on his primal experience of the multiplicities of identity abounding 'in his father's house', and confirmed by his ongoing experiences of multiplicity in his own and extended family, Appiah argues that "every human identity is constructed, historical; ...invented histories, invented biologies, invented cultural affinities come with every identity; each is a kind of role that has to be scripted..." (Appiah, 1992:174). He follows this statement with an argument that explicates the importance of his central position that: "...an African identity is coming into being". Further, that "...this identity is a new thing...is the product of a history...and that the bases through which it has largely been theorized - race, a common historical experience, a shared metaphysics - presuppose falsehoods too serious for us to ignore" (1992:174). He reiterates this point later in defending his position against what he calls the 'mystifications' of Pan-Africanism and black solidarity, and it is the mystifications that he positions himself against not Pan-Africanism or black solidarity *per se*. This reiteration reads thus: "...it is clear enough that a biologically rooted conception of race is both dangerous in practice and misleading in theory: African unity, African identity, need securer foundations than race" (Appiah, 1992:176). In essence his goal is to achieve an 'intellectually, reinvigorated Pan-Africanism' that makes Africa a 'usable identity', in the sense of political citizenship and human rights, if I read his examples correctly, in other words: "not to forget that all of us belong to multifarious communities with their local customs; ...not to dream of a single African state and to forget the complexly different trajectories of the continent's so many languages and cultures" (Appiah,

1992:180). And to layer this further, and in a conceptualisation of identity that can be seen as closely related to Mouffe's notions of identity, Appiah states that: "in this world of genders, ethnicities, and classes, of families, religions, and nations, it is as well to remember that there are times when Africa is not the banner we need" (1992:180).

Mudimbe too suggests that "the concept of race is now generally considered an ideological trap" (1988:132), but in effect this is not the primary subject of his book *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (1988). Rather, as the title implies, his focus is, broadly, African philosophy: "the foundations of discourse about Africa" (1988:xi). But Mudimbe has been noted for his writing because of its implications for knowledges of African identity. 'Identity' itself is cited only four times in the index, yet he himself notes his commitment "not to philosophy, nor to an *invented Africa*, but to what it essentially means to be an African and a philosopher today" (1988:xi). This is no doubt a reference to himself and his own identity positionalities and the concerns that come with it, but as the book explicates his journeyings through the philosophical inventions of Africa, it becomes clear that Mudimbe, like certain other theorists on identity, does not hold with singular conceptions of identity, that position themselves on one or other side of a binary divide. He writes for example that:

> Because of the colonializing structure, a dichotomizing system has emerged, and with it a great number of current paradigmatic oppositions have developed: traditional versus modern; oral versus written and printed; agrarian and customary communities versus urban and industrialized civilization; subsistence economies versus highly productive economies. In Africa a great deal of attention is generally given to the evolution implied and promised by the passage from the former paradigms to the latter (Mudimbe, 1980). This presupposed jump from one extremity (underdevelopment) to

the other (development) is in fact misleading (Mudimbe, 1988:4).

He returns to this notion of misleading binary oppositions in his conclusion when he asserts that the "static binary opposition between tradition and modernity" cannot be justified. (Mudimbe, 1988:189). For Mudimbe, tradition is not static, but is a "part of history in the making" in that it means "discontinuities through a dynamic continuation and possible conversion of *tradita* (legacies)" (1988:189). There is in other words no 'pure' past.

What then are the implications of these concerns for the present study and for my theoretical framings of identity? First, they are written with a specific and conscious focus on Africa thus adding a particularly localised (albeit that Africa is arguably a large locale) framing of questions of identity. Second, in the writing of two significant theorists on African philosophy and identity, complex, multiple conceptualisations of identity are proposed. Third, notions of Africa that are binarist or essentialist are refuted, thus supporting the framework I have already developed based on Bhabha's notions of a Third Space, an in-between, and Mouffe's notions of imbricated positionalities. The excursions I have made into the writings of Hall and Gilroy, based on experiences and conceptualisations of identity in the diaspora, are also complemented by Appiah and Mudimbe's work. This is not to propose a water-tight theoretical framework, where there are no contradictions, but rather in the space that I can make to explicate my framework, it is useful to show how lines can be drawn between different theorists, from at times rather vastly different positionalities themselves.

I shall return now to the discussion about anti-apartheid documentary film and video, and its development into a series called *Ordinary People* that represents identity as multiple, as unfixed, and then conclude this chapter by tying it up with the theoretical focus I have explicated based on identity as multiple, hybrid, in-between. Those issues raised, in these two chapters, about subjectivity and identity

in documentary film, both theoretically and in contemporary documentary film practice, are extremely significant. As my examples show, these two areas of concern - exposing or representing magnitudes, and subjectivity and identity - may also be seen in relation to each other. So that whatever subjectivity is represented and how it is represented directly impacts upon the ability of a particular text to open up the magnitudes of the historical reality with which it is concerned. Certainly, this is implied by the 'journey' that Nichols' theoretical work has taken. His most recent focus on performative documentary and 'auto-ethnographies' strongly develops this idea. This kind of analysis needs to deal with questions like: who speaks? for whom? how? for what purpose? and what kinds of 'voice' (in Nichols' sense of the word) are projected? Since 'voice' is concerned to a large extent with the filmmaker's ideological positioning within the text, this analysis in effect needs to encompass references to the filmmakers themselves.

With respect to the questions such an analysis evokes, an overview of the period with which I am dealing indicates that the making of South African anti-apartheid film and video was mostly the domain of (white) male filmmakers[15]. On the other hand, looking at the development of anti-apartheid documentary from another perspective, the subjects (and subjectivities) least represented are black, rural women - the most marginalised grouping in society. The 'voicelessness' of the subaltern[16] in this context needs some focus. Film and video educational programmes have begun to recognise the need to extend access to resources through affirmative action policies, but the largest impetus for the use of media to empower the subaltern in our context is coming from initiatives to develop community radio. The conceptualising and practice of 'subaltern media' however needs elaboration, particularly in relation to identity and subjectivity and the mediation of the spaces inhabited by the subaltern.

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[15] I make this point cognisant of its generalised nature, and without intending to diminish the work of female filmmakers and black filmmakers. Nevertheless it is a point that needs to be made.
[16] In relation to the cinema specifically, Fusco (1989:9) proposes the use of the term 'subaltern media' as discussed earlier in this chapter.

I am using questions of identity and subjectivity therefore as a way into thinking about or theorising around both the subjects and the subject matter represented in South African documentary, since these cannot be separated. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to focus in depth on the filmmakers themselves, although this will be necessary at times since representation is so strongly determined by the representer - he or she who has access to the means of production.

Contemporary debates in documentary film suggest that Chantal Mouffe's (1988) conceptualisation of the multiplicity of subject positions has relevance for analysing South African documentary film and video. As already noted, for Mouffe individuals are inscribed within multiple subject relations by the numerous discourses within which they exist. The value of this theoretical position for analysing South African documentary is that it opens up the possibility of new terrain for identifying who is represented in documentary films and by whom. To lay out the trajectory of documentary film and impose on it various subject positions that include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, space or geography, leads to significant discoveries about the representative-ness of South African documentary, and to its ability to open up questions of magnitude.

Although I am not primarily concerned with the filmmakers themselves it is important to dwell momentarily on this aspect of anti-apartheid documentary film and video. For one of the ways in which Mouffe's work on multiplicity is valuable is that it explains how the anti-apartheid documentaries of the 1980s were in large measure an expression of political ideology, a Marxist cinema in a sense, regardless of the filmmakers' own subjectivities based on race, class or other positionalities. In effect their ideological positioning was the subjectivity from within which they made their films. Certainly, however, textual analyses can and, as we shall see, will reveal how the various films work to represent the subjectivities of their subjects. To prescribe a necessary link though between who is represented and who does the representing is not entirely possible nor viable, as

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989b) confirms. But the important point to be made here is that the binding common feature or common subjective position of anti-apartheid filmmakers and their subjects was one that was based on political ideology - in the main the power of the black (usually male) working class within the Mass Democratic Movement aligned with the African National Congress to unite against apartheid and to achieve its end.

The fact that the majority of South African documentaries have been made by white males, or within collective situations where white males have been the majority is not insignificant, most especially because it raises questions about privilege and access. The identity position of 'white male' does not necessarily (and indeed cannot) encompass the total complexity of an individual's subject position.

Here Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity' is valuable since, despite its binary connotations, in Bhabha's explication it embraces the multiplicity of subject relations that Mouffe proposes. It reiterates the imbrication of one subject position with another/others that Mouffe implies, providing an all-encompassing and complex notion of identity and subjectivity. This is a theoretical position that relates strongly to the 'hybrid' nature of South African experience and that identifies what might seem to be the project of the series *Ordinary People* - to represent the 'hybridity' of South African identities. Nevertheless to accept theoretical work that sits comfortably with the cultural form being analysed does not necessarily provide all the answers and can in itself become an exercise in masking theories that might sit *un*-comfortably with the work being analysed but that need or warrant exposition. One of these theoretical positions that on many levels mitigates against the notions of both multiple subject positions and hybridity is the concern of some cultural theorists at the seemingly easy appropriation of critical perspectives that entrench the notion of multiplicity within identity at the expense of national, international and indeed global

movements for transformation. In particular this relates to the work of African-Americans and black people in the diaspora to represent the unity of their struggle against Western imperialism and colonialism. The conceptualisation and re-conceptualisation of Third Cinema, and the debates surrounding it, raises this issue very strongly[17]. In the South African experience of cultural work, one in which very little scholarship has emerged, we need both to apply theories developed within the West and to find and apply theories derived from subjectivity under colonialism in other parts of Africa and the world and from the experiences of marginalised people who have life experiences similar to those of South Africans, particularly those based on race, in building towards and writing new theoretical work within the South African context. And this is the important point - *that new theoretical work on identity and subjectivity, and specifically strategies of representing identity and subjectivity, needs to be written from within the South African context (and indeed the African context).*

In this sense the work of Appiah and Mudimbe that I have presented is especially important. Future studies on African identity and its representations need to build on the foundations that these writers have laid, and expand the critical value of their work, in application specifically (but obviously not only) to questions of representation. Using the theoretical framework discussed in these two chapters my focus for this thesis is on strategies of representation, with reference to identity and subjectivity based on close textual analyses of selected South African anti-apartheid documentary films and videos. The relationships between the texts themselves and their makers, the organisations within which they produced the work, and the political, ideological and theoretical frameworks within which they were located and by which they were influenced will be noted but will not be the

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[17] See Taylor (1987) to whom I referred earlier in this chapter with regard to his accusation of the 'kidnapping' of the concept 'Third Cinema' by 'first world' theorists and critics. See also Taylor (1989) on questions of aesthetics exemplified by the following quote: "Afro-modernist cultural discourse refuses the confinement to detailed study within the established, Eurocentric narrative of human culture and inaugurates the reconstruction of its own" (1989:103).

chief focus of the thesis. In other words, while text and context are inextricably linked, my primary focus will be on the texts themselves, using the theoretical framework defined in these two chapters. But before getting there, there is one more piece of the framing 'puzzle' that needs to be put in place, since I am primarily focused on strategies of representation. I am referring here to a(nother) marginalised cinema, the working class cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, which highlights what we could have learned from what was already (radically) there.

Chapter Three

Working Class Cinema in the 1920s and 1930s

In the history of world cinema there is another cinema which, like Third Cinema, has been called 'revolutionary'. This is the 'movement' that developed on the basis of the growth of communism in the (then) USSR in the 1920s and 1930s, predating Third Cinema by forty to fifty years. It was a response to the "call...for a world-wide proletarian cinema, for a mechanism to produce, distribute, and exhibit leftist films and to counter the Hollywood-dominated cinema of capitalism" (Kepley, 1983:7). Like Third Cinema it has been largely disregarded in film histories, a point noted by many writers who have attempted to chart the history of this field of cinema. Bert Hogenkamp, for example, in 'Workers' Newsreels in the 1920s and 1930s' writes that the existence of the workers' film movements in the 1920s and 1930s "has been ignored by the standard works of bourgeois film historians" (1977:1), and Vance Kepley Jr., comments that: "The history of the American and European cinema of the 1920s...stresses the growth of the Hollywood industry..." and "a full history of the period should also record the efforts...to resist the dominant trend and to establish alternative cinema organizations" (1983:7). The same criticism holds for film histories in specific countries, for example, Bruce Murray laments the 'lack of attention' to films of the left in accounts of German film history (1990:4).

There are two primary reasons for my focus on this cinema in this project on South African anti-apartheid documentary film and video: first, that it was a cinema born of revolution, or at least the desire for revolution; and second, that multiple strategies of representation are evident in this film 'movement'. A third reason for examining this part of film history relates to organisational issues and questions which it raises, but

this is a rather tangential reason for the present project. Future studies in this area would be valuable for the continued development of a national cinema in South Africa in the new democracy of the 1990s and beyond 2000. My intention here is to describe this film 'movement' in some detail, touching on key developments in different countries. I will simultaneously sketch some of the strategies of representation employed in selected films that formed part of this 'movement'. The films made can be described as both fiction and documentary, and some films employed the conventions of both, thereby blurring the boundaries between them, in Nichols' terms. In most instances there was a mix of forms and this chapter therefore reaches across newsreels, documentaries and fiction film.

Soviet Antecedents [1]

I have already noted that this cinema was broadly defined as 'revolutionary' cinema, but it was in fact more specifically a cinema of the proletariat, a working class cinema - at least that was the intention, and in this sense the work of Video News Services in South Africa, which I will examine in detail in the next chapter, resembles it. But let us go back to the Soviet Union in the 1920s where the 'story' begins[2]. In August 1921 the Executive Committee of the Communist International (Comintern) met to deal with the crisis in the Soviet economy - which had resulted from the destruction of

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[1] I have developed the summary that follows from a number of sources relying primarily on the following authors: Hartsough (1985), Kepley (1983), Murray (1990), and Welch (1981).

[2] It is convenient for the purposes of narrating history to ascribe a 'beginning', but like all histories, the 'beginning' of this history is not necessarily at one moment in time. Some historians of working class film refer further back to earlier developments. David Welch writes about the short 'revolutionary' films made by German commercial film companies in response to the demands of the working class in 1918-1919 (1981:5), and Hogenkamp ascribes a beginning, at least to the documentary newsreel which was to become an important feature of worker film organisations, to the "quality of actuality" of the first films of the Lumière brothers in the late 1800s (1977:2). History, even if perceived in individual moments, is complex and the summary here is of necessity a sketch, in line with the purposes of this thesis, while I am aware of the 'reduction' of complex factors, especially political ones, in presenting a summary like this. For this reason and as far as possible I provide further references to enable the reader to derive more detailed explanations.

capital equipment in the Russian civil war and a severe drought and subsequent famine - and Lenin's appeal for foreign aid. The Comintern responded by voting for the establishment of a Foreign Committee for Workers' Relief. It set up affiliated committees in a number of countries, and took the title *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe*: in English, Workers' International Relief (WIR)[3]. Willi Münzenberg, a young German activist[4], was appointed through Lenin's personal initiative to head the WIR in Berlin[5]. Under his leadership, the WIR which began as a small committee grew into "a world movement which claimed 18 million members and status as the largest international proletarian organization" (Kepley, 1983:7)[6].

The aim of the WIR was, according to Murray, "to create an alternative to the dominant sources of news and entertainment, to inform Germans about the cultural changes in the Soviet Union, and to nurture the development of a proletarian culture in Germany" (1990:3). In fact the WIR's work expanded far beyond this through the affiliate committees it established in a number of countries, including France, England, the United States and Japan (Kepley, 1983:8), but more Soviet films

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[3] I shall use the term Workers' International Relief since this is the title used by the majority of writers. Note, however, that it is also referred to as International Workers' Aid (IWA) - see Welch (1981) and by the initials from the German title, IAH - see Hartsough (1985) and Murray (1990).

[4] Münzenberg is also described as a "communist-entrepreneur" (Kepley, 1983:7). Kepley notes further that he was associated with Rosa Luxemburg's Spartacist League and that he had helped run the Youth International of the Comintern (1983:8). Murray describes him as "an extremely talented media man" (1990:3).

[5] The reasons for the choice of Germany as a base for the WIR are too detailed and complex to include here. For some detail on this see Hartsough (1981:131) and the references she cites (1981:145, fn.3). See Murray (1990:39-42) for detailed discussion on debates in the *Proletkult* on the relationship between art and politics, which influenced the cultural developments in the Soviet Union in the early 1920s and in Germany at the same time. Hartsough (1985) thematically traces how the cultural work of the WIR was responsive to political debates and decisions from 1921 to 1933, especially in the Comintern and the German Communist Party (KPD). This was the political and cultural context within which the WIR was formed and developed its cultural activities.

[6] This is the way most texts describe the establishment of WIR. Hartsough however puts it in more detail: "At the 1921 meeting of the Congress of International Communist Youth, Lenin requested the members to aid drought victims in the Ukraine and along the Volga. The executive committee of the congress placed Willi Münzenberg in charge of a relief program, which became the IAH" (1985:133).

circulated in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s than in any other country outside the Soviet Union (Hartsough, 1985:131). The WIR's focus on film as a political instrument for the development of working class consciousness was due in large measure to the views of Münzenberg and 'his associates', as Murray puts it. Münzenberg believed that: "it is a punishable crime to allow bourgeois and social-democratic concerns to monopolize the media for influencing public opinion without a struggle...everything must be done to break this monopoly" (Murray, 1990:112), and Clara Zetkin, described as a 'fellow Party leader' by Hartsough, "saw film as a way the IAH could rouse the international proletariat to awareness of its duty to support the Soviet Union" (Hartsough, 1985:133).

WIR's first film venture was in 1921 when, combining the need to raise money and to develop worker consciousness, Münzenberg "calculated that the public exhibition of films about the Soviet famine would generate contributions while increasing worker empathy with the Soviets" (Kepley, 1983:9). Through *Sevzapkino*, the then-strongest studio in the Soviet film industry, WIR secured foreign rights to two productions, one of which, *Infinite Sorrow* (1921), dealt with the famine (Kepley, 1983:10). Before the end of the year WIR had commissioned original productions on the famine, and WIR representatives worked with Soviet camera operators on two documentaries: *Hunger in Soviet Russia* (1921) and *Starvation Along the Banks of the Volga* (1921) (Kepley, 1983:10). Both films premiered in Berlin in 1922 (Murray, 1990:52). In this year Münzenberg, "after conferring directly with Lenin" (Kepley, 1983:10), established a permanent cinema department attached to WIR, called *Aufbau, Industrie und Handels A.G.* or simply *Aufbau* or AIH (as it is called in the literature)[7]. Later, in 1924, WIR

[7] *Aufbau* was in fact a corporation formed in terms of what Kepley calls Lenin's semi-capitalist New Economic Policy (NEP) (1983:11), which encouraged foreign investment. Through *Aufbau* WIR purchased capital equipment, acquired and managed farms and factories, and reconstructed damaged buildings (Kepley, 1983:11) but more importantly for this analysis it invested in the Soviet film industry by purchasing and supplying film equipment - reportedly 80% of the industry's new cameras -

joined a pre-revolutionary film studio in the Soviet Union, called *Rus'*, and established *Mezhrabpom-Rus'*, with *Aufbau* and *Rus'* each owning 50% of the shares (Kepley, 1983:12). The aim was "the joint production and similarly the joint exploitation of cinematographic pictures" (Kepley, 1983:12). While Kepley proposes that the reason for WIR's move to establish a studio was to help revive the Soviet film industry, wider and more complex reasons are proposed by both Hartsough and Murray[8]. In charting the company's history, Kepley identifies the following points:
1. The company used the talents of important directors such as Protazanov and Pudovkin, and initially concentrated on popular genre and entertainment films;
2. It developed effective marketing strategies, being the first Soviet studio to create a press bureau to publicise its films;
3. It integrated vertically - with production facilities in Moscow and Leningrad, a widespread distribution network, and ownership of three of the largest, most profitable commercial theatres (Kepley, 1983:13).

In these ways the company was serving the needs of the industry. Meanwhile to counter criticisms of 'nepism' - that it was profiteering under the New Economic Policy (NEP) - the company also funded an 'agit-steamer' used to take cinema and cultural activities into remote areas, and produced agitational works (Kepley, 1983:13). Ultimately WIR purchased all the *Rus'* shares in the company and removed

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and raw film stock (Kepley, 1983:11-12).
[8] One of the reasons was to ensure a steady supply of Soviet films, which promoted the proletarian cause (Hartsough, 1985:134). Münzenberg had accepted the KPD's (German Communist Party's) position that proletarian cinema could only be made in a state where the proletariat governed, that the efforts of the proletariat needed to be focused on the material base. For details of the KPD debates on proletarian cinema see Murray (1990:39-53). It was only later when the KPD's position changed that Münzenberg promoted proletarian filmmaking in Germany itself. Another possible reason was German film censorship in this period, which would have inhibited the development of filmmaking (Murray, 1990:48).

all the *Rus'* administrators (Kepley, 1983: 13)[9]. It funded research into film sound and continued to make revolutionary films by Pudovkin and Vertov (Kepley, 1983:14).

Germany

In 1927 the German Communist Party (KPD, *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*), at its Eleventh Party Congress, changed its political strategy instructing its members to "join existing organizations to build a Red Front in opposition to the dominant cultural institutions in Weimar society" (Murray, 1990:112). This opened the door for the WIR to produce films in Germany. In 1925, after the Weimar government had revised its contingency laws, which now meant that only those companies that distributed German films in Germany could distribute foreign films, the WIR merged with a small production company, and formed *Prometheus*[10], which enabled it to continue its distribution of Soviet films in Germany[11]. The first film it distributed was Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). It was first screened in Germany at a closed screening in Berlin in January 1926 to commemorate Lenin's death, but the censors prohibited public screenings. There was an outcry including "a wave of protests from well-known intellectuals, artists and political activists" (Murray, 1990:121). Murray goes so far as to propose that the attention the film attracted was less to do with the film itself and the marketing of the "tiny, inexperienced Prometheus" than with "the coverage...received in the press, the endorsements of famous personalities, and even the repeated intervention of censors" (Murray, 1990:121). This was to be one of the most important films distributed by *Prometheus* to workers' film organisations in other parts of the world.

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[9] The reasons for this 'take-over' are that the so-called 'dedicated communists' were concerned at criticisms being levelled that the operation was capitalist, being still under the influence of the bourgeois *Rus'* management (Kepley, 1983:13).
[10] The company's full title was: *Prometheus Film-verleih und Vertriebs-GmbH.*
[11] See Murray (1990:112 & 121) for details.

Alongside the establishment of *Prometheus*, the WIR established the *Film-Kartell "Welt-Film" GmbH* (*Weltfilm*), to produce and distribute non-commercial films. According to Murray, it distributed a small number of socially critical mainstream films, but relied mostly on distributing Soviet and *Prometheus* films. It produced about thirty short documentaries (Murray, 1990:197). Some of the titles include: *Twelfth Party Congress of the KPD in Berlin* (1929), *May Day in Berlin* (1930), and *Red Sport in Pictures* (1930). These documentaries promoted the leaders of the KPD and the WIR (Murray, 1990:194). Here, by way of comparison witth developments in worker cinema in other countries, it is important to note that documentaries made in England and the United States in the 1930s also focused on May Day and worker gatherings. Furthermore, in terms of the focus of this thesis on strategies of representation in South African documentary, it is worth noting that in South Africa in the 1980s documentaries made by VNS also used images from similar kinds of events in promoting the ideological perspectives of COSATU workers.

With regard to strategies of representation, it is useful to note that Murray differentiates between this type of documentary and "more extensive documentaries (that) opposed dominant ideological perspectives with Marxist analysis" (Murray, 1990:196). The example he points to is the film called *Contemporary Problem: How the Worker Lives*[12] (1930) which was directed by Slatan Dudow, who was to collaborate with Bertolt Brecht in making the first German proletarian feature film, *Kuhle Wampe* (1932). Murray's critique focuses on the film's "omniscient inter-titles and simple juxtaposition of contrasting images" (1990:196). He notes for example how "a selection of close-ups depicting the exhausted, sad faces of individual workers follows a sequence in which masses of workers leave a factory" (Murray, 1990:196). This was a strategy used in workers' newsreels, documentaries and fiction films in

[12] The German title is: *Zeitproblem: Wie der Arbeiter wohnt.*

other parts of the world in the 1930s and it is arguably influenced by the Soviet cinema of the time. Since *Battleship Potemkin* was widely seen in Germany and in other parts of the world, it is not surprising that directors of worker films 'copied' Eisenstein's dialectical film form, which relied on the juxtaposition of images[13]. In *Battleship Potemkin*, for example, the Odessa Steps sequence builds its dramatic structure on the juxtaposition of close-ups of the terrified faces of the citizens of Odessa with long shots and wide shots of the broader scene.

A further strategy in *How the Worker Lives*, was the use of fictional re-enactments. One of these is the police eviction of a family. The effect, according to Murray, was "to establish class distinctions, evoke sympathy for the poor, generate disdain for the rich, and encourage spectators to reject existing authority" (1990:196). Murray's position on this strategy seems to be based on an unrealistic elevation of documentary 'objectivity' since he notes that "while claiming all the objectivity of documentaries, it incorporated staged scenes...", as if 'staged scenes' might taint the objectivity achieved by conventional documentary imagery. His critique is aimed however not so much at the strategies themselves but at their effect on spectators in supporting KPD and WIR leaders and their views (Murray, 1990:196-197). His primary critique is that *Weltfilm*, producer of this documentary, "encouraged spectators to rely on authoritarian direction" (1990:197). This perspective ties in with Murray's overall critique of this period of cinema, which he makes repeatedly - namely, that the leaders of organisations like the KPD and the WIR, never encouraged the critical interest of workers themselves (Murray, 1990:10 & 237).

There are just three films made by *Prometheus* that promoted the critical engagement of working class audiences, as far as Murray is concerned. These are: *One + One* =

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[13] In his discussion of film criticism in the KPD Murray in fact notes how the Soviet films were praised and perceived as superior to German films of the period (1990:116-117).

Three (1927), *The Living Corpse* (1929) and *Kuhle Wampe*[14]. All three films are based on two hallmarks which Murray identifies as being central to the filmmaking ventures of *Prometheus*: authenticity and typicality. Their films aimed at showing the living conditions depicted on the screen as the way in which the working class (which included the unemployed) really experienced life - hence authenticity, and the characters they portrayed were intended to be typical of working class people (or for that matter the bourgeoisie or the authorities). But the reasons for the special place Murray accords these films is that they disrupt narrative cohesion and draw the spectator into critical engagement with the film itself - they "experiment seriously with alternative narrative codes that encouraged audiences to exercise emotional and intellectual skills by participating in the production of their ideological orientation" (Murray, 1990:224). The films also accomplished popular success at the box-office (to greater or lesser degrees), so they were not only ideologically successful but were beginning to show radical filmmakers how to make films that could combine a critical ideological stance with commercial success - a 'beginning' that history was to bring to an abrupt closure.

Of the three films *Kuhle Wampe* can be seen as most successful at the level of spectator engagement because it incorporated a philosophy of participation in its production processes, by linking up with the Communist-led Fichte Sport Club that enlisted the support and participation of others, amounting to over four thousand people (Murray, 1990: 218). For Murray it therefore "provided the most advanced model for radically democratic film production and reception before 1933" (1990:224). If this is so, then its place in the history of working class cinema is most significant. The implications of Murray's statement are far-reaching. 'Radically

[14] The corresponding German titles for the first two films are: *Eins + Eins = Drei* and *Der Lebende Leichnam*. The title *Kuhle Wampe* refers to the name of a tent colony outside Berlin where the unemployed could live cheaply in the summer.

democratic film production' implies both a democratic process in the making of the film and the inscription of democratic ideals in the significations of the film. As regards the process of production, Murray, for example, notes how 'the collective' brought together not only Brecht, whose work in the theatre had already incorporated notions of collective responsibility, but also Eisler, who, "was the leading KPD proponent of a radically democratic alternative to traditional forms of artistic production and reception" (1990:218). On the level of significations, we shall see shortly in my detailed analysis of the film, how it consciously inscribed specific strategies to propose democratic, working class orientated perspectives of German society at the time. The collective processes of making the film and its propositions for democracy, are intimately tied to its reception. Since thousands of young people voluntarily devoted themselves to involvement with the film, notably members of the Fichte Sport Club (Murray, 1990:218), their 'spectatorship' was already ensured by virtue of their participation in the film's making, while that participation in itself is intricately woven into the film's meanings. The fact that Murray calls this film 'the most advanced model' for this type of filmmaking, makes it a very significant film for the study of working class cinema in its time and place, but also beyond that. As we shall see later in this chapter, there are examples of working class cinema from other countries that appear to break boundaries, especially on the level of aesthetics and, sometimes, on the level of production, es. *La Vie est à nous*, made in France, in 1936, is one example here. *Kuhle Wampe* therefore provides a valuable point of comparison with such films. Furthermore, this historical focus and background on questions of aesthetics, production and reception, adds substantial texture to critical perspectives of South African working class cinema in the 1980s. This point will be developed in the next chapter[15]. *Kuhle Wampe* was the last film in which *Prometheus*

[15] It is especially for this reason that it warrants critical attention in this thesis. I have been able to view an original 35mm. version from the National Film and Television Archive at the British Film Institute in London, which gives me a more critical perception of writings about the film and the film itself.

participated before its demise in 1932 and before Hitler came to power in 1933. It was directed by Dudow (who had earlier directed *How the Worker Lives*), and was written by Brecht.

The film is characterised by its epic narrative structure, which had already in the early 1930s become a significant feature of Brecht's theatre work. It is divided into four sections, each with its own title: 1. One Unemployed Less; 2. The Best Years of a Young Person's Life; 3. Sincere Congratulations; and 4. The Dark Streets of Embattled Cities[16]. The titles act both as descriptions of each section of the film, and also as critical commentary of what the viewer can expect to see, and does see, in each section. For example, the title 'One Unemployed Less' is the comment of one of the women onlookers at Franz's suicide, which occurs after he has been unable to find employment and has been berated by his parents. The comment, and especially the status it is given by using it in titling the first section, entrenches the link between Franz's suicide and the social condition of unemployment. This is also reinforced by the images of the first section. It is not only Franz who is seeking employment. Hundreds of people are in the same position. This is confirmed by the use of images of newspaper headlines on unemployment, as well as images of men on bicycles, including Franz, speeding through the streets attempting to get to each factory before all other work-seekers. Noteworthy here is the framing and composition of the close-up shots of bicycle wheels that are juxtaposed with wider shots and long shots of the race through the streets. This strategy is one that repeats similar juxtapositions in Soviet films and worker documentaries. A further noteworthy point is that *The Road to Hell* (1933), a socialist film made in England a year later, repeats this plot in that the son who is unable to find employment commits suicide.

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[16] These English-version titles are taken from the English subtitles to the film.

Like the first title, the second title, 'The Best Years of a Young Person's Life', is a comment from one of the onlookers. This time it informs the viewer's consideration of the events that follow, acting as a critical juxtaposition to the social conditions which are revealed in the second section - the eviction of the Bönike family due to rental arrears, indicating that "the cliché can be false" (Murray, 1990:221). Using the titles in these ways the viewer's emotional engagement with the narrative and the film's fictional characters is temporarily suspended while simultaneously engaging her or his critical judgement.

The film's political value is clearly its ideological perspective which favours and promotes the working class over the bourgeoisie, and critiques German society at that time. This macro-narrative is given shape through the exposition of the micro-narrative which depicts specific characters and follows them from a beginning through to an end, flirting with narrative conventions but never allowing audiences to succumb uncritically to the pleasures of the narrative text. The strategies employed to achieve this are multiple. The epic narrative structure and the use of titles for each section within this structure is one of these, but there are others that interlock with this one. I have already alluded to the use of images of newspapers that are intercut within the fictional narrative sequence. A similar strategy is used in the sequence where Mr Bönike is reading out aloud from the newspaper to Mrs Bönike who is meanwhile adding up food expenses. The voice-over of the 'Mata Hari' story becomes a juxtaposition with the images that are presented from Mrs Bönike's point of view - the images she apparently has in her mind - of food and their prices. Where the earlier use of newspapers had highlighted unemployment, the use of the newspaper in this sequence highlights the irrelevance of the mass media for the working class - although in a limited way, since it locates the concern over food prices with the woman. The stronger critique here is that it reinforces the need for worker consciousness since Mr Bönike is oblivious to Mrs Bönike's concerns, even

raising the newspaper so that she is entirely out of his view, as he becomes increasingly seduced by the newspaper story. This sustains the earlier view of his lack of consciousness when he is shown drinking beer in a bar. Murray's perspective here is similar. For him, the content of the newspaper story juxtaposed with Mrs Bönike's concerns with food costs, represents the film's critique of mass entertainment in Germany at the time, and the capitulation of the working class to its attractions (Murray, 1990:221-222).

Another sequence which represents non-diegetic imagery to highlight a character's point of view is when Anni, who is pregnant, and Fritz, her lover, go for a walk. As they pass a group of schoolchildren the sequence cuts to a montage of images superimposed over the image of her walking. This montage sequence includes images of babies, doctors' rooms, medicine bottles and medical records, her brother's body after the suicide, the coffin, and dolls in a shop window. This 'impression' of Anni's perspective contrasts with Fritz's response that he wants his freedom, when his friend proposes that he marry Anni. It also gives some context to the fact that Anni wants an abortion. There is complexity here for this sequence has a number of effects: it interrupts the narrative flow thereby preventing the viewer's uncritical response; it gives an interior perspective of Anni's character and her psychological state (in a similar way to the sequence when her mother is worried about the cost of food) which both explains her abortion and engages the viewer's ongoing interest in the micro-narrative; and it challenges the irresponsibility of Fritz - which sets the scene for his later interest in the socialist views espoused by Anni's friends.

The strategies in the last section of the film owe much to Brecht's experience in the theatre. First, the spectacle of the sports event is visually powerful - this is where the four thousand-plus recruits perform in the film, but the theatrical elements are most

visible in the performance of an agit-prop theatre group[17] at this sports event, and in a discussion on the tram between young people from the event and some of the passengers. The agit-prop theatre group mimes a repeat version of the events that have led Anni to this point in her life - the family eviction. This time however the family questions the right of the landlord to evict them. This theatrical 'insert' uses the real-life experiences of the working class and produces an enacted critical response.

The discussion on the tram is the final sequence of the film. Here, the film represents the bourgeoisie in stereotypical individuated characterisations. A man is reading from a newspaper about coffee plantations being deliberately burned in Brazil. This sparks a response from Kurt, one of Anni's friends. A discussion ensues, with the various bourgeois characters giving their views. Through the derisive responses of the young workers from the sports festival the film maintains its working class perspective. The discussion becomes a debate about how the world will be changed and Kurt makes the final comment that it will be changed 'by people who don't like it'. The combination of a number of strategies in this sequence works to both entrench the film's perspective and to encourage viewer participation. It is, in other words, both a constructed and complete scene that further validates the meanings the film has already produced, and a scene that invites the spectator to form his or her own opinions as if he or she were a participant in the discussion itself. This is achieved by:

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[17] The group is called *Das Rote Sprachrohr* (Summary: National Film and Television Archive, unpubd.). According to Murray there were other 'leftist' theatre groups and agit-prop groups involved in 'the collective' that created the film (1990:218). Murray uses the term 'collective' in his analysis of the film and its processes of production. Although he does not make it clear that the term comes from Brecht he implies this when he writes: "According to Brecht, as the collective grew, the interaction of its members became at least as important as the product of their efforts" (my emphasis) (1990:218 & 270, fn.30). This notion of the production collective is an extremely important one for it represents one of the strategies for engaging viewers in the production of meaning. Whether the collective incorporated members of the working class *per se* is difficult to ascertain, but what seems certain is that the filmmakers created a participatory model for radical filmmaking.

1. The setting, which is one part of the tram filled with young workers from the sports event and passengers who are identifiably different. This makes it possible visually to represent individual comments and accompanying close-up shots. The effect is that the spectator 'feels' as if she or he is present, as the camera moves from one person to another.
2. The stereotyping of the passengers already on the tram, whose bourgeois characteristics are highlighted by the fact that all the young workers are dressed in sports clothes, having come from the event - so the difference between the two 'types' is easy to see.
3. The discussion itself, which is open-ended, and which is performed in naturalistic style, oblivious of the camera. This is an engaging strategy for the spectator, whose own judgement on the discussion is invited. And we shall see how important this strategy is in respect of our discussion of South African anti-apartheid documentaries in the chapters that follow. Here, and I am thinking particularly of the VNS documentaries, the emphasis is on binding the ideological workings of the documentary into a pre-conceived ideological framework that does not allow for the kind of open spectator engagement that is seen in *Kuhle Wampe*.

Clearly then these theatrical elements, in *Kuhle Wampe*, are not there for their own sake. Rather they represent carefully positioned representational strategies that advance the micro-narrative, because the characters we have come to know through the narrative cohesion that is present, are always in the images. But more importantly these strategies create a symbiosis between the micro-narrative and the contextual macro-narrative. The macro-narrative therefore becomes part of the diegesis, and so cannot be ignored by the viewer.

To summarise: the strategies of representation in *Kuhle Wampe* are aimed at authenticating its depiction of the realities of working class experiences, and

portraying its characters who develop the narrative as typical of workers in general. The film achieves this by disrupting narrative cohesion and thereby drawing the spectator into critical engagement with the film itself. The film's epic narrative structure is one of the ways this occurs, each section having a title which both describes and comments critically upon the events that follow. Other ways are: inserts of non-diegetic imagery such as newspaper headlines; visualisations of characters' points of view, used as juxtapositions with diegetic events; an agit-prop theatre performance; stereotyped images of the bourgeoisie; and selective use of camera shots such as close-ups, and choices in framing and composition. The overall effect of these strategies is to bind together what I have called the micro and macro narratives of the film, so that the spectator is constantly engaged in critical evaluation and judgement at both levels within the framework of the film itself. This is a framework which relentlessly challenges the spectator to produce interpretations that will transform the realities of the working class. Yet the film offers no conclusive argument towards this transformation. In this sense it is a "partially programmed ideological viewpoint" (Murray, 1990:221) which the viewer is invited to complete.

On the broader scale of the development of a proletarian cinema, even the successful films of *Prometheus*, (*Kuhle Wampe* being the most successful), represent a relatively limited intervention in the growth of this cinema. The combination however of the production and distribution of films is really where the significance of this work based in the USSR, the WIR and the KPD lies, specifically with regard to working class film programmes in other parts of the world. Before I expand on these and their relationships with WIR, I will present a summary of another significant piece of the history of German working class cinema in the 1920s for the present study. This was the film programme that emerged from within the Socialist Party in Germany (SPD).

It was the SPD that first attempted to make and distribute "indigenous working class films" (Welch, 1981:6) as early as 1922, when the *Volksfilmbühne* (People's-Cinema-Theatre) was established[18]. It began to show short documentaries at worker events, and produced two films: *The Forge* in 1924, and *Free People* in 1925[19]. Both films were critically and commercially unsuccessful for reasons which, according to Welch, highlight the ambivalence of the SPD (1981:6) around representing the inequalities in German society on the basis of class. The plots of the films illustrate this. The ending of *The Forge* uses the natural phenomenon of a storm to facilitate unity between striking and non-striking workers and save the company. It is the factory ultimately that is more important than the workers (Welch, 1981:6). For Murray, the storm acts as a *deus ex machina* which reduces the conflict between the striking workers and their employers (Murray, 1990: 100). In *Free People* romance between a teacher with social-democratic ideas and the landowner's daughter, who is inspired by his ideas, is the basis of the story. The film ends with an international demonstration for peace led by the couple (Welch, 1981:6). Welch, noting that these were described as "proletarian super-productions" (1981:6), comments that they were "fundamentally reformist" (1981:6) but that their failure was more to do with the SPD's acceptance of the status quo for, like the commercial filmmakers, the SPD "consciously ignored the manifestly obvious connection between the living conditions of individuals and the phenomenon of the proletarian mass" (1981:6). This is confirmed by Murray's comments that these features were "far less than revolutionary" and that "they assimilated existing standards of production and reception" (1990:100-101).

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[18] Welch notes that it was established by the SPD "in conjunction with socialist trade unions" (1981:6), whereas Murray proposes that it was formed by "a number of union groups in Berlin" (1990:33). For details of its principles and reasons for its failure see Murray (1990:33-34).

[19] The German titles of these films are: *Schmiede* and *Freies Volk*. In the filmography attached to Welch's paper (1981:17), the producer of the second film is named as *Veritas Film GmbH*, Berlin, and of the first film 'probably' the same company. There is one mention of this company in Murray (1990:99). I have not found any other references to it in the literature available to me, but presumably it was one either established by the SPD or one with which it was associated.

In 1925 the SPD established an organisation called *Film und Lichtbilddienst* (FuL) which successfully produced and distributed films[20] (Murray, 1990:101-102). Its productions included short animation films, documentaries and election campaign films for "internal use" (Murray, 1990:102). Its two most 'impressive' films, according to Murray, were *In the Beginning was the Word* (1928) and *Full Speed Ahead* (1928). *In the Beginning was the Word* is a "dramatic documentary" which reviews the socialist press from 1848 to 1928 and which "established an authoritarian relationship with spectators that in no way encouraged their self-initiative in producing an ideological viewpoint" (Murray, 1990:103-104). It uses 'techniques' like inter-titles and the juxtaposition of staged scenes with documentary scenes to present its subject matter as ideologically authentic (Murray, 1990:104). *Full Speed Ahead* followed the development of one urban working class family to demonstrate the achievements of the SPD from 1880 to 1928 (Murray, 1990:104). Its effects for audiences were much the same as with *In the Beginning was the Word*, also using inter-titles to convey its authenticity but relying more on montage sequences. The characters who represent the film's ideological stance are so-called "traditional figures of authority" (Murray, 1990:107). This underlines the critique of the SPD films as 'reformist', which, according to Murray, in themselves created an over-reliance in audiences on the authority of the text (1990:107).

Without access to the films it is difficult to derive a clear picture of how they worked, while it is valuable to note the strategies they used and the effect they might have had on spectators at the time. Without diminishing the importance of this type of film work, what is more significant for the present chapter, because it is important comparative material for further discussions of the kinds of films made by working class groupings and organisations in various parts of the world in general, and in

[20] Welch ascribes the establishment of the FuL to a period after the founding of the *Volksfilmverband* in 1927 (see below).

South Africa in particular, is that the FuL, which produced these two films, also produced and distributed a weekly newsreel called *Volkswochenschau* (People's Weekly Newsreel). It was a collaboration with the Reich Committee and other working class organisations, to compete commercially with conservative newsreels such as the *Ufa-Wochenschau*[21], but they had limited success (Murray, 1990:102).

Another organisation which produced newsreels was the *Volksfilmverband für Filmkunst* (The Popular Association for Film Art), later called the *Volksfilmverband* (VFV), formed in 1928. Responsibility for its founding is variously ascribed. Welch proposes that it was formed by the SPD which though it was "careful not to be associated with the communists" (Welch, 1981:9)[22], was "determined to establish a proletarian cinema" (1981:9). Murray, on the other hand, proposes that it was formed by "a number of left-leaning intellectuals and artists (who) joined Social Democrats and Communists...after numerous discussions about the need for and possibility of organizing a non-partisan, grass-roots film organization" (1990:139). It was to function like the SPD's *Volksfilmbühne* and "challenge the aesthetic as well as the ideological quality of commercial film" (Murray, 1990:139). According to quotes from its director cited in Welch, it was founded to "fight reactionary trash...and to develop artistically progressive films" and its mission was to "collect together those masses of cinema goers and educate them in critical perception" (1981:9).

But back to the 'story' of the newsreels - in February 1928 the Association's first film

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[21] *Ufa*'s full title was *Universum Film A.G.* It was a large film conglomerate formed in 1917, which "brought together leaders of the most conservative circles of German society" (Murray, 1990:22). Its goals were: "to aid the High Command in carrying out its military goals, to be an instrument for political influence abroad, and to provide a defense against the propaganda work of the enemy within Germany" (Murray, 1990:22).

[22] On this point, Welch comments further that the SPD "went to great lengths to point out that their ranks 'consisted of three times more non-communists than communists' (reference not cited)" (1981:9).

show was scheduled. It was to include an extraordinary film created by VFV called *Zeitbericht-Zeitgesicht* (*News of the Times-Face of the Times*). It was made by editing together parts of UFA (commercial) newsreels, in a changed format to their original versions, so as to provide an alternative ideological viewpoint. As Béla Balázs explains it:

> From (the UFA newsreels) we cut new reels. For instance, in the 'Dogs' beauty contest', overwhelmingly glamorous ladies held expensive lap-dogs in their arms. Next to this was 'One who did not take place in the contest': a blind beggar and his 'seeing eye' dog, watching over his miserable master in the cold of winter. Then 'St Moritz': Skating rinks and the guests on the terrace of a luxury hotel. 'This, too, is St Moritz': a melancholy procession of ragged, hungry snow-shovellers and rink-sweepers... (Balázs, 1970:165-166).

The textual detail in this quote shows how, with a new juxtaposition of shots and using inter-titles, newsreels shot by commercial companies could be re-invigorated towards promoting working class ideological perspectives and socialist ideals. This type of editing style could have been used to valuable effect by anti-apartheid filmmakers in South Africa in the 1980s, by re-using copied news material from the SABC. This was not the case, but there are small examples of the use of SABC material in some of the work of VNS, such as in *Fruits of Defiance* (1990), and in the next chapter I describe in detail how this is done and the effect it achieves.

The commercial newsreels had already been passed by the censors in their original versions. But the censors, not quite as gullible as the VFV appears to have hoped, refused permission for the film to be shown at the first viewing of the *Volksfilmverband* (Hogenkamp, 1977:5). It would seem though that sometimes reconstructed newsreels were passed by the censors and screened, or were deemed to have already been passed by the censors, and screened anyway. Balázs suggests this

by writing that: "The police were itching to ban these news-reels but could not do so, as they were all respectable UFA news-reels, every one of them approved by the censorship. Only the order of showing had been altered a little" (Balázs, 1970:166). Nevertheless the censors got the better of *Zeitbericht-Zeitgesicht*. The VFV decided not to show it since after the many cuts ordered it retained little of its original character, and announced that it would produce its own weekly newsreel in the future - an aspiration which in fact was never accomplished (Hogenkamp, 1977:5). But the legacy of the newsreel project was to make an impact on the future work of leftwing filmmakers and organisations both in Germany and in other countries. Hochbaum, the director of the film *Brüder* (*Brothers*) made in 1929, which was distributed by FuL but produced by the Social Democratic organisation *Deutscher Verkehrsbund* (German Transportation Federation), used existing film material from *Brüder* in making *Zwei Welten* (*Two Worlds*) in which he juxtaposed the worlds of the rich and the poor (Hogenkamp, 1977:5). The Belgian filmmaker, Henri Storck used the same method in his film, *Histoire d'un soldat inconnu* (*History of an Unknown Soldier*) (Hogenkamp, 1977:5). The strongest use of this method, "to give a new meaning to existing film material by re-editing the sequences" (Hogenkamp, 1977:5) was in Holland, by filmmaker Joris Ivens, which I will describe later in this chapter.

I will close this part of the summary of the history of working class cinema by describing some of the developments and changes in the more prominent organisations that are relevant for this study, as they moved towards and into the 1930s, in the few years before Hitler came into power in 1933:
1. The VFV - it became involved in producing a film about working class conditions in the coal-mining district of Waldenburg, called *Hunger in Waldenburg*, which premiered in Berlin in 1929 (Murray, 1990:225) and which experimented with filmic strategies that are important to note. It is a drama filmed in the Waldenburg region. which gives it a realistic setting, using non-professional actors and no studio

footage[23]. Unlike the work of other directors at the time, it relies less on the more complex and innovative photographic and montage techniques they had been using and more on character monologues and omniscient inter-titles, to suggest its typicality as a portrayal of working class conditions. For Murray, while it is ideologically alternative to mainstream cinema at the time, it adopted dominant codes of reception, which did little to encourage spectator participation in the construction of its ideological perspectives[24]. Meanwhile KPD influence in the VFV increased. In October 1929, the VFV joined the communist organisation *Interessengemeinschaft für Arbeiterkultur* (Interest-community for Workers' Culture, Ifa), the KPD's *Arbeiterkorrespondenten* (worker correspondents) began to contribute to the VFV's journal *Film und Volk* (Murray, 1990:229), and it lost its character as a politically neutral organisation (Hogenkamp, 1977:5). But the VFV's support base slowly disintegrated in the early 1930s[25] and it became a victim of the economic crisis, although two sections - Hamburg and Stuttgart - were in operation until 1933 (Hogenkamp, 1977:1933). A final point of noteworthiness on the VFV is that when it could no longer sustain *Film und Volk*, it merged with the *Arbeiter-Theater-Bund Deutschlands* (The Workers' Theatre League of Germany) and formed the *Arbeiterbühne und Film* in which critics began to make proposals for a more engaged and participative proletarian film movement. Borrowing from developments in the theatre the 'agitpropization' of proletarian film was proposed. Workers were encouraged to document their experiences on 8mm. cameras in local collectives and to screen them to fellow workers at the 'grass-roots' level (Murray, 1990:231). These ideas were matched in at least one of the newspapers of the WIR, *Berlin am Morgen*,

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[23] It is interesting to note here, à propos the marginalisation of working class cinema of the 1920s in film history, that the use of non-professional actors and realistic non-studio settings in Italian neo-realism is often cited as being a significant moment in film history, but in point of fact it was not the first time.

[24] This summary is taken from Murray (1990:226-227), where he provides more detailed explanations of the film's narrative and how specific sequences are constructed.

[25] For details see Murray (1990:228-229).

when in 1932 articles on the use of 8mm. film and working-class collectives began to appear (Murray, 1990:194-195). Some collectives were established but their projects were short-lived, because they were "unable to attract enough interest", according to Murray (1990:232). By then, it was no doubt increasingly impossible to sustain the ideological imperatives of the working class, as National Socialism increased. Murray cites a number of reasons for this: the lack of co-operation between the KPD and the SPD which minimalised opposition to National Socialism; the opportunistic support for the NDSAP (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) by leading industrialists, agragrians and aristocrats; the appeal that National Socialism had for large numbers of dissatisfied and disoriented civil servants, other white-collar workers, small merchants, and other petty bourgeoisie; the fact that National Socialism provided the 'most attractive ideological alternative' outside of the KPD and SPD[26]. The role that cinema, and particularly mainstream cinema, played in this context, is especially important to note here. In Germany's social and political circumstances in the early 1930s that I have briefly described here, Hollywood cinema was perceived to be a threat to German national identity. Here the organisation called Ufa (*Universum Film A.G.*) and its history from its beginnings as Bufa (*Bild- und Film-Amt*; The Film and Photo Office) established by the German High Command in 1916 (Murray, 1990:21), is significant. The full complexities of these developments fall outside the ambit of the present study, and may be gleaned from writers like Murray (1990). But it is necessary to state here that the particular combination of Ufa's conservatism, its commercial stronghold, its power over the press through advertising, the privileging of certain films through contingency and censorship laws, and the apparent appeal of entertainment escapist cinema for the film-going public, made it possible for Ufa to ideologically promote mainstream perspectives in support

[26] These points are summarised from Murray (1990:145-148). See this reference for more detailed explanations of these points.

of National Socialism. In this milieu therefore, the potential for the growth of working class cinema was seriously limited.

The concern that workers themselves should be making films of their experiences in the German context, was matched in other countries in the same period. It is a point that warrants some comparison with the South African processes for making anti-apartheid film in the 1980s. Here, there were various initiatives to establish training programmes for workers and members of community-based organisations in the 1980s, especially in the latter half of the decade after the establishment of the Film and Allied Workers' Organisation (FAWO). The now fully-established Newtown Film and Television School, had its early beginnings in a small part-time training project on Sunday afternoons in the Alexandra township, run by a group of FAWO members, using borrowed Video 8 cameras. When the School was established one of its early functions was to train workers, and especially unemployed workers, selected by COSATU. In the same period, organisations like Video News Services and Free Filmmakers established trainee programmes as a means of redressing the imbalance of access to film training and filmmaking.

2. The WIR - Denise Hartsough (1985) has documented how the WIR was affected by the policies of the Comintern in the period spanning 1921 to 1933. The last phase of this period began with the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928, where its policy shifted away from forming a united cultural front with the Social Democrats. It was in terms of this shift in policy that the KPD set up the Ifa, mentioned above. In 1929 Willi Münzenberg proclaimed the WIR's allegiance to the KPD and began to work more closely with it.[27] The WIR stopped trying to build a united front with intellectuals through the VFV and to produce and distribute films through

[27] See Hartsough for a description of the WIR's 'recruitment and agitation efforts' at this time (1985:140).

Prometheus. It concentrated on using film to organise workers through *Weltfilm* (Hartsough, 1985:143). Hartsough notes, for example, how *Weltfilm* engaged in 'grassroots proletarian film activity', distributing and exhibiting feature length films, and giving instruction to workers in the use of 35mm. film (Hartsough, 1985: 143). It also, according to Hartsough, "had a monopoly on the reprinting and distribution of 35mm Soviet films in 16mm" (Hartsough, 1985:143). This made Soviet films more accessible to working class groups in Germany, and was to be a key strategy in the distribution and exhibition of Soviet films in Britain and the USA in the 1930s. *Mezhrabpom*, the film company which the WIR had established in the USSR, continued to flourish, producing both silent and sound films and distributing them in the Soviet Union and internationally.

Having examined the basis of working class or proletarian cinema in the 1920s and early 1930s in the Soviet Union and in Germany, some of the organisational issues which arose around it, and some of the representational strategies that were developed within it, I will now expand this chapter into an overview of working class cinema in a number of other countries. From the literature it would seem that working class films were distributed through the WIR in a range of countries in both the northern and the southern hemispheres, including Japan, Argentina and Australia. This suggests that there were committees in these countries affiliated to the WIR concerned with worker consciousness. These would have been associated with the Communist Party in these countries. But there is little if anything, written (in English) about the film activities of these affiliates, except in the case of Japan[28]. There is a

[28] See Hogenkamp (1977:14-15). He cites a further two references that deal with Japan written in German: one from the 1930s itself - Korea Senda, 'Proletarische Film-Bewegung in Japan', in *Arbeiterbuehne und Film*, 18(2), February 1931:26-27; and Kazuo Yamada, 'Das soziale Erwachen des japanischen Films', in Eckhart Jahnke, Manfed Lichtenstein, Kazuo Yamada, (1976), *Dokumentarfilm in Japan. Se.ne demokratische un kaempferische traditionen*. Berlin: Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR:29-40.

little more written on developments in Holland, France, the United States and Britain. What follows then is effectively 'notes' on each of these countries, with more extensively detailed sections on those countries about which there is more material, both written and in film, from which to draw.

Japan[29]

The organisation that spearheaded working class cinema in Japan was called *Prokino*, the League for the Proletarian Cinema, which was an organisation of the All-Japanese Congress of the Association for Proletarian Art, in which the Communist Party of Japan concentrated its cultural work. It operated from 1929 to 1934. A number of features of its work are important to note here. Firstly, workers themselves were making films using small formats like 9.5mm. and 16mm. film[30]. Secondly, related to the first point, the use of small formats meant that the exhibition of films was not confined to cinemas that used 35mm., and working class films could therefore be shown in "small halls and even in peasants' huts" (Senda quoted in Hogenkamp, 1977:14)[31]. Thirdly, newsreels and documentaries were an important component of the work created. Hogenkamp mentions one newsreel called *Prokino-News No.1* which has not survived. Two films have survived however: *Earth* (1930) which is about the expropriation of peasant and worker land by a big factory, and *12th May Day in Tokyo* (1931), evidently a documentary about May Day events where "workers are searched by policemen, some speakers are prevented from giving a speech by police, the WIR distributes food, masses of workers are assembling wearing

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[29] This summary is entirely indebted to Hogenkamp (1977:14-15).

[30] Hogenkamp (1977:14), mentions that some *Prokino* members had gained experience in using small format cameras filming strikes and demonstrations in 1927 and 1928, which suggests that some form of organised workers' cinema was in existence before *Prokino*, but I have been unable to find further references to this.

[31] The full quote is interesting here: "Exhibition is possible in all small halls and even in peasants' huts. Because the white terror in Japan forces the comrades there to do their filmwork (shooting and exhibition) almost always illegally, this small film method is of great importance" (Senda quoted in Hogenkamp, 1977:14).

headbands with slogans and carrying their banners" (Hogenkamp, 1977:14). This description reiterates the point made elsewhere, that the content of workers' films in a range of countries were similar to each other in the same period and was also matched by workers' films made in South Africa in the 1980s. Fourthly, there was reciprocity and information flow between *Prokino* and its counterparts in other countries[32].

The development of working class cinema in Japan, from Hogenkamp's account, suggests that there was considerable success in both facilitating the production of films by workers themselves, and making possible their distribution. Here there are some comparative points to be made in relation to South Africa in the 1980s. There were projects established to train workers and community representatives, in the early 1980s working on small formats like 16mm. and especially 8mm. film. Later in the 1980s when video was more accessible (and after 8mm. film had been phased out by Kodak) Video 8 was used. Since there was no access to public broadcasting facilities, and video is easy to copy, documentaries (and fiction films like *Mapantsula*) were copied, with no regard for copyright in the circumstances, and viewed by thousands of people in all kinds of venues across many communities in the country. Like 16mm. and other small film formats in the 1920s and 1930s, which made possible the distribution of working class cinema outside of mainstream venues and beyond censorship regulations, so video as technology made possible the distribution of anti-apartheid film in South Africa in the 1980s.

Holland[33]

In Holland the *Vereeniging voor VolksCultuur* (Association for Popular Culture, VVVC) was founded in January 1928. It was, according to Hogenkamp, an attempt by

[32] These points are elaborated in Hogenkamp (1977:14-15).
[33] See Hogenkamp (1977:6-11), from which this summary is derived. Hogenkamp, in turn, relied virtually exclusively on reports in *De Tribune*, the Communist Party's daily newspaper in Holland.

the Communist Party of Holland (CPH) to "increase the effectiveness of its filmshows" (Hogenkamp, 1977:6). The reasons cited by Hogenkamp for this development are: first, the Dutch sections of the WIR and the International Labour Defence (ILD) were both closely associated with the CPH and had experience in exhibiting films, as did the CPH itself; a second reason was increasing censorship; and third, the success of the film service of the social democrat *Instituut voor Arbeiders Ontwikkeling* (Institute for Workers' Education).

The VVVC both produced its own films and fought against censorship, especially of Soviet films[34]. *Battleship Potemkin* was one of the Soviet films exhibited as well as two German documentaries: *Blütmai 1929 (Bloody May Day)*, about the shooting of Berlin workers on May Day in 1929, and *Roter Frontkaempferbuna (Red Front)* (1928), about a meeting of Red Front fighters in 1928. One of the films made by the VVVC was called *Arm Drenthe (Poor Drenthe)* (1929) about Holland's poorest province.

In 1930 there was a period of stagnation in the work of the VVVC, evidently related to organisational questions and probably also to policy issues, given the German experience of the political milieu in the same period, but this changed later in 1930. Late in 1930 the first VVVC newsreel was shown. And it is the newsreel projects that I will elaborate here.

I have already mentioned the approach adopted to newsreels in Germany, where commercial newsreel footage, already approved by the censors, was re-edited to represent working class perspectives. In Holland a similar approach was adopted,

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[34] Here Hogenkamp does not make a clear distinction between exhibiting films and fighting against censorship. His writing suggests that in the exhibition of Soviet films the issue of censorship was increasingly brought to the fore.

notably by the internationally acclaimed Dutch documentarist, Joris Ivens, who, Hogenkamp suggests, may have read about the way the German newsreel *Zeitbericht-Zeitgesicht* was made (Hogenkamp, 1977:10). In any event, Ivens' writings confirm that he was centrally engaged in what he calls "idea editing" (quoted in Hogenkamp, 1977:6). This was similar to the process of constructing the German working class newsreels. Commercial newsreels were acquired, 'cut into pieces', re-edited with newsreel footage and shots inserted representing events such as the Russian Revolution, then restored to their original state before returning them[35].

There were at least five newsreels made in this way in 1930 and 1931. They were viewed by worker audiences who gathered on Sunday mornings in local sections of the VVVC for 'performances' that could include the viewing of a Soviet feature film, music, singing, dancing, agit-prop theatre, and announcements of events[36]. The content of the newsreels was mostly on the Soviet Union, but included news on Europe and America, and focused on fascism and revolution (Hogenkamp, 1977:8). Their function, according to Hogenkamp, was one of 'recognition' rather than 'consciousness-raising'. The feature-length Soviet films that were shown did not relate to the Dutch workers' experience of reality and the newsreels acted as the link between this and the Soviet workers' experience, which in turn facilitated a better understanding of the feature film.

The newsreel series was discontinued in 1931 for reasons that are not known. Hogenkamp makes a link, however, between the ending of the newsreels and the fact that the VVVC changed its name to the *Vereeniging van Vrienden der Sovjet-Unie* (Association of Friends of the Soviet Union, VVSU). He makes the point that at its

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[35] See Ivens (1969:96-97). For further references to Ivens' writings see Hogenkamp (1977:6 & 33, fn.19).
[36] See the various references in Hogenkamp (1977:9-10).

first Sunday morning 'performance' in Amsterdam in 1931 the newsreel shown was made in the Soviet Union - and he concludes the point with an exclamation mark. The significance of this is not very clear. Since the link between the Dutch experience and the Soviet Union was provided by the newsreels, one can presume that the fact that the Soviet Union was now the entire emphasis both in the name of the organisation and in the origin of the newsreel, significantly, if not totally, diminished the representation of the Dutch working class experience. At the same time Hogenkamp makes the additional point that the newsreels were made to clarify the 'political line' of the CPH which was suppressed or distorted by the 'bourgeois newsreels' (Hogenkamp, 1977:10). Hence, the emphasis on the Soviet experience.

The VVVC-newsreel was a significant beginning to the working class cinema movement in Holland whose momentum was not sustained. It was only in 1934 that another workers' film collective emerged, but no details on this are available in the literature (in English), nor does Hogenkamp expand on this development.

In the work of one filmmaker, Joris Ivens, there was a sustained interest in the working class. Part of the reason for the ending of the newsreel series could have been that Ivens was involved in various film projects in a diverse range of countries from this period onwards. His first films were *De Brug* (*The Bridge*, 1928) and *Rain* described as "elegiac studies" (Winston, 1995:184) and "experimental" (Hogenkamp, 1977:7). They were made for the *Filmliga*, an organisation established by film lovers after the 'famous' showing of *Mother* (Hogenkamp, 1977:7), a film made by the Soviet film-maker Pudovkin and produced by *Mezhrabpom* in 1927. Later Ivens visited the Soviet Union, at the invitation of Pudovkin. In the 1930s he was also involved in film projects in the United States, as well as in Spain and China[37].

[37] See Winston (1995:82ff.) for more details on the films Ivens was involved in between the late 1920s and in the 1930s. See also Ivens (1969).

France

The working class cinema movement in France is, in most accounts, tied primarily to the Popular Front period in France from 1936 to 1938. Its starting point, however, is given[38] as the founding of an organisation called *Les Amis de Spartacus* (*The Friends of Spartacus*) by a group of activists in 1928, for "privately screening films banned by the censor" (Buchsbaum, 1988:25). Soviet films were successfully shown, especially *Mother* and *Battleship Potemkin* but the organisation produced no films of its own. It had a membership of 10,000[39] but its life was cut short by the Paris police commissioner in October 1928. The French sections of the WIR and the Friends of the Soviet Union organised regular film shows but there was no overall organisation to co-ordinate the distribution, exhibition or production of films.

The Communist Party's sectarian policy after 1928, is cited as the reason for diminishing cultural activities in the left at that time (Buchsbaum, 1988:3). This policy only changed in 1934, but even prior to that, resistance to fascism especially amongst intellectuals and artists, was 'exploited' by the Party. It was instrumental in the formation of the *Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires* (Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists, AEAR)[40], in which the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF) played a significant role.

The AEAR had different sections for the various arts. The cinema section was known as the *Alliance du Cinéma Indépendant* (ACI), which was commissioned by the PCF to make *La Vie est à nous* in 1936. This film made innovative and unprecedented strategic use of newsreel and documentary footage. I shall elaborate the detail of this production later in this chapter. Before doing so however, it would be helpful to

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[38] See Hogenkamp (1977:21).
[39] This is the figure given by Buchsbaum (1988:25); whereas Hogenkamp gives 6,000 as the membership figure (1977:21).
[40] Buchsbaum notes 1932 as the founding date (1988:3), while Hogenkamp notes it as 1933 (1977:22).

delineate pertinent issues that emerge in an examination of the production of newsreels specifically, spearheaded by the AEAR in 1934. This will enrich the later discussion on *La Vie est à nous.*

The AEAR's work in newsreels highlights the disenchantment of the left with commercial newsreels at that time, which was later to be a feature of *La Vie est à nous*. The importance of the gathering of intellectuals and artists in one organisation is underlined by Hogenkamp who writes about the link between this protest against commercial newsreels and prominent artists in the AEAR. He describes for example how Germaine Dulac, an avant-garde filmmaker[41], lectured on 'the illegal censorship of newsreels' and showed examples of censored newsreels at a film evening organised by the AEAR in April, 1934 (Hogenkamp, 1977:22). At that time, Dulac was a supervisor at *France Actualités*, the newsreel arm of Gaumont and MGM (Hogenkamp, 1977:22). The significance here is that the newsreels were 'owned' by commercial companies, who complied with requests from the authorities to censor their material. Hogenkamp refers to the newsreel of the Hunger March in November 1933, when unemployed marchers made "incendiary speeches for the microphone". The newsreel firm "gracefully consented" to make cuts that would "tone down the message" (Hogenkamp, 1977:22). For the purposes of comparison with South African worker film and video in the 1980s, this 'climate' of censorship, both in France and Germany in the 1930s, is mirrored by the censorship laws in South Africa, as well as in the plethora of the apartheid state's regulations such as the Emergency Media Regulations, that prevented the free flow of information.

Newsreels were not, however, only commercially made. Oppositional newsreels were made although it is not known who made them (Hogenkamp, 1977:22). Hogenkamp

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[41] See Flitterman-Lewis (1990) and Hayward (1992 and 1993:109-111) for detail of Dulac's filmmaking in this vein.

cites a number of sources that refer to the exhibition of 'workers' newsreels' in 1934 which, as in other countries, included newsreels of May Day events. While the work of the Film and Photo League in the United States was represented as an exemplar for the French workers' film movement (Hogenkamp, 1977:23), according to Hogenkamp there was little done to develop newsreel production - at least up until 1935.

The Film Service of the SFIO

In 1935, two different organisations that were to impact on the production of workers' films were established. Like the Soviet Union and Germany, political positions were a determining factor in cultural developments, especially the divide between socialists and communists. This divide was manifest in the film organisations that emerged at the time: the Film Service of the Socialist Party; *Ciné-Liberté* of the Communist Party. I shall focus first on the Film Service before turning to *Ciné-Liberté* and its production *of La Vie est à nous* (1936), under commission from the Communist Party.

The *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO, translated as French Section of the Workers' International), the official title of the French Socialist Party (Buchsbaum, 1988:80, fn.124), established a "regional committee for agitation and propaganda, bringing together all our technician comrades whose co-operation and competence can be used for propaganda"[42] in Paris and the surrounding area, which formed the basis of the *Service Cinématographique de la Fédération de la Seine* (Film Service of the Federation of the Seine)[43]. Two films were produced by this group: *Le Mur des fédérés* (1935) and *14 juillet 1935* (1935). The first film documented the demonstration in 1935 commemorating the shootings of leaders of

[42] Quoted from *Le Populaire* in Hogenkamp (1977:24).
[43] Buchsbaum (1988:56) provides details of the political implications of this move and especially the fact that it was specifically Marceau Pivert, leader of a 'young revolutionary group' on the left of the Socialist Party, who promoted this development.

the Paris Commune in 1871 at the Mur des fédérés. Hogenkamp notes that in its titles it was called 'Proletarian Newsreel' while in the press it was called 'cinéma socialiste' (socialist cinema) (1977:24) - no doubt arising from the political understructures that determined cultural developments and their naming.

While on the surface the content of the film was based on the demonstrations taking place, in analysing this content and its structuring into a film, the ideological framework underlying the text is revealed. Thus, Buchsbaum proposes a reading of the film that foregrounds the choices made by Pivert, the film's director, based on his particular ideological positionings. This refers to his views on the issue of national defence under capitalism. Pivert held that national defence should not be increased and he promoted an internationalist rather than a nationalist working class perspective. For the purposes of the present study, it is interesting and valuable to note how the strategies that the filmmaker chooses reinforces his particular ideological framework. This will become comparatively important when in later chapters I examine the strategic structuring of South African anti-apartheid films in a similar way. In this regard Buchsbaum makes a general comment about films of the left that could as readily be made about the VNS films I will be examining in the next chapter. Here he is writing about the narrational voice-over of *Le Mur des fédérés* which addresses the 'workers of France' and invokes them to "look and awaken to your magnificent and invincible force, which is like a river current flowing to the sea" (Buchsbaum, 1988:58). He comments: "The Left constantly cited the size of the crowds at demonstrations...as proof to the workers themselves of their power and...to document these impressive demonstrations of the will of the masses" (Buchsbaum, 1988:58).

Having noted how the sound track confirms the militancy of workers, Buchsbaum makes further comment on the strategic use of images, and how in particular the

choice of banners and signs reflected Pivert's political position. The cinematography not only fulfils this ideological framework but reinforces what the voice-over has made manifest. This occurs in the ways, implied by Buchsbaum, that the camera was placed to film certain elements of the demonstrations: "...the camera moves past a flurry of raised fists. A flag of the Jeunesses Socialistes rises from this sea of arms...marchers file by, carrying the assorted banners" (1988:59). These kinds of images, using a predominantly low angle camera, re-occur in numerous examples of working class cinema, not only in South Africa in the 1980s, but fifty years before in the making of an international working class movement based in various countries around the world.

In relation to the second film made by the SFIO, *14 juillet 1935*, it would seem that there were different documentary accounts of the events of that day[44]. One of them was the SFIO film and there was another called the *Grand Rassemblement du 14 juillet* (1935). While *14 juillet 1935* was made by Pivert, the other version of 14th July 1935 was "suffused with (an) outpouring of nationalism...(and) the film features the PCF representatives more prominently than the figures of the other parties" (Buchsbaum, 1988:63). The broad ideological framework that set the political parties apart were evident in the different filmic accounts of the same event. This ideological, contextual umbrella always informed the choice of content of working class cinema. Buchsbaum also makes some significant comments about the strategies used in the film *Grand Rassemblement* to reinforce the sense of masses of people, "reinforcing the sense of scope of the events, implying that all of Paris is in attendance" (1988:64). These strategies include the use of the camera's panning movement, which in a single shot reveals the size of a crowd. Added to this however, in editing the film, two or more shots could be edited together all with a panning movement in the same

[44] See Buchsbaum (1988:56 & 80, fn.132).

direction, that makes the change of shot a smooth one and gives a highlighted impression of a large crowd. This strategy was used in working class films in England (as I shall point out) and also in the VNS films in South Africa in the 1980s.

A further comparative point in relation to this film and the South African documentaries I shall examine, is the apparent consciousness of the filmmakers to keep commentary as well as 'excessive tampering' with the images and sounds to a minimum (Buchsbaum, 1988:65). Buchsbaum comments that the reason for this was the "violent dissatisfaction" (1988:65) in the left with the commercial newsreels and the 'voice-of-God' style of narration that they used. This authoritative style predetermined the meanings of the newsreels, which were in any event linked with bourgeois aspirations and their collusion with capital. Buchsbaum proposes that the left was able to be more flexible - as he puts it: "to more easily refrain" (1988:65) - in the issue of controlling images. Here he glosses over the complexity of the issue of control and didacticism by relating his comments to only one or two aspects of the strategies employed. Seen *in toto* however, in a coherent overall structure that is primarily ideologically framed, despite the absence of say, an overpowering determining 'voice-of-God' narrator, the other strategies may have a similar effect that is less visible (or audible). In the discussions of the South African documentaries of the 1980s I shall demonstrate how this is precisely what happened.

Little, if anything, is written of *14 juillet 1935*, but from the various accounts of circumstances surrounding these films, the positioning of the socialists and the communists in primarily political terms was reflected in the cinema organisations that were established and the films that they made. Here, with regard to the two films on 14th July 1935, Buchsbaum makes the point that "the two films were to prefigure the future path of Left filmmaking" (Buchsbaum, 1988:66). He proposes that the makers of *Grand Rassemblement* were 'the core' of the *Alliance du Cinéma Indépendant*

(ACI, Alliance of the Independent Cinema) formed by the PCF a few months later, in November 1935. In April the following year it was renamed *Ciné-Liberté*. Before going into the detail of the work of *Ciné-Liberté* however, it would be worthwhile to complete the 'story' of the socialist film group headed by Pivert.

According to Hogenkamp, after the making of *Le Mur des fédérés* and *14 juillet*, "a long silence surrounded the Film Service" (1977:25). He makes the point that Pivert and his followers formed a 'left-radical minority' in the SFIO and that it became increasingly impossible for the Film Service to act on behalf of the Socialist Party because of this gap (1977:27). Hogenkamp implies that Pivert and his group were more orientated towards worker ideals than to broader party issues, especially towards the forming of the Popular Front. This is where the fact that the press called the films 'socialist films' is important, whereas the titles of the films themselves used the phrase 'proletarian newsreel'. One might speculate therefore, that the making of working class cinema in this historical period in France, was overshadowed by the broader demands of the alliance of parties in the Popular Front - not a dissimilar historical mode to that which informed the making of working class videos in South Africa in the 1980s.

The Film Service did make more films. In 1936 at least two films were made: one called *16 février 1936* about a demonstration following an attack by fascists on the leader of the SFIO, Léon Blum, on 13th February 1936[45]; and another called *Boulogne Socialiste* about the socialist Town Council of Boulogne-Billancourt (Hogenkamp, 1977:25). The Film Service also began to use a 17.5mm. film format, which according to Hogenkamp was common in education (1977:25). This implies that rather than being restricted to commercial cinemas for the projection of their

[45] Blum became head of the Popular Front government in April 1936.

films, the Film Service could project in other venues more conducive to the educational function of the films themselves. The Film Service also hired out 'progressive feature-films' (Hogenkamp, 1977:26).

In June 1936 workers all over France went on strike and occupied their factories. Pivert's political position is evident from his comment in the socialist press that 'All is possible' which was met with a response by the head of the PCF in the communist press that 'No! Not all is possible'. Pivert had filmed in the factories during the strikes but the footage was not edited, presumably because to do so would have revealed the gap between the socialist party and Pivert's Revolutionary Left. This widening gap was the reason that further footage remained unedited. According to Hogenkamp, the Film Service was less and less linked with the Socialist Party (1977:26) and in 1938 Pivert and his group resigned and formed a party of their own - the *Parti Socialiste Ouvrier et Paysan* (PSOP, Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party). The PSOP made one film, in November 1938. It was an hour-long documentary[46] called *Contre le courant* (*Against the current*). It covered the events in France from a "left-radical point of view" (Hogenkamp, 1977:27), using the footage that previously had been unedited. Eventually the Film Service of the PSOP folded in the summer of 1939, due to "growing repression by reactionary forces" (Hogenkamp, 1977:27).

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[46] Hogenkamp suggests it was 'about' an hour in length (1977:36, fn.125), while Buchsbaum states that it was forty-five minutes in length (1988:178, fn.124). See this reference in Buchsbaum for an elucidating discussion of Fofi's position on the film. See also Fofi (1972/3:43), where he says that "if we want an overall 'class' assessment of the cinema in this period we must look to the only existing example, *Contre le courant*". Fofi is obviously in sympathy with Pivert's position on proletarian and party political issues, something with which Buchsbaum seems to take issue. The documentation of these debates from the perspective of the present study, points towards political conflict in the political parties of the time whose concerns purported to be those of the proletariat, but were never realised as such - neither in the political developments that ensued nor in the filmmaking efforts that they spawned.

Ciné-Liberté and the Communist Party

Having spelled out some of the detail of the films and the organisation of filmmaking in the Socialist Party, I will now return to the establishment of *Ciné-Liberté* by the PCF and the films that it produced. Here, Hogenkamp's point that neither the Film Service of the SFIO nor *Ciné-Liberté* of the PCF involved workers themselves in filmmaking is important to note: "they consisted only of professionals who spent their spare time for these movements out of political conviction" (1977:28). This is exemplified by the fact that the film with which *Ciné-Liberté* came to be most strongly identified, called *La Vie est à nous*[47], was directed by Jean Renoir[48], one of the most significant French film directors in the history of French cinema, emerging in 1936 as "the leading filmmaker on the Left" (Buchsbaum, 1988:266).

Ciné-Liberté emerged from the interest in cinema generated within the AEAR (*Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires*), which established the Maison de la Culture in 1936, when its cinema section was named the *Alliance du Cinéma Indépendant* (ACI). A number of writers on this period note that what was important about this development was that it was not party-specific but brought together numerous artists and 'cultural workers' with various political persuasions. They may have had sympathies for the PCF but were not necessarily members[49]. The name '*Ciné-Liberté*' was derived from the relationship of the ACI with *Radio-Liberté*, which publicised the demands of left filmmakers for, amongst other things, the abolition of censorship (Buchsbaum, 1988:71). When the PCF commissioned the

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[47] I am grateful to Keith Reader for making it possible for me to view *La Vie est à nous*.

[48] See Buchsbaum (1988:84) for details of how Renoir came to be asked to direct the film. Also see Fofi (1972/3:14-15) for a description of Renoir's earlier film *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1935), for which he collaborated especially closely with Prévert, of the October Group. This was a theatre group that by all accounts was both anarchist and communist. For details of the group and its work see Buchsbaum (1988:36-42).

[49] See for example, Buchsbaum (1988:66) where he discusses how the ACI allowed workers, artists and intellectuals to manifest their opposition to fascism and their support for the Popular Front without being bound by party discipline.

ACI to make an electoral propaganda film it adopted the name *Ciné-Liberté* thus acknowledging its debt to *Radio-Liberté* in its opposition to commercial cinema (Buchsbaum, 1988:71). Fofi comments that there were other developments that contributed to the establishment of *Ciné-Liberté*. He cites, for example, the *Syndicat Général du Cinéma* which, in 1935, had organised film screenings with the objective of establishing 'cultural groups' of film workers and a 'cinemagoers' union' (Fofi, 1972/3:17)[50]. It was only with the PCF's film commission to the ACI however, that filmmakers in the AEAR moved beyond screenings, critical writings, and discussions and engaged in film production[51].

There is considerable debate in the literature on *La Vie est à nous*, about the details of individual responsibilities within the collective that wrote, directed and produced the film. In any event the film was released without individual credits[52], but writers on the film have engaged in debate about the responsibilities of those involved in its making[53]. Renoir was applauded by the PCF at the film's premiere. He was called the 'principal artisan' (Buchsbaum, 1988:157) of the film. But as Buchsbaum points out the PCF needed the publicity that the artists and writers brought to it (1988:157)[54], so

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[50] With regard to these earlier developments see also Buchsbaum (1988:55), where he describes how at a screening of *Battleship Potemkin* the idea of setting up a union of spectators was proposed but 'had no sequel'. The call for such a union did however "articulate a widely felt frustration with the commercial cinema" (Buchsbaum, 1988:55).

[51] Buchsbaum (1988:54) notes however that *L'Humanité*, the communist newspaper, makes a 'puzzling' reference to the screening of two films made by the ACI in December 1935 and January 1936.

[52] Buchsbaum (1988:188) notes that "the extant version of the film awards production credit to a crew of technicians, artists and workers".

[53] Buchsbaum (1988:84) ascribes the idea for the film to Aragon, secretary-general of the Maison de la Culture. He apparently 'passed on' the idea to Jacques Duclos, head of the agit-prop section of the PCF and suggested Renoir as director. The script was written by Jean-Paul Le Chanois (1988:84), Jean-Paul Dreyfus who changed his name to Le Chanois when France was occupied by the Nazis (1988:166, fn.2), and Pierre Unik, a communist filmmaker, who collaborated with Le Chanois on his next film.

[54] The relationship between artists and the PCF was complex. Buchsbaum (1988:42) describes the reciprocity of the relationship thus: "there is no question that the PCF solicited the allegiance of intellectuals and artists for the prestige their names would confirm on the party, but the party and its

it might well have been strategic on its part to highlight Renoir's role. He himself seems to have downplayed his role in the film's production[55]. Nevertheless, what is important for the present study is an exploration of the chief strategies that the film employs. Here, the first point to make is that it was a collective venture, as previously noted, with different parts directed by different people. In its very production concept and design therefore, there was an attempt to shift away from the normative conventions of the commercial cinema, to engage in a form of production praxis. The second point to make, and the central one with regard to the film's strategies of representation, which warrants detailed discussion in the context of my study, is that the film integrates documentary elements with fictional sequences. Indeed it also creates elements to look like documentary and incorporates fictional characters within documentary 'moments' in the film, so that the boundaries of these two forms or modes of filmmaking are approached by the filmmakers from a perspective of their 'blurring', rather than as distinct types in their own right: "the film's constant 'work' on the fiction/documentary oppositions reflects a conscious rejection of either category as a controlling one for the film" (Buchsbaum, 1988:112). Here, some detail of the film itself will elucidate the point.

There are three 'sketches'[56] that form the central space of the film: the first, directed by Le Chanois[57], is about a worker who is fired, then reinstated after his workmates

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cultural front organizations offered in return a forum for them to make some public political stand".

[55] See Buchsbaum (1988:156-157) and Fofi (1972/3:19) for some of Renoir's comments on his role in the film.

[56] This is Fofi's term for the three individualised central 'stories' (1972/3:21). Buchsbaum calls them 'fictional episodes' (1988:117). He actually refers to four, his first one being an episode where a newspaper vendor, selling *L'Humanité*, is attacked by fascists (1988:117), but I have chosen to use Fofi's description and see this episode as part of the framing of the film.

[57] Le Chanois was a member of the PCF, and therefore a 'logical choice' for the factory sequence (Buchsbaum, 1988:158).

go on strike; the second, directed by Becker[58], is about a peasant whose furniture is to be confiscated, but which is prevented by a communist neighbour; the third, directed by Renoir, is about a young 'technician' who is out of work and is assisted by the Communist Party. Each of these three sequences has all the elements of a conventionally fictionalised sequence, primarily using characters to motivate the process of the narrative. It is precisely this factor which makes the incorporation of some of these very characters into documentary sequences later in the film so significant. The characters are fictional, and in the context of the filmic narrative they are individuals. But they are also types[59], with whom audiences could identify.

To explain the ways in which these characters are highlighted as types, some description here of the shift in the overall narrative structure from the fictional sequences to the ending of the film will be valuable. In the third and final 'sketch', René, the young unemployed 'technician'[60], leaves his girlfriend, Ninette, because he is frustrated by his inability to provide for her. After some attempts at finding work, and trying to find food in a soup kitchen, where the food runs out before he gets to the front of the queue, he collapses. He is rescued by members of the Young Communists who take him to a meeting. The moment when he opens his eyes is highlighted by the camera lingering on his face in a close-up shot. A chorus is singing a song representing the ideals of the youth at the time. A series of shot-reverse shot images cut between René and the chorus. Having established this structure, at a point when there is an expectation of a cut from a shot of the chorus back to another shot of René,

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[58] Becker was also a member of the PCF. This was his directorial debut. For more on Becker see Buchsbaum (1988:158) where he is discussed in relation to the issue of 'young filmmakers' being given an opportunity to work on the film, and the fact that he had been 'passed over' in favour of Renoir for the making of *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*.

[59] This recalls the earlier discussion in this chapter, principally related to developments in German working class cinema, with its focus on 'typicality'.

[60] Here Buchsbaum makes the point that while in France he would be called an *ingénieur*, to translate this into 'engineer' would be an incorrect representation of his training. He is in fact a lighting technician. See Buchsbaum (1988:130).

a shot of a large audience is presented instead. And this, as Buchsbaum makes clear, is the 'transition' to the film's final sequence (1988:135). It is a transition which achieves a certain unity, a smooth blending, without closure on René's story (Buchsbaum, 1988:135). In effect the character from the fictional narrative is literally transposed into representing a mass audience.

The final sequence, directed by Renoir, is a series of short statements presented directly to the camera by some members of the Central Committee. At specifically chosen points within these speeches, when the camera cuts to images of the listening audience, the same audience whose image marked the transitionary moment to the final sequence, certain of the characters of the three fictional 'sketches' are seen to be present in the audience itself. For example, when Jean Renaud, the person chiefly responsible for agricultural issues in the Communist Party, speaks, the audience shots include the characters from the second 'sketch' about peasant life. The last four speakers "sound the central points of the PCF position within the Popular Front" (Buchsbaum, 1988:137). When Cachin (director of *L'Humanité* and a founder of the PCF) speaks on fascism and the need for workers to unite, a cutaway to the audience presents the actors from the factory 'sketch' at the centre of the frame, and furthermore, as Buchsbaum points out (1988:137), the crowd is seemingly the same as seen earlier, including the characters from the peasant 'sketch'. Here the film underlines the notion from the speech that workers should unite against fascism, and that the PCF provides the forum for them to do so. Varying the strategy on how the crowds are represented, the next speech has a different cutaway to another crowd not recognisable from a previous cutaway "as if illustrating the idea of the nameless thousands that make it a 'great party'" (Buchsbaum, 1988:137). As this final sequence continues, in the speech presented by Duclos about the young people of France, calling them to 'walk hand in hand in the conquest of life' the young 'technician'

René, and his girlfriend Ninette, find each other in the crowd[61]. In this sense the unresolved fiction of the 'sketch' where they are first presented, is in fact resolved within the documentary moment of the presentation of speeches to a large audience - even though the speeches were specifically recorded for the film[62].

This interplay of the fictional characters within the final sequence is carried through to the end of the film where groups singing the 'Internationale' march across the screen. Here the film incorporates characters from the fictional 'sketches' into the marching groups. For example, the farmer's communist nephew from the peasant sequence carries the farmer's child and leads one group; René and Ninette lead another group in the opposite screen direction. Eventually the groups meet up in one long shot, filling the screen, as a mass of marchers (Buchsbaum, 1988:141).

This strategic use of shot combinations that cinematically portray large crowds is, according to Buchsbaum, borrowed from Pudovkin's film *Mother*, which he proposes the filmmakers would have seen (1988:141). In the final moments of *La Vie est à nous*, images of surging water, convey "a sense of the power driving the masses forward" (1988:141): another intertextual reference to a Soviet film - Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*. This editing method is called 'synthetic editing' by Buchsbaum. It refers not only to the montage sequence of the crowds marching at the end of the film, but also to the ways in which the eyelines, in filmic terms, of the fictional characters in the crowd scenes, are matched with the eyelines of the leaders speaking, thereby entrenching a point-of-view that is subjectively that of the character. The character in turn is portrayed beyond the diegesis of each fictional 'sketch' as typical of somebody within a sector, such as the peasantry, or the unemployed etc., within a

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[61] See the replication of the image where René and Ninette, re-united, are represented in a high mid-shot, framed centrally, listening to the speeches, in Buchsbaum (1988:140).
[62] According to Buchsbaum (1988:135), the final sequence was recorded at the Pathé studios at Francoeur.

dramatised but 'lived reality' (Buchsbaum, 1988:95). Thus the integration of fictional elements with documentary sequences is made possible, and the blurring of fictional reality and 'objective' reality is achieved.

There is another area in which this film is unconventional in relation to documentary footage and this is in its use and manipulation of newsreel footage, combining inter-titles with manipulated sounds and images that are based in newsreel footage[63]. A sequence in the beginning section of the film exemplifies this. The lead in to this part of the film is a series of shots in the countryside that first show a group of bourgeois men and women practising shooting on a cut-out of a human figure with a worker's cap on it. The next shot composed identically is of a group wearing military uniforms. An inter-title states: "The French Fascists exercise". The connection is made between the bourgeoisie and the fascists. This connection is further underlined by another inter-title: "We have already seen them at work".

This is where the newsreel footage comes in. For here, the film cuts to a series of shots representing street battles that took place on the night of 6th February 1934 - an historic night when fascists demonstrated in the streets of Paris against the dismissal of Jean Chiappe, the Paris Prefect of Police[64]. In *La Vie est à nous*, the newsreel footage of this night is used to begin a sequence which identifies the fascist leagues with Hitler and Mussolini. After a series of shots depicting that night, Colonel de la

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[63] Jacques Brunius is credited with the newsreel sequences at the beginning of the film (Buchsbaum, 1988:85). See Buchsbaum (1988:158) for a quote by Brunius where he describes his interest in formally experimenting with images and sounds.

[64] According to Buchsbaum, in January 1934 Alexandre Stavisky had 'swindled' the government of large amounts of money. Some government members were implicated in the fraud. Stavisky was found dead some weeks later, ostensibly by suicide. The fascist leagues demonstrated against the government in the streets. The Chautemps government resigned on 28th January. The left accused Jean Chiappe of partiality in allowing the fascist leagues to demonstrate and refusing permission to the left. They demanded that he be dismissed. The demonstrations of 6th February were seen as a call by the fascists for his reinstatement. See Buchsbaum (1988:105-109).

Rocque, the leader of one of the fascist leagues, the *Croix-de-feu*, is shown wearing military medals, speaking with colleagues in the aftermath of that night. The next shot contextualises this, showing fascists marching with the Arc de Triomphe in the background. There is a shot of the *Croix-de-feu* marching with de la Rocque alongside in a 'ludicrous' manner, "dragging his feet in a bizarre fashion", as one critic described it (Buchsbaum, 1988:147). The shot was apparently 'doctored' (1988:109), and it is used four times juxtaposed with other shots of the *Croix-de-feu* marching and an inter-title that states: "The French Hitlerians march in military fashion". Thus the French fascists are allied with Hitler and his fascism. They are also represented as being un-orderly and 'bizarre'.

The connection with Hitler is further underscored where one of the shots of the marchers is composed specifically to match the shot following it, depicting Nazi soldiers in 'crisp military formation' (1988:110) with a *swastika* superimposed over them. Hitler is depicted on a podium and as he opens his mouth to speak, the sound track, synchronised to the movements of his lips, is not his words but a dog barking. The crowd roars and a shot of soldiers advancing in battle follows.

So here, in this sequence, there is a carefully constructed, strategic use of newsreel footage to derive and produce meanings that will promote the perspective of the PCF and the Popular Front: by the way shots are framed; the juxtapositions of shots in relation to each other; the inter-titles used; the insertion of elements into newsreel shots to change their meaning while still using their location in reality; and by the editing out of some sounds and editing in of others. These strategies bind the filmmakers' ideological perspective into the film itself - a perspective that derides fascism and its proponents, and that links the fascism evident in France with fascism beyond its borders. This in turn links up with the meanings produced in other parts of

the film: that in uniting against fascism, the various sectors of French society will achieve the happiness they seek.

Buchsbaum raises some significant points about this use of newsreel footage in the film, especially with regard to how the filmmakers of the left criticised the commercial newsreels. For Buchsbaum, the use of newsreel footage in the film *La Vie est à nous*, "engages the issue of film as an ideological practice" (Buchsbaum, 1988:101). It does this by the "intentional interpenetration" (Buchsbaum, 1988:112) or 'blurring' of documentary and fiction. This 'blurring' functions to question the supposed objectivity of the documentary mode, since although documentary footage, especially in the newsreel imagery, is visibly present, its use in the conventional mode of documentary, as irrefutable evidence of reality existing only in the ways depicted, is strategically and consciously resisted. This does not mean however, that its 'availability' for meanings is entirely open. Rather, the filmmakers, propose the production of meanings that are bound into the organisation's ideological framework, at the same time as being unconventional. In other words, the film's rhetoric and its ideology overlap, an issue raised by Buchsbaum's critique which we will see pertains most specifically to this research into the relationship between strategies of representation in anti-apartheid documentary film and video and the ideology or 'voice' of the filmmaker.

According to Hogenkamp, *Ciné-Liberté* produced 'a series of newsreels' shortly after *La Vie est à nous*. These were newsreels of Popular Front demonstrations. During the worker strikes in June 1936 *Ciné-Liberté* filmed with the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT)[65] in several occupied factories (Hogenkamp, 1977:27) producing a

[65] Translated as the General Confederation of Work.

film called *Le Film des grèves* (*The Film of the Strikes*)[66]. There were at least seven documentary films made, according to Hogenkamp's research, but how many newsreels were made is not known. Their production was discontinued for reasons which "are not very clear" (Hogenkamp, 1977:27). It would seem though that distribution and exhibition was problematic - an allusion made by Hogenkamp (1977:27). The lack of newsreel production prompts Hogenkamp to ask the question: "Why not a Popular Front newsreel?" (1977:27). There are no simple answers but two ideas could be proposed. First, an inter-relationship between the socialist Film Service and *Ciné-Liberté* could not be achieved. This would have made the sharing of resources and expertise more possible. Germaine Dulac is posed as the exception to this (Hogenkamp, 1977:28) since she was active in both bodies. Second, amateur filmmakers were not involved in the production of newsreels. This was the domain of professionals. The format was therefore professional too - 35 mm. with sound - and the films' mobility and access was limited to those sites that had 35 mm. projection facilities. The issue of formats seems to have been quite a complex one, especially since there was no standardisation. Buchsbaum notes that trade publications advertised several formats including 9.5mm., 16mm., and 17.5mm.. By comparison, by the 1980s and in South Africa, this would not be an issue because by then video was widely available[67].

In the period after 1936 the energy that had been sustained in the making of *La Vie est à nous* subsided. *Ciné-Liberté*'s film work was more closely aligned with CGT member unions "valorizing the dignity of work" (Buchsbaum, 1988:225). In the

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[66] Buchsbaum refers to a film on the strikes made by *Ciné-Liberté* which was not referred to by name at the time and was later called *Grèves d'occupation* (*Occupation strikes*) (1988:196 & 225). It is not clear whether the film noted by Hogenkamp is the same one.

[67] There were complex issues however, concerned primarily with questions of access. Producing video was limited to those individuals and organisations that were able to raise funds to purchase equipment. Viewing video required access to a video cassette recorder. Furthermore, electricity was not available in many parts of the country thus limiting access to urban and peri-urban centres.

Socialist Party Germaine Dulac headed a new film organisation called *Mai 36* while at the same time being a member of *Ciné-Liberté*. She completed one film in *Mai 36* called *Le Retour à la Vie* (*The Return to Life*) (1936), an eleven-minute film that mixed newsreel and fictional footage. From the literature it would seem that the film was attempting stylistically to match something of the success of *La Vie est à nous*, albeit on a much smaller scale, and with regard to a focus on the flight of capital from France at the time. Buchsbaum's view is that the film was technically accomplished but politically 'anodyne', lacking complexity and a 'polemical thrust' and at least one critic at the time called it 'infantile' (Buchsbaum 1988:215-217). From Buchsbaum's critique it would seem that, while Dulac integrated newsreel footage within a fictional narrative, the film used this newsreel footage literally or descriptively without in any way inscribing a critique into its use, as the makers of *La Vie est à nous* had done. Clearly, *La Vie est à nous* had established a critical filmmaking mode against which critics (then and now) have measured the success of the other films emerging from those political movements.

The focus in filmmaking on the left shifted to feature films. This underlines the earlier point that workers themselves were not involved in film production. *Ciné-Liberté* went on to produce a film called *La Marseillaise* in 1937. It was directed by Jean Renoir and although it reflected the history of the French Revolution it did so entirely as a fiction film set in that period. The PCF supported this film production but produced three films of its own: *Le Temps des Cerises* (*The Time of the Cherries*) (1937), a film made to publicise the PCF's programme for the elderly; *La Vie d'un homme* (*The Life of a Man*) (1937), a documentary biography of a popular PCF leader who had died, that uses some fictional elements; and *La Grande Espérance* (*The Great Hope*) (1938), a documentary about the PCF itself.

Ciné-Liberté was "born with the success of *La Vie est à nous* and died with the completion of *La Marseillaise*" (Buchsbaum, 1988:250). With the demise of the Popular Front, the rifts between parties, the rise of fascism, and the start of the war in Europe, filmmaking activities that promoted the aspirations of the working class came to an end in France.

Britain[68]

Although I cannot do more than sketch the outlines of working class cinema in Britain, as I have done for those countries I have focused on above, it is important to provide some perspectives on . . building an international context of this kind of filmmaking and in relation to the comparative background it provides for the study of anti-apartheid documentary filmmaking in South Africa.

The development of working class cinema in Britain was initially associated with the distribution of Soviet films in the 1920s. This was through the organisation of the London Film Society which was established in 1925. It was essentially a middle class enterprise, particularly since its subscription fee of 25 shillings was too high for the working class. It was here that in 1929 Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin* had its British premiere, with Eisenstein present, along with Grierson's film *Drifters*.

In response to the call for the formation of screening outlets for working class people, the Federation of Workers' Film Societies (FOWFS) was formed in 1929. Between this organisation and the Masses Stage and Film Guild (MSFG), attached to the Independent Labour Party, the screening of Soviet films was made possible. Screening films, especially those from the then Soviet Union, was fraught with

[68] The following references have been most useful for this summary: Hogenkamp (1976), Hogenkamp (1977), Hogenkamp (1986), Lewis (1977), and Wegg-Prosser (1977). I have also used Macpherson (1980) and Winston (1995).

problems. In terms of the British Cinematograph Act of 1909, 16mm. film was regarded as non-inflammable and was therefore exempt from the Act, which in effect meant 16mm. films could be exhibited in non-theatrical venues. This is why there was a strong move to distribute left-wing films in the 16 mm. format, and why the copying of 35mm. films onto 16mm. in the Soviet Union was so significant for international distribution. But added to that, even if 16mm. projections were available, local authority permission for screenings had to be given. The literature refers to a number of cases where permission was not granted which led to commentary in the left press about the banning of Soviet films. There are some instances also where the banning of a screening by one local authority was overturned by another Labour-supporting council[69]. This fuelled the Conservatives pronouncements of an organised 'Red menace' and the question of censorship became a highly-charged political issue. It resulted in a stronger reliance on 16 mm. film[70]. Public venues for screenings, such as licensed cinemas, were increasingly less available for left-wing organisations to hold screenings. In the early 1930s a number of newsreels depicting workers' 'topical news' were produced by the FOWFS and screened alongside Soviet films.

It was in the 1930s that film production from a working class perspective took shape, beginning with the FOWFS newsreels. In some of the work, members of the working class themselves were involved but from the literature available it would seem that

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[69] See Hogenkamp (1976:70) for details of the effects of the permission granted by the West Ham Borough Council for screenings of Pudovkin's *Mother* in licensed cinemas in March 1930. This meant that not only could the film be watched by members of the left-wing organisation concerned (the MSFG) but that it was now open to the general public.

[70] This reliance on 16 mm. was not by chance, but by political design. According to Hogenkamp (1977:18-19), in relation to censorship issues, the trade made a request to the government to include non-inflammable film under the Cinematograph Act of 1909. Kino ran a campaign against this proposal and engaged educationalists in it. Small film had just started being used in educational circles. Kino won a test case on the matter and after 'a year's struggle' the trade and the government dropped the issue.

these production activities were mostly organised by dedicated left-wing activists, critics and filmmakers. This film production was organised and facilitated by a number of organisations that emerged in the 1930s. I shall delineate each of these and give a brief account of the work. I shall then examine the question of strategies of representation in specific examples from the body of films that was produced.

The Socialist Film Council headed by Ivor Montagu was established in the early 1930s. Its first film, released in 1933, was entitled *What the Newsreel Does Not Show*. The title itself refers to the resistance of the left to the commercial newsreels. In particular, the left was expressing its growing concern with the rise of fascism and the intransigence of the commercial newsreel companies towards representing this[71]. The Socialist Film Council also made a film called *The Road to Hell*, which was screened for the first time in the summer of 1933. In 1938 a film called *Blow Bugles Blow* (1934) was released.

There are two historical elements to be noted in the formation of left-wing and working class film organisations in Britain which match the histories of the other countries I am examining for these developments in this chapter. These elements are: the significance of collaborations between artists engaged in various types of art forms, especially filmmakers and theatre artists; and, the association with cultural developments in the Soviet Union. In May 1933, a cinema conference was organised by the Cinema Buro of the International Union of Revolutionary Theatre at the International Workers' Theatre Olympiad in Moscow. At this conference a decision was made to use the national workers' theatre organisations to establish workers' film organisations in their own countries. In December 1933, an organisation called Kino

[71] The film *Before Hindsight* made in 1977, directed by Elizabeth Taylor-Mead and Jonathan Lewis, looks back at this period and makes comparisons between what the commercial newsreels were presenting as news, what was being left out, and left-wing newsreels. See also Lewis (1977:68-73).

(the Russian word for Cinema) was formed in Britain, under the auspices of the Workers' Theatre Movement in London. It focused on screenings of 16 mm. films and began to make newsreels in 1934. In November 1934, the Kino production department and the Workers' Camera Club combined to form the Workers' Film and Photo League, later called simply the Film and Photo League (FPL). It was what Hogenkamp refers to as "the socialist counterpart of the bourgeois amateur film association" (1976:72). The FPL manifesto is represented as[72]:

> ...the time has come for workers to produce films and photos of their own, films and photos showing their own lives, their own problems, their own organised efforts to solve these problems.

Kino was registered as a distribution company in 1935 and continued to distribute 16mm. film. The FPL distributed some of its films through Kino but it also acted as its own distributor, since it worked both in the 16mm. format and in a smaller format, 9.5mm. which Kino did not distribute. This was apparently a format used by amateur filmmakers and presumably 'grassroots' workers sent their footage into the FPL in this format[73]. Under the FPL a number of documentaries and newsreels of workers rallies, events and issues were made as well as some fiction films.

The Progressive Film Institute was established in the mid-1930s under the directorship of Ivor Montagu. It initially acted as a distributor of 35mm., leaving 16mm. distribution to Kino, and later became involved in film production. The first film it distributed was called *Free Thaelmann*, made to protest the imprisonment of the communist leader in Germany by the Nazis. The next film was *Defence of Madrid* (1936) which was released in 1937. This was followed by films about Spain,

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[72] From the compilation called *Workers' Films of the 30s* (1981).
[73] See Wegg-Prosser (1977:246) for a more detailed discussion of the relationship between Kino and the FPL, where she suggests that there was conflict between them at times.

highlighting the government's non-intervention policy with regard to the crisis in that country.

In 1936 the Labour Party established a Joint Film Committee which later formed the Workers Film Association. The filmmaker Ralph Bond made a film called *Advance, Democracy* in 1938 for this body. In 1938 Ivor Montagu made a film of the Communist Party congress focusing on the fight against fascism and promoting a British Popular Front. After this the Communist Party commissioned the Progressive Film Institute to make a film. The film was called *Peace and Plenty* and was released in 1939. The Second World War began in 1939, by which time the lack of unity against fascism and the splits in and between political parties had already led to decreased energy for working class cinema. But if there was any hope of breaking through, the war and Britain's part in it, put an end to it.

I shall now turn to strategies of representation that are reflected in the films produced by these organisations in this period, and the implications of these strategies for the production of meanings. There are three types of film: newsreels, documentaries and fiction films. Although newsreels might be seen as a form of documentary, they were at that time perceived to be a specific type of film. In the discussion that follows I shall deal with the first two types only as they are most directly relevant to my analysis of South African documentary film and video.

To begin with newsreels: it needs to be noted that the newsreels made by the left-wing film organisations in Britain in the 1930s were specifically oppositional in intention. They were made to oppose the commercial newsreels being made and viewed in cinemas at the time. In the film *Before Hindsight*, directors Elizabeth Taylor-Mead and Jonathan Lewis, compare the representation of a mass rally in Hyde Park in a commercial newsreel, made by Pathé, with a FPL newsreel. The Pathé

newsreel is shot entirely from a distance with no shots from within the crowd or on street level. There is no sense from the images of who is in the crowd, the shots are merely objective and observational of masses of people. It was shot, as Lewis suggests, "on a wide lens high up on a building overlooking the park" (1977:71). In the voice-over narration that accompanies the wide and long shots of the crowds, comment is made that "huge crowds however orderly must of necessity be well marshalled" and further that:

> so excellent was the police organisation, so perfectly did they handle this mighty gathering that there was little or no trouble. Yet once again this demonstrated the tact and restraint of the London policeman and of the good nature and reason of the men in the street[74].

In effect the Pathé newsreel homogenises the crowd and sentimentalises its attitudes and those of the police. It also valorises authority.

In comparison, the FPL newsreel, entitled *Newsreel No. 2.* (1934) transforms a general mass rally into specific elements in consciously chosen ways. There are titles and inter-titles explaining or highlighting specific points, such as an inter-title which reads 'The Fascist Fiasco'. This is followed by a low angle mid-shot of young women in blackshirts marching. The juxtaposition of this title with this shot reveals the ideological position of the FPL and its clear support for the anti-fascist campaign. The camera is in, or close to, the crowds, and the types of shots that this makes possible, and that are chosen for the film, reflect this. There are low angle mid-shots of the speakers, that highlight both the speaker and the banners that surround him. Low angle mid-shots of the protesters marching highlight the numbers in the crowd and the banners bearing anti-fascism slogans. There are also top shots combined with a

[74] These quotes from the voice-over narration are verbatim from the notes I took on viewing the film.

moving camera that pans across the crowd to reveal its size. Although the majority of shots are from a low angle, the types of shots are diverse. The 'notes on shooting' for camerapersons referred to in the compilation called *Workers' Films of the 30s* are interesting here:

> plenty of close-ups... avoid long and tedious shots of people marching...banners near, mid, and close up are very effective, also massed banners passing over heads. Get high shooting positions and unusual angles...

Lewis and Taylor-Mead use the film *Before Hindsight*, and indeed made it, to reflect upon the ways in which the commercial newsreels abrogated responsibility for showing a greater 'truth', with regard especially to the rise of the dictators and of fascism in Europe. The availability of the FPL material has made it possible to open up questions of representation, especially from ideological and political positions, but also from formal perspectives. The commercial newsreels were positioned in the mainstream. They were an established part of the viewings of mainstream cinemas and their representational strategies were designed to maintain their hegemonic position. The working class newsreels on the other hand existed to question that hegemony and to propose and promote the perspectives of the working class. Not all the newsreels emanating from these organisations, however, were formally different from the commercial newsreels. Lewis suggests, for example, that "the most striking thing about the Socialist Film Council's work is that their newsreel...in fact looks exactly like a commercial newsreel" (1977: 73). The reference here is to the newsreel entitled *What the Newsreel does not Show*. It might not have been formally different to the commercial newsreels, which in itself could be seen as a strategic choice, but it was clearly different in its content. The words of some the critics corroborate this point. Rotha, one of the Griersonians, suggested that this film and *The Road to Hell*

"stink" (Hogenkamp, 1986:93)[75]. It is noteworthy here that without being formally innovative the film still represented its ideological position successfully.

To focus on the newsreels of the FPL more specifically: as I have noted they were formally innovative choosing consciously to be part of the events and crowds they were representing rather than maintaining objective, observational distance. This is reflected in the types of shots and camera movements seen in the newsreels, and the effects they have on the production of meanings. In effect they engage audiences into the events rather than creating an implied distance between the audience and the events depicted. They also unashamedly represent their ideological perspectives by juxtapositions of inter-titles with selected images. This view is confirmed by one of the comments made in the film *Before Hindsight*, that compares the FPL newsreels with the commercial newsreels: "both were in fact propaganda, but one of them pretended not to be". In other words, the FPL newsreels made their point of view explicit. It is noteworthy here that the first newsreel made by the FPL, entitled *Workers' Newsreel No. 1.* (1934), has a title at the beginning which states that: "This is an attempt to present NEWS from the working class point of view". The newsreel is dated 1934. According to Wegg-Prosser this title probably refers back to *What the Newsreel does not Show* produced in 1933, which opens with the title: "This is an attempt by a group of Socialists to show the true picture of the world today" (Wegg-Prosser, 1977:245).

The second type of film made by the left-wing organisations oriented towards

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[75] It is a study in itself to deal with the relationships between the different groups of filmmakers at the time. Grierson and those who worked with him and for him were not part of the organisations that campaigned against fascism, or that campaigned for workers' rights in Britain. In many instances he criticised them and their work. At the same time he fraternised with some of the left-wing filmmakers and critics, especially in his editorial position for the left-wing journal *Cinema Quarterly*. See Winston (1995) who deals most fully with the contradictions around Grierson and his political position.

working class perspective is documentaries. Some writers refer also to 'story documentaries' though it is not entirely clear to which documentaries this label is ascribed. Wegg-Prosser for example suggests that they are the documentaries made after 1935 by the FPL, but she does not give their titles (1977:246). Based on her date these documentaries would be those that "limit the films to one subject and refer to this subject in the title of the film" (Hogenkamp, 1977:20). An example of this type of film is *March Against Starvation*. It was made in 1936 and documents the historic 1936 national protest march by workers against starvation. The opening titles refer specifically to the fact that it is a 'story': "Story of the National Protest 1936" (my emphasis). 'Story' here clearly refers to the linearity of the telling, especially when considering the way in which the narrative[76] unfolds. The film's narrative begins with the different groups of marchers from the different centres throughout the country starting their journeys and culminates with all the marchers from the various centres converging at a mass rally in London. Some of the incidents that occur to individuals and groups on route are also documented. There is another way, however, that the notion of 'story' attached to these documentaries is significant, and that is in the elements of the narrative that focus in close-up detail on specific elements. I would call these elements, these in a certain sense fictional elements, inter-cuts. They are inter-cuts because they are precisely that - shots cut in-between the broader flow of the 'story'. There are a number of general examples of these close-up inter-cuts in the film: in preparing for the march there are close-up shots of equipment and boots; along the way there are close-up shots of feet being bandaged, of boot laces being tied, of arms with first aid arm bands. Specific sequences of the film use close-up inter-cuts strategically. One example of this is in the sequence that deals with the decision of the York city authorities to block the marchers from entering the city. The sign "ROAD CLOSED" presented in close-up is juxtaposed with wide shots of police

[76] Here I am consciously differentiating between 'story' and 'narrative'.

on horseback and expensive cars parked next to York minster. Close-up inter-cuts are also strategically used in this sequence with inter-titles. For example, a short series of images looks like this:

1. Title: "In this hall"
2. Shot of Salvation Army workers
3. Title: "a hot meal is waiting for the marchers"
4. Close-ups of meat being sliced, plates, pots of food, apples, milk in buckets etc.
5. Title: "but imported police bar the way and try to break the marchers self-control"

The sequence produces layers of meanings. First, it tells the 'story' of the marchers on this particular march, and what happens to them on the way. But it also refers to the overall concern of the march with hunger. The brutality of the closure of this city to the marchers is underlined and it becomes indexical of the more general hardships experienced in workers' lives, which have given rise to the march in the first place. In effect then, the notion of the 'story documentary' is two-pronged. On the one hand, it refers to the linearity of the telling of a story of an event, and on the other hand, it refers to the telling of that story in filmic terms, using strategically chosen and placed images, especially close-up images, and titles.

There is another meaning of the label 'story documentary' proposed by the ascription of the term to the film *Red Right and Bloo* (1937) in the British Film Institute listing. This is primarily a fictional tale of an aristocratic woman who is lost and finds herself at a meeting of the Left Book Club instead of at the Bloo Book Club. This primarily fictionalised account incorporates documentary images into its narrative. The film is a 'story' in the fictional sense, but in effect it documents the activities of the Left Book Club and the words and images of left-wing leaders. The 'story' acts as a fictional framing device for the representation of documentary evidence of left-wing activities. Brecht's film *Kuhle Wampe*, examined earlier in this chapter, functions in a similar way. The French film *La Vie est à nous* is another example here.

On the subject of comparing films across countries, and in relation to the strategic use of innovative, formal strategies, the film *Peace and Plenty* made by Ivor Montagu in 1939, on commission for the British Communist Party, is referred to in the literature as being most close to *La Vie est à nous*. It does not contain any fictional footage *per se* but stretches beyond "dominant movie conventions" (Hogenkamp, 1976:76) in its combination of charts, statistics, still photographs, black and white images juxtaposed with colour scenes, and the substitution of a puppet to represent Chamberlain. *Peace and Plenty* is a much shorter film than *La Vie est à nous*, being approximately 25 minutes long, but like the French film it proposes the necessity of a Popular Front, and interprets Communist Party principles in "a satisfying film form" (Hogenkamp, 1976:76).

Before leaving the details of the British working class film movement to examine developments in the United States, it is important to comment upon the question of who the makers of the films in Britain were. It is clear that there were a number of left-wing activists, like Ivor Montagu for example, who engaged in filmmaking. Films were made that reflected a working class perspective, focusing on worker issues within Britain itself, others presented an anti-fascist perspective concerned with international political issues, and still others integrated both areas of concern. The question is raised however, in the context of the focus of my study here, and also in the literature on the period, as to who made these films, and more specifically, the extent to which workers were themselves engaged in production. This relates further to questions of access to equipment and training, and also to questions of technology.

The writer who most consistently focuses on these issues is Hogenkamp. There would seem to be an equation implied in his writing between the maker of the film and the extent of the working class perspective represented. The question of who makes the film, who produces the shots, who directs their imaging, is a vexed one, especially

since it pertains most strongly to filmmaking in South Africa. It is not axiomatic that a worker who is also a filmmaker will make a film more strongly representing the ideologies of the working class than a filmmaker who is not of the working class *per se*. And, the working class is not necessarily a homogeneous entity. One of the issues to be considered here is a moral one in terms of the ways in which hegemonies create opportunities for some, and limitations for others. Apartheid is a prime example of this, along with the ensuing denial of access to film training and practice for the majority of black people in the country. But added to this, is the issue of limitations and of what I would call 'containing prescriptions' of the types of issues, events and imagery that are available within the public domain of spectatorship. In some ways, legislation in South Africa maintained this type of prescriptiveness to filmmaking activities. And from the above discussions of working class cinema in other countries in the 1920s and 1930s it is clear that legislation also played its part there. There were however conscious attempts to develop a 'grassroots' base to working class film production in Britain (as there were in South Africa, which I will deal with elsewhere in this study). This move by the FPL in particular, took the form of encouraging workers in various areas to film footage of events and send the material into the league's offices to be edited into films being produced. Hogenkamp makes the point that "envelopes with film material that had been sent by League members in the country to the London headquarters, still survive" (1977:20). On the one hand this proves the fact that workers were sending in their own film material, but at the same time the existence of these envelopes when the archive was discovered in the 1970s might suggest that the League did not incorporate much of the members' work into those productions that emanated from the London centre.

There were films produced entirely by workers filming as a collective. The films *Construction* (1935), and *Revolt of the Fishermen* (1935) are two examples of these. The first of these documents a strike by construction workers. It opens with the title

"made by the men on the job", underlining the fact that the workers themselves made it. These films repeat the innovative, formal approaches identified earlier in relation to the workers' newsreels: carefully chosen shots, using a diversity of angles and distance; and the inter-cutting of images with titles. Wegg-Prosser observes though that although the 'message' of the films is 'Unity wins' as in the other films of the period, "it is brought down to the specific issue of unionisation rather than the general rallying cry of 'Popular Front'" (1977:246). In this comment there is a hint of the idea that because it was *bona fide* workers making the films they are more orientated towards worker issues such as unionisation. This is difficult to test except to say that since the films were made under the auspices of the Film and Photo League, the orientation of that organisation to worker issues at the 'grassroots' level would undoubtedly have influenced or supported filmic perspectives that promoted the understanding and representation of the issues affecting workers within Britain itself.

United States of America

In the USA the Workers' Film and Photo League, later called the Film and Photo League (FPL) was established in 1930 in New York. It was closely connected with the USA section of the Workers' International Relief also based in New York. The League was apparently referred to as "the Film Department of the Workers' International Relief" (Hogenkamp, 1977:35, fn.66). It was the first organisation established in the USA to advance a working class perspective in newsreels. Soviet films had been distributed in the USA through an organisation called Friends of Soviet Russia, a WIR affiliate, since 1922 (Campbell, 1977:23), but the Film and Photo League was established to extend this work into the production of working class films. There were other organisations established later in the 1930s by some of the filmmakers who had first been associated with the FPL in the USA and a film school was established. I shall begin with a sketch of these organisational

developments and follow this with an examination of strategies of representation in the newsreels and documentaries.

In 1931 the journal called *Experimental Cinema*, "a magazine devoted to film theory and the Soviet film" (Nichols, 1972/3:108), published this summary of the FPL's programme:

> To struggle against and expose the reactionary film.
>
> To produce documentary films reflecting the lives and struggles of the American workers.
>
> To spread and popularize the great artistic and revolutionary Soviet productions (1931:37).

Like its British counterpart and similar organisations in various countries, the FPL in the USA distributed and exhibited Soviet films, and produced newsreels in opposition to the commercial newsreels of the time, to publicise the events that were not being represented, that the "bourgeois media continued to ignore or distort" (Campbell, 1977:25). Its focus was not only oppositional but was geared positively to promote perspectives of working class life: "The movie must become our weapon...spread(ing) the message of struggle against unemployment, starvation and police clubbings ...reflect(ing) the lives and struggles of the American workers" (*Experimental Cinema*, 1931:37).

A number of branches were established in various cities in the USA: San Francisco, Detroit, Chicago, Hollywood, Boston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. all receive mention in the literature. The national character of the organisation is underlined by the fact that a national conference was held in Chicago in September 1934 (a time when conflict within the FPL led to the formation of another organisation called Nykino which I will discuss further on). At this conference the National Film and Photo League was born, and a national executive committee

elected. A National Film Exchange was established to facilitate the distribution of films between branches in different cities. A decision was made to continue primarily to create newsreels and to facilitate this further by instituting a "shock production troupe" in each branch as well as a training school in each branch to "develop members of the newsreel troupe" (Platt, 1934:30). These resolutions followed the paper presented to the conference by Leo Hurwitz who, a short time later, was to form Nykino because of his frustrations with the FPL executive committee (Hurwitz, 1975:10). In his paper he had bemoaned the fact that there was insufficient production of films, exhibition and distribution of films, and experimentation with diverse film forms. He proposed the notion of 'shock troupes of full time film workers' borrowing the term from revolutionary theatre counterparts in the Workers' Laboratory Theatre. This highlights here the inter-relationship that existed between different groups of artists working to represent revolutionary aspirations in their art, as was the case in the other countries I have examined. In effect though it would seem that the debate at the conference over the form that working class perspectives should take in the production of cinema by the FPL, was the issue that finally caused the breakaway by Leo Hurwitz and other filmmakers in the FPL[77]. His paper for example noted that "to rule out other film forms in which it is easier to build up essential sequences not accessible to the documentary camera-eye is a gross error" and he proposed "the trailer, the enacted short, the combined enacted and documentary, animated cartoon, satiric and didactic" as forms with which to experiment in addition to the newsreel and what he called, "the document" (Hurwitz, 1934b:28).

The work of the League continued through to 1936. A number of films were made in the final two years of its existence, and like the organisations that existed in the international sphere, "history was against them" (Campbell, 1977:25). With the

[77] Campbell (1977:25) is of the opinion however, that it was a question of financial priorities rather than "either/or aesthetic commitments".

demise of the WIR, the 'parent body' of the FPL around 1935, the FPL completed one last film on the Chinese Revolution before closing in 1936 (Campbell, 1977:25). Meanwhile Hurwitz and others, disenchanted with the FPL's position on film forms, formed an organisation called Nykino, 'Ny' standing for New York. Hurwitz calls it "a small transitional organization" (1975:10). A number of significant filmmakers were associated with Nykino, including Joris Ivens, Paul Strand and Pare Lorentz and the organisation became involved in a range of work, including projects funded by the federal administration. Having completed the film *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, Nykino shifted into a 'new stage', and the non-profit production company called Frontier Films was established. Writers have commented upon the political contradictions in the work of Nykino and Frontier Films, particularly the fact that work was being done for federal authorities and structures, while the group purported to be left-wing. In some ways these are contradictions that pertain to all the developments discussed in this chapter. Frontier Films lasted until 1941 when it "disbanded because of the war" (Hurwitz, 1975:15).

Before moving on to examine the strategies of representation in the newsreels of the FPL it is important to note that the New York FPL established the Harry Alan Potamkin Film School in the mid-1930s "to train working-class filmmakers" (Safford, 1977:28). Potamkin, radical poet and film critic (Campbell, 1977:23), who died in July 1933 (Brandon, 1934: 14), had written a 'Proposal for a School of the Motion Picture' which was published in a 1933 edition of *Hound and Horn*. His idea had been for a university curriculum while the school established in his name was declared to be a 'workshop school' where the learners would not listen to lectures but would be participants (Brandon, 1934:14), no doubt based on the need to train workers as filmmakers so as to extend the number of filmmakers in the FPL. A film called *Waste and Want* (1934), directed by Samuel Brody, emanated from this workshop school.

It is also important to note here that at least one of the filmmakers in the FPL, Leo Hurwitz, was not content with the limited possibilities that the school provided. Brandon had written, in hopeful tones, that the workshop could be seen as "a signal advance...depart(ing) from the sporadic methods of the past...a declaration of the necessity for organized practical study of the problems confronting workers in the film movement" (1934a:15). Hurwitz however was not convinced and told the national conference of the FPL in Chicago a few months after Brandon's article on the school had been published that "we have not yet trained a truly able corps of film workers" (Hurwitz, 1934b:28). He disparagingly ascribed this to what he called the 'prevalent conception' that "we can train worker-cameramen (sic) and filmmakers by giving them a few lessons in photography and sending them out to cover a demonstrations (sic) or make a documentary" (1934b:28). His view, as I mentioned earlier, was that each FPL branch should train 'a shock troupe of filmmakers', but more importantly this 'shock troupe' should be "full-time" (1934b:28), something that workers who remained in their original jobs could not be.

In the South African context a similar debate took place within the Film and Allied Workers' Organisation (FAWO) in the late 1980s. Video News Services had already established its approach to making films from a workers' perspective within a full-time operation. It had also begun to incorporate full-time trainees who were practically engaged in film production. To extend this type of initiative into a broader educational project, the Community Video School (now called the Newtown Film and Television School) was established in 1989 as a full-time educational project under the auspices of FAWO.

Having noted the development of film organisations emerging from the FPL, I shall now return to examine in more detail the representational strategies and formal issues

pertaining to its film work[78]. There were numerous newsreels made, Hogenkamp proposes sixteen in all (Hogenkamp, 1977:15). Not many of these are extant since a fire in 1935 destroyed the bulk of the FPL's footage (Campbell and Alexander, 1977:33)[79]. A number of general points can be made about the strategies employed in those newsreels that are extant:

1. The images reflect a diversity of shots taken at close range to the subjects. Low angle shots highlight images of banners and marchers. Close-ups and mid-shots are used for dramatic effect. There are hand-held shots[80]. The images are what I would call 'committed' rather than distanced. This is underlined by the ways in which the filmmakers of the time talk or write about the film form to which they aspired then. Brody, for example, speaks of "the documentary form of 'engaged' reality" (Safford, 1977:30). Elsewhere in the same interview he says: "What is art if it is not 'engage'...and 'enrage' too" (Safford, 1977:29). Hurwitz writes that the images were guided by "feeling" (1975:9). He presents the example of the cameraman (sic) being

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[78] I shall not focus on the work of Nykino and Frontier Films, which developed beyond the parameters of working class cinema, and would take this study outside its scope. A more complex and in-depth study of working class cinema, and its comparison with developments in South Africa, could valuably include the films that emerged from Nykino and Frontier Films. The aesthetic choices, and the imagery, in films like *The Plow that Broke the Plains* arguably portray the influences of the Soviet films distributed through the FPL, and the production of working class newsreels and documentaries, with which the film writers and makers were engaged in the earlier half of the 1930s. Hurwitz confirms this observation when he writes that in Nykino they were "stimulated by the Russians" (1975:12).

[79] The filmography developed by Campbell and Alexander attempts to record what was produced by the FPL and some of the 'independent' films made in association with the New York FPL (1977:33). In this listing the surviving footage/newsreels are: *America Today*, which compiles material from 1932 to 1934 from FPL footage and commercial newsreels (a number of these were made but it is not known how many); *National Hunger March/Hunger March 1931/Hunger 1931* (1931), *Bonus March* (1932), *The Ford Massacre* (1932), *Hunger/Hunger 1932* (1933). Of these I have been able to view *Hunger March*, *The Ford Massacre*, *America Today* and a further newsreel, not listed in this filmography, called *Unemployment Special* (1931). I am grateful to Loren Kruger for making these known and available to me.

[80] The relationship between technology and the images produced cannot be underestimated. Hand-held images were made possible by the "unrestricted mobility" (Campbell, 1977:24) of small cameras (although they were mostly 35mm. and not 16mm.) and the absence of sound equipment (Campbell, 1977:24-25).

'daringly close' to mounted police brutalising demonstrators as "an image with a felt point of view: the fine efficient brutality of the police-horsemen, an identification with people trying to express their anger at the arrival of the first Nazi envoy to America" (Hurwitz, 1975:10). Importantly, the 'feeling' and its representation is from the perspective of the protester. This ideological subjectivity is underlined in the comment by Brody about the newsreel documenting the National Hunger March: "Our cameramen (sic) were class conscious workers...we 'shot' the March not as 'disinterested' news-gatherers' but as actual participants in the March itself". Further: "It is the viewpoint of the marchers themselves" (my emphases) (Campbell, 1977:24).

2. The influence of the Soviet films is at times perceptible, as in the dramatic shots of feet marching, referring back to Pudovkin's *Mother*. In *Jump Cut*'s published interview with Samuel Brody who established the FPL (Safford, 1977:28), he comments that: "we strove to emulate the dynamism, élan and vitality of films like *Mother* and *Potemkin*" (Safford, 1977:28).

3. The juxtaposition of titles and inter-titles with film images and sometimes still images is used to promote specific meanings.

Unlike developments within those organisations making working class films in other countries, towards integrating fiction and documentary within their film practice (to greater or lesser extents), this fell outside the purview of the FPL because its proponents split from the FPL to form Nykino and later Frontier Films, where they did produce films that used enactments and dramatisations. Ironically, however, even though the FPL re-committed itself to making "unvarnished newsreels" (Campbell, 1977:24) at its national conference in 1934, from the published records it would seem that it was not beyond providing assistance to filmmakers who used a "dramatized documentary method" (Campbell, 1977:24).

Here ends this simultaneously exhaustive and necessarily generalised investigation of working class cinema that developed on an international scale in the 1920s and 1930s. Its pertinence to the study of anti-apartheid documentary film in South Africa in the period under review here - 1976 to 1995 - cannot be underestimated. I write this for a number of inter-related reasons which I shall now delineate:

1. The first of these must be that these developments in working class cinema have not been studied in-depth by the makers of anti-apartheid cinema in South Africa. There are complex reasons for this, but the primary reason has to be that this part of film history has, to a very large extent, been absent from studies in film history. Some anti-apartheid filmmakers have studied film in other countries and therefore have had greater access to alternative film histories. Harriet Gavshon, producer of the *Ordinary People* series, is one of these, which may well account (at least in part) for her innovative representations of identity in South Africa.

2. There is a certain sense of tragedy in noting that this history has not been accessible to South African anti-apartheid filmmakers. While there was at times, in some cultural organisations a conscious reference to Soviet revolutionary history it was rather generalised. The benefits, for example, of knowing about and therefore emulating, the work of left-wing filmmakers in the 1920s and 1930s who re-edited the footage of commercial newsreels to produce revolutionary meanings, could have had enormous beneficial effect in the work of anti-apartheid filmmakers. There are instances of the use/re-use of footage from news footage presented by the SABC, but these instances are rare[81]. Further benefits could have been attained from reading the debates about, and viewing, the films made in the 1920s and 1930s. Access to these might have opened up perspectives in South African anti-apartheid filmmaking in

[81] I mentioned earlier the use of SABC news footage by VNS and this will be developed in the next chapter. Another instance of the use/re-use of television news footage is in the film called *Uku Hamba 'Ze - To Walk Naked*, which I directed in 1995, where I 'appropriate' footage of a group of women in Soweto stripping their clothes in protest against their dwellings being demolished and use it as black and white, slow-motion imagery.

more diverse ways. The relationship between form and ideology, which is a recurrent theme running through every aspect of the history of working class cinema in the 1920s and 1930s, is a critical nexus in the making of any revolutionary cinema, anti-apartheid cinema included.

3. It is also important to note that despite the fact that this history was not easily accessible in South Africa, the 'received tradition' of imaging revolutionary processes had surely filtered through, over the decades. This is clear from the style of graphics in the banners, posters and T-shirts represented in the worker videos of the 1980s and 1990s in South Africa. Furthermore, the strategies used in South African anti-apartheid documentaries are in many ways similar to those used in the films of the 1920s and 1930s, most especially with regard to the newsreels and documentaries. Images highlight political banners and leaders because they are shot from a low angle, and the perception of masses of people protesting or marching or engaged in anti-apartheid activities is reinforced with particular types of shots and camera movements. Nevertheless, the range of possibilities, aesthetic choices, in the VNS work that was specifically orientated to represent workers, is limited to a rather conventionalised cinematic perspective, especially in the 1980s and in some of the collective work of the 1990s. Here there are no instances of integrated fictionalised and dramatised accounts, although there are times when the work is innovative as I shall discuss in the next chapter. ork that was produced by individual filmmakers, under the auspices of VNS, there are more diverse formal strategies. Examples of this are the documentary *Fruits of Defiance*, which I examine in detail in the next chapter, and the television drama *The Line*.

4. Finally, the relationship between various groups of artists in formulating revolutionary organisations in the 1920s and 1930s, is comparable with similar programmes in South Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s. An example of this is the Culture for Another South Africa conference that was held in Amsterdam in 1987. It united cultural workers from South Africa with those in exile, in one conference. At

the same time the strategic importance of the individual cultural sectors was highlighted. The various cultural sectors together resolved to form discipline-specific organisations to fight apartheid. In relation to film, it was on the basis of this resolution that FAWO was established in 1988. A further comparative study examining the broader cultural sphere in South Africa in relation to the history of working class cinema and culture in the 1920s and 1930s, in the countries I have focused on here would be valuable.

Chapter Four

Subjects who Speak? Selections from the Documentaries of Video News Services

The theoretical excursions of the first three chapters, weaving as they do through documentary film histories and theories of cinema and identity that are pertinent to the present study, provide a rich background for the detailed focus in the next two chapters on two broad trends that emerged in anti-apartheid documentaries of the late 1980s and early 1990s. These documentaries are: first, the documentaries of the Video News Services (VNS, later called Afravision), which represented the anti-apartheid 'struggle' rather singularly from the ideological perspective of the black, urban, male worker affiliated with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU); and second, the documentaries made by Mail and Guardian Television in its *Ordinary People* series, which more flexibly represented South African identities. These are discussed with particular reference to what I see as two structuring concerns that facilitate the representation of identities in anti-apartheid film and video: the 'voice' of the filmmaker - the authorial presence in the film's social statement; and the notion of the 'speaking subject' - how, to what extent, and to what effect the subject of the film is ascribed agency.

Before examining selected documentaries in detail I shall sketch how I view the notions of 'voice' and the 'speaking subject' in the context of this study, briefly recalling where necessary some of the terrain covered in the first chapter. The concept of 'voice' is rooted in the ideological constructs of documentary film, based on what Bill Nichols refers to as "that which conveys to us a sense of the text's social point of view" (1983:18). In other words, 'voice' is the extent to which the filmmaker

prescribes the film's social statement, or indeed, argument. This notion ties into the kind of ideological positioning that the filmmaker chooses to (pre)determine, not only for the framing of the subjects within the film, or the subject matter of the film, but for the spectators of the film themselves. This takes the concept of 'voice' into the realm of the ways in which the film works as a text: how it sutures or interpellates the spectator into its meanings through its inscribed rhetoric. As I discussed in Chapter One, this inscription occurs in the complex weaving of the text through what Nichols defines as three axes that structure the text itself - history, narrative and myth. In documentary, the historical axis binds the text to its referential reality, the historical context about which it is made. The narrative axis frames and structures the film's exposition, its telling of that history. The axis of myth provides the spectacle from which the spectator gains pleasure. Seen in the light of these three axes, the 'voice' of the film-maker becomes "a level of authorial presence...that is felt and experienced by the viewer as different from the mere replication or reproduction of the world...[so that]...what we experience is less the world reproduced than the world represented" (Nichols, 1991:128). The importance of this is precisely the fact that the authorial statement of the film is one which is 'represented'. Nichols' perspective here implies that it is consciously 'felt and experienced' by the viewer but in effect it is the unconscious workings of the text to produce meanings for the spectator that is equally if not more significant. Questions, then, of how films render identity visible or meaningful for viewers through the inscription of ideology by the filmmaker become critical.

The notion of the 'speaking subject' is more complex than that of 'voice' for in effect, it combines two concepts: 'speaking' and 'subject'. At the simplest level, it refers to the subject about whom the film is made, the person(s), the 'social actor(s)', whose historical reality frames the subject matter of the film. The first point, then, is to identify who the subject is (and also who is not, who is absent). Developing from this,

the notion of the subject as 'speaking', opens up questions as to how that subject is represented within the film itself. Put differently, with regard to the power and presence of the filmmaker in the text's social statement, the issue is the extent to which the filmmaker 'allows' the 'voice' of the subject to be represented. The notion of the 'speaking subject', then, does not refer only to the ways in which the subject speaks, literally the words she or he utters, but the extent to which all the workings of the text itself, (through the axes of history, narrative and myth), represent the subject. Here, the points raised by Isabel Hofmeyr (1995) on the valorisation of 'oralness' in Southern African studies, disregarding precisely these questions of narrativisation and authorial influence, are of crucial importance. This is made more complex when we add to this mix of representational issues and questions, the ways in which the subject is ascribed agency within the text. This ties up with the earlier point about the power that the subject is accorded to determine the film's meanings.

Theoretical perspectives on subjectivity in film point towards the ways in which classic narrative cinema works to represent the subject within the text. Specific codes and conventions conspire to maintain the sense of a seamless reality being depicted. They also point towards ways in which the notion of 'the subject' in film needs to be viewed from psychoanalytical perspectives, where the subject is never a unified or unitary whole, but is always divided within her/himself. Thus even where agency is ascribed to the subject, where the subject's 'speaking' is primary in the meanings that the text evokes, the subject is still a site of 'difference'. This conceptualisation of the 'speaking subject' is significant for this study of strategies of representation for it relates to questions about who 'speaks', who is given agency within the representational matrices of the film, for whom, and for what purpose[1].

[1] The notion of the 'speaking subject' is usefully discussed in: Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*, (1996:82-87); and Lapsley and Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, (1988:214-219).

The two broad trends in representations of identity which I shall examine against this backdrop of the filmmaker's 'voice' and the 'speaking subject', are, as I have noted, those represented by the documentaries made by VNS on the one hand, and the *Ordinary People* series, made by Mail and Guardian Television on the other. By comparing the two it is clear that there are different strategies at work resulting in different positionings of identity. In these two chapters I will begin by noting some of the general features of each category of documentary and then illustrate these with selected examples, which I shall analyse. The present chapter in some ways sets the scene for the following chapter on *Ordinary People*. My focus in these two chapters is in effect more strongly on the *Ordinary People* series since it is more complex on strategies of representation and the questions of identity that are thus raised, and therefore requires more detailed focus. It is also, in my view, a proposed or possible way forward for the representation of identities in South Africa, for it reflects multiplicities of identities, rather than fixed categories of identities, and facilitates an engagement in the often extraordinary events of South African life with a subjective intimacy never before represented. It therefore warrants more detailed introspection.

Video News Services

Video News Services was established in 1985 by a collective[2] comprised of Brian Tilley, Laurence Dworkin and Mokonenyana Molete. In a paper which locates the work of VNS in the 'struggle against apartheid', Molete identifies the main aims of VNS as follows:

> 1. to provide in-depth magazine and documentary material to international networks and solidarity organizations; and

[2] The notion of the collective is in itself a significant resistance to the conventional hierarchical structures of the film and video industry and to capitalist imperatives in general. Radical filmmakers in other parts of the world like Jean-Luc Godard for instance have adopted a similar position. In France in the 1930s the film *La Vie est à nous*, discussed in the previous chapter, was made collectively.

2. to begin distributing edited videos inside South Africa through organizations active in the liberation struggle (1991:62) .

These aims were based on the fact that the 'South African story' was being represented by foreign film crews from their perspectives rather than by South Africans to foreign audiences. The collective was formed to redress this imbalance. Furthermore, the growing mass political movement in South Africa had no 'voice' in the South African mass media and the collective perceived itself as having a political responsibility to contribute to the change (Molete, 1991:62). In regard to these aims then, a study of the VNS documentaries, based on questions of 'voice' and subjective textual agency, becomes all the more important.

In the case of the VNS documentaries I would argue that the filmmakers work on the basis of an ideologically derived political framework that proposes a symbiotic interconnection between the fight for the rights of workers - specifically and mostly black, urban, male workers affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) - and the national campaign for political freedom and democracy in South Africa. It is noteworthy in this regard that Laurence Dworkin identifies the start of the organisation "with the launch of COSATU" (Meintjies, 1989:69) in 1985. The representational strategies which emerge based on this framework reveal a dominance of the 'voice' of the filmmaker because of the political stance framing the film itself, and because all the representational choices serve that political position. It is a formulaic ideological prescription which acts as a structuring principle for the representational strategies selected. The documentaries are ideologically tight, even closed, promoting this specific ideological framework in relation to national identity. The subject is the urban, black, male (seldom female) COSATU-affiliated worker, but he seldom speaks, literally uttering words about his own experience. When he does speak, however, his words are used in relation to other textual strategies to illustrate

the broader ideological (pre)text on which the documentaries are based. Similarly, his textual representations as a subject who 'speaks' are used illustratively, rather than prescribing his agency within the text itself. His agency as subject, is dominated by the ideological structuring principle that exists beyond the text, and it is in this ideological space that his agency exists, though it is unmatched within the textual framing of his subjectivity. This ascribes to the spectator or viewer an observational position. The textual imaging on the screen is, for the viewer, two-dimensional. There is a one hundred and eighty degree line separating the viewer from the film's subjects. They speak to us and we watch and listen, without participation. The *Ordinary People* series on the other hand never allows the viewer to watch passively, for the camera is always moving with one subject or another, always allowing for possibilities of identification and of identity.

Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU

I shall begin my analyses of VNS documentaries with an example from the 1990s, to portray how the central concepts of 'voice' and the 'speaking subject' have effect in this strategically-made documentary called *Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU* (1991). I say this because it was "the first programme made by the democratic movement to be shown by SABC TV"[3]. Made for national television audiences in association with COSATU, it presents the history of COSATU in a linear chronology that begins with the 1973 strikes in Durban then moves to the formation of FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade Unions) and later of COSATU in 1985. It follows events in COSATU through each year after its launch, noting its successes and failures up to 1991 following the release of Nelson Mandela, the unbanning of political organisations and the beginnings of negotiations towards the first democratic election. All the way through the documentary, the point is made, and audiences are

[3] This is the description on the video cover which also notes that it was screened in July 1991, two days before COSATU's first national congress.

led to believe, that civil liberties and the rights of workers are interlinked, and that in the fight for democracy COSATU was a significant force.

In relation to the notion of the 'speaking subject', the documentary interviews two workers, using them in strategic combination with other elements. These include interviews with COSATU and union officials, illustrative imagery, a camera style that accords status to the workers and worker imagery in the frame, editing devices and the voice-over narration of a black female. With regard to the ideological positioning of identity in the VNS documentaries, the narrational voice-over in this particular documentary is not integrated with the subjectivities represented in the text itself, and it therefore seems to be a decision on the part of the filmmakers to pay some form of allegiance to broadening the film's subjectivities, without seriously locating the subjectivities within the text itself in a broader construction of identity. The female voice-over therefore appears to be a tacked on decision after the making of the film rather than a fully integrated ideological positioning within the text and the meanings it seeks to produce[4]. Every interviewee is male, and apart from the very rare representation of a woman within a crowd scene, women are entirely absent from this documentary. Male subjectivities are therefore highlighted even more strongly by this apparently aberrant, and patronising, choice of voice-over. The female subject is absent whether at the level of the worker or at the level of the union official. Within the narrative that the film proposes and its ideological framework women have no agency. The presence of a female voice in a both central (as narrator) yet absent (in images and words) way proposes a reading of this film, in its historical context, as portraying an enormous lacuna in this type of anti-apartheid documentary film: the representation of women, in this case women workers, in the fight for freedom in this country.

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[4] It is instructive here that the credits 'absent' the female narrator: she is not individually credited.

As a whole, within the limited and exclusive identities that the film proposes, the documentary is principally interactive[5], based on excerpts of interviews used in ways that clearly have been carefully prescribed, and not only in that they are all with men. They can be seen in three clusters: those with COSATU and union officials; those with commentators outside the union movement; and interviews with two workers, who represent the 'speaking subjects' of the documentary. The 'speaking subject' is, as I have already noted, not given any subjective agency within the text itself. Rather the way the filmmakers link the words of the 'speaking subject' with those of the union officials, ties his words about his specific experience into the documentary as a whole, and into the documentary's argument - its ideologically based structuring principle that predetermines the strategies of representation and their relationship to each other in the framing and the making of the text itself.

An important feature of the interviews and how they are used in the documentary relates to the backdrops of each excerpt. The two workers are interviewed sitting on a chair in a factory with machinery in the background - a realistic worker setting. The exterior commentators are interviewed in realistic office settings, seated at a desk. The COSATU representatives and union officials however, are placed in front of graphic posters, depicting various worker-orientated slogans and images that fill the background of the frame. The image of Jay Naidoo, then secretary-general of COSATU, is an example of this (see Fig.1, p.188). This has the effect of harmonising the words of the spokesperson with the words and images represented in the backdrop - a theatricalised context within which the interviewee speaks. In this way the particular or specific, represented in the words of the interviewee, is never disassociated from the general, represented in the background. The selected ways in which each cluster of interviewees is represented strongly exemplifies the concept of

[5] See Bill Nichols (1991:44-56) on the interactive mode of documentary film.

the 'voice' of the filmmaker. Rather than follow convention and interview all interviewees in the same way, the filmmakers have consciously constructed the 'space' of each type of interview. This has the effect of highlighting the differences between them and enabling their selective and strategic incorporation into the film's 'voice' in different ways. The primary interviewees are the COSATU and union officials. It is they who confirm the film's ideological framework and the other interviews are used strategically in combination with these to further that perception. Thus, although the 'speaking subjects' are in relative terms a small feature of the documentary, their positioning in the documentary, especially in terms of its 'voice', are crucial because their words verify and support the bigger statements by the union officials. So, the comments about the relationship between national liberation and workers rights are not represented as mere political rhetoric on the part of the officials and leaders but rather they are represented as primarily significant in the singular experience of individual workers.

The 'voice' of this documentary hinges centrally on the camera style used in the illustrative imagery. This is chiefly the use of a low angle camera which highlights the backdrops of all the scenes, especially crowd scenes, or scenes at meetings. These backdrops are usually enormous banners, with graphics reflecting union names and logos. At the same time each shot is carefully composed and framed so that the aesthetics of the shot highlight the slogans and images on the posters, as well as the militancy of the workers themselves. The aesthetic effects of these shots also relates to the colours within the images. The colours red, yellow, black and white predominate, both in the posters and banners that make up the backgrounds and in the images of workers in the foregrounds, wearing T-shirts. For example, one of the shots of a worker congress depicts a crowd of workers in red T-shirts toyi-toying in front of a large banner which fills the background of the frame and graphically portrays the words 'One Country One Federation' and 'Unity is Strength'. The low angle of the

shot has the effect of framing the bodies of the workers at the waist and so highlighting their torsos and the banner in the background. Another shot from a very low angle has a similar effect. The framing just below the shoulder level foregrounds the workers' shoulders and heads with fists raised in red T-shirts against the banner filling the background in red with yellow writing representing part of the slogan 'One Country One Federation'. The imagery on the banners, and in the logos on T-shirts, has its roots in Soviet revolutionary imagery of the 1920s. The placement of the camera at a low angle, coupled with specific framing and composition, repeatedly highlights the revolutionary sentiments of the events depicted (see Fig.2, p.188).

Intermittently, and sometimes linking sequences, the documentary takes the form of a collage of images edited in strobe, which has the effect of breaking up the image and abstracting it from itself. Over these collages there is a township-based instrumental music that has a reflective quality. While these collages sometimes provide a link between sequences, they also act as a device or strategy that momentarily removes the viewer from the mainstream narrative and allows for reflection on the issues presented. In this way these collages act as an alienating strategy, a Brechtian device. They also however hold the viewer's attention within the framework of the broad political context within which COSATU was formed, especially when they represent images of crowds marching and demonstrating, and of police brutality. These sequences, then, serve primarily to entrench the broader political framework that exists beyond the specific environs of the workers' revolution, reminding the viewer of the interrelationship between the two. This is reinforced with illustrative imagery that represents the events and historical moments in the formation of COSATU itself and that followed its formation. This includes images of national meetings and congresses, police raids at COSATU House and union offices, and meetings between workers and 'bosses'. The union officials who speak as interviewees in the

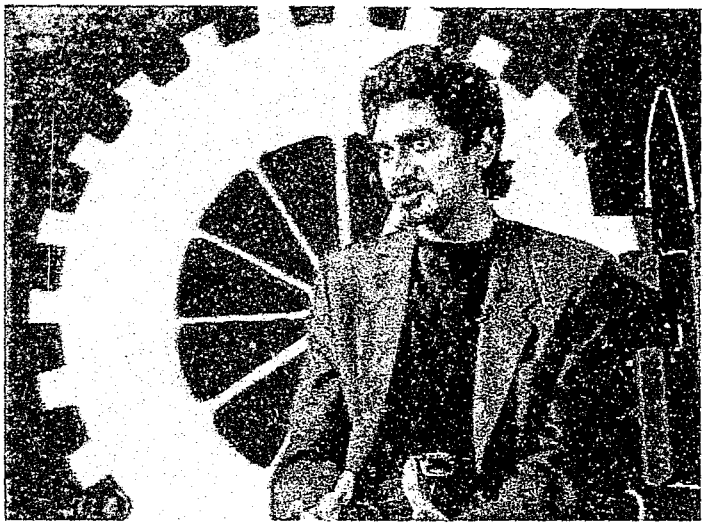

Fig.1. Shot of COSATU representative Jay Naidoo: low angle framing against worker-orientated graphics as background *(Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU).*



Fig.2. Shot of workers' meeting: mise-en-scene reflecting back to Soviet revolutionary imagery of the 1920s *(Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU).*

documentary are at times shown as part of these strategic meetings which confirms their credibility as interviewees.

The narrational voice-over, which I have already commented on in gender terms, provides information, links sequences together and propels the narrative forward. At times this voice-over becomes explanatory, dominating the accompanying visual images, and taking on the voice-of-God quality of didactic documentaries - described by Bill Nichols as the 'expository' documentary[6]. This didacticism is a strong feature of the film's closed ideological framework, for the spectator is led through the documentary with little if any opportunity to consider the subject matter for her/himself. Rather the preferred meanings of the filmmaker, the documentary's 'voice', are repeated, confirmed and reinforced through each of the strategies selected and their combination.

In a general sense for the viewer, by the end of the documentary, the outcome is unquestionably that although political liberation is underway in 1991, there is a further struggle to be fought and won and that is the advancement of the rights of workers. Indeed, political liberation is not complete without workers being given the status of 'the most important citizens of the country', as Cyril Ramaphosa puts it towards the end of the documentary. But in terms of the subjectivities inscribed into, and absent from, the documentary this would primarily mean male workers. Inscribed within the absence in the documentary itself is the need for advancement of the representation and the rights of women workers. The documentary calls for action in the real world in terms of its conscious rhetoric. It does this by creating a symbiosis between political freedom and workers' rights. It shows how these two features of South African life cannot be divorced from each other, and concludes by reinforcing

[6] See Bill Nichols on the expository mode of documentary (1991:34-38).

its argument that the future of political freedom continues to rest centrally on the status of the worker in society. At the same time the representational strategies employed by the documentary itself, the limits of the subjectivities it represents, reduces the narrative framing of South African history to single exclusive categorised subjectivities - urban, black, male workers affiliated to COSATU.

I shall now extend this discussion towards an earlier film made by VNS called *Fruits of Defiance* (1990), in particular examining, not only questions of 'voice' and the 'speaking subject', but considering these in closer relation with Nichols' theories of documentary sub-structure based on the axes of history, narrative and myth.

Fruits of Defiance

Fruits of Defiance was made in 1990 about the Defiance Campaign that began in August of 1989. The Defiance Campaign was launched by the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) in the face of the government's elections for its tricameral parliament, which sought to trade off 'coloured' and Indian support for a semblance of power in the National Party government. A massive boycott of the election was organised as well as worker stay-aways to protest the election, and supporters of the MDM, in numerous mass actions across the country, demonstrated their defiance of apartheid laws particularly in relation to the government's bannings of organisations and individuals and of 'whites-only' facilities such as hospitals and beaches. These events included protest marches in all the major cities of the country, beginning in Cape Town and spreading to Johannesburg, Durban and other cities. These marches brought together the largest mass alliance of anti-apartheid protesters across all sectors of South African society and signalled "the existence of a widespread political consciousness" (Collinge, 1989:6).

This is the political consciousness that *Fruits of Defiance* seeks to represent. It

documents the events that occurred specifically in Manenberg on the Cape Flats, and places these within the macro socio-political context. The documentary is co-directed by Brian Tilley of the VNS collective, and Oliver Schmitz, who had previously co-scripted and directed the feature film *Mapantsula,* arguably the first South African fiction film to successfully represent the brutal realities of apartheid from a popular perspective[7]. The collaboration of these two filmmakers within the production framework of VNS led to the making of an extraordinarily complex documentary *Fruits of Defiance*, which reflects an interweaving of documentary and fictional elements[8], depicting a series of what might be seen as news items within a strongly formulated narrative structure, framed by representations of the macro socio-political context.

The strength of the film's narrative structure and the issues it highlights about the relationship between narrative and representation, coupled with the explicit aims of VNS, suggest that the film is an attempt at narrating a particular perspective of popular consciousness. The concepts of both 'narrative' and 'narration' are implied here - each complex in its own right - and my concern here is to focus broadly on how both the narrativizing of *Fruits of Defiance* and the way in which it is narrated represents this popular consciousness. By 'narrativizing' I mean the ways in which a 'story' is inscribed within the film. The link between this 'story' and the representation or 'telling' of popular consciousness is my focus, in the analysis that follows, through an examination of how the film uses individual personal testimonies to confirm the popular consciousness it seeks to represent and, in particular, how it constructs one of these testimonies as its central narration. In other words, what is

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[7] For more detailed discussions on *Mapantsula* see: Beittel (1990); Davis (1996:116-122); Maingard (1994); Nixon (1994:90-97); Prinsloo (1990); Schmitz and Mogotlane (1991); and Tomaselli (1991).
[8] In 1997 these two filmmakers collaborated once more in the production of what is billed as a documentary called *Jo'burg Stories*. In effect the film combines fiction and documentary.

interesting about this film for this study is how the subjects speak (particularly one subject) and confirm the 'voice' of the text.

There is an implication here of the independent existence of a popular consciousness which can be simply and unproblematically narrated. The idea that a singular popular consciousness exists in the real world must however be problematised. In the context of the late 1980s, when this film was made, a broad-based mass movement resisting apartheid, reflecting an equally generalised popular consciousness, was apparent. In a sense this is the popular consciousness that *Fruits of Defiance* represents and defends. Beyond this, however, it is necessary to note the multiplicity and diversity of popular consciousness, and the concomitantly different forms it has taken in both the 1980s and 1990s[9].

As we have seen in earlier discussions, especially in Chapter One, film not only reflects social or historical reality it also constructs it. It is an intervention that in part determines perceptions of the real world and reproduces them by mediating visually and aurally between the real world and its formulation in consciousness. Since filmic representation is at one remove from reality it can be said to be always fictional, as I discussed in Chapter One, even when it is documentary film. Documentary film can therefore be seen as an intervention in audience perceptions of popular consciousness, acting as a statement that defines it. I am using the example of *Fruits of Defiance* to show how this is achieved. The film claims to represent popular consciousness at a particular moment and place in history and fulfills these claims in terms of both its

[9] The outcome of the general elections in the Western Cape in comparison with other regions is an example of the different ways that the broad-based popular consciousness to which I have referred was expressed. Where the documentary proposes broad and popular allegiance to the African National Congress, the results of the elections in that region some four years later show majority support for the National Party. This suggests that this popular consciousness had diversified consciousnesses within it. Further exploration of this is not possible within this study's parameters and I am therefore, to a large extent, unproblematically accepting this broad-based notion of a popular consciousness.

subject matter and its filmic treatment of that content, which centres around the primary 'speaking subject', Mark Splinter.

For Bill Nichols, documentary film "contributes to the formation of popular memory. It proposes perspectives on and interpretations of historic issues, processes and events" (Nichols, 1991:ix). This needs to be considered in relation to the strategies that documentary film uses that can either contain or reveal 'questions of magnitude' - how it works against 'miniaturization' and for 'magnitude'. The interweaving of the three axes of documentary exposition: history, narrative and myth, determines the extent to which a documentary film opens up the magnitudes or reduces them and also determines the desire for and possibility of praxis - action for transformation in the real world.

Contemporary literary studies would suggest that texts that make multiple meanings possible would be more ideologically open than those that preclude the possibility of producing multiple meanings. This is one way of interpreting Nichols' proposal for documentary film that opens up questions of magnitude. *Fruits of Defiance* was so compelling however in 1990, precisely because it arguably limits the possibility of deriving multiple meanings from its viewing: it 'contains' its magnitudes, but it also acts against this containment in significant ways. Firstly, it is rooted in a political practice that links documentary filmmaking with popular consciousness and its expression through the MDM and in mass action. Secondly, through its content and its point of view (its 'voice') it closely associates itself with the popular consciousness that was widely prevalent across many sectors of the country at the time. Thirdly, it consciously breaks conventions in its filmic style. I will now examine how it does so with specific reference to the strategic use of the camera in combination with editing strategies.

The filmmakers seem to have consciously chosen to break the cinematic conventions of SABC television news programmes in a range of ways. Firstly and most importantly the camera is often carefully positioned from within the perspective of the people resisting the police, demonstrating against apartheid, or the Manenberg community[10] - the film therefore reads as the interior point of view of 'the people' themselves. In many sequences the camera seems to participate as an actor within the unfolding events rather than observing them dispassionately. For example, at the start of the sequence documenting the march to parliament which became known as the 'Purple Rain March' where police used water cannons filled with purple dye on the protesters, the camera is on the street observing a police van carrying shouting protesters which dominates the frame. The policeman driving the van leaps o ns towards the camera in mid-shot and a freeze-frame holds him momentarily in this confrontational position. This filmic, specifically editing, strategy is repeated in the next shot where a traffic officer walks up to the camera and the shot is frozen in a close-up on his torso, and also in a third shot where this time the policeman's hand covers the lens. Up to this point in the sequence because of the camera's participatory positioning, the perspective is an interior, subjective one. By extension then, it is the viewer towards whom the police aggression is directed. This confrontational stance towards the protesters is underlined by using the freeze frame as a device or strategy, and not only once, but repeatedly.

Having confirmed the interiority of the documentary's perspective, the camera then pans right and freezes on a shot of the empty street with the statement '52 journalists arrested', super-imposed on the image. The camera movement - m ng beyond the

[10] I use the term 'community' here without debate. It is however a problematic concept with diverse meanings. For example, Anderson (1983) is concerned with how community is 'imagined' and others are co cerned with defining it in more conventional terms such as geographically and socially. In *Fruits of Defiance* Manenberg is defined geographically, economically, politically and socially and also its 'imagined' quality is highlighted by specific stylistic features, including the overlay of music.

subjective experience of the event - makes it possible for the documentary to represent commentary on the event, which in this case takes the form of the super-imposed statement over the image. The documentary has therefore been able to represent an exterior perspective of the event, and by staying within the framework of the event initially, which has been strongly established from an interior perspective, it makes its commentary without losing the film's interiority.

Soon after the sequence described here the camera observes the 'Purple Rain March' from a high-angle and pulls back at one point in the sequence to reveal the windows from which the cameraperson has shot the footage. In a conventional television news programme this would serve to exteriorise the viewer. In this film, however, this is not the case. How this is achieved is through layers of complex interiorising strategies which work in combination with each other.

One of these strategies is the placing of the camera geographically within the Manenberg community itself, thereby observing the events on its streets through the eyes of its residents. In one such scene, from the interior of a home we observe the police indiscriminately shooting at people on the streets. The strains of the signature tune of the soap opera *Loving*, signalling the domestic environs, are heard in the background over the bursts of gunfire. The camera pulls back to reveal a silhouette of three small children's heads just above the window ledge with the curtain pulled back and the police on the street outside occupying the background of the shot. Seen from the perspective of these children in this intimate context it is a most chilling moment and most powerful in terms of the film's persuasive mechanisms (see Figs.3&4, p.196).

There are a number of examples where the interlocking of the camera's participatory positioning with selected editing devices is significant for breaking cinematic



Figs.3&4. Shots of police brutality on the streets of Manenberg in *Fruits of Defiance*: the camera pulls back to reveal the community point-of-view through the subjectivity of three small children.

conventions. One example of this is in an early sequence in the film which depicts a confrontation between a group of demonstrators and police. From within the perspective of the group of demonstrators we see a policeman take aim and shoot. The image on screen then loses focus and blurs and we see a series of frozen images edited closely together (editing in strobe) that gives the effect of a sense of tumbling in space. The viewer, through both the camera's positioning and the editing style in this sequence, is by implication positioned as one of the demonstrators - in effect is shot at - and is therefore bound to identify with the demonstrators against the brutal actions of the police. In repeated sequences the filmmakers use this type of participatory camera style combined with an innovative editing style to 'suture'[11] the viewer into producing specifically determined meanings from the film. Yet at the same time, these stylistic features lend it a quality that opens up its ideological terrain in the context of the mass media representations commonly produced at that time, notably by the SABC. The film focuses most specifically on this contradiction when towards the end of the film it features the (then) new President of the country, FW de Klerk, in his inaugural presidential speech, making a statement to the international media about the events the film has documented:

> During the night of the election deliberate attempts were made...to prevent citizens from voting. Subsequent violent incidents led to the death of several citizens. I wish to convey my sincerest condolences to the bereaved. Under these circumstances...the police had to respond to restore order, to stop the escalation of violence and to prevent the further killing of innocent people.

Here he is represented in a conventional television news shot, a mid-shot with the camera at a low angle thereby slightly elevating him and providing him with a strong

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[11] The term 'suture' meaning here the ideological and psychoanalytical interpellation of the viewer through the use of cinematic strategies. See Hayward: "In film theory the system of suture has come to mean, in its simplest sense, to stitch the spectator into the filmic text" (1996: 371).

presence in the screen image. In a conventional national broadcast news programme, either devoid of context or including context shot from the police perspective, this would provide him with the stature necessary to make him and his position plausible. In *Fruits of Defiance* however, FW de Klerk is viewed against the backdrop of the previous sequence which narrates the 'killing of innocent people' from the community's point of view. This powerfully undermines FW de Klerk's statements and in particular, his sentence offering condolences is made to appear extremely trite. Here it is valuable to draw comparisons with strategies used in working class cinema of the 1920s and 1930s. The film *La Vie est à nous* is a good example. The film comments on fascism by, for example, overlaying the sound of a barking dog onto images of Hitler speaking, and manipulating images of the leader of the *Croix-de-feu* marching, so that he looks bizarre.

To put the sequence that includes de Klerk in context: the sequence opens with a press conference at which the families of those killed are present to give testimony to how the killings happened. What is usually presented as a statistic in the media is given an individuated human context that forcefully and emotionally draws the viewer to further confirm the film's representation of popular consciousness. Where the work of the film has thus far been to interiorise its perspective, this sequence underlines how inappropriate it is for grief to be exposed so publicly. The introductory words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu confirm this:

> We don't enjoy exposing our pain. Grief...is a private thing. And to bring our sisters and our mothers and our brothers and our children in this kind of way hurts...because normally in our communities they would've been sitting at home with their friends and their family surrounding them and strengthening them. But...this has been forced on us by a vicious government.

A woman identified as Mrs Cornelia Otto, the mother of Yvette Otto who was fifteen years old and pregnant, describes how her daughter was killed at point blank range by a policeman. As the sequence unfolds we engage more deeply with this communal intimacy as the camera joins the mourners at the Otto home and is placed close to the open coffin while young mourners file past and place flowers against the pallid face of the corpse of Yvette Otto. The futility of this loss of life is palpable as we join the funeral procession and participate in the church ceremony. At the burial site the camera is again placed alongside the grave and watches as the coffin is lowered and the mother cries out her grief in a medium close-up, collapsing onto a supporter from whose point-of-view the shot is taken, as if it is the viewer that she will fall on for comfort in her pain. Again the camera's position ties the viewer irrevocably into this exposition of grief. This is immediately entrenched by a montage of shots of a number of different bodies being buried, underlining the fact that this is only one of many similar burials arising from police brutalities. As the viewer emerges from this sequence, the sequence of FW de Klerk's inaugural speech described above begins. In the context of *Fruits of Defiance* particularly in juxtaposition to the community grief and burial sequence immediately before it, de Klerk appears as a perpetrator of political untruths in the mould of a neo-colonial dictator. This is a powerful portrayal from the interior perspective of a community - the people of Manenberg, who the film has strategically represented as a microcosm of the masses of people, disenfranchised by apartheid, demonstrating against and resisting it and also brutalised by it.

In addition to the cinematic strategies that the documentary employs, the testimony of a number of individual subjects often spoken directly to the camera, or almost directly to the camera, is used to confirm the film's representations of the events in Manenberg. In *Ideology and the Image*, Bill Nichols argues that the closer an interviewee comes to the zero-degree eyeline - when the subject looks directly into the camera - the stronger the "demonstrative proof" (1981:178). In both the

representation of the events and particularly in the words (and images) of the film's individual subjects, we are consistently exposed to 'demonstrative proof' that the events did indeed take place, but more importantly, that the events took place in this way. The testimony of individuals like Yvette Otto's mother and others in the Manenberg community generally act as 'demonstrative proof'. The testimony of one of these 'witness-participants', Mark Splinter, stands out from all the individual testimonies however, as a central organising feature of the film. Although on one level he is one of the film's subjects like all the others, unlike them he has an extremely complex relationship with the film as a whole.

Firstly, his testimony is used as verification of the filmmakers' acceptance and inclusion within that specific community. This happens because Mark Splinter speaks in a particular linguistic form ('parole' in semiotic terms) that signifies his position within the cultural "structures of feeling" (Williams, 1977:132) of that community:

> Die Defiance Campaign het bewys dat it kan better conditions create in 'n area soos Manenberg...die marches it gee mense confidence dat [...] as jy iets force as jy wil dit hê dan kan jy dit kry man. En die Defiance Campaign het daai uitgebeeld na mense toe dat ons moenie pacifist moenie stil sit nie...ons moet march....
>
> (The Defiance Campaign showed that it can create better conditions in an area like Manenberg...the marches give people confidence that [...] if you force something, if you want to have it then you can get it man. And the Defiance Campaign has shown this to people, that we must not be pacifist, must not sit still...we must march.)

In using this community-based linguistic form the interviewee is represented as accepting and trusting the credentials of the filmmakers, and by extension the viewers, into the community's cultural and political space. This is also the linguistic

form used in the song that opens and closes the film, and in this way the framing of the film in its entirety and Mark Splinter's testimony are linked, further reinforcing the film's 'voice'.

While the interviews with specific individuals in the film are all shot in a private or domestic space, such as in their homes, or in a communal space, such as the street, the footage of Mark Splinter is shot in a way that separates him and elevates him from the Manenberg background while also tying him to it. (There is one occasion when Mark Splinter is shot in an interior space which I will elaborate later.) Splinter is elevated on a stairway against the background in a close-up or medium close-up. This means that his face fills the frame and brings his image and his testimony very close to the viewer. He is strongly in the foreground of the image. In the background is a section of a block of flats in Manenberg which acts in the same way as a two-dimensional theatrical backdrop. This has the effect of highlighting Splinter's relationship with Manenberg but somehow removing him from it. In this way his testimony, that speaks both about Manenberg and about the broader political context, is matched by the way he is framed and the shot is composed (see Fig.5, p.209).

Mark Splinter's testimony, in comparison to the other testimonies, is given strong definition and focus in the film. In relation to Nichols' axis of myth, the way he is positioned in the shot has the effect of ascribing to him a 'to-be-looked-atness'. This quality is usually associated with Hollywood screen stars and characters, whereby identification with the star or character is reinforced. His image is also ascribed mythical qualities by the way in which it is introduced, its syntagmatic location. The viewer is 'led' to the point where he presents his testimony with a tracking shot of Manenberg, from a moving vehicle, with the diegetic sound edited out and the music

of Abdullah Ibrahim[12] playing over the image. This has a fictional quality which ascribes a sense of spectacle both to the film in an overall sense, and in particular to the image of Mark Splinter. And since spectacle creates pleasure, the fiction draws the viewer into the film's ideological framework, sutures the spectator into its 'voice'. The relationship between the axis of myth and the other two axes, narrative and history, combine to construct the complexity of Mark Splinter's position as a 'speaking subject'.

On the basis of narrative, he acts as a link between the events portrayed within the film but framing them in a broader historical narrative beyond the confines of the film itself. This broader narrative refers back in time to the Defiance Campaign of the 1950s:

> ...We should learn from the 50s, of the marches then...history is repeating itself it's just the material conditions that's changing...Our comrades the volunteers...that time, have done things in a disciplined manner and we should continue in that same spirit....

He is in effect made to act as the film's narrator. In conventional documentary film a narrator, often off-screen with resultant omnipotent authority, narrates the film directing the viewer through it. This is what Nichols calls 'expository' documentary. On-screen narration is also common, especially in a television news format. Both kinds of narration are directed at and spoken to the viewer. There is no narrator in *Fruits of Defiance*. Rather the film relies on written information to provide an introduction to the film and written statements or dates to orientate the viewer during

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[12] Abdullah Ibrahim formerly known as Dollar Brand grew up in Cape Town and became an internationally renowned jazz musician. He lived in political exile for many years. His first album released in the 1970s was called 'Manenberg' and his persona in South Africa is culturally tied to Manenberg and the Cape Flats, the geographical location of Manenberg. In *Fruits of Defiance* therefore the use of his music is significant not just at the level of its inherent evocative qualities bu also at the level of his political and cultural persona.

the film. Nevertheless the film has a strong narrative structure which the film relies on in part to persuade the viewer of its representation of popular consciousness. This narrative structure is achieved in large measure by the chronology the film follows, beginning in August 1989 and ending with the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990. It is Mark Splinter's testimony however that 'speaks' the viewer through the film. His testimony not only verbally confirms the events we see, and locates them within a broader political framework, but it also comments on the political processes that the film represents. In this way Mark Splinter is given the authority to act as narrator. The power of this form of narration is that it is seemingly expressed from within the community perspective by an ordinary person' whose language is coded from within the community. Mark Splinter never leaves Manenberg in the context of the film yet he represents himself and his community as participants in the broad history of defiance, or rather the filmmakers achieve this rather remarkable feat. And they do this by the strategies of representation working in combination to ascribe symbiosis between Mark Splinter as representative and narrator, his local community, and the extended political and historical environment.

To extend this discussion in more detail: both the macro political context and Mark Splinter's testimony, from within Manenberg, frame the film in its entirety and its diegesis, thus repeatedly enforcing the relationship between the two throughout the film. This is illustrated by examining how the film begins. Firstly the context of protest is underlined by the familiar chants 'Amandla!' ('Power!') 'Awethu!' ('To the People!'). Then a written explanation about the film is screened identifying its context and establishing that it "focuses on Manenberg - a working class area that was one of the centers of conflict". The first images are in a montage series of people in Manenberg, men on corners, in doorways, a woman hanging washing, a shot of two blocks of flats with washing lines strung between them and children playing in the street. Music begins over this montage and as the camera tracks from a moving

vehicle along the streets of Manenberg the music becomes song - a song performed by Fuad Adams from Manenberg, in the same linguistic form as Mark Splinter's speech. The song apparently reflects on life in Manenberg as the words comment on meeting 'my brother', having a smoke and talking about work: "weet jy hoe gaan dit by die werk, die lahnee vat my vir 'n poep" ("do you know how it's going at work, the boss treats me like a fool"[13]). The accompanying images illustrate the song, initially from within Manenberg, then broadening from that to representing worker protests and becoming broader still to encompass police action against demonstrators. This sequence also includes police action shot from within Manenberg. This corresponds with similar shots later in the film, again as a device to layer the film's meanings. The song continues: "kyk ons vra hom vir 'n increase, toe loop hy weg as of ons suffer from disease" ("see we ask him for an increase, then he walks away as if we suffer from disease"). As the song ends the image that fills the screen is a silhouette of a Manenberg skyline against a sunrise. The title *Fruits of Defiance* appears over the image. So, prior to our entry into the film proper, before the title, the filmmakers have already established the symbiosis between the macro political context and Manenberg. It is important to note also that that context incorporates a working class perspective, further entrenching the film's representation of popular consciousness as being in keeping with the MDM's initiatives towards a broad-based alliance against apartheid. This in turn enables the film to represent Manenberg as a microcosm of the broader popular consciousness existing at that time. Yet, at the same time, VNS' ideological focus on the central significance of the black working class is not lost.

We still have not 'met' Mark Splinter, who is to play so significant a role in the film's diegesis. This in itself is a strategic choice, for the filmmakers have used the opening of the film to carefully and strategically establish the link between Manenberg as

[13] Translation from the video sub-title.

microcosm of broader events in the country and the particular form of popular consciousness that is being promoted as the basis for liberation from apartheid. The broader macro picture is still the focus after the film's title. We are again presented macro scenes culminating in a confrontation between protesters and police over Trevor Manuel (banned at the time and later to be appointed Minister of Finance in the new democratic government) and his defiance of his banning orders. The protesters repeatedly chant: "an eye for an eye, a policeman must die" and the scene fades. The chant continues briefly as the image changes to a tracking shot of the Manenberg streets, much like the tracking shot used earlier, and one that we come to recognise through the film as a recurring motif. The chant fades out and a haunting piano piece, from Abdullah Ibrahim, becomes the sound over a montage of images of Manenberg. It is here that Mark Splinter's voice is heard for the first time, speaking over the montage images about the Defiance Campaign. In relation to the points made about Splinter acting as narrator it is important to note that this interview segment, or piece of narration, proposes that people should march to Parliament and to the 'whites-only' beaches. Immediately after this, the image cuts to a sequence of protest at a 'whites-only' beach. It is as if at the bidding of Mark Splinter the people have risen to protest apartheid laws. Thus in the film's editing style as well as in its framing of Mark Splinter he is given the authority of narrator. It is his point of view that is represented, and most importantly, his point of view is represented as the confirmed point of view of the people of Manenberg. He is in other words ascribed agency in a number of interlocking ways: as narrator of the film, as representative of the people of Manenberg, and as leader of political action.

His agency is further entrenched by Mark Splinter's own consciousness of speaking for the people of Manenberg, especially in his use of 'we' rather than 'I'. His use of 'we' is especially significant if we look at his representation in relation to the extensive use of interiorising strategies in the film and the elaborate detail with which

the film enters Manenberg, using the tracking shot combined with non-diegetic music described above, and moves towards Mark Splinter's testimony each time he speaks. These strategies combine to assert, in the viewer's mind, that he is not simply another 'witness-participant'. This is important because there are other interviewees who also use 'we'. Rather the filmmakers have given this particular 'witness' a special stature in the context of the film, and that is to illustrate the relationship between the broad popular political consciousness prevalent in South Africa at the time and the aspirations of ordinary people, in ways that delimit questions the viewer may raise. Thus to give Mark Splinter the authority to determine and direct the film's narrative has the result of empowering his perspective as that of ordinary people, not only of Manenberg, but of all communities or 'working class areas' like Manenberg.

> The sense that Mark Splinter represents the voice of 'the people' is underlined in a number of ways. One sequence in particular achieves this most strongly when a montage of still shots of individual women and children dissolved into each other is presented with Mark Splinter's voice-over saying: "The way forward now ... is that we should continue with our defiance...".

Unlike the testimony of others in the film, Mark Splinter's 'we' is illustrated. The idea that his testimony is representative of a broad range of 'ordinary people' is thus not left to question. The power he is given to narrate the film as a representative of the community is further exemplified by the sequence which begins with his words:

> Manenberg is one of the most potential areas ... the working class areas that can change a lot in this country. It just depends on the people and how determined they are for freedom....

Immediately after this we see shots of people in Manenberg and then another person interviewed specifically by the filmmakers appears on screen. A number of additional interviews ensue, inter-cut with illustrative shots and general shots of Manenberg and

the people in it. Thus not only does Mark Splinter's testimony verify the macro events and in part direct the viewer in associating the broad political scenario with the specific experience of Manenberg, but his testimony itself is verified by the testimony of others who speak as if at his request, thereby reinforcing his commentary.

In his role as narrator Mark Splinter's testimony also resolves the film's narrative. In many ways its ending matches its beginning. The relationship between the representation of popular consciousness that the film has explicated and the cause of 'ordinary people' is reaffirmed. The following sequence is an example of how this happens. It depicts the events following the Defiance Campaign by presenting images of the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of the African National Congress and the release of Nelson Mandela. The sequence ends with a low angle mid-shot of Mandela at a mass rally. The angle of the shot gives him stature. He says: "It is not the kings and generals that make history but the masses of the people". This image and the statement accompanying it is used by the filmmakers to reiterate their 'voice' in this text, their particular perspective of popular consciousness at that time.

Seemingly to re-confirm its 'voice', to unquestionably link the events in Manenberg as presented in the film with the broader political programme of the ANC, the film does not end here. It returns to Manenberg in the same way as it has throughout the film and arrives at an interior shot of one of the interviewees, Maqbool Moos. This time he is sitting alongside Mark Splinter, and this is the only domesticated shot of him which I mentioned earlier. He presents his final testimony from this space:

> ...Die struggle stop nie daar nie dit gaan voort, en mense moet ge-organise moet ge-mobilise rondom dinge...alhoewel die ANC unbanned is, alhoewel die SACP unbanned is, alhoewel al die ander organisations unbanned is, die comrades released is en so aan, die

> struggle continue until such time apartheid removed is en die capitalist society removed is.
>
> (...The struggle does not stop there it goes on, and people must organise and mobilise around things...although the ANC is unbanned, although the SACP is unbanned, although all the other organisations are unbanned, the comrades released and so on, the struggle continues until such time as apartheid is removed and the capitalist society is removed.)

The closing sequence of the film inter-cuts shots of Manenberg with shots of protest by workers and by demonstrators, and also of police brutality, as the end of the Fuad Adams' song which we heard at the start of the film plays the film out. The film's narrative is therefore circular, arriving at a resolution within its own framework. In relation to Nichols' concerns with questions of 'magnitude' this is not a resolution for history however. Rather history's imperfection and the concomitant need for praxis is etched in the viewer's mind as Mark Splinter presents his final testimony and calls the viewer to continue 'the struggle' against apartheid and against capitalism (see Fig.6, p.209).

This analysis of *Fruits of Defiance* has teased out the relationship between documentary film and the narration of popular consciousness by examining the strategies of representation that it uses. These strategies are primarily stylistic: the subjective interiority of the camera positioned within the events, within the 'community', as a participant, combined with specific editing devices. The documentary also achieves its interiority in the use of testimonies from specific individuals and particularly the testimony of one person, Mark Splinter, who speaks in a specific linguistic form that places him in an intimate relationship with his



Fig.5. Shot of Mark Splinter: given the authority to act as narrator foregrounded against the Manenberg context *(Fruits of Defiance)*.

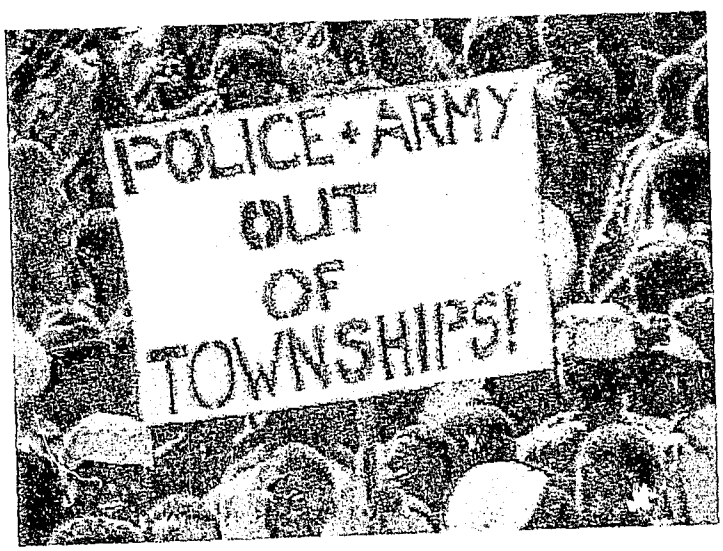

Fig.6. Shot of mass demonstration: an example of imagery from the liberation struggle used in VNS documentaries *(Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU)*.

community and also in an interior relationship with worker and popular culture. He acts both as the film's narrator and as a representative of 'ordinary people' strongly associated with the mass action during the 1989 Defiance Campaign, which the film represents.

In relation to 'questions of magnitude' and the three axes of history, narrative and myth I would propose that although the film seems to 'contain' its magnitudes, by making its 'voice' explicit, ultimately it in fact opens them up. It is rooted in a political documentary film practice; it makes oppositional stylistic choices; and it represents 'the voice of the people' from an interiorised perspective. This subjective perspective, derived from a combination of the 'speaking subject' empowered as narrator in a special way and the numerous strategies used that support the statements of this 'speaking subject', sutures the viewer into a relationship with the events depicted. This suturing, a rhetorical relationship with the film, ties the viewer to the point of view of the film's subjects, thereby reinforcing an oppositional perspective to the 'official histories' of the time. In 1990, this was a significantly powerful intervention into perceptions of the realities of South African life, especially those portrayed on government-dominated national television screens.

Compelling Freedom

Having derived a detailed analysis on the 'speaking subject' from an examination of the interweaving strategies used in *Fruits of Defiance*, I shall now turn to another film made by VNS, three years earlier in 1987, which also defines and represents popular consciousness, this time from what the filmmakers propose is the perspective of working class culture or worker culture, as it was also known. The film is *Compelling Freedom*, which, put most simply, documents a variety of workers' cultural expressions and places these within the processes of an organised workers' movement, namely the Congress of South African Trade Unions. As we shall see, the

strategies of representation in this documentary are used to define working class culture in most specific ways, ways that enable the filmmakers to make ideological claims to its history as being inextricably woven into the same thread as the founding of COSATU and the 'liberation movement'. The 'liberation movement' too is defined in terms that pertain to the film's ideological structuring.

The film uses an explanatory voice-over narration at times, but in terms of the issue of the 'speaking subject', it is important to note that although individual workers speak in the film, their views are used not as a unique strategy in itself, as in *Fruits of Defiance*, but to confirm the views of union officials speaking as their representatives. The film is ideologically tight - tying the words of both workers and their representatives into a bundle of complex filmic strategies that suture the viewer into deriving meanings that reinforce the 'voice' of the text. How this is achieved is the subject of the analysis that follows.

Compelling Freedom is about different types of working class culture that emerged in the 1980s - poetry, song, dance and plays - and specifically their existence within the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions. It takes its title from the poem used to frame the film's narrative: at the beginning, in a narrational voice, over shots of people silhouetted against a sunrise going to work, and at the end over shots of people silhouetted against a sunset returning from work. The opening words are: 'I'm the worker poet, my poetry begins at four in the morning and ends at six at night, I'm the worker poet forged in the noise and creaking of machines...'. The closing words speak of images that have been seen that make the worker 'a prisoner of my eyes' and sounds that have been heard that make the worker 'a prisoner of my ears' and end with: '...from this liberation, this compelling freedom of sound and sight I

speak to you'[14]. So the film's title, and by extension the film, is in effect a call from the worker to join his ('his' since it is a male voice-over and since the film virtually entirely represents a male perspective) imprisonment within the sights and sounds of an essentially apartheid experience, which in turn represent the place from which liberation and freedom will be 'compelling'. The freedom then that is 'compelling' is that that will come from an identification with workers, and in terms of the film, workers that are organised within COSATU. It is this identification that the film's 'voice' consistently encourages and reinforces.

This opening, and closing, has a circular, narrativising effect. The poem and the image at the beginning match the poem and the image at the end. At the beginning, the worker is rising at the start of the day, at the end the worker is returning home at the end of the day: sunrise, at the beginning, and sunset, at the end. These strategies aestheticise and romanticise the worker's perspective, through both the images and the words of the voice-over poetry recital. This is reinforced by the repeated beginning and ending that forms a closed, circular narrative, and has the effect of strongly defining the film's diegesis, framing in parallel the world of the film and the world of the worker. This narrative framing reinforces the representational strategies within the film that interpellate the viewer into its rhetoric.

One of the central, and most significant, organising features of the film is the many times and ways in which groups and masses of people demonstrating their resistance

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[14] The full text of the poem at the end is:

> I've seen countless horizons filled with crimson suns; I've seen dust settle over battlefields and rise again; I've seen bread with children who died before they lived; I've seen worlds without end; I'm a prisoner of my eyes. I've heard the leaders of stature and simplicity; I've heard the roar of gunfire bursting through my ears; I've heard the rattling of chains taking workers to the pits of slavery; I've heard freedom songs on the breath of the night wind; I've heard defiant slogans shouted above the thunder of casspirs; I'm a prisoner of my ears. From this liberation, this compelling freedom of sound and sight, I speak to you.

to apartheid are represented. Sometimes these are individual illustrative images, for example in the earlier part of the film when the film's focus is being established, or to reflect in a single image the words of a workers' song. As the film progresses however, and the ideas become more complex, these images of mass demonstration are combined into sequences that portray this resistance alongside, and integrated with, cultural expressions. Indeed, some of these mass demonstrations are themselves presented as exemplifying worker culture on a mass scale. For example, in one sequence where the narrator has indicated that South Africa's broadcast media is 'under strict state control' he goes on to state: 'but culture in a revolutionary situation finds other outlets', over images of youth toyi-toying on township streets. These are not workers, strictly speaking, but here the film collapses together youth and workers, or, put slightly differently, worker culture and youth culture, which reinforces the broadest level of meaning that the film seeks to propose - unity against apartheid, mass resistance to apartheid, under the umbrella of the 'liberation movement'. But the 'liberation movement' is not portrayed in all its complexities, differences and contradictions. Rather it is represented as a singular, unified, homogenised mass falling broadly within the ANC-COSATU-SACP alliance. And in doing this, the documentary appropriates to itself, or put differently, the filmmakers appropriate into their conceptualisation of the film's 'voice', all kinds of images and sounds, such as the rather far-fetched example of toyi-toying youth, to announce and re-announce the close inter-relationship of working class culture, as defined by the film, and revolution. I shall return to the film's definitions of working class culture, but before doing so I would like to reinforce this last point with the following example from the film.

The penultimate sequence of the film represents images from the second national congress of COSATU held in 1987. Here, the Congress debate about adopting the Freedom Charter (originally an ANC document) is the core feature. The film inter-

cuts comments of delegates to the congress proposing the adoption of the Charter, with shots of delegates seated in the hall, and further with images of workers toyi-toying and singing in celebration of the adoption of the Charter, and of the Charter itself. This sequence begins with a voice-over narration that states that: 'working class culture often reflects the ideas and debates that are currently in the liberation movement...', thereby making explicit in words what the 'voice' of the documentary has been building. As the film moves to its end, the filmmakers create the opportunity to re-iterate, to re-interpret for the viewer, the inseparability of working class culture, again (and always) from the film's specific perspective, and the liberation movement, also as specifically defined by the film.

To return now to questions of how the film defines working class culture: I have already noted that it represents working class culture within the framework of COSATU specifically, and it is clear from the start that the intention of the film's 'voice' is in fact to do precisely this. This is problematic however in the broad claims that the film makes for all working class culture. Indeed it intimates that the types of working class culture that are represented in the documentary are equal to the sum of working class culture in South Africa. And not only this, but it also proposes, in the voice-over narration, that the formation of FOSATU (the Federation of South African Trade Unions, predecessor of COSATU) "made the beginnings of working class culture possible", as if prior to this moment there was no working class culture in existence. It is as well to dwell a little on the absence inferred as a means of understanding how the film effectively obliterates the histories of working class culture in South Africa. These stretch back at least into the last century. Indeed Coplan proposes that the beginnings of South Africa's "urban art forms...can be traced back three centuries" (1985:3). He also provides detailed histories of cultural activities by groups like the Khoi-khoi underclass that developed in the late 1800s in

the Cape in his chapter on 'City life and performing arts in nineteenth century South Africa' (1985:8-55), to note just one example from Coplan's book.

Another example of what *Compelling Freedom* 'absents' is provided by Veit Erlmann who writes of the influence of the American 'coon shows' in the formation of certain strands of Zulu migrant workers performance and dance (1991:97-104), as well as in the development of the 'coon' carnival, now called the Cape Carnival (1991:30-32 & 1996:212)[15]. Erlmann extends his discussions to incorporate the ways in which the membership of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) was "one of the strongest motors of black South African popular culture" (1991:104) in the 1920s and 1930s. Further examples of 'African proletarian' and 'working-class concerts and dances' are documented by Coplan (1985), as well as culture in black townships like Sophiatown in the 1950s, which could in part be termed 'working class culture'.
In relation to these histories of working class culture in South Africa, it becomes clear that the documentary filmmakers of *Compelling Freedom* might have more correctly considered placing the particular forms of working class culture that are its focus, within a broader historical framework. This also arguably could have provided an even stronger 'voice' for the documentary. The choice is rather for historical absence, in order that the documentary can unproblematically claim for its 'voice' a symbiosis between those particular union structures that the filmmakers represent and their selected 'history' of working class culture: history in quotes here because of its partiality.

Throughout the film the relationship between specific, selected types of working class culture and mass action against apartheid is underlined. A sequence on two 'worker

[15] See my paper (1996) where I examine some of this history in relation to its contemporary appropriation for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Rugby World Cup hosted by South Africa in 1995.

poets' follows the inaccurate claims made for the beginnings of working class culture in the 1980s. The point is made that these poets used to work in the genre of traditional praise poetry and have now incorporated worker issues into this genre, praising workers and their unions. One of the poets, Alfred Qabula, is presented in performance with a large crowd responding. This is followed by a cut to Qabula performing in 1987 to metalworkers on strike. What is significant here is that his 'poem' begins in praise of the union and then moves into a performance of a dialogue between the bosses and their spies. This is represented in *fanagalo*[16] which worker audiences would recognise, although in the film it is translated in sub-titles in the same way as any other text in the v cular. The camera cuts between images of Qabula in performance and images of the crowd, reinforcing the symbiosis between this depiction of working class culture and working class or mass action, from within the particular unions that the film's ideology s s. In addition the size of the crowd is reinforced by the panning movement of the camera across the crowd. This is a camera movement repeated in numerous shots of crowds throughout the film, with the effect of portraying the vastness of their size. As I discussed in Chapter Three, such shots were also used extensively in working class cinema in other parts of the world in the 1920s and 1930s.

In relation to the concern in this chapter with the 'speaking subject' it becomes clear from this analysis thus far that the subject - the worker - 'speaks' in many different ways, and primarily through the strategies of the filmmakers which form a unified coherent 'voice' designed to promote the 'liberation movement' through the perspective of COSATU, its affiliates, and the cultural expressions of their members. But what of those workers that actually speak and how are their utterances integrated and used in the context of the film as a whole? There are three occasions when this

[16] This is a bastardisation of Zulu from colonial times.

occurs: the first two are representatives of workers in plays from which excerpts are shown, and the third is a poet. A description of a sequence incorporating one of the speakers from a play will exemplify the point I made earlier about the use of 'speaking subjects' as one of many integrated strategies of representation. Unlike *Fruits of Defiance*, where the 'speaking subject' is the central, organising feature, in this film the 'speaking subject' is integrated within a cluster of many organising features, within which the representation of masses resisting apartheid is a repeated image or motif.

A sequence that best explicates how the 'speaking subject' is so integrated portrays the play *Qonda*, which is performed by three worker-actors. The sequence opens with the narrator's voice-over images of the play: "*Qonda*, a play by three COSATU workers from Durban, is a reaction to activities of right wing vigilantes in Natal townships". This is followed by a short excerpt from the play, and then a close-up shot of one of the worker-actors - the speaking subject - whose words are translated in sub-titles as follows: 'Our play tells things as they are. Some vigilantes live around us. They know we are COSATU people, they have attacked us for that. But they don't know about the play yet'. This is followed by shots of the activities of vigilantes and excerpts from the play inter-cut with each other. These shots are representations of the same thing, vigilantes chasing a young man and beating him with sticks, thereby reinforcing the view that worker culture is rooted in real-life experience. Once more the strategy is to reflect the symbiotic nature of these representations of working class cultural expression and the life experience of specifically COSATU-affiliated workers. In this context the utterances of the worker-actor, though purporting to ascribe agency to the subject as 'speaking', in effect do not. They are the basis rather for reinforcing this symbiosis, on which the film's rhetoric relies, as one of the various strategies that the documentary uses to maintain its ideological consistency.

This approach of integrating strategies of representation is best exemplified in a sequence that is organised around the Europack Workers' Choir, singing about worker issues. The ways in which the sequence plays between images of members of the choir singing and images that illustrate the words of the song, is another example of the represented symbiosis between the life experience of workers and their cultural expressions. The sequence is introduced by the sound of the beginning of the song over the words of Frank Meintjies, representing COSATU, as he says '...we should work now to build a new society in which people would relate differently, there wouldn't be oppression and exploitation'. There is a cut from an image of the choir to a top-shot of a crowd of people running with a banner - another example of the strategic way in which shots of mass action are used. The image cuts back to the choir, standing formally in a semi-circle in black and white uniforms, as they sing 'we are fighting for our rights, we're fighting for democracy...we are fighting for our freedom for ever and ever more...we shall not be moved away, in our land, solidarity'. On 'moved away' there is a cut to a shot of a group of police next to a police van and a casspir. A policeman gestures to a large group of people to move. So here, the police action is directly countered by the words of the song. The song moves on: '...to be united to be strong, aluta continua...'. The images here are of large groups of workers demonstrating with their fists in the air, shot in such a way as to fill the ame. The camera is not static however, but pans across the crowd representing its ize, again reflecting the same strategy used in earlier working class films.

From here the song continues in the vernacular and is translated in sub-titles. There is a mid-shot of the workers singing and then a cut to a large group of workers marching with posters aloft, again reminding the audience of on-going mass action. The song moves on to the words: 'The bosses are crying, Botha is crying' and the images here are of white men in suits - clearly representing 'bosses' - walking towards a building. A further image shows shots being fired from a police casspir. The sound of shots and

shouts is now mixed with the sound of the song, another way of inter-penetrating the cultural expression itself with real life events. The camera zooms out from the shot of the casspir to reveal a group of young men throwing stones at the police holding up garbage bin lids as shields. The camera pans with them as they run backwards from the police to the left of the screen. In terms of the film's 'voice' - its ideological point of view - it is significant that the camera is not behind the police but is alongside and behind the youth. . cally, it is their point of view that is represented, and ideologically this is the point of view that the film reinforces[17].

As the images moved to the youth resisting the police the words of the song were: 'Mandela makes them cry...', the link between the images and the words of the song reinforcing the film's 'voice'. To extend this ideological positioning, the next image is a shot taken outside a COSATU national congress. Here the words of the song are: 'COSATU makes them cry...'. A crowd of delegates is shown singing and toyi-toying. As the camera pans with the movement of the crowd a banner is revealed that says 'COSATU' just at the moment that the word 'COSATU' is uttered in the song - a carefully edited piece of film to match sound and image, and to therefore re-state the film's point of view.

Over the words concluding the song: 'Mayibuye I-Afrika!' translated as 'Come Back, Africa!', the filmmakers present, in a short collage, five shots of factories. There are no people in them. The last of these shots zooms out to reveal a foreground of a large grass field, which has been burnt by the sun. This is a complex sequence within the larger sequence. First, the filmmakers achieve a Brechtian alienation effect because of

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[17] See my MA thesis (1990, unpublished) where I discuss this type of camera placement as an interior mode of representation. What is important here is that the camera subjectively represents the youths' point of view. This is a strategy that is also used to significant effect in *Fruits of Defiance*. See Stam and Spence (1983) for a discussion of how some films "exploit the identificatory mechanisms of cinema on behalf of the coloniser rather than the colonised" (1983:13), referring to the placement of the camera behind characters that represent the coloniser.

the juxtaposition between sound and image. This is reminiscent of the use of this strategy in some of the so-called 'video pamphlets' made by VNS in the mid 1980s[18]. Second, the film's 'voice' is confirmed: that worker power will bring socialism and ultimately freedom for workers. Third, the return of Africa, by implication to the workers, means taking control of the factories, a control that the film achieves symbolically in this collage of images. It makes manifest in this juxtaposition of sound and image the possibility of socialism. Fourth, the low angle of these shots and the way they fill the frame is typical of shots from political film movements promoting socialism in other parts of the world, particularly the Workers' Film and Photo Leagues in the 1930s, described in the previous chapter. It is also typical of the heroic shots of working environments and workers used by filmmakers in the Griersonian movement in the 1930s and 1940s, discussed in Chapter One. So this collage is layered with inter-textual references that entrench its wider significations. What is interesting here is that whether the filmmakers were consciously inter-textual or not, upon analysis, the use of similar strategies for similar purposes across different film practices, enriches understandings of political filmmaking in general and in different specific contexts.

In *Compelling Freedom* the notion of the 'speaking subject' is not given a special significance as a singular strategy, as I noted earlier. Rather, the 'speaking subject' is one of the multiple strategies which the documentary employs to reinforce its primary theme - the inter-relationship between workers' culture and workers' life experiences. These multiple and diverse strategies bind this theme into the documentary's broadly defined context - the inter-dependent relationship between the mass organisation of workers affiliated to COSATU and national liberation.

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[18] See Currie and Markovitz (1993:95) who comment on VNS making 15-minute pieces which they call 'video pamphlets'. See my MA thesis (1990:88, unpublished) for some detail on one of these that focuses on the 1987 mineworkers' strike.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been on the ways in which selected documentaries made by VNS in the 1980s and 1990s are strategically structured to represent their 'voice' particularly in relation to the notion of the 'speaking subject'. Three documentaries were analysed on this basis. In *Fruits of Defiance* the strategies of interiorising the camera, giving it the perspective of 'the people', in combination with editing devices, were discussed as primary strategies in this documentary. The use of Mark Splinter, as a dominant 'speaking subject', represented uniquely in comparison with other 'speaking subjects', is a device that ascribes him the central position, and the central agency, of narrating the documentary. This representation is reinforced by the other strategies employed. Thus for example, because he is central to the film's narration, and because the film strategically locates itself primarily within the space of the community - on one level the Manenberg community, on another the community of all those fighting apartheid - he is especially powerful in the context of the documentary's 'voice', not only in terms of his image but in terms of the content of his 'speaking'. His statement at the end of the documentary that the 'struggle' is not over until apartheid and capitalism are removed is therefore an act of 'suturing' the viewer into agreeing or colluding with the film's 'voice' - but more importantly into agreeing that the 'struggle' is not over.

The documentary *Compelling Freedom* establishes a strong relationship between specific types of 'working class culture' and mass action within the 'liberation movement'. These are defined in ways that are specifically related to the film's 'voice', so that, for example, 'working class culture' is defined in ways that effectively takes no cognisance of any forms of working class culture prior to the formation of FOSATU, nor outside of FOSATU and COSATU. *Compelling Freedom* achieves its 'voice' by combining multiple strategies of representation. It incorporates illustrative imagery of masses of workers. It ties the words of workers who are used

as 'speaking subjects' - two worker-actors - with images from the plays created by workers and images of the real-life events on which the plays are based. These illustrative contextual references give the documentary its referential impact. The strategic placement of the camera from the point-of-view of those whom ideologically-speaking the film supports provides a subjectivity and an interiority that binds the viewer's perspective to that of the film's 'voice'. The strategic use of a montage of images of factories creates a Brechtian alienation-effect, engaging the audience's critical judgement. Overall, the 'voice' of this documentary reinforces the relationship between the specific unions within the black working class, in particular those affiliated to COSATU, and the ANC-led mass alliance against apartheid.

This symbiotic interconnection is the subject of the documentary *Hlanganani: A Short History of Cosatu*, the first of these documentaries that I focused on, which was made some five years after *Compelling Freedom*. The ideological similarity between the two documentaries, despite the gap in time, reinforces the sense of a specific ideological positioning of the organisation itself that is consistently present in its work, over a relatively long period of time. Made for national television audiences, *Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU* aims specifically to document the history of COSATU. In relation to the notion of the 'speaking subject', the documentary interviews two workers, but uses these interviews in strategic combination with other elements. In effect they have no agency as 'speaking subjects'. Their words are the basis for deriving broader ideological points about COSATU, by linking them through specific editing devices with the words of officials from interviews with COSATU and union representatives. The camera style consistently accords status to the workers and worker imagery in the frame. The overall impression created by the 'voice' of this documentary is that liberation from apartheid has been, and will continue to be, achieved by workers from COSATU and its affiliates within the ANC-COSATU-SACP alliance. These workers are generalised, even homogenised, as

being black, male and urban. In these terms, the female voice-over, albeit seemingly of a black female, has the appearance of being a 'politically correct' decision taken after the film was made to pre-empt or counter claims of gender discrimination.

I will turn in the next chapter to the *Ordinary People* series, which represents the second trend in representations of identity. Like the VNS documentaries, the documentaries in this series are also created on the basis of what can be described as a formula. Here, however, the formula is not so obviously ideologically constructed as based on principles underpinning the selected representational strategies, which do of course have ideological effects. In contrast to the VNS documentaries the *Ordinary People* series allows for an ideologically open, 'swimming around' of possible positionings of identity, without ever being fixed in any one position. It exemplifies what Mouffe refers to as the inscription of every subject in a multiplicity of positionalities. The *Ordinary People* series has an especially self-conscious focus on the 'speaking subject', and in particular facilitates the speaking of its subjects as 'ordinary' people, thereby making an extraordinary and innovative intervention in strategies of representation in anti-apartheid documentary film and video, and the meanings they produced in the early 1990s.

Chapter Five

From the Representative to the 'Ordinary' Subject: Selections from the *Ordinary People* Series

In 1993 the anti-apartheid film and video unit, Free Film Makers and *The Weekly Mail* (now called *Mail and Guardian*), in a joint venture called Weekly Mail Television (now called Mail and Guardian Television) successfully negotiated with the SABC, the commissioning of a series called *Ordinary People*. In that year seven parts to the series were produced and broadcast. It was the first time that an independent production company had produced a current affairs programme for the SABC (*The Weekly Mail*, 26 March-1 April, 1993:32). In 1994 and 1995 further documentaries in the series were produced and broadcast on the SABC, as well as one specific programme called *A Day with the President*, presented in a prime-time slot in May 1995, on the anniversary of Nelson Mandela's first year in office.

The *Ordinary People* series operates as a current affairs programme, each episode being approximately thirty minutes (except *A Day with the President* which is fifty-five minutes long), representing topical, current events and issues of the time. While each episode stands alone as a documentary what is significant here is that it is a series which was driven by a number of predetermined strategies, repeated in each part of the series. The series therefore has an overall coherence, represented by a grid of strategies present in each part. While current affairs is a particular mode of television production with its own codes and conventions, it draws on documentary film and video as the mainstay of its representations. The principle reason however for focusing in great detail on *Ordinary People* is because it was so specifically and

consciously an intervention in the ways in which anti-apartheid documentary film and video had been made previously, in the strategies of representation that preceded it. It consciously engages with multiplicities of identity in South Africa, and represents a deliberate move to counter the singularity of the political documentaries made by VNS[1]. It is also important to note that the transformations beginning to take shape in the SABC in 1993, made it possible for a project of this nature to be commissioned by the SABC. These transformations will be the subject of the next chapter.

A significant issue related to the fact that this was a current affairs programme, is that the events represented in the *Ordinary People* series, were not always necessarily widely reported in the media. The content of much of the series was often informing viewers of events about which they knew very little if anything at all. Viewers were also being taken to places and into situations that they had never before been to or in. An example of this is the football match at the Lonehill prison between a prison team and the famous Soweto football team, Orlando Pirates. Alternatively events, situations, places that were very familiar were being presented differently to the ways in which they had been presented on television before. An example of this is the conflict between Inkatha and the ANC. The choice of the event covered in each part of the series, coupled with the way in which it was presented, from a highly personalised range of subjectivities, was therefore significant for engaging audiences not only in familiar aspects of life in South Africa represented differently, but by making transparent events, places and people that were hitherto unrepresented or absent from the national television screen.

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[1] This is not to suggest that the makers of these different categories of documentaries worked against each other competitively. Indeed they were all anti-apartheid filmmakers, members of the Film and Allied Workers Organisation, worked collaboratively as film activists in the 1980s, and worked on films together. For example, Brian Tilley, of the VNS collective, directed one episode of the *Ordinary People* series.

The key element to the *Ordinary People* series is that rather than individual perspectives being representative - representing the views of one or other mass organisation or group as the VNS documentaries had done, the individuals presented in any one part of the series, stand primarily for themselves as 'ordinary' people. This is so even when the individual presented is a leader or official. The way in which this is made to occur is explained in the discussion of the four chief principles of this series which follows

1. Three or four key individuals

The first of these principles is that each part is based on three or four key individuals, who are connected to or who converge on a specific event or place. Each individual is followed and filmed by a cameraperson attached to him or her. In most cases difference is marked between these three individuals. For example, in *The Peacemakers*, three Peace Monitors are followed through the day - one is from Inkatha, another from the African National Congress, and a third is from the Peace Secretariat itself - as well as a member of the Internal Stability Unit; in *Tooth of the Times* the three individuals are a farmer, a farm labourer, and an auctioneer. The difference between the subjects varies from one part of the series to another. Sometimes the difference is based on class, gender, race, political allegiances, occupation, and so on, or a combination of differences.

2. Camera style

Stylistically, the camera is mostly hand-held, an active participant in the proceedings, in the cinema verite style. This style is often used observationally in documentary. But in *Ordinary People* it is not an observing camera so much as a subjective camera since the camera consciously seeks to represent the point of view of a particular subject. This has the effect of placing the spectator into a position of identification with that subject. In relation to the VNS documentaries there is an important

distinction to be made here between the ways in which those documentaries represent a subjective point of view of the black working class, broadly speaking, by creating a sense of an ideological subjectivity, which also draws the spectator into identifying with it. At times in the VNS documentaries this is done by using point-of-view shots, similar to those in the *Ordinary People* series. For example in the VNS documentary *Fruits of Defiance*, images of police brutality on the street are represented from the point of view of a group of small children observing the action from the windows within their home. An interiority is created in this way. The subjectivity of the VNS documentaries emerges however from the combination of strategies rather than any single strategy on its own. In the *Ordinary People* series, on the other hand, the subjectivity created is by primarily and consistently using the camera as if it were the subject her/himself.

3. The personal-political line

Following a chapter by Deleuze and Parnel called 'Many Politics' in the book called *Dialogues* (1977), I wish to invoke the concept of 'lines' presented there as a way of defining the line drawn by the creators of the *Ordinary People* series through each of its subjects as a personal-political line. The writing of the term 'personal-political' might suggest a binarism, but the very employment of Deleuze and Parnel's notion of 'line' mitigates against such a connotation. In the series the representation of the subject as ordinary person no matter what his or her political position or status might be is paramount. This occurs not as an obliteration of the political, but as an interconnection between and around the many parts of a subject's life. For this reason Deleuze's notion of 'lines' is an appropriate reference. It allows for the sense of interconnection and relationship between these parts, rather than simply one position of a binary split between the personal and the political being elevated above or away from the other. For in 'Many Politics', Deleuze and Parnel propose that "we are made up of lines and these lines are very varied in nature" (Deleuze and Parnel, 1977:124).

The first of these lines is segmentary, clearly defined. A second type is more supple, allowing for thresholds to be crossed. A third kind is more complex. the line of gravity, the line of flight. But "the three lines are immanent, caught up in one another" (Deleuze and Parnel, 1977:125), and it is this entangled immanence, that Deleuze and Parnel poetically describe, which I invoke here. This notion has some relationship too to the concept of 'hybridity' discussed in Chapter Two, for Deleuze and Parnel write that "it is certainly no longer...a synthesis of 1 and 2, but of a third which always comes from elsewhere and disturbs the binarity of the two, not so much inserting itself in their opposition as in their complementarity" (Deleuze and Parnel, 1977:131).

4. Narrative[2]

The fourth principle is the conscious use of narrative in the making of each part: "taking fictional principles and applying them to documentary film"[3]. In relation to this principle, each 'social actor', to use Nichols' term, is a 'character', through whom the narrative cause-effect chain is motivated. Here there is a significant linking between the character in narrative time and space within a (fiction) film, and the 'character' within historical time and space in a documentary film. Ultimately this cause-effect chain leads to resolution and closure, at least in classic narrative structure. In documentary however, while narrative may lead to closure of the filmic time and space, the historically real dimension of the film, the referential reality within which the film is located, remains open. This sets up a potential dilemma for the documentary filmmaker seeking to locate or position viewers/spectators in relation to the history that is in process beyond the frame of the text itself. Here, the fact that *Ordinary People* is a series, presented over a period of three years, facilitates

[2] I am grateful to Harriet Gavshon, producer of the *Ordinary People* series, for suggesting this as a fourth principle, in a personal discussion with her on 6 June 1997.
[3] Harriet Gavshon's description of her use of narrative, in my discussion with her on 6 June 1997.

the notion that there is no end to the ordinary people in South Africa. Even in the closing of each narrative, each part, there is the knowledge of another narrative/part to be opened up. Nevertheless, the challenge for the filmmaker is the positioning of the spectator in relation to the people and events of each part, with an incomplete sense of closure that might facilitate action on the part of the spectator in the real world.

The effect then of these principles of the *Ordinary People* series in combination is that three or four different points of view usually on a single event are subjectively represented within a filmic narrative structure. These three or four perspectives are represented by 'speaking subjects' who both speak in personal narrational styles that explain and describe their lives, positions and actions, and who 'speak' in the sense that their subjectivities are consciously and strategically represented within the film's textual framing. This leads to a set of questions as to the 'voice' or 'argument' of each part of the series. Does this triple/quadruple subjectivity remove the filmmaker's 'voice'? To what extent does the filmmaker defer her argument to the voices represented in the text? Or does this triple/quadruple subjectivity itself represent a clue to the ideological positioning of the filmmaker? It would seem that this is so, primarily because the text's social statement - its 'voice' - in each case seems to be that these are 'ordinary' people, no matter what their role in life or in society is. The human-ness of each individual, whatever his or her political orientation or status in society might be, is primary. For South Africans in the early 1990s this was a powerful statement, given the polarised, brutalised nature of the nation as a whole. In a sense it might seem to be potentially conservative - a liberal position that condones all and makes no judgement. Yet, the nature of the series, and its position in the early to mid 1990s, as well as its innovative form seems to retract it from this potential. This is in many ways due to the fact that the images on television (and non-televised documentaries such as those made by VNS) were in so many ways based on categorisations of the polarisation of South African society. By contrast, *Ordinary*

People was an intervention that opened up questions of identity. That it did so in humanist terms put it on a cutting edge that could have limited its success. On the other hand it is precisely because of this humanism that it was a successful and innovative intervention in the representation of South African identities to South Africans at that time. No longer were South Africans being identified on the basis of established categories, often in dichotomous opposition to each other - black/white, workers/bosses - but rather the human, shared ordinariness of all South Africans, across a diverse range of identities was being exposed, in a way that had never yet been attempted in televisual representation.

Furthermore, in presenting multiple subjectivities or identities, in such a way that audiences are sutured (literally 'stitched') into identifying with these subjectivities, 'truth' is never fixed and is always open, allowing the viewer to derive her or his own meanings from those subjectivities represented. The viewer is not able to fix any 'truth' onto *Ordinary People* because it represents three or four angles on any particular reality. In this sense, the 'voice' of the documentary is quite simply that 'truth' cannot be fixed onto South African realities. This has significant outcomes, for when 'truth' is unfixed, it engages the viewer in having to produce meanings. In a Brechtian sense the viewer is therefore made to exercise her or his critical judgement. Who is right? seems to be the question that awaits an answer. And there is never a singular answer, an uncomplex answer, because the subjectivities represented are multiple and not only that - they are sufficiently different from each other, sometimes extremely so, to make this lack of singularity highly probable.

There is no doubt that the primary strategy of this documentary series is the consistent focus on the representation of individual subjectivities, as I noted earlier. Unlike the VNS documentaries, which vary in the strategies they use, though they are all to the same ideological end, in *Ordinary People* the same formula is reproduced in each part

of the series, also to the same end. This primary strategy, focusing on individual subjectivities, would not work as coherently if it were not for the fact that three additional strategies are tied to this one: the subjects are 'speaking subjects'; the individual subjectivities are marked by significant difference one from the other; and the camera style used enables these individual subjectivities to be represented so that audiences are sutured into positions of identification with each of them. And, at the time of their broadcast, the subjectivities represented took South African audiences into new experiences, or familiar ones but in new ways, through the eyes of subjects whose difference meant that they would not all be subjects with whom viewers would usually identify. In effect then, the *Ordinary People* series achieves a rejection of stereotypes. It personalises those categories of people that have been socially 'fixed' - the farmer, the activist, the lesbian, the prison warder, the policeman etc. These most often also have a racial dimension, for example, the farmer is a white farmer, the activist is a black activist. Thus, rejecting these stereotypes is also an intervention in racial attitudes that audiences might have. Furthermore, the identities of the subjects are not necessarily always encapsulated as whole, or unfragmented. For, at times, individual subjects may reveal difference within themselves, and not only in relation to other subjects in the same part of the series. This adds to the complexity of questions of identity in the series.

In this chapter I will examine the pilot programme, *The Peacemakers* (1993) in detail, based on the features I have identified thus far. I will then extend the discussion in relation to two further examples from the series. Finally, I will analyse *A Day with the President*, primarily because Nelson Mandela is one of the most 'extraordinary' of 'ordinary' people, and the work of *Ordinary People* to represent him in the series raises questions about how widely the 'formula' is applicable. These four documentaries together represent just over a ten percent sample of the series, examining the key elements of the series and the effects of the ways they are applied

in a small but significant sample (due to copyright it is not possible to include exemplary images in the text).

The Peacemakers

The principle elements discussed above were visible in the series from the start, in the pilot programme entitled *The Peacemakers*, which I will now examine in some detail, because it was the pilot episode and set the scene for those that followed. This documentary was produced on the 1993 anniversary of the 1961 Sharpeville massacre. Two commemorative rallies were held by the opposing Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress in Vosloorus. The potential for violence to erupt between the parties is a theme of the episode as tensions mount, particularly when the routes of each march which had been agreed prior to the events are changed. The documentary focuses on the work of four 'ordinary' people trying to keep the peace: two peace monitors, one an IFP member and the other an ANC member; a member of the police force on duty in the township on that day; and a peace facilitator from the Peace Secretariat working in the township. The interesting feature of *The Peacemakers* is that it is representing polarities within South African society, chiefly conflict between the IFP and the ANC, as well as less specified polarities such as those presented by Clive, the member of the Internal Stability Unit, who talks about the differences between blacks and whites, 'we' and 'they'. But because it does this from individualised perspectives the narrative foregrounds the 'ordinary' individual and the polarities become part of a personal-political line located in the individual's subjectivity.

There are times when the dramatic impact of the political context leaps into the foreground of the image - an example of this is when Gertrude, the monitor who is an IFP member, fails to halt the IFP marchers, who have chosen a route not agreed to and are about to meet with buses "loaded with ANC supporters", according to the

voice-over narration. The images that represent this in effect very powerfully show up the IFP as being uncontrolled, undisciplined and careless. For as soon as Gertrude tells the crowd of marchers that the ANC buses are very close, the camera shows IFP supporters ignoring her request that they stop and responding aggressively by calling the marchers to move forward towards the ANC. This image is juxtaposed with the ANC supporters' response which is to turn the buses around and move out of the way. A shot of a young supporter holding onto the side of the bus and confidently making a turning gesture with his hand acts as a counter-image to the apparent aggression of the IFP supporters. The tension of the situation is highlighted by two images which the documentary presents between these two: one of these shows police with guns in their hands moving onto the road between the two groups; the other is an example of the overlapping of the individual subjects, who are the focus of the documentary, with the highly charged social context they are in, to which they are not exterior observers. In this shot Gertrude and Faith (of the ANC), along with others from the Peace Committee and some Inkatha supporters meet on the road between the two groups of supporters. Faith explains the problem and in doing so is clearly upset as she states that the Inkatha supporters have taken the wrong route - Gertrude and the Inkatha supporters react. Another member of the Peace Committee takes a stand on how they should rather deal peacefully with the problem. Gertrude agrees, and the camera cuts away. Here, two subjects of the documentary meet. They are opposite to each other politically, yet as 'ordinary' people they are the same. This has been strongly established by earlier sequences of the documentary where their introductions to the audience are visually and aurally matched (discussed in detail below). The futility of the political conflict is underlined. But at the same time, it is represented as being tied entirely to the subjectivity of these individuals. Rarely are there images of the conflict that stand alone.

The documentary's ideological position is clearly supportive of the ANC as against Inkatha which the following elements in the documentary underline. When David from the Peace Secretariat is interviewed on the side of the road, about the successful aversion of potential conflict he makes the point that 'we are grateful to the ANC for getting their people inside the bus and around'. Later the narrator makes the comment that after the rally "again Inkatha supporters take the most direct but wrong route" and when the narrative is moving towards closure we see Gertrude commenting on her disappointment that things went wrong because the wrong routes were taken. This is a strong statement coming from her because she herself is a member of the IFP.

These moments when the larger picture, the broader social context, seeps through to the foreground of the programme, are significant in terms of the 'voice' of the documentary. For here the text's 'voice', and therefore the 'voice' of the producer is that the potential conflict was in effect created by the IFP taking the wrong routes, and breaking the previously made agreements on which routes each group would take. This 'argument' within the documentary is strengthened also by the explanatory maps. Where the convention would be to represent the map independently with a voice-over explanation, here the documentary uses the opportunity to underline the individual subjectivities by showing David with a map spread out on the bonnet of his car within the situation itself, explaining to the camera the two different routes depicted in different colours with the potential points of conflict encircled. So the individual subject is tied, in the narrative structure, to the unfolding 'story' of the event and to the ideological position of the filmmakers. When this overlapping occurs the documentary's 'voice' is strongest. The aggression of the IFP supporters is all the more powerful because it is tied to the individual within it, in this case Gertrude, with whom the audience has been led to identify, from the outset of the documentary. Thus, while the documentary purports to be non-judgmental, it does in effect, and on analysis, position itself ideologically.

This subject identification, the spectator identifying with the subject, is a primary element throughout the documentary, beginning with the opening sequence, which introduces each of the four individuals firstly within her or his domestic space at the start of the day. Faith, for example, is introduced with an opening shot of a township street. The shot is subtitled: 'Sunday, 5 a.m.'. Over the shot we hear the sound of a cock crowing. The camera pans left and stops on a house that is lit. The shot cuts to an image of a black woman in mid-shot putting on a beret. Her T-shirt has the words 'Local Peace Committee of the Peace Secretariat' on it. The image is sub-titled: 'Faith in Katlehong'. The long shot of the street conventionally establishes the geographical location, while the mid-shot of the 'character' gives the viewer a close impression of the subject. Each of the four individuals is introduced in a similar way.

The next subject is a white policeman in camouflage uniform, also getting dressed, doing up his belt. The subtitle tells the audience he is 'Clive in Boksburg'. The camera tilts down as he does up his belt, lifts a gun and pans with him as he leaves the room. In the next shot the camera is behind him as he enters another room and kisses somebody lying in bed asleep. From here we move to the third person, opening with a shot of the dark sky with a few lights visible, signifying the time of day. The camera pans right and we see a white man locking the door of a flat, subtitled 'David in Johannesburg'. He turns and walks past the camera. The camera follows as he walks into the lift. From here the next subject is introduced. The shot is a top-shot of a black woman cleaning a floor, subtitled: 'Gertrude in Thokoza'. There is a cut to a close up of her face from a low angle, then the image fades to black and fades up on the title of this part of the series.

So in this opening sequence we have 'met' each individual subject at the same time on the same day. This gives them equal space within the narrative and has the effect therefore of equalising them for the audience as individuals. This is important for the

unfolding narrative, for as the day progresses the audience will continue to identify more or less equally with each of these subjects in turn. Thus far we have only observed each subject. In the sequence that follows the title each subject is represented again, some of them commenting on the day and the events that are planned.

First some shots of men in camouflage uniform, including shots of Clive, silhouetted against the early morning sky are presented. This is a roll call, names are being called out. For the first time we hear the voice-over narration, in a black, male voice, saying: "March the twenty-first, Sharpeville Day. The Katlehong ISU is about to be deployed in three East Rand townships". So Clive here does not speak, but images of him in the context of his role are used to provide information to the viewer in the voice-over.

From this the documentary cuts to an image of a meeting of people, some seated and some standing, around tables, most of them in 'Peace' T-shirts. The image is subtitled: 'Regional Peace Secretariat'. The camera cuts to a close-up of a pile of large 'Peace Committee' stickers. David picks one up and begins to talk to the meeting about it. His voice is edited over the image saying: "This thing is big, bigger than anything we've ever done before. Two major rallies, one Inkatha, one ANC, on Sharpeville Day, four kilometres apart. It's big". In this way he both speaks out his own views, and reiterates the context we have already been given by the unseen narrator, thereby underlining the potential conflict within which each subject will play out her or his role as a 'peacemaker'.

The image cuts to a side shot of David driving a car, showing large stickers on the side that say 'Peace Committee', on the motorway, silhouetted against the city skyline at sunrise. This is followed by a cut to a closer side shot of David. Then there are two more general shots that open up the frame and provide a further sense of context. The

first of these is an image in long shot of the motorway, the second is a tracking shot taken from a moving vehicle of the view from a car on a motorway - in this shot the piece shown is of railway lines: another signifier of political violence at the time. David's voice continues over these shots: "...we've done as much as we can. Now it's up to the ANC, the IFP, and the security force".

At this point in the documentary Faith is the next subject to be further contextualised. We see her first in her domestic space, in mid-shot, praying with a group of people in her house. Then as she leaves the house the camera follows behind her giving the viewer her subjective point-of-view. As the camera tracks behind her we pass a man outside the house wearing a 'Free Mandela' T-shirt - a reminder once more of the broader context of what we are watching, and also a signifier of Faith's political allegiances. The image is subtitled: 'Faith, ANC Peace Monitor'. She greets people outside her house and the camera, still behind her, holds the shot watching as she walks down the township street with a young woman, who had left the house with her. Over this image we hear her voice-over, reflecting on the fact that people learn to fight for everything, to clothe themselves, to eat, to work, for housing - "you know it's within them because of the system that we've been living in...now eventually a person fights for everything, you know it's in the blood". This voice-over commentary that projects Faith's concern about violence is followed by additional commentary in ambient sound as the camera tracks alongside her in a mid-shot. The camera cuts to a long shot of her taken from the other side of a street as she says in voice-over: "I'm just a housewife, an ordinary housewife...". Here there is a juxtaposition of her 'ordinary' life, her privatised, domesticated life, which we have already observed, with the broader political concerns that she voices. She continues the personalised commentary about herself, while from her point-of-view we see a road lined with casspirs. She audibly draws in her breath while the voice-over continues. So there is a constant juxtaposition of the personal, private persona with

the political context within which the subject lives or works. The personal-political line is reinforced.

This approach to presenting Faith is matched by the way in which Gertrude is presented. First we see a close-up of Gertrude with a European Community observer next to her. The camera pans to show her ANC team mate talking about conflict. The unseen narrator comments that Gertrude, an Inkatha monitor, is teamed up for the day with the ANC. There is a cut to a shot of Gertrude walking in the township with a 'peace secretariat' flag over her shoulder, taken from behind her. In the background of the image we see migrant labour hostels, site, and therefore signifier, of political violence linked with Inkatha-supporting hostel dwellers. She comments: 'If this day is successful it's just going to be a symbol that we can make it, I mean peace'. Off-camera we hear the question: "And if it fails?". She replies: 'It means that we will be failing to make peace, but we will have to go on until we get it, because we want it'. So here we have a matching of her concerns about violence and peace in a similar way to those voiced by Faith. As her commentary continues, with the camera still behind or alongside her, she brings in her personal experience, integrating the personal with the political: 'I was one of those people who were victimised. My house was destroyed by fire and my property was looted and my vehicles were set alight, so I don't want anyone to experience that what I have experienced (sic). So that is why I engaged myself in the peace'. The camera holds still as we watch Gertrude from behind continuing to walk down the road through the hostels - a shot that matches a similar shot of Faith walking down the township street. This matching underlines the fact that Inkatha and the ANC are in conflict with each other, but it simultaneously underlines the human similarity between the two women, a point that the series as a whole makes repeatedly.

Having now had a more strongly contextualised introduction to David, Faith and Gertrude, where the audience has heard them speaking in some detail about themselves and their concerns for the day, the expectation is that Clive's subjectivity will be similarly presented. But before this happens, the documentary opens up allowing the event around which the narrative is structured to have some visual space. This is done in a way that still ties the subjective-ness of the documentary to the broader event. It does not move away from the individualised subjective nature of the style of the documentary that has preceded this point. By contrast, the VNS documentaries would move away from subjective perspectives and provide illustrative shots, edited in as directorial visual comment.

In this documentary this kind of illustration, binding the broader narrative event with subjective points of view, is achieved in a short sequence that shows a large group of ANC supporters marching forward into the frame down a road over Faith's shoulder - another point-of-view shot underlining her subjectivity. The marchers are moving from left to right in the frame. As they pass in front of the camera Faith talks with one of the leaders in the background. The next shot is juxtaposed against this one, for it shows a large group of IFP supporters crossing the frame from the opposite side of the frame - from right to left. Visually, it is as if the two groups are marching towards each other. This edited juxtaposition therefore has the effect of intensely heightening the dramatic sense of conflict. In narrative terms, the filmmaker manipulates the images, through editing, to achieve dramatic tension. The spectator is led to expect therefore, that this tension will be resolved by the narrative as it unfolds.

Having visually represented the potential conflict, the narrative shifts to the presentation of Clive, which equalises the four subjective viewpoints. His context is the place from which he plays his role in the conflict - the driving seat of a casspir. The first shot in this sequence is a mid-shot of Clive taken from the side with

marchers visible in the background through his window. His first comment is personalised: 'My mother worries...well I had to phone her once (inaudible) otherwise she was a bit upset. Been shot at, that type of thing. Ja, I'd been shot at. Couldn't see them and it was at night OK. We couldn't shoot back at them 'cause we couldn't see where they were shooting from'. Here there is a cut to a full-frame image of a steel-reinforced window of a casspir. In the middle of the window there is a large hole (presumably for guns). Being an interior shot from within the casspir, tracking with it as it moves, it represents Clive's subjective point-of-view. This subjectivity is matched by the shots that follow, taken from behind or alongside Clive as he speaks about his experiences. The windows show that they have been shot at or that heavy objects have been thrown at them. The shots also repeat Clive's subjective point-of-view of the marches taking place. For example, in one shot taken from behind Clive, we see a large crowd of Inkatha supporters through the front of the casspir. He comments in response to off-camera questions being put to him, mostly inaudibly, from the back of the casspir, on how things have changed for the better: 'I mean now there's more control over everything...I mean where they'd rather, much more rather, listen to their own people OK, than listen to us...because now we tell them they have to do it, where their people persuade them to do it (inaudible)'. Once more the mixture of personal with political, reinforced by the subjective camera maintains the relationship, for the viewer, between the dramatic conflict being played out beyond the windows of the casspir, with the individual responses of the 'ordinary' subjects of the documentary.

This focus on each 'ordinary' person in the documentary is carried through to the closing sequences. Each subject is represented both visually and aurally, in a space that is removed from the events of the day. It is clearly the end of the day, the sun is setting, it is dark. The narrative structure uses the natural cycle of the day, opening at sunrise, closing at sunset. First we see Gertrude from behind. She appears tense as she

walks, and the identifying square pinned onto her back has fallen loose, underlying the hopelessness she feels. In a voice-over we hear her comments on the day. She reiterates the point about the agreement being violated and the wrong routes taken and ends with the words '...there was no fun in it because I've been working hard and sweating'. There is a dissolve into a shot taken from a vehicle moving along the motorway. The image is the scene alongside. It is sunset and pylons fill the foreground of the image etched against the darkening sky. Strains of the music from the series' title sequence are overlaid. Another dissolve and we see a mid-shot of Faith sitting in a lounge drinking a glass of water, looking very tired. She is speaking to others in the room. 'I'm very tired, I'm thirsty. Luckily they didn't fight' she says (as translated in subtitles).

The shot dissolves into another shot from the moving vehicle, with music from the title sequence. A further dissolve from this shot presents Gertrude sitting in a kitchen looking tired and downcast, with a cup in her hand. Her voice-over comments: "We have to forgive, you know we are Christians. We have to forgive". In a small but significant gesture she moves the cup which is empty, as if in despair. A dissolve from this shot takes the viewer to a shot of the front of a casspir, headlights on in the dark, turning towards the camera. As the camera cuts to a mid-shot of Clive walking into a room, his voice-over makes the point that: "For the amount of people we had there from Inkatha, from the ANC, it worked out pretty well...for just that one incident where they were eighty metres away from each other, I mean I don't know what would have happened if we weren't there okay. But I think they can look at today as being a success". This issue of success is picked up in David's final commentary.

Once more from Clive the shot dissolves into a tracking shot from a moving vehicle of the cityscape in the sunset. This shot dissolves into a pan, from left to right like the

shot before it, of a room, recognisable as the Peace Committee meeting room from the opening sequences of the documentary. Here however there are no people in the shot. The tables and chairs are empty, but as the camera continues panning we see David seated alone at one of the tables facing the camera. He has a cup and saucer in front of him, his hand over his mouth, as he stares ahead. His voice-over, which begins over the exterior tracking shot, comments on how everybody involved did their best. As the shot dissolves to the interior space of the meeting room he continues: "I don't know how you judge your success, or whether it wasn't a success...what would have happened if we weren't there...what happened because we were there, I don't know".

The effect of this sequence is profound, primarily because of its reflective nature. This is engendered by: the time of day which is used in the images; the dissolves to and from shots of the geographic landscape in a seeming journey from the site of the event back into the city overlaid with brief excerpts from the music of the title sequence; and the representation of each subject's considerations of the day integrated with these more exterior shots. Here, with regard to Nichols' concern with praxis, the event itself may be over, but the conflicts which drive a wedge between different groups and organisations are still there. Violence has been averted but will it be averted next time? we could ask as the documentary closes. The narrative is complete but historical reality is not. Furthermore, praxis within that history is exemplified by the actions of four individual subjects with whom we have been led to identify. History is not something that exists outside of individual, personal lives. Indeed, the 'speaking subject', not only speaks about that history, but has agency within it. This agency is not only tied to the subject's representative-ness, of an organisation, a political allegiance, but to the fact that he or she is an 'ordinary' person like anyone else watching the programme. Thus the subjects' ordinariness is the central feature that binds the viewer to the documentary's 'argument' and to the possibility that

praxis may follow. The documentary then is an intervention into historical reality, not only because of its strategies of representation but also because of its potential effects on viewers.

In this section on *The Peacemakers* I have shown how a carefully detailed analysis reveals the consistent focus of this episode of the *Ordinary People* series on the representation of individual subjectivities. There is no doubt that this is the primary strategy of this documentary series, which is used in every single part of the entire series. In the following section of this chapter I will show how this strategy was used in other parts of the series. Unlike the VNS documentaries, which vary in the strategies they use though they are all to the same ideological end, in *Ordinary People* the same formula is reproduced in each part of the series, also to the same end. The analyses that follow will extend the discussion on *The Peacemakers* to other parts of the series.

The intention in this next section is to further highlight the strategy of representation that is primary in the *Ordinary People* series: the representation of a number of individual subjectivities. This is itself the basis of the series, but as I have shown it would not work as coherently if it were not for the fact that three additional strategies are tied to this one: the subjects are 'speaking subjects'; the individual subjectivities are marked by significant difference one from the other; and, the camera style used enables these individual subjectivities to be represented so that audiences are sutured into positions of identification with each of them.

It is also important to refer back to a point I raised at the beginning of this chapter, that the subjectivities represented took South African audiences into new experiences, or familiar ones but in new ways, through the eyes of subjects whose difference meant that for viewers they would not all be subjects with whom they would usually

identify. In effect then, the *Ordinary People* series achieves a rejection of stereotypes personalising those categories of people that have been socially 'fixed'. Furthermore, the identities of the subjects are not necessarily always encapsulated as whole, or unfragmented. For, at times, individual subjects may reveal difference within themselves, and not only in relation to other subjects in the same part of the series. This adds to the complexity of questions of identity in the series. How this issue of the representation of the subject is used as a strategy in other parts of the series and the complex questions of identity that are achieved is the focus of the ensuing discussion.

The Tooth of the Times

This episode is the next choice for analysis, because it was also part of the 1993 documentaries, therefore before the election in 1994, and because it highlights an issue that, as the country was moving towards a democracy, was represented in the media more strongly in relation to land rights and black people. The 'plight' of the white farmer was not a political priority at that time. To view a white farmer in a national television programme from his personal subjective position, in a documentary made by anti-apartheid filmmakers, was an exceptionally new moment in television, much in the same way as the subjective, interior view of Clive's casspir in *The Peacemakers*.

In *The Tooth of the Times* the idea that difference between subjectivities is an important strategy is well exemplified. This is reflected particularly in the difference between the white farmer, and the black labourer. Although as I will show the documentary is apparently centrally about the white farmer it becomes clear that it is also about the black labourer. In relation to this difference, the ways in which the subjects are both 'speaking' and 'non-speaking' adds to the meanings which this part of the series produces. For although the farmer is in effect a 'speaking subject' in

larger measure than the labourer, it is clear that to him and his wife, the black workers in their employ have no personalised voice. The notion of the 'speaking subject' then has a double edge in this part of the series. On the one hand, the filmmakers seek to represent the subject as 'speaking' and on the other hand, the racist attitudes of the farmer/employer mitigate against the subject actually speaking. This has the effect of showing up the farmer's racism. Some detail from this part of the series will elucidate the point here.

First, it is valuable to examine the farmer's position in the documentary - the fact that although there are primarily three and possibly four or even five subjectivities focused upon, the documentary is centrally about the farmer, it is his story being told. The voice-over narration makes this allusion at the outset when it says: "Thousands of farmers in South Africa face bankruptcy this year as drought and debt place severe pressure on agriculture. Many farmers have been saved from forced liquidation by government funds but others have not been able to pay back their loans".

It is primarily this farmer, Eddie Jakobs' story, but as the documentary progresses it becomes increasingly obvious that, because of the interdependence of him and his family with the workers and their families, while he might be the chief 'character' of this story, it is the story of many people. The central core of 'characters' around the farmer are his wife, his son, and Fanie Letsime his "labourer of forty-seven years", as he is described in the voice-over narration. These are all represented as 'speaking subjects'. The subject who, in a sense, stands outside of these is the auctioneer. At the beginning of the documentary, the three subjects identified, at least visually, while the narrator describes what the documentary is about, are the auctioneer, the farmer and the labourer. But the other subjects I have mentioned fill in the picture, as it were, with their words and actions.

Let us look for example at the opening sequence of the documentary, that follows the sequence introducing the issue, and the *Ordinary People* title sequence. The first shot is a long shot of the farmhouse and is followed by a low-angle shot of the farmer, seated at the kitchen table. This is an 'ordinary' scene - a family preparing food, eating, talking about the events of the day. The farmer comments: '...it's a dream, not a reality. I can't believe it's happening...I can't do it again in my lifetime again, because times are very hard (sic)'. The image cuts to a long shot of another set of dwellings, those of the labourer. The title 'Tooth of the Times' is superimposed onto this shot. We then see a wide-angle shot of Fanie Letsime sitting in a wheelchair, with crutches splayed out on either side of him, in front of a blue corrugated iron dwelling. A comparison between the two types of dwellings we have seen is inevitably made. Then, in an over-shoulder shot, highlighting Mr. Letsime's point of view, we look across his yard to the field beyond. So far he has not spoken.

The image cuts back to the kitchen scene where the farmer, his son and grandson are eating breakfast. The farmer's wife offers eggs from a pan. There is a cut to a low angle shot of the farmer who comments that it is tragic that 'they're about to liquidate me'. There is a cut to the farmer's wife stirring something in a pot, her grandson next to her. She turns and addresses the camera directly: 'our eldest daughter, she and her husband was here yesterday (sic)...'. She starts to cry and continues: 'you know that makes us more - because they grow up here and they, you know, for the grandchildren, "we're going to ouma and oupa at the plaas[4]. I want to spend my holiday at the plaas". Now there's no plaas anymore'. She turns around and continues stirring. The camera pans across the room back to the farmer, still seated at the table. This pan is a significant choice on the part of the editor (and on the part of the cameraperson before him) because it reinforces the relationships between the people

[4] Translates as "grandma and grandpa at the farm".

in the scene, but also makes visible the interlinking of the emotions on display. The message here is that this is not just tragic for one person - the farmer - but for his immediate and extended family. His next words support this: '...You know if you stay together as a family it's very nice but if you're far away it's not good'. He wipes a tear away from his cheek. The son now talks directly to the camera in a mid-shot about the emotions. He saw his father crying for the first time in 1972, he says, then when he had an accident the previous year, 'and now'. He himself begins to cry. This is a very moving sequence. On the human level the audience identifies with the emotions evoked, aided by the homely family scene within which they are expressed. But, this is the white farmer, the hated 'boer'. There is a jostling of human empathy with the stereotypes and political views of the day.

Ultimately however, this part of the series stops short of effecting any sense of the transformation with which Nichols is concerned. This historical reality is closed, with the closure of the narrative. For unlike *The Peacemakers* there is no sense here that the subjects have agency within the events depicted. Indeed, as I have already noted, in 1993, when this part of the series was broadcast, negotiations towards the first democratic election were moving towards completion. There was every hope that in a new dispensation there would be greater concern over the redistribution of land to those whose land was appropriated by the apartheid government and given to white farmers. The situation surrounding Eddie Jakobs' apparent victimisation was in fact far more complex than *The Tooth of the Times* revealed.

Before examining this question of the political context of the documentary in greater detail, let us complete the discussion of the use of 'speaking' and 'non-speaking' subjects and examine how this aspect of *The Tooth of the Times* reveals the racism of the farmer, and so in some measure mitigates against a singularly empathic view of his situation - in other words, how viewers are given cues for reading against the grain

of the empathy that is evoked. In this sense the representation of Eddie Jakobs' identity, and audience identification with him, is made complex. How this happens is exemplified by an exchange between the farmer and his wife in the kitchen, about the number of years that some of the staff have been working for them. This is an example of how the juxtaposition of 'speaking' with 'non-speaking' subjects can make meaning in documentary, when there is an ideological consciousness on the part of the filmmaker. The important point here is that two women, about whom the farmer and his wife speak, are in fact working at the kitchen sink as this exchange occurs. The farmer and his wife however, discuss them as if they are not there.

I shall describe this scene to make my point explicit, noting the movements of the camera. In effect, the camera becomes the tool which displays the film's ideology. First, the farmer says: 'These are our servants, that have worked for us for years'. The camera is opposite him. Behind him one of the women can be seen working at the sink, her back to the camera. The farmer asks his wife: 'Miem, how long has Betiena been in your service?'. Meanwhile, since the woman about whom he speaks is standing right there, the viewer knows that he could have asked her directly. His wife answers in mid-shot, pointing to the right of the frame, towards the woman outside the frame, about whom she is speaking: 'She's worked twenty-five years for me, seven years doing the washing and for eighteen she's been in the kitchen, everyday'. Here the fact that she is speaking about the women, along with what she is saying and the way she says it, suggests that to her the loss of the property includes the loss of these women. To her they are part of the property like everything else. But they are not a human part of the property. The words of a farmer later in the documentary bear out this perception of the way farm workers are viewed as being 'owned' by farmers when he says: '...what will happen to this bunch of blacks of his?'. As the farmer's wife finishes her comment the image cuts to a profile mid-shot of the two women at the sink. They are silent, unspeaking, serious, focused on their work, seemingly

unaware of the camera. This shot is held for another ten to fifteen seconds as we hear the farmer's voice-over: "This one's husband grew up here. He was almost born here. He was very small when he herded sheep with his father". The camera now cuts away from the women at the sink, back to an image of the farmer. But the earlier shot of him from across the table is not repeated. Rather, the camera that had a profile shot of the women at the sink has now, apparently deliberately, swung around, to represent their point-of-view. It is a top-shot, since the farmer is seated, which even more strongly underlines the fact that their point-of-view is represented here. It is as if they are now looking down at him from their standing position - and the spectator too. The camera here reveals the underlying ideological stance of the filmmakers in its representation of the workers who are the more seriously victimised in this scenario. The farmer completes his commentary: "Today he's a grandfather. He has grandchildren". The next shot changes the sequence by moving to a new location, significantly a representation of the labourer engaged in conversation with small children, presumably his grandchildren, about where they will go.

For the viewer, the scene in the kitchen is juxtaposed by a short sequence that precedes it, where the woman called Betiena leaves the corrugated iron dwelling, associated earlier with Fanie Letsime, and is walking hastily to work. As the camera follows her from behind in a mid-shot she calls across the field: 'Let's go! the baas is going to beat us'. She laughs and continues: 'It's late now. Let's hurry!'. The camera holds still, watching as she walks down a footpath through the field towards the farmhouse. The juxtaposition of these two scenes, one where Betiena is a 'speaking subject' and the other where she is a 'non-speaking subject', makes the point even more strongly that the farmer and his wife treat their staff as if they have no voice, one example of their racism.

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