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Televising Trauma:

**Exploring the experience of South African documentary subjects who
have appeared in films about Apartheid.**

By

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partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the MPhil in Justice
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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the reward of any degree, It is my own work, Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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This research was made possible by the openness of the individuals who shared their documentary experiences with me and whose responses form the main chapters of this thesis: Gori, the Hendricks family and Nyameka Goniwe.

Thank you, too, to the many people who facilitated this research by giving of their time for interviews : Francois Verster, Lindy Wilson, Ronnelle Loots, Shirley Gunn, Brian Tilley, Kemal Pervanic, Lea Estherhuizen, Don Edkins, Liz Fish, Sean Field, Cahal McLaughlin, Jeremy Veary, Gordon Brookbanks, Neville Alexander, Pumla Gobodo-Madizikela, Thapelo Mokushane, Maureen Mazibuko.

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INTRODUCTION

The end credits roll. Some of the audience begin to clap. There is a little heckling and a few people walk out. Others sit motionless digesting the documentary film they have just watched. Over the last 52 minutes they have watched a man break down in front of the camera as he recounts the night his best friend was killed by apartheid security police. He has shared his intimate emotions about how the years of struggle destroyed his family. He has been accompanied by the camera to the place where the final shoot-out took place to face the memories that haunt him. Then the lights go on and a man walks to the front of the stage where he takes questions from the audience. It was his story that was just shown on the screen.

This thesis explores the experience, specifically for documentary subjects, of having their traumatic memories of apartheid represented in documentary films. The man described above is Gori and his experiences as a documentary subject are recounted in Chapter One. The experiences of the Hendricks family, who were the subjects of a documentary about their forced removal from District 6 are shared in Chapter Two. Finally, Chapter Three is based on Nyamaka Goniwe's account of participating in multiple documentary films since her husband was killed by security police during apartheid.

My objective here is not to conduct a textual analysis of films that deal with traumatic memory in South Africa but rather to listen to individuals' accounts of being involved in documentary projects that seek to represent their experiences. Academic literature around

the documentary form tends to do one of three things: deconstruct the completed text, analyse the audience's relationship with the text or operate in conversation with the filmmaker. Rarely does it engage with the individuals on whose lives the content of the film relies, the people whose stories are being told. This thesis explores the 'documentary experience' from the perspective of those South Africans whose traumatic stories have been represented in films. Preliminary conversations indicated that, first and foremost, the relationship that a film subject has with the films in which they appear is rarely static. Thus it was necessary to divide the research into three broad areas that reflect distinct stages in the process:

1. The documentary subject's experience of the initial negotiations between themselves and the filmmaker, both their concerns about participating and their motivations.
2. The documentary subject's experiences of the actual filming process – their experiences of being interviewed in front of a camera and being filmed observationally either at the time of their trauma or when they were re-visiting a site of memory.
3. The documentary subject's account of the longer-term effects of participating in a documentary and how this has affected their particular relationship with their traumatic past.

The use of documentary follows a lengthy tradition and one set to continue, albeit in ever-changing forms as filmmakers employ new means of telling stories and new distribution opportunities emerge. Documentary film has long been a medium by which human atrocities have been exposed and disseminated. It is a visual form that has been used to report, interrogate and reflect on oppressive regimes, state violence, torture, disappearances and discrimination through telling stories of individual and collective pain. The programmes

of documentary film festivals, the stories promoted at documentary pitching forums and many of the documentaries that have made it into film history testify to this. The combination of image and voice that documentary can enjoin makes it a powerful medium for representing traumatic human experiences, both individual and collective.

My decision to analyse the experience of the documentary subject was inspired by my concurrent work in two areas related to documentary film. Having been involved in a research study that measured the impact of the well-known *Steps for the Future* series, I had focused previously on the relationship between audiences and films in South Africa¹. As audience members both identified with and questioned what they saw on the screen, the effect that they had on each other and the group dynamics at various screenings were extraordinary. Simultaneously, I was attending community screenings and film festivals that showed a stream of films about South Africa's political past.

The potential power of film to bring a community together, or divide it, when debating a narrative of the apartheid past was revealed time and time again. At screenings in church halls, clinics, schools, in private homes and at film festivals it was possible to witness poignant moments of identification from audience members or attacks on the legitimacy of the story-teller or gratitude that a collective experience was being shared and so many other emotions in between. Such experiences led me to think not just about the impact of these films on audiences but about what it means for individuals, the documentary subjects, to share their memories in this way.

¹¹ Englehart, Lucinda. 'Media Activism in the Screening Room: the significance of viewing locations, facilitation and audience dynamics in the reception of HIV/AIDS films in South Africa' in *Visual Anthropology Review*, Volume 19 Numbers 1 and 2, (Spring and Summer 2003).

Secondly, for some time I have been involved in making documentaries that *rely* on individuals speaking to camera and allowing the camera into their everyday lives. Therefore an exploration of the processes from the perspective of the documentary subject had real application to my own work making films. It was possible to access a different voice of the documentary subject, one that commented on the experience of telling. Continuing to work on films in South Africa throughout the research process, my academic inquiry informed my practical work and vice versa.

Literature and Methods

Given the paucity of literature on this specific focus – the experience of the documentary subject – it was necessary to engage with theoretical analyses of memory and narrative from a number of academic perspectives. Memory and narrative have been important topics in literature, history, political science, psychology and religion. References to a wide reaching literature are included throughout the substantive chapters and contribute to a lengthy bibliography at the end².

Various case-studies provided invaluable pointers to themes that would be pursued in my research. The collection of writings, *Trauma and Life Stories*, edited by Lacy Rogers, Leydesdorff and Dawson, includes case-studies about traumatic memory from around the world, thereby illuminating both the peculiarities of the South African context and more general themes³. The papers, collated by Chris van der Merwe and Rolf Wolfswinkel in

² Full references have been inserted when the literature is first mentioned. Subsequent references are just author and title.

³ Lacy Rogers, Kim et al (eds); *Trauma and Life Stories - International Perspectives*. Routledge Studies in Memory and Narrative (London 1999).

Telling Wounds: Narrative, Trauma and Memory also provide a wide range of case studies that combine an analysis of the South African situation with other historic references⁴. However, although they explore what it may be like for subjects to tell, neither collection deals with the presentation of this story to camera.

The Holocaust has, of course, inspired much research about trauma and memory. On this account, it was useful to read the works of Lawrence Langer and Felman and Laub who have explored questions around representation of trauma in Holocaust narratives⁵. They highlight the problems of articulating difficult memories and the consequences of doing so. The personal writings of Primo Levi and Charlotte Delbo, survivors of the concentration camps, provide emotional first-hand accounts that substantiate these analyses⁶.

Media theorists such as Bill Nichols, Macdonald and Cousins, Ellis and McLane have analysed documentary as a genre, usefully highlighting the different narrative conventions available to filmmakers⁷. However, they say little about the perspective of the documentary subject. My interest is in exploring how documentary subjects respond to the narrative choices made by filmmakers who are trying to represent their traumatic stories. Many visual anthropologists including Faye Ginsburg and Meg McLagan have explored production processes when marginalised communities are creating their own media but this

⁴ Van der Merwe, C and Rolfswinkel; R. *Telling Wounds: Narrative, Trauma and Memory*, Van Schaik. (Cape Town, 2002). Proceedings of the conference held at the University of Cape Town, 3-5 July 2002.

⁵ Langer, L. *Art from the Ashes: a Holocaust Anthology*; Oxford University Press (New York, 1995).

Felman, S and Laub, D; *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, Routledge, (London, 1992).

⁶ Levi, Primo; 'Shame' in Langer, L (ed); *Art from the Ashes: a Holocaust Anthology*.

Delbo, C; *Auschwitz and After*, Yale University Press (Yale, 1997).

⁷ Nichols, B; *Representing Reality – Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press (US, 1991).

Macdonald, K and Cousins, M; *Imagining Reality: the Faber Book of Documentary* Faber and Faber (London, 1998).

Ellis, J and McLane, B; *A New History of Documentary Film*, Continuum, (New York, 2005).

is a distinct exercise because the individuals are then in control of production⁸. Nevertheless, it is important to establish early on that we are not examining a process that is entirely passive on the part of the documentary subject but rather an ongoing set of negotiations between them and the filmmaker.

A life story/oral history approach was best suited to my research. Engaging with a breadth of case studies allowed me to draw out shared responses to trauma as well as entirely individual reactions. Oral history works by Thomson, Perks, Portelli, Raphael and Field illuminated appropriate methods and the complexities and contradictions of personal narratives, particularly when their content is painful. Field lends particularly useful advice about navigating through the research process in South Africa when trauma is involved⁹.

Each of my chapters dealt with a distinct chapter of apartheid history so it was necessary for me to understand the background of each of my main interviewees in some depth. Gori was heavily involved in youth politics, the Hendricks were the victims of the Group Areas Act and Nyameka Goniwe lost her husband to the security police. Each of the chapters references the useful literature on these subjects. Wider reading on apartheid politics, and in particular about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), provided an overall framework while more personal accounts by Zubeida Jaffer, Pumla Gobodo-Madizikela

⁸ Ginsburg, F et al (eds); *Media Worlds – anthropology on a new terrain*, University of California Press (Berkeley, 2002).

⁹ Thomson, A and Perks, R (eds); *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge (London, 1998)

Portelli, A; 'What makes oral history different' in Thomson and Perks (eds), (London, 1998)

Samuel, R and Thompson, P (eds); *The Myths We Live By*, Routledge (London, 1990)

Field, S; 'Memory, the TRC and the Significance of Oral History in Post-Apartheid South Africa'. Paper presented at Conference, *The TRC: Commissioning the Past*, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, 11-14 June 1999.

and Antjie Krog raised some of the more difficult issues about both telling and hearing stories from the past¹⁰.

My literature review was accompanied by extensive viewing of South African film footage - both in the form of raw footage and finished documentaries - sourced by the UCT African Studies library, the Mayibuye Centre at UWC and individual filmmakers¹¹.

However, my focus on the lived experience of documentary subjects meant that the core research involved talking to the story-tellers themselves. Knowing that some of these individuals had been pursued extensively by journalists and academics over the years, made the first approach challenging. However, having explained that my interest was in their experience of telling their story rather than the details of the story itself, the reaction was unanimously positive. Nyameka Goniwe's response was particularly reassuring:

'People don't usually ask those questions of the participant...that is the bit they take for granted'¹².

Extensive periods of time were spent at the houses of Gori and the Hendricks where I spoke not just to them but had the input of their families and friends. The main interview with Nyameka Goniwe took place in her office at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in Cape Town. Interviews with Gori and the Hendricks often blended informal family time with the directly relevant conversations. Artefacts of memory such as

¹⁰ Jaffer, Zubeida; *Our Generation*, Kwela Books (Cape Town, 2003)

Gobodo-Madizikela, Pumla; *A Human Being Died that Night- a story of forgiveness*, David Philip, (Cape Town, 2003).

Krog, Antjie; *Country of my Skull: guilt, sorrow and the limits of forgiveness in the new South Africa*, 2nd Edition, Random House (South Africa, 2002)

¹¹ Full filmography at back with bibliography.

¹² First meeting with Nyameka Goniwe, February 2003. Meeting facilitated by Thapelo Mokushane.

photographs, letters and other video material were often procured. A life history approach was required to unpack some of the emotional legacies that determine what is spoken and what is kept silent when the memories are of a traumatic nature. Since each of the interviewees expressed a frustration of their life-story being restricted to one aspect of their life, it was important to place their traumatic experience within a longer narrative.

Since the research revealed an anxiety on the part of the documentary subjects that previous television interviews did not reflect their real beliefs or emotions, an opportunity was given to all interviewees to delete, change or add to their responses. Most added further comment and additional memories rather than requested deletions, although some were sensitive about offending filmmakers with whom they have worked and this is revealing in itself.

As Sean Field argues persuasively, a flexible set of research strategies is clearly required when violence and trauma are involved¹³. Determining whether it was appropriate to ask interviewees to sit with me and share another viewing of a documentary in which they have appeared was judged on a case by case basis. Events at the TRC hearings, in which video material was occasionally used as evidence of violence perpetuated against victims, are a sharp reminder of how the visual nature of film can reawaken very painful emotions. The collapse of one of the mothers of the Gugulethu Seven when confronted with video footage of her son being brutalised by the security police is one of the most searing images of the Commission hearings.

¹³ Field, Sean; 'Interviewing in a Culture of Violence' in Lacy Rogers (et al) (eds); *Trauma and Life Stories – International Perspectives*.

Ultimately, given limitations of space, it was necessary to limit my substantive chapters to three case-studies. The responses of other documentary subjects who represent a wider breadth of apartheid experiences will be included in future work. It would also be interesting to extend the research to another part of the world that has had its own traumatic political history in order to understand what responses are coming out of South Africa's particular cultural history.

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CHAPTER 1

A Filmed Memorial : How Gori sought to record the story of his fallen comrade

‘It is the responsibility of those who are still alive...we have a duty to tell their stories’.

(Gori, premiere of *Deafening Echoes*, V&A Waterfront Cinema, Cape Town, August 2003)

‘My life doesn’t belong to me but my people. I have a duty to expose my life to my people...My personal life is my people’s story’.

(Gori, interview in his home, 10/08/03)

Gori lives in Athlone, a suburb of Cape Town where informal settlements and permanent housing now compete for space. A pack of fierce rottweilers protect his family home where he lives with his wife and two daughters. On top of Gori’s television sit two evidently well-used video cassettes. Gori has sat through the two documentaries on these video tapes multiple times. He has seen them play at film festivals held in Cape Town cinemas, on television, at local community screenings and sometimes he still watches the video copies by himself or with friends. In both the films, Gori is the central narrator.

Andrew October, known by all as Gori, articulates an intense need to contribute his version of events to the history of the anti-apartheid struggle. He speaks of a personal duty to his comrades but also of an historical responsibility to his children and to the future of his country, South Africa. Gori has participated in two documentaries, *When the War is Over*

(2002) directed by Francois Verster and *Deafening Echoes* (2003) directed by Eugene Paremoer. Inadvertently, documentary film became the medium through which Gori made his history public¹. In many parts, his is a traumatic narrative and the documentaries provide intimate accounts of his experiences and his emotional responses to them.

This chapter will explore the significance of these films for Gori. Particular attention will be given to his motivations for participating in these documentary projects, his expectations and his actual experience of documentary film as a tool to unpack his eventful past². Although ultimately experienced as cathartic and beneficial to his personal relations, the chapter reveals that the processes of making these films were much more complex than Gori had anticipated. Questions are raised around the tension between experiencing documentary as therapy and the painful reality of reconnecting to the trauma of your past.

Of further significance is Gori's lived experience of the different external influences and power dynamics that may affect the representation of a traumatic historical story when it is presented as a documentary. He speaks of the effects of different film directors and the physical limitations of the documentary form. Notably, he also discusses his growing awareness of the longer chain of commissioning editors and broadcasters who play a role in a film's construction.

Gori, born in 1968, dedicated his youth to fighting the apartheid system, often in head-on confrontation. As a teenager he was an active member of the Bonteheuwel Military Wing

¹ Interview with Gori in his Athlone home. 10/08/03. If quotes are not footnoted, they are drawn from this main interview.

² Gori and I met many times during the research period. In addition to long, informal interviews in his house, I attended the public screenings of both films with him and was with him when *When the War was Over* was broadcast on television.

(BMW), a militant teenage self-defence unit formed in 1984 as a guerilla branch of the ANC³. As for many ‘black’ or ‘coloured’ people of his generation, a traditional education was replaced by a battle for liberation- a life of illegal gatherings and clashes with the oppressors⁴. Gori was one of eighteen children and he spent much of his early childhood fending for himself in the streets⁵.

After a number of tough years, when his mother was an alcoholic and his brother was murdered by his cousin, he went back to school. There, he met Anton Fransch and Ashley Kriel who inspired and politicised him⁶. Ashley Kriel was executed at the age of 20 by infamous apartheid torturer Jeffrey Benzien. Ashley was a leading figure in youth politics in the Western Cape and like Fransch and Gori spent a period out of the country training with the MK⁷. His funeral turned out to be another pivotal event in the anti-apartheid battle when police started firing tear-gas at Ashley’s coffin and forbidding mourners to come to his grave. Anton Fransch, whose story is central to Gori’s documentary experience and thus to this thesis, was also a prominent youth leader of the anti-apartheid struggle, returning to South Africa in 1989 after receiving guerrilla training. He was killed later that year, on 17th

³ Seekings, J; *Heroes or Villains: Youth Politics in the 1980s* Ravan Press (Johannesburg, 1993).

⁴ “*Liberation Now, Education Later*” was a popular mantra of the apartheid years as a generation of schoolgoers in the South African townships devoted their lives to the struggle and, in the 70’s and 80’s, fierce protests raged in many schools.

Ntshoe, I; ‘The Impact of Political Violence on Education in South Africa: Past, Present and Future’ in *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, New York, published at <http://www.tc.edu/cice/>

Cross, M; *Resistance and transformation: Education Culture and Reconstruction in South Africa*, Skotaville, (Johannesburg, 2002)

For an overall analysis of the different forms of ‘People’s Power’ that emerged during the apartheid struggle, see Seekings, J; *The UDF – A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991*, David Philip, (Cape Town, 2000).

⁵ Interview with Gori, 10/08/03.

⁶ For a detailed and personal account about Ashley Kriel’s life see his sister’s testimony presented at the TRC: www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/helder/ct00611.htm and Zubeida Jaffer’s biography *Our Generation*. Kwela: Cape Town, South Africa, 2003.

⁷ Umkhonto we Sizwe, abbreviated to MK, was the military wing of the ANC (African National Congress). The apartheid government classified it as a terrorist organisation.

November, when security police and defence forces forced a vicious seven hour siege on the house where he was hiding in Athlone, on the outskirts of Cape Town⁸.

Anton Fransch, Ashley Kriel and Gori were members of the youth based defence unit, the BMW, and together found purpose fighting the injustices of apartheid and formed strong bonds as comrades. In *Deafening Echoes*, Gori mentions that he and Anton made a pact to kill the person who ever betrayed the other.

Gori went on to be a prominent member of the MK and spent periods in other revolutionary states across Africa and the former USSR where he received underground military training⁹. In 1992, he came back to South Africa. He says that, newly returned to his country, he experienced a number of assassination attempts by former enemies. Soon he was commanded by his seniors in the MK to integrate into the new South African army¹⁰. He became a Captain and involved himself in the battle against gangsterism in the townships.

His own experiences have thus been dramatic and traumatic. However, the memories that he most openly articulates in conversation are rarely delivered in the first person. More often they relate the deeds of his comrades and in particular the courage and inspiration of his friend and personal hero, Anton Fransch, whom he feels has been tragically neglected in the official records of apartheid history. A major theme in this chapter is Gori's desire to record the history of another individual and, in this, he is not alone. Claude Lanzmann,

⁸ Krog, Antjie. *Country of My Skull*, Random House: Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002, pgs.50-55.

⁹ For an extensive collection of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) documents. see <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mk/>

¹⁰ Gori, interview in home, 10/08/03. The MK suspended its operations in 1990 and was integrated into the South African Defence Force by 1994.

director of *Shoah*, describes his interviewees as ‘spokespeople of the dead’¹¹. In their own writings, Holocaust survivors Primo Levi and Charlotte Delbo express a similar sense of duty to speak on behalf of those who have been denied a voice. Levi describes the process as ‘a discourse on behalf of third parties...we speak in their stead, by proxy’¹².

Gori says he has had numerous approaches from journalists over the years eager to hear about his life in exile but his first priority was to tell the story of his comrade, Anton Fransch. An interesting insight was provided by Cahal McLaughlin, a director of films about political conflict in Ireland and South Africa, who spoke of his experience of individuals deflecting attention onto another person within the documentary-making arena¹³. When interviewing ex-prisoners and torture victims, McLaughlin describes a common tendency amongst them to recount the stories of others above their own:

‘You can ask them directly about their personal experience and they will often reply with a story about the torture suffered by their friend in the next cell’¹⁴.

There are a number of possible explanations for this phenomenon. In some instances there is an element of victims wanting to disassociate themselves from their own pain and traumatic memories but, potentially, there are other issues and principles at stake. One of these possible dynamics revolves around issues of security. Members of the ANC and security forces alike were trained to keep their activities highly discreet so this shift towards speaking freely and for a public audience is neither natural nor comfortable. There is also an innate conflict between the often highly personalised story-telling of documentary film-

¹¹ Rabinowitz, P. *They Must be Represented; the politics of documentary*, Verso, (New York, London, 1994).

¹² Levi, Primo; ‘Shame’ in Langer, L (ed), *Art from the Ashes*, p.116.
Delbo, Charlotte; *Auschwitz and After*.

¹³ Interview with Cahal McLaughlin, London, 19/09/03.

¹⁴ Ibid.

making and the collective struggle. Fighting the anti-apartheid struggle was rarely an individualistic endeavour. For those involved, there are strong bonds of loyalty towards a collective cause that may be insulted by the often individual, character-led approach of documentary film. In any event, those who put themselves in the limelight might fear rebuke by their comrades.

Gori expresses a slight discomfort that he has been pushed to the forefront ;

‘I still feel quite bad that I am the main role-player in both films. I believe that other people should have had more to say’.

Such sentiments reveal a potential collision between commissioning editors in search of emotional personal stories for their audiences and struggle activists intent on representing a collective cause either because they fear accusations of self-aggrandisement or because this is an instinct that runs deep from their political training.

Commissioning editors and documentary makers are looking for sympathetic and articulate characters with compelling stories and an element of charm as narrators. In pitching forums commissioning editors often speak of the ‘relationship’ that must be formed between the audience and the documentary subject if the film is to keep its audience and thereby ‘earn’ its slot. Therefore their preference is often for strongly character driven films that delve into the life of an individual at a very personal level, engaging the audience through empathy. In contrast, for former struggle fighters like Gori, it is often more appropriate to talk in the collective ‘we’ than the individual ‘I’. This is partly in deference to the pervasive ideology, driven by socialist ideas, that the struggle was ‘for and by the people’. There is also the possibility that documentary subjects will experience an element of resentment from their communities for the individual attention they have received. It is a complex dynamic to

which the documentary filmmaker may not be privy. It was expressed in a number of different ways throughout my research. Cahal McCloughlin witnessed one of his interviewees – Brian Mphahlele, who we shall hear of again later – being jeered by other community members as they filmed an interview with him about his incarceration as a political prisoner during apartheid. McCloughlin felt that the negative response derived as much from the novelty of a film crew being in that part of the township¹⁵.

Gori spent three years working with director Francois Verster on *When the War is Over*. Before they met, Verster, researching his proposed film about the BMW, was speaking to a number of people in Bonteheuwel. It transpired that the local man whom Verster thought would be the main character in his film and his primary source for research was providing him with false information¹⁶. Gori says that he was observing this situation from a distance and was furious at the duplicity of this other man but also suspicious of Verster's motives. However, they began communicating and Gori took Verster to meet other people to persuade him that he was being given false information about the community. He started working with Verster more closely and the film morphed into his story told alongside that of his comrade Marlon.

As is often the case with documentaries, and particularly those that are observational and filmed over an extensive period, the finished film ended up quite different to what either of them had originally intended. The emphasis of the film shifted away from the BMW as a group of comrades and became an intimate account of just two of its members, Gori and Marlon. The film is an exploration of the disparate paths their lives have taken and their

¹⁵Interview with Cahal McCloughlin, London, 19/09/93.

¹⁶Conversation with Francois Verster, Cape Town, 4/08/03.

memories of their shared history¹⁷. Gori is very proud of *When the War is Over* and remains close friends with Verster. He speaks of Verster becoming ‘part of the family’ as a result of all their shared experiences and emotional domestic episodes¹⁸.

However, on its completion, he felt that *When the War is Over* film had not served one important purpose. For years he had considered how he might draw attention to the story of Anton Fransch. To him, this was a matter of personal necessity and public responsibility. Gori says he talked to many people about how Anton’s story could be told and thought about it much himself¹⁹. It was ‘a relief’ in 2002 when local film-maker Eugene Paremoer informed him that he had secured a small amount of funding to make a film about Fransch²⁰. Paremoer himself has ‘struggle credentials’ and had lived in Bonteheuwel where he knew Anton personally. Filmmaker Paremoer establishes his insider position when he includes a scene in *Deafening Echoes* in which we see him watching archival footage with Gori in which he notices himself in the crowd at a youth rally.

Gori’s desire to tell Anton’s story is propelled by a number of factors. He appeals to the notion of claiming Anton ‘a place in history’, drawing again on a popular phrase from the very present discourses of memorialisation and oral history in South Africa²¹. One result of the extensive media coverage of the TRC and the presence of other forums in South Africa where ‘speaking out’ has become a central activity is that such phrases have entered

¹⁷ The notion that memories change with the passage of time and are contingent on conditions of the present is a central premise for oral historians such Perks and Thomson and Raphael.

Thomson, A and Perks, R (eds); *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge (London, 1998)

Portelli, A; ‘What makes oral history different’ in Thomson and Perks (eds), (London, 1998)

Samuel, R and Thompson, P (eds); *The Myths We Live By*, Routledge (London, 1990)

¹⁸ Interview with Gori in his Athlone home, 10/08/03.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

wider public circulation²². Gori expresses such abstract motivations but also speaks at a much more personal level. He speaks openly of the fact that his telling Anton's story is as much a healing process for himself:

'Since I came back from exile I used to tell people about Anton. It was my way of healing myself. I didn't think a social worker was going to help me'²³.

Many of his explanations suggest a guilt of survival which is a notion taken up by Primo Levi in his writings. Levi devotes his essay, *Shame*, to the difficult emotions that arise when history delivers comrades and friends in different directions. Levi, a Holocaust survivor himself, asks himself,

'Are you ashamed because you are alive in place of another? And in particular, of a man more generous, more sensitive, more useful, wiser, worthier of living than you?'²⁴.

In our interviews, Gori often attributed many of his life's successes to the early guidance provided by Anton. It is significant to this exploration that he describes his participation in a documentary as some gesture towards assuaging his feelings of discomfort that his mentor died and he survived the struggle and can enjoy the benefits²⁵.

²² A public culture of telling has developed that is experienced in a number of spheres in South Africa. An example is provided by the Treatment Action Campaign, the South African organisation that has received international recognition for its campaign for the delivery of HIV/AIDS treatments. TAC adopted public testimony as a core activity to address its own themes. At TAC meetings, men and women would take the microphone and share their personal narratives about living with HIV/AIDS with their fellow audience members.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Levi, Primo, 'Shame' in Langer, L; *Art from the Ashes*, p.16.

²⁵ John Iliffe explores how African societies conceive honour and how it affects behaviour in *Honour in African History*. University of Cambridge Press, (New York 2005).

Gori seeks meaning for his friend's sacrifice and recognition for his actions. Shoshana Felman argues that a similar claim for validity motivates the narratives of the Holocaust survivors who appear in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*:

'To testify is not just to record a fact, but to address another, to appeal to a community. To testify is not only to narrate, but to commit oneself, and the narrative to others...to take responsibility for the truth, which goes beyond the personal, in having general validity'²⁶.

The profound importance of people reconstituting their sense of self after periods of state violence and oppression by telling their own stories is extolled across the academic disciplines but, as Fiona Ross argues, there is an important role for recounting the narratives of others²⁷. Gori explains that he wants to entrench the story of Anton Fransch in the minds of the people of Bonteheuwel, the community where Anton lived and fought. The importance awarded to community is a subject that recurs in oral histories in South Africa, although in reality it is not a clearly delineated construct²⁸. For Gori, it is his 'community' that is the primary audience for these films. He hopes that the evidence provided by the film secures him and his comrades respect in the community and will influence current and future dynamics.

Again he speaks of retrieving his friend's story from the 'dustbins of history', another phrase drawn from prevalent discourses around memory and history in South Africa. This appeal to reinstate historicity to neglected persons and events is an argument often made by

²⁶ Felman and Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. Routledge, (London, 2002) p.204.

²⁷ Ross, Fiona. On Having Voice and being Heard: some after-effects of testifying before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in *Anthropological Theory*, Volume 3, No 3, SAGE, pgs 325-341.

²⁸ Worden, Bickford-Smith and Van Heyningen; *Cape Town: The Making of a City*, David Philip, (Cape Town, 1998).

documentary makers as they try to legitimise their projects²⁹. It is frequently a card that is played when new documentary projects are pitched to commissioning editors and funders. It is therefore interesting to explore, according to the lived experience of documentary subjects, how and if films can achieve a level of acknowledgement for lost heroes or events.

For years Gori has thrown his energies into venerating the life of Anton Fransch in private acts of ritual and memorialisation. In the film *Deafening Echoes* we see the private shrine he has constructed to his friend in his house. Often he admits this has been at the expense of his own family who have been unable to share this aspect of his past. Participating in a second documentary film, specifically about Anton Fransch, afforded Gori the opportunity to take his private thoughts on a public journey³⁰. In this, Gori's view accords with the notion forwarded by Jackson that storytelling operates as a bridge between the private and the public³¹.

A 17 minute film, *Deafening Echoes*, directed by Paremoer, had its premiere in Cape Town in 2003³². As in *When the War is Over*, Gori is the film's main narrator. Other members of the community also share their memories of Anton but the central construct of the film is Gori's first visit back to the house where Anton's life ended. The camera follows him as he

²⁹ See Bernard Henri Levy; *Reflexions sur la guerre, le mal et la fin de l'histoire*. Grasset, (Paris, 2001). Levy argues that it is a public duty to tell the stories of those people who have been silenced by history. He writes of the need to achieve historical dignity for sacrificed communities and individuals in order to restore their dignity.

Erika Apfelbaum: 'Restoring Lives Shattered by Collective Violence: the role of official public narratives in the process of memorialising' in C van der Merwe and R Wolfswinkel (eds), *Telling Wounds: Narrative, Trauma and Memory*.

³⁰ Interview with Gori in his Athlone house, 10/08/03.

³¹ Jackson, Michael ; *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity*, University of Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press, (Copenhagen, 2002).

See also Kearney, Richard. *On Stories*. Routledge, (London and New York, 2002)

³² Encounters Film Festival, Cape Town, August 2003.

examines the bullet holes and talks to the family in whose house Anton had been boarding at the time when the situation exploded. The film has been broadcast by SABC and shown at a selection of film festivals in South Africa and beyond.

I was sitting next to Gori and his family at the Cape Town premiere of *Deafening Echoes*. It was an emotional screening for him as many people who knew Anton were in the audience.

Of the screening, Gori said:

‘After watching *Deafening Echoes*, I could see some members of the audience were crying. It was a very moving thing...When they saw the film they recalled moments from their own pasts. There is no point trying to run from your past’.

Emotions and tensions often run high at such screening events. In many settings in South Africa, memories are being circulated in a space still charged with contested moral and political claims. In the cinema environment, this can play out in a number of unpredictable ways. Audiences may transform a cinema space from a neutral venue into a silent or vociferous battlefield. Months before Gori and his family had attended a community screening of *When the War is Over* at a local hall in Bonteheuwel. Gori had described the local audience in attendance as ‘the most intimidating jury of all’ and his wife, Nicky, voiced her relief to have survived ‘the hardest screening in front of our own community’³³.

The notion of community, as used here, must be seen within its South African context. The ‘community’ provided a sense of identity and a set of alliances and values during the apartheid years and Gori and Nicky’s anxieties about the community screening are revealing. The audience were people with whom they shared parts of their history but also people who, they knew, would give a different version of events.

³³ Screening of *When the War is Over*, Bonteheuwel Civic Centre, November 2003.

Different claims on memory are a complex dynamic in the development of any personal documentary. Since the inception of the *Deafening Echoes* project, there had been disagreement about who should tell Anton's story and how it should be told. The sensitive nature of these conversations was exacerbated by the fact that controversy remains within the community around the details of Anton's betrayal. Yassir Henry made a formal declaration before the TRC that he had been forced to inform where Anton was hiding after they threatened to kill his brother³⁴. Some members of Anton's family, fearful that Anton's story would be used to make money, had been resistant to a film being made³⁵. Anton's mother did ultimately watch the final version of the film on a video³⁶. Gori reports that she was pleased that Anton's death had been recorded by people who knew him personally but, unlike Gori, she did not want a copy to remain in her house as a constant reminder³⁷.

After the first public screening of *Deafening Echoes*, Gori was asked to come to the front of the cinema and address the audience. He declared that he felt like 'a fraud' because it should be Anton telling his own story and receiving their applause³⁸. In spite of this concern, he remains adamant that these stories be told by people like himself who lived through the experience. Oral historian, Ronald Grele, argues that a past is meaningfully created and struggled for within a matrix of social and collective relationships³⁹. For Gori,

³⁴ Krog, Antjie. *Country of My Skull*, pgs: 52-55.

³⁵ Interview with Gori in his Athlone home 10/08/03

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Waterfront Cinema, Cape Town. August 2003.

³⁹ Grele, Ronald; *Envelopes of Sound: the Art of Oral History*. Second Edition, Praeger Publishers, (US, 1991).

as for other struggle activists, it matters hugely who tells their stories and there is high anxiety of them being misappropriated⁴⁰:

‘There are too many people telling stories about our pasts. I wanted these stories to be told by people who underwent the processes, who felt the pain, who were part of the tyre burning, the stone-throwing and who knew most of the comrades’.

A critical concern for Gori was that a film about Anton Fransch should ‘humanise’ him. He feels that much news footage has been broadcast that shows Anton leading rallies and making speeches but he should also be shown as ‘a lover, a student, a friend’. In other words, documentary can act as a form of personal obituary to the deceased⁴¹. Discussing the shortcomings of *Deafening Echoes* he said:

‘We should hear more from his ex-girlfriends, his family, the people who hid him in their houses. We need to know how he influenced their lives and their different perspectives on him’.

Gori’s quest was not just to establish ‘facts’ about another individual but to use the documentary forum as a platform for memories, which he recognises as subjective.

An important dialogue with the documentary subjects throughout the research period involved their perceptions of what the documentary genre should aim to achieve. Gori argues that documentaries should tell more than the grand political narratives. Significantly,

⁴⁰ The ‘legitimacy’ of story-tellers became a particularly complex issue during the TRC and subsequent systems of reparation. Rumours of financial pay-outs as well as the attention that went with being an acknowledged victim caused tensions in some communities.

Burton, Mary. ‘Reparation, Amnesty and a National Archive’ in James, Wilmot and Van de Vijver, Linda *After the TRC: reflections on truth and reconciliation in South Africa*, David Philip, (Cape Town, 2000).

⁴¹ Rosenstone, Robert; *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, Princeton University Press, (US, 1994). Rosenstone edits a collection of essays by various historians who explore efforts in films to explore historical events that have caused trauma.

on one occasion when I visited, he urged me to watch some extra archival footage that he had at home. It showed a simple scene of Anton quietly walking in the streets with some friends. Gori remains very disappointed that this material did not make it into the final cut of either *Deafening Echoes* or *When the War is Over*. He regrets that instead the filmmakers selected archival footage of Anton making rousing speeches and leading rallies, scenes that set him apart from the masses, rather than choosing a scene that, in his mind, truly reflects Anton 'with his people'. It is a good illustration of a gap between what a filmmaker may deem important to their argument and that which is important to those participating in the film.

Gori reveals much of his private life through participating in these documentaries. *When the War is Over*, in particular, is an intimate glimpse into his family home. When questioned about the extent to which he was prepared to share his personal life in the documentary films, his response was firm:

'My life doesn't belong to me but my people. I have a duty to expose my life to my people...My personal life is my people's story'.

He argues the importance of sharing his personal life as part of the ongoing story of apartheid. By observing the family in everyday life, ten years after the end of apartheid, the film reveals the residual scars left behind by the struggle years, the violence witnessed and the friends lost.

A central narrative thread of the film is Gori's difficult relationship with Nicky, his girlfriend who eventually becomes his wife. Gori's attachment to his former comrades damages his relationship with Nicky who has not shared his political past. Gori knows that his personal story reflects the difficulties encountered by many others in post-apartheid

South Africa 'because it's the personal sacrifices made by these people which made the politics'⁴². Thus, he sees it as an extension of his duty to his community to reveal the difficulties he is facing and, in doing so, prevent people from feeling that they are isolated in their emotions. Gori asked if I had remembered seeing him reach for his mobile telephone when he was on stage after the premiere of *When the War is Over* at the Waterfront cinema. He says that Nicky had sent him a comforting text message from where she was sitting at the back of the audience having seen the film for the first time. He says he felt that she understood something of where he came from for the first time⁴³.

The shared experience of viewing a film can undoubtedly be a powerful - even occasionally transformative - experience. For those poignant stories of the different destinies of friends and comrades in post-apartheid South Africa, it is unsurprising that the viewing room becomes an emotional space with the possibility to unite and divide its audiences. The story on the screen can be a connector to the past and a reminder of the present. As exemplified by Gori and Marlon, post-apartheid life in South Africa has taken some friends and family members in very contrasting directions. Audiences of *When the War is Over* confront this reality in the screening room.

Marlon ekes out an existence through drugs, gangsterism and crime while Gori's livelihood comes through policing these very activities. Despite Gori's initial concerns about how the film would be judged by the community, he believes that it is also essential that the community engages with the issues portrayed. In his view, reminding the community of their shared cause during the struggle against apartheid can rebind them and also, importantly, share stories across generations. I described what played out in the hall in

⁴² Interview with Gori in his Athlone home 10/08/03

⁴³ Premiere of *When the War is Over*, Waterfront cinema, Cape Town. August 2003.

Bonteheuwel the night that *When the War is Over* was first screened in an article published in *DOX Magazine*⁴⁴. The community, given confidence by its size and the anonymity offered by the seating arrangement, howled with laughter at the gangsters on the screen as they boasted of their violent escapades and were filmed smoking the local street drug.

In this moment, the screening room provided the audience with a safe place to respond to their threats and fears and their collective response became an act of reaffirming social ties amongst them⁴⁵. As my article elaborates, we witnessed a shifting power dynamic as the citizens responded to the gangsters who terrorise their community. Within the audience that evening were a few of the gangsters who appear in the film, or at least those who had not subsequently been killed. Broadcasting their activities on the big screen did not, perhaps contrary to their expectations, award them a movie star status but rather resulted in them being spontaneously ridiculed. Most of them slipped out of the hall before the end. At the end of the film, audience members joined Gori in an appeal for solidarity within the community in respect for the freedom for which they risked their young lives. On stage Gori appealed to the audience to remember their past and build from there:

‘You can not run away from the past because there are Marlons and Goris out there living with this past and if you look left or right you are going to see a face that takes you back to the memories’⁴⁶.

Social ties are not only strained between peers but also between generations due to the lack of shared experience since the end of apartheid. It is interesting to observe documentary

⁴⁴ Englehart, Lucinda, *When a Community Sees Itself* in *DOX: Documentary Film Magazine*. 47:12-13

⁴⁵ Field, Sean. ‘Interviewing in a culture of Violence’ in Lacy Rogers et al (eds); *Trauma and Life Stories - International Perspectives*.

⁴⁶ Community screening of *When the War is Over*, Bonteheuwel Civic Centre. November, 2003.

film as another medium for sharing apartheid stories across age groups. A woman at the same community screening of *When the War is Over* told me how she had brought her children from the other side of Cape Town to watch the film. She had moved out of the township after the end of apartheid but she considered it very important that her children have an understanding of her upbringing in Bonteheuwel. She said she also wanted them to meet the other struggle activists whom she knew would be at the screening for these were the people alongside whom she fought. The question of painful narratives of the past being shared between parents and children recurred as a theme throughout this research. Gori and other participants in this research explain that one of their motivations for appearing in their respective documentaries is to create a record of their past for their children. As in evidence at the screening, other parents use documentary film as a way of sharing their own past with their children even if they do not appear in the films themselves.

Having discussed both Gori's motivation for participating in the documentaries and his experience of viewing the finished films, it is necessary to describe his experience of the actual production process. The camera became a constant presence in Gori and Nicky's home during the three years that director Francois Verster gathered material for *When the War is Over*. Unsurprisingly, they both express a range of emotions towards the camera over this extended period. Nicky speaks of times when she felt painfully displaced because Gori and Francois Verster disappeared to film for a whole night. But she also speaks of times when the camera performed a powerful therapeutic tool in her relationship with Gori⁴⁷. At these moments Nicky says that Francois, who was either behind the camera or working with another cameraman, performed the role of mediator, sometimes actively,

⁴⁷ Interview with Nicky in their Athlone home, 10/08/03.

sometimes silently⁴⁸. They both say that the filmmaking process forced them to become aware of their own miscommunication about Gori's past.

Gori describes the many hours he spent being interviewed by Francois about his comrades and their past in almost confessional terms. Although quite the opposite effect is also possible, the filmmaker may become a trusted recipient of the interviewees' emotions. Fiona Ross and Antjie Krog both emphasise this notion of 'safe space' and the importance it was afforded in the construction of the TRC⁴⁹. Ross discusses how, for example, the TRC Commissioners attempted to create safe physical space by permitting vulnerable testifiers to speak from behind screens and safe emotional space by imbuing the hearings with a religious sanctity.

Richard Wilson argues that the descriptions 'victim' and 'perpetrator' became normative terms in the TRC that encouraged those involved into predetermined roles. If you were a 'victim' you were expected to forgive and if you were a 'perpetrator' you were expected to repent⁵⁰. Documentary subjects involved in this research voiced similar feelings about being used to represent a certain position and the pressure they felt to conform to a particular argument about, for example, forgiveness or reconciliation.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ross, Fiona; 'On having voice and being heard: some after-effects of testifying before the South African Truth and reconciliation Commission' in *Anthropological Theory*, SAGE publications, (London, 2003), pgs 325-341.

Antjie, Krog. *Country of My Skull*.

⁵⁰ Wilson, Richard; *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State*, Cambridge University Press, (New York, 2001), pgs 21-26.

The documentary maker has to decide how to respond to the traumatic narratives of their documentary subjects⁵¹. During the TRC, Commissioners and councillors openly hugged and had their arms around the testifiers when they broke down. Lindy Wilson's documentary, *The Gugulethu Seven*, records one particularly painful example of this when the mothers of the murdered boys had to sit through video evidence at the TRC⁵². The TRC councillors responded to the women by supporting them in a very physical way. However, this option is not always appropriate for filmmakers who have to work through a number of decisions regarding when it is appropriate to offer physical comfort if the interviewee is distressed and how long they should allow the camera to roll when the interviewee is too upset to continue.

Filmmakers usually develop their own set of ethics which they use to set their own parameters during their careers. Roger Graef, a well-known British television documentary maker who has made some influential films with rape victims says that his only rule is to make it clear to his subjects that they can edit out any of their disclosures⁵³. Pumla Gobodo-Madizikela, a member of the TRC's Human Rights Violation Committee, writes of her awareness of the pain and anguish that she could provoke in her interviews with victims and reflects on the precarious nature of her role as 'messenger' who would be 'here now

⁵¹ Apfelbaum provides an interesting example of a time when the emotional response of the interviewer was offensive to the testifier. When, during a radio program on the Armenian massacre by the Turks in 1917, a ninety year old Armenian woman told the story of her childhood escape and survival, the interviewer burst into tears. The Armenian lady, telling her story, responded firmly:

'No need to cry! Tears and pity are inadequate responses, an expression of superficial empathy and emotion which betrays the gravity of the event, and saves from having to face the dread and from truly confronting the full implications of the situation'.

Apfelbaum, Erika. 'Restoring Lives Shattered by Collective Violence: the role of official public narratives in the process of memorialising' in Van der Merwe and Wolfswinkel (eds); *Telling Wounds: Narrative, Trauma and Memory*, Van Schaik, (Cape Town, 2002), p.12.

⁵² TRC Hearing, Cape Town, 23/4/1996.

⁵³ Roger Graef speaking at a documentary masterclass at the Riverside Studios, London 4/10/06.

and gone tomorrow'⁵⁴. Most of the filmmakers who I met for the purposes of this research spoke openly of their misgivings about ethical decisions they have made at critical points during productions. In relation to *When the War is Over*, director Francois Verster mentions feeling too invasive when filming the funeral of Marlon's sister who had been shot by a rival gang. He says that he wasn't sure that it felt right to be there as he did not know her and it was such a terrible time for the family. In his next film, *The Mothers' House*, Verster questions whether he should have put the camera down when a physical fight broke out between two of the sisters in the house. He speaks candidly of the dilemma that faces a filmmaker in such a situation, asking whether it is right to continue filming in the name of 'good journalism' or whether the presence of a camera might catalyse such an aggressive incident⁵⁵.

Gori says, that for him, the most difficult emotions often came some time after the interviews. He describes feeling initially fortified and unaware of the emotional upheaval that lay in store:

'I believe when I spoke about it I felt better and when I spoke about it sometimes I would be taken back to the experiences, I was taken back to our times together and then it would take me three/four weeks to get out of it again'⁵⁶.

This reawakening of pain was felt particularly acutely after the experience of 'revisiting' a place of memory, a device often used in documentaries that deal with traumatic memory. During the making of *Deafening Echoes*, director Eugene Paremoer proposed filming at the

⁵⁴ Gobodo-Madzikela, Pumla. 'Memory and Trauma' in Jillian Edelstein.; *Truth and Lies: Stories from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa*. M&G Books, (Johannesburg, 2001), p.12.

⁵⁵ In discussion with Francois Verster, 07/05/05.

⁵⁶ Interview with Gori in his Athlone home, 10/08/03.

house where Anton was shot. Gori says Paremoer had not realised it would be the first time Gori had been back there and thus he had not fully appreciated the immensity of the experience for him. Gori was filmed re-visiting the house and meeting the family with whom Anton was boarding at the time. They discuss Anton and the events of the tragic night. Gori then poignantly walks around the house, pausing to examine the bullet marks left by the security police. In our interview, he explained what was in his mind as he moved around, seemingly absorbing every detail of the space:

‘I saw where the bullets hit and the room he was in when they were outside. There were still marks. I was looking for an old bullet to remind me of Anton. I wanted to find something that could personally attach me to Anton’.

It seems that Gori’s need to find a physical artefact to connect himself with his past is not that unusual. There were mothers who came to the TRC witnessing stands holding items belonging to their lost children. Seemingly this is not a phenomenon unique to South Africa either. Gori’s response is so similar to that described by a man called Kemal Pevanic whom I also interviewed during the research period⁵⁷. Kemal experienced the massacre of his village in Bosnia in April 1992⁵⁸. In 2000, after many years of exile in England, Kemal decided to return to what remained of his village that had been ethnically cleansed. The whole visit was captured on camera with the intention of making a documentary that would share his experience and those of his community with a wider audience. He felt he had to reclaim some of his past and confront the painful memories

⁵⁷ Interview with Kemal Pevanic and viewing a rough cut of his film, London 15/9/03.

⁵⁸ Kemal’s family lived in a small village in the North West of Bosnia called Kevljani. In 1992, Kemal, his brother and his mother were looking after the family’s land while the his father and older brother were working on construction sites in Croatia. Suddenly the war raging in Croatia spilled over the Bosnian-Croat border and the village was torn in two. One morning soldiers arrived and together with local Serbs, rounded up Muslim villagers and took them to concentration camps. Kemal and his brother were detained for months, interrogated and tortured. Finally after seven months, they were released and the few survivors were taken to Croatia and host countries in the West. Kemal was brought over to UK where he remains today.

associated with what had been ‘home’⁵⁹. A major incident of this trip was a confrontation with a former high school teacher who had become his torturer in prison.

Kemal revealed how he completely underestimated the effect that the project would have on him and how the effects continued long after the actual trip had finished. He asked me to look through the rough footage of the film. One scene was particularly striking, reminding me of Gori’s desire to find an artefact from the past. The scene shows Kemal quietly walking around the charred remains of his house. At one point he finds a pair of his old denim shorts and keeps them as a physical reminder. The fact that he clutched them to him as he continued his mission provides another graphic illustration of how people may seek physical reminders of their past to accompany those that occupy their mind. When Gori spoke about searching for a tangible piece of Anton’s history, in the form of a bullet, he too was demonstrating this need.

When it comes to revisiting sites of memory, there are implications beyond the immediate event and of this documentary filmmakers need to be aware. Cahal McLaughlin, director of *We Never Give Up*, a documentary made for the Human Rights Media Centre in Cape Town about the legacy of apartheid and reparations says he was given an acute reminder of this when filming in South Africa⁶⁰. Brian Mphahlele was introduced earlier as a documentary subject in *We Will Never Give Up*. Cahal accompanied Brian Mphahlele back to the prison where he had been incarcerated. He says at the time Brian spoke very articulately. However, when he went back to see him the next day he could barely speak

⁵⁹ Interview with Kemal Pervanic, London, 15/9/03.

⁶⁰ Interview with Cahal McLaughlin, London 3/9/03.

because he had been drinking all night to allay the reignited memories⁶¹. Revisiting a physical space may abolish the distance between past and present⁶². For the documentary maker this may produce the most authentic of accounts but it is worth listening to the subjects' own experiences of how they felt the after-effects.

It is important, also, to consider how the presence of the camera may affect the actual experience of returning to a site of memory. The accounts of Gori and other interviewees suggest that, at the time, the camera may have offered some kind of distraction and sense of purpose. Further, the physical evidence of the place or artefacts may provide useful tools with which to 'bear witness'. In this, it is comparable to victims of human rights violations revealing their physical scars and injuries to camera, within victim groups or at the TRC⁶³. Given the fear of many victims of trauma that they will neither be able to express their story sufficiently or be believed, it may be a relief to have a framework for their telling and physical cues that can prompt deeper memories and detailed anecdotes.

There are numerous factors that may shape the experience of returning to a site of memory- the interviewees' relationship with the film-maker, their current living situation or a particular encounter during the visit. Gori said he remained shaken for weeks after visiting the house where Anton was killed. The accounts given by each of the documentary subjects involved in this research confirm the intrusive nature of traumatic memory and the

⁶¹ Interview with Cahal McLaughlin, London 3/9/03.

⁶² Transference of trauma is a recurring theme in the collection of writings by Lacy Rogers et al (eds) *Trauma and Life Stories – International Perspectives*, pgs 1-26 and 207-219. Transference is the process whereby previous experience and related feelings are transferred from the past and are experienced as if they are actually in the present.

⁶³ Colvin, Christopher. *Limiting Memory: the roots and routes of story-telling in post-apartheid, post-TRC South Africa* in Van der Merwe, C and Wolfswinkel, R (eds); *Telling Wounds: Narrative, Trauma and Memory*, p.123

It is interesting to consider whether the conditions of a set-up documentary interview encourage a certain delivery in the same way that it is argued that the structural design of the TRC invited a certain style of delivery from those testifying. A set-up interview tends to be a pre-planned session between interviewers and interviewees where the room is deliberately set up to achieve the optimum interview, with attention to external conditions such as sound and light. Material gathered in this style of interview appears throughout *When the War is Over* alongside more casual, observational interviews that were filmed spontaneously. I wanted to know from Gori whether he felt that the formal interview context encouraged him to tell his story in a particular, even 'practised' way. There is no doubt that context, as well as awareness of potential audiences, play a part in the nature of story-telling. The public television coverage of the TRC hearings may well have exerted some influence on how victims of apartheid atrocities subsequently narrated their stories. Those at the TRC and documentary subjects alike have spoken about the pressure upon them to deliver their story within a certain timeframe and also according to a certain narrative arc with the worst human rights violation as the climax of their testimony⁶⁷.

After extensive exposure to testimonies of apartheid memory through interviews, documentaries and the TRC Report, I was able to recognise the same phrases repeated by the same individuals as they re-told their stories on different platforms. I wanted to understand whether the 'story-tellers' were aware of this and possibly used set versions of their stories to protect themselves from having to repeatedly relive the pain of their

⁶⁷ Ross, Fiona. 'On having voice and being heard: some after-effects of testifying before the South African Truth and reconciliation Commission' in *Anthropological Theory*, SAGE Publications, 2003, p. 325.

Gori says, at this point, he realised that there is ‘a commander higher than the filmmaker!’⁷⁰. The commissioning editors and broadcasters are considering how their audiences, often living in very different environments to the documentary subjects, will read and understand the text. This, combined with the restrictions of the genre (for example, the required fixed length of a programme), may result in a simplification of a traumatic narrative. On a similar note, Ross writes about the simplification of victims’ testimonies that occurred in the media and final TRC report. She speaks of complex testimonies being ‘reduced and reified as stories of suffering’⁷¹. In regard to *When the War is Over*, Gori was displeased with the simplified representation that the co-producers demanded, believing that it did not reflect the complex South African reality. In Gori’s words:

‘The truth is that I am coming from a society where my brother’s a gangster and I’m a policemen. We’re not separate’⁷².

This response was echoed by other interviewees who felt that their stories were oversimplified to produce a clearer, more didactic story. Jeremy Veary and Gordon Brookbanks whose story was told in *Engaging the Enemy*, directed by Stef Snell, expressed their concerns about documentary films needing a ‘good side’ and a ‘bad side’⁷³. Veary, an ANC operative who spent many years on Robben Island argues: ‘It’s not a neat story...It never is in a war’. He criticises ‘documentary accounts that accord with the liberal version of good conquering evil’ rather than analyse the complexities of the situation⁷⁴.

⁷⁰ Interview with Gori, Athlone, 10/08/03

⁷¹ Ross, Fiona. ‘On having voice and being heard: some after-effects of testifying before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’. *Anthropological Theory*, p. 325

⁷² Interview with Gori, Athlone, 10/08/03

⁷³ Interview with Jeremy Veary and Gordon Brookbanks, Rondebosch, Cape Town, 10/03/03.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

In the case of *When the War is Over*, the Danish co-producers also wanted a film based firmly in the present while Francois and Gori wanted a film that flipped between the past and present. Francois and Gori were more concerned to use the record straight around certain events and various characters' roles in these events during the struggle years. In contrast, the foreign co-producers wanted to locate the film firmly in post-apartheid South Africa.

Gori and Francois remained close friends after the completion of the film but this was not the case at the outset. Gori speaks openly of his suspicions of Francois and his different background as a white, Afrikaans male. In Gori's words, 'Francois had to prove he was serious'. When asked about the pivotal points in their relationship, Gori spoke of Francois demonstrating his dedication to their stories and lives by 'working after hours' and accompanying him on dangerous missions, such as shabean raids.

The issue of who can tell whose story forever rages in South Africa⁷⁵. The launch in 2004 of the SABC series, *Black on White*, was one response to the debate. The objective of the series was to 'reverse the lens' and have black film-makers tell white stories. Gori's perspective is that it matters less that Francois was an 'outsider' because the people on the screen 'were the people who were actually there'⁷⁶. He believes that ultimately Francois coming in as an outsider did not detract from the film because he became absorbed in the community. His greatest concern is that filmmakers would come into the community and

⁷⁵ Visual anthropologist, Jay Ruby, argues that questions of representation – who can represent someone else, in what language and with what intention - define our times. As a consequence, he argues, new demands for self-authorship and control of representation can be heard around the world.

Ruby, Jay; Chapter 8, 'Speaking for, Speaking about, Speaking with, or speaking alongside' in Ruby, J: *Picturing Culture, Picturing Culture*, University of Chicago Press, (Chicago, 2000).

⁷⁶ Interview with Gori, Athlone, 10/08/03.

choose the wrong people, ‘opportunists’, to tell the stories of the past⁷⁷. Gori expresses a belief that legitimacy can be gained as well as determined by community when it comes to the recording of history. Verster has argued, in turn, that it is also important to recognise the power of the story-tellers themselves who determine the direction of the film through what they both expose and censor. In most cases, it is an ongoing negotiation between filmmaker and subject.

In general, Gori found the documentary experience to be enriching. The exploration and representation of his past came at an important stage of his life, a few years after returning from exile. He stresses that the opportunity to produce his own narrative of his past gave him a new perspective on his present life. This chapter reveals the mixture of experiences had by Gori in the making of both *Deafening Echoes* and *When the War is Over* and the ongoing negotiations that defined the processes of these two films.

Ultimately, the films have played a very significant part in the last few years of Gori’s life. They have affected not only him but his community and family. He has constructive criticisms of the genre but he also feels that, at a personal level, the film-making process awarded him space for introspection that he had previously been unable to access. This occurred through the active process of making the documentaries and continued as he watched his own stories become public texts as they appeared on screen. For him, a critical aspect was what the films allowed him to share with his family. This, he summed up to me, standing in the foyer after the first cinema screening of *When the War is Over*:

⁷⁷ Ibid.

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‘The last family to leave District Six’ : the account of a filmed family.

‘The Hendricks family changed South Africa through the film’.

(Latifa Hendricks, interview in Belhar home, 17/03/03)

‘Did she say that we changed South Africa? We changed the world. The Olympics couldn’t come to South Africa because of our film’.

(Armien Hendricks, interview in Belhar home, 26/03/03)

The first car journey I made to visit the Hendricks family was a journey they had never wanted to make. It is nearly 25 years since Mr and Mrs Hendricks and their young children, overwhelmed with grief and anger, were transported away from Table Mountain, the view of the harbour and what was left of their community, District Six. Before getting on to the N2 out of Cape Town that would lead me to Belhar - the township where the family was forcibly relocated - I drove very close to where their home had once stood in District Six. A handful of new houses have sprung up as the land reclaim process has eventually begun but at the time of this research the Hendricks family remain on the waiting list with little information about when they will be allocated housing.

The Hendricks family were the subjects of *Last Supper in Hortsley Street*, a documentary directed by Lindy Wilson in 1983. This chapter explores their experiences of making the film and the effects it has had on their lives ever since. Armien says that he suggested the film’s title because of the significant scene in the film when the family, with a great sense of foreboding, sit down together for their last supper in their District

Six home¹. The 52 minute film documents the family's forced removal from District Six. It records a series of dramatic and traumatic events that they endured, including the arrival of bulldozers to demolish their home, their removal to Belhar and a poignant return visit to the site of their decimated home. The film became a signature piece for District Six and was shown on a daily basis at the District Six Museum when it first opened². The opening quotes give some indication of the important role that the film played in their lives and their perceptions of how it has shaped their identity. This chapter aims to unravel their emotions towards the film and hear their comment on such a traumatic period of their lives being recorded, for posterity, on film.

Whilst in the 1980's it was difficult for the film to be broadcast in South Africa because of apartheid censorship, it was screened by a number of international broadcasters including the BBC. *Last Supper in Hortsley Street* has also been shown at documentary film festivals around the world. As a result of the film's reputation as a unique record of this period, foreign and local journalists still seek out the family when they need a comment on District Six. Mr Hendricks says that the film constantly reappears in their lives³. Recent television news clips made to report on the land restitution process in Cape Town made further use of excerpts from the film. On 11 February 2004, exactly 38 years after District Six was re-zoned by the government, former President Nelson Mandela handed over keys to the first returning residents, many of whom are now over eighty years old. The Hendricks family were still on the waiting list, waiting to get a new place in their old area.

¹ Interview with Armien Hendricks, Belhar home, 17/03/03. Any quotes by the Hendricks, that are not referenced are taken from this main interview.

² The District Six Museum situated in Buitenkant Street, Cape Town was opened in December 1994. (www.districtsix.co.za)

³ Interview with Mr Hendricks, Belhar home, 17/03/03.

For the purposes of this research, I was interested to explore what it was like for Mr and Mrs Hendricks to experience the 'documentary gaze' during the forced removal from their home and how the film has subsequently impacted their lives. The fact that the film was made nearly 25 years ago lends an interesting dimension to this research and contrasts with the experience of some of the other documentary subjects, such as that of Gori, who were still living through the broadcast experience when I met him. I was interested to examine the lasting effects of the Hendricks' having participated in *Last Supper in Hortsley Street* and their subsequent role as 'representatives' of a particular apartheid story. Although the film is a portrayal of an individual family, the Hendricks are positioned as representatives of a much bigger story of injustice. Moreover, it became apparent that this case-study provides an interesting exploration of the simultaneous blending and separating of an individual and collective experience.

Twenty five years ago, the character-led, observational approach to filmmaking that characterises *Last Supper in Hortsley Street* contrasted with many of the documentaries being made in South Africa, both by oppositional film-makers and by the state broadcasters. The popular trend was towards what film theorist Bill Nichols refers to as 'expository', describing the type of documentary that exposes a case or presents an argument from a particular angle⁴. Nowadays a character-led approach has become increasingly common in documentary and is a popular choice among commissioning editors seeking to draw audiences. As a trend, it contrasts with the more definite argument of the expository documentary but also with the traditional 'historical documentary' that presents evidence through archival footage, expert witnesses, a voice-over narration and often puts a greater focus on structure than agency. This shift in trend towards following individuals' lives increases the importance of trying to

⁴ Nichols. Bill; *Representing Reality*. Indiana University Press, (Bloomington, 1991)

understand the experience on the part of the documentary subject, particularly when surrounding events are traumatic. If we are to hear the voices of individuals, it is also important to hear their experiences of lending that voice.

The family members say that little has changed in Belhar since they first moved there, praying that it would only be a temporary measure. They argue that there is a notable absence of facilities, employment opportunities and, as the residents are quick to point out, a lack of any community as a result of endemic crime. Like Gori, whose experience is discussed in the previous chapter, the Hendricks often return to the concept of community. For them, it defines their allegiance during the struggle years and has come to represent a loyalty structure that, in their mind, is no longer available to them.

When I arrived on my first visit, their youngest daughter Roshana, was sitting on the doorstep staring at the empty street. She was only four years old when she left District Six with her family but is quick to express her identity as a 'District Sixer'. She laments the rupture caused by the forced removal for both her family and, interestingly despite her young age, for herself. In our many subsequent conversations, Roshana often expressed a sense of loss. She spoke of having her 'childhood stolen' and her desire to 're-claim' the past⁵.

This notion of transferred trauma is explored in Zubeida Jaffer's biography, *Our Generation*⁶. When sent on a research mission to Holland before the TRC, where she was making a testimony herself, she visited the National Centre for medico-psychological treatment for members of the resistance and victims of the Second World

⁵ Conversation with Roshana during first meeting with family, February 2003.

⁶ Jaffer, Zubeida. *Our Generation*, Kwela Books, (South Africa, 2003).

War⁷. There, she met a woman, born 45 years after the war ended whom the psychologists believed to be suffering as a result of her parents' trauma. Jaffer, like other South African struggle activists, realised she had to explore different ways of preventing her own daughter taking on her traumatic experiences. She explains this as one of her motivations for making a statement to the TRC:

'We are trying to make a symbolic break with the past and I felt that I don't want to go into the future, into years to come and pass all this pain onto my daughter and to you know onto future generations'⁸.

The previous chapter provided two examples of parents using documentary to share narratives of their past with their children. Gori likes to explain his past to his daughters through his films and the lady interviewed in Bonteheuwel had brought her children to the community screening in order to do the same. Roshana's response reveals, conversely, that through constant exposure to her parents' trauma, she has taken it on for herself, absorbing it as part of her own identity. Roshana has seen *Last Supper in Hortsley Street* so many times and has been identified as part of the family in the film, that she has lived the experience of her parents and older siblings through the film. The experience of her family has been frozen by the film and it provides a connector to a past that was not really hers. This example acts as another reminder that the afterlife of a documentary is never predictable and may affect not just those who made an active decision to participate at the time of production.

On my second visit to Belhar, I was greeted by the eldest daughter who apologised that her mother, Latifa Hendricks, had rushed out to visit her sick sister so had to cancel our appointment. I sympathised and left. The next day Latifa phoned to apologise for the

⁷ For a transcript of Jaffer's testimony before the TRC, see <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/helder/ct00776.htm>

⁸ Jaffer, *Our Generation*, pg. 90.

inconvenience and quickly admitted that the story about her sister was an excuse and she had in fact stormed out of the house after a huge argument with her husband, Armien Hendricks. Latifa commented that the actions of the apartheid government still had its bearing on personal relations, exactly as Gori argued in the preceding chapter. Ever since the family's forced removal away from Cape Town, she says Armien has felt frustrated by the isolation imposed on him and the subsequent difficulty of finding work. Under such conditions, she says, home life has been very strained for a long time⁹. Latifa and Armien married in 1969. They had both grown up in District Six and had together made it their home.

The film's director, Lindy Wilson, was introduced to the family in 1982, just as the local councillors issued their final warnings to the Hendricks family. The fact that this introduction was made by somebody whom the Hendricks already knew affected their initial predisposition to the project¹⁰. In contrast to the experience of some of the other documentary subjects featured in this research, there were no lengthy negotiations but rather an understanding on both sides that the filmmaking process had to commence immediately if events were to be recorded. Around the Hendricks' home already lay the demolished foundations of their neighbours' houses and community structures such as libraries and the old market area. For years they had resisted the councillors and remain proud of their role as 'the last family to leave District Six'. Although strict apartheid laws meant that the risks were significant for both Lindy and the Hendricks, it was agreed that the traumatic process should be documented on camera.

⁹ Interview with Latifa, Belhar home 17/03/03.

¹⁰ The introduction was made by Peggy Davenport, an artist whose work is exhibited at the District Six Museum, Cape Town.

As with some of my other film subjects, an important part of the research process was a shared viewing of *Last Supper in Hortsley Street*¹¹. In this instance, collaborative viewing with the Hendricks served many purposes but it was important that a good rapport and level of trust had already been established through social visits with Lindy Wilson prior to the research. The experience prompted conversations that would otherwise have been hard to initiate. We were able to witness the film's scenes together which enabled Latifa and Armien to provide me with an animated commentary of the film's structure. They also shared their relationships with other characters who appear. When we came to the scene when the white councillors came to their house to issue their final eviction warning, Latifa grabbed my arm and said, 'Look at their aggression...just look at their faces Lucinda'. When the film showed a little boy playing in the barren streets of District Six, she informed me:

'That little boy was stabbed to death with a screwdriver here in Belhar a while ago...he wanted so much to return to District Six'.

This process brought an immediacy to the discussion, dissolving some of the gap between past and present.

For a number of reasons, Armien was clearly less comfortable watching the film with me and wandered back and forth between the kitchen and the living room where Latifa and I were sitting in front of the television¹². Armien explained:

'It makes me sad. We were young then. It reminds me what they have taken away from us and makes me think, 'What if?'. It makes me think how things might have been better for us. Sometimes I watch it on my own if I want to release my sadness'.

¹¹ The section on Methods in the Introduction discusses the ethical decisions around viewing the documentaries with the documentary subjects.

¹² Western explores how men and women felt the dislocation of forced removals quite differently in his book *Outcast Cape Town*, Minnesota University Press, (Minneapolis, 1996).

In this last statement, his sentiments are similar to Gori who speaks of viewing the films in which he has appeared as private acts of memory which he uses to re-immense himself in his old world. But Armien also reveals how the irretrievable quality of film and the images it freezes in time can, for him, be a paralysing connector to the past. Rabinowitz speaks of documentary film's capacity to 'freeze images within their frames' and 'provide a stability to an ever-changing reality'¹³.

However, as Armien confesses, looking back the images of District Six before its decimation, can be too emotional because it freezes a past that is more attractive to him than the present. For Armien, the visual nature of documentary and the emotions thereby aroused by revisiting the images, can be too powerful and painful. He summed this up poignantly:

'Memories is [sic] longer than a dream...if you wake up they are still with you'¹⁴.

Armien's responses, years after the forced removal, suggest that his memories of District Six can arouse resentment as much as nostalgic pleasure for him. On the day of our shared viewing, he was not feeling well and the film provoked negative emotions. Previous conversations in which he revealed the pride he used to feel when viewing the film make this an interesting illustration of the changing relationship a subject can have with a text in which they are represented. Numerous factors affect this relationship and, as has been illustrated many times in my own documentary production work as well as in this research, this relationship really can shift from day to day.

¹³ Rabinowitz, Paula. *They Must be represented; the politics of documentary*. Verso, (New York, London, 1994), p. 17.

¹⁴ Interview with Armien, Belhar home, 17/03/03.

When Armien looks at the film shot many years ago, he sees a healthy young man who has a happy family life and is forcefully challenging the oppressive system. He associates the footage with a better time and a better him. Film's ability to freeze peoples' physical features in a certain period time certainly exacerbates these emotions. The highly selective process of editing also means that the highest - or lowest-emotional moments are used to illustrate the argument of the film. As with all nostalgic memories, when Armien looks back at images of his past it is easy for him to forget that these intense and positive moments were not always representative of everyday life.

It is important to say something more of District Six in order to understand its role in the Hendricks' life and therefore their relationship to the film. This is a community that has inspired musicals, art, photography, poetry, literature and the creation of a museum¹⁵. As the land restitution process has begun, it has also served as a symbolic community. When Mandela handed over keys to former residents in February 2004 at a huge public ceremony, it was televised nationwide. Forced relocations occurred across the country, sometimes attracting the world's attention such as in Sophiatown, Johannesburg¹⁶. However, District Six remains a prominent case-study partly because of the scale and the style of the process: 60,000 people were relocated from District Six to surrounding townships¹⁷. A majority of the Coloured community in the Cape Town area lived in District Six or had a close relative from the community. Although people

¹⁵ For example, the David Kramer musicals '*Kat and the Kings*' and '*District Six the Musical*' have played to significant audiences both in South Africa and overseas. The District Six Museum (www.districtsix.co.za) continues to expand its collections, exhibitions and education programmes. A body of literature ranging from poetry to biography about the District Six experience continues to grow.

¹⁶ Pascale Lamche's documentary *Sophiatown* (2003) explores, through powerful archival material, the demolition of this area of Johannesburg and the tragedy of its many talented musicians being sent into exile. Xola Maseko's feature film, *Drum* (2004) is also set in Sophiatown around the time of forced relocations. Prominent South African writers Don Mattera and Athol Fugard have also set works within the former community of Sophiatown.

¹⁷ Soudien C and Jeppie S (eds); *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present*, Buchu Books, (Cape Town, 1990)

of all races did live within the district, it represents a place of particular significance for the Coloured population of Cape Town. Western describes it as:

‘A space in part at least seven generations deep and one with associations with the emancipation of the slaves’¹⁸.

Bickford-Smith and MacEachern have brought our attention to the way that memories of the community have been constructed from an ideological and political position as well as remembered history¹⁹. This argument is particularly relevant to an exploration of the relationship that the Hendricks have with the film *Last Supper in Hortsley Street*. Belinda Bozzoli discusses community as an oppositional construction in the South African context²⁰. A pre-apartheid past is glorified in order to further emphasise a dissatisfaction with the post-apartheid present. Like other former residents, their opinions are intensified by their dissatisfaction with the community where they have been forced to reside after the demolition of District Six. Of Belhar, Latifa says, ‘It is a house but it never became a home’²¹. This is in contrast to the *home* and *community* that feature in their memories of their past.

When discussing memories of pre-apartheid Cape Town to provide a social portrait of the city on the eve of the apartheid regime, Bickford-Smith describes the positive memories that emerged amongst his interviewees.²² Contrary to other evidence, the informants remember a place marked by tolerance, cohesion and security. Their

¹⁸ Western, J; *Outcast Cape Town*, George Allen and Unwin, (London 1981), p.150.

¹⁹ Bickford-Smith, Vivian; ‘Representing Cape Town on the eve of Apartheid’ in *Urban History*, Volume 25, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge, 1998), pgs 36-59.

MacEachern, Charmaine. ‘Mapping the memories: politics, place and identity in the District Six Museum, Cape Town’, in Zegeye, Abebe (ed); *Social Identities in the New South Africa*, Volume 1 Kwela Books, (Cape Town, 2001), pgs 499-521.

²⁰ Bozzoli, Belinda. *Class; Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives*, Ravan Press, (Johannesburg, 1987).

²¹ Interview with Latifa Hendricks, 17/03/03.

²² Bickford-Smith, Vivian. ‘Representing Cape Town on the eve of apartheid’ in *Urban History*. This article provides an important context to understand the Cape Town eulogised by the Hendricks family, before the Group Areas Act was legislated and forced removals process began in earnest. In fact the apartheid government was in power for most of the Hendricks’ adult lives but it was harder for the authorities to enforce the spatial divisions until the Group Area Act was implemented.

memories are often generalised and do not match actual events or dates. A warm discourse about the past comforts its proponents. Above all positive memories serve to highlight the iniquity of apartheid legislation and the subsequent injustices.

Certain myths about District Six have been compounded over the years by media and artistic representations and these popular representations have then been absorbed into personal accounts. It is possible that this sometimes suits academics and filmmakers who work with these somewhat romantic narratives; the quest comes less to seek the actual facts than the 'experience' as told by the narrators. When it comes to exploring traumatic memory in relation to the Holocaust, Lawrence Langer argues that it is as important to lend ear to the narratives that emerge *around* a series of events. Propelled by this argument, Langer pulls together a wide collection of art, drama, poetry and prose about the Holocaust in *Art from the Ashes*. In the introduction, he argues that it is a misguided venture to try and separate fact and fiction in the quest to represent, 'the way it was'. He writes, 'Holocaust fact and Holocaust fiction are Siamese twins, joined at birth and severed at their peril'²³. Psychoanalyst Dori Laub also argues the importance of taking survivors' perceptions of what happened in the camps as seriously as the 'real facts'²⁴.

The Hendricks reproduce the popular narrative of District Six as a vibrant and harmonious place. Since they have so often been interviewed as a couple, they have a tendency to share responses and play out established roles in their recounting of stories. Their repetition of certain details and descriptions also suggests that they pull from a repertoire of previously narrated memories that exaggerate and omit certain elements.

²³ Langer, Lawrence. *Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology*, Oxford University Press, (US, 1995), p.11.

²⁴ Laub, Dori in Felmand and Laub (eds); *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, Routledge, (London, 1992)

South African archivist Verne Harris appeals for us to embrace the fact that all repositories of memory are an ‘extraordinary creation of remembering, forgetting and fantasy’²⁵. Oral historians such as Portelli, Thompson and Perks make the same argument. They are interested in what is included *and* what is excluded when they work with individuals’ life histories²⁶.

For the Hendricks, everything was better in District Six and, in their view, the film provides real *evidence* of this. Viewing the film, and its depiction of District Six, with the Hendricks inevitably resulted in comparisons with their present lives in Belhar, particularly in regard to the physical landscape. The footage shows deserted homes, piles of rubble and disused cars but Latifa only commented on the aesthetic advantages of the place, displaying an acute sense of loyalty to what Armien refers to as their ‘homelands’²⁷. Such glorification of a deprived community is analysed by Samuel and Thompson:

‘For so many years, a byword for poverty and deprivation, is transfigured into a warm and homely place, a little commonwealth where there was always a helping hand’²⁸.

There is a notable use of hyperbole when Latifa speaks of her former community. In one of our meetings, Latifa stretched out her arms to their full span to illustrate how much bigger the snoeks (local fish) were for sale in the District Six market and she eulogises her former neighbours:

‘Even food wasn’t a problem in District Six. What was for me was for you, whether you were white or black’.

²⁵ Harris, Verne. ‘The Archival Sliver: A perspective on the Construction of Social Memory in Archives and the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy’ in Harris, Harris, Pickover and Reed (eds) *Refiguring the Archive*, Springer, (South Africa. p.151)

²⁶ Perks and Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader*.

²⁷ Interview with Armien Hendricks, Belhar home, 17/03/03

²⁸ Samuel, Raphael and Paul Thompson; *The Myths We Live By*, p.28.

This is in opposition to the ‘uncivilized people’ who live around them in Belhar. According to Latifa, even the criminals weren’t all that bad in District Six. Having viewed the film together, Latifa took me through a collection of photographs from District Six. Pointing to a photograph of a gangster, she exclaimed, ‘See, even the gangsters were good-looking there!’. MacEachern provides a list of similar phrases reproduced on a variety of platforms in regard to District Six²⁹.

It is interesting, in this instance, to observe a documentary film acting as a romantic connector to the past as well as a painful reminder of the trauma experienced. For the Hendricks family *Last Supper in Hortsley Street* preserves their memories of the painfully traumatic day when their old house was decimated, provides proof of the injustice and ignites selective memories of their life before that day.

For Armien the greatest tragedy of relocation was losing the natural landscape of Cape Town:

‘How can you push people out of a Mother City and place them here? If they had put us on Robben Island we would have been better’³⁰.

He speaks often of the spaces he used to visit:

‘When I felt lonely I would go and sit in Company Gardens. When I wanted to enjoy myself I would walk to one of the beaches at Seapoint, Camps Bay or Clifton. We weren’t allowed onto Clifton beach but we could stand and watch. We lived under Table Mountain and it was all free to enjoy’.

The Hendricks family provide a living illustration of a statement made by film theorist Bill Nichols when he observed, ‘Meaning and action, past and present, hinge on one

²⁹ Charmaine MacEacherns, ‘Mapping the memories; politics, place and identity in the District Six Museum, Cape Town’ in Zegeye, Abebe (ed); *Social Identities in the New South Africa*, page 234.

³⁰ Interview with Armien Hendricks, Belhar, 17/3/03.

another distinctively'³¹. The meaning attributed to the past and actions taken in the past are contingent on the meaning invested in the present and recollections of the past are told from such a standpoint. It would seem that the Hendricks express their resentment at not being relocated to District Six within the ongoing land restitution process and their ongoing dissatisfaction with their living situation in Belhar by continually asserting themselves as '*the last family to leave District Six*'. This role is consolidated and confirmed by the existence of the film, *Last Supper in Horstley Street*. They perceive themselves as the true resisters. This background is essential to understanding their relationship with the documentary.

When it came to the making of this film, there was little time for the 'negotiations' between film-maker and film subject that have formed an important part of the experience had by other participants in this research. By the time Lindy Wilson met the family, the crisis had already begun. In this instance, the task was not to produce a long-term observation of the family but to capture their immediate trauma. They committed themselves to the project immediately because they recognised the importance of their experience being recorded although they knew there were risks involved, 'We were scared of doing it and we were scared of not doing it'³². The security police were very wary of media activities that might discredit the regime. Latifa said, 'you weren't allowed to say anything...it's why Mandela was in prison for 27 years'. Armien confuses the dates but adds, 'Our film was made only four years [sic] after they killed Biko..it was a very dangerous time'³³.

The fact that Lindy was prepared to put herself at risk clearly awarded her a certain respect from the family. Local authorities did question her activities but she claimed to

³¹ Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality – Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, p. 1.

³² Armien, 26/03/03

³³ In conversation with Armien and Latifa together, Belhar, 17/03/03.

be a tourist photographing Cape Town³⁴. Later, she had to smuggle the footage out of South Africa for editing in order to avoid the material being confiscated³⁵. In Latifa's mind, the gap was closed between film-maker and subject when Lindy cried with her on the night they left District Six³⁶. It is interesting how the documentary subjects involved in this specific research have identified key moments when they have awarded their respective filmmakers a legitimacy. Gori spoke of his change in attitude towards director Francois Verster when he was prepared to accompany him on dangerous shabeen raids and work 'long after hours'³⁷. The Hendricks were impressed when, during the production of *Last Supper in Horstley Street*, Lindy had joined them for the long walk to Belhar station, 'where there are lots of robbers', in order to capture their new situation on camera. These two examples provide unusual insights from the perspective of documentary subjects as they explain and interpret significant moments in their long and often changing relationships with the filmmakers.

Issues of trust and legitimacy emerged as critical themes in this exploration. In the case of the Hendricks and Gori, trust seems to be awarded at two levels. Firstly, the filmmakers had to prove they were serious about the job in hand and, by implication, empathise and share the difficult experiences of the subject. Secondly, film-makers' relationships with the subjects had to be judged as 'genuine'. It remains very important to the Hendricks that Lindy and her husband came to plant trees in their new garden in Belhar. As Armien jokes 'we had the only white gardeners in South Africa!'³⁸.

Responses suggest that judgement of the filmmakers' 'genuineness' is often predicated on the film-maker showing interest in their subjects when there is no camera present so

³⁴ Interview with Lindy Wilson, Rondebosch, Cape Town. 28/03/04.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Personal communication with Latifa, anecdote recalled in telephone call, 14/04/03.

³⁷ Interview with Gori, Athlone, 10/08/03.

³⁸ Interview with Armien, Belhar, 17/03/03.

that their relationship is not contingent on 'data collection'. The difficult decision facing the filmmaker as to when, or if, to bring out a camera at an emotional moment is discussed in the previous chapter. It mattered hugely to Armien and Latifa that Lindy Wilson was there to assist them with their garden, beyond her filmmaking duties.

The Hendricks express a long-term loyalty to Lindy Wilson and insist she will be the one who films their return to District Six if this dream becomes a reality for them. However, of course, this is not always the conclusion of documentary subjects who fall out with the filmmaker along the way or after the production, often questioning exactly what they gained from the process. They may recognise the process as important but there is still often an underlying expectation that the benefits will be real and tangible. The Hendricks reveal a disappointment that the film has not given them a real head-start in the battle for restitution. They appreciate the acknowledgment provided by the film but admit that it has always heightened their disappointment that they were not prioritised when the restitution process began.

The camera and film-maker can perform a number of necessary roles in individuals' lives and sometimes the attention awarded by the making of a film offers a temporary but uplifting diversion from an otherwise difficult daily existence. Certainly the Hendricks revealed a pride at being acknowledged as 'the people from the film' over the years. They spoke of being stopped in the street and recounted anecdotes of being recognised, such as the recent occasion when the doctor examining Armien referred to him as 'a celebrity'³⁹. Paradoxically it seems that the attention given to the Hendricks as a result of the film may have intensified their disappointment at not being prioritised in the land restitution process. Armien certainly expresses a sense of feeling let down after

³⁹ Interview with Armien Hendricks, 17/3/03.

making such a public gesture of defiance against the apartheid state and daring to broadcast their story at a dangerous time.

The anti-climax of finishing a film and returning to an 'unobserved life' was brought up by a few interviewees during the research. Although the film-making process is likely to have had its share of challenges, it does provide some attention in lives that are often felt to be disregarded or forgotten. Thus, a void may be felt when the process is suddenly over. This is a possible outcome of all qualitative research that involves people sharing intimate information about their lives⁴⁰. It seems that, in their own minds, the film really fixed the Hendricks' identity as the last family to leave District Six which thereby increased their expectations of recognition and compensation. This is an unforeseen consequence of their becoming documentary subjects. They believe they demonstrated their struggle and proved their position to the world through the film which they believe, in turn, gives them authority and legitimacy.

Their viewpoint is powerfully illustrated in two letters written by Armien appealing to be returned to District Six. In one of these letters he writes:

'We the Hendricks family decided to express our anger and frustration to the rest of the country and the world by making a film- called THE LAST SUPPER IN HORTSLEY STREET.

We were the very last in District Six- there was nothing left of the city- we fought until the very end. Every one else just gave up hope and left...We made Hortsley Street the most famous street in District Six'.

In the other letter which is addressed to Mr President Mandela, at the top of the page where the address is traditionally positioned, Armien has written in big capital letters:

⁴⁰ Yow discusses the ethical dilemmas that confront researchers who use interviewing as their main research method, particularly when the material is of a personal or traumatic nature. Yow, Valerie. Chapter 5, 'Interpersonal Relations in the Interview' in *Recording oral history: a practical guide for social scientists*, Sage, (London 1994).

‘THE HENDRICKS FAMILY FROM THE LAST SUPPER IN HORTSLEY STREET’⁴¹.

This primary definition as ‘the family from the film’ reveals the potential significance that a documentary text can take within its subjects’ lives. ‘How can the men fight without arms?’ asked Armien in one of our conversations. At a time when they felt completely disempowered and unable to protect their family and home from the powerful apartheid state, the film appears to have given them a means of resistance. Naomi Rosh White, in her discussion of Holocaust testimonies, views this important process that can be undertaken through different forms of representation as moving from ‘object to subject’⁴². In a similar vein, critical theorist bell hooks writes about ‘speaking as an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges the politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless’⁴³.

Latifa speaks of the camera providing not only solace through the traumatic episode but also distraction. Whilst watching the film alongside me, she constantly made reference to her appearance and expressed her embarrassment at the way she looked on screen:

‘Look at me...I was so thin...look at my dress...see I started smoking I was so depressed’⁴⁴.

However, at the time, she reports being so preoccupied with the events around her that she did not have time to feel self-conscious in front of the camera. If the film had been made retrospectively and relied on her narrating her memories, then her relationship with the camera and her behaviour in front of the lens is likely to have been quite

⁴¹ The Hendricks were proud of these letters and gave me printed copies of these letters to take home with me.

⁴² Rosh White, Naomi; *Marking Absences: Holocaust testimony and history* in (eds) Perks and Thomson; *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, (London, 1998), pgs 172-182.

⁴³ hooks, bell: *Talking Back/Out There: Marginalisation and Contemporary Culture*, MIT Press, (Cambridge Mass, 1990), p. 340.

⁴⁴ Interview with Latifa, Belhar home, 17/3/03.

different⁴⁵. As the details of a narrative may change with time, so may the delivery of the narrative. Latifa believes that her confidence before the camera and her willingness to break down so publicly was enabled by the particularly fraught situation in which the filming took place. Participating in a documentary film that looked back at her memories of the trauma would, in her mind, have resulted in a much timid 'performance'.

Whilst Latifa was horrified by her appearance on screen, Armien revealed his own concerns in the edit phase. Lindy Wilson provided the following insight from the editing stage of the film project⁴⁶. She says she brought Latifa and Armien into the edit suite to show them the rough cut and to get their feedback. She says they loved the film from first viewing, and they confirm this, but Armien was deeply bothered about one scene. It was a scene in which he was shown praying. As a result of the picture and sound being sync-ed in a certain way, he was kneeling at a moment when the soundtrack of the prayer indicated he should be standing according to prayer ritual. The editor was able to rectify this situation in two minutes and Armien was hugely relieved.

All the documentary story-tellers participating in this research expressed some concern at how their behaviour on screen would be 'judged' by audiences. This anxiety is expressed in a number of individual ways. Armien was anxious about being seen to not observe proper prayer protocol. On a number of occasions when I have been personally involved with interviewing subjects on camera, I have noted that a major anxiety is the state of untidiness in their house. During a recent documentary production, a female subject spoke openly about matters around child abuse and HIV but remained deeply

⁴⁵ Latifa's thoughts on this matter are similar to those of Nyameka Goniwe (discussed in Chapter 3) who was asked to do television interviews within hours of her finding out about the murder of her husband. Nyameka comments on the differences between the content and the delivery of this interview conducted as the traumatic events unfolded and the many interviews she has given subsequently.

⁴⁶ Interview with Lindy Wilson, Rondebosch, Cape Town, 20/10/03.

concerned about the mark behind her on the wall and the bad impression this would make.

In sum, the account given by the Hendricks reveals an experience that has been positive yet with its own disappointments. They talk of the paralysing connection to the past that the film provides and also of the expectations it has created for them. However, overall, it is certain that the film has been a very positive part of their lives, both for what it gave them at the time of the trauma when it was produced and in the years that have since rolled by. Latifa and Armien agree that during its actual production, the film provided them with a vital coping mechanism. It took them beyond their personal trauma and gave them a bigger cause:

‘The film gave us power. We helped mankind...what made me happy was that the world could see what was happening. We achieved something’. (Latifa)

They believe that a documentary film was the right medium to extend their voice to the world:

‘If I make a film hundreds, thousands and millions will see it right around the world. If I just talk to you how many people will hear’. (Armien)

The different documentary subjects participating in this research have revealed diverse opinions on whom they deem their most important audiences. Gori was primarily concerned that his local community of Bontehuwel should acknowledge and re-claim Anton Fransch through seeing *Deafening Echoes*. Armien, in contrast, was most concerned to reach white audiences in South Africa and international audiences with *Last Supper in Horstley Street*. He said he hoped that the film would make white audiences in South Africa feel ‘ashamed’ and hoped it would challenge stereotypical representations of Africa for international audiences:

‘Africa is not just about elephants and lions. In District Six there was culture- cricket players, ballerinas, craftsmen’.

Thus, for the Hendricks’, the documentary form offers a medium of communication with a wide reach and one with a powerful capacity to effect opinion as a result of its visual quality. Latifa drew on the old maxim of ‘seeing is believing’ to state her case: ‘They have to see it and then they believe you’. In her mind, its force lies in showing a normal family doing normal family things. This, she hopes, creates an important empathy between subject and audience member:

‘We’re not characters in a play...it’s a real-life story...no-one told us what to say...the audiences see a real family having that pain’.

The completed film was shown, as a once off special screening, at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town soon after its completion. Armien reports asking the theatre manager to keep his family apart from the rest of the public as he was nervous about the security police⁴⁷. When faced with their story on the big screen, their overwhelming feeling, they both say, was one of pride and ownership. Latifa describes the screening:

‘I felt proud to see the film on the ‘big screen’. It was new for us. It was a shock to see me there, then I got used to it. It wasn’t acting...we just said what we felt’.

Armien added to this:

‘I was proud to sit in a white place as a Coloured person and it was our movie’.

The Hendricks have been ‘documentary subjects’ for over twenty years and, in this, the accounts of Armien and Latifa make a fascinating contribution to this overall research. Documentaries often make use of archive material to illustrate the differences between the past and the present. Such material is used to say, ‘This is what the gulags looked like, Witness the horrors of the Nazi camps, Look at the brutality of Apartheid’. But, as

⁴⁷ Interview with Armien, 17/3/03.

Latifa pointed out in one of our discussions, film material is as useful to show the lack of change as it is to put a distance between the past and present. Nowadays, she says, their film, 'Shows the world how things have not changed'.

Despite the regime change, the Hendricks are still in the house where they were forcibly relocated twenty three years ago. Above all, the experience of the Hendricks shows that, although audiences may watch a film only once, 'the afterlife' may be long and go through a number of different stages.

In 1982, *Last Supper in Horstley Street* was made to highlight the injustices of the District Six forced removals. Today, the film serves as a critical reminder of what took place but also what remains to be rectified. Earlier in the chapter, Armien was cited as saying that he was 'scared of doing and it and we were scared of not doing it'. The process was undoubtedly facilitated by a warm, authentic relationship with Lindy Wilson whom the Hendricks' took into their confidence at a traumatic time. This chapter reveals the perspective of a couple who did not dedicate their lives to political struggle as activists but who wanted the gross injustice perpetrated against their family to be recorded and disseminated. *Last Supper in Hortsley Street* became their vehicle.

CHAPTER 3

***'The Expert on Pain'* : Nyameka Goniwe's experience of participating in documentary films.**

'I'm still a human being. It's not like I am doing this for professional purposes like an actor or actress who has to learn their script'

(Nyameka Goniwe, 27/02/03)¹

Within minutes of finding out that her husband had been murdered, the media was on Nyameka Goniwe's doorstep. They wanted to know about her husband, Matthew Goniwe, whose charred body had been found in undergrowth around Bluewater Bay in Port Elizabeth. The questions came thick and fast: 'What was he was like?' 'How was she dealing with her loss?' 'What did she think had happened to him?' 'Who did she think had killed him?' She says the calls and the questions have continued ever since². From that day onwards in May 1985, she says has been made 'a symbol of suffering' and 'the expert on pain'³. In this role, as representative of her husband's story and her associated trauma, Nyameka has been involved in a number of documentaries and news pieces, frequently called upon to retell her experience for the screen .

Immediately noteworthy is that Nyameka does not know the names of all the finished films that have resulted or indeed what became of much of the filmed material that has been recorded with her. Unlike the accounts provided by other documentary story-

¹ Interview with Nyameka Goniwe, IJR office, Cape Town, 27/02/03. If not footnoted, all quotations are taken from this central interview.

² Ibid.

³ For full transcript of Nyameka Goniwe's submission to the TRC, see www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrtrans/hrvell/goniwe.htm

tellers involved in this research, in which they have spoken about their experiences with a specific film or at most two films, Nyameka speaks from the standpoint of someone who has had a wide range of experiences with filmmakers and journalists. In her case, these experiences have also stretched over a period of more than 20 years. She is frequently called upon to speak of both her particular trauma but also for her comment on general themes such as reconciliation or transition.

The ensuing chapter reveals Nyameka's concerns for the documentary participant and the pressures to which they are subjected. She upholds the importance of exposing the atrocities of the former regime but believes this imperative can result in a pressure on the documentary subject that puts in a painful or compromised position. Yet, she argues, certain measures can be taken to avoid such an eventuality or at least lessen the effects.

The film best known internationally in which Nyameka is interviewed is *Long Night's Journey Into Day*, directed by filmmakers Frances Reid and Deborah Hoffmann in 2000. The documentary was nominated for an Academy Award⁴. The film follows four cases that came before the TRC and includes interviews with both victims of apartheid abuses and the perpetrators in order to explore themes of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Other films to which she alluded in our discussions include *Certain Unknown Persons* and *Nyameka's Story*. The former was made in 1988 by the Video News Service/Afravision (VNS), a collective of oppositional filmmakers who sought to capture and expose apartheid atrocities⁵. The footage was then used in various forms, covertly in

⁴ For full transcript of *Long Night's Journey Into Day* see: <http://www.newsreel.org/transcripts/longnight.htm>

⁵ The Video News Service (VNS) was formed in April 1986. A collective of oppositional filmmakers, it was funded with overseas financial support. As well as longer form films, VNS made 'video pamphlets' that were distributed between townships to pass on important information that would assist the struggle. In 2000, the UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives acquired the Afravision video archive. This

the townships to promote the struggle as well as by foreign broadcasters. *Nyameka's Story* was directed by Mark Kaplan on behalf of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in 2001. In this 25 minute film, Nyameka reflects on the life of her husband Matthew Goniwe. The film includes an interview with the man who gave the signal for Goniwe to be killed.

The motivations and aims of the three films mentioned so far are distinct. They were made at different moments during and after the struggle and to achieve quite different ends. It is necessary to know something of their context and the filmmaker or organisation that produced the different films. Reid and Hoffman, directors of *Long Night's Journey into Day*, are two American filmmakers whose aim was to tell foreign audiences, most of whom would have a minimal knowledge of South Africa and Apartheid, the extraordinary story of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. They have spoken of the challenges as filmmakers of trying to communicate such a complex story within its historical context in a simplified and engaging way that would command a foreign audience⁶.

VNS/Afravision, who made *Certain Unknown Persons*, worked illegally during the apartheid years to capture atrocities at the most turbulent of times. *Certain Unknown Persons* investigates the disappearances of political activists, including Mathew Goniwe, incorporating interviews with other activists and family members. The IJR, responsible for *Nyameka's Story*, is an Institute established to promote democratic nation-building and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa and therefore creates materials that support this mandate. It is also significant that Nyameka worked at the

collection included 5,000 beta recordings of the mass struggles in the 1980s and the lead-up to democracy.

⁶ Reid and Hoffmann's motivations for making *Long Night's Journey Into Day* are discussed in a newspaper interview in the Daily Californian, August 25, 2000: <http://www.dailycal.org/sharticle.php?id=2942>

IJR at the time the film was made which, she explains, affected the set of negotiations that precedes participation in any film project.

Nyameka's account is particularly interesting for what it reveals of how working for different filmmakers, organisations or collectives changes the documentary experience. She clearly felt a particular set of obligations in each instance and explains how the different frameworks affected each documentary experience. Nyameka expected me, as a researcher, to quiz her about her trauma and was surprised and clearly pleased to learn that this research was not directed, once again, towards her recounting her traumatic experience but to discuss her experience of having to *represent* this trauma: 'Nobody asked me what it was like to have to always talk⁷'. She believes more attention should be given to the story-teller's needs and a greater consideration of what it might be like for that individual to go through such a process.

The story of Matthew Goniwe and his comrades Fort Calata, Michael 'Sparrow' Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlawuli, who collectively became known as the Cradock Four, is one of the best known in the history of the anti-apartheid struggle. In *Country of My Skull*, Krog recounts her conversation with Xhosa intellectual, Professor Konlo, who emphasises the significance of the funeral of the Cradock Four on 20 July 1985:

'It was like a raging fire. ANC and SACP flags were defiantly displayed – buses and buses full of people turned up, were turned away – a state of emergency was declared. But in a sense it was the real beginning of the end of Apartheid'⁸.

⁷ Second meeting with Nyameka Goniwe, 14/03/03, Cape Town.

⁸ Krog, Antjie. *Country of My Skull*, p. 43.

The effects were nationwide and the apartheid government, fearful of group unrest, called a State of Emergency⁹. These four men from the Eastern Cape had been brutally murdered and their bodies burned by members of the security police on their way back from a UDF meeting in Port Elizabeth¹⁰. The state tried to frame the incident as another incident of 'black on black' violence, proving the urgent need to further secure the country. Only at the TRC hearings did the truth around the men's murders become public¹¹.

Matthew Goniwe was 36 years old in 1985 and emerging as an incredibly popular political activist who was said to embody the community struggle in Cradock¹². He had been instrumental in setting up the Cradock Residential Association (Cradora) and was a great concern to the security police because of his ability to mobilise people. This was demonstrated by his rent battles, his support for school boycotts and his defiance of local councils. Cradock and its township of Lingelihle had a strong history of black protest and the security police saw Goniwe as an incendiary force. Goniwe was a school teacher and when the government had tried to move him away from Cradock, prolonged and widespread school boycotts were sparked. He had already served four years in prison for 'Marxist activity' from 1976 and found himself again detained in 1984 as a result of the school boycotts. On that occasion, he had been at home with Nyameka and his children when the police hauled him off into the night. On returning

⁹ On the significance of events in Cradock, see also:

Sarkin, J. *Carrots and Sticks: the TRC and the South African Amnesty Process*, Hart Publishing, (Oxford, 2004).

¹⁰ The United Democratic Front (UDF) was a very important anti-apartheid umbrella organisation in the 1980's. It represented a coalition of civic organisations, church, students, workers who supported the organisation's slogan 'UDF Unites, Apartheid Divides'.

Seekings, Jeremy. *The UDF – A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983 – 1991*. David Philip, (Cape Town, 2000).

¹¹ Christopher Nicholson provides a narrative account of the investigation into the killings of the Cradock Four and gives attention to the part of the 'third force' in events.

Nicholson, Christopher. *Permanent Removal: Who Killed the Cradock Four?* Wits University Press, (Johannesburg, 2004).

¹² Articles that reflect Mathew Goniwe's popularity and reputation at the time of his assassination can be found in the *Weekly Mail* 12/07/85, 23/08/85, 25/07/86.

to his community he had committed himself full-time to UDF activities and fighting the struggle.

On June 27, 1985, when leaving the UDF meeting in Port Elizabeth, Matthew had telephoned Nyameka to say he was on his way home. She waited and waited, increasingly anxious, but he never arrived back at their home in the Cradock township of Lingelihle. First the security police killed Mkhonto and Mhlawuli in order to remove them as witnesses and then Calata and Goniwe, political activists they had been attempting to eliminate for some time¹³. Their burned bodies, which bore numerous stab wounds, were found near the car in which they had been travelling which was also burned almost beyond recognition.

Years later, during the TRC process, Nyameka recounts being taken back to the bush where her husband's charred body was found for a television news interview. She was astonished at the lack of understanding amongst the crew and still can't believe she was persuaded to go there:

'They took me right into the bushes and after that ordeal they didn't even show me the footage'¹⁴.

Of their motivations, she says it is a matter of 'journalists trying to get an edge on a story over other journalists'¹⁵. Nyameka makes interesting distinctions between the genres of news and documentary and how they may be experienced differently by the 'story-teller'. She speaks of the fast turn-around required by news and how this, in her view, destroys the possibility of a genuine relationship with the filmed subject:

¹³ For the Statement by the TRC: Amnesty Applications for Cradock Four Killings, 16 February 1998, see http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/1998/98217_0x6849810596.htm

Seven former Security branch policemen applied for amnesty in connection with the killing of the four activists from Cradock.

¹⁴ Interview with Nyameka Goniwe, IJR office Cape Town, 17/03/03.

¹⁵ Ibid.

‘I have yet to experience a situation when people making news spend time thinking about how it might feel for the person’¹⁶.

Traditionally, documentaries are made over a longer period with the opportunity for more dialogue between the film-maker and subject¹⁷. However, some of the issues do not disappear. Nyameka shares her resentment of filmmakers – whether they are creating news programmes or long-form documentaries – who consider first and foremost what will benefit their film, often to the detriment of the documentary subject. She feels they can too easily distance themselves from the subjects as real people:

‘They tell you to smile now because it suits their film’.

Nyameka is critical of the level of direction she has received during documentary production in the past. She believes this is appropriate for scripted roles but not for the ‘unscripted’ role of the documentary subject. She conveys her sentiments in the quote that opens this chapter:

‘I’m still a human being. It’s not like I am doing this for professional purposes like an actor or actress who has to learn their script’¹⁸.

She expands on this point when she argues that an actor or actress leaves his or her script at the end of the day and returns to their normal life. For the documentary subject, intimate interviews and returning to sites of memory may have prolonged effects: ‘It takes a long time to recover’¹⁹. Nyameka explains that even though she has been asked

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The distinction between the two genres is not necessarily clear-cut. Documentaries traditionally represent a more long-form format than news but the fast turn-around of many current affairs programmes, often classified as documentaries, means that the filming period is not necessarily a prolonged process.

¹⁸ Interview with Nyameka Goniwe, IJR office, Cape Town, 27/02/03.

¹⁹ Ibid.

to recount the same events on countless occasions, she still finds that the phrasing or angle of a question can really throw her. She explains:

‘Some [questions] take you right there. It depends what and how they are asking you and when they take you back to that scene and normally they don’t even know they have upset you’²⁰.

In this, Nyameka suggests that she has different layers of memory and raises an issue that is essential to this research. She says she may be able to speak of events around her husband’s death at a fairly disassociated level in interviews but can suddenly be taken right back to the core of her pain by a single question. Neither the years that have lapsed, nor the number of times that the story has been narrated has altered this for her. Her comments are reminiscent of Charlotte Delbo’s writings about her own ‘deep’ and ‘common’ memories of her experiences in Auschwitz²¹. Delbo speaks of being able to slide unpredictably between the person who sits in front of the reader who can talk about her concentration camp experience ‘without exhibiting or registering any anxiety or emotion’ and the person who is limitlessly pained by the reawakening of traumatic memories²².

As Nyameka also describes it, the rupture of painful memories and the shift between ‘deep’ and ‘common’ memories can be alarmingly unpredictable. The filmmaker can usefully be aware of this. Nyameka and Delbo give similar descriptions of a sudden loss of control of their difficult memories and their experience of having to force them back into a safe container. Delbo writes:

²⁰ Interview with Nyameka Goniwe, IJR office, Cape Town, 27/02/03.

²¹ Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*.

²² *Ibid*, page 79.

‘It takes days for everything to get back to normal, for everything to get shoved back inside memory, and for the skin of memory to mend again’²³.

For each individual it may be different cues that reawaken their memories and the consequences, as Gori testified when discussing his experience of revisiting a site of memory, may be felt some time after the event.

It is possible that what Delbo calls the ‘skin of memories’ may rupture not at the point of telling nor even a few days afterwards but at the point of viewing the completed product, years after the trauma has taken place. The capacity for archival footage to be a painful connector to the past was graphically illustrated for me during the research period. One afternoon I was viewing *We Will Never Give Up* in the video room of the UCT African Studies library²⁴. I was unaware that a member of domestic staff had started watching the film from the back of the room. The film opens with archival footage of the 1986 state orchestrated arson attacks of the KTC community outside Cape Town which left thousands of South Africans penniless and homeless. On seeing this footage on the screen, the cleaner let out a deep cry. She then explained to me that she had lost her house and all her belongings in the fires and slept outside with her young child for nine months. She said that just glancing at the footage from 1986 triggered an onslaught of horrific memories. This example illustrates that emotional preparation may also be required at the point of viewing.

Nyameka says that she has acquired a sense of the emotional preparation that she requires to protect herself before she puts herself in front of a camera but expresses a concern for other South African subjects who may not know the extent to which they need to psychologically prepare themselves. This may be because they can not

²³ Ibid, page 79.

²⁴ *We Will Never Give Up*, directed by Cahal McLaughlin and produced by Shirley Gunn in 2002, tells the stories of eleven survivors of apartheid violence.

anticipate what emotions will be thrown up. It may also be that they have been thrown into the process without sufficient time for reflection or been swayed by the attention or promise of reward. For Nyameka, it is imperative that story-tellers are made aware of the unexpected emotions that may emerge even though they may think they have already come to terms with their trauma.

The unpredictability of traumatic memory is emphasised in Nyameka's account time and time again. This unpredictability makes the experience difficult for the documentary subject because they can not necessarily foresee the emotional consequences of their participation but also for the filmmaker who wants to protect his subjects against any further pain as far as possible. Advance conversations, however candid, about what will be discussed in an interview and the processes that will be undertaken such as revisiting a painful site of memory, do not necessarily cushion the road ahead. The experience of Brian Mphahlele, one of the story-tellers in *We Will Never Give Up*, illustrates Nyameka's argument very pointedly. Brian's experience was compared to that of Gori in Chapter 1, but it is relevant to go into more detail here.

During filming, Brian was taken back to the prison where he was detained and tortured and, with a confident air, took control as the narrator, leading the film crew around the building and sharing his memories²⁵. At the end of the day's production Brian was dropped off at his home, a shack in the township and apparently seemed fine. The director was to film with him again the following day but when they returned at the agreed time, they found him in a very bad state. He had started drinking heavily after the producers had dropped him off the day before. It emerged that his community had been quite critical of the attention he was receiving and, he admitted later that many bad

²⁵ Cahal McLaughlin, interview in London, 19/9/03.

memories had flooded his mind. He was stuttering badly in the interviews on the second day. Reflecting on experiences like that of Brian critically reminds us that a confident delivery at the moment of telling does not necessarily imply everything is or will be alright. Nyameka's argument that it is difficult to predict how a documentary subject will feel when they share their traumatic memories is certainly one that deserves acknowledgement.

Nyameka points out that when the filmmaker is a friend or colleague, it can be hard to say no. Although the filmmaker may be able to read signs of discomfort if they know their interviewee, this might result in them pushing further and the subject allowing this. Nyameka's request is that the documentary subject is not treated as a commodity. Too many times she feels that she has been taken back to her husband's grave or scene of murder for the purpose of a 'good scene'. Sometimes, she says, she has barely known the film-maker when this request has been put forward. She describes feeling pushed in directions she doesn't want to go :

'It [the media] doesn't feel with you, the people behind it don't know or sense when you don't want to go on'²⁶.

Why then does Nyameka, an intelligent and successful woman, risk re-awakening such painful memories through cooperating with film-makers? Certainly, she revealed in this research that her answer to this question would have been different in 1985 (the year of her husband's death) to what it is now. Then, in the mid-80s with the anti-apartheid struggle at its height, Nyameka saw it as her duty to the struggle cause to let the world hear of the atrocities inflicted by the security police.

²⁶ Interview with Nyameka Goniwe, IJR office, Cape Town, 27/02/03.

Due to his high profile, maximum coverage of Mathew Goniwe's horrific experience would expose the barbarity of the apartheid state and, as a result, Nyameka felt a responsibility to agree to media requests. The fact that Mathew was someone who had always risked his life, and ultimately died for the cause, intensified this pressure. She makes it clear that it would have been antithetical to his cause to let the injustices be silenced. The struggle was mentally and physically tied up with sacrifice and Nyameka suggests that for this reason she had to overcome her personal discomfort at speaking to camera crews²⁷.

In his own lifetime, stringent apartheid laws and lengthy spells in prison prohibited Mathew a public platform. Much of his work as an important activist was covert and undocumented. There is rare archival footage of Mathew addressing a rally in *Nyameka's Story* but otherwise, like many of the young leaders, there is little evidence of his part in the struggle. Thus after his death, Nyameka and Mathew's comrades felt they had to publicise his contribution and further his battle. He was an inspiration for many within the struggle and they felt bound to use his influence as the difficult years continued.

Like her husband, she felt that the real events taking place in South Africa had to be disseminated around the world and she in some ways represented a real-life 'witness' who could lend meaning to the cruel facts:

'We were involved in a battle and needed to get information out'²⁸.

The powerful filter of the apartheid state was sure to censor these narratives otherwise. Understanding this motivation as part of a political obligation is critical to this research. A not dissimilar phenomenon, mentioned in the introduction, is currently being

²⁷ Interview with Nyameka Goniwe, IJR office, Cape Town, 27/02/03

²⁸ Ibid

observed in relation to South Africans speaking out on camera about living with HIV/AIDS for documentaries that address this new South African reality. As with the young political activist who put his own safety second to exposing the cruelty of the regime, so the person living with HIV who speaks out on camera risks being stigmatised by their own community in favour of getting the bigger message out there²⁹. In the arenas of both health and politics, some individuals have argued that it is a necessity to contribute to the nation's story and their personal discomfort comes second to this³⁰.

By choice, Nyameka would have stayed away from the public spotlight:

'I never wanted to be a public figure. I've been a shy person for as long as I can remember'.

Yet in the period following Mathew's death, she found herself sought out by endless film crews. Nyameka reports that since many of them had travelled a long way from overseas, and were putting themselves in risky situations by filming in covert circumstances, she felt the responsibility all the more acutely:

'Everyone was putting themselves at risk so there were high expectations of you and you have to be honest in your responses'.

Nyameka's account also draws our attention to why certain individuals are selected over others as documentary subjects. Of the four widows of the Cradock Four, she is the one who is most often called upon for interviews. For filmmakers, her eloquence makes her an attractive interviewee, particularly when they are exploring such abstract notions as reconciliation in a more academic framework. Her articulate manner, as well as her personal experience, make her an ideal candidate for insightful statements and longer filmed interviews. Two of the widows speak limited English. Mrs Calata, Fort's widow,

²⁹ My own research for impact study of the *Steps for the Future* documentary series, conducted in Alexandra township, Johannesburg, June 2003.

³⁰ Ibid.

was interviewed with Nyamaka for *Long Night's Journey Into Day* but, on most occasions, it has been Nyameka who has been approached to recount the story of the Cradock Four.

Nyameka's account reminds us that delivery of a traumatic narrative in front of a camera can be arduous on an emotional and physical level. Like other documentary subjects interviewed for this research, she draws attention to the practice of being asked to repeat certain phrases or soundbites that have caught the filmmaker's attention. Further, in order to facilitate the edit process and so viewers do not hear a second voice off-camera during an intimate interview, filmmakers will often ask their subjects to incorporate their question into their answer. For example, if the filmmaker's question is, 'How did you find out your husband had been murdered?', they would ask Nyameka to begin her sentence with 'I found out my husband had been murdered when....'. This practice can feel quite unnatural and interfering for those speaking to camera.

The processes of filmmaking are not necessarily demystified for subjects who may not understand why the part they deem most important has been excluded or why they were interviewed for hours and hours to obtain a single soundbite. Nyameka speaks of often providing a long, emotional account for a film-maker and then finding it has been cut down to a few seconds and de-contextualised. She recognises that documentary is a restricted form but is critical of the way film-makers may conceal that they are aiming for a particular response:

'Film-makers take long life histories but they have their angle and will project your story in a certain way....The problem is that you don't realise what is going to happen when you are participating in the actual interview. You believe the film-maker is listening to your whole story'.

She feels, to a degree, that this was her experience with the making of *Long Night's Journey Into Day* which went onto receive festival accolades³¹. Nyameka had a good relationship with the film's directors, Frances Reid and Deborah Hoffmann, but feels that the film misrepresented what she said in her interviews in its quest to construct the film the directors wanted:

'They chose this one line, a particular line because it conveys for them something that they want to convey. They took a single argument out of its context and so it came across in a negative way'.

The film is constructed through the telling of four different experiences of the TRC. One of the potential aggravations for documentary subjects, and one felt by Nyameka in this particular case, is that their real-life experience becomes representative of an argument. When this is the case, their experience becomes 'evidence' for an argument and the parts or sentiments that fit less neatly may be erased and edited. Of course it is not just documentaries that are forced to edit ruthlessly and reduce arguments. Kemal Pervanic, whose traumatic experience in Bosnia was introduced earlier in the research, provided a similarly illustrative story about being asked for his comments on reconciliation on a radio programme:

'I was interviewed for a BBC Radio 4 programme about reconciliation, this woman interviewed me. She was really nice but later the producer altered the interview. I said things like, 'I can't forgive, I can't forget but I don't hate' but they cut the last bit out. They kept in, 'I can't forgive, I can't forget' and then the next voice was that of Desmond Tutu who was also part of the programme saying 'You have to forgive.....'. He was not responding to me but it is cut together to make it sound like it is his response to what I am saying!'³².

³¹ *Long Night's Journey Into Day* won the prestigious Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary and an Academy Award Nomination in the Documentary category.

³² Interview with Kemal Pervanic, London, 15/9/03.

The issues raised above relate to the experience of having one's narrative altered to fit a certain form when the content is already so difficult to articulate. Nyameka also draws our attention to the physically arduous aspects of the production process itself as potentially experienced by the documentary subject. She recalls the intensity of the heat in front of the lights when being interviewed for documentary *Certain Unknown Persons*. The difficult conditions were tolerated, she felt, because the film was being made covertly. She adds that since she was aware that she would be on television she did feel self-conscious about her appearance in spite of the taxing conditions in which they were working. Significantly, she also recalls that over the years filmmakers have requested her to look less smart on the grounds that a natural, everyday look would contribute to the authenticity of the film as well as better represent the 'traumatised individual'.

An awareness of physical appearance in front of the camera is a theme that recurred throughout this research. Interviewees expressed concern at being judged by audiences if their appearance was poor. Once again, my attention was first drawn to the importance of this particular conversation when researching the impact of the *Steps for the Future* series³³. One lady, who specifically asked to remain anonymous, said that her abiding memory of the filming process was being asked to wear the same pink dress everyday of production because it looked good on camera.

The lady said such interference with her aesthetic choices bothered her much more than the very personal disclosures she chose to make before the camera about her HIV positive status because she felt her private choices were demeaned. Significant, too, is that this lady was adamant that I should not mention her name as she did not want the

³³ Englehart, Lucinda; 'Media Activism in the Screening Room: the significance of viewing locations, facilitation and audience dynamics in the reception of HIV/AIDS films in South Africa' in *Visual Anthropology Review*, pgs.73-85.

filmmaker to know she was upset. She did not want to offend the filmmaker with this criticism. Like Nyameka, this lady distinguished between dramatic feature films in which this kind of instruction is anticipated and documentaries which are presented as a 'natural' capturing of events so such requests are unexpected. Earlier Nyameka was cited as saying that she did not want to be treated like an actress who could lay down her script at the end of the day.

There is potential conflict between the interests of the documentary subject and the film-maker when it comes to wanting to present different physical appearances. The documentary subjects in this research, including Nyameka, commented that filmmakers have often to tried to align their physical appearance with the emotional experience they are describing as though looking too good would not be appropriate. Whilst involved in productions, I have witnessed the documentary subject wanting to change their clothes or hair and the filmmaker preferring them to look less polished. A similar situation can occur when people are filmed in their own homes. The filmmaker wants to capture the difficult living conditions but the documentary subject may feel that a badly kept house is a poor reflection on them.

Nyameka is honest about the personal difficulties of being so associated to a key apartheid story. Her concern is that your whole self becomes the trauma and people lose sight of the parts of you that are separate to that experience. The tendency, she says, is to, 'freeze you there and put you in a frame'³⁴. Nyameka is very aware of the role that she feels she is required to assume when she becomes the documentary subject. Again this response can be heard beyond Nyameka's South African experience. Kemal

³⁴ Second meeting with Nyameka Goniwe, April 2003.

Pervanic makes similar observations in regard to the pressures of such a role when he is asked to speak of the decimation he witnessed in his Bosnian village:

‘I see myself reverting to a certain unsmiling persona...there is a pressure to play this role or suffering is undermined’³⁵.

The responses of both Kemal and Nyameka suggest that the fact they have become representatives of a collective trauma intensifies the pressure to present a certain gravitas.

Nyameka’s feelings about being a documentary subject reveals many tensions because her involvement has brought pain as well as has been meaningful. As for the other documentary subjects, the permanent nature of film is a double edged sword; it preserves memories and reminds people of the injustices of the past but its qualities of irretrievability can also be stressful for people trying to move on from their trauma. Nyameka feels that, too easily, in people’s minds she is inseparable from her trauma and subsequently her identity is prescribed:

‘People forget you are human and your life is not just about that pain. Your life is not just about that single aspect. Noone’s life is a single trauma...the reality of it is you are not subsumed by it forever and you do still engage with life...you know what I am saying...It is not that you can no longer smile but you become a symbol of pain’³⁶.

Nyameka offers her own explanation of why she feels that filmmakers push her so hard. She feels that sometimes she is fulfilling the needs of the film-makers who were themselves unable to be as directly involved:

‘You represent what they couldn’t be and what they couldn’t experience’³⁷.

³⁵ Interview with Kemal Pervanic, London, 15/9/03.

³⁶ Interview with Nyameka Goniwe, IJR office, Cape Town, 27/02/03.

³⁷ Ibid.

In her mind, the filmmaker's probing is an attempt to get closer to the experience for themselves. She suggests that they almost want to live it vicariously by getting right to the heart of the experiences of those people who suffered the trauma directly. It is an interesting perspective to explore in this context. She is not denying that these filmmakers are often people who care hugely about the issues being explored but does argue that sometimes, in order to make their political or social statement, they push the person who had to live the experience first-hand too far.

It is many years since the horrific events that took her husband's life and Nyameka's life has changed considerably. She now lives in Cape Town and has two grown up children. She is committed to making a continued contribution to reconciliation in South Africa but wants to be allowed to exist outside of her trauma and live a life undefined by events of the past. As a film subject she feels she is too often posited as 'a resource'. She says:

'If someone needs a comment on film about say reconciliation or reparation they are told to go to Nyameka. I mean what is that?'³⁸

Nyameka laughs at the common refrain of the people who call her up with such requests. She mimics their line of persuasion, 'Aren't you excited you are going to be on television?'. Nyameka is confident in her reply, 'Why? What would I want to be on television for?'³⁹,

In spite of some of her misgivings about the processes applied, or too often misapplied, Nyameka also believes that the genre of documentary has the potential to achieve many things. It is at a more personal level that she feels she must set herself more stringent parameters and insists on better codes of practice by some film-makers. She wants to assert greater control over her own narrative. Otherwise, she feels that with every re-

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

telling of her trauma, every trip back to a site of memory and every time she puts more of her private world into the public sphere at somebody else's direction, she diminishes a little more of herself:

'I always feel a resistance because when is it me and what of me must I share, when can I be myself and be private and how can I not be allowed to be private?'

A good exercise for filmmakers, she suggests semi-jokingly, would be to put them in front of the camera and ask them to speak about things in their life that have been difficult for them. She feels that the challenges are too often underestimated:

'These are people who are so involved in media and have these expectations that other people must be polished when they would not be able to handle it themselves...If someone said to you that tomorrow they were going to interview you about your own life it is going to be tough and a lot of emotions will be provoked'⁴⁰.

An enduring problem for Nyameka, and one which can quite easily be guarded against, is that the story-tellers on whom these documentaries depend, are too often left uninformed about the afterlife of the completed product. The film may be considered a huge success on the international circuit but, in her experience the person whose story the film tells is too often left with no idea of its circulation. They therefore do not know where their narrative is going: 'Once it's out there, its out there- you have no control'⁴¹. She insists that filmmakers recognise, 'their films could not exist without those stories which relate the real-life experiences of the people telling them'⁴².

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

Whether the film has been made by a work colleague or a complete stranger, it is essential to Nyameka that she is kept informed about the dissemination of a film that includes her story. She says that, too often:

‘You find out by report that the film is being sold to broadcasters, being shown at festivals around the world... you lose control of your own images and you feel terrible, undermined and hurt’⁴³.

She explains that her negative feelings on this subject matter are triggered by the disempowering experience of having people approach her saying they recognise her face from ‘this film or that film’ and she doesn’t know to which films they are referring. She points out, at the extreme end of the spectrum is quite possible, for filmmakers to scan the archives and make a film which includes your story without you even knowing. Furthermore the material on which they are drawing may not even represent the story-teller’s perspective very well:

‘You are very vulnerable in your grief and you may not express yourself as you want’.

Yet, she says, such interview material is dragged from the archives time and time again. It is clear that Nyameka is referring to the interview conducted with her literally hours after she heard of her husband’s death. She says she barely knew what she was saying, such was her overwhelming shock and grief but yet the interview has been inserted in countless South African and international films about the struggle years.

Being in the media spotlight for so long has clearly allowed Nyameka to feel passionately about some of the issues raised in this chapter. She shared her thoughts because they provide real insight that can be applied as filmmakers continue to do

⁴³ Ibid.

what Nyameka still considers necessary work. She believes that too often she has felt ‘very unprotected, all alone and vulnerable’ whilst cooperating with documentary filmmakers whilst sharing her traumatic story and often this could have been avoided. The key for Nyameka seems to be an honest relationship about what is trying to be achieved and shared information about the film’s afterlife so that the subject knows what has become of the story they tell.

Nyameka does believe that film has the potential to provoke ‘internal conversations’ that are important to transition in South Africa. She believes audiences watch documentaries and reflect on the issues raised with reference to their own experiences. As noted earlier, since the end of apartheid, Nyameka has been called upon to speak on more general themes such as nation-building. Even though she is reluctant to continue making her life so public, she does see that her story does offer a ‘model of possibility’ that can be presented on film.

Her responsibilities and motivations have reconfigured given the change in political order and, with this, probably so has her own narrative. There is no longer the need for Nyameka to meet a foreign crew in a covert meeting place as happened in the 80’s. However, she does still feel that she has a responsibility to ensure an accurate re-writing of South African history of which her story is a part:

‘There is a lack of material that can be used for educational purposes because an open South African history is very new and there has been little documentation over the years of the majority of the country’s stories.’

Nyameka’s contributions to this research are significant, providing both the intellectual, more abstract justifications for participating in documentary projects but also revealing the most human of concerns. She admits, candidly:

'I say yes because I'd hate to be labelled 'the difficult person'.

'Grief is a good story', she concludes, but appeals to filmmakers who explore apartheid memory to remember that their subjects are not fictional characters whose speech and movement can be determined.

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CONCLUSION

The responses of the documentary subjects in the preceding three chapters reveal all number of concerns that could hardly have been predicted. Some of the tensions are so individual and yet certain shared themes also emerged as the documentary subjects described their experiences of telling their apartheid memories. Yet, overall, documentary was seen as an opportunity.

For Gori, documentary has provided a platform to celebrate his comrade Anton Fransch and unravel some of his struggle past for his family. For the Hendricks, *Last Supper in Hortsley Street*, was an opportunity to show the world how a normal family were forced out of their home. For Nyameka Goniwe, during the most violent period, documentary film was a way to espouse the values of her murdered husband and, over time, it has provided a space to discuss themes around reconciliation. Notwithstanding these positives, it is undoubtedly valuable to have heard the interviewees' motivations, concerns, difficulties and unusually personal accounts of the journeys they made along the way from first approach by a filmmaker to seeing the films in which they appear on the screen.

My research also involved meeting and interviewing a number of individuals who had been imprisoned on Robben Island and subsequently had their stories included in documentary films. Limited by space in this paper, their full accounts will be incorporated in future work. However, it is worth briefly mentioning the viewpoint of one of these interviewees because of his distinct take on the documentary experience in South Africa. Neville Alexander was a political prisoner on Robben Island from 1963-1974 and his experiences are presented in *Robben Island: Our University* directed by Lindy Wilson and *Voices from*

Robben Island directed by Adam Low. Alexander's interest is in using documentary to quash notions of victimhood and to tell a positive a positive story about how the Island was transformed by prisoners into a place of learning and preparation for the new South Africa¹. He says he has tried to use documentary film to tell a different side of the story and crush stereotypical representations.

Alexander was always significantly more in control of his documentary experience than the other interviewees. In *Voices from Robben Island* he is used as an 'expert witness' and in *Robben Island: Our University* he conducted the discussion amongst other political activists from the director's living room. His experience was quite distinct to the Hendricks, for example, who had the camera cast upon them as their trauma unfolded or Gori who was using the films in which he was involved partly as a therapeutic tool to come to terms with the death of his friend.

Further, Alexander himself points out that since, his life has been dedicated to 'processing ideas and articulating them', he is quite comfortable reaching for the 'soundbite'². He admits that when working with documentary he specifically 'gropes for the memorable phrase or the memorable metaphor', documentary being distinct as an experience to the 'discursive space allowed by books'³. Maureen Mazibuko, on the other hand, for whom *We Will Never Give Up* was her first experience of recording her memories to camera said that she had to go through her story a second time because on the first telling 'the performance was weak'⁴.

¹ Interview with Neville Alexander, UCT, 4/8/03.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

These examples and the responses articulated in the main chapters illustrate that being a documentary subject does come easier to some people than others. Much comes down to individual personality and familiarity with the camera. For documentary filmmakers, part of the research process is, of course, finding the best representatives for their film – individuals who will open up to the camera, be liked by audiences as well as have a moving and revealing account to share. However, when it comes to talking about painful memories of the past Nyameka reminds us that, even if you have told your story multiple times before and are the most articulate of speakers, you can never be sure what will happen at the moment of telling. Alexander is adamant that eloquence before the camera is not linked to education but rather a confidence related to knowing what you want to say⁵. The notions of remembering and forgetting are often paradoxical and the responses to my inquiry were no exception. People talk about wanting acknowledgment and the desire to be left alone in the same sentence. They declare they are exhausted by re-living the painful memories and then tell their stories in perfect detail in front of a camera.

As this research indicates, various methods are used by filmmakers in order to stimulate the memories of their interviewees. The three main chapters discussed personal experiences of some of these methods such as revisiting sites of painful memory. Some of the documentary subjects who were interviewed for this research admitted that they sometimes caught themselves trying to provide the filmmaker with the argument that they thought they wanted to hear. On this account, a revealing episode was candidly shared by Ronnelle

⁴ Following a screening of *We Will Never Give Up*, Maureen participated in a discussion about the film with the students, April 2004. It was notable that when students asked particular questions, Maureen responded with a full account of her ordeal at the hands of the security police even if this was not relevant to the question posed.

⁵ Interview with Neville Alexander, UCT, 4/8/03.

Loots about the film she co-directed with Antjie Krog for the *Landscape of Memory* series called *The Unfolding of the Sky*. She speaks of an occasion when, in the role of director, she made a fast but difficult decision in order to elicit an account that the documentary subject now admits is more authentic⁶. The concept of the film was a straight discussion between Antjie Krog and Deborah Matshoba around themes of memory and forgiveness. Krog had previously heard Matshoba talk about her horrific experiences of rape and violence before the TRC.

When they met one evening to conduct the interview in a single meeting, the camera was switched on and the two women proceeded to have a fairly restrained and stereotyped conversation about Deborah's life. Ronnelle, in the role of director, felt that Deborah was confining the conversation within very set parameters and responding to what she perceived to be the film's agenda, namely forgiveness. Just when Antjie began 'to scratch at the surface of the darker stuff', Ronnelle made the decision to delay the conclusion of the interview until the following day⁷. She could see that some painful wounds had been opened and the interlude provided by the night might result in more raw responses. The overnight break marks a clear shift in the film. Although not entirely proud of her actions, Ronnelle's intuition proved right. The overnight break marks a clear shift in the film. The following day, when the interview picks up, Deborah's forgiveness is much more conditional.

The result is not a neat linear argument about forgiveness, as the documentary subject believed to be the intention of the filmmaker but rather raises many questions. Deborah has

⁶ Interview with Ronnelle Loots, Cape Town, 14/3/04

⁷ Ibid.

made it clear that she had no reservations about the finished film but, in this instance, Ronnelle remains concerned about the personal distress caused along the way. Speaking of her decision to cut off the interview just as Deborah's traumatic memories were brought to the surface, Ronnelle says; 'I know it was right for the film but I don't know if it was right of me or right for Deborah'⁸. What the example also illustrates, again, is that memories and the experience of telling are contingent on many factors including where they are told, to whom they are told and, as this instance highlights, when they are told.

There are times when, as above, filmmakers can make purposeful decisions in order to stimulate memory. However, there are other times when, even though filmmakers are treading carefully aware they are dealing with difficult memories, events can also be beyond their control with difficult consequences for the documentary subject and guilt for the filmmaker. Director Liz Fish spoke of one occasion during the production of *The Last Walk of Clement Zulu* when she believes that the filming process intervened with the natural course of events with negative effect⁹. *The Last Walk of Clement Zulu* is a powerful film about the release and reintegration of ordinary men, who had been imprisoned for their political activities, from Robben Island into a changing society. While still incarcerated on Robben Island, Clement had told Liz that, on his release, he would make the long journey home by boat followed by the train, a bus and finally a taxi. Later she found out that he was offered a flight home but he had said he would keep to the original plans for the sake of the documentary. On the last leg of journey of the journey, Liz and her crew were following alongside Clement's taxi and they turned the wrong way at intersection. Clement got out of his taxi and ended up waiting 3 hours to re-find the crew. By this stage, he was very

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Interview with Liz Fish, Mowbray, Cape Town, 27/8/03

anxious and, according to Liz, had had enough of being a film subject and just wanted to get home to be reunited with his family after years in prison. Tension was heightened by the fact that he did not know how his community would receive him¹⁰. After the mishap, Liz took Clement straight to his home in her car. When working with traumatic memory, the interviewees and the filmmakers involved in this research agreed that there always has to be a certain flexibility and an opportunity to halt production when necessary.

When Maureen Mazibuko spoke of her performance being weak, she was voicing a fear felt by many documentary subjects that both they and their story are being judged. On the lighter side, we heard documentary subjects talking about their embarrassment of viewers seeing inside their untidy houses or their clothes they perceive to be inadequate for a television appearance. On a heavier note, we hear of apartheid victims in South Africa who have lifted up their tops to reveal scars to the camera because they do not believe that audiences will believe their stories¹¹.

In South Africa, the growing number of community screenings has forced documentary subjects to give more thought to their direct audiences. The documentary subjects interviewed here admitted the fear they feel ahead of such screenings but express a relief, concurrently, that have an opportunity to engage with the finished films alongside an audience. In apartheid times, audiences could be quite invisible to documentary subjects as their accounts were often broadcast abroad without the documentary subjects knowing who they were reaching or in what form. All those interviewed for this research were adamant

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Colvin, Christopher in C van der Merwe and R Wolfswinkel (eds); *Telling Wounds: Narrative, Trauma and Memory*, p.123

that they want to be kept informed about the distribution of films in which they appear. They want to remain updated on how they are received on the global film festival circuit and where they are broadcast.

Each of the interviewees expressed their disappointment at times when they have been left without ongoing information about how a film developed or left without their own copy of the finished film. They pointed out that it requires minimal effort by a filmmaker to make this last gesture that leaves the documentary subject with the choice to watch the film or not. Examples are given, in this research, of documentary subjects who have kept unseen video copies on a shelf and those who constantly return to view a particular film in which they appear. It is significant that the one favour the Hendricks family asked of me was to follow up on a foreign film crew who had spent a whole day interviewing them a few months prior to my research. Roshana, the youngest daughter, expressed real distress that she had opened up to these strangers because they had claimed 'we need to tell your story to the world'¹². The filmmakers broke their promise to call back with information about the finished film. This thesis strongly suggests that these sensitivities are exacerbated when the subject matter is of a traumatic nature. Quite understandably, when people have shared their most painful memories, they want to know what becomes of them.

By exploring the different phases of the documentary experience, it was revealed that there will probably be aspects of the documentary experience that disappoint subjects as well as ones that assist them. This is partly because the process- and particularly the editing phase- is only demystified as it unfolds. The reality of documentary filmmaking is that a 52 minute film may easily be the result of 150 hours of footage which clearly necessitates a ruthless

¹² In discussion with Roshana, 17/03/03.

culling of interviews and observational filming. When the content of these edited interviews includes stories that have been difficult to tell, subjects may feel their disappointment more acutely. The question of whether their traumatic stories were 'good enough' for inclusion was raised by a number of interviewees. Nyameka also expressed her frustration at a complete account being edited down to a sound-bite that does not portray her view when separated from the full account. Conversely, documentary subjects may wonder why the filmmaker has decided to keep some of the long silences, but lose some of the explanation. The interviewees all highlighted moments when they were unsure why material had been included or excluded.

The chapters above touch on so many complex motivations for documentary subjects participating in documentary films and these are just the spoken ones. Motivations for participation are clearly complex and often hard to articulate because they would reveal an expectation of some kind of return. Motivations are also subject to change as someone goes through the process of being filmed. It is quite possible that the documentary subjects interviewed already have quite different feelings about the films in which they participated because their own situations have changed. However, the themes highlighted and the questions raised remain relevant.

Devices chosen by filmmakers to stimulate memory are wide-ranging and this thesis was able to explore some of these from the perspective of the documentary subject. In terms of the documentary subject's relationship with the finished film, it is clear that new distribution opportunities – in particular, the internet - may alter the consequences of participation for documentary subjects. On the upside, important stories can be disseminated much more widely but the accompanying concern is that it becomes

impossible to control or limit audiences which, when stories share traumatic memory or are politically sensitive, can make documentary subjects more vulnerable.

If South Africa follows the same path as other countries that have experienced deep political trauma, it is likely that films that deal with apartheid memory will not be produced in a constant flow. Already there is a call, from both local broadcasters and the public, for films which tell new stories in new ways and to move beyond '*apartheid films*'. However, in future years, it would not be surprising to see more films about the apartheid years, particularly while those who experienced the terrors of apartheid first-hand are still alive. The hopes and fears revealed in the accounts of the documentary subjects involved in this research will remain pertinent.

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