

Dreaming a Connection: Reflections on the Documentary Subject/Filmmaker Relationship

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During the production of a recent documentary I directed and filmed, the feature length *Tanaka-san Will Not Do Callisthenics* (2008), I had a conversation with Japanese labour activist Tanaka Tetsuro, the subject of the film. He told me that he had had a dream. He laughed and said that in the dream he was running endlessly down a street and I was chasing him with a camera. “How strange”, I replied. “I’ve been having a dream too. You’re running down a street and I’m chasing you with a camera.” If, as I will explore in this essay, we might consider authorship in a specific form of documentary filmmaking - one where a filmmaker works with a subject over a protracted period of time - as the partial outcome of a reciprocity that can develop between maker and subject, the message from Tanaka-san’s and my oneiric worlds could be read as a painful rebuttal. But such a literal reading of these dreams possibly ignores other important information: Tanaka may be running, but in both dreams it is he who invites the chase, his actions cause mine. There is mutuality. As I am intensely in his world, so he is in mine.



In this essay I will circle facets of authorship in documentary from the perspective of a creative practitioner. While documentary authorship may be considered an outcome of the relationship between director, subject and spectator (Kilborn & Izod 1997 et al) I am not focusing here on its broad interrogation but rather on how it might be considered one outcome of a reciprocity that can develop between filmmaker and subject in projects filmed over extended periods. Reflecting on a series of exchanges between myself and documentary subjects in three of my films, *A Calcutta Christmas* (1999), *The Trouble with Merle* (2002) and *Tanaka-san Will Not Do Callisthenics* (2008), I will explore how this relationship, fundamental to documentary practice, may be discerned in the aesthetic strategies employed by a filmmaker and how the relationship might be considered a negotiated space between filmmaker and subject. By space I am both referring here to the physical space that filmmaker and subject inhabit when filming together and, another space, the invisible spectrum of power to which a documentary maker inevitably must attend.

Considering Anna Broinowski’s recent documentary *Forbidden Lie\$* (2007) - a work that appears to deal explicitly with the “space” between filmmaker and subject and an idea of “authentic” authorship - also allows reflections on these questions. The film explores the story of writer Norma Khouri whose book *Forbidden Love*, about honour killings in Jordan, was famously accused by Malcolm Knox in the *Sydney Morning Herald* to be a fraud. (www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/07/23/1090464854793.html) In *Forbidden Lie\$* Khouri cooperates with director Broinowski in the presentation of her historical self in dramatisations of sections of her published narrative; she also interacts with Broinowski on screen in actuality sequences filmed in Jordan and elsewhere as the director attempts to find the evidence that will support Khouri’s assertions. Various truth claims are presented throughout the film and ultimately the audience is left to decide for itself. What is particularly interesting about the film in relation to a discussion of authorship in documentary is the way Broinowski reveals the ongoing tussle between subject and director for control in the film. Indeed, the energy of

the film derives from a representational strategy intended to both replicate and comment on this struggle.

Many of the sequences in *Forbidden Lie\$* can be discussed in terms of their reflexivity. The film reveals its process to a large extent, referring to and problematising the way its meanings are constructed through its various techniques. Indeed, the documentary is particularly insistent in this respect. For example, at one point following an interview where Khouri speaks directly to camera, the *mise-en-scène* in which she is located is literally deconstructed as a flat screen behind her is moved out of frame revealing Broinowski and the green screen technology that has been used to create the interview's sense of place. *Forbidden Lie\$* is founded on an extended relationship between director and subject developed over a period of time. In presentations of the film at festivals, Broinowski has noted that, "Neither of us trust each other, but we're going to be friends forever" (blog.spout.com/2008/03/01/truefalse-forbidden-lies/ accessed August 30, 2009).

Richard Kilborn and John Izod (1997) following Bill Nichols (1991) have discussed reflexivity in documentary in relation to authorship. They suggest that when documentary filmmakers:

...enter the frame not as the participant observers familiar in the interactive mode but as auteurs... (it) enables them to question the role of authorship in their own, and by extension, other documentaries (Kilborn & Izod 1997:78).

A body of reflexive documentary based on a heightened form of the filmmaker "entering the frame" exists. It includes, notably, the works of Nick Broomfield and Michael Moore who have each constructed a particular screen persona, a kind of awkward investigator-filmmaker. In the sense that these filmmakers' personae are central to the construction of the unfolding "dramas", their documentaries could also be described as performative. Media theorist Jon Dovey (2000) has referred to the reflexive oeuvre of Moore, Broomfield and others such as Ross McElwee as "klutz films", works that involve:

...particular models of masculine anti-authority as narrative strategy or filmmakers use the same reflexive, subjective techniques to problematise the whole experience of white heterosexual masculinity itself (Dovey 2000: 52).

In Nichols' early typologies of documentary he distinguishes between the interactive and the reflexive modes. In his original concept of the interactive, he discusses how it "introduces a sense of partialness, of situated presence and local knowledge that derives from the actual encounter of the filmmaker and the other" (Nichols 1991: 178). Dovey asserts that this same sense of contingency, partiality, may also be found in contemporary reflexive documentaries and that, importantly, Nichols' 1991 use of the term "interactive" derives from a particular time and culture. "His sense of the meaning of interactive derives from the 1970s, the "me" decade, the era that prompted Lasch's *Culture of Narcissism* and Sennett's *Fall of Public Man*." (Dovey 2000:53) For Dovey, the term "interactivity" is:

... ambiguous, standing for digital media technologies at the same time as empowering potentialities of communication, connectivity and "human interaction" itself. It is in this latter sense that it becomes a useful way of thinking about the films... These (reflexive) films speak of the same impulse that saw "interactivity" itself as an automatically empowering force, acts of speech exchange which would lead to "greater understanding" as a valorised aim in and of itself... (Ibid).

Forbidden Lie\$ demonstrates a high degree of both modes. These descriptors, however, are made from a reading of the texts. The question might also be put, "what is this reflexivity/interactivity *for* in relation to a creative practitioner's intentions?" Considering this in relation to Dennis O'Rourke's approach as director and camera operator in *The Good Woman of Bangkok* (1991), another film that explores the director/subject relationship, filmmaker and historian Martha Ansara has observed:

The world of the creative documentary is not a perfect place. It is not an arena of totally considered actions, no matter what rationale we give to our impulses. Each filmmaker has at least some inkling of the deep personal function which making any film fulfils. We all project our human dilemmas upon our choice and treatment of subject, but we rarely acknowledge this in our work (Ansara in Berry 1997:25).

Ansara is commenting on an impulse that is less discussed in writings about documentary, an impulse that might be thought of as generative, that both impacts on and is reflected in the relationship between filmmaker and subject. Documentary is in part about re-presenting an experience of the world, about lives, about the ways individuals or groups are in the world, about social relations. If we accept that a discourse of social relations underpins the form, it seems inevitable that we must extend this understanding to also include those relations between documentary filmmaker and subject and perhaps consider documentary as both an outcome and an embodiment of this relationship. Nichols (2001) has expanded on this. Following his earlier proposition of the interactive, he has reformulated this documentary mode as the “participatory”, where the filmmaker’s potential status as a “social actor” participating in a relationship with the subject is acknowledged:

The filmmaker steps out from behind the cloak of voice-over commentary, steps away from poetic meditation, steps down from a fly-on-the-wall perch, and becomes a social actor (almost) like any other. (Almost like any other because the filmmaker retains the camera, and with it, a certain degree of potential power and control over events.) ... What ties join the filmmaker and subject and what needs divide them? (2001:116).

For Nichols, in the participatory:

We expect that what we learn will hinge on the nature and quality of the encounter between filmmaker and subject rather than by generalisations supported by images illuminating a given perspective. We may see and hear the filmmaker respond on the spot, in the same historical arena as the film’s subjects. The possibility of serving as mentor, critic, interrogator, collaborator, or provocateur arise (Ibid).

It is the collaborative element of the filmmaker-subject relationship that Nichols refers to here that interests me in this discussion, together with the idea that decisions a documentary filmmaker makes in the act of filming during a relationship with a subject may indicate or reveal something of their sensibility, their attitude and their connection to/collaboration with the person they are filming; and that the subject’s corresponding response to the camera/filmmaker amplifies this knowledge. Ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall has written in *The Corporeal Image* how the ways an encounter is filmed can offer knowledge that locates the filmmaker/camera in relation to the subject,

It can be said that the filmmaker’s body is inscribed in the camera’s vision at the same corporeal level as the bodies of the film subjects themselves. ... In viewing a film we respond in various ways to the bodies of people we see on the screen but we also respond to the filmmaker’s body as we experience it through the decisions that guide the movements of the camera, how it frames events, and in matters of proximity and positioning in relation to the subjects. The narratives created by the filmmaker’s vision carry with them a series of judgements about the world, a moral framework, in much the same way that the narrativisation of history does. This becomes quite evident in people’s visceral responses to films – their approval or disapproval of the filmmaker’s sensibility, of what is seen and how it is seen, and what is left out (MacDougall 2006: 54).

Each filming context, of course, demands a different negotiation of the space between filmmaker and subject, and the creative strategies used may explicitly or implicitly direct our attention to the body behind the camera. For example, Agnès Varda’s voice-over in *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2000) offers us much information about her reflections, intentions and the people she films. But equally, and perhaps less explicitly, the ways she frames her subjects during her exchanges with them, the exchanges themselves, the proximity of her camera, reveal her approach to the negotiation of the space that she and they share.

Put that camera down...

In *A Calcutta Christmas* (1998) I explore the lives of a group of elderly Anglo-Indians living in a home for the destitute in the centre of Calcutta. Many of the residents had lost contact with their families as they had emigrated to Australia, Canada and the UK after Indian independence in 1947. Making this documentary filmed over six weeks in the home, I collaborated with a crew of cinematographer, sound recordist and producer. Although most of the documentary was shot by the cinematographer, Himman Dhamija, I also used a small digital video camera that allowed me to film on my own. This meant that decisions about framing, camera movement, proximity and subject were mine on those occasions.

Much of my time was spent with the women residents in and around their dormitory. One of the people I especially focus on, in the film, was a woman called Gladys Minwallah. Gladys found living in the Home difficult as she had previously enjoyed a higher standard of living in Calcutta. She had firm notions about how one should conduct oneself in life's encounters and held strongly to a code of "graceful behaviour" in all circumstances. Off-camera she treated me like an errant daughter and the small camera I was using like my toy; the camera did not appear to daunt her and there were numerous exchanges between us during the course of the shoot.

Of those exchanges that are seen in the documentary, I included the following conversation. I am standing framing Gladys in a mid shot, looking down on her as she sits in a chair and looks back directly at the camera/me. Gladys tells me to put the camera down, "Put that camera down for one minute", but I ignore her order while responding "Yeah, OK". There is clearly an unequal distribution of power apparent in the relationship in this moment, as it is I who controls the camera, who frames. As Nichols notes (2001:116), to wield the camera is to control, yet despite Gladys' admonition I do not stop filming. In the home, the unequal power relationship between residents and filmmakers was in some evidence: the residents had few resources, they were there because they had nowhere else to go; the crew was free to move in and out at will. One could say that Gladys Minwallah telling me to put my camera down and my refusal to acquiesce reveals the limits of her agency. But she, who can clearly see that I have not stopped filming, chooses to continue the discussion anyway. Indeed, she becomes the interviewer and I become the interviewee. She asks, "What do you think as you go about the world, what do you think carries the most? Manners?" We go on to have a brief discussion about the importance of manners. However, when she asks me to repeat myself at one point, my response to her question sounds irritated, terse. I don't remember being irritated at the time; we were having one of our intermittent discussions about how one might "be" in the world, but in the grain of my voice I hear, not only the documentary filmmaker responding to a subject but the faint echo of an aggrieved daughter.



Click image for video

Reading the sequence today one might describe it in terms of several of Nichols' modes – reflexive, interactive, participatory. But such terms, although useful, cannot necessarily fully encompass the complexity of the relationship that may develop between subject and filmmaker. Gladys Minwallah and I had canvassed the reasons I was making the film in several discussions off-camera. She had questioned my motives suggesting that I was making a film about the residents because they were destitute. Ironically, I had not understood the degree of the residents' privations until I had been filming for a time. To an outside eye they might appear powerless, managed, vulnerable, victimised, but they were in fact experts on how to live their lives in these particular circumstances, behaving gracefully under pressure. The term "expert" denotes a specific competence and Gladys Minwallah demonstrated that competence vividly. Sharing that expertise with me over the period I was filming contributed authorially to the film's fabrication. This is not to deny the overarching formative role of the filmmaker/author in the construction of a documentary screen reality (Winston 2001 et al). Rather, it is an acknowledgment of the complexity of the relationship(s) producing such a film. The sequence above, in which our roles appear to be reversed, was included in the film as an emblematic moment that might potentially refer to this complexity.

Institutional and industrial imperatives can also impact on questions of authorship in documentary. *A Calcutta Christmas* was financed by Film Australia under the National Interest Programme and presold to SBSTV. I wrote and originally

performed the voice-over that narrates the documentary. This, combined with the inclusion of encounters in the film such as the one discussed above with Gladys Minwallah, I hoped suggested some of the ideas of relationship and reciprocity with which I was engaging – and perhaps, worked some way against an objectification of the people who appeared in the film, an objectification that hovered dangerously around the edges of the production. However, institutions have their own prerogatives. For Film Australia, professionalism in the form of “high production values” such as an actorly performance of voice-over was its priority. My voice/performance was deemed unprofessional and removed from the project at the eleventh hour. My arguments that the use of a voice-over artist would potentially contribute to an objectification of the subjects, that it could undercut the relationship I had been trying to represent in the film, that the “flawed” quality of my voice was in fact a significant element in that representation, were not persuasive. It was apparent that the concept of documentary authorship had different meaning for the financing body, that the organisation regarded itself as a form of co-author of the project and sought to protect its institutional interests. Ultimately, during the re-recording of the film’s narration, my request to the voice-over artist who replaced me that she should, through her performance, infer a relationship with the people on screen - people she had never met - was an impossible direction.

It’s a relationship...

David MacDougall’s argument that we consciously or unconsciously “respond to the filmmaker’s body as we experience it through the decisions that guide the movements of the camera, how it frames events, and in matters of proximity and positioning in relation to the subjects” (2006:54) is apposite when considering Dennis O’Rourke’s documentary, *Cunnamulla* (2001), a longitudinal portrait of a Queensland country town. In the film there is a telling sequence, one of several where two young teenage girls discuss their sexual experiences in the town. The girls are seated together on a bed giggling self-consciously and mucking about with each other. From time to time they look flirtatiously, almost complicitly, at the camera/O’Rourke as they talk. Although we do not hear O’Rourke’s voice or see him, his presence in the room behind the camera as it moves from one girl to the other becomes a palpable element in the encounter. It is not the camera the girls speak to, it is camera/O’Rourke. They offer their laughter and their story to him and they clearly have a connection with him that allows them to do this. In their glances to camera we begin to see his reflection. In an interview about the film on ABC TV’s *7.30 Report* programme O’Rourke discussed how, “The people in the film make themselves very vulnerable to me by being so honest, by not having any secrets. And - but I’m also vulnerable to them – it’s a relationship” (<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/stories/s236397.htm> accessed 20.8.09).

Might documentary filmmakers be thought of as “recovering the lives” of the subject in such projects? This notion is perhaps one step removed from an earlier rhetoric about documentary, that in these kinds of works filmmakers “let the people speak”. However these schema describe a relationship where all agency rests with the filmmaker. Instead O’Rourke, referring to his own “vulnerability” and acknowledging the relationship, appears to be suggesting in his statement that in practice, the director/subject relationship is not as easily defined as this, that it is more layered. As we watch the sequence in *Cunnamulla* our understanding of the girls develops as the camera records their exchanges, but it is equally true, that as our filmic knowledge of them grows it does so in parallel to our knowledge of the filmmaker; that we are granted a knowledge of his sensibility through this relationship and, that as the recorded moments accrete and as the lives of the subjects are “recovered”, so too is the filmmaker’s.

Searching for words to articulate what it is about the sequences/exchanges I explore in my own work that gives me pause to reflect on questions of authorship and reciprocity, I am struck by the fact that in each there is an explicit attempt by the subject to negotiate the “space” between myself and them; that is, in each the subject is asserting an agency and that this is a trope present across the three works. Each moment could be described as both reflexive and participatory but these engagements as rhetorical devices were not my goal. In the process of filming I was in the “flow” of each interaction, a complex position where one is both fully attending to, perhaps immersed, in the unfolding discourse and yet observing it at the same time. Csikszentmihalyi has described this as learning “to achieve the dialectical tension between involvement and detachment that is so characteristic of every creative process.” (1997:248) In this process I was not aiming at justifying, revealing or exposing the representational codes or structures of the filmmaking process at the time of filming or in the final edit. What interested me then and continues to do so was the depth (or lack) of a connection each suggests, and how that reflects back on the director/subject relationship.

I just sense you believe ...

The Trouble with Merle stands in counterpoint methodologically to *A Calcutta Christmas*. In the documentary I try to

understand the need for some Tasmanians to insist on a narrative that has the Hollywood film star of the 1930s, Merle Oberon, born to a Tasmanian called Lottie Chintock who worked as a chambermaid in a country hotel in the north east of the state. This story sits outside both Oberon's official biographies and the narrative that the film studio published about Oberon's provenance when she was becoming famous. I attempt to discover if the Tasmanian story could be true.

Unlike *A Calcutta Christmas* which was filmed in one location over several weeks, during *The Trouble with Merle's* unfolding narrative approximately fifteen people are interviewed across Australia, USA, Canada and India. The film employs a conventional interview strategy and is filmed by a cinematographer; each person I interview gives evidence in relation to their version of the story; their eye-line is generally a classic 30 degree angle to the camera plane; my questions are masked and we hear only the interviewees' answers - except in the sequence I describe. I have come to talk to Maxine Green who claims she knows where there is a birth certificate that will prove Merle Oberon is Tasmanian, that she was indeed Lottie Chintock's daughter, that she was not Indian, nor Anglo-Australian, but Chinese-Australian.

The sequence proceeds as follows: we see an exterior shot of my red Volkswagen arriving outside Maxine Green's house. My voice-over explains that I am there because Green says she knows where Merle Oberon's birth certificate is. We cut to a shot of Green sitting at her kitchen table as she answers my questions. At one point my voice is heard saying, "And do you think you know where the birth certificate is?" Green nods. There is a pause. I ask, "And where do you think it is?" Green laughs, "Oh Maree, I have to keep that. That's mine, that's mine. I just sense that you know and you believe that she was born here..."



Click image for video

Where the subjects in *A Calcutta Christmas* and *Tanaka-san Will Not Do Callisthenics* often range freely across the camera's frame, Maxine Green, like the other interviewees/storytellers in this film, is formally "managed" in the shooting in that a directorial decision has been made about where she will sit, what angle and direction she will look, how she will be lit. However, within this one brief sequence in the film Green attempts to escape the formal constraints of the interview and laughs at the audacity or perhaps naivety of my question. She calls me by my first name and goes on to include me in her belief system, "I just sense that you know and you believe...." In fact Green was correct in her assumption. She intuited that I did want to believe her story (which most people including the crew thought ridiculous), and that in that moment I hoped there was indeed a birth certificate proving Oberon was Lottie Chintock's daughter.

During post-production Green's refusal to reveal the location of Oberon's birth certificate was included as a structural element in the narrative of failed inquiry I was creating. As such it was an important and useful moment. However, reflecting on this sequence I see that it is her recognition of my desire for the birth certificate to really exist, and her corresponding "need" for me to embody that desire - combined with her freedom to laugh at me even in these conditions where the power that the apparatus of filmmaking confers seems to reside entirely with me - demonstrates a connection to the person sharing the same space as she, that not only reveals something of herself but of course something of myself - a fleeting instance of mutuality. It is perhaps the only moment like this in the film where the formal patterning/control is broken and where the subject "refuses" the way in which they are being positioned.

A notable difference between the methodologies used in this film and the others I am citing in this essay is that in this project, neither was I controlling the camera, nor was the possibility of developing an extended relationship with the subjects possible, given the brief time spent in each location. In that sense the individuals represented in the documentary are imbricated in a kind of epistemological web designed to service both the plotting of the narrative and the construction of the film's authorship as a single identity - mine. Maxine Green alone challenges the power relations underpinning the sequence and indeed the film. She seems to attempt to elude control but she is brought back into line by archival footage cut into her interview immediately after she says, "that's mine": a close-up of Merle Oberon as Messalina from Alexander Korda's ill-fated, never completed *I, Claudius* (1937). As if in response to Green's assertions about the birth certificate, Oberon lowers her eyes enigmatically, perhaps suggesting that only she knows the answer to this mystery.

I show you my loyalty...

In my most recent project *Tanaka-san Will Not Do Callisthenics* I am the sole camera operator. The film is a portrait of Tanaka Tetsuro and his twenty-five year protest against the company that sacked him. Tanaka's protest has taken the form of a daily picket outside the gates of the factory where he worked. One of the events that led to his dismissal was his refusal to perform mass callisthenics at work in unpaid time despite pressure from management; Tanaka regarded the performance of callisthenics as a demeaning loyalty test to the company. Like *A Calcutta Christmas*, and unlike *The Trouble with Merle*, the film was shot over an extended period of time in one location. The first sequence I discuss occurs towards the end of the film when Tanaka, who has not performed callisthenics since before he was sacked, demonstrates them for me on camera.

Tanaka is in his study as my voice-over explains that I have asked him to demonstrate the callisthenics he had refused to do all those years ago. As he performs the exercises I explain that I am unable to play the traditional callisthenics music (which is played daily on Japanese public radio) due to legal constraints. We watch as Tanaka exercises. When he has finished I ask him, "How do you feel?". He replies, "It is strange, I still remember. It must be thirty years." I laugh off-camera and say, "This is a historic occasion". At first he does not understand. I explain by saying, "Tanaka-san will do callisthenics", a reference to the title of the film that I had already discussed with him. He responds, "But Mr Tanaka never do that." Then he grins and looking directly at the camera/me says, "But Maree forced me to do it." At the time of filming I was pleased that Tanaka had agreed to perform the callisthenics given their significance in his story. It was not till viewing the rushes that I realised he said, "But Maree forced me" – an ironic reference to the director/subject relationship. But then he follows this jest, partly ironically, partly sincerely, with the statement, "I show you my loyalty". It is a complex moment in the film as it embodies many of the ideas that have been explored. Tanaka is explicitly referring to the historical function of the callisthenics as the loyalty test to the company which ultimately led to his dismissal while at the same time acknowledging the connection that exists between us, filmmaker and subject, in this kind of filmmaking. He seems to understand that a kind of loyalty can exist in the fraught human relationship between subject and filmmaker that is both bounded by technology and hounded by the question, "who controls whom?" or perhaps, "who controls my representation?".



Click image for video

In another scene in the film, these questions of control are played out in a three-way dynamic. Tanaka is visited by two young US men, Mormon missionaries. In the frame Tanaka sits in profile discussing religion with the two men. He

questions them about their religious approach, their openness to other religions. They assure him that they are tolerant of others' beliefs. Just as Tanaka is attempting to represent himself as "open" to an outside world that includes the Mormons, the Mormons are negotiating their representation as "tolerant". But then, unexpectedly, Tanaka asks the Mormons if they are familiar with *The Internationale*. It is a provocative question as it is almost certain that these young men do not know the labour anthem. When they acknowledge that they do not know the song, my voice is heard from behind camera urging Tanaka, "Sing it, you should sing it for them." Tanaka looks at the camera/me with a slight expression of exasperation but he begins to sing. Later when he explains to the young men that this is a song sometimes sung in "communistic countries", they are nearly breathless in their shock/surprise – "Well that's perhaps why I never heard it!" Tanaka then asks one of the young men to pray for him and his family and world peace. The Mormon appears to improvise his prayer, on the one hand praising Tanaka for his generous heart while also imploring his "heavenly father" that one day Tanaka "may see". The young man seems unable to complete this phrase and an excruciating silence follows. Perhaps he intended to add "...the light", but to do so might appear discourteous.

The notion of the *camera provocateur* - that the presence of the camera may provoke a degree of self-consciousness in a documentary subject's behaviour that delivers a particular truth, that the presence of a documentary camera will inevitably inflect the behaviour of those being filmed - has been commented on since Rouch and Morin's *Chronique d'un été* (1961). Certainly, in this scene each participant has a stake in the mode of his representation, an investment that influences his self-presentation. But there is also a third social actor present, off-screen: myself. Tanaka's glance to camera/me when I urge him, "Sing it, you should sing it for them" and his acquiescence, seem to reveal his understanding of the potential status of such a representation in the film and his willingness to collaborate in delivering it. If there is a gradient of power relations operating in that physical space at that moment, he (the subject) and I (the filmmaker) are perhaps jointly at one end of the spectrum; we share an understanding or even "loyalty" that is a product of our extended relationship and that stands in counterpoint to the way in which the Mormons are positioned in the scene. The mutuality, or perhaps intersubjectivity, of which I have written earlier, is evident in our performance of self/selves in this sequence: this is who we show ourselves to be.

Only connect...

Documentary's association with the factual, the empirical, the "real", the actual, has had enduring repercussions for the ways in which a film may be described to its potential audiences: a documentary, after all, is *about* some/thing. Nichols (1991:31) has discussed how audiences come to the practice of watching documentary impelled by a 'desire to know', a pleasure in knowing, an *epistophilia*. Thus, the films I have written about in this essay have variously, and not inaccurately, been described as being *about* "life inside a forgotten community" (Screen Australia) "why Merle Oberon's origins mattered" (ABC TV), "a fascinating portrait of an idiosyncratic Japanese non-conformist" (Istanbul Documentary Festival); or at other times, *about* "the way racism can shape a life", "the possibility of living an ethical life" (Author's promotional material). Yet they could equally be described as memories of encounters between subject and filmmaker, or perhaps of the texture of that encounter.

Returning to the dream shared by Tanaka and myself that I describe at the beginning of this essay, perhaps the "chase", from my perspective, reflects my desire to connect with the person who, in the dream, seems to be continually running from me. Perhaps Tanaka's small expression of exasperation at my urging him to sing *The Internationale* to the Mormons reflects the documentary subject's feeling, a feeling expressed in his dream. But, in the act of filming the dreams merge. Despite our gender and cultural differences, the mutuality on which I am reflecting - in the context of a documentary filmmaker-subject relationship that both functions within, and is ultimately represented in the works I have discussed - binds us.

And in that binding lies the foundation of authorship.

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