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**Filming Alterity:  
Explorations of 'Voice(s)' in Contemporary French  
Ethnographic Film**

**Sonia Vincent-Gill**

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Dissertation submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts  
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## Introduction

The aim of my M.A. dissertation is to explore some of the ways in which three contemporary French ethnographic filmmakers have tackled the problem of the filmic representation of 'alterity', whether it be cultural 'otherness' or 'otherness' created by old age. My analysis will attempt to situate the three anthropologists within the context of theoretical debates in anthropology and documentary film criticism.

The representation of alterity is a complex issue with many facets and it is for this reason that I have chosen to focus my analysis mainly on the question of 'voice'. To explore the issue of voice, I shall take as a starting point an essay written in 1983 by the documentary film theorist, Bill Nichols, entitled 'The Voice of Documentary'.<sup>1</sup>

Nichols defines the documentary voice as:

something narrower than style: that which conveys to us a sense of a text's social point of view, of how it is speaking to us and how it is organising the materials it is presenting to us. In this sense, voice is not restricted to any one code or feature, such as dialogue or spoken commentary. Voice is perhaps akin to that intangible, moirélike pattern formed by the unique interaction of all a film's codes, and it applies to all modes of documentary

(Rosenthal & Corner eds. 2005: 18-19).

'Voice' is therefore an inclusive term, integrating both 'direct' or 'explicit' forms of the filmmaker's intervention (voice-over, dialogue etc.), and 'indirect' or 'implicit' forms revealed by the stylistic or aesthetic choices made in the film (sequence-style shooting, chronological construction etc.). In this respect, Nichols' definition of documentary

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<sup>1</sup> This article was originally published in *Film Quarterly* 36, No. 3 (Spring 1983) and has recently been republished in 2005 in *New Challenges for Documentary* edited by Rosenthal & Corner.

'voice' can be usefully compared to Clifford Geertz's analysis of the authorial 'voice' in written ethnography. In the opening of his book *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, Geertz establishes two questions to be explored when analysing the role of the author in the construction of the text (1988:8). Firstly, the question of 'signature' – how the 'author' is made 'manifest in the text'. Secondly, the question of 'discourse' – what rhetorical devices and strategies are employed by the author to establish his or her authority (1988:8).

Geertz's critical concepts of 'signature' and 'discourse' were written with the textual form of ethnography in mind, however, they are concepts that I feel can be equally applied to ethnographic film. For in the same way that a written ethnography is the result of a selection of different rhetorical strategies, so too is a filmic ethnography the result of a series of choices regarding the questions of 'signature' and 'discourse'. By integrating Geertz's critical terminology of 'signature' and 'discourse' into my investigation of filmic voice, it is hoped that this will help clarify Nichols' broad definition of voice by drawing particular attention to the filmmaker's role in the representation of alterity.

Although Nichols' essay was written twenty-five years ago, his definition of voice remains useful for the purpose of my investigation into the representation of alterity and will be used together with Geertz as a guiding thread in my dissertation. It is however important to point out that the concept of voice is not exclusively authorial and may be expanded to include the 'voices' of the ethnographic subjects. As a consequence, I shall be examining the manner in which the three ethnographic filmmakers choose to include or exclude their own 'voice', and the techniques that they adopt to incorporate the 'voices' of the 'others' into their films.

The content of Nichols' article refers to the dominant modes of documentary filmmaking of the early eighties – 'observational' documentary and the emergence of 'reflexive' documentary. This ties in with the style of documentary making practiced by two of the ethnographic filmmakers whose work I have selected to study: Colette Piault, who situates herself in the 'observational' mode of filmmaking (*Terrain* 1986: 8), and Eliane de Latour whose work develops a more reflexive, 'polyvocal' style of voice. Nichols' essay, published in 1983, is also from a historical point of view roughly contemporary with the dates when Piault and Latour were filming the selected documentaries (Piault: 1978-1980 and 1983; de Latour 1984 and 1987).

Nichols criticises his contemporary filmmakers for appearing to have 'lost their voice', forfeiting 'their own voice for that of others (usually characters recruited to the film and interviewed)' (1983: 19). As a result, they formally 'disavow the complexities of voice, and discourse, for the apparent simplicities of faithful observation or respectful representation' (*ibid.*). By removing the 'voice of the text' the sense of a hierarchy of voices becomes lost and the interviewees' words are accepted as 'truth' without an alternative perspective being offered (*ibid.*:25).

This claim will be assessed with regards to Colette Piault's film, *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, which eschews commentary and authorial intervention, and her second film, *Une vie dure*, which is composed of two interviews with the ethnographic subject Kalliope, who lives in a small mountain village in northern Greece, and her daughter Eugenia, who has returned to visit her mother. I shall refer to Nichols' later book *Blurred Boundaries* in which he describes observational cinema as suffering from a 'lack of context and history' (1994: 95). This seems to be a problem that Piault is aware of and tries to solve in *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* by including 'explanations' spoken by the subjects at various points in the documentary (*Terrain* 1986: 8). (This is shown in particular in the opening monologue which could be construed as a filmic

version of what rhetoricians would call prosopopeia: ‘the putting of speeches into the mouths of others’.)<sup>2</sup> The ‘lack of context’ that Nichols suggests is inherent in observational documentary is an issue that is particularly relevant when filming alterity, as the viewer is not necessarily familiar with the culture being represented (in the case of Piault’s films, the culture in question is northern Greece). As a consequence:

To see is not to perceive, still less to comprehend... Commentary of some kind, whether in words, or in intertitles, is often essential if we are to avoid bewilderment and misapprehension

(Peter Loizos in Crawford and Turton 1992: 54).

Loizos’ comment brings us to consider the possible ‘loss of voice’ from an anthropological perspective. As the visual anthropologist Jay Ruby points out, the significance of allowing the ethnographic subject to tell his or her own story offers the subject a greater say in the construction of his or her image and represents:

a major shift in attitude about where one looks for authority and authenticity. It recognises that the experts’ opinions and the filmmakers’ vision need to be tempered by the subjects’ lived experience and their view of themselves. It is ‘speaking with’ instead of ‘speaking for’

(2000: 204).

Piault’s decision to remove her voice from the film to ‘give voice’ to the ‘other’ is clearly a significant choice, and may be interpreted as a desire to develop a different

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<sup>2</sup> This definition is taken from the Online Etymology Dictionary, created by Douglas Harper, Professor of Sociology at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA. The basic sources of this site are among others: *Weekley’s An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, *Klein’s A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, *Oxford English Dictionary* (second edition), *Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology*. See <http://www.etymonline.com> for more information.

way of representing the ethnographic subject in a postcolonial world, made possible by the development of new synchronised sound camera technology. It may also be linked to the need for anthropologists to guard against 'ethnocentrism'. However, I shall demonstrate in my analysis that although Piault may set out to remove her 'voice' from the film, her 'indirect voice' may be discerned through an analysis of her filmic discourse (for example, in the positioning of the camera). Likewise, Piault's mode of filming the 'others' as if she were not there is also brought into question at several points in the film, as she is metonymically drawn into the film through the occasional glance at the camera.

In Nichols' definition of voice, he refers to film as a 'text', thereby associating what is an audio-visual medium to the written word. The idea of 'film-as-text' is one of the concepts that I shall be exploring in the second chapter of my dissertation examining the work of Eliane de Latour who herself alludes to this conception of film in the opening sequence of *Les temps du pouvoir* (1984). The opening sequence with its image of a woman typing and the accompanying voice-over serve to draw the viewer's attention to the fact that a film is as much the creation of an author as is a written text. Indeed throughout the film, there are reflexive references to the constructed nature of film or the role of the 'authorial voice'.

This exploration of 'film-as-text' will be linked to the wider question of authorship in film and will assess the reflexive techniques that de Latour employs to incorporate her 'voice' into the documentary. One such technique is her exploration of the anthropological possibilities of montage which will be investigated in particular in her first documentary, *Les temps du pouvoir* (1984), where she superimposes the soundtrack of an interview with Samna over a 'collage' of images. I shall also explore the relationship between the 'voice' of the author and the 'voices' of the ethnographic

subjects, for de Latour is notable in adopting a 'polyvocal' approach to filming alterity. Charlotte Aull Davies' claim that the 'postmodern' breaking down of the boundary between author and text has the implication of denying the privileged voice of authority – 'there are only perspectives' – will be assessed in the light of de Latour's 'polyvocal' approach (1999: 14).

In my third chapter on Stéphane Breton, I shall examine David MacDougall's argument that to compare film to a text is a limiting use of film which he argues is ontologically different to the written text: 'As writers, we articulate thoughts and experiences, but as photographers and filmmakers we articulate images of looking and being. What is thought is only implied, unless it is appended in writing or speech' (2006:5). MacDougall's conception of film as a form of 'looking and being', as a 'corporeal image', is particularly valuable for the analysis of Breton's documentaries which incorporates the 'return gaze' of the ethnographic subject into the discourse of the film and adopts an interactive mode of filming in which the camera is an extension of his body. Breton's decision to 'allow' the subject to look back at the camera, 'to look the camera in the eye,' marks a significant break with traditional forms of filmmaking in which the subject is told not to look at the camera in order to pretend that it is not there (as practiced by Piault and to a certain extent by de Latour). The treatment of the subject's gaze will form a key part of this chapter, as it is revelatory of the manner in which an ethnographer chooses to approach the filming of alterity.

Breton's 'embodied camera' seeks to extend the notion of 'voice' to include the gaze of the ethnographer and the movement of his body as it moves through space. In his second film, *Le Ciel dans un jardin* (2003), I shall explore how Breton attempts to include an evocation of his senses into the film through a combination of audio-visual strategies (the use of close-ups and the inclusion of non-diegetic music). To assess to

what extent a 'sensuous' mode of filming is possible, I shall refer in particular to David MacDougall (2006) and Laura U. Marks (2000) who have both written on this subject.

**Chapter 1: The Question of 'Voice' in Colette Piault's 'Anthropology of Living Reality'.**

If one accepts that speech in a documentary film gives a sense and direction to images, and is both a mediator of knowledge and an instrument of power, one can readily appreciate that the control or free expression of these words can be a matter of critical importance for the filmmakers. The solutions proposed, and the strategies adopted are therefore revealing of their attitudes and personal relationships with others as well as with themselves

(Colette Piault 2007: 38).

Once synchronised sound camera technology became readily available in the 1960s, documentary filmmakers were able to record with ease the voices of those who they filmed. Consequently, filmmakers were able to explore the possibilities offered by the inclusion of the voice of the subject through methods such as the interview, or through the observation of the subjects in their daily lives. The choice of the filmmaker to include or exclude the voice of the subject therefore became, as Colette Piault points out, revelatory of a filmmaker's attitude and relationship with the others (2007: 38).

Piault highlights in this article the issue of the 'control' or 'free expression' of speech in ethnographic film and refers in particular to the work of the pioneering ethnographic filmmaker, Jean Rouch, who rejected the use of subtitles in his work.<sup>3</sup> She concludes her analysis of Rouch's oeuvre by stating that:

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<sup>3</sup> Piault's article on the role of speech in Jean Rouch's work and her interview with him on the same subject have recently been translated into English and republished in *VAR*, 23, No.1, 2007: 38-42; 43-53. They were originally published in French in *CinémAction*, 1995, No. 81. The decision to reprint these articles is representative of the renewed international interest in Jean Rouch's oeuvre, reflected by the publication of a collection of Rouch's articles and interviews, translated into English by Steven Feld (2003) and with a collection of essays edited by Joram ten Brink, published in 2007.

from the moment it became possible to allow the Other to express himself with the use of subtitles that translate what he said, Rouch's continuing resolve to speak in his place and on his behalf appeared an 'abuse of power' paternalistic, even neo-colonial

(ibid.: 42).

The choice of vocabulary in this quotation provides a clear insight into how she believes the ethnographic subject should, or rather should not be represented. It is not therefore very surprising that she adopted a very different form of documentary making to Rouch, one which rejected all external voice-over commentary, and allowed the subject to express his or herself 'directly' to camera without the intervention or interpretation of the filmmaker. (The question of whether it is possible for the subject to give 'free expression' to his or her self is one that needs to be examined at a later point.)

This approach to documentary making began in the United States in the 1960s and became known as 'direct' cinema, later renamed by many as observational cinema to avoid confusion with *cinéma vérité* (Nichols 1991; Ruby 2000). Documentary makers such as Fred Wiseman and Drew Associates used the new mobile synchronised sound camera technology to observe events as they unfolded 'directly' before the camera. The movement became known for its particular aesthetic style eschewing commentary and intervention by the filmmaker. In opposition to a thesis-led 'expository' style of documentary making, in which the viewer was led through an argument, direct cinema aimed to 'cede "control" over the events that occur in front of the camera', in order to provide the viewer with 'an opportunity to look in on and overhear something of the lived experience of others' (Nichols 1991: 38-42).

Among the earliest to adapt this method to the ethnographic documentary was the ethnographic filmmaker, David MacDougall, whose 1972 film *To Live with Herds* was the first to use subtitles to translate the words and conversations of the Jie (Uganda). Piault has cited in several interviews the influence this film had at its first screening on her and other ethnographers:

For the first time, we were able to witness a film about real people and real events in the original version. And this original version was of life itself as it unfolded before our eyes. For the first time, the viewer had *direct* access to what was projected on screen. The use of an interpretative commentary no longer remained the sole technique available to explain the image. It often became secondary, complementary, even superfluous. The Jie became real, fully rounded, and complex *individuals*, laughing at jokes and commenting, as we all do, on their everyday lives. Their universe and their speech was no longer restricted to the recitation of their myths and explaining their ritual ceremonies, as had been the case with the previous cinematic tradition.

(2007: 41; original emphasis).

The choice of the words 'previous cinematic tradition' suggests that Piault interprets the arrival of synchronised sound technology as a new era in ethnographic filmmaking. By excluding the use of a direct commentary, which she equates to 'la voix coloniale', Piault attempts to redress the previous authorial dominance of the ethnographer in

favour of the subject (*Terrain* interview 1986: 7).<sup>4</sup> The question of whether ‘direct access’ to the subject is possible in an unproblematic or unhindered way is one that I shall seek to explore in my analysis of her films. Whatever the case, from an anthropological point of view, the decision to ‘give voice’ to the ethnographic subject is an important development and it is possible to interpret this change as a search for a different way to represent the subject in a postcolonial world, ‘to apply a corrective to increasingly abstract descriptions of colonised and marginalised peoples’ (David MacDougall 1998: 120). In addition, it marks an important epistemological change in the nature of the representation of alterity. As the visual anthropologist Jay Ruby points out, the significance of allowing the ethnographic subject to tell his or her own story offers the subject a greater say in the construction of his or her image and represents:

a major shift in attitude about where one looks for authority and authenticity. It recognises that the experts’ opinions and the filmmakers’ vision need to be tempered by the subjects’ lived experience and their view of themselves. It is ‘speaking with’ instead of ‘speaking for’

(2000: 204).

It is certainly true that Piault does not speak directly on behalf of her ethnographic subjects (although the film could be said to be an *indirect* way of speaking for the villagers of Ano Ravenia). However, the idea of ‘speaking with’ implies a dialogue between ethnographer and subject and though this is present in *Une vie dure* (1996) which is composed of two interviews, this is not the case in her first film, *Ce n’est pas tous les jours fête* (1980). Although there are several examples of conversations or

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<sup>4</sup> The full bibliographic reference for this interview is located in the Internet section of the bibliography.

'explanations' that have been initiated by the ethnographer, at no moment of this particular film does one hear Piault speak. If there is a conversation taking place, it is one to which the spectator does not have access as it not included in the film.

Piault's article on Rouch thus introduces the question of the 'control' or 'free expression' of the speech of the ethnographic subjects as an important indicator of a filmmaker's attitude to representing alterity on film. Speech is, however, only one aspect of the complex question of 'voice'. Although, I shall examine Piault's decision to exclude commentary and assess whether this does indeed permit 'direct access' into the world of the subject, my analysis will also look at the more indirect 'voice' of the filmmaker revealed by the choice of filmic discourse. This chapter seeks therefore to explore the question of 'voice' in two of Colette Piault's documentaries set in the Greek village of Ano Ravenia: *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* (1980) and *Une vie dure* (1996). In particular, I shall evaluate Bill Nichols' claim that an observational style of filming entails a 'loss of voice' (1983). To do this I shall focus my analysis on the choices made by Piault, as regards 'signature' and 'discourse', and treat them from a cinematic and anthropological point of view.

**I: *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* (1980) – 108 minutes**

*Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, is Colette Piault's first film in a series of six films made in the small mountain village of Ano Ravenia in Epirus (Greece). Central to each of these documentaries is the impact of migration on village and family life. This particular film deals with the daily life of the villagers, who are for the most part retired, and contrasts the emptiness of Ano Ravenia with the return of the migrants for the Easter festivities when the village seems to be reborn. By focusing on the quotidian, Piault suggests a desire to move away from representing alterity through their rituals, for as she argues:

is it really fair to assign such paramount importance to filmed ritual, whereby the expression of a social group or community is reduced to nothing more than its rituals and ceremonies? [...] Do we dare film rituals without connecting them to the living reality they are sustaining and from which they are hatched?

(1989: 15-16).

Although Piault does show festive occasions in the village such as Easter, they are given only a secondary place in the overall narrative – what she is concerned in portraying is the 'anthropology of living reality' (1989: 17). This is reflected in the title of her first film set in Ano Ravenia, *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* (1980) and in the name of her production company *Les Films du Quotidien*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Colette Piault's website: [www.lesfilmsduquotidien.fr](http://www.lesfilmsduquotidien.fr) for more information.

In order to establish the characteristics of Piault's approach to filming alterity, I shall begin by examining in detail a scene in which two women go to fetch water. The sequence is composed in three movements: the journey to the well, the filling of the water containers at the well, and the return to the village. Faithful to the observational mode of documentary making in which Piault situates herself, the scene does not feature any commentary to explain what is taking place (*Terrain* interview 1986:8). With the exception of a greeting, when the women meet another old lady travelling in the opposite direction, there is no dialogue in this scene between the two women to explain the purpose of their journey. It is up to the viewer to work out what is taking place using the visual clues provided (for example the women are leading donkeys loaded with a large number of containers).

The decision to eschew commentary in this scene, and in the film as a whole, is an important decision as regards the discourse of the film. In itself this scene is not difficult to understand, for the purpose of the journey is soon explained when the women arrive at the well and begin filling the containers with water. There is to a certain extent no need for the use of a narrative voice to explain what is occurring. However, Nichols is correct in his criticism that the loss of an authorial voice engenders a lack of context. For although it is possible to surmise, that if the women are fetching water it is because there is no running water in the village, there is no explanation of the exact reason why the village does not have water. This is an issue of which Piault seems aware, for twenty-five minutes later into the film she includes a group discussion in which five men discuss the issues facing Ano Ravenia (I shall return to this later). It is here that the viewer discovers that, despite a reservoir having been built seven years

ago, the pipes to relay the reservoir to the village have never been laid so the villagers are still forced to fetch water with donkeys.

The absence of a narrative voice does therefore have an impact on the degree of knowledge that is made available to the viewer. However, a film should not simply be conceived as a means of providing 'information' for the viewer. It is perhaps more helpful to think of documentary as an 'experiential' mode in which the audience is invited 'to understand and sense other cultures' through an audio-visual representation (Crawford and Turton 1992: 74). In this sense, the sequence, with its absence of commentary or explanation, mirrors the experience of the ethnographer in the field who observes events whose significance is sometimes only later revealed (as in the case with the group discussion mentioned above). The absence of commentary involves the viewer in a process of deciphering and interpretation that may be seen as analogue to the process of deciphering and interpretation that the ethnographer undertakes to achieve ethnographic understanding. As a consequence, the audience is actively engaged in a process of 'discovery':

it is the viewer who discovers connections within a network of possibilities structured by the author... this produces a highly interactive and interpretive relationship to visual works, qualitatively different from interpreting expository texts which, at least in the past, primarily involved assessing the implications of assertions

(David MacDougall 1998: 70-71).

Although the viewer has an active role in discovering or deciphering the meaning of a sequence, it is important to remember that the author's 'voice' is still indirectly present within the sequence, constructing 'a network of possibilities' that direct the viewer's interpretation. The very fact that Piault chooses to include the 'water fetching' sequence indicates the significance of this daily chore in the lives of the villagers and is perhaps a way of directing the viewer's attention to the wider key issues of the film. For the question of how water is obtained is connected to the major concern of the film – the question of why economic migration is such an important phenomenon in Ano Ravenian society – and also touches on more general ethnographic issues such as the role of women in rural communities of northern Greece. If it is the case that the viewer is 'directed' towards a consideration of the wider issues that this sequence raises, then Piault's inclusion of this sequence constitutes a form of 'analysis' or commentary, albeit one that is indirectly conveyed.

The presence of the filmmaker's 'indirect voice' in the 'water fetching' sequence is further supported by the analysis of Piault's role in the montage of this chosen extract. Rather than filming the women's expedition in 'real time', Piault reconstructs the journey elliptically in a succession of shots that describe the various stages of the women's progress – transforming the journey to and from the well into a sequence lasting two and a half minutes. That this journey to the well appears free flowing and coherent is due to a successful structuring of the space described in a succession of shots lasting on average ten seconds which create a sense of the women moving through the environment.

The sequence begins with an establishing shot in which the women are to the rear of frame walking towards the camera. The next shot shows the women in profile

walking from the left hand side of the frame to the right. The camera then pans horizontally to the right to keep the women in shot as they turn their backs to the camera and disappear up the path away from the camera and to the rear of the image. Thus is created a sense of movement through space, from rear to fore, from left to right, and from fore to rear, creating the illusion of a coherent progression in space along a path. For the return journey, Piault uses just a single establishing shot to evoke the walk back to the village, the idea of regression is enhanced by the positioning of the camera which is placed behind the women who walk from the fore to the rear of shot.

As the analysis of the reconstruction of time and space shows, Piault's 'signature' or 'voice' is present within the scene in an indirect fashion through the filmic strategies or 'discourse' chosen. It is for this reason that it is worth examining in closer detail exactly how the camera is positioned in relation to the ethnographic subject to understand how Piault approaches filming alterity.

With the exception of one shot which cuts off just as the camera begins to walk a couple of paces, the camera (although it moves in space between the shots) occupies a static position throughout this thirteen shot sequence. The camera pivots on its base only twice: firstly, a horizontal pan to describe the movement of the women in the journey to the well, and secondly, a vertical pan to reveal the funnel into which the water is being poured. The stationary nature of the composition creates an impression of 'observation' or even 'surveillance' rather than a sense of participation or interaction that would be created if the camera were to walk with the women. This impression of a 'disembodied' camera observing events is enhanced by the fact that, out of the three

selected filmmakers, Piault is alone in preferring to work with a cameraman rather than acting as the camera operator.<sup>6</sup> This, she explains, is for technical reasons:

Il est souvent plus efficace, plus approprié de confier l'image qui demande une totale concentration et impose une limitation du champ de vision à un cameraman expérimenté dominant toutes les possibilités de son outil, grâce à une pratique constante, et de se réserver l'enregistrement du son qui permet de tout voir, tout en conservant le contact avec les personnes filmées. Il faut pouvoir utiliser sa caméra comme on conduit sa voiture, avec des réflexes

(*Terrain* 1986: 5).

Piault refers, in this 1986 interview, to the constraint imposed by having to look down the viewfinder of the camera as it limits a person's field of vision.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, Piault prefers to act as sound technician as this permits her to see the scene in its entirety.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, this enables her to direct the camera's 'eye' towards events of particular interest to her research without having to worry about technical issues. Nevertheless, whilst the quality of the images may be superior with an

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<sup>6</sup> Though only one of the selected filmmakers chooses to work with a camera crew, this decision is not particularly unusual. Many anthropologists lacking the technical training prefer to collaborate with professionals and act either in the capacity of director or as an advisor; the latter was common practice, for example, in Granada Television's *Disappearing World* series. Colette Piault has however, in her most recent film, acted as cameraman in *Morts présumés disparus* (2003), made in collaboration with the anthropologist Paul Sant Cassia.

<sup>7</sup> The arrival of digital camera technology with fold-out mini-TV screens has altered this problem of limited vision, as the cameraman is now able to see both the camera screen and the scene being shot without having to look down the viewfinder. This enlarges the cameraman's field of vision and enables him or her to maintain eye contact with the subject being filmed. For more detail cf. Sarah Pink 2001: Chapter 4.

<sup>8</sup> Colette Piault however, only acts as sound technician in one documentary in the Ano Ravenia cycle: *Charbonniers* (1990). In the case of *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, two sound technicians are credited.

experienced camera technician, the net result is that the 'eye' of the camera is not directly associated with the 'I' of the ethnographer but acts instead as a disembodied observer (or voyeur) of the events. The distance at which the ethnographic subjects are shot further increases this feeling. Avoiding the use of close-up, the subjects are portrayed in a series of shots varying from mid-distance to the wider establishing shot.

It is possible to interpret the manner of filming the ethnographic subject, revealed in this sequence, as an 'objectifying' or 'voyeuristic' gaze. The absence of close-ups in this scene, and in the film as a whole, is a significant choice by Piauult for documentary makers tend to use the close-up as a means of aiding the viewer to identify and differentiate between the various individuals in a film (Barbash & Taylor 1997: 108). Helping the audience to distinguish between the people captured on film does not however appear to form part of Piauult's film aesthetic, for the women of this sequence are not identified by name, and nor are the other villagers portrayed in *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*. As a consequence, the rejection of the close-up, coupled with the policy of the villagers' anonymity, can be construed as a refusal to use the kind of framing that invites identification between the viewer and the subject.

This perhaps seems a surprising choice in the highly individualistic society of today where the close-up features as a staple of television culture (this is in part the result of the smaller screen which requires the use of close-ups to generate greater visual impact). However, when seen from an anthropological perspective, this aesthetic choice can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, as a desire to recreate a more natural form of observation, akin to the ethnographer's 'naked' eye, for the close-up by exaggerating proximity:

brings to the cinema a quasi-tactility absent in ordinary human relations. When we meet others in day-to-day exchanges we do not explore their faces with our fingertips, but in cinema we come close to doing this, becoming especially alive to the liquidity of the eyes and mouth and, at a more interpretive level, the flickering signs of emotions

(MacDougall 2006: 22).

Secondly, as a reflection of Piault's interest in the group rather than the individual. Therefore, the unnamed women are filmed not in their quality of individuals going to fetch water, but as representatives of the women of Ano Ravenia who are required to obtain water in this manner. Had the women been filmed in a manner that included the close-up, it is possible that the viewer would have become caught up in the 'liquidity of the eyes and mouth' of the individual women and as a consequence, become less focused on the activity itself – the fetching of water from a well.

The idea of an individual acting as a representative of the village is supported by the second extract of the film I have chosen to look at. As I have already touched on in the previous example, Nichols is correct in his analysis that an observational mode of filming can suffer from a 'lack of context' (1994: 95). Piault attempts to remedy this by including a group discussion at a later point in the film which reveals additional information regarding the water situation of the village. Whilst this information is not of vital importance to the comprehension of the 'water fetching' sequence, it does help provide greater insight into the lives of the inhabitants of Ano Ravenia.

This group discussion is one of a handful of scenes that appear at various points in *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* to provide contextual information or 'explanations' as

Piault describes them in an interview in *Terrain* (1986: 8). The best example is found at the beginning of the film, when a man standing in a field provides a short history of the village, full of statistics:

Ce village c'est Ano Ravenia, nomarchie de Janina à 15 kilomètres de l'Albanie. Son existence remonte à 200 ans. Quand j'étais petit, avant la guerre, il comptait 7 à 800 personnes vivant d'agriculture, surtout d'élevage et de quelques vignes... Il y avait alors 5 000 moutons et 1 000 chèvres de l'élevage, avec une agriculture d'appoint. Mais les gens ne pouvaient pas vivre. Après la guerre, l'exode a commencé... En quelques années, la population du village est passée de 800 à 200 habitants. Sur les 170 personnes d'aujourd'hui, il y a quatre ou cinq jeunes, tous les autres sont âgés. La moitié vit avec cette misérable retraite de 1 000 drachmes par mois... Voilà la situation de notre village.

This monologue filmed in the valley with the village visible in the background provides a clear and informative introduction to Ano Ravenia and immediately draws attention to the central theme of migration. The extensive detail that he provides and the lack of extraneous comment suggests that this scene has, at the very least, been prompted if not rehearsed with the filmmaker – the monologue fits too neatly into the designs of the narrative structure of the film for it to be completely unplanned. That this monologue is not entirely spontaneous is not in itself a problem, nor does it cast doubt on the validity of the information, as gathering information through the use of interviews is a common field technique. The significance of this scene lies in the fact that it raises the question

of whose 'voice' is being represented – is it his own reflections, his fellow villagers' opinions, or the filmmaker's interests?

The blurring of 'voice(s)' in this sequence makes it possible to interpret this scene as something analogous to what a rhetorician would call *prosopopeia*: 'the putting of speeches into the mouths of others'.<sup>9</sup> The voice of the unnamed villager therefore can be read as representing the implicit authorial voice of Piault, since his speech provides the sort of contextual information that could have been spoken by the ethnographer in a voice-over commentary. Although there is no firmly established link between the man's voice and that of Piault, other than the convenient content of the monologue, the fact that the man is again unnamed makes it difficult to ascertain exactly on whose behalf he is speaking. There is a distinct impression that the man is representing several 'voices' indicated by his use of the first person plural ' "notre" village'. This suggests that, at the very least, the man is representing the voices of the villagers, if not the explicit concerns of the ethnographer.

Although it is possible to discern the 'voice' of the ethnographer in this sequence (albeit not distinctly), this seems to be contrary to Piault's filmic discourse which seeks to remove her presence from the scene in two ways. Firstly, by removing any trace of her interaction with the subject (i.e. the question(s) which prompts the man's monologue), and secondly by the positioning of the camera. The sequence is composed of two shots: the first of the man standing with his back to the camera, the second shot in profile. At no point does he acknowledge the camera despite the fact that his monologue is clearly motivated by its presence (it is highly unlikely that he would be talking to himself about the village he lives in if there was no one there). Thus, the

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<sup>9</sup> See page 7, footnote 2, for source.

very inclusion of the man's narrative implies that an interlocutor is present even if they cannot be seen in the shot. As a consequence, Piault is drawn indirectly into the scene as the implied interlocutor (as is, to a certain extent, the viewer) despite her attempt to remove her presence through the montage of this extract.

Whereas in this example the camera is positioned in such a way as to remove the possibility of the man's gaze crossing that of the camera, there are occasional examples of filmic 'mise en abyme' or 'reflexivity' when the villagers glance at the camera.<sup>10</sup> Such occasions are rare for in the majority of the documentary the ethnographic subjects do not make eye contact with the camera but instead look either slightly off camera, or, as in this example, the positioning of the camera makes contact between subject and filmmaker difficult.

The most notable example of the 'return gaze' occurs during a festive occasion, presumably in honour of the Virgin Mary (neither the date nor the occasion is specified), when the whole village has gathered outside to listen to music and dance.<sup>11</sup> A horizontal pan from the camera slowly describes, from left to right, a group of villagers sitting in a row at the edge of the dancing and comes to a rest on the group of musicians who are providing the music for the dancing. The villagers are filmed from the front, portrait-style, in a long shot lasting around one minute fifteen seconds. Out of the thirty-six individuals filmed in this one shot (thirty-three villagers and three musicians), twenty-nine people ignore the presence of the camera – perhaps because they are engrossed with the dancing taking place, or perhaps because they have been told to not to look at the camera, 'to pretend that the camera is not there'. The latter reason appears to be a distinct possibility, for at the moment that three people move into

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<sup>10</sup> I shall be exploring the concept of 'reflexivity' in greater detail in Chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup> I have borrowed the term 'return gaze' from Griffiths (2002 c.f 196-).

shot, they steal a glance at the camera only to quickly look away. Two villagers stare straight at the camera, stock-still, almost as if posing for a photograph, and two musicians acknowledge the camera with a glance.

This pan shot provides an interesting and unexpected moment of reflexivity in which the artificiality of the film is revealed. Though brief, the return gaze also metonymically brings Piault into the film, despite her efforts to stay out of it, much as in the previous example she is drawn into the film as the implied interlocutor of the monologue. The importance of this scene resides not so much in revealing the inherent illusion of an 'invisible' camera that does not affect the people filmed, but in raising the issue of why Piault persists in denying for the majority of the film the return gaze of the subject. This is a significant choice for as the ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall suggests:

the glance into the camera evokes one of the primal experiences of daily life – of look returned by look – through which we signal mutual recognition and affirm the shared experience of the moment. It is the look of exchange that says, 'At this moment, we see ourselves through one another'

(1998: 100; cited by Griffiths 2002: 199).

The decision to exclude the return gaze, and thus remove an important means of interaction and expression from the subject, may appear contradictory in a film which attempts to 'give voice' to the ethnographic subject. Another consequence is that it denies the representation of the relationship between ethnographer and subject which inevitably involves the exchange of looks and dialogue. It personally seems an extreme

aesthetic choice if the only intention is to protect the illusion of a non-provocative camera.

For the majority of people, the presence of a camera or even just an ethnographer with a notebook is not a normal set of circumstances and it is inevitable that their behaviour will be affected accordingly. On a different festive occasion, the villagers process out of church after a service accompanied by a group of musicians. The shot is set up so that the musicians walk towards the camera. The violinist, when he sees the camera, rather than ignore its presence (as the rest of the people walking past it do), turns and smiles at the camera, positioning his body in such a way as to provide a clear shot of the movement of the bow over the strings as he plays and walks. The instinctive adaptation of the musician's posture in order to 'play to' the camera reveals the inherent 'performative' nature of film. In a film which attempts to minimise the presence of the camera through an 'invisible' mode of filming, this moment of reflexivity shatters the illusion of 'direct' and unhindered access into the world of the ethnographic subjects.

Rather than see this as a failure of the film's aesthetic, it is perhaps more useful to turn to recent documentary criticism which focuses on the 'performance' aspect of film. Stella Bruzzi suggests that:

documentary will forever be circumscribed by the fact that it is a mode of representation and thus can never elide the distance between image and event. It is imperative, however, to acknowledge that this deficiency does not invalidate the notion of the non-fiction film

(2000: 180).

Bruzzi argues as a consequence for a change in emphasis, away from the pursuit of an impossible 'objective truth' or 'invisible observation', towards a filmic approach which embraces the idea that 'the important truth any documentary captures is the performance in front of the camera' (2000: 74). The 'truth' of film is thus the 'performance' that is the direct result of the 'moment when the filmmaking process disrupts and intrudes upon the reality of the world it is documenting' – it is the moment of *encounter* between filmmaker and subject (Bruzzi 2000: 72).

The violinist's reaction is thus an explicit example of the moment in which the filmmaker's presence 'disrupts and intrudes' upon the subject. His smile testifies to the presence of another human being behind the camera and functions as a moment of exchange or 'encounter' between two individuals. This is very similar to the exchange of looks that occurs in the previous example of the pan shot of the villagers. What is significant in these two examples is that they undermine the idea that a 'disembodied' or 'invisible' camera, which observes without intruding, is possible or even desirable.

As David MacDougall points out:

What is finally disappointing in the ideal of filming 'as if the camera were not there' is not that observation in itself is unimportant, but that as a governing approach it remains far less interesting than exploring the situation that actually exists. The camera *is* there, and it is held by a representative of one culture encountering another. Beside such an extraordinary event, the search for isolation and invisibility seems a curiously irrelevant ambition. No ethnographic film is merely a record of

another society; it is always a record of the meeting between a filmmaker and that society

(1998: 133-134).

Ignoring the ethnographic encounter also has another consequence of creating an approach which 'implies that we can observe and extract objective information (data) about our informants. This can be problematised as an 'objectifying' approach that does research *on* but not *with* people' (Pink 2001: 23). In the light of observational cinema's aim to distance itself from an 'authoritative' or even 'colonial' style of filming by eschewing commentary, this rejection of the encounter between ethnographer and subject is paradoxical. For, with the exception of a voice-over which interprets the ethnographic subject, and the change in subject matter from the focus on 'exotic' rituals to the quotidian, in what way has the manner of filming alterity changed in observational documentary making? The idea of 'giving voice' to the subject is not really shown in Piault's film which includes only a few 'explanations' provided by the subject (and in the case of the man's monologue it is questionable exactly whose 'voice' is being represented). It is very likely that this is a factor that led to many documentary makers to adapt the observational method and include the subject's voice through the use of interview (as is shown in the second of Piault's films). Interviewing the subject also has the advantage of providing the 'context' that is often lacking in observational film as a result of the 'loss of voice' that Nichols talks about.

The 'direct' or 'unfiltered' access into the world of the subject promised by observational documentary is, as I have shown with the example of the man's monologue, also problematic. Although there is indeed a 'loss' of Piault's direct voice

engendered by the lack of commentary, her indirect voice is present through the montage of scenes such as the 'water fetching' sequence, the selection of material included in the film and through the possible example of 'prosopopeia' in the man's monologue. Thus, despite Piault's attempts to exclude her presence, *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* testifies to her role in the construction of the film. In this way, although observational cinema is an important development as it 'recognises that the experts' opinions and the filmmakers' vision need to be tempered by the subjects' lived experience', in truth, 'editorial control still remains in the hands of the filmmaker' (Ruby 2000: 204). As a consequence, 'the empowerment of the subject is therefore more illusory than actual. Although new voices are heard, traditional forms of authorship have not be significantly altered' (Ruby 2000: 204).

## II: *Une vie dure* (1996) – 54 minutes

Though the majority of *Une vie dure* was shot in 1983, this documentary did not achieve its finished form until 1996 making it the last film in Piault's series of six films set in Ano Ravenia, produced over a sixteen-year period. The film is based around the life story of an old lady, Kalliopi Kalogerou, born at the turn of the century. In this analysis, I shall explore the role of the interview in the filming of alterity, and assess how the interview encompasses ideas of interaction between the 'voice' of the subject and the 'voice' of the filmmaker.

*Une vie dure* begins with a short sequence of film shot in 1978 showing an old lady looking through an album of family photographs and describing aloud the diverse parts of the world in which they now live. Interestingly, this opening scene is in fact the same footage used by Piault to end her first film, *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* (1980). This creates a cyclical feel: the end of one film proves to be the starting point of another. In this sense, this represents the work of the ethnographer who, once he or she has established a general overview of the community, is able to start a more detailed investigation of the particular.

However, when looked at in greater detail, the 'photograph album' sequence used in *Une vie dure* has been cut differently and there is an inversion of two shots: what was the final shot of the sequence in *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* has become the first shot in *Une vie dure*, whilst an establishing shot has been removed from the

later version. To clarify these changes, I have drawn up a table in order to visually compare the two versions.<sup>12</sup>

<i>Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête</i>	<i>Une vie dure</i>
<b>Shot 1.</b> Establishing shot of house.	<b>Shot [1].</b> Absent.
<b>Shot 2.</b> Head and shoulder shot of Kalliope (unnamed) filmed portrait-style. She has a photograph album on her knee and is looking through the pictures whilst describing them out aloud. Camera then zoom out to show husband sitting silently in a chair next to her.	<b>Shot [3].</b> Shot over Kalliope's shoulder looking down at the album. The viewer is able to see the photographs that she is describing.
<b>Shot 3.</b> Shot over Kalliope's shoulder looking down at the album. The viewer is now able to see the photographs that she is continuing to describe.	<b>Shot [2].</b> Head and shoulder shot of Kalliope (as yet unnamed) filmed portrait-style. The camera zooms out to show the husband sitting on a chair and then cuts to the opening credits.

The major difference between the two versions is the relationship to space: the sequence in *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* describes a progressive movement from far to near, whilst *Une vie dure* commences with a shot that literally looks over the shoulder of the subject and into the important moments of her family's lives displayed in the album. I would suggest that this alternative montage is a significant choice by Piault, an explicit example of the 'indirect voice' of the filmmaker, which indicates the difference of approach to be taken in this film.

Whereas her earlier film is more about the group than the particular (seen for example in the 'water fetching' sequence in which the two anonymous women appear to be filmed not as individuals but as representatives of the women of the village), her last

<sup>12</sup> The numbers in square brackets refer to the numbered shots of *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* and not to the number of shots in the version of the sequence that appears in *Une vie dure* (of which there are two).

film is an investigation or 'portrait' of an individual. By beginning *Une vie dure* with shot [3], the viewer is immediately drawn into the life of Kalliope and her family, represented here in the photographs, and is made aware of the central themes of migration and memory to be explored in the film. Photographs showing frozen moments of importance in her family's life, such as weddings, birthdays and baptisms, act as a metaphor for the interview-based documentary that is to follow, which will touch on moments of significance in Kalliope's life – such as childhood, marriage and migrant children.

The notion that this is a film to be based on an insider's perspective is borne out by the rest of the film which is built around two interviews: the first with Kalliope (Winter 1983) lasting just over thirty-one minutes, and the second with Kalliope and her daughter Eugenia (Summer 1983) which lasts around nine and a half minutes. In a film that runs at fifty-four minutes, approximately forty-one minutes are devoted to interview, or in percentage terms, around seventy-five percent. The remaining time is taken up with a scene in which Kalliope shows her garden to the interviewer, an 'observational' style scene in which Kalliope prepares and cooks pitta bread and the 'farewell' scene when the film crew and subjects drink coffee together.<sup>13</sup>

The balance of this film is therefore very different to Pault's first documentary, based on the observation of the ethnographic subjects with, on occasion, the inclusion of the subjects' voices through the insertion of a few 'explanations'. *Une vie dure* is, by contrast, a film of testimony – a representation of alterity from the other side – in which Kalliope and her daughter are given the opportunity to 'voice' their experiences. What

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<sup>13</sup> These 'observational' style scenes will not form part of my analysis as I wish to focus on the manner in which the interview is used in *Une vie dure* to represent alterity.

is captured on film is a moment of ethnographic *encounter* or *interaction* between ethnographer and ethnographic subjects.

Filming interviews tends to lead to a fairly static style of shooting conducive with the use of a tripod since the subject is usually sitting down, prone to little movement. During the first interview with Kalliopi, the camera remains for the majority of the time fixed on the subject who is sitting in a three-quarter front profile on a bed in a room of her house (the location very likely chosen as it is winter). To the rear of the shot is a window through which the viewer can see the roof of another house, and on the wall, left of the frame, hang three black and white framed photographs that are in shadows. One of the portraits is her mother-in-law; the others remain unidentified, although it is probably safe to assume that they represent family members – perhaps her parents or her deceased husband.<sup>14</sup>

The style of shooting in this scene remains centred on the subject, who can be seen at all times in the shot (apart from at one point when the cameraman pans to his left to frame the interviewer who is asking Kalliope a question). This is reinforced by the direction of the light, which is positioned to illuminate the subject, whilst the interviewer remains slightly more in the shadows. Variety is produced through the changes in the closeness of the shot that fluctuate from a mid-distance shot revealing Kalliope's whole body, to a closer 'head and shoulders' shot. To maintain the viewer's interest, the camera zooms slightly in and out every minute or so. To indicate with whom Kalliope is interacting, the cameraman starts the beginning of the interview with

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<sup>14</sup> The problem of watching films, which were made for the widescreen of a cinema, on a small screen, is that it is often difficult to see clearly details such as the photographs in the photograph album or the portraits hanging on the wall in this scene.

a shot that includes both the interviewer and the interviewee and at various points in the half-hour interview, he periodically zooms out or pans left to include both interlocutors in the frame. This has the advantage of not only establishing for the viewer who the interviewer is, but also of providing a direction for Kalliope's eye contact which is often directed off-screen when the interviewer is not present in the shot. The idea of 'interaction' between two people is further enhanced on one occasion, with a horizontal pan from left to right, which links the two individuals visually and reinforces the notion of exchange or communication created by the interview.

One of the features of *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, is a style of 'disembodied' filming in which the camera attempts to create the illusion of unobtrusive observation. This impression was increased by the decision of Piault to use a cameraman with the consequence that the 'I' of the ethnographer is not directly associated with the 'eye' of the camera. In *Une vie dure*, Piault again chooses to work with a cameraman, however the manner in which the camera is positioned provides a partial sense of 'embodiment'. For, the camera is placed to the right of the interviewer, almost as if it were a person sitting by the interviewer's side. Rather than positioning the camera in the middle of the two individuals, the camera is placed off-centre, nearer to the interviewer. In the last section of the interview, between changing rolls, the camera is repositioned to shoot over the shoulder of the interviewer, providing the point-of-view occupied by the interviewer, thereby creating the sense that the camera is filming the 'other' from the perspective of the interviewer.

Filming alterity through the use of interview provides an opportunity for the ethnographic subject 'to describe their subjective experiences of past and present events, while simultaneously we interpret the emotions and constraints of the moment'

(MacDougall 1998: 117). In this sense, it is an important tool in the attempt to create a method of filming 'others' that is more representative of a postcolonial society.<sup>15</sup> However, as MacDougall points out, despite being an 'ideal medium for confession and self-revelation' the interview is equally a means for 'misinformation' (ibid.). For this reason, it is important 'to see interviews as representing limited perspectives and uneven mixtures of candour and self-justification' (ibid.).

MacDougall's argument that interviews offer 'limited perspectives' may be linked to Nichols' point that interview-based documentary, in which there is an absence of a 'hierarchy of voices', lacks the necessary contextual information that enables the viewer to evaluate the 'veracity' or the 'insightfulness' of the interviewee's comments. As a consequence, Nichols suggests that the film becomes a 'rubber stamp':

The film says, in effect, 'Interviewees never lie.' Interviewees say, 'What I am telling you is the truth.' We then ask, 'Is the interviewee telling the truth?' but find no acknowledgment in the film of the possibility, let alone the necessity, of entertaining this question

(Rosenthal & Corner eds. 2005: 25).

Both Nichols' and MacDougall's criticism of the use of the interview in documentary can be applied to *Une vie dure*, as the first interview provides only one perspective: the life history of Kalliope seen from her point of view. Although to a certain extent, it may be argued that the second interview which features Kalliope's daughter, offers a fresh

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<sup>15</sup> Although Greece was not colonised by the west, Michael Hertzfeld, makes the valid point in his 1987 book, *Anthropology through the Looking-glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*, that Greece has been intellectually colonised by Western intellectuals as the 'cradle' of European civilisation.

perspective, Piault does not provide the viewer with additional material that permits the appraisal of whether Kalliope's story represents a typical or unusual example of a woman in Ano Ravenian society. (The question of whether Kalliope's life history is representative will be returned to at a later point).

The second point that MacDougall raises is that interviews can be used selectively to support a particular argument that suits the interests of the author (1998: 118). As Lucien Taylor suggests in his introduction to MacDougall's book: 'although the interview might seem to be enabling for the filmmaker's subjects, it is really empowering for filmmakers themselves, who are able to conceal their own editorial point of view, and their own discursive voice, behind the testimony of their subject' (MacDougall 1998: 5-6). Piault appears aware of this issue, and therefore adopts a 'sequence-style' method of shooting, frequently used in observational cinema, in which the shot lasts the length of the film reel (approximately ten minutes).<sup>16</sup> Both interviews in *Une vie dure* feature this style of filming which adopts a policy of reducing to a minimum the amount of editing that takes place within the shots, in order to render a 'complete' account of the subject's testimony.

The use of sequence-style shooting by observational filmmakers was an attempt to capture on film a version of an event that was as close as possible to the actual scene that took place before the filmmaker. It was hoped that the:

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<sup>16</sup> It is interesting to note that although Piault situates *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, as being in the observational style, she does not adopt sequence-style shooting within the documentary preferring to reconstruct time and space in the manner demonstrated in my analysis of the 'water fetching' sequence (*Terrain* 1986: 8). This is very likely due to the length of time that such sequences would take if they were filmed in 'real time'. By eschewing this style of filming, Piault is able to film a wide variety of situations and events.

inevitable selectivity of shooting may be counteracted, or perhaps merely atoned for, by a refusal of selectivity in the editing: that the minimum of structuring will afford the maximum of truth.

(Dai Vaughan in Crawford and Turton eds. 1992: 100)

However, as Dai Vaughan insightfully continues: ‘the antithesis of the structured is not the truthful, or even the objective, but quite simply the random (ibid.).’

Piault therefore tries to reduce the ‘selectivity’ of shooting by reducing her role as editor to a strict minimum (there are no cuts within the individual sequence-shots). Nevertheless, despite Piault’s attempts to remove her ‘voice’ from the interview, her ‘indirect voice’ is present in the selection of questions that she chooses to ask. So, even though the footage has not been edited to conform to her particular interpretation of events, Piault’s choice of questions, which relate to her research interests, direct the content of the interview and play an active role in the structuring of the interviewee’s answers.

It is perhaps worth briefly considering the nature of a filmed interview and to what extent it differs from a more ‘traditional’ form of interview which has formed as essential part of ethnographic fieldwork. As Piault herself points out, a filmed interview is different to an interview carried out as part of ethnographic fieldwork which can take place over many days and involve a great deal of repetition. In a filmed interview, the cost of film stock notwithstanding: ‘l’interview filmé ne peut jamais oublier le spectateur’ (Piault 2008: 1).<sup>17</sup> As a result, in a filmed interview such as in *Une vie dure*

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<sup>17</sup> As this article was sourced from the Internet and did not contain any page numbers, I have included numbers to facilitate the location of quotations within the article. The page numbers are based on the printing of the article in 12 point.

in which there is little variety in the images shown, there is a need to provide detail without repetition in order to maintain the interest of the viewer.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, Piault explains it is very rare for an interview to be recorded upon first contact with the individual (ibid.). Whilst there is a certain logic to carefully preparing the issues to be addressed in the filmed interview, it does raise the issue of whether the account given by the subject can be free from the outside influence of the ethnographer's 'voice'.

The issue of the influence of the ethnographer's 'voice' on the subject is further complicated by the fact that Piault chooses to use an Epirot friend of Kalliope to conduct the first interview, whilst her own 'direct voice' remains absent from the scene. The ethnographer's choice to use a third party to interview Kalliope perhaps stems from the same practical concerns that motivate her decision to use a professional cameraman: as a native speaker, Eleni, has a greater command of the language and is therefore able to adapt more quickly to the direction in which the subject is taking the question. Likewise it is equally possible that by using a friend of the ethnographic subject, Piault is attempting to create a more informal atmosphere for the subject in order to aid the flow of the conversation. This fulfils Piault's admonition in her recent article on the nature of the interview in ethnographic film that: 'l'interview devra être vécu et filmé comme une "Petite conversation entre amis' (2008: 4). Had Piault herself chosen to interview Kalliope, this would have emphasised the idea of the interview being used for ethnographic research and possibly impeded the freedom with which Kalliope expresses herself (however the presence of the camera crew and Piault is hardly the most natural of situations).

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<sup>18</sup> Another alternative approach that I shall analyse in Chapter 2, is the technique employed by Eliane de Latour in which the audio of an interview is superimposed over images shot at a different time – this has the benefit of providing a visual support or illustration for the ideas expressed by the interviewee.

Whatever the case may be, the use of a third party does not remove Piauxt's 'indirect voice' from the scene. Indeed it is possible to argue, that this is another example of what a rhetorician would call *prosopopeia* – Piauxt is using Eleni as a mouthpiece through which her questions are funnelled. In this sense, although Piauxt 'direct voice' is not present in this interview – the viewer neither hears nor sees her – her 'voice' is present indirectly through the rhetorical effect of *prosopopeia*.

Piauxt's orchestrating role in the interview is also acknowledged at one point in the interview in which Kalliope looks off-screen, in the opposite direction to Eleni, to where the viewer assumes Piauxt is sitting. This exchange of glances occurs about eighteen minutes into the interview just after a transition from one reel to another. There appears to have been a cut in time (perhaps whilst the camera's magazine was being changed), for the phrasing of Eleni's question, 'Alors, tu étais jeune du temps des Turcs', seems designed to restart the conversation or pick up from where it left off. There is a pause before Kalliope answers, for at that particular moment she is looking off-screen as if waiting for a signal that everything is in place for the interview to continue. After a second or two, she smiles and turns towards the interviewer to answer her question.

This moment of reflexivity, created by Kalliope's off-screen look, metonymically brings Piauxt into the interview and reveals the ethnographer's part in the proceedings. Piauxt is drawn into the film not only as an implied interlocutor or listener (for she does not speak whilst the camera is rolling) but also as the implied 'voice of authority' that is co-ordinating the interview and filming process. In comparison with *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, in which Piauxt attempts to remove any trace of her 'voice', Piauxt seems to have adapted this guiding principle in *Une vie dure*,

for in the second interview it is Piault herself who acts as interviewer. As a consequence, the 'second part' of the documentary filmed in at a later date (Summer 1983) provides the viewer with a greater sense of the interaction that takes place between ethnographer and subjects during the ethnographic encounter.

The second interview features Kalliope's daughter, Eugenia, who has flown in from the United States where she now lives, to visit her mother in Ano Ravenia. With the exception that the interview features two interviewees, the style of shooting remains similar to that seen in the first interview – focused on the subjects. The major difference is that Piault is the one asking the questions, however, unlike in the first interview, the cameraman does not include the ethnographer in the shot but concentrates his attention on the two subjects, occasionally panning from one to the other as they converse between themselves.

The addition of another voice transforms the nature of the interview into a more free-flowing dialogue, in which Eugenia often asks her mother questions, or prompts her to remember things they did together in the past:

Comment j'étais Mère? Est-ce que je travaillais avec toi?

Tu te souviens, on mettait des chaînes aux chevaux...

As these examples quoted above demonstrate, Eugenia, although an interviewee who talks about her own life, also acts as an interviewer. Since she knows her mother well, this provides Piault with an ideal assistant, perhaps providing the ethnographer with access to material that Kalliope had forgotten or not considered relevant. Piault's

interventions are on the whole minimal, for what is recorded on film is more of a conversation between Eugenia and her mother reminiscing about 'old times', told to Piault. This is not to say that Piault is excluded, for throughout the nine-and-a-half minute interview, Eugenia and Kalliope make sustained eye contact with a point that is off-screen where the viewer presumes Piault is sitting. By the exchange of looks, Piault is included in the discussion not only as listener but also as an occasional interlocutor.

It is however, the scene which directly follows the second interview, that I particularly wish to focus attention on, for it raises important issues regarding the nature of the relationship between film and its subject, as well as to the nature of the ethnographic research.

Lasting around one minute and fifty seconds, this sequence begins with Eugenia handing out coffee to her mother and various members of the film crew, including Piault. Once everyone is served and seated, Kalliope and Eugenia wish Piault 'bon voyage' and for her to come back every year. Eugenia then expresses her desire to invite Piault to her home in America. Piault asks her where she lives and reveals that she is going to New York in September. Eugenia promises to give the ethnographer her address, as New York is, by plane, only two hours away from her home in St. Louis, Missouri.

This 'farewell scene' takes place on the same balcony as the second interview and, as such, this sequence follows on quite naturally. An unspecified amount of time has elapsed between the two sequences, for if the viewer looks closely, he or she might notice that Eugenia has changed clothes and is now wearing a dress with different jewellery. What is of particular interest however is not so much the time lapse between the two sequences, but the fact that Piault chose to film this moment of interaction

between herself and the subjects and include it in what is an interview-based documentary.

By alluding to her return, this sequence prepares the viewer for the end of the film, as the end of Piault's stay in Ano Ravenia marks the end of her research in the field. It also provides an occasion to show the relationships that develop between the ethnographer and subjects. For while there are moments of a more formal nature when Piault is carrying out ethnographic research (as seen in the two interviews), there are also moments of relaxation (shown in this scene) when all drink coffee together and invitations to visit are given. Piault's reference to her future return to Ano Ravenia, in addition, evokes the special nature of the relationship between ethnographer and subjects which is based on long-term research in the same area: when *Une vie dure* was shot Piault had already been researching for nine years in the village. This is one of the differences between a film shot by professional documentary makers who have to work to a particular time-scale and budget, and that of an ethnographer whose work in one area tends not to be limited, as least as regards the time spend in the field. This is seen in the fact that although *Une vie dure* was shot in 1983, the film did not achieve its finished form until thirteen years later when it was presented at the 1996 Bilan de film ethnographique in Paris.<sup>19</sup>

The inclusion of this 'farewell sequence', I would however argue does more than simply evoke the long-term basis of the relationship between ethnographer and subjects, or the incomplete nature of ethnographic fieldwork. It also touches on the transient nature of film and its relationship to the subjects that it portrays:

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<sup>19</sup> In the same year *Une vie dure* was also screened at the Göttingen International Film Festival in Germany and the NAFA Film Festival in Bergen, Norway.

In fiction films, the characters seem to slip away into the past. More disturbingly, the subjects of documentary slip away into the future, like impatient children before a portrait painter. Films stand still, but their subjects move on... If film adds movement and transiency [sic] to still photography, it has never resolved the deeper transiency of the subjects escaping from the work. Even as a film is being shot, its subjects are in transition, moving toward a future that the film cannot contain

(MacDougall 1998: 33).

The sense of the 'fugitive subject' is highlighted in the 'farewell sequence', for as the documentary draws to an end, the subjects and Piault are already evoking a future that the 'film cannot contain' (MacDougall 1998: 33). Piault evokes her future trip to America and the suggestion of a visit to Eugenia's home in St. Louis, whilst Kalliope suggests that the next time Piault visits Ano Ravenia, she might no longer be alive. The impression of the subject escaping towards an unknown future is further increased by the very last shot of the film which shows Kalliope shot in profile sitting alone on her balcony looking out towards a unknown horizon that the viewer does not have access to.

In my analysis of *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, I have already evoked the notion of the difficulty in evaluating to what extent the footage shown in the final montage is representative of a particular situation or whether it represents an untypical example. This is particularly the case with the absence of a voice-over commentary or the inclusion of multiple perspectives that are often used to provide the viewer with a

sense of context. The specificity of film also adds to this dilemma of representation, for as Peter Loizos points out:

If you wish to show how a yarn-garden is prepared, you may not capture a typical event if a particular day's activities are interrupted by a violent thunderstorm, the eruption of a quarrel, or a woman giving birth. What, if anything, is to be excluded? Do you shoot again another day hoping to cover the entire event without the unusual features? Or do you include the unusual, but explain its unusualness in a commentary aside, or in a written teaching guide?

(1993: 19).

In the case of an interview-based documentary such as *Une vie dure*, the question of representation relates to the individual(s) who is being interviewed – is their life history being recorded because it is particularly unusual or because it is particularly representative of the individual's social group? Is Kalliope life history meant to be representative of the experiences of other Ano Ravenian women of her generation, or is she unusual (and therefore 'worthy' of interviewing?).

The ethnographer Charlotte Aull Davies who has written on ethnographic research and on the collection of life histories suggests that: 'ethnographers collect and study life histories not primarily out of interest in individual stories but in order to improve understanding and knowledge of social and cultural processes more generally' (1999: 169). This of course, she admits, raises the question of generalisation in ethnographic film. However, she makes the distinction between 'empirical

generalisation to a larger population' and 'theoretical induction in which social and cultural processes observed in individual cases are argued to be relevant in other contexts' (1999: 170).

To what extent Kalliopi's life history is representative is not a question that a non-specialist can answer having watched this documentary. *Une vie dure* lacks a context or an alternative perspective that could have been provided either by a voice-over commentary or by the inclusion of other life histories – there is a 'loss' of an 'authorial voice' or of a 'hierarchy of voices' as Nichols would argue (Rosenthal ed. 2005: 25). However, as Aull Davies points out:

no individual life history can be said to be representative in its entirety, in that each individual set of life experiences is unique to a single person. On the other hand, it may be possible to abstract various themes from the lives of individual members of a given social category and hence provide empirically generalisable knowledge

(1999: 170).

Film, like the photographs in Kalliopi's family album, is a means of representation: a method of creating a record that can be preserved for posterity. Born at the turn of the century, Kalliopi has lived through important moments in Greek history such as the Turkish occupation, and is a living witness of the long association of village life in Ano Ravenia with migration (her father spent long periods working abroad. Although it would be mistaken to interpret one individual's life story as necessarily representative of a whole society, Piault's decision to record an

autobiographical account of Kalliopi's life can be seen as an attempt to preserve an eyewitness account of a way of life that is disappearing. In this sense, *Une vie dure* is a form of salvage anthropology.

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Over the course of this analysis, I have analysed Piault's use of 'voice(s)' in two of her documentaries based in Ano Ravenia, which adopt different approaches towards filming alterity. The first, *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, offers an observational style of documentary in which Piault's 'direct voice' is excluded, the second, *Une vie dure*, provides an interview-based film in which the voices of subject and ethnographer interact with one another.

It is possible to interpret the change in approach between the two films as an evolution in Piault's ethnographic and filmic strategy, possibly the result of the cinematographic training that she received in England at the National Film and Television School, headed at the time by Colin Young.<sup>20</sup> Thus, having seen the 'problems' raised by the making of her first documentary in Ano Ravenia, Piault decided to change her approach towards a more inclusive style that represented the encounter between ethnographer and subject rather than the pretence of 'invisible' observation.

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<sup>20</sup> Piault recalls in a 1986 interview that Young, interested in her documentary approach, invited her to the N.F.T.S where he taught her how to use editing equipment. *Une vie dure* as well as two other films in the 'Ano Ravenia' cycle were filmed in collaboration with the N.F.T.S. Graham Johnston, a student of the school acted as Piault's cameraman on each of these occasions.

On the other hand, Piault's comments: 'ce qui me paraît important, c'est... de rechercher des expressions cinématographiques adéquates au lieu de se conformer à un modèle unique, idéal et figé du film ethnographique' (*Terrain* 1986: 3). This would perhaps suggest that rather than seeing the different approach to filming alterity in *Une vie dure* as an evolution, Piault simply adapts her approach to suit the occasion. Since, each method of filming 'otherness' raises its own particular questions of representation, rather than limiting herself to a 'modèle unique', it is possible that Piault prefers to vary her method of filming alterity in an attempt to provide a variety of representations.

## **Chapter 2: Experimentations in Reflexive Ethnography, Polyvocality, and**

### **Montage – Eliane de Latour**

Il faut faire des films et ne pas rester le nez collé au «réel»... Quoi qu'il arrive, il faut sélectionner au cadrage et couper au montage... La seule garantie de non-manipulation, c'est au fond que le point de vue de l'auteur soit juste, que sa subjectivité soit claire. Il n'y a pas de «réel» ou de «vérité» mais une manière de faire comprendre qui, elle, doit être juste. Une fois ce contrat établi, la construction reste libre.

(Eliane de Latour 1993: 9)

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the concept of 'reflexive' ethnographic film and investigate how Eliane de Latour applies this notion of 'reflexivity' in her documentary work filming alterity. As this quotation of a 1993 interview suggests, de Latour adopts an approach in which, since selection is an inevitable part of filming, it is important to clearly situate the author's point of view. However, her reflexive style goes further and does not simply limit itself to an inclusion of her 'voice', but involves an exploration of 'polyvocality' in which the voices of 'self' and 'others' are included into the fabric of the film. Another significant aspect of her work is her desire to explore the anthropological possibilities of her 'indirect voice' through the use of montage and aesthetic effects. Before exploring the question of 'voices' in de Latour's work, it is perhaps helpful to briefly outline the concept of reflexivity and the definition that I propose to adopt.

In the previous chapter, I have explored how an observational approach to ethnographic documentary making attempts to create the illusion of ‘disembodied observation’; that the filmmaker is endeavouring to film what would have happened had he or she not been there. In the case of Colette Piault’s *Ce n’est pas tous les jours fête* (1980), this is an aesthetic which does not always succeed, especially when the subject looks back at the camera. As MacDougall suggests:

What is finally disappointing in the ideal of filming ‘as if the camera were not there’ is not that observation in itself is unimportant, but that as a governing approach it remains far less interesting than exploring the situation that actually exists. The camera *is* there, and it is held by a representative of one culture encountering another. Beside such an extraordinary event, the search for isolation and invisibility seems a curiously irrelevant ambition. No ethnographic film is merely a record of another society; it is always a record of the meeting between a filmmaker and that society

(1998: 133-134).

The realisation that the ethnographer’s ‘voice’ was inevitably present in a scene, either directly through commentary, or indirectly through the montage or construction of a film or text, led many anthropologists in the early 1980s to argue for ethnographers to develop a reflexive approach to anthropology.<sup>21</sup> One of the primary advocates was the

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<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that reflexive documentary is not a recent development. Dziga Vertov’s 1929 *The Man with a Movie Camera*, is often said to be the first documentary which explored the notion of reflexivity, whilst in ethnographic film, the pioneering *ethnocinéma*, Jean Rouch began including reflexive strategies in his films in the 1950s and 1960s with such works as *Jaguar* (1967) and *Moi, un*

visual anthropologist Jay Ruby who defined that the reflexive approach should be one in which:

the producer deliberately, intentionally reveals to an audience the underlying epistemological assumptions that caused the formulation of a set of questions in a particular way, the seeking of answers to those questions in a particular way, and finally the presentation of the findings in a particular way

(Ruby ed. 1982: 6).

Ruby's position has been criticised more recently by David MacDougall who suggests that Ruby's type of 'reflexivity' is of an 'external' kind which is problematic for two reasons (1998: 88). Firstly, that as a concept it does not go far enough, and secondly, that it:

attempts to erect reflexivity as a structure exterior to the work. That is to say, it proposes a frame of reference within which we are to assess the work... Because it frames the frame, so to speak, it is considered to be more accurate, more valid, more scientific. It gives us an interpretation of known bias. This implies an ultimately achievable 'correct' interpretation and a way of restoring to representation its scientific objectivity. Thus, in the guise of insisting on the mediated nature of film, it actually maintains the ideology and mechanisms of nineteenth century positivism intact... In

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*noir* (1959). The fact that Rouch's ethnographic work did not influence mainstream anthropology, which did not begin to explore such ideas until the 1980s, is possibly due to the marginalisation of visual anthropology that many anthropologists seem to feel exists (cf. Stoller 1992; MacDougall 1998; Grimshaw 2001; Griffiths 2002).

effect, it perpetrates what Strathern has called ‘the illusion of the transparent writer’ by believing that the writer can eventually be *made* transparent (ibid).

As a consequence, MacDougall argues for a ‘deeper’ form of reflexivity, one in which the author is seen as an integral part of the film: ‘Subject and object define one another through the work, and the “author” is in fact in many ways an artefact of the work’ (1998: 89).

In this chapter, I wish to argue that Eliane de Latour adopts a form of ‘deep reflexivity’ of the kind defined by MacDougall, as she includes her presence or ‘voice’ both directly, in the form of voice-over commentary, and indirectly through her exploration of the aesthetic and anthropological possibilities of film. Using the ethnographer Charlotte Aull Davies’ definition of postmodernism, I shall also be assessing if de Latour’s inclusion of multiple voices or perspectives, can be attributed to a postmodern ‘rejection of meta-narratives’ (1999: 14).

To examine these concepts I have chosen two documentaries by de Latour: *Les temps du pouvoir* (1984) and *Le reflet de la vie* (1987). Although the location and subject of the two films are very different (one is set in the Niger and deals with political power, the other is set in the Cevennes and explores the alterity of old age), they nevertheless share a similarity in their cinematographic and ethnographic approach.

**I: *Les temps du pouvoir* (1984) – 91 minutes**

If there can be said to be a key question that de Latour's first documentary attempts to answer, it could be defined as: 'Who is Samna?'. Set in the canton of Tiberi (Niger), *Les temps du pouvoir* explores how the power of the sovereign of a traditionally animist dynasty is changing, faced with a centralising state in which Islam is spreading rapidly. The documentary focuses on Samna, the 'chef de canton', and attempts to define who he is and what his role involves, seen from the multiple perspectives of de Latour and his subjects. As the ethnographer suggests in her book that accompanies this film: 'je souhaite raconter une histoire qui dépasse largement la personne du chef, une histoire élaborée entre le point de vue des acteurs du film et le mien' (1992: 16).

To explore the techniques that de Latour uses to film alterity, I shall begin by exploring how de Latour includes her 'voice' in the documentary, before moving on to an analysis of how she includes the 'voices' of others. Once again the term 'voice' is to be understood in the broad sense that Nichols attributes to it, including both 'direct' voice (voice-over commentary) and 'indirect' voice (montage and other aesthetic effects).

Unlike Colette Piault, who rejects the use of commentary in her work and seeks to diminish the presence of her 'voice', in *Les temps du pouvoir*, de Latour seeks to establish her 'voice' from the outset of the film. The opening pre-credit sequence lasts around six and a half minutes and is composed of an extra-diegetic first-person commentary spoken by de Latour, and a montage of footage shot in Paris and Niger.

Due to the length of this sequence, I shall only be looking at the first two minutes, as this is sufficient to introduce the principle ways in which de Latour includes her voice.

The documentary opens with a shot of the Parisian skyline, identifiable by the outline of the dome of the Invalides. The camera pans down vertically to a typewriter where a woman is typing. The shot is framed so that only her hands are visible. De Latour's voice-over commentary begins:

Ici à Paris, les vents du sable, les horizons perturbés du pays Mawri remuent encore ma mémoire. Mes pensées sont là, accrochées au cœur du Niger aux lisières du pays Hausa où j'ai découvert le canton de Tiberi et son chef Samna. Prince de sang, il a été élu par les chefs du village. Avant l'arrivée des blancs, ses ancêtres constituaient une dynastie souveraine. Comme dans un mirage, son cheval traverse mon souvenir.

As if transported by her words, the image then switches to Niger, to a shot in which a white horse is being rubbed down in a sandy yard. The keys of the typewriter can still be heard, while the commentary continues:

Ce cheval, le cheval de Samna, blanc ou noir, les récits des vieux adhèrent à sa robe. Autrefois la guerre était au centre de la vie, le cheval au centre du combat. Prolongement du corps du souverain, son étrier était chargé de tous les génies porteurs de la victoire. Au retour d'une campagne, encore remplis de forces dangereuses, aucun regard n'aurait pu prendre le risque de se porter sur eux. Aujourd'hui les chefs possèdent des Mercedes qui attirent

le regard. Mais blanche, toute blanche, la monture de Samna n'est-elle pas encore chevauchée par la puissance des temps anciens ?

De Latour's use of the voice-over commentary provides the audience with an introduction to the themes of the film – tradition, history, political power, change etc. – as well as introducing the 'author' of the film. The decision to begin the film in Paris, as well as her choice to use the first-person, helps establish a sense of identification between the ethnographer's 'voice' and the documentary. Her choice of the first-person, rather than an impersonal expository style of commentary, serves to demonstrate her personal and emotional attachment to the people and events portrayed. The ethnographer's 'poetic' language and use of rhetorical questions enhances the personal tone of the film and further distances her voice-over from more traditional forms of scientific 'objective' narrative. In this manner, this opening scene of *Les temps du pouvoir*, demonstrates her opinion that the cinema should offer 'un regard personnel' (1993: 9).

The identification of the ethnographer's 'voice' with the film is further enhanced by the repetition of words connected to memory in the commentary – 'ma mémoire', 'mes pensées', 'mon souvenir' – and with the repeated use of the possessive pronoun 'my'. Although what the first-time viewer is about to see will be new to him or her, for de Latour it is a reminder of her past experience in Niger. Indeed, it is possible to suggest, looking at the way in which this extract is structured, that the transition of the image from Paris to Niger is provoked by the remembrance of Samna's horse. It is almost as if the viewer is allowed access into de Latour's memory, for as she says, 'son cheval traverse mon souvenir', the image shifts to a shot of a white horse identified as

'le cheval de Samna' by her commentary. The combination of both 'indirect' and 'direct' voice reinforces the notion of de Latour as 'author' of the words of the commentary and 'editor' of the footage.

The theme of authorship is developed with the motif of the typewriter. Given the personal tone of the commentary, it is possible to assume that the hands belong to de Latour. However, the identity of the hands is of less importance than the metaphorical significance of this sequence: what is highlighted is the idea the film is as much the creation of an author as a written account. The lingering sound of typing stresses that what the viewer is about to see is a re-construction of a personal experience. It also metaphorically assimilates the film to a text.

The concept of 'film-as-text' has a critical history in anthropology and documentary film (Nichols relates film to 'text' in his definition of voice – Rosenthal ed. 2005: 18) and is defined in the following terms:

The film-as-text stimulates thought through a juxtaposition of elements, each of which bears a relationship to the intellectual framework of the inquiry. These elements may reveal information on how materials were gathered, provide alternative perspectives by the film's subjects, or present the evidence out of which the film proceeds. This produces a kind of filmic montage, but montage in which the contributing passages retain an internal life and are not reduced, as in the montage of Eisenstein, to the level of iconic signs. The result is a form of filmmaking in which observational cinema... can coexist with the generation of meaning through the collision of dissimilar materials

(MacDougall 1998: 193).

The idea of stimulating thought through ‘a juxtaposition of elements’ can be usefully applied to the opening extract that I have chosen, which juxtaposes images of Paris with the Niger whilst evoking concepts of memory, temporality, authorship and reflexivity. Whilst the notion of ‘alternative perspectives’ is not shown in this sequence, the use of multiple voices is a technique that de Latour explores in *Les temps du pouvoir*, as I shall later demonstrate.

‘Film-as-text’ seems to be a running metaphor in her documentary and appears in various forms. There is extensive use of the juxtaposition of different scenes and ‘dissimilar materials’ to generate meaning. For example, de Latour explores the clash between the traditional animist beliefs of the people of the Tiberi canton and the rise of an Islamic state with a mixture of interviews with both sides, and a sequence in which she juxtaposes images of the ‘maîtres de la terre’ invoking the chief of the genies with images of Friday prayer. *Les temps du pouvoir* is also constructed around a ‘carnet de voyage’ device in which titles providing time and place situate the various scenes of the film (for example: Tibiri, le 20 décembre). For the viewer, this chronological ‘diary’ format provides a sense of progression through time that helps drive forward the narrative and maintain his or her interest, as well as reinforcing the personal nature of the film. In addition, by breaking down the film into different sections, this creates an internal rhythm and pace to the film much like the individual chapters in a book. This deliberate structuring of the time and space in the film provides a system of markers or signs around which the viewer can orient his or her self in an unfamiliar landscape and continues the theme of film-as-text.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> This chronology is, however, an invention of de Latour. Unlike Colette Piault who restricts the process of montage to assembling her footage chronologically and with minimal editing, de Latour’s approach is diametrically opposite: ‘Le sujet était éclairé à travers des facettes qui pouvaient apparemment s’assembler dans n’importe quel ordre sans que cela en change le sens – tout pouvait se retourner.’

In addition to using the combination of visual cues with voiceover to emphasise the idea that ‘ethnographic truths are inherently *partial* – committed and incomplete’ (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 7), Eliane de Latour also uses her voice to represent the journey of discovery that the ethnographer undergoes during fieldwork. Perhaps the best example is the elections for the ‘Société de développement’:

Je filme, je filme, je ne comprends pas ce qui se passe... Répartis par associations, les gens votent, mais pour qui? pourquoi?... C’est seulement à mon retour à Niamey que j’ai eu l’explication de ce qui s’était passé sous mes yeux.

The path towards knowledge or understanding is not therefore a question of merely witnessing events – ‘to see is not to perceive, still less, to comprehend’ – but is a process of systematic investigation and analysis (Loizos in Crawford and Turton 1992: 54). Rather than using the medium of film to illustrate her findings, or as a means of collecting data, de Latour uses the process of documentary making as an ‘arena of inquiry’ (Stoller 1992: 193). This not only creates a dynamic feel to the film but also serves to link the ethnographer’s experience with that of the viewer who is equally undergoing a journey of discovery.

Using the medium of film as an investigative tool is perhaps more clearly demonstrated in the inclusion of filmed interviews in which de Latour asks various people for their perspective on events or issues. One such example is during the elections for the ‘Société de développement’ when she asks a woman for her view on

the utility of the elections. Another example of a more formal interview is a sequence in which de Latour questions Samna about the consequences of his election to the 'chefferie' which led to him to confine his five wives to life in a compound.

In the previous chapter, I touched upon the notion of the interview being included in a film to provide a sense of 'context' or 'explanation' for the viewer, since an observational mode of filming may often lack context as Nichols suggests (1994: 95). Likewise, an interview-based documentary can lack sufficient contextual information when there are few witnesses. This can make it difficult for the viewer to evaluate to what extent the views expressed are representational of a wider phenomenon. Thinking back to *Une vie dure*, the question of whether Kalliope's life history is meant to represent a typical example of a woman of her generation or not, is not easy to evaluate as there are only two witnesses from the same family that are interviewed.

De Latour's approach to interviewing in *Les temps du pouvoir* does not include such a narrow focus on the choice of interviewees and is part of her policy of including a variety of voices to build up a portrait of how different members of the population perceive their chief, Samna. However, what is of interest to me at this point in the analysis, is not so much the variety of 'voices' (this I shall develop later), but the manner in which the interviews are filmed.

The example which I have chosen involves the first part of de Latour's interview with Samna, situated around twenty minutes into the film, in which the ethnographer questions him about his election as 'chef de canton' and the impact it had on him and his family. De Latour begins the sequence with a shot of the same white horse that was seen in the opening sequence of the film and juxtaposes the horse with a shot of Samna

sitting in a chair. Samna is filmed at medium distance from a front three-quarter angle that is reminiscent of the angle at which Kalliope was shot in *Une vie dure*. What is however different is that once the interview has begun, rather than the camera remaining fixed on the subject, de Latour chooses to superimpose the audio of the interview over a montage of images.

De Latour's montage features two themes: the first half alternates between shots of Samna and a white horse, whilst the second half shows images of Samna's wives living inside the compound. It is possible to interpret this 'collage' of footage as having been designed to fulfil two separate functions. The image of the horse is a recurring theme in *Les temps du pouvoir*, and as the opening voice-over explains, the horse was once the symbol of the sovereign's power:

Autrefois la guerre était au centre de la vie, le cheval au centre du combat. Prolongement du corps du souverain, son étrier était chargé de tous les génies porteurs de la victoire. Au retour d'une campagne, encore remplis de forces dangereuses, aucun regard n'aurait pu prendre le risque de se porter sur eux. Aujourd'hui les chefs possèdent des Mercedes qui attirent le regard.

De Latour's use of the images of the horse may perhaps be interpreted not simply as a symbol or evocation of the past, but also as a commentary on Samna's position as 'chef de canton' today. For the image of the horse juxtaposed after the first shot of Samna sitting in a chair, shows the horse being led by a man, while the second shot of the horse shows the man retying a rope that attaches two of the horse's legs to restrict his

movement. As the ethnographer comments in a voice-over roughly seventeen minutes after this interview:

En étudiant cette société, en regardant, en écoutant Samna, je me suis rendue compte qu'il n'était pas vraiment maître de son canton. Il doit exécuter les ordres du gouvernement. En réalité, la plupart des affaires importantes lui échappent.

De Latour's 'voice' is therefore heard on two levels in this extract of the interview. The viewer hears her 'direct voice' ask Samna a question and 'sees' her 'indirect voice' provide an analysis of the situation through the juxtaposition of the images. Although the ethnographer's analysis might not be immediately comprehensible to a first-time viewer, the theme of Samna's lack of power is one that is illustrated in a more direct fashion shortly after the interview, in a series of observational scenes, introduced by de Latour's commentary quoted above.

Returning to the second half of Samna's interview, the images function not so much as an analysis of the situation or as an indication of a theme that is to be treated at a later point, but as a way of providing context to Samna's words. Nichols' criticism that interview-based documentary can provide an absence of context seems to be an issue of which de Latour seems aware. For when she asks Samna, 'vous avez été obligé d'enfermer vos femmes après votre élection?', the image shows a shot of the exterior wall of the compound before moving inside and providing images of his wives and children, cooking, braiding hair and looking after young babies.

The sequence inside the compound lasts around one minute during which Samna's voice is heard during the first twenty seconds or so. Therefore, while it is possible to suggest that these images function as an illustration or 'context' to Samna's evocation of his wives, it is also possible that the interview is used to provide a means of transition to this footage of the women's quarters in the compound. Whatever the case, the inclusion of this footage provides the viewer with a brief glimpse into the lives of Samna's extended family, providing a sense of audio-visual context that is absent from an interview. As a consequence, the use of montage in this example demonstrates de Latour's exploration of the aesthetic possibilities of film to add another layer of meaning to the events portrayed.

This exploration of the aesthetic possibilities of film does not confine itself to providing additional contextual 'information' or analysis to interviews, but is also seen in other sequences where she employs an 'impressionistic' style of montage. The term 'impressionistic' is to be interpreted in two ways: firstly as giving a broad picture rather than an 'exact' description (if such a thing were possible), and secondly, as a depiction of the ethnographer's impressions of an event. Perhaps the best example of this approach is to be found in the sequence that portrays the visit of the 'sous-préfet' to the 'canton'.

De Latour describes in her monograph *Les temps du pouvoir* how, during the visit, she was struck by the contrast between the resigned crowd and the pretentious, lengthy speech of the sous-préfet. She explains that she was filled with hostility towards the sous-préfet to such an extent that she only filmed four shots of him even though he was the centre of the event (1992: 155). Initially believing that it would be difficult to edit such a sequence, de Latour then realised that the very absence of the

sous-préfet was interesting in itself. She decided to reduce his presence to three shots lasting one second each and to fragment the translation of the speech so that only the first few sentences are translated before the subtitles disappear. The overall effect is one in which:

Les mots envahissent l'espace, les heures s'étirent: le sens même des paroles n'a plus d'importance... des ordres, encore des ordres... Progressivement ne parviennent que les consonances de l'autorité, une autorité qui fige ceux qui se soumettent. Les mots du sous-préfet n'ont plus d'autre sens

(de Latour 1992: 155).

By deliberately cutting the sous-préfet 'out of the picture' at the editing stage, de Latour reinforces her personal sense of hostility towards the official and her sense of empathy with the docile and resigned crowd. This is transmitted to the viewer through her camera's 'eye' lingering on the crowd: the three minute sequence devotes twelve shots out of fifteen to the crowd, and three shots, lasting a total of three seconds to the sous-préfet. Through this 'impressionistic' montage de Latour makes the audience aware that what they are experiencing is the perspective of the ethnographer and is not an attempt to create a 'balanced' or 'objective' representation of the event. Indeed, de Latour actively rejects the notion of 'real time' observation:

J'ai voulu suggérer plus que décrire les aspects de la vie quotidienne... La description technologique a, pour certains, été l'essence même du cinéma ethnologique. La suggestion, l'ellipse semblent perçues comme une trahison au regard de l'observation : si un tapissier doit enfoncer 359 clous, pas un ne sera épargné au spectateur ! La durée réelle est un leurre, elle n'apprend rien puisque par principe le cinéma oblige à une reconstruction du temps. Sans même aller si loin, les documents ethnologiques pèchent souvent par une certaine propension à vouloir tout montrer, tout décrire, tout dire, tout expliquer

(1992 : 94-95).

A close examination of the 'visit of the sous-préfet' scene quickly reveals that the sequence is not shot in real time but is a reconstruction of the event both in time and space. For the camera does not remain fixed in one position but instead shows a variety of perspectives – shot 3 is filmed from behind the seated officials looking towards the crowd, while in shot 4, the camera is situated in the crowd looking towards the sous-préfet and other dignitaries. Whereas it is possible to film this 'scenario' in 'real time' with a walking camera moving between the two viewpoints, de Latour prefers to cut between the different perspectives. Thus the sequence is built up with a variety of shots lasting between five to ten seconds that moves around the crowd, interspersing shots of the crowd with close-ups of various individuals.

In the previous chapter, I have shown in the 'water fetching' sequence how Colette Piauxt reconstructs time and space to provide an account of the journey to and from the well that lasts two and a half minutes. This sort of restructuring of time is one

that is perfectly plausible for the viewer who understands that this version of events is not to be interpreted in a literal manner – the journey does not last two and a half minutes – but figuratively as an edited version that represents the various stages. Even though de Latour has a very different approach to filming alterity, creating ‘multi-layered’ sequences such as the interview of Samna, she also reconstructs time and space in the same manner as Piault in this scene. However, de Latour also explores the relationship of the medium of cinema to time in other ways during the film.

When analysing the symbolic juxtaposition of the white horse with shots of the interview with Samna, I suggested that de Latour was using the horse to evoke the past, when the sovereign held real power. There is another example of the use of recurring footage, which involves a group of Samna’s envoys, dressed in red, descending a hill on horseback. As de Latour explains:

*Cette figure emblématique du pouvoir passé et présent, qui vient scander le récit avec les échos de tambours de guerre, n’appartient pas au ‘réel’ (les gardes ne passent pas leur temps à descendre la colline trois par trois!): elle oblige le spectateur à modifier son regard*

(1992: 155).

The primary function of this sequence is not therefore to demonstrate that Samna uses envoys on horseback to deliver his messages to the surrounding villages. Instead, it is to awaken the viewer to the idea that he or she is not just looking at a representation of the ‘real’ in this film but that there are other levels of analysis possible. The repetition

of this scene draws the viewer's attention to the fact that the envoys have a symbolic function in the documentary: they represent the co-existence of the past and the present.

A key theme of *Les temps du pouvoir* is devoted to exploring how Samna's role as a 'chef de canton' is evolving and adapting the traditions of the past to a modernising Niger. The inclusion of the men on horseback and the sound of the drums represent the symbols of power of the past that continue to be used in the present. This I would suggest explains the significance of the title of the documentary which uses the plural rather than the singular – it is *les temps du pouvoir* and not *le temps du pouvoir*. In order to understand the present it is necessary to understand the past. This creates a notion of circular time where past and present co-exist. As a result, this repetitive aesthetic 'effect' breaks the narrative flow of the film and challenges the idea of linear chronology that is created by the diary format of the documentary. This is perhaps another way that de Latour attempts to draw the audience's attention to the fact that the film is not to be taken as an 'objective' representation of reality, an idea which is repeatedly stressed by the reflexive style of the documentary.

De Latour also alludes to the temporal relationship between film and its subjects in one shot that occurs during the visit of Samna's farmlands (around thirty-five minutes into the documentary). The camera walks towards the new granary that has just been completed and looks through an opening at the inside of the structure. The next shot is filmed from the inside of the granary and it is on this moment that I wish to focus. From the dark insides of the granary, the camera looks out through the small opening to Samna and his men who are outside. De Latour walks closer to the opening, so that the camera frames the opening and the opening frames the ethnographic subjects. There is a frame within the frame as it were. The image is particularly

striking, as there is a contrast between the blackness of the inside and the light of the outside. This shot conveys to the viewer the impression of a photograph, but one in which the subjects are able to move about and interact.

By framing the frame, the ethnographer draws the viewer's attention to the limited vision of film that is restricted not only in what it can see but is also restricted in time. Like a photograph, which freezes a particular instance in time, a film also captures a moment in the life of the subjects. Although a film represents a longer period of time, it is brief in comparison with the lives of its subjects and in this sense film is 'one large freeze-frame' (MacDougall 1998: 33). This highlights the innate paradox of the medium of film, for while filming is taking place, the camera 'is always an instrument framing the present', however, 'the film it contains is always an instrument of the past' (ibid.: 34). The subject slips away into the future while the film stands still (ibid.: 33).

In the next part of this analysis, I shall focus on the manner in which de Latour includes the 'voices' of others into her documentary and explore the notion of 'polyvocality'.

Charlotte Aull Davies suggests in her definition of 'postmodernism' that the breaking down of the boundary between author and text has the implication that there is a:

denial of authority, of a privileged voice... This denial is part of the postmodern rejection of meta-narratives – that is, explanations of broad historical processes and grand theory. In this view there is no privileged

explanation, no basis on which to judge one perspective more correct or truer than another; there are only perspectives (1999: 14)

I do not wish to go so far as to argue that de Latour's *Les temps du pouvoir* represents a postmodern approach to filming alterity. Nevertheless, Aull Davies' point that 'there are only perspectives' that cannot be judged 'more correct or truer than another' is one that can be applied to this documentary, for de Latour includes the 'voices' of others into her film: 'je souhaite raconter une histoire... élaborée entre le point de vue des acteurs du film et le mien' (de Latour 1992: 16).

One such 'voice' is that of an old azna animist priest called Bankali. De Latour includes his voice through an observational scene in which she films a sacrifice of a goat and through an interview in which he comments on the victory of the Koran in the Niger. It is however, his meeting with Samna, a practicing Muslim that is the most interesting in highlighting the differences between the two faiths.

Seizing the opportunity that de Latour knew Samna, Bankali asked her to set up a meeting to fulfil his ambition to make the leader's acquaintance. As she explains in her ethnography: 'Samna a accepté la visite du prêtre pour me faire plaisir et Bankali n'a formulé ce vœu que dans la mesure où je lui donnais les moyens de l'exaucer' (1992: 81). This encounter is therefore a direct consequence of her presence as it is unlikely that without her intervention both parties would have met. De Latour makes no show of hiding her intervention in this scene and reveals her role in her monograph and in a voice-over commentary. This reflects the idea that what is captured on film is 'made by, rather than independent from the filmmaker's intrusion into the subject's world' (Bruzzi 2000: 74).

The exchange between Samna and Bankali is a short one, lasting around one minute fifteen seconds and is comprised of four shots. The first image lasts one minute and shows both subjects conversing in shot. During the same shot, the camera pans horizontally towards Bankali and then back to Samna, before moving to film the old priest from over Samna's shoulder. The camera's movement testifies to de Latour's presence in the scene (it is not a 'disembodied' camera) and the pan movement reinforces the notion of exchange between the two ethnographic subjects.

Just before this sequence is an interview between Samna and the ethnographer in which she questions him on whether he still listens to the advice of the 'maîtres de la terre' in spite of his monotheistic beliefs as a Muslim. Samna replies in the affirmative saying that in order to ensure a good harvest, he not only praises Allah but also follows the advice of the priests. For, as he points out, if he refuses to follow their advice and the crops fail, the people will blame him for not having done what was necessary. During the meeting with Bankali, Samna is polite and asks whether he thinks that the harvest will be a good one. Bankali, on the other hand, is humorously ironic in his replies:

Bankali: Je prie pour ton territoire. Si je garde la maîtrise de la terre,  
qu'Allah ne commande pas, vous aurez du mil plein à en laisser!

Samna: Ah ! C'est toi qui commandes et pas Allah !

Bankali : Je n'aime pas Allah, c'est un arnaqueur. Quand on l'appelle,  
il tue !

Samna: Tu as raison, il peut tuer !

Other man: Il t'a brûlé ta jambe !

Bankali: Non ! C'est le feu qui m'a brûlé !

Samna: Tout a été fait pour avoir la pluie. Je suis content.

Bankali: Que Dieu nous donne du mil !

Samna: Qu'Allah te ramène en paix !

Bankali: Ce n'est pas Allah, c'est l'auto !

Bankali's irreverence towards Samna forms an important counterpoint to the image of Samna that has been portrayed in the documentary, which up to this point has shown him as a leader with lands, vehicles and political power (albeit limited). The inclusion of Bankali's 'voice' is therefore a significant choice as it provides an insight into how the older generation of animist persuasion perceive Samna. It is also an indication of how the addition of the 'voices' of 'others' is about to reverse the viewer's perception of Samna.

*Les temps du pouvoir* has as its central theme political power and how the role of a sovereign has been diluted to that of a civil servant implementing the decisions of the government. This tension between the past and present has been explored by de Latour in interviews, such as the one in which she asks Samna how he manages to reconcile the two systems of belief of his people, and through observational scenes in which she realises how little power he really has. However, the tension reaches its paroxysm in a confrontation with Mundié, an elderly princess, who accuses Samna of betraying his heritage and traditions as he wishes to sell her ancestral land for development.

Mundié's vituperation of Samna provides a dramatic and significant reversal of the mainly positive image that has been constructed of the leader. 'Le film bascule,

relevant la façade en carton pâte derrière laquelle le souverain essaye de cacher la déchéance intérieur d'un pouvoir qui a perdu sa vraie nature en se vendant à la colonisation pour garder les miettes d'une autorité dont le principe est désormais ailleurs' (Marc-Henri Piault 2000: 206).<sup>23</sup> Unlike the meeting between Samna and Bankali, this is not a situation that was 'provoked' by the ethnographer's presence, but was a scene that she came across and began filming even though she had difficulty understanding exactly what was being said (1992: 46). Later learning the identity of Mundié, de Latour then went to the ruined royal palace where the old princess lives and it is here that Mundié reveals her anger at those in power: 'Ils ont abandonné l'héritage souverain... Ils suivent l'argent... ils ont préféré l'argent à leur descendance!'

The integration of the voices of Mundié and Bankali into the documentary is part of de Latour's aim to create a film 'élaborée entre le point de vue des acteurs du film et le mien' (1992: 16). It is possible to argue that this 'polyvocal' approach is the result of a realisation that 'there is no privileged explanation, no basis on which to judge one perspective more correct or truer than another; there are only perspectives' (Aull Davies 1999: 14). However, de Latour's 'strong' presence in the film – both directly with her voice-over commentary and indirectly with her explorations of aesthetics – suggests to the contrary that, although she may see the benefit of including other perspectives, this does not mean that she abandons a sense of a hierarchy in the voices represented. Whilst she may reflexively question her authority, this does not mean that she abandons interpretation altogether.

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<sup>23</sup> In *La colonisation: Rupture ou parenthèse?* edited by Marc-Henri Piault (1987), de Latour provides greater detail on how French colonialism modified the structure of power transforming the 'chef de canton' into an administrator, as a part of the process of the centralising of political power where there previously had been none (cf. de Latour's chapter 'Le Futur Antérieur', pp. 19-46 for more information).

As de Latour acknowledges in her final voice-over commentary, the question of who Samna is, is a complex one and in many ways is an infinite question, for an individual is not a fixed entity but is in a constant state of evolution. This state of evolution is in many ways incompatible with the nature of film which is limited to showing a fragment of the past, whilst the subject moves forward and evolves. 'By freezing life, every film to some degree offends against the complexity of people and the destiny that awaits them' (MacDougall 1998: 37). Of the many facets that make up Samna, de Latour has only been able to show a few:

Samna, l'héritier de Gùdùmas, la divinité de la guerre, Samna le musulman,  
Samna le prince de sang, Samna l'auxiliaire de l'Etat, Samna le père de  
famille. Samna que j'ai essayé de rencontrer.

The difficulty of attempting to 'meet' or film someone is reflected on the very first occasion that the viewer meets Samna who is awarding a prize at a bicycle race. Filmed from behind, Samna turns and returns to his seat. As he sits down, de Latour films his face in close-up. His movement makes it difficult to keep his face in the frame of the shot. The mirrored sunglasses that he wears prove impenetrable to the gaze of the camera. A sense of mystery prevails...

## II: *Le reflet de la vie* (1987) – 54 minutes

Eliane de Latour's second film explores the lives of seven elderly people, aged 85 years and up, living in the Cevenne countryside in France. The documentary focuses more precisely on how these people, who have been rejected by society as 'hors d'usage', manage to reconstruct a world in which to live in (1992: 154). As with the first documentary, I shall analyse how de Latour films alterity, by focusing on how she incorporates her 'voice' and the 'voices' of 'others' into the film.

In contrast with *Les temps du pouvoir*, de Latour does not include her voice through the device of voice-over commentary in her second documentary. Instead she prefers to intervene directly in the scene asking questions and participating in a dialogue between herself and the ethnographic subject. A possible explanation for this absence of commentary is that the documentary is set in France with French-speaking participants. Since the audience shares a common culture and language with the ethnographic subjects, there is less need for the ethnographer to intervene and provide explanation, as is the case when dealing with a foreign culture such as that portrayed in *Les temps du pouvoir*. However, it is also important to remember that old age is another form of alterity and is a form of otherness that de Latour was not particularly familiar with when filming this documentary, as she is not an expert on old age or France.<sup>24</sup> As a consequence, it is possible to suggest that there is a reversal of roles, and it is the old people who act as guides to the ethnographer (this is an idea that I shall be exploring later).

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<sup>24</sup> De Latour's ethnographic research has been largely based in West Africa (she has worked in Niger, and the Ivory Coast). *Les temps du pouvoir* grew out of her doctoral research on the nature of political power in Niger. Cf. Appendix 2 for more information.

The majority of the film, therefore, features ‘voice’ as a dialogue between de Latour and the filmed subject. Rather than the more formal interviews present in her first documentary, which seek either to obtain an answer to precise questions or to provide contextual information for the viewer, the style of intervention in *Le reflet de la vie* is freer, more conversational. De Latour’s comments act as a way of prompting the person to reflect on certain general topics:

[To Lucie]            Comment passez-vous les journées?

[To Zitou]            Ça ne vous dérange pas de vivre seule?

[To Emma]            Vous avez été une infirmière pendant combien  
de temps?

The impression that this approach conveys is not one of investigation but one that provides the opportunity for the subject to express his or her self. As the title indicates, it is a reflection, or rather reflections, on life as seen by seven people. Of course, the ethnographer does remain to a certain extent in control of the direction of the conversation (as do all participants in a conversation generally) but in this film, de Latour’s role is less dominant and she intervenes only occasionally in what are to a large extent monologues. In other words, her presence is affirmed at points in the dialogue in order to facilitate this exploration of the opinions of the ethnographic subject. Rather than the active interviewer or participant of the previous film, de Latour adopts here the position of listener (and possibly places herself as an apprentice of how to cope with old age).

There are also certain examples of scenes in which the ethnographer does not directly intervene. Such sequences are generally to be found in the group scenes such as men playing pétanque and a gathering at the old people's home where they take it in turns to entertain each other with stories or songs. There are however, few scenes of this type. Their function is to provide a sense of context and a general impression of the social group as a whole. De Latour is more interested in exploring the individual universes of the seven people than in the social group as a whole. (This is in contrast to Colette Piauxt's focus on the group rather than the individual in *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*). De Latour's interest in the individual rather than the social group, may perhaps be ascribed partly, to the realisation that no one person can stand as representative of a society, and partly that a society is composed of individuals who each possess a different, non-uniform way of looking at the world.

If the voice of de Latour is heard less directly in this film when compared to her first documentary, this is not the case when one examines her indirect voice at the stages of montage and in the style of filming. *Le reflet de la vie* shows a distinct evolution in de Latour's search to utilise the aesthetic possibilities of film. I shall begin this section by examining the montage of the film before discussing the stylistic techniques employed.

As with her first film, de Latour adopts a thematic approach to montage, juxtaposing situations to draw maximum effect. The central theme of isolation and solitude is brought out by the ethnographer's thematic approach to montage, often comparing two people's very different experience of it. One such example is to be found at the beginning of the film in which the viewer meets Rose who lives at home. Her energy and relative mobility contrasts with the second character, Lucie, who lives

in an old people's home, unable to look after herself fully anymore. Whereas Rose's days are structured around the programmes on television and walking the dog, Lucie spends her time looking at the clock and embroidering to pass the time. De Latour's 'pairing' of characters continues with the contrasting example of Zitou, who is enthusiastic in her love for life, and Emma, for whom life is a burden that she wishes to be rid of.

The structure of *Le reflet de la vie* is therefore designed to bring each personality into sharp relief by juxtaposing contrasting ways of life. In this sense, the documentary differs from *Les temps du pouvoir*, for it is not so much about organising material to clarify the argument of the ethnographer but is more about offering seven people the chance to express their particular philosophy of life. In this sense, de Latour's purpose in making this film is less about describing her personal ethnographic experience and more about portraying the journey of reflection that other people have undergone in coming to terms with their age.

The idea of journey brings one to consider the issue of time or chronology. Whereas *Les temps du pouvoir* is built around a diary structure providing a sense of forward movement through time as well as a sense of circular time with the past and present co-existing, *Le reflet de la vie* is noticeable for its absence of a defined sense of time. Although there are many shots of clocks ticking, there is no attempt to reconstruct the film in relation to a specific time of shooting. The only indication of a concrete time reference is to be found in the closing credits that provide the viewer with the production date of the film. This absence of a time frame, I would argue, is a deliberate choice of de Latour. *Le reflet de la vie* is an exploration of very old age (85 years and over): the seven people portrayed have lived beyond the normal span of life and are in a

sense outside time.<sup>25</sup> With no job or children to impose a particular structure to the day or week, these people are able to choose their own rhythm of life with the result that time becomes a fairly abstract concept. As André, a centenarian, points out, not knowing how many days one has left to live: ‘je vis au jour le jour’. In the absence of movement towards the future, time becomes fairly static, existing in the immediate present and when looking back on important moments in the past. De Latour’s decision to avoid using a chronological frame to structure the film is therefore a symbolic reflection of this reality for her ethnographic subjects.

In my analysis of *Les temps du pouvoir*, I have shown how de Latour seeks to develop an aesthetic approach to film that seeks to transcend the use of film as an ‘audio-visual’ recording device and create an aesthetic cinema capable of ‘telling a story’ and expressing symbolic ideas (such as the notion of the past and present coexisting, evoked by the recurring scene of Samna’s envoys on horseback). This is taken a step further in her second documentary in which she seeks to explore the possibilities of creating a distinct aesthetic style to represent the individual personalities of the ethnographic subjects: ‘les sept personnes choisies devaient surgir de l’écran avec leur identité, leur climat propre’ (1992: 156). To do this, de Latour adapts her style of filming and includes the use of photographic montage in her approach; she moves from the exploration of ‘multiple voices’ to the exploration of a ‘multitextual’ form of representation. I shall investigate this through the portrayal of three individuals: Rose, Emma and Hélène.

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<sup>25</sup> According to the INSEE website, average life expectancy in France in 2007 is 77 years for men and 84 years for women (this is likely to have been slightly lower in 1987 when *Le reflet de la vie* was filmed). In 1985, people aged 85 years and over represented 1.2% of the population of France. Thus, the seven individuals of the film represent a minority of the population – they are ‘other’ through their age. (Cf. [www.insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr)).

Rose's universe is evoked by the camera's focus on a triangular space in which she lives. The viewer is shown her television that is lit from dawn to dusk, the dog she sometimes talks to and the kitchen table at which she eats, watches television and writes. The style of filming is not a fixed portrait shot as is often the case with an interview form of documentary, instead the camera functions more like a human eye, moving around the kitchen and pausing to look at the objects with which Rose surrounds herself. In this way, the camera functions as the extension of the 'I' of de Latour often moving to respond to a gesture or comment of Rose. Although the sequence observes Rose's daily routine – for example, cooking, walking the dog, writing a letter – de Latour's identification of her eye with that of the camera destroys any impression of voyeurism that an observational style of filming can convey. The camera is 'embodied': it is an extension of the ethnographer's eye and in this sense the gaze of the camera is 'humanised'. The viewer is aware that what is taking place is an exchange between two people, for de Latour's presence is indicated directly through her occasional comments and indirectly through the 'I' of the camera. (Compare the 'disembodied camera' of Colette Piauult in *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, which at times seems to be an instrument of surveillance.)

That de Latour uses synchronised sound to film this sequence might not seem particularly surprising in what is supposed to be a documentary film. However, as I shall demonstrate with the sequences devoted to Emma and Hélène, it is an approach that de Latour does not use throughout the film and is therefore worthy of a brief comment. The advantage of using synchronised sound film, as opposed to photography for example, is that it enables the viewer to experience the environment in which Rose moves in an audio-visual capacity. De Latour describes her choice to use synchronised

sound as the only way to represent Rose's personality and the loneliness of her existence (1992: 157). By using a medium that has a forward movement and is not static, de Latour mirrors Rose's energetic character and her constant stream of chatter as she moves around the kitchen. Although she is voluble during the filming this is due to de Latour's presence, for she lives alone and has no interlocutor. Her occasional remarks to the dog and the background noise of the television which is lit at all times, serve as a reminder to the audience of Rose's isolation and the ways in which she tries to fill this silence.

De Latour's search for an appropriate form of representation leads her to use a static style of filming to represent Emma's outlook on life. As the viewer hears Emma recount the various deceptions she has experienced, the camera moves around her house in a series of fixed shots focusing on the various bibelots and furniture that fill the rooms. The occasional shots of Emma show her seated in a chair. Her lack of motion in this sequence is mirrored by the static nature of the style of shooting which underlines the lack of interest that Emma has in life. For her 'la vie ne présente pas beaucoup d'intérêt' as old age has taken away everything that she liked to do. De Latour's concentration on objects also underlines this:

La tristesse d'Emma, une infirmière retraitée, m'est instantanément apparue à travers ses meubles, son acharnement à les cirer et à faire de l'ordre sans qu'aucun regard extérieur ne puisse apprécier ses efforts

(1992: 157).

This interest with objects is a recurring theme of the film, for they are a way of exploring a person's personality and experiences since objects often function as a reminder of a past event or loved one in the same manner as a photograph. The inanimate nature of objects also reinforces the idea of stagnation and lifelessness of Emma.

In contrast to Rose who is filmed in synchronised sound, de Latour does not synchronise the images of this sequence with the audio of Emma's monologue. Her words have been recorded at another time and superimposed over the static images. This is another way in which de Latour evokes Emma's disengagement with her existence. The organisation of the footage is not however, completely removed from the significance of Emma's words. At a point of the narration when Emma is explaining how she would have liked to be married but was unlucky in love, the camera focuses on a figurine of a courting couple. Another example occurs in the last shot of the sequence in which Emma describes how she would like to die now. The image chosen shows her sitting motionless in her chair covered in shadows. The symbolism of the shadows with their connotations of darkness and death reinforce Emma's desire for oblivion. By linking the audio content of this moment to a visual aesthetic, de Latour succeeds in evoking on two different levels the emotional distress of Emma.

Having experimented with different modes of film aesthetic to represent Rose and Emma, de Latour chooses to use the medium of black and white photography to evoke Hélène's universe. De Latour explains this decision in the following terms:

Le cinéma me paraissait trop lourd, trop «riche» pour traiter l'immuabilité de cette femme, née, mariée, prête à mourir dans la ferme dont elle n'a

jamais bougé. La caméra aurait saisi sa démarche lente et pénible, son dentier mal tenu, son repas peu appétissant... une foule de détails qui aurait «encombré» et certainement dévié la perception du personnage

(1992: 157).

The choice of black and white photography as opposed to colour creates a stark, arid aesthetic, reflecting the absence of variety and change in the life of a woman who has never moved from the place she was born. However, in the midst of this black and white colour scheme, exists an occasional splash of colour when the photograph shows Hélène sitting near the fire: the flames have been coloured a red-yellow hue. This striking contrast of the coloured flames suggests a source of warmth and comfort in Hélène's otherwise denuded universe. As she herself says, 'un feu empêche de languir'.

De Latour's suggestion that the medium of film would have been 'too rich' to represent Hélène is an interesting analysis, for Christopher Pinney, writing on the differences between photography and film, suggests the very opposite: 'still images contain *too many meanings* whereas the desirability of film lies precisely in its ability to constrain meaning through narrative chains of significance' (Pinney in Crawford and Turton eds. 1992: 27 [original emphasis]). John Collier Jr., however, appears to agree with de Latour's point of view, for he points out that photographs can only suggest, they cannot 'show *how* a man caresses his child, or *how* a man gets up from his bed' (Collier Jr. in Hockings ed. 2003: 252 [original emphasis]).

Whilst it is true that there is a reduction in the amount of visual detail (the viewer does not see *how* Hélène moves around), de Latour includes an audio recording of the ethnographic encounter that provides an uninterrupted account of the meeting.

The tap-tap of her sticks on the flagstones and her numerous sighs are a sufficient reminder of the difficulty she has with walking without having to resort to visual representation. The decentralising of the eye in this sequence reverses the traditional importance given to vision and challenges the viewer to 'modifier son regard' (1992: 155). Instead of relying on the eye, the audience is obliged to listen to the continuous diegetic sound and reconstruct what is taking place from the audio and visual 'clues' provided: 'still records are time slices, which the investigator [or viewer] must link together by conjecture' (John Collier Jr. in Hockings ed. 2003: 252). This creates a proactive viewer, in a similar fashion that the symbolism of the red cavaliers in *Les temps du pouvoir* makes the viewer question the notion of a simple linear chronology.

Nevertheless, while there might be a 'reduction' in the amount of visual detail, there is, paradoxically, at the same time an increase in the amount of detail. For the fixed nature of the photograph allows the viewer more time to examine the individual elements that compose the picture. De Latour's montage of the photographs also seems to indicate that she is interested in altering the gaze of the viewer from a glance that takes in a general view, to a look that lingers. The first two photographs of H el ene are in fact close-ups of the same photograph: the first showing the old lady from waist up, the second from the waist down, before showing the whole photograph in the third shot of the sequence.

De Latour's search to evoke 'leur identit e, leur climat propre' of her ethnographic subjects leads her to incorporate extra-diegetic music into her documentary (1992: 156). Proponents of observational documentary avoid adding any sounds that are not present during the time of filming for reasons of 'veracity' or

'objectivity'. Since I have shown in my analysis how de Latour does not follow the canon of direct cinema, it is worth assessing how the music functions in this film and whether it has a particular role similar to the use of photography or styles of filming.

Filmmakers commonly employ music in their films to evoke particular emotions or to create atmospheres such as suspense or fear. De Latour chooses in *Le reflet de la vie* to use a simple piano melody that reoccurs at several moments of the film in the manner of a leitmotif. The first occasion when it is heard, is when the audience sees a solitary figure walking away from the church returning to the retirement home. A sequence in which Rose is walking her dog alone is the next occasion for the leitmotif to be used. These two examples suggest the theme of solitude and isolation, which I would suggest, is reinforced by the music. Not only is the leitmotif melancholic in tone, it is also picked out on the piano with one hand. The lack of harmonisation of the melody effectively evokes the solitude of the individuals portrayed in these two sequences for they have both lost their partners and must continue along alone.

This interpretation seems to be borne out with the entrance of a harmonised version of the leitmotif when the viewer is introduced to André. André, a centenarian, admits that:

Je n'ai jamais souffert de l'isolement, car j'ai ma mémoire qui va vers des gens que j'aime alors je passe un moment intéressant. Je ne crois pas avoir eu dans ma vie un seul moment d'isolement moral. Je peux réciter 1,500 vers, 2,000 poèmes, je ne m'ennuie jamais.

Having never suffered from isolation, the use of the leitmotif in an unharmonised version would not be appropriate if I am correct in my analysis that the music is designed to have a precise function and meaning in this film. The effect of the melody being played 'with two hands' changes the focus of the emotion conveyed from solitude to one of harmonic contemplation that is fitting with André reflective, contented outlook on life. This I would argue suggests that de Latour' use of music is as carefully constructed to convey a particular idea as are her aesthetic choices in the use of different media of representation. All these elements when combined enhance the ideas that de Latour is putting forward in this film. As a result, the effect is one of a 'three-dimensional' type of ethnography that incorporates the senses into ethnography rather than relying on 'two-dimensional' audio-visual representation.

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In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate some of the ways in which de Latour explores the anthropological possibilities of film (and photography to a certain extent) to represent alterity. De Latour argues in her written ethnography, that accompanies the film *Les temps du pouvoir*, that both the written medium and the audio-visual format offer different ways of representing alterity that are complementary:

le film apporte une connaissance sensible que l'écriture restitue avec difficulté, le livre ouvre au spectateur des analyses qu'il est impossible d'inclure dans un commentaire. 'Ce qui peut être montré ne peut pas être dit' (Wittgenstein). Écrit et image sont indissolublement liés

(de Latour 1992: 12).

Thus, her reflexive approach to ethnography is tailored according to each media. In her book she goes into more detail about the circumstances which led to filming particular sequences, while in the film, she evokes her subjective role as author through images such as the typewriter, and through the engagement of her 'voice' in the audio and visual elements of the documentary. This I would suggest shows an awareness that the audience of a film may differ to the more specialised reader of a written ethnography.

De Latour explores the anthropological possibilities of montage in both documentaries. There is the example of her use of superimposed audio over a montage of images in the interview with Samna, which provides at once a representation of the actual interview, as well as an interpretation of the exchange through the visual images. In her second documentary, she seeks to explore the differences between filmic and photographic representation.<sup>26</sup> Another feature of both documentaries is a desire to search for the different ways in which the voices of 'others' can be incorporated into the film, whether through interviews, conversations, or 'observational' scenes in which the

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<sup>26</sup> This is something that she develops in a later film *Si bleu, si calme* (1996), in which she uses a montage of photographs to evoke life inside prison cells, and the moving image to evoke the freedom of the prison wardens who are able to circulate more freely within the prison.

ethnographer does not intervene.<sup>27</sup> This includes the attempt to harness the potential of the aesthetics of film to evoke or reflect the ‘inner’ voice, or personality, of the ethnographic subject.

These experimentations in ‘reflexivity’, ‘polyvocality’ and montage reveal a desire to create a more complex representation of alterity that explores and exploits the potential of the audio-visual medium. This interest has led her in later films to explore the boundary between documentary and fiction by creating a form of fiction based on reality in a manner similar to Jean Rouch’s ‘ethno-fiction’ films such as *Jaguar* (1967) and *Moi, un noir* (1959).<sup>28</sup> In the documentaries explored here, I have shown how this search for different forms of representation, in particular seen in *Le reflet de la vie*, has led her to incorporate the senses into the ethnographic experience. This, I would suggest, is another way of ‘personalising’ the ‘voices’ portrayed in the documentaries. It is also an approach that seeks to place the ethnographic encounter at the centre of the film.

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<sup>27</sup> In her third film, *Tidjane ou les voies d’Allah* (1989) de Latour incorporates the medium of ‘feedback’ commentary, in which the grandson of the prophet portrayed in the film provides a commentary on the images, which are played back to him with de Latour in attendance. This is reminiscent of Rouch’s film *Jaguar* (1967) where the ‘actors’ of the film, Damouré and Lam, provide an improvised commentary that was recorded as they were shown the silent footage. (*Jaguar* was filmed before the invention of portable synchronised sound camera technology.)

<sup>28</sup> For example, *Si bleu si calme: La prison intérieure* (1996) is based on a project that de Latour carried out with prisoners at the ‘Maison d’Arrêt de la Santé’ in Paris. The film is based on the texts the detainees wrote in response to a documentary film workshop run by the ethnographer.

**Chapter 3: The Corporeal Image: Explorations of Embodiment and the Senses –**

**Stéphane Breton<sup>29</sup>**

L'ethnologie est l'art d'échanger des regards, pas seulement d'observer des faits exotiques

(Breton 2005: 117).

In the previous chapter, I explored the notion of 'film-as-text' and whilst concluding that a film can have 'texture' i.e. have various layers of meaning, to compare a film to a text is perhaps not the best way of conceiving film. For the medium of film is inherently different to the written medium and to conceive of the use of film in ethnography 'merely as a means of verbally retelling information... represents an unimaginative as well as highly inefficient use of the medium' (Henley 2007: 55). As Henley also goes on to point out, film has the ability to represent the 'performative context' in which speech takes place and can show, in a way that is difficult to convey in the written form, the:

host of paralinguistic features that have to do with the performance of the speaker (accent, speed of delivery, tone of voice, hand gestures, posture and so on) and with the circumstances and manner in which this information is received and responded to by interlocutors

(ibid.: 56).

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<sup>29</sup> The reference to David MacDougall's book, *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses* (2006), in my choice of title for Chapter 3 is intentional, for it is MacDougall who provides many of the key critical concepts that I shall be exploring in this chapter.

However, the act of filming, in addition to providing a representation of how the ethnographic subject speaks and interacts in his or her environment, also ‘produces an object in which the filmmaker’s interaction with the film subject is explicitly inscribed’ (MacDougall 1998: 56). As I have shown in Chapter 1, despite Colette Piault’s attempts to minimise her presence by eschewing commentary, her ‘voice’ remains present in *Ce n’est pas tous les jours fête* through the ‘indirect’ strategies of her filmic discourse. For choices about where the camera is positioned and how the ‘voices’ of the others are included into the film are revelatory of the filmmaker’s relationship to alterity. Writing about colonial films, Marc-Henri Piault suggests that:

La désignation, sinon la stigmatisation du visage de l’autre dans les films coloniaux renseigne aujourd’hui autant sinon plus sur le regard de l’observateur que sur la réalité qu’il observe. L’angle de l’observation et la mise en rapport des différents ‘objets’ montrés dévoilent, au-delà des choix éventuellement annoncés et énoncés, des positions dans le monde, des orientations, des critères d’appréciation, des hiérarchisations concernant la réalité dans sa façon de la percevoir

(2000: 30-31).

Filming is therefore about ‘looking’ – how the filmmaker looks at the ethnographic subjects – and this leads the ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall to argue that ‘before films are a form of representing or communicating, they are a form of looking and being’ (2006: 6-7).

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to examine film as a form of 'looking and being' through the analysis of two documentaries by the ethnographer Stéphane Breton. MacDougall's conception of film as a 'corporeal image' (relating to or involving the physical body) is particularly valuable for the analysis of Breton's documentaries which incorporate the 'return gaze' of the ethnographic subject into the discourse of the film, and adopt an interactive mode of filming in which the camera is an extension of the ethnographer's body. The second area of analysis will investigate the recent critical interest, in both anthropology and film, in the senses.

Early calls for a more 'sensuous ethnography' may perhaps be exemplified with Paul Stoller's 1997 book *Sensuous Scholarship*, in which he argues for ethnographers to incorporate the sensuous body into their ethnographic works. This, he advocates, is essential in the 'ethnographic description of societies in which the Eurocentric notion of text – and of textual interpretations – is not important' (1997: xv). More recent criticism has attempted to show how the medium of film is capable of evoking the memory of senses such as touch and smell (Laura M. Marks 2000), whilst David MacDougall in his 2006 book explores the relationship of ethnographic film and the senses. In the light of this debate, the aim of this chapter is to assess to what extent Breton's documentaries evoke senses other than looking, and to what extent is film an ideal medium for developing an 'ethnography of the senses'.

As in the previous chapters, I shall be exploring these concepts through the investigation of the use of 'voice' in Breton's films – how he includes his 'voice' and the 'voices' of others. In the first film, *Eux et Moi: Un ethnologue en Papouasie Occidentale* (2001), my analysis will focus on the notion of ethnographic dialogue between the ethnographer and his subjects, and will assess how Breton demonstrates in

the documentary his belief that: 'l'ethnologie est l'art d'échanger des regards, pas seulement d'observer des faits exotiques (Breton 2005: 117). Breton's second film, *Le ciel dans un jardin* (2003), will provide the opportunity to investigate the inclusion of the senses in filmic ethnography.

A final area of analysis will be the issue of ethnography on television, for unlike Colette Piault and Eliane de Latour whose films were shown at 'specialised' film festivals, Breton's documentaries were produced in collaboration with ARTE, France's 'cultural' terrestrial television channel.<sup>30</sup> Issues regarding the ethical implications of showing the ethnographic subject on 'mainstream' television will be considered alongside how Breton attempts to distance himself from more 'popular' travel films that are made by non-specialists. My sources for this discussion will be mainly based on the two chosen documentaries, but will also include Breton's 2005 essay *Television*, in which he strongly criticises television documentaries for their voyeuristic 'invisible camera' and their over-reliance on commentary which subordinates the image to the role of illustration to the word.

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<sup>30</sup> Although ARTE is a terrestrial channel it only has a 3.2% share of the television audience, therefore this suggests that the audience is not exactly what could be called 'mainstream' or general public (compare TF1 viewing figures which account for 30.7% of the audience share). These figures relate to the average viewing figures for 2007 and were obtained from Médiamétrie, a independent company set up in 1985 to measure audience figures across the media: cf. <http://www.mediametrie.fr/index.php>

**I: *Eux et moi: Un ethnologue en Papouasie Occidentale* (2001) – 62 minutes**

*Eux et moi: Un ethnologue en Papouasie Occidentale* is, as the title suggests, a film which explores the evolution of the relationship between the people of a small mountain village in Papua New Guinea and the ethnographer Stéphane Breton. Whereas the documentaries studied in the other chapters have concentrated on a particular area of ethnographic research (Colette Piauxt: migration; Eliane de Latour: political power), the focus in Breton's film is on the ethnographic encounter itself. Unlike in the other documentaries where the acceptance of the ethnographer's presence is a *fait accompli*, Breton demonstrates in this film that it takes many years to be accepted by a community, and that the process is one that includes the ethnographer being rejected, ignored, isolated and 'deceived' by the ethnographic subjects.

As I have done in previous chapters, I shall begin my analysis by establishing the characteristics of Breton's approach to filming alterity by examining in detail a sequence that occurs at the beginning of the film. This sequence, lasting around one minute thirty, shows a woman with a net bag on her back, carrying an axe on her head, walking in the forest in front of a man. Shot from a front three-quarter profile, the two ethnographic subjects walk past the stationary camera and disappear up the path, their movement followed by the camera. As the woman passes the camera she turns her face to acknowledge it. The next shot is filmed with the camera on the move following behind the man, who the viewer sees is carrying a large number of bananas on his back. Forty seconds into the sequence Breton's 'direct voice' is heard:

Ce chemin, ça fait des années que je le prends. Je descends d'un petit avion, je charge les sacs. Il me faut 2 jours pour arriver chez eux, en marchant dans la boue. Je me souviens que je suis venu avec quelques illusions. J'aimais cette forêt de Nouvelle-Guinée, j'avais envie de partager leur vie. Mon métier d'ethnologue était une excuse pour aller leur parler. Je voulais seulement qu'ils ne fassent pas attention à moi et je croyais que ça ne dépendrait que de moi.

During this voice-over commentary, the camera continues to walk over fallen tree trunks, surrounded by the green vegetation of the forest. After the extra-diegetic commentary, the man walking in front of Breton stops on the path, turns, and looking the camera straight in the eye asks Breton if he likes plantains. Breton replies in the affirmative and the man says that he will give him some when they arrive. The ethnographer thanks the man.

This short opening scene reveals the key elements of Breton's documentary approach: first person commentary, dialogue between ethnographer and subject, material exchange of goods, the identification of the camera with the ethnographer's body and the 'return gaze'. I shall therefore analyse this opening scene with regards to each of these issues in turn.

The use of voice-over in this opening sequence has several functions. Firstly, it provides the viewer with contextual information – the viewer learns that Breton is an ethnologist who has been coming to a remote part of New Guinea for many years. This immediately puts a distance between him, a professional anthropologist, and other television travel documentaries that are made much more quickly for reasons of cost.

Breton's admission that he arrived in New Guinea with 'quelques illusions' equally separates his commentary from the omniscient style of documentary making that he objects to strenuously in *Télévision* (2005). Finally, it establishes a narrative pact between the viewer and the ethnographer by indicating that the viewer will have access into the ethnographic encounter through the inclusion of Breton's thoughts and experiences. The choice to use the first-person creates a more intimate tone to the commentary, while the use of the present tense coupled with the images that are shot by the ethnographer in 'walking camera' mode, create a sense of immediacy to the commentary and helps identify the 'I' of the ethnographer with the 'eye' of the camera.

In the same way that the inclusion of Breton's 'direct voice' indicates that this documentary is one in which the filmmaker's role is to be included, the short dialogue that takes place also reinforces the notion of interaction between the 'voice' of the ethnographer and the 'voices' of the ethnographic subjects. This verbal exchange prepares the viewer for the key feature of the documentary which is not about filming the 'others' in an observational style, but one in which the notion of the ethnographic *encounter* is placed at the heart of the relationship between ethnographer and filmed subjects. In this sense, Breton's film features a form of 'deep reflexivity' of the kind favoured by MacDougall and discussed in the previous chapter: it is an approach in which 'subject and object define one another through the work, and the "author" is in fact in many ways an artefact of the work' (1998: 89).

Where Breton perhaps goes a stage further than Eliane de Latour, who also includes a form of 'deep reflexivity' into her work, is in his inclusion of the 'material' exchange that takes place during the ethnographic encounter; he does not limit the notion of interaction between self and other to a purely verbal exchange. In this

example, the ethnographic subject offers to share some of his food with Breton upon arrival. This sequence is the first among many to feature some sort of 'material' exchange between the two parties and, as I shall demonstrate in later examples, this notion of exchange does not limit itself to food and medicine, but also, more controversially, includes transactions of a monetary nature.

Moving away from the notion of 'direct voice' (or rather 'voices' of the ethnographer and subjects), I shall now assess the 'indirect voice' of the filmmaker in this opening sequence, beginning with the identification between the camera and the ethnographer's body. In my analysis in Chapter 1 of Colette Piauult's approach to filming alterity, I described how she attempted in *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* (with varying results) to create the illusion of a 'disembodied' camera observing events without affecting the ethnographic subjects being filmed.

Breton's approach could be described as exactly the opposite: it is an 'embodied' camera in which the 'eye' of the camera is identified not only with the 'I' of the voice-over commentary but also with the movement of his body. The camera walks with the ethnographic subjects and is not simply content to observe them from a stationary position. Throughout the film, the camera acts as an extension of Breton's body; the camera is Breton's eye looking at and interacting with the landscape and people that he encounters. As Breton is a one-man camera crew, the viewer does not see the ethnographer's whole body. Despite this, Breton creates a strong sense of identification between his person and the camera, and on many occasions, the viewer sees Breton's hand reaching out to shake hands with the people being filmed. As a result:

**moi** : La caméra n'obéit plus à un point de vue objectif, celui du reportage télévisé par exemple, qui veut vous faire croire qu'il suffit de montrer les choses comme si on était le bon Dieu, comme si on était un observateur transparent, attaché au ciel par un fil, et qui aurait le droit de regarder simplement parce qu'il travaille pour la télé. Au contraire, dans ce film, que vous tournez avec stupéfaction, vous faites partie du spectacle, bien qu'on ne vous voie pas, sinon votre main, à l'occasion, quand vous donnez un biffeton. Ce n'est pas un film sur eux, mais sur eux et vous.

**lui** : Oui.

(Breton interviewing himself for ARTE)<sup>31</sup>

Through the movement of the camera, Breton inscribes his 'corporeal image' into the film and is an important part of his filmic discourse which chooses to explore the two-way process of the ethnographic encounter between *eux et moi*. This also acknowledges that research in the field:

is necessarily an embodied activity. Our body and the bodies of others are central to the practical accomplishment of fieldwork. We locate our physical being alongside those of others, as we negotiate the spatial context of the field. We concern ourselves with the positioning, visibility and

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<sup>31</sup> This interview is published online on ARTE's website: <http://www.arte.tv/fr/connaissance-decouverte/Le-Monde-des-Papous/Stephane-Breton/401122.html>. It has not been possible to determine a precise date for the interview, however, since the interview only makes reference to *Eux et moi* (2001) it is likely that this interview took place some time between 2001 and 2002 before the broadcasting of his second documentary in 2003.

performance of our own embodied self as we undertake participant observation

(Amanda Coffey 1999: 59).

Although Coffey is writing in relation to written ethnography, her comments regarding the 'positioning, visibility and performance' of the ethnographic self are particularly relevant to filmic ethnography which 'produces an object in which the filmmaker's interaction with the film subject is explicitly inscribed' (MacDougall 1998: 56).

Indeed, when one examines Breton's positioning of his body in relation to the ethnographic subject in this opening scene, it reveals much about his attitude towards the ethnographic others. During the shot in which Breton walks with his camera, he positions himself behind the ethnographic subjects: he follows in their footsteps. Whilst this may be attributed to aesthetic reasons – the inclusion of two people provides the shot with a depth of field that would otherwise be absent – I would also argue that there is a metaphorical allusion to the relationship of power or knowledge between the ethnographer and subjects.

Breton could have chosen to place his camera further along the path and film the subjects walking towards the camera (this is what Colette Piauult does in her first shot of the 'water fetching' sequence). This would have provided a sense of spatial depth to the shot and a sense of control over the movement of the ethnographic subject through space. Instead, in this particular shot, and in many others throughout the film, he chooses to position himself walking behind the subjects. I would suggest that this is an indirect reference to his feeling of being reduced to the status of an ignorant child through the 'dépayement' of the ethnographic journey:

Le dépaysement de l'ethnologue, c'est moins un dépaysement à cause d'un pays exotique, qu'un dépaysement du fait d'une ignorance à laquelle on n'est pas habituée, la capacité de s'exprimer etc. Donc c'est vraiment un retour à l'enfance, c'est très dérangent, on se sent souvent très mal à l'aise.<sup>32</sup>

Breton therefore suggests, through the positioning of his camera, his metaphorical need to be lead by the ethnographic subject along the path of knowledge. It is also possible to argue that this imbalance of power in favour of the ethnographic subjects is reflected in the title of the film, *Eux et moi*, which contrasts the plural with the singular.

The final feature of this opening sequence that I would like to comment on is the decision to include the 'return gaze' of the ethnographic subjects. There are two examples in this sequence when the subject turns to face the camera: the first is in the first shot of the sequence when the woman turns her face towards the camera as she walks past it, the second when the man turns and asks Breton if he likes plantains. While the first example may be read as an acknowledgement of the camera's presence, the second example takes the notion of the 'return gaze' a step further and acknowledges that the camera is a person with whom dialogue is possible. By looking the camera 'in the eye', the man metonymically draws not only Breton into the film but also the viewer.

Unlike in Colette Piau's first documentary in which the 'return gaze' of the subject is 'accidentally' included on a few occasions, thereby breaking through the illusion of the 'invisible' gaze of the camera, in Breton's films, the return gaze is a

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<sup>32</sup> Stéphane Breton in conversation with Catherine Rascon, the editor of *Eux et moi*, transcribed from the director's commentary of the same film.

central part of his approach to filming alterity. The majority of the sequences in *Eux et moi* which feature dialogue between the ethnographer and subject, frame the subject in a close portrait shot of their head and shoulders. By including the 'return gaze' of the ethnographic others, Breton is acknowledging the shared humanity between himself and the filmed subjects, for:

the glance into the camera evokes one of the primal experiences of daily life – of look returned by look – through which we signal mutual recognition and affirm the shared experience of the moment. It is the look of exchange that says, 'At this moment, we see ourselves through one another'. The encounter produces a phatic [sic] reversal of roles, in which the reviewer seems to be regarding himself or herself with the eyes of the other

(MacDougall 1998: 100)

However, the return gaze also raises the ethical issue of the nature of the gaze and its implicit voyeurism. As the ethnographer Alison Griffiths suggests:

in certain instances, the cinematic return gaze breaks the circuit of power between the spectator's gaze and the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of the Other by making the spectator acutely aware of the intrusive nature of the filming and by triggering a nearly automatic reaction to the discomfort of being stared at

(Griffiths 2002: 199).

Although in this opening sequence the return gaze is one of exchange and dialogue, there are several examples in the documentary of the subjects showing a certain hostility towards being filmed by Breton – they are discomforted by the ethnographer's stare. One man asks 'On est entre nous, pourquoi tu filmes?', while the ethnographer's future neighbour, Taimbuga, rejects the gaze of the camera and attempts to move out of shot: 'Je veux pas de ton truc'.

Breton acknowledges in his director's commentary of his initial unease when filming his ethnographic subjects as 'filmer quelqu'un, c'est une forme de viol, ou de violation'. The idea of 'violation' or 'rape' may perhaps seem extreme in the image it conveys, nevertheless, the implied notion of consumption through the gaze of the camera lens is echoed by the ethnographer Marc Augé who suggests that: 'fabriquer des images (photographier, filmer), c'est à la fois s'appropriier l'espace et le transformer, d'une certaine manière: le consommer' (1997: 162).

It is precisely as a result of this impression of 'violation' caused by the gaze of the camera that Breton chooses to include the return gaze of the ethnographic subject as part of his filmic discourse. For him, it is a moral decision: 'un regard est légitime s'il donne le droit d'être retourné... Le droit que j'ai de filmer, il est signifié par le regard de celui que je regarde' (*Eux et moi* Director's commentary). As a consequence, Breton's decision to include not only the 'voices' of the ethnographic subject but also their 'gazes' reinforces the notion of exchange between the ethnographer and others. It also accords the filmed subjects an equal status to the filmmaker, for both have the right to look at each other.

A final consequence of the 'return gaze' is that it makes the viewer aware of the 'reversibility' of the concept of 'alterity'. As MacDougall points out in his analysis of

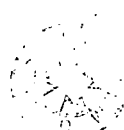
the glance into the camera: 'the encounter [of looks] produces a phatic reversal of roles, in which the reviewer seems to be regarding himself or herself with the eyes of the other' (1998: 100). This 'reversal of roles' has the result of inverting the notion of who is 'other': for the viewer, it is the New Guinean man; for the filmed subject, it is those who are looking at him.

The concept of a 'reverse anthropology' or 'inverted alterity' is one that is explored by Breton in the documentary. Unlike Colette Piault or Eliane de Latour who do not include the details of where they live during fieldwork, Breton actively includes his cultural self into the fabric of the film.<sup>33</sup> The sequence that follows the opening scene, described above, shows the left hand of the ethnographer turning a key in a lock and entering the hut in which he lives. Inside the cabin, built by Breton in a western style, the viewer is able to see a rudimentary bed made out of planks of wood, a small foam camping mattress hanging on the wall and a solar panel placed on a wooden chair.

Breton's inclusion of his living space is unusual, for in the previous documentaries that I have analysed there is little or no reference to how the ethnographer experiences life in the field. His decision to build a house in the style of his own culture raises the question of why he chose not to 'go the whole way' and share the same living conditions as the Wodani villagers. This is a question that his editor, Catherine Rascon, puts to him in the director's commentary. Breton reveals that this decision was motivated by two factors. Firstly, this was a decision taken for practical reasons: the houses of the villagers were so small that he could not stand up inside; the leaking roofs also meant that he could not keep his notebooks and other possessions

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<sup>33</sup> Eliane de Latour does make a brief reference in her written ethnography to the living quarters that she was assigned to during the making of *Les temps du pouvoir* (1992: 16). However, there is no mention of this in the film. Instead, de Latour focuses on showing how the 'others' live and largely ignores her own experience of living on the terrain.



dry. Secondly, Breton's western house was motivated for ethnographic reasons. Part of Breton's initial difficulty in establishing contact with the people of the village was their complete indifference to his presence – for a large part of his initial voyages he was ignored. By building a house that was different to those of the villagers, not only was he signalling that he was 'different' or 'other' but he was also hoping that this difference would attract them:

si j'avais une maison différente de la leur, ça voulait dire que j'étais différent et ça les transformait en ethnologues... il fallait qu'eux deviennent ethnologue pour que je puisse devenir ethnologue – pour qu'ils acceptent de me montrer leurs choses, il fallait que je leur montre les miennes

*(Eux et moi, Director's commentary).*

This policy of turning the 'others' into ethnologists, intent on discovering the 'otherness' of Breton, provides a memorable scene that is positioned half an hour into the film. The sequence lasting roughly twenty-five seconds is composed of four shots. The first, is a horizontal pan shot moving from left to right which shows Dingimbaina and another man standing outside Breton's house looking through the window: 'tu vois quelque chose?' one man asks the other. Breton's next shot is an extreme close-up of an eye looking in through the window, shot from inside the cabin. The third image shows a child's eye looking in with his or her hand pressed up against the window, while the fourth shot shows Dingimbaina's face highly concentrated in his position as a 'voyeur'.

Whereas the inclusion of the gaze of the ethnographic subjects and the notion of 'cultural exchange' allude to the reversibility of the notion of alterity in an indirect fashion, the scene described above is direct in its demonstration of the 'observer observed'. Here, the 'others' turn the tables on the ethnographer and make him the centre of their observations, just as the film documents Breton's interest in observing their way of life. As a consequence, this short sequence demonstrates effectively how 'alterity' is in fact a reversible concept. It also reinforces the notion of exchange between ethnographer and subject: since Breton has the right to look at them, they too have the right to observe him.

Up to this point, my analysis has been focused on how Breton includes the 'gaze' of his ethnographic subjects into the film and, as a consequence, I have only touched on how the 'voices' of the ethnographer and subjects are included (through voice-over commentary and dialogue). This is something that I wish to remedy in this next section which will concentrate on Breton's use of 'voice(s)'.

As I have shown in the previous chapters, one of the techniques used by both Colette Piault and Eliane de Latour to include the 'voices' of the ethnographic 'others' is through the device of interview. It is notable that *Eux et moi* features only one example of an interview that takes place inside Breton's cabin with Obapui, the ethnographer's 'adopted father'. In this sequence lasting approximately four minutes, one minute forty is devoted to an interview in which Breton asks Obapui about the roles or powers of two spirits, Megamba and Nguane. The rest of the sequence features an exchange between the two parties of a monetary nature. Breton pays Obapui for his

'work' and then negotiates with him regarding a sum of money that the ethnographer is to provide as a contribution for a pig festival (this I shall deal with shortly).

Interviews, as I have discussed in Chapter 1, raise various questions. One such issue regards the extent to which the subject may be said to be 'representative' of a social group (Charlotte Aull Davies 1999: 170). Thus, in Piault's *Une vie dure*, it is difficult to establish whether Kalliope's life history is being filmed because she represents a typical example of a woman of her generation or because her life has been particularly unusual. Another such issue is highlighted by David MacDougall who suggests that while interviews are an 'ideal medium for confession and self-revelation' they are equally ideal for 'misinformation' (1998: 117). As a consequence, he suggests that 'it is important to see interviews as representing limited perspectives and uneven mixtures of candour and self-justification' (ibid.).

Both Aull Davies' and MacDougall's arguments remain equally applicable to Breton's interview with Obapui. It is possible to raise the following questions in an analysis of the interview – for what reason has the ethnographer chosen Obapui rather than another individual to find out about the Wodani's spirit world, to what extent is Obapui's understanding limited? However, I would suggest that this is perhaps not the most productive route to take (especially as this ground has, to a certain extent, been covered in the chapter on Piault). Instead I would prefer to focus on the issue of why Breton chooses to include only one short interview in the film, lasting roughly one minute forty, and abandons this practice altogether in the second documentary.

Possible answers may be sourced from the director's commentary in which Breton explains that he quickly abandoned the use of the interview as a method of ethnographic research as he realised that it is: 'un peu artificiel, on arrive pas à en tirer

grand chose'. Instead he turns his attention to participating in the villagers' daily life and learning from what he overhears and observes. An additional reason that he provides, links to his criticism of television documentary in which 'on croit faire dire la vérité à des gens' just because they are interviewed in front of a camera.

While these reasons are a useful insight into his research techniques in the field, I would suggest that an additional reason for Breton's abandoning of the interview may be found in the idea that the interview goes against the filmic discourse of the documentary. *Eux et moi*, as the title indicates, is about exchange: whether the exchange of looks, the exchange of dialogue or the exchange of material goods. The 'return gaze' is about establishing a notion of a reciprocal relationship between ethnographer and subjects. This is cemented by Breton's inclusion of the notion of a 'reversible' alterity in which he himself becomes 'other' in the eyes of the filmed subjects. Both these factors indicate a desire to establish a relationship based on an equality of status.

A close analysis of the manner in which Breton film Obapui in this sequence, reveals that the positioning of the camera is designed to create an impression of equality and exchange. Throughout the film, Breton films the ethnographic subjects sitting cross-legged or squatting on the floor of their houses and adopts a similar crouching position in order to film them at eye-level. In this sequence Breton also films Obapui at eye-level however, what is unusual is that Obapui is sitting on one of the ethnographer's chairs. As this is the only example of one of the filmed subjects sitting in a chair rather than on the ground, this decision is perhaps worthy of comment.

It is possible that, as an elderly man, Obapui is sitting in a chair for reasons of comfort, or perhaps this setting is created for the comfort of the ethnographer.

Whatever the case, the net result is that Obapui occupies a raised position that perhaps is a metaphorical indication of his status as an 'informer', chosen among many, to provide insight into the Wodani's system of beliefs. Obapui's knowledge is 'raised' above that of the 'others'. However, an alternative perspective would suggest that the decision to film Obapui in a chair is an attempt to redress the power inequality that an interview creates. For the ethnographer Michael Hertzfeld argues that the interview is, by its very nature, unequal in the distribution of power between the ethnographer and subject:

asking questions... is itself a status-related activity; the higher the questioner's status, the greater the range of available modes of interrogation (E. Goody 1978: 37). Anthropologists may appear deferential to their informants, but this is merely the privilege of power

(Hertzfeld 1987: 17).

Although Breton attempts to emphasise through his filmic strategies the notion of equality, it is possible that the realisation that an interview created a fundamental power inequality between himself and the interviewee is another reason for him to abandon this 'artificial' mode of enquiry.

The second half of this sequence is devoted to Breton paying Obapui for his 'work' and this is perhaps the most controversial part of the scene. Although ethnographers often distribute food and medicines among the population they study (cf. Loizos 1993: 207), the issue of 'payment' usually goes unmentioned. Breton himself

indicates that many ethnographers were unhappy with this scene as, 'il est de bon ton de ne pas payer ses informateurs' (Director's commentary). Initially, Breton reveals that he too was uneasy with showing this side of the ethnographic encounter. Nevertheless, since the purpose of the film is to show 'de quoi sont faites les relations' it was necessary to include these money-based transactions, which at first he had tried to ignore but which the camera forced him to look at.

For the viewer, the number of scenes in which money changes hands may appear unsettling, with images of the ethnographer 'corrupting' a subsistence culture to the 'evils' of capitalism perhaps dominating interpretations of these sequences. It is certainly an impression shared by Breton, as he admits in a voice-over:

Ce n'était pas sur ce terrain que je voulais les rencontrer. Je pensais qu'avec eux, les choses seraient simples. Mais j'ai trouvé l'argent, l'impureté, l'intérêt, ce que je n'aime pas, ce dont j'ai honte

However, Breton's feelings of shame towards money is not one that is shared by the Wodani, who he gradually discovers, value money above all other possessions.<sup>34</sup> As a result:

c'est au contraire parce qu'il m'arrivait de payer que j'avais des renseignements vrais et sincères parce que la monnaie chez eux est une chose trop importante pour être volée... c'est comme un acte notariat la

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<sup>34</sup> For a more detailed ethnographic analysis of the Wodani's conception of money, which includes an exploration of their spiritual and philosophical relationship to their shell coinage cf. Stéphane Breton's articles on the subject published in 1999 and 2002 in *L'Homme*. (For full references please refer to my bibliography).

monnaie chez eux. Quand quelque chose d'important a eu lieu, il y a toujours eu un transfert de monnaie... dès qu'il y avait un paiement, ça légitimait l'authenticité d'une relation ou d'une information donnée

(Director's commentary).

This sequence serves as a reminder of the dangers of projecting western ethnocentric attitudes onto different cultures: whereas Breton wished for a 'simpler' life where money was not important, he learns that, on the contrary, the exchange of money and other goods is the very 'glue' that holds together the fabric of Wodani society.

One of the aims of this chapter is to examine David MacDougall's argument that 'before films are a form of representing or communicating, they are a form of looking and being' (2006: 6-7). In my analysis of the opening sequence I have focused on the idea of 'film as a form of looking' with an analysis of the 'return gaze' of the subjects and the significance of the exchange of looks that takes place between ethnographer and 'others'. I would now like to explore the concept of 'film as a form of being' and the idea of a 'corporeal image'.

Breton, as I have discussed, chooses to reject the use of the interview and concentrate upon participant observation: 'je me suis mis à partager leur vie et à attraper ce que j'entendais' (Director's commentary). Rather than using the medium of film to investigate a particular area of research, as Colette Piault and Eliane de Latour do in their documentaries, *Eux et moi* is about the experience of *being* in the field. It is a film that explores the relationship between ethnographer and subjects and describes how the relationship is established and on what it is based (the exchange of goods and the

importance for them to circulate). Breton builds his film out of the various conversations and exchanges that take place along his ethnographic journey. In this sense, it is an 'experiential' mode of filmmaking.<sup>35</sup>

To get an idea of Breton's cinema of 'being', I shall examine a short sequence lasting around forty seconds, in which Breton greets and shakes hands with various men who have come to see him at his house. This scene occurs approximately four minutes into the documentary, and takes place just before the moment when Breton hands out money to women and children and pays the men for having cleared the vegetation that had grown up around his house during his absence.

Looking out of his cabin's door, the viewer sees a man (Breton's 'adopted' son Esau) coming through a gap in the ethnographer's fence sporting an unusual haircut. 'Oh, la coiffure!' exclaims Breton, as he steps out of his house and walks towards the advancing Esau. Breton shakes hands with Esau, the camera framing the 'other' in a close frontal head and shoulders shot. The camera then pans horizontally to show other men arriving. The ethnographer greets them individually in turn and shakes their hands. Once again the men are filmed in portrait, the camera moving between the individual faces before panning vertically down to show the white hand of Breton shaking a brown hand.

In this sequence there is little dialogue other than the repeated word 'aba' (hello) as Breton greets the men one by one. The interaction between the ethnographer and the Wodani men is of a physical rather than verbal nature. The final movement of the

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<sup>35</sup> I am using the term 'experiential' as defined in the *OED*: 'involving or based on experience'. This is in contrast to the use of the term in Chapter 1 that is defined by Crawford as: 'the experiential mode invites the audience to understand and sense other cultures by emphasising analogue forms of representation' (in Crawford and Turton eds 1992: 77). While Breton's films invite the audience to 'understand' and 'sense' other cultures, it is through the medium of his experiences as an ethnographer in the field rather than by 'emphasising analogue forms of representation'.

camera which pans down emphasises that this encounter is about the contact between the hand of the ethnographer and the hands of the ethnographic subjects.

Breton's approach to filming alterity, as I have shown in previous examples, is not just limited to including the 'voices' of others but also seeks to include the 'return gaze' of those he films. To his own 'direct voice', which he includes through dialogue and the use of voice-over commentary, Breton adds the dimension of his 'corporeal experience' in the field. The 'greeting sequence' is a particularly clear example of how Breton's camera is 'embodied' by the ethnographer. The camera moves with Breton's body as he walks towards the men. It films the men's faces at eye-level height and pans between the various faces of the men, mirroring the movement of Breton's eyes and body as he turns to greet each individual. The outstretched hand of Breton enhances the impression of the camera acting as an extension of his body by evoking the sense of touch. As a consequence, this sequence demonstrates the 'animal origin' of film and illustrates MacDougall's idea that 'corporeal images are not just the images of other bodies; they are also images of the body behind the camera and its relations with the world' (2006: 3).

In the second of Breton's documentaries, I shall pursue this concept of a 'corporeal image' and explore to what extent Breton seeks to create a more 'sensuous' filmic ethnography by the incorporation of his senses into the film.

## II: *Le Ciel dans un jardin* (2003) – 62 minutes

*Le Ciel dans un jardin* may in many ways be considered as ‘Part 2’ of *Eux et moi*, seeing as it takes place in the same location, a year on from filming the first documentary. If the main filmic strategies remain constant in the second documentary – the ‘return gaze’, the ‘embodied camera’ – the tone of the film is very different to *Eux et moi*. Breton’s first film is about the establishment of a relationship between himself and the ‘others’ and the difficulties that he encounters in his attempts to ‘get closer’ to the ‘others’. By the end of *Eux et moi*, Breton has gained the right to exchange valuable shell coinage and is, to a certain extent, accepted by the Wodani villagers. Thus in the second film, the relationship is already established, Breton no longer needs to make the effort to ‘go towards’ the others since his presence is accepted: he has become part of the scene. As a consequence of this ‘rite of passage’, he is permitted in *Le Ciel dans un jardin* to film areas of the Wodani’s lives that he did not previously have access to.

To gain an idea of how Breton’s position has changed, I shall examine a sequence which takes place approximately two minutes into the film. In this scene lasting approximately two minutes and twenty seconds, the ethnographer’s neighbours are working in their garden getting rid of grass and weeds. Breton films the various members of the family working: the mother busily uprooting plants and complaining that she is fed up with all this grass, the young boys helping out their mother, and the grandmother scratching her back with a branch. In a later voice-over, Breton explains that, ‘le jardin est un lieu intime, un niveau de vitalité d’une femme, comme regarder ses enfants’. The fact that the wife of his neighbour, Taimbuga, now calls him to come with them when they go to the garden is a sign of his acceptance. In *Eux et moi*, the

garden does not really feature because for a long time Breton was not welcome in this private area.

Breton's position in this scene is at once as an observer and a participant. Although a large part of this scene is about him silently observing the family as they work, it is not a 'voyeuristic' mode of observational filming as he is included in the scene. The mother at one point turns around and smiles at Breton as she walks to another part of the garden and the grandmother jokingly asks Breton if he would like 'un coup d'orties' while she scratches her back. Likewise Breton includes his presence by asking one of the boys if the other is good at clearing the weeds. This is therefore a different kind of observation to that practiced by Colette Piault in *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête*, where the observation is of an 'invisible' kind and where the 'disembodied' camera creates an impression of a 'voyeuristic' gaze. In this particular extract of *Le Ciel dans un jardin*, it is clear that there is a person behind the camera and that this person is Breton.

By analysing this sequence, it is possible to see how the ethnographer has become integrated into the rhythm of his neighbour's daily life: there is little dialogue between him and the 'others' as there is no need. They accept his presence as an observer and include him through occasional glances and jokes as they work. In this sense, this scene illustrates Breton's conception of how documentary film should 'look': 'le regard documentaire est l'art de faire partie de la scène, non pas d'être "transparent". C'est pourquoi le dialogue est son bien le plus précieux et l'interviewue [sic], sa défaite' (Breton 2005: 79).

Breton also includes his 'voice' in this sequence in a more 'indirect' form through the use of extradiegetic voice-over commentary:

Je suis revenu après un an d'absence. Les voisins ont commencé un nouveau jardin. Il n'a pas plu depuis un moment et tout le monde en profite pour défricher. C'est la saison des gros travaux et des échardes. Il y a quelques jours c'était la rumeur de la ville, et maintenant me voilà avec eux, comme si je ne les avais pas quittés.

This commentary therefore has the purpose of providing a context for the viewer, situating the film one year later after the first film and explaining the reasons for the work in the garden. Although the commentary is added during post-production, the use of the present tense gives a sense of immediacy to the dialogue creating the impression that the ethnographer is commenting directly in situ and is speaking in an aside to the viewer who is also drawn into the scene. The other important idea that is contained within this voice-over is the concept of comparison: a few days ago he was in the bustle of the town and now he is here in the middle of the forest as if he had never left.

While this scene is about 'being' in the field with the ethnographic subjects, the hint of comparison also evokes a certain distance that is establishing itself between Breton and the 'others'. This is caused by Breton's awareness that this will be his last visit to Papua New Guinea as the political situation caused by the Indonesian occupation is closing off access to outside visitors. The film is therefore an opportunity for reflection not only on his experiences, but also on the notion of alterity, and his relationship to the 'others'.

This reflective tone of comparison is most clearly seen in the opening sequence, which juxtaposes images of the Parisian landscape with images of Papua New Guinea.

Paris is evoked through a montage of close-ups showing people's shoes walking past cigarette butts lying on a pavement, and getting onto a downwards moving escalator. This sequence is juxtaposed with two shots situated in Papua New Guinea in which the viewer sees a man carefully making his way across a narrow rope bridge suspended across a river. The harsh man-made landscape of Paris where people confine their feet in shoes and cross the road on zebra crossings, contrasts with the lush green vegetation of the riverbank in Papua New Guinea and the bare feet of the man walking across the bridge.

To this 'collage' of contrasting images, Breton adds his 'voice' in which he evokes the 'double life' that he has led, alternating between his normal life as a salaried worker and the life he leads in the mountains of Papua New Guinea where the climate is more extreme. He also explores the motives of his desire to travel to such a remote location:

Je rêvais d'une vie qui se résumerait à la pluie, à la marche, à une patate cuite dans la cendre. Une vie qui serait l'abondance du temps. Je n'étais pas attiré par l'exotisme, mais par une simplification. Je suis allé la chercher chez eux. C'est sans doute une illusion de quelqu'un qui vient d'un pays où on ne manque de rien et où on ne sait pas ce qu'on a.

During this sequence Breton also heightens the contrast between his two lives by the addition of a non-diegetic piece of contemporary classical music that provides the viewer with an atmospheric sense of tension and intensity. (I shall develop the use of voice-over and music shortly.)

This opening scene may be interpreted as a metaphor for the film as a whole, which seeks to compare and reflect on two very different modes of life. Breton's juxtaposition of images reveals the cyclical nature of the anthropological journey – although the ethnographer travels far to study another culture, his exposure to alterity provokes a metaphorical return to the self:

the act of doing anthropology provides our collective self – culture – with a chance to examine itself through the other that exotic cultures represent. We are able to see ourselves anew when we experience other vicariously through the experience of being an ethnographer

(Ruby ed. 1982: 30).

This re-evaluation of the ethnographer's own culture is alluded to in *Eux et moi*, when Breton discovers the dangers of projecting ethnocentric ideas onto other cultures. The realisation that the Wodani value money as a positive force, enables him to realise that the idea that money is 'dirty' and a 'corrupting' force is not a universal concept but is a 'western' idea of recent origin.

It is paradoxical that it is by 'getting closer' to the 'others' that Breton is able to acquire a sense of distance necessary to reflect on the differences that separate them: 'ayant gagné un degré dans leur intimité, je perçois mieux la différence de nos vies'.<sup>36</sup> This ability to reflect is in part due to the fact that Breton is now able to simply 'be' with the ethnographic 'others', rather than having to constantly argue and justify his

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<sup>36</sup> This quotation comes from Breton's *Note d'intention* for *Le Ciel dans un jardin* that forms part of a variety of documents included on the DVD containing Breton's documentaries *Eux et Moi* and *Le Ciel dans un jardin*.

presence as is shown in the first film. In addition, the fact that this is to be Breton's last journey to Papua New Guinea also creates a sense of distance caused by the realisation that this time he really is leaving and not coming back: Breton likens it to a 'deuil' (*Note d'intention*). As a result of this sense of mourning, Breton observes that the way he looks at the villagers' lives is affected: 'le deuil donne une couleur particulière à l'observation, faite d'un curieux mélange d'indifférence et d'acuité. Je me mets à contempler les petites choses et les moments perdus' (ibid.).

One of the main differences that strikes Breton about the Wodani, is that though they have nothing, they are rich in time (in comparison to Parisian life where people are rich and have no time). In the director's commentary of this film, Breton explains that one of the things he wishes to film is 'le temps qui coule comme un robinet où il ne se passe rien: la fumée monte, on baille, on fait la sieste, on fume'. To explore how Breton attempts to film 'les petites choses et les moments perdus', I shall examine a sequence that occurs roughly forty minutes into the documentary.

In this scene, that lasts just over six minutes, Breton films his neighbour, Taimbuga, as he lights a fire, cooks a potato and eats it. The length of the shots indicate a sense of the time each stage takes – the first shot in which Taimbuga attempts to get a spark to light his kindling lasts around three minutes. During that time not much happens: a small child sitting next to his father watches his efforts and tries to control his hiccups, the older boy occasionally interrupts the silence with a short burst of song. Once the kindling has lit, Taimbuga slowly and carefully feeds the small flame before placing it into the fireplace in the middle of the hut. During this time, the camera reflects the silence and lack of movement by remaining largely static, framing

Taimbuga's body and occasionally moving slightly to the left or right to show the children sitting either side of their father.

Just after Taimbuga begins to kindle the fire in the fireplace, Breton, who has remained silent during these three minutes of observation, addresses the viewer in a voice-over commentary:

[...] En recueillant ces impressions, je m'aperçois que ce sont les mêmes qui m'avaient frappé autrefois, en arrivant. Quand on connaît rien d'un endroit, on est absorbé pas les détails. Les sens ne voient pas les choses de loin, ils cherchent à recréer un univers clos, maternelle peut-être. Ce sont des sensations qu'un jour l'habitude aura cessé de percevoir mais qui peuvent resurgir mystérieusement, et tout d'un coup on se souvient de qui on était. Je perçois comme une présence l'odeur de fumée de mes carnets d'ethnologue. Il m'a fallu des années de voyages en Nouvelle-Guinée pour retrouver la simplicité des premières impressions [...]

In a similar manner that the study of other cultures brings the ethnographer back to his own culture, Breton discovers that the end of his visit and the sense of mourning that this creates, heightens his sensual awareness of his surrounding environment. He is able to recapture the sensations of when he first arrived among the Wodani, a time when he could not speak or understand their language and so was forced to concentrate on small details.

Breton's evocation of being absorbed by small things is reflected in the cinematography of the second part of this sequence which also attempts to convey an

impression of the ethnographer's sharpened senses. During the voice-over, there has been a cut in time between the moment that the fire takes hold and the moment that the potatoes are cooked and held in the hand ready to be peeled and eaten. Whereas the camera in the first half of this sequence was static, filming the ethnographic subjects at a medium distance, in the second half, the majority of the shots are filmed in close-up.

*Eux et Moi* features few close-ups, preferring to remain at the more conventional distance of a 'head and shoulders' shot. This I would suggest reflects the fact that Breton is not fully integrated into the society and is in the process of establishing a relationship with the Wodani. The use of the close-up would be inappropriate and would suggest an intimacy that is not yet established, for:

the close-up creates a proximity to the faces and bodies of others that we experience much less commonly in daily life. The conventions of social distance normally restrict proximity except in moments of intimacy

(MacDougall 2006: 21)

By adopting the close-up in the second documentary, to film the 'others' eating their potatoes, Breton illustrates the sense of intimacy that he has built up with these people. Breton's camera lingers on Taimbuga's hands as he carefully taps the potato, slowly breaks it open, and peels it, before putting it into his mouth to chew. The camera captures the vapour rising from the hot potato as it is broken open by the small boy. The sound of mastication fills the air...

Writing about the close-up, David MacDougall suggests that:

in exaggerating proximity, the close-up brings to the cinema a quasi-tactility absent in ordinary human relations. When we meet others in day-to-day exchanges we do not explore their faces with our fingertips, but in cinema we come close to doing this, becoming especially alive to the liquidity of the eyes and mouth and, at a more interpretive level, the flickering signs of emotions

(ibid.: 22).

MacDougall suggests in this quotation that by using the close-up, film can get close to evoking the sense of touch. I would however posit that Breton's sequence does not only attempt to evoke the sensation of touch, by focusing on a potato held in a hand, but also attempts to evoke the sensations of taste and smell. This raises the question of whether the medium of film is able to awaken a wider range of senses in the viewer's response other than the aural and the visual.

In her book, *The Skin of the Film*, Laura U. Marks explores the capacity of film to engage with a wider range of senses and argues that 'since memory functions multisensorially, a work of cinema, though it only directly engages two senses, activates a memory that necessarily involves all the senses' (2000: 22). While it is true that the viewer does not have the memory of being there in the hut with Taimbuga and his family, it is not too difficult for the viewer to transcribe similar experiences onto the situation. One does not have to go to Papua New Guinea to experience the smell of a

wood fire, the taste of a potato, or the sensation of heat rising from a hot potato held in the hand. As a consequence, it is possible to argue, as Marks does, that:

the cinematic encounter takes place not only between my body and the film's body, but my sensorium and the film's sensorium. We bring our own personal and cultural organisation of the senses to cinema, and cinema brings a particular organisation of the sense to us, the filmmaker's own sensorium refracted through the cinematic apparatus

(2000: 153).

This idea would seem to be supported by the research of neuroscientists, art theorists, and phenomenologists who have observed that a viewer does not perceive objects in any complete or unitary way. Instead, rather than seeing the object as a whole, he or she perceives only one face of the object at a time, from one particular perspective:

For the rest, we make inferences about them drawn from the probabilities involved, and from the fragmentary stimuli of shading, position, and size in relation to other objects. This means we actively construct objects in a manner that suggests they are as much projections of our own bodies as independent of them. Thus, if other bodies influence ours, we also reach out and enrich them with our own responses

(MacDougall 2006: 21).

Of course the ability to reconstruct the range of senses evoked in a piece of film will vary, depending on the range of experiences that the viewer has had, but this is similar to how a non-specialist and specialist may respond to the same film. In the case of the filmmaker, his relationship to the film is again of a different nature, as MacDougall points out: 'the filmmaker can never see the film as others see it' (1998: 27). This is not only because the film is but a short extract from all the footage that he shot, but also because certain shots 'that are perhaps of no more than passing interest to the casual viewer resonate with a special significance: a day remembered, an object actually handled' (ibid: 28). As Breton says in the voice-over of this sequence: 'je perçois comme une présence l'odeur de fumée de mes carnets d'ethnologue' – it is unlikely that another person would find the smoky smell of his notebooks as evocative.

The 'potato sequence' demonstrates Breton's interest in focusing on the small details that make up his ethnographic subjects' lives. It also shows how, through the combination of the close-up and voice-over, the ethnographer attempts to evoke the intimacy of his relationship with the 'others' and the sensual experience of the moment. An analysis of the language that Breton uses in his voice-over commentary shows a desire to express his heightened sensibility caused by the 'deuil' of departure. Picking out extracts from a variety of Breton's commentaries, it is possible to see the senses of taste and smell being evoked:

La chaleur m'écrase. Ma bouche et mon corps ont pris le goût de caoutchouc de la quinine. La malaria rode dans les coins, elle vient se faire sentir un peu.

L'air vibre de chaleur et d'abeilles. J'aime l'odeur de la végétation tombée et du feu éteint.

The ability of the sense of smell to transport Breton back in time to a past memory is also demonstrated in an extract in which he describes how the smell of a particular type of wood is:

le premier souvenir que je garde de mon arrivée dans cette vallée. Quand je le respire maintenant je crois revenir à l'époque où je ne comprenais rien de ce qui se disait, où les choses étaient mystérieuses de façon si simple, où je ne reconnaissais pas bien les visages, et où mes impressions se reposaient sur des détails infimes : des bruits, des odeurs, des atmosphères, car il n'y avait rien d'autre.

In addition to his choice of vocabulary, Breton uses the audio-visual ability of film to enhance the sensorium of the film. This he does visually, as I have shown with the previous example, by using the close-up to evoke the sense of touch, and aurally through his exploration of sound.

Sound plays an important role in *Le Ciel dans un jardin*, and the viewer benefits from the advances in digital camera technology that enables the filmmaker to capture the sounds of his environment much more clearly than on previous available equipment.<sup>37</sup> The reflective tone of Breton's film pauses at times to capture a

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<sup>37</sup> Compare the 'crackly' sound of Piault's *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* to the 'quality' of the sound in Breton's films. (There is also degradation in the quality and colours of Piault's images).

‘soundscape’ from the natural environment – a shot of leaves rustling in the wind; a shot of the clouds moving against a blue sky, whilst in the background the viewer hears the sounds of birds. Breton also adds non-diegetic music to his second documentary; a decision that he explains is motivated by the fact that he is more ‘receptive’ to his senses in this second film (Director’s commentary).

One such example of non-diegetic music occurs near the end of *Le Ciel dans un jardin*, in a scene in which an extract of a lieder by Schubert is superimposed over a sequence in which the grandmother of Taimbuga’s family is seen working in the garden surrounded by greenery.<sup>38</sup> In Chapter 2, I analysed how Eliane de Latour incorporates a piece of original music into her film, *Le reflet de la vie*, to evoke the emotional feelings of solitude and contentment of the ethnographic subjects portrayed in the film. With Breton’s film, the use of music is not to evoke the interior world of the ‘others’ but is used to evoke the ethnographer’s own feelings:

ce n’est pas une illustration sonore avec de la musique qui est la leur, qu’ils fabriquent... C’est une musique qui vient chez moi, c’est donc une musique d’état d’âme. C’est comme un regard caméra, ça veut dire que celui qui regarde a un sentiment sur ce qu’il regarde

(Director’s commentary).

The use of music to evoke the nostalgic and melancholic mood of the ethnographer as he says goodbye to the Wodani can be assimilated into the variety of strategies that Breton employs in both documentaries to enhance the notion of an ‘embodied camera’

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<sup>38</sup> The title of the piece of music is *Meeres Stille*, based on a poem written by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and set to music by Franz Schubert.

or 'corporeal image'. The 'interior music' of Breton is a way of conveying to the viewer of *Le Ciel dans un jardin*, the idea that there is a sentient being behind the camera – who not only speaks and looks, but also *feels*.

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Over the course of this chapter, I have explored the manner in which Breton incorporates the 'voices' of the ethnographic subjects into his films. In both documentaries, Breton includes the 'voices' of the 'others' through dialogue with himself, while in the second film, the ethnographer is also able to observe them interacting among themselves as he has become accepted as part of their daily routine (for example, in the 'garden sequence'). However, Breton includes the Wodani villagers in another significant choice of filmic discourse with the right of the 'others' to look back at the camera. This has the benefit of combating the potential 'voyeurism' of the camera's gaze that may be levelled at certain observational films, and promotes the notion of exchange between the ethnographer and subjects. It is also a question of ethics: if the ethnographer has the right to look at their lives, they too, in the interests of equality, should have the right to look at the ethnographer. The 'return gaze' also has the function of drawing the viewer's attention to the idea that alterity is a reversible concept: for the ethnographer it is the Wodani who are 'other'; for the Wodani, it is Breton.

Breton's approach to filming alterity is one which seeks to explore the potential of integrating his own 'voice' (or perhaps it would be more appropriate to suggest 'self') into the narrative. He includes his 'direct voice' through interaction with the filmed subjects and through the use of voice-over commentary, much in the same way as Eliane de Latour does. If Breton may be said to have an 'indirect voice' (and by 'voice' it is necessary to conceive of the concept of 'voice' in a broad sense), it is through his development of an 'embodied camera'. Breton links the 'eye' of the camera to his own 'I' not only, through the inclusion of his 'direct voice', but also through the strong sense of identification between the movement of his own body and that of the camera – the camera looks and moves as a person. In his second film, *Le Ciel dans un jardin*, Breton seeks to extend the notion of an 'embodied camera' to include an evocation of his senses, through a combination of audio-visual strategies (the use of close-ups and the inclusion of non-diegetic music).

At the start of this chapter, I expressed that one of the critical concepts that I wished to explore in the ethnographic documentaries of Stéphane Breton, was David MacDougall's idea that 'before films are a form of representing or communicating, they are a form of looking and being' (2006: 6-7). Film as a form of 'looking' is an idea that I explored in particular in the first film in my analysis of the 'return gaze', whereas the notion of film as a form of 'being' was explored in Breton's second film. However, I have also attempted, in my exploration of Breton's evocation of his senses, to demonstrate that MacDougall's concept of film as a form of 'looking and being' may also be extended to film as a form of 'feeling', i.e. that the medium of film is also capable of being used to create a more 'sensuous' ethnography, one in which the sensorium is included.

### Concluding Remarks

Over the course of this dissertation, I have explored the manner in which three French ethnographic filmmakers have employed the medium of film to represent alterity over a period of three decades, starting in the 1980s with Colette Piault, and finishing in the early 2000s with Stéphane Breton. More precisely, my analysis has focused on the notion of 'voice' (as defined by Bill Nichols), and the way that each filmmaker has sought to include or exclude their 'authorial voice' and 'voices' of the ethnographic subjects.

In Chapter 1, I investigated Colette Piault's decision to eschew the use of voice-over commentary to 'give voice' to her filmed subjects. It was suggested that Piault's choice is in part a reflection of the development of new synchronised sound camera technology, and a desire to develop a different method of filming alterity in a postcolonial world, an approach which focuses on the quotidian rather than rituals – an anthropology of 'living reality'.

The observational mode of filmmaking which features in the ethnographer's first film, *Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête* (1980), promotes the idea of an 'invisible' camera, filming the 'others' as if it were not there. As I have shown, the occasional glance at the camera breaks this illusion, metonymically drawing the filmmaker into the film, and revealing the inherent 'performative' nature of film. This moment of reflexivity therefore raises the question of whether an 'invisible' camera, which observes without intruding, is possible or even desirable – for the 'disembodied' camera creates an impression of 'voyeurism'. It is also a mode of filmmaking which ignores the ethnographic encounter between filmmaker and subject. The use of the interview, seen

in Piault's second film, *Une vie dure*, may be interpreted as a means of providing the contextual information that is often lacking in observational films, as well as addressing the relationship between ethnographer and subjects. However, the inclusion of only two 'voices' from the same family, in *Une vie dure*, also raises the issue of 'representativity': to what extent are these life histories representative of a wider social context? This demonstrates that interview-based documentary may also suffer from a 'lack of context'.

Chapter 2 explores the notion of 'reflexivity' and assesses the way in which Eliane de Latour includes her 'direct voice' through the use of voice-over commentary and dialogue with the ethnographic subjects. The ethnographer's 'indirect voice' is also explored, for the realisation that film is inevitably a construction created by an author, leads her to explore the anthropological possibilities of film aesthetics, since 'objective' representation is not possible. In *Les temps du pouvoir* (1984), de Latour explores the possibilities of montage. For example, in her interview with Samna, she superimposes the soundtrack over a montage of images. This provides 'contextual' illustration to Samna's words and acts as a form of analytical commentary on the content of the interview. In her second film, *Le reflet de la vie* (1987), de Latour explores the possibilities of photographic montage in her attempt to create a distinct aesthetic style to reflect the different personalities of her ethnographic subjects. De Latour's approach to filming alterity is one which adopts a 'polyvocal' approach, placing the ethnographic encounter at the heart of her documentaries, and which sees the beginning of an 'embodied camera' in which the 'eye' of the camera is linked to the 'I' of the ethnographer.

The concept of 'embodied camera' is further developed in Chapter 3 with an analysis of two documentaries by Stéphane Breton. Breton extends the incorporation of the 'voices' of the ethnographic subjects to include the 'return gaze'. This diffuses the 'voyeuristic' gaze of the camera and reveals that alterity is a reversible concept. The 'voice' of the filmmaker is included through voice-over and dialogue. However, Breton seeks to include his presence further by adopting an 'embodied camera' whose gaze is firmly identified with the 'eye' of the ethnographer, and whose movement reflects the movement of his body. In his second film *Le Ciel dans un jardin* (2003), Breton seeks to extend the notion of an 'embodied camera' to include an evocation of his senses, through a combination of audio-visual strategies (the use of close-ups and the inclusion of non-diegetic music). In this sense, Breton's second documentary suggests that the person behind the camera is not only someone who looks and moves, but is also a sentient being.

Despite Piault, de Latour and Breton adopting different approaches to film alterity, there are, nevertheless, common ideas running through their work – the most notable being the desire to incorporate the 'voice' of the 'others'. Each ethnographer explores, to a varying degree, the relationship of film and memory, whether attempting to preserve the life history of the ethnographic subjects, or exploring the ethnographer's memories of their fieldwork evoked on film. As a consequence, it is possible to discern a notion of 'salvage ethnography' running through the documentaries. This does not necessarily mean that they are trying to preserve traces of a disappearing culture or way of life, (Breton acknowledges the Wodani's right to aspire to change), but rather that the

act of filming alterity creates an audio-visual ‘memory’ evoking their time in the field; a souvenir of sorts.

By analysing the documentaries of these three filmmakers, it is possible to see an evolution in the approach of filming alterity, over a period of three decades: from observation to reflexivity, from the exclusion of the ‘voice’ of the ethnographer to the incorporation of the ethnographer’s senses in the ‘embodied camera’ of Breton. In each chapter, I have also attempted to show how each filmmaker’s method of filming otherness may be critically linked to modes of documentary filmmaking in general, and to developments in anthropological theory.

However, it is important to emphasise that although there is an evolution in approach, this does not mean that Breton’s documentaries represent a ‘better’ or less ‘problematic’ way of filming alterity. As Bill Nichols points out:

I do not intend to argue that self-reflexive [or any other form of] documentary represents a pinnacle or solution in any ultimate sense. It is, however, in the process of evolving alternatives that seem, in our present historical context, less obviously problematic than the strategies of commentary, *vérité*, or the interview. These new forms may, like their predecessors, come to seem more ‘natural’ or even ‘realistic’ for a time. But the success of every form breeds its own overthrow: it limits, disavows, represses (as well as represents). In time, new necessities bring new formal inventions

(Rosenthal & Corner eds. 2005: 18).

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that this evolution does not render the previous mode of filming alterity 'obsolete'. Rather than interpreting Breton's 'embodied camera' as the antithesis of Piau's observational approach, it is perhaps more useful to interpret Breton's work as a search to adapt the inherent 'voyeurism' of the camera's gaze. Breton's documentaries are therefore an adaptation of the observational mode of filmmaking – an attempt to create an 'embodied camera' which can observe the 'others' whilst being included as part of the scene.

## **Appendix 1: Colette Piault – Biography and Filmography**

### **Biography**

Colette Piault is an anthropologist-filmmaker, born in 1933, who has been an active part of the attempt to promote the use of film in anthropology, setting up the Société française d'anthropologie visuelle in 1985 and creating and organising an international film seminar 'Looking at European Societies' (1982-1992). As a postgraduate she undertook fieldwork in West Africa where she collaborated with Jean Rouch (1917-2004). Following on from this experience, Piault worked in Northern France for a short period before moving to a new terrain in Greece. Since 1974, her research has been based in the small Greek mountain village of Ano Ravenia in Epirus where she has studied the effect extensive migration has had on village life.

From early on in her career, Colette Piault has used the medium of film as part of her research methodology and has made at least one film in each of the three geographical areas in which she has worked. To date she has made nine documentaries, six of which are based in Ano Ravenia.

## Filmography

1972	<i>Albertine et Dorcas</i>	(Ivory Coast)
1972	<i>Le Brouck</i>	(France)
1980	<i>Ce n'est pas tous les jours fête</i>	(Greece: Ano Ravenia)
1982	<i>Au fil de l'aiguille</i>	(Greece: Ano Ravenia)
1985	<i>Let's Get Married</i>	(Greece: Ano Ravenia)
1986	<i>Ma famille et moi</i>	(Greece: Ano Ravenia; Switzerland: Zurich)
1990	<i>Charbonniers</i>	(Greece: Ano Ravenia)
1996	<i>Une vie dure</i>	(Greece: Ano Ravenia)
2003	<i>Morts présumés disparus</i>	(Cyprus)

## Appendix 2: Eliane de Latour - Biography and Filmography

### Biography

Eliane de Latour is an active anthropologist-filmmaker who obtained her doctorate in 1981 from Paris V. Since making her first documentary, *Les temps du pouvoir* (1984), based on her doctoral research on the history of political change in the Mawri region of the Niger, filmmaking has remained an integral part of her ethnographic work. A founder member of the audiovisual centre of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), de Latour's research interests relate to the use of the medium of film in anthropology. She describes her research on her EHESS web page as centred around the questions of:

Cinéma et les Sciences sociales

La spécificité du cinéma dans le processus des connaissances

La spécificité du cinéma dans la constitution et restitution des savoirs<sup>39</sup>

To date she has made seven films – four of which can be described as adopting a documentary approach and three which can be described as either 'ethno-fiction', in the manner of Jean Rouch, or 'fiction'. With the exception of two films, *Le reflet de la vie* and *Si bleu, si calme*, made in the Cevennes and in the Maison d'Arrêt de la Santé (a Parisian prison), the remaining films have been based in West Africa (Niger and Ivory Coast).

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<sup>39</sup> This information was accessed in 2007. Eliane de Latour has since left the Centre d'études africaines (Ceaf) at the EHESS and so this web page has disappeared.

## Filmography

1984	<i>Les temps du pouvoir</i>	(Niger)	Documentary
1987	<i>Le reflet de la vie</i>	(Cévennes, France)	Documentary
1989	<i>Tidjane ou les voies d'Allah</i>	(Niger)	Documentary
1992	<i>Contes et comptes de la cour</i>	(Niger)	Documentary
1996	<i>Si bleu, si calme</i>	(Paris)	'Fiction'
2000	<i>Bronx-Barbès</i>	(Ivory Coast)	'Fiction'
2005	<i>Les oiseaux du ciel</i>	(Europe and Ivory Coast)	'Fiction'

### **Appendix 3: Stéphane Breton – Biography and Filmography**

#### **Biography**

Stéphane Breton is an anthropologist and documentary filmmaker who currently teaches at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. Born in 1959, he studied at the EHESS under the direction of the anthropologist Marc Augé and obtained his doctorate in 1986. Primarily a specialist of Melanesia, Breton spent many years researching in Papua New Guinea before the political situation caused by the Indonesian occupation of the country forced him to seek new terrain. Recent documentary work has included fieldwork in the mountains of Tian Shan in Kyrgyzstan near China and in New Mexico. In 2006 he organised the ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un corps’ exposition at the Musée du quai Branly for which he wrote an accompanying essay. Breton is also the founder and director of a documentary film series entitled ‘L’usage du monde’ which is made in collaboration with the Musée du quai Branly and is coproduced by ARTE and Les Films d’Ici. Set in Gabon, *La peur dans la forêt*, produced by Julien Samani, is the first documentary in this new series and is currently in production.

To date, Breton has made seven documentaries (one is currently in production) that testify to the variety of countries he has visited as part of his ethnographic fieldwork. This includes his first film set in Nigeria, documentaries made in Papua New Guinea (on which my analysis is based) and films shot in the mountains of Tian Shan, Paris and New Mexico.

**Filmography**

1994	<i>Un dieu au bord de la route</i>	(Nigeria)
2001	<i>Eux et moi : Un ethnologue en Papouasie</i>	(Papua New Guinea)
2003	<i>Le ciel dans le jardin</i>	(Papua New Guinea)
2005	<i>Un été silencieux (52 minutes)</i>	(Kyrgyzstan)
2007	<i>Le monde extérieur (52 minutes)</i>	(Paris)
2007	<i>Nuages apportant la nuit (30 minutes)</i>	(Papua New Guinea)
2008	<i>La maison vide (In production)</i>	(New Mexico)

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 1959 *Moi, un Noir*  
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 1974 *Le Dama d'Ambara: Enchanter la mort*  
 1984 *Dionysos*  
 1999 *Sirius: l'étoile Dogon*

<sup>40</sup> All these films are available for consultation at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Site Tolbiac). Unless otherwise indicated all these films are on video based formats.

<sup>41</sup> Both Breton's 2001 and 2003 films are available to purchase on DVD (released 2005) and may also be downloaded on ARTE's video on demand website: <http://www.artevod.com/home.do>

## **INTERNET SITES CONSULTED**

### **Breton, Stéphane:**

ARTE interview Stéphane Breton – ‘Lui et moi’:

<http://www.arte.tv/fr/accueil/recherche/1126334.html>

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<http://www.lesfilmsdici.fr/accueil.htm>

### **Latour, Eliane de:**

Eliane de Latour’s webpage at the Centre d’études africaines at the EHESS.

(This has now been removed as she has left the EHESS):

<http://ceaf.ehess.fr/sommaire.php?id=29>

Interview for her film *Bronx-Barbès* (2000) at the Forum des images during the Recontres internationales du cinéma:

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Comité du film ethnographique:  
<http://www.comite-film-ethno.net/>

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<http://www.ehess.fr/fr/>

Online etymological dictionary:  
<http://www.etymonline.com>

Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE):  
<http://www.insee.fr>

Médiamétrie – measurement of audience viewing figures across the French media:  
<http://www.mediametrie.fr/index.php>

Système universitaire de documentation:  
<http://www.sudoc.abes.fr/>

