

# TOWARDS INTERCULTURAL DOCUMENTARY

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PHD BY PUBLISHED WORK  
UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS, LONDON  
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### **VIEWING SUBMITTED WORKS.**

DVDs of documentary films and hard copies of book and catalogue chapters are submitted with the text of the thesis. Further production information is available at [www.lotusfilms.co.uk](http://www.lotusfilms.co.uk)

‘The reference to the other is an awakening,  
an awakening to proximity,  
and this is responsibility for the neighbour,  
to the point of substituting for him’

Emmanuel Lévinas  
(1989:178)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my supervisors, Deborah Cherry and James Swinson for their talent in melding the languages of practice and scrutiny in the Academy and the vision to intuit this thesis from a screening. Deborah Cherry elegantly nurtured my writing over many years and with great generosity of spirit to bring this to fruition. I would like to thank all the on-screen contributors and interviewees who made the work possible by allowing me to film, photograph or write about something of their experience and the many documentary-making colleagues who worked with me on the film practice discussed here. My thanks to my students and colleagues at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts, London and previously at Birkbeck and Goldsmiths Colleges and City University who helped cultivate a critical culture for documentary futures where we could test out some of these ideas. Many colleagues helped in different ways including Sandra Borley, Ian Collison, Mark Crawley, Jane Collins, Zoe Forster, Peter Harvey, Richard Keeble, Suzanne Marcuzzi, Nancy Platt, William Raban, Lizzie Thynne and Amanda Windle. I remain in the happy debt of teachers and mentors whose kindness and critical encouragement modeled an example of how to pass these gifts to others. Among them: Alan Durant, Dhammarati, Jonathan Dollimore, Padmavajra, Michael Renov, Jacqueline Rose, Emma Sandon, Alan Sinfield, Allon White and Brian Winston. None of this would have been possible without the steady support of friends and family, especially Drs. Gargi and Vijay Rughani who fired the love of knowledge in pursuit of wisdom and the two people who I would like to acknowledge more fully than I can express: who gave so much of their time and hearts to support me through the research and writing, JS and TR.



# ABSTRACT

‘Towards Intercultural Documentary’ is a PhD by Published Work that is comprised of four documentary films, an exhibition catalogue essay and an academic book chapter to form a collective body of work in film and text focused on what Rughani proposes as ‘intercultural documentary practice’. This body of work configures ‘intercultural documentary practice’ as a space or arena in which people of radically different perspectives encounter the other.<sup>1</sup> Intercultural documentary aspires to create pluralised spaces of exchange by engaging difference within and between communities. In this work, voices traditionally overlooked, excluded or edged to the cultural margins are re-framed to find a new centrality in a broader encounter, more accurately reflecting the diverse influences that comprise polyglot societies. In the United Kingdom (UK) context, three submitted films, broadcast to peak-time audiences on BBC 2 and Channel 4, stood in contradistinction to mainstream narratives that typically portrayed British experience as largely monocultural and homogeneous.

The contribution to knowledge of this thesis is in deepening and extending the dynamics of documentary practice to embrace intercultural communication and to weld this to the ethics of documentary making. In so doing, this body of work situates ethics as central to the documentary encounter and offers new practice-based insights into navigating tensions in the process of making such work and its methodologies.

‘Towards Intercultural Documentary’ presents a case for the coherence of the body of work that makes a contribution to knowledge at the inter-disciplinary confluence of: documentary studies and practice, ethics and intercultural communication. The submission comprises: *Islam and the Temple of ‘Ilm’* (BBC 2, 1990); *One of the Family* (Channel 4, 2000); *Playing Model Soldiers* (Channel 4, 2000); *Glass Houses* (British Council, 2004); the exhibition catalogue essay *British Homeland* in *Home* (British Council, 2004) and the book chapter ‘Are You a Vulture? Reflecting on the ethics and aesthetics of coverage of atrocity and its aftermath, in *Peace Journalism* (Peter Lang, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text from here, the ‘other’ is referred to without quotation marks.

CV: PRATAP RUGHANI  
 Director Lotus Films  
 Course Director, MA Documentary Film  
 London College of Communication, University of the Arts London (UAL)

## Professional Practice

Documentary filmmaker, photographer and writer. Over thirty commissions as documentary film-maker for BBC TV, Channel 4, British Council and fine art spaces (production list detailed below). Freelance writer for *The Independent*, *The Observer* and magazine editor.

## List of Publications

### Films

<i>Justine</i> . Gallery film for ProjectArt Works / Paul Hamlyn (2013) Opened at Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts.	DIRECTOR / PRODUCER
<i>Loving Berlin</i> . Music film for Japanese broadcast, portrait of a friendship (50 minutes, EcoMusic TV, 2011)	DIRECTOR/ ARTIST PHOTOGRAPHER
Remembering Khairlanji (photographic essay & performative lecture At ICA, London, 2010).	
<i>The Botanist</i> , art-film installation (21 mins, 2009) Modern Art Oxford	CAMERA
<i>Urunanna, Rwanda</i> (5 mins, 2008) BBC World	DIRECTOR
<i>Found in Translation</i> (50 mins, 2007) Lotus Films (Dept. of Education)	DIRECTOR
<i>Glass Houses</i> (47 mins, 2004) British Council (Lotus Films)	DIRECTOR
<i>An Indian Affair</i> (1 hr, 2001) Channel 4	DIRECTOR
<i>New Model Army</i> (1 hr, 2000) Channel 4 (Umbrella Pictures)	DIRECTOR
<i>Beautiful Death &amp; Such a Wonderful Thing</i> , two films for the series <i>Planet Ustinov</i> (2 x 1 hr, 1998), Channel 4 (Granada Documentaries)	ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
<i>Satellite Wars</i> (2 x 40 mins, 1995) Channel 4 (Brook Lapping)	DIRECTOR / ASSOC. PRODUCER
<i>Africa's Big Game</i> (1 hr, 1994) BBC2 (Scorer Association)	DIRECTOR
<i>The Dog's Tale</i> , (40 min, 1992) BBC 2 (Union Pictures)	DIRECTOR
<i>Water Wars</i> (50 min, 1992) BBC 2	ASSISTANT PRODUCER
<i>Taking Liberties</i> (2 x 30 min, 1991, BBC 2	DIRECTOR / ASSOC. PRODUCER
<i>Antenna: Islam &amp; the Temple of 'Ilm'</i> (17 min, 1990) BBC2	DIRECTOR
<i>Antenna: How Green is Your Garden?</i> (20 min, 1989) BBC 2	DIRECTOR
<i>The Play on One</i> (1989), BBC One Drama	COMMISSIONING NEW WRITERS / SCRIPT ED.

### Photography

The Karuna Trust, annual photographic essays, in India and Ladakh (9 x24 pages, annual publication 2004-),	PHOTOGRAPHER
60 photographs for <i>Planet Ustinov</i> Granada Book, Simon & Schuster, London 1998	PHOTOGRAPHER

## Print Publications

### *Articles in books and catalogues*

- 2013 *The Documentary Film Book*, author chapter 'The Dance of Documentary Ethics'. *British Film Institute*. London 2013, ed. B. Winston.
- 2012 'Anthology' *Project Art Works 1997-2012*, ed. Adams, K & Shaw, P, author book chapter 'The Art of Not Knowing' pp. 204-7. *Project Art Works*, Hastings 2012.
- 2010 'Are You a Vulture? Reflecting on the ethics and aesthetics of coverage of atrocity and its aftermath', pp. 157-71 in *Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*, eds. Richard Keeble, John Tulloch and Florian Zollmann, foreword by John Pilger (Oxford: Peter Lang).
- 2004 Catalogue essay for *A Place Called Home*, touring exhibition, supported by the British Council.

### *Edited volumes*

- 1996 *Art, Activism and Fundamentalism*, special issue of *The India Magazine*, vol.16 (January 1996).
- 1993 *AIDS and HIV*, special issue of *New Internationalist* 250 (1993).
- 1993 *Tourism*, special issue of *New Internationalist* 245 (1993).

### *Articles in journals / exhibition catalogues*

- 2013 John Akomfrah in conversation with Pratap Rughani for Vol 2.1, *MIRAJ* (Moving Image Research Art Journal) 2013
- 2013 Round Table, *Ethnography and Documentary in the Avant-Garde* for Vol 2.1, *MIRAJ* (Moving Image Research Art Journal) 2013
- 2011 "Where Three Dreams Cross" Review article for *Photography & Culture Journal*
- 2004 "A Place Called Home", *Art South Africa* 3, no. 1.
- 2004 "British Homeland", Essay in art catalogue *A Place Called Home* (British Council, South Africa).
- 2001 "Representing Cultures: From National Story to a 'National Brand' ... and Back Again", *British Studies Now* (British Council)  
[http://www.counterpoint-online.org/doclibrary/member\\_content/download/24/bsn15.pdf](http://www.counterpoint-online.org/doclibrary/member_content/download/24/bsn15.pdf)

### *Journalism and reportage*

- 2008 "The Dalai Lama's Practical Guide to Happiness" *The Times of London*, 30.5.08
- 2007 "Escaping untouchability", *The Times of London*, 20 January.
- 2006 "Documentary Film", article series, *The India Magazine*, February-March.
- 2005 "Prayers on the Wind", text and photographic essay, Ladakh. *Indo-Brit Magazine*.
- 2002 "Anish Kapoor" studio visit, article and photography, *Urthona Magazine*, issue 19.
- 2002 "Conscientious Objection", *The Times of London*, 19 October.
- 1998 "The Pardoner's Tale" (Truth & Reconciliation in South Africa) *Dharma Life* Issue 9.
- 1997 "Pilgrim's Process" *Dharma Life* Issue 4.
- 1995 "India's Documentary Films" *The India Magazine*, Issues Feb & March.
- 1996 "Satellite Television", *Himal magazine*, Vol 9, No. 4, June,
- 1991 "The Struggle to Keep Justice in Focus" *The Independent*, 27.2.91

## Awards and Honours

### *For documentary filmmaking:*

- 2001 *New Model Army* (Channel 4)  
Director's Award for Best Film, TV Factual, RIMA Awards, 2001.  
Shortlist for Best Documentary Series, Grierson Award, 2001. Selected for screenings at festivals, including *Black Screen* Film Festival and *Bite the Mango* Film Festival 2001.
- 1996 *Africa's Big Game* (BBC 2)  
Best of Festival award, Missoula Environmental Film Festival, 1996.

### *For research:*

- 2010 AHRC Network Grant, as co-investigator of bid to develop Moving Image Research Network, culminating in the launch of a new peer-reviewed academic journal; *Moving Image Research Art Journal*. (MIRAJ, launched April 2012)
- 2010 The University of the Arts Research Centre for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation (TrAIN), Associate Award for film development.
- 2009 Pedagogic Research Funding for developing new MA curriculum, UAL.
- 2007 Small Grant, funding for *The Botanist* film installation, University of the Arts London.

### *For journalism:*

- 1992 "The Observer" Young Travel Writer award for investigation "Lake Issyk Kul"
- 1988 German Embassy Journalism Prize for writing on race and education in Berlin.

### *For teaching:*

- 2013 Higher Education Academy, UK. National Teaching Fellowship Award (NTFS)
- 2012 Univ of Arts, London teaching award for contribution to key strategic vision of Univ of Arts London including writing & leading new MA in Documentary Film.

### *For public service:*

- 2009 Art Works People Award, 'for contributing to the success of work in widening participation'.

## Qualifications

- 2009 MA, International Journalism, City University, London.
- 2002 MA, Philosophy, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
- 1987 BA (Hons), English Literature, University of Sussex.
- 2008 Certificate, Creative Writing, Birkbeck College, University of London.
- 1996 Certificate, World Cinema, National Film and Television Institute of India.
- 1995 Certificate, Indian Aesthetics, National Museum Institute of India.
- 1988 P/G Diploma Newspaper Journalism, City University, London.

### *Professional training*

- 2008 Certificate in Supervising Research Degrees (PhD / MPhil) for professionals in art, design and communication, Royal College of Art / University of the Arts London.
- 1991 Drama Directors' Training, BBC TV.
- 1988-90 Production Trainee, BBC TV.

## Academic Appointments

**Reader in Documentary Film**, London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. *Teaching in documentary film and photographic practices and writing, embraces observational, fine art, journalistic and industry approaches.*

- 2006- Course Director, MA Documentary Film & MA Documentary Research for Film and Television, London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. Devised & wrote LCC's first post-graduate film production MA.
- 2002-08 Visiting Lecturer in Film, Department of Lifelong Learning, Birkbeck College, University of London.
- 2001 fwd Specialist Tutor in the reporting of religion & ethics, Centre for Journalism, City University, London.
- 1991-92 Lecturer, English Literature, Goldsmiths College, University of London. Co-wrote & delivered new BA strand *Writing for Media*.

## Chairing/Convening seminars at national & international conferences

- 2014 Panel Chair: *The Act of Killing* Special Seminar, Central St Martins, UAL
- 2013 Panel Chair: Documentary Compassion at *Visible Evidence XX*, Stockholm.
- 2012 Panel Chair: Graduate School Public Research Platform debate 'Art & Social Engagement' Chelsea, Camberwell, Wimbledon Schools of Art.
- 2012 Panel Chair: *Documentary Now!* Panel Title: 'YouTube Activism', UCL London.
- 2012 Conference Chair (& co-Investigator) AHRC-funded Place, Landscape / Ecology. LCC, June 2012
- 2012 Conference Chair (& co-Investigator) AHRC-funded Documentary & The Ethnographic Avant-Garde, LCC, January 2012
- 2011 Panel Convenor: *Documentary Now!* Panel Title: '*Ethics at the edge: documentary dilemmas in sound and image*', London.
- 2010 Panel Convenor: MECCSA, Media, Communication & Cultural Studies Association, Chaired panel '*Developing Stories: Narrative and Subjectivity*'
- 2009 Panel Chair: RNUAL summer forum.
- 2009 Panel Chair: *South Asian Documentary* for *Visible Evidence XVI* Univ. Southern California, USA.
- 2008 Panel Chair: *Public Diplomacy* seminar (Foreign Office, Wilton Park)
- 2007 Conference Chair: *UK & Palestinian Territories*, including chairing live video-conferencing link up between British Council London & Ramallah & Jerusalem studios. (British Council)
- 2006 Conference Chair: *New National Identities*, 2 day residential conference, included facilitating conference & chairing seminars with Lord Kinnock. (Ditchley Park/ British Council).
- 2006 Panellist, City University, London. MA Screenwriting Symposium on writing and censorship.
- 2004 Panel Chair: *Eye to Eye* conference, seminar *Cross-cultural Approaches to Death*, for 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The British Council, London.
- 2004 Screening of selected work / Q&A for Durban International Film Festival & masterclasses with new film-makers from Durban Townships. South Africa.

## Academic Conference Papers

*My first academic conference paper was to the 1988 Literature, Teaching, Politics national conference on education policy and social exclusion. Recent academic papers include.*

- 2014 Keynote to Learning & Teaching conference, Univ. of Arts London
- 2013 VISIBLE EVIDENCE XX, (Stockholm Univ.) *The Dance of Documentary Ethics*  
Screening of *Justine* at Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts.
- 2013 Screening & paper for *Into the Archive: Re-Viewing Kubrick* at LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
- 2012 Screening & paper for “Truth, Dare or Promise” *The Art of Not Knowing*, Goldsmiths’ College, London Univ.
- 2012 Screening & paper for AHRC Moving Image research Network conference at Univ. of Arts London ‘*The Dance of Documentary Ethics.*’
- 2011 Screening & paper at Tate Modern, Starr auditorium for ‘Embedded’ conference with Simon Norfolk exhibition. Paper: ‘*Accidentally in Bed*’ on access and censorship in reporting war.
- 2011 DOCUMENTARY NOW! (Westminster Univ). ‘*Whose story? Ethical tensions and documentary narrative*’
- 2010 ICA, London *Remembering Khairlanji*, (practice-based film and photography paper) for *Histories of Hatred* conference, which was also filmed for London Consortium / LCACE documentary).
- 2010 VISIBLE EVIDENCE XVII, leading forum for Documentary Film studies (Bogazici, Univ. Istanbul, Turkey). *Documentary Ethics in the Digital Age* (practice-based paper).
- 2010 MECCSA, Media, Communication & Cultural Studies Association at LSE. *The Documentarist and the Subject* practice-based (film and text) paper.
- 2009 VISIBLE EVIDENCE XVI, (Univ. of Southern California, 2009) *Solidarity? With whom and to what?* Practice-based paper on the creative space of observational documentary and the ethics of response.
- 2008 VISIBLE EVIDENCE XV, (Univ. of Lincoln) *Representing Atrocity: Ethical and Aesthetic Considerations in Photographing the Khairlanji Murders in India.* Practice-based film and photography paper / book chapter based on this paper.
- 2008 DOCUMENTARY NOW! (Birkbeck College, London Univ). *Documentary Ethics.*

## External Examining

- 2014fwd MA Screen Documentary, Goldsmiths College, Univ of London.
- 2013 MA Documentary Practices, MA Journalism, MA Media Communication  
MA Animation, UCA (Farnham) External Advisor for validation & revalidation.
- 2012 MFA, Wimbledon College of Art, UAL, External Advisor.
- 2009-12 MA in International Journalism at Brunel University, external examiner.
- 2010 BA in Community Journalism at Lincoln University – external validator  
Validator, BA Community Journalism, Lincoln University
- 2009-10 BA Journalism at Thames Valley University

## Professional Service and Other Academic Appointments

- 2014 fwd Editorial Board, *Journal of Media Practice*.
- 2012 fwd International Advisory Board, *Moving Image Review & Art Journal*.
- 2010-12 Co-Investigator of AHRC-funded bid *The Moving Image Research Network* from which *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* developed.
- 2007- Fellow of Higher Education Academy, UK.
- 2005- Executive Group of *Institute of Communication Ethics*, publishing *Ethical Space*, the Institute's peer-reviewed quarterly journal.
- fwd
- 2002- Voting member of British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), invited for contribution to documentary film.
- 2002- UK Trustee, *Pragya* Environmental Charity (Whitley Award-winning international environmental charity, with UN observer status).
- 1999- Director, Lotus Films
- 1998- BBC TV Training; Associate, developing training for directors and individual learning consultancies for BBC TV documentaries.
- 1994- Member, Directors UK (formerly Directors' and Producers' Rights Society).
- 1994 Consultant editor, *The India Magazine* (leading English-language magazine on Indian arts).
- 1993 Co-editor, *New Internationalist* magazine.

## Contribution to Teaching & Learning

- 2009-14 Presented papers on pedagogy of my research and teaching practice each year at annual Teaching & Learning Day (UAL) & chaired debates / seminars. Including *Widening Participation in Film*; *Cultural capital: in whose image? Show & Tell*, *University to Industry*; *Making A Difference*; *what students say about us*
- 2010 *One Step at A Time*, interview for video on my widening participation research to develop a new curriculum used at HEA conference *Meeting the Challenge*.
- 2009 fwd CPD: Reflexive practice research for PhD by Published Work, 'Documentary Ethics' (UAL) *due to complete in 2013*.

## Selected Media Appearances

- 2010 Documentary based on *The Histories of Hatred* conference at ICA, April 2010, featuring my photography and writing for *Remembering Khairlanji* project, on documentary ethics.
- 2010 *One Step at A Time*, interview for video on my widening participation research to develop a new curriculum informed by student experience at LCC, Univ of Arts London.
- 1990 Interview for *Black & White Media Show*, BBC TV, on analysis of broadcast output
- 1989 *Big Words, Small Worlds*, interview for Channel 4 documentary on literary studies.

# INTRODUCTION

## INTERCULTURAL DOCUMENTARY

The term ‘intercultural’ as explored here is developed by the researcher to describe a focus in submitted works on the process of developing documentary dialogue between peoples of radically diverging backgrounds focused through a largely British post-colonial frame. The recognition of difference here is not about creating windows between isolated worlds but to configure documentary practices that help explore how difference is lived through connections and crossings. Intercultural documentary situates documentary practice beyond the reflection of a singular, dominant monoculture to insist on recognising, reflecting and engaging the manifest pluralism of cultures explored in submitted work. This has implications for many forms of difference including gender, class, religion, sexuality, region and disability as much as for ethnicity and race.

Through the gateway of difference - initially through culture, race and ethnicity - intercultural documentary aspires to configure pro-filmic space as a pluralised zone, through which the experiences of people with diverse backgrounds can be juxtaposed and come into relation to a larger community. This approach to navigating difference suggests a radical centrality for the ethics of communication in documentary including relations between documentary teams and contributors and is central to the submission’s contribution to knowledge.

Mary Louise-Pratt’s concept of the ‘contact zone’ (1991) is useful when the Documentarist aims to open out a space of mutual influence in developing the work, especially in over-turning or at least ‘de-throning’ the thread within colonial or imperial aspirations to document and define aspects of the other as part of a cultural project of ‘knowing’ as subjugation.

Until the mid 1980s, the public square of broadcast documentary rarely reflected the desire to see and hear many of the UK’s diverse cultures - with some significant



exceptions from the independent, community, artists' and co-operative documentary circuits. The first task for UK documentary practice was cross-cultural, to achieve some kind of connection with Great Britain's evolution as a post-colonial, multi-racial society, with documentary practices distinct from its roots in empire marketing or colonial anthropology.

'Cross-cultural' here refers to the action of moving from one culture to another, or to compare different cultures, each understood as a distinct entity. In contrast, intercultural documentary is a dialogistic proposition: to research, film and distribute documentary that moves within and between multi-vocal cultural boundaries, navigating difference with a sharp focus on documentary ethics, and intended for audiences that include people and communities featured in the work.

Intercultural marks a development from 'cross-cultural' and an important shift of approach. The Latin root of 'inter' means 'what is between' for example, the Latin *inter nos* references a real or metaphoric zone between people. So 'intercultural' in this sense signals an emphasis on listening, dialogue and cultivating the space between self and other where interactions can lead to a new understanding, or a triangulated configuration, informed by engaging with (at least) two perspectives but not delimited or bound by them. To do this relies on a perspective where distinct groups are not conceived or framed as homogenous, an anthropological other or an exotic curiosity but as people who are part of a broader *polis*: a body of citizens with a say and an investment in the differences of view within communities and how their stories are told. This situates *intercultural* documentary as an arena which can engage and even broker dialogue within the larger community, enabled by the Documentarist's emphasis on seeking to listen and include diverse perspectives and experiences, whether or not the authorities where they live are interested in, respect or even recognise their rights as people, as discussed in the essay 'Are You a Vulture? Reflecting on the ethics and aesthetics of coverage of atrocity and its aftermath' (2010) and the documentary series *New Model Army* (2000).

The ethics of intercultural documentary practices includes an investigation of the competing forces that play out for the practitioner in the transition from pro-filmic events to documentary recording. Key individual choices made in securing access and

choosing how to frame are uncovered and scrutinised in 'Are You a Vulture?' This book chapter was selected along with *British Homeland* (2004) as key texts in which the thinking and practice of intercultural documentary are made explicit in both philosophical and ethical terms. Lévinas offers the philosophical challenge to pay profound attention to the face of the other as a path away from subsuming another's being into our 'totalising vision' (Hand 1996). Lévinas insists that the gaze of the other is primary, leaving us the ethical duty of creating and responding to our relatedness.

A common ambition for *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'* (1990), the catalogue essay *British Homeland* and both films submitted in the *New Model Army* series was to document and examine the intercultural realities of UK life. The pluralisation of UK identities is a significant impetus for developing documentary practices across boundaries of culture, ethnicity and race. This context influences ideas of the nation as described in comments by journalist Mohamed Dualeh in *Glass Houses* (2004):

'I will label myself, as clear as the day: I'm a Muslim, I'm British and there is no need for me to compromise to either one because I am both of them.'

Dualeh's background symbolises the mixing of cultures that he describes. He settled in Wales after growing up in Somalia, the son of an Irish-Brazilian father with a Portuguese-indigenous-American grandfather. Documentary practices exploring the lived experience of hybrid cultures signify changing national identities but also reach beyond a preoccupation with Britishness and its cultural borders.

This is an essential move for intercultural documentary, which is concerned with the conditions of contact between people. It unfolds the prospect of a deeper listening, hearing and articulation of difference in relation to others, rather than a preoccupation with definitions of the nation. This is a key drive in *Glass Houses*, which explores cultural difference played out across religious and cultural identities loosened from any single notion of nationality.

A new emphasis on working across and between sub-cultures to weave a broader conversation is a key marker of intercultural documentary. *Glass Houses* emerged from documentary actuality that reaches beyond national borders to explore inter-

national cultural exchange. *British Homeland* takes the development of British Asian identities and explores these in the context of the South Asian diaspora in South Africa.

Submitted works span a period from 1990-2010. An early documentary from 1990, *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'* is included to chart the evolution of the argument for intercultural documentary practice. UAL regulations exclude work published since the PhD enrolment date in 2011 although the intercultural enquiry continues in films and writing since then. The selection was made to give a range of documentary practices, though the focus is on UK television documentary and analysis of the work is led by a detailed discussion of the Channel 4 documentary series *New Model Army*. Some other works not submitted are referenced where they support the development of intercultural documentary practice. The continuing trajectory of Rughani's published work since 2010 is signalled in the conclusion. Instead of attempting a theoretical definition of documentary practice, intercultural documentary is explored as a 'travelling concept' (Bal 2002) which embraces many modes (film, photography and writing) in many contexts (television, cinema, gallery and NGO print publications). Their unity is not on the surface level of form but is elaborated through a common approach to intercultural communication and the ethics of approaching difference when recording actuality. At times this is explicit in the subjects discussed by contributors to films, at other times it is implied in the deeper structure of the work. Methodologies are integrated into discussion of individual films in chapters two and three. As the discussion moves towards more personal reflections on submitted work and the ethical questions these raise, the tone becomes more personal and the mode of address moves from third to first person in order to address the process of making more directly.

Stuart Hall, Emmanuel Lévinas, Edward Said, Raymond Williams, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak are significant influences in developing a trajectory towards this formulation of intercultural dialogue, though they did not apply their thinking directly to documentary studies. The interpretation of their ideas in formulating intercultural documentary is therefore part of the original contribution to knowledge.

Part of the promise, adventure and awkward beauty of intercultural documentary

practice is that the attempt to configure a more open space of engagement leads to work that sometimes witnesses and examines entrenched prejudices. This raises historically contingent questions about the efficacy of censorship and self-censorship when cultivating intercultural dialogue. The development of these ideas in submitted works is critically examined alongside the project to recover hidden histories.

My role in four of the five films submitted is director or sometimes producer and director. Film is a collaborative medium and the director's vision is informed by many factors including the editorial or artistic context of a commission and the industrial context of production, hence the context of these is discussed in section 3.1. Also included is Rughani's camerawork in *Glass Houses* where his role as location camera operator in Sudan and Indonesia is an example of intercultural visualisation. This is included to reference the haptic decisions and visual translation of intercultural ideas based on the precise choices of camerawork, including movement, angle, light, framing, shot duration and perspective in a production context.

Developing intercultural practice draws on a continuing debate over multiculturalism. Through many iterations especially from the mid 1960s, multiculturalism has by turns become a contested concept with its own discrete history, which refracts differently for different practitioners and theorists. Intercultural documentary draws on insights of multiculturalisms but also learns from critiques of it, for example multiculturalism's sometime inattention to power relations and racism. Intercultural documentary seeks to respond to unfolding events wherever this leads in such debates. Narrative emerges through processes which claim a space rather than being fully defined *a priori* through ideological, cultural or commercial pressures. Intercultural documentary can thus embrace not a single documentary 'truth' but diverse 'truths' that surface through an open period of filming enquiry and observation.

Subordinated communities (at least those whose histories are not dissolved by assimilation) re-appropriate, configure and create their own narratives in a process of trans-culturation (Pratt 1991:31-40). Intercultural documentary seeks out these interstitial spaces to hear competing narratives whilst navigating power dynamics and the huge asymmetries that often attend attempts to embrace marginalised and excluded people in a bigger conversation. This perspective has philosophical and ethical

dimensions which go to the deeper praxis of intercultural documentary: an intention to see and then to examine exchanges holistically and to attend to fissures or breaks in world-view of individual subjects whether as citizen, coloniser or colonised.

Documentary is an ideal form for intercultural enquiry. Documentarists can choose to try to hear and experience how the world looks from the points of view of diverging characters and contrasting sensibilities. There is a natural synergy of concept and practice as documentary actuality is inherently about recording context, understanding history and in so doing locating other ways of being and speaking. Documentary's history in film, television, photography and gallery practice arguably extends to other research areas including docudrama and oral history. For the purposes of this enquiry however the survey of documentary's areas of operation remains focused on the fields in which documentary practice operates in submitted works, namely documentary film in broadcast and cinematic contexts. No attempt is made to define documentary as its borders are changing once more in online and inter-active spheres and discussing a definition could lead to a focus farther away from the selected works.

The discussion of documentary cinema is limited to the period 1898 to 1960, after which the discussion shifts to broadcast contexts following the ascendancy of television documentary. Cinema documentary especially John Grierson's stable was a substantial inheritance for television where it was joined by influences from direct cinema and current affairs. Together they combined to produce the main documentary modes of UK broadcast television, the focus of submitted works. Some submitted works were picked up by the independent festival circuit and shown in cinemas but they were primarily made for television, hence the discussion of documentary history moves from cinema to television according to the chronology outlined.

The contribution to knowledge of these works is in deepening and extending the dynamics of engagement with difference underpinned by a thorough examination of individual practitioner ethics to propose an 'intercultural documentary practice'. Submitted works reveal new practice-based insights into navigating tensions in the process of making such work and the industrial context of production, thus weaving inter-disciplinary threads that constitute a critical and original contribution to knowledge.

# CHAPTER 1: BROADCAST CONTEXT OF SUBMITTED DOCUMENTARY FILMS

This section gives a brief insight into how Rughani's documentary practice emerged and developed in relation to the changing cultural ecology of UK broadcasting in the production period of submitted documentary works. Rughani's broadcast documentary practice coincided with television's belated recognition of aspects of the UK's manifest plurality that reconfigured the television landscape in the 1980s. In section 2.1 *Multiculturalisms and documentary* Rughani discusses how social unrest strengthened the case for on-screen diversity in the campaign for a fourth channel. This led the first Thatcher government (a Conservative government with radical instincts) to enact a liberal broadcasting reform that launched Channel 4 in 1982.

Channel 4 was conceived as a broader cultural space to reflect contemporary British life (Brown 2007). It may seem strange that this was not yet significantly happening within the existing national channels (BBC 1, BBC 2 and ITV) but the arrival of Channel 4 created pressure for other channels to wake up to significant but ignored stories and within a few seasons, their schedules started to reflect this cultural shift.

Rughani pursued storytelling as an undergraduate student studying world literature in the mid-1980s. He directed a play (Gardner Arts Centre, Sussex) and wrote newspaper stories (*Union News*) focused on the experiences of displaced or marginalised communities: Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong; the story of revolution in China; the influence of diversity in British media. These stories centred on questions of cross-cultural and international interest which evolved through the 1990s into a framework of inter-cultural communication.

Documentary became a natural form to bring together words, images and directing in stories about social change. The cultural profile of Channel 4 made it look like a place where new ideas might be heard and in 1987, Rughani wrote to the Channel with magazine programme and documentary ideas. None were commissioned and dozens of other letters resulted simply in advice to gain more experience, so Rughani developed

a radio feature and used this research to write a documentary proposal as part of his successful BBC TV Production Traineeship application in 1988. The radio story featured the Piscataway Indians, the original inhabitants of Washington DC and their struggle for survival against US government plans to build a sewage works on their sacred burial site or *ossuary*, which sits on the opposite bank of the Potomac river from George Washington's former home of Mount Vernon.

Rughani began work in BBC TV's Documentary Features department and went on to commission new writers for BBC TV Drama (*The Play on One*) before making his first films for the Science Features Unit and then settling back into the Documentary Features Unit. Rughani's particular interest in internationality combined with a preoccupation to bring international stories of change across national borders for UK broadcast. Several documentaries were unpacked to draw out a social justice or human rights edge. Rughani's editorial interests focused on exploring documentary as a form of dialogic communication, to re-contextualise the mono-narrative of imperial or victor history. He paid close attention to voices at the margins and wove these into mainstream or national conversations. Such voices were typically overlooked or ignored yet remain socially central to how UK society sees itself, as discussed in section 2.1 *Cultural studies* and in 3.1. *Industrial context of production*.

The focus of *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'* (submission 1.1.1.) saw pluralism in science as an ideal space of international thought and in so doing retells part of a suppressed history of cultural and scientific exchange. Rughani found a receptive context in the BBC Science Features department when it was commissioned in 1989, perhaps because of its novelty value. Few producers proposed such ideas at that time yet a new awareness of difference meant that some parts of BBC 2 could be interested.

In 1993 Rughani joined the *New Internationalist* magazine as a co-editor and spent a year developing his stills photojournalism and pursuing particular editorial arguments, rather than balancing these with counter-perspectives. These stories were marked by cross-cultural encounters, from a critique of mass-tourism (including photography by Martin Parr of the British abroad) and the internationality of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

However the medium of documentary film exerted a strong pull, especially when

conceived as a kind of crucible in which people of radically different experiences were brought into a broader conversation. After a year writing, Rughani returned to documentary film through independent commissions for BBC 2 and Channel 4.

From 1994, the instinct to go deeper into a specific perspective led to projects conceived more in terms of documentary film-essays. Significantly, this model was not a search for 'neutrality', 'impartiality' or 'objectivity', the nostrums of BBC journalism, but a search for developing particular perspectives, often by recovering hidden histories. The emphasis on documentary as a tool for mediating strained or fractured conversations continued through the 1990s in several documentaries that connected people, often polarised by colonial conflict and its aftermath. In *Gardeners in Eden* (part three of the series *Africa's Big Game*, BBC 2, 1995) and *Such A Wonderful Thing* (part four of the series *Planet Ustinov* Channel 4, 1999), Rughani devised films where the key protagonists explored their struggle for self-determination and cultural expression in South and East Africa, including work with Desmond Tutu and President Mandela during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings of the new South Africa.

The experience of developing a more singular, authored voice through a period of writing on *New Internationalist* magazine and the commitment to understanding how subcultures interact in a national conversation led to an approach that connected contributors' personal experience with social change through exploring subjectivity as had happened in gender studies. This led to documentary films that are deeply interested in how culture, ethnicity, history, race, belief, gender, sexuality and other conditioning factors coalesced to shape individuals as they interacted with others and society. *One of the Family* and *Playing Model Soldiers* (submissions 1.1.2 & 1.1.3) embody this approach. After many international documentary projects, these films turned towards Britain's struggle for pluralism and how the realities of cultural and racial difference impacted the British Army as an institution. The films aspired not to collapse the individual into identity politics, but rather to do the reverse: by attention to difference to go below the skin. Individuals thus had space to explore complexity and even contradictions and so open out a more three-dimensional way of looking and self-questioning, for example in *Glass Houses* (submission 1.1.4) through which a broader and increasingly reflexive understanding emerged for several contributors.



## **CONTEXT OF COLLABORATIVE AND CREATIVE RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHED BY THE FILMS AND THEIR CREDITS.**

The role of sole writer or sole photographer in the submitted text and photographic essays (1.1.5 & 1.1.6) is generally understood. Film and video however are created in a more collaborative, team-based culture and it is therefore worth unpacking the author's role and credits in each of the four submitted documentary film productions (1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 & 1.1.4). Central to Rughani's role in each documentary was developing each film through a direct relationship with the commissioning editor. Rughani had regular meetings at key stages in the production cycle including showing rough and fine cuts to the executives who commissioned these works: Jana Bennett (BBC TV) Yasmin Anwar (Channel 4) and Martin Rose, Nick Wadham-Smith and Ginny Marriott (The British Council). The duration of the production cycle ranged from three months (*Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'*) to nine months (*'Glass Houses'*) and eighteen months in some observationally led works (*One of the Family* and *Playing Model Soldiers*). Rughani's involvement through the complete production cycle was essential in shaping each documentary, from location research and directing through the editing period until exhibition in broadcast or cinema contexts. Filming was followed by a period of reviewing rushes, firstly alone and then with experienced film editors. The serendipity and disappointments of responding to rushes in a director-editor relationship meant sharing the working out of many possible narratives within the material and honing these to create the final film. Shaping sequences, whilst ultimately the director's responsibility, was a collaborative process developed jointly with film editors, notably Alex Harvey and John McMullin. The director's presence in the cutting room is central to Rughani's approach, in order to unfold the sensibility developed through relationships with contributors throughout the research and filming process. This approach contrasts with a recent production trend to use 'jobbing directors' who do not oversee the film through the editing process, thus vitiating the essential link between contributors to the film and the documentary's final shape.

Some production and filming teams tend towards a more formal observation of the vertical broadcast structure from commissioning editor to executive or series producer to producer/director and researcher or on location from director to camera crew.

Others develop a flatter, more collaborative model, even within hierarchical structures, enabling easier influence for individuals in different production roles, including technical and administrative grades, which is the production team culture that Rughani sought to cultivate.

How broadcasters and cultural institutions manage the nomenclature of documentary roles and on-screen credits reveals the culture of documentary production within particular organisations, which shifts over time. Each institution has its norms in choosing who to credit and how to describe the roles taken. The summary of Rughani's credits below offers an insight into the collaborative and creative relationships within each documentary team, focused on the author's role in each documentary as director, producer or cameraman.

**1.1.1, *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'*** (1990), was an in-house commission for BBC TV's Science Features Department. Rughani pitched the idea internally, then produced, directed and wrote the commentary script with guidance from writer/presenter Ziauddin Sardar. Rughani is credited as 'producer' since the roles of 'director' and 'writer' were not separated or individually acknowledged in this commissioning strand. It was unusual to see a director's credit in this science documentary series. No formal reason was given for this, though separating the director's or writer's role from the producer into separate credits may have been seen as 'arty' or even pretentious in this programming area. Typically a dedicated 'director' or 'writer' credit was reserved for bigger-name signature works in longer format films. It was also assumed that the producer would be involved in the research process, so the research credit was generally reserved for individuals dedicated to that role. Research was a route through to producing, which was the route Rughani took.

**1.1.2 *One of the Family*** (54mins) and **1.1.3 *Playing Model Soldiers*** (54mins) were independent commissions for the documentary series *New Model Army* through Umbrella Pictures for Channel 4 television. From its inception, Channel 4's commissioning structure was conceived as a publishing model, with very little programming made 'in house'. Umbrella Pictures is a small, independent production company. Alongside Pratap Rughani as director were producer, Leo St Clair, and series producer, Roger Mills. This team conducted all research and worked on location

as camera assistants (as needed) to support cameraman Colin Angell. The small size of the team, based in a converted loft in west London provided a much more intimate atmosphere than the big in-house programming departments of BBC TV. This enabled Mills, a much-respected voice in the evolution of British television documentary, to establish a collegiate style and develop close, egalitarian working relationships. This continued on location where the camera team was fully involved in editorial discussions and filming judgments included their perspectives where possible.

In **1.1.3** *Playing Model Soldiers* Rughani has a separate writer's credit alongside the director's credit. Channel 4 more readily recognised both writers' and directors' roles as distinct categories for recognition. Historically the distinctions between producer and director roles were more firmly established than in parts of BBC TV. The history of the channel and the influence of its early relationships with creatives, activists and artists whose practices often developed outside the broadcast sector contributed to this. The distinctive and sometimes ironic commentary script written by Rughani for *Playing Model Soldiers* underlined the sense of a singular and individually authored film, which made the case clear to acknowledge his separate writer's credit.

**1.1.4** *Glass Houses* (47 mins) was an independent commission through Lotus Films for the British Council, London, 2004. It was commissioned by the British Council's think tank Counterpoint that has a licenced space within the institution to think more laterally and even radically about cultural relations. This was reflected in a flatter commissioning structure where the Director, Deputy Director and a more junior staff member at the think-tank were equally credited as commissioners and worked as a team. Each played significant roles in developing thinking through discussions of the progress of the film. *Glass Houses* was an early production through the independent company Lotus Films, where Rughani is director. Rughani is credited as writer, producer and director and recorded the narration that marked a more personal connection with the work through recording his voice.

*Glass Houses* opens with sensitive questions of reporting and censorship in Sudan. Rughani felt it important to open the film in Khartoum but faced difficulties since reporting restrictions had been imposed by the Sudanese government and journalists' visas were stopped. A way was found to get Rughani and his equipment into Sudan

and to minimise the size of the filming team to reduce risk and visibility. Rughani therefore worked with a minimum crew, hiring a location sound recordist in Khartoum and shot the Sudan sequences himself. The arrival of smaller broadcast-quality video cameras made it easier to work as a one-person crew and move less obtrusively in sensitive environments when there was a compelling editorial reason to work in this way. Rughani had an established photographic practice which, combined with substantial directing experience, made the case for combining the roles of director and camera operator. He is therefore credited for filming the Sudanese (and Indonesian) sequences of *Glass Houses*.

Concurrently in the broadcast industry, lighter cameras and reduced budgets drove the contraction of documentary crew sizes. Multi-tasking created new pressures for directors to contribute to camerawork and this made sense in the Sudanese sequences in *Glass Houses* as the appropriate expertise and sensibility had been developed. However, a director's aptitude is not in the same skillset as a camera operator's talents, so the adoption of each role was weighed up carefully to ensure that there was a compelling editorial reason for Rughani's decision to undertake the camerawork for sequences in Sudan and Indonesia in *Glass Houses*. There is no camera assistant role credited in *Glass Houses*. By 2004 the camera assistant's post was becoming a rarity in documentary crews, with the work of the assistant's role filled by the sound recordist or production staff and this on-screen credit disappearing.

## SUMMARY AND CONTEXT OF SUBMITTED WORKS

### The Works Submitted, in chronological order

#### FILMS

- 1.1.1 *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'*, (17 mins) BBC TV, London, 1990.
- 1.1.2 *Playing Model Soldiers*, (54mins) Channel 4 TV, London 2000, part 1 of the documentary series *New Model Army*.
- 1.1.3 *One of the Family*, (54mins) Channel 4 TV, London 2000. part 2 of the documentary series *New Model Army*.
- 1.1.4 *Glass Houses*, (47 mins) British Council, London 2004.

#### TEXT

- 1.1.5 *British Homeland* Catalogue essay in *A Place Called Home*; artists from the South Asian Disapora, British Council, South Africa, 2004.
- 1.1.6 'Are You a Vulture? Reflecting on the ethics and aesthetics of coverage of atrocity and its aftermath', pp. 157-71 in *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*, eds. Richard Keeble, John Tulloch and Florian Zollmann, foreword by John Pilger (Oxford: Peter Lang) 2010. Accompanied by *Karuna Trust Newsletter '08* (Karuna Trust, London 2008).

### **1.1.1. *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'* (17 mins)**

**BBC TV London, 1990**

*Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'* (knowledge) is a short film about how the values of classical Islam can and do shape Western science. Rughani proposed the film in-house to BBC TV Science Features Department producer Jana Bennett, co-editor of the BBC 2 science magazine series *Antenna* that wholly funded the project and broadcast it at peak time (8.10pm to 9pm, 31.1.90).

Rughani wrote a short film treatment drawing on *Explorations In Islamic Science* (1989) by Ziauddin Sardar who he approached to present.

Rughani produced and directed *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'* and wrote a guide script with input from Sardar. The project benefitted from Sardar's expert knowledge and contacts, including Nobel Prize-winning theoretical physicist and devout Muslim, Abdus Salaam, who explains in the film the cultural attraction within Islam of seeing the unity of elements which inspired his scientific breakthrough.

The film attracted significant coverage in *The Listener*, television previews, reviews and many viewers' letters.

### **1.1.2. *One of the Family*, (54mins) Channel 4 TV, London 2000.**

#### **Film 1 in the documentary series *New Model Army*.**

*One of the Family* is the first in a series of 4 x 1 hour observational documentary films called *New Model Army* about the experiences of black and minority ethnic (BME)<sup>2</sup> recruits in the British Army. Films 1 and 2 are submitted as these are the two films of the series where Rughani has the sole director's credit.

Wholly funded by Channel 4's Multicultural Department under commissioning editor Yasmin Anwar, it was originally conceived as a series of six to eight half-hour programmes. In agreement with Channel 4 the filming period was extended over 18 months and developed as 4 x 1 hour documentaries to enable the team to go more deeply into relationships with recruits and explore the complexity of emerging issues.

It was broadcast at peak time on Channel 4, (9pm to 10pm on 8.8.2000) with two advertisement breaks at agreed periods in each story.

Rughani directed this film through the independent production company Umbrella Pictures, under series producer Roger Mills. Mills' distinguished track record and extensive experience helped secure access with the Army and underpinned the project's credibility.

*One of the Family* won the Director's Award for Best Film, (Television Factual) at the RIMA (Race in the Media) Award 2011. *New Model Army* was shortlisted for Best Documentary Series, Grierson Award, 2001.

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<sup>2</sup> The term BME 'Black and minority ethnic' communities replaces 'Black and Asian' and 'Black' as a shorthand for UK visible minority ethnic communities. It is not intended to imply homogeneity of such diverse communities as the overall argument against the dominance of any monoculture emphasises.

### **1.1.3 *Playing Model Soldiers*, (54mins) Channel 4 TV, London 2000**

**Film 2 of the documentary series *New Model Army*.**

*Playing Model Soldiers* is the second in the series of 4 x 1 hour observational documentary films about the experiences of BME recruits in the British Army, called *New Model Army*.

Rughani directed and wrote this film, which was shot over 18 months and involved agreeing significant changes of narrative structure with commissioning editor Yasmin Anwar as events unfolded. Editorial and creative freedom was central so that experiences could unfold into narrative without a pre-determined storyline being imposed on it.

It was broadcast at peak time on Channel 4 (9pm to 10pm on 15.8.2000) with two advertisement breaks at agreed periods in each story.

After broadcast, the film *Playing Model Soldiers* enjoyed further distribution on the independent film festival circuit, with screenings at Liverpool's *Black Film Festival*, Bradford's National Media Museum as part of the *Bite the Mango* Festival, the British Council's *Representing Cultures* conference (all in 2001) plus sequence screenings at leading academic conferences including *MECCSA* (London 2010), *Visible Evidence* (Los Angeles 2009) and *Documentary Now!* (London 2010).

*Playing Model Soldiers* won the Director's Award for Best Film, (Television Factual) at RIMA (Race in the Media) 2011. It was shortlisted for Best Documentary Series, Grierson Award, 2001.



#### **1.1.4. *Glass Houses*, (47 mins) British Council, London 2004.**

*Glass Houses* is a film about the culmination of a British Council project called Keeping in Touch, when twelve young journalists from across the Muslim world come to report on Britain. Over an intense week *Glass Houses* goes behind their headlines where investigating Britain folds into questions of the journalists' identity and even of Islam itself.

The film was an editorially independent commission by Counterpoint, the British Council's think-tank which specialises in cultural diplomacy. It premiered at the global *Eye to Eye* conference on international relations (London, 3.11.04) which marked the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the British Council. It went on to international distribution through British Council offices in many countries, especially in the Muslim and Arab world.

Rughani directed, wrote and produced the film through the independent production company Lotus Films. He was also location cameraman in Sudan and Indonesia as discussed in section on collaborative relationships and credits.

**1.1.5 *British Homeland*, exhibition catalogue essay in *A Place Called Home*: artists from the South Asian Disapora, British Council, South Africa, 2004, pp.47-55.**

*British Homeland* is an essay (3,000 words) commissioned by the British Council, South Africa in a catalogue that accompanies *A Place Called Home*, a show of South Asian diaspora artists which marked the tenth anniversary of the first free elections in South Africa.

Rughani's essay is rooted in the evolution of plural British identities. Launched in Durban, South Africa, the publication of this essay places Rughani's investigation of British pluralism in a context of South Asian diaspora and internationality.

The essay argues for art and film that connect cultures and examines how these engage the pluralisation of national identities including the sometimes awkward insights of diversity.

*British Homeland* was launched at the NSA Gallery, Durban where Rughani gave a gallery talk and a workshop as part of the Durban International Film Festival (June 2004).

**1.1.6. ‘Are You a Vulture? Reflecting on the ethics and aesthetics of coverage of atrocity and its aftermath’, pp. 157-71 in *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*. Eds. Richard Keeble, John Tulloch and Florian Zollmann, foreword by John Pilger (Oxford: Peter Lang) 2010**

This chapter (5,150 words) was commissioned by Richard Keeble, pioneer of UK Journalism studies, with a foreword by John Pilger. It connects parallel disciplines of documentary photography, film and current affairs through common ethical questions.

Rughani investigates practitioner ethics of documentary film-makers and photographers when making work in the aftermath of atrocity. It draws on self-critique from the researcher’s field notes when documenting the aftermath of caste-based murders in India, connecting this with Magnum founder George Rodger's Holocaust-aftermath imagery.

Photographs cited in the chapter (with weblinks) were printed in the NGO publication *Karuna '08* and shown at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) London in 2010 where Rughani’s photography and presentation were filmed for the documentary *Histories of Hatred* (London Consortium TV 2010). Imagery from this research was presented to a plenary seminar of the *Visible Evidence* conference 2008 and *Documentary Now!* 2008 and the British Academy funded conference *Afterlives of Monuments* 2010.

Note: This chapter emerged from a photographic essay ‘Remembering Khairlanji’ and can be viewed alongside it (with the Plate numbers in text). See the ‘photography’ tab of [www.lotusfilms.co.uk](http://www.lotusfilms.co.uk) website and pp. 4-9 of the submitted *Karuna '08* publication (Karuna Trust, London 2008).

## 1.2. The Interrelationship of the Submitted Works

Two key themes weave through and inter-connect the submitted works: the journey towards intercultural communication (including an approach to recovering hidden histories) and the ethics of documentary practice. In Rughani's documentary practice these are not discrete areas. Where, how and who to frame are documentary acts that reveal an ethics of enquiry, whether the practitioner is alive to this or not. Configuring a pro-filmic space where sustained acts of listening and looking generate experiences of intercultural communication through which documentary films emerge is the central research enquiry. The *ethics* of giving sustained attention to the experiences of marginalised, excluded or sometimes reviled communities and configuring the documentary frame to facilitate new perceptions from that space is a key motivation informing all of the works. *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'*, *Playing Model Soldiers* and *One of the Family* are post-colonial British documentaries. A developing trend in the chronology of the work is to offer space for reflexivity, both for contributors to films (for example the journalists in *Glass Houses* talk through their experience of the project) and in Rughani's own reflections, quoted from his field notes in 'Are You a Vulture?'

The cultural politics of devising stories to create dialogues of difference links of all the submitted works, as does a deeper philosophical ethic of listening and exchange. This forms the original and independent contribution to knowledge; the works submitted are results of these investigations.

### 1.3. The Standing of the Publishers

BBC 2 and Channel 4 enjoy a high standing and dominant role as commissioners and UK broadcasters in the competitive world of documentary film making. They are large organisations commissioning a range of outputs so their standing should be assessed in terms of the culture of specific commissioning areas through which each project developed. Each area has its own culture and perception of its audience, which shapes how a commissioning editor views the development of the film.

Typically, broadcast documentaries work within the house style of specific factual or documentary strands. There have been significant changes to the ecology of UK broadcast documentary over the period covered. ‘Docu-soap’ and ‘reality television’ began as experiments that became separate genres but are increasingly influential as devices in much broadcast documentary production output. These approaches thrived through legislative, commercial and cultural shifts which have created an environment more exposed to market forces and responsive to social media trends, often chasing the perceived appetites of a lucrative demographic in the broadcast audience.

However the documentaries submitted here are individually commissioned films or series, developed to work editorially with individual voices, rather than being defined by a house style or trend. Many documentary directors report that the space for such commissions on UK and US television is becoming smaller and smaller.

Where appropriate Rughani looked beyond the UK broadcast sector to the British Council, artists’ commissions and academic research contexts to find the right commissioning ‘fit’ for an idea.

The British Council is an internationally recognised patron of culture and the arts. *Glass Houses* was commissioned by the British Council think tank Counterpoint, which has a brief to think laterally about cultural relations. Like the BBC, its distance from government leaves it broadly free to pursue projects without significant concern about politically motivated editorial interference. The damaging breach in this understanding (between the BBC and the Blair Government) becomes part of the enquiry of *Glass Houses*.

The British Council, South Africa, published the catalogue essay *British Homeland* and as with Counterpoint, the author worked in an independent commissioning environment. The British Council's standing as a respected patron helped attract audiences to the exhibition and readers to the catalogue.

Peter Lang is a significant academic publisher specializing in postgraduate and research areas. All books are peer reviewed and the media and communications list includes significant scholars and practitioners in the field. *Peace Journalism, War and Conflict Resolution*, the book featuring the essay 'Are You a Vulture?' has attracted significant interest. Peter Lang is a charity and has been able to protect their editing standards and individual author relationships from the increasing commercial pressures affecting some academic publishers in the sector.

# CHAPTER 2: POSITIONING OF THE SUBMITTED WORKS IN THEIR FIELDS OF STUDY

## Introduction

The fields of study of intercultural documentary cross the disciplines of cultural studies (2.1); documentary studies and its history (2.2) and film ethics (2.3), which are discussed in this order.

Lisa Lattuca (2003:7) identified four forms of interdisciplinarity that help situate research that crosses disciplinary divides. In this model, intercultural documentary most closely approximates to synthetic interdisciplinarity, which bridges disciplines or opens out research ideas at their intersection or in the space between them.

Both the key terms of this thesis, ‘inter-cultural’ and ‘documentary’ are broad and contested which makes them fluid. They refract differently for different practitioners and theorists as they have done since their genesis. At times these terms become a battleground with their own discrete history and turf-wars over putative boundaries. It is therefore worth mapping the sense in which both the terms ‘documentary’ and ‘inter-cultural’ are used and the particular valence intended when discussing an ‘intercultural documentary practice’ in submitted works. At the same time there is significant conceptual value in staying open to the opportunities that the fluidity of these terms present.

The intercultural documentary concept ‘travels’ across disciplines, in the sense developed by Mieke Bal (2002:13) where fluidity of concepts is welcomed as part of the inter-disciplinary project of cultural analysis, made newly uncertain and productive by examining this movement. Bal argues against an emphasis on conceptual methodology:

‘understanding *concept* itself not as a clear-cut methodological legislation, but as a territory to be travelled in a spirit of adventure’ (Bal 2002: 23)

Likewise this discussion of intercultural documentary bypasses questions of defining disciplines by methodological analysis and draws on related conceptual articulations which develop the idea. Laura Marks proposes an intercultural cinema that: 'represent[s] the experience of living between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge, or living as a minority in the Euro-American West.' (2000: 1)

Marks's conception draws on the insights of Black British film studies, especially Mercer (1988) and proposes an intercultural cinema marked by formal experimentation and 'haptic visuality', an idea which invokes embodied memory and knowledge triggered by an appeal to the senses and physical response from the 'skin' of the film (Marks 2000).

My concept and practice of intercultural *documentary* takes up Marks's emphasis on the intercultural as an ability to work in post-colonial, global contexts or re-defining national ones. Intercultural documentary as developed here offers a new emphasis on the *process* of making rather than defining a fixed position. It therefore implies a closer attention to the ways in which cultures communicate in the spaces between. In this process, the ethics of documentary practices assumes a new centrality. Unlike Marks's intercultural cinema, intercultural documentary is not limited to avant-garde aesthetics. It can unfold in conventional documentary grammars as a viable and accessible alternative to monocultural storytelling from within broadcast documentary film culture.



## 2.1 Cultural Studies

Works submitted conceive of documentary actuality as a kind of ‘lightning charge’ connecting pro-filmic events in the world through the documentary frame to connect with audiences and complete a circle back to subjects of the film. Since 1895, as documentary forms proliferated from Leningrad to Manhattan, Mumbai to Paris, the question of ‘which events to show?’ and ‘whose experience to explore?’ has been answered in documentary film by a far narrower version of the world than might be expected in societies embracing democratic or progressive aspirations. Why? What taboos and cultural politics are so effectively at work in the history of documentary film that great swathes of human experience remain routinely ignored or suppressed?

Many forces, including the manifest pluralisation of many British cities coalesced to spark change. The publication in 1978 of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* catalysed a new generation to explore post-colonial thinking in both the metropolis and the de-colonised world. This sent ripples through national and trans-national cultures. Debates quickly matured within Said’s own discipline of comparative literature and went on to help stimulate subaltern thinking across the humanities. This formed a model for me, studying literature in English at Sussex University’s School of African and Asian Studies and later philosophy at SOAS (London University’s School of Oriental and African Studies).

An anti-racist, anti-Orientalist perspective was easier to advance within literary studies because there was at least a BME presence and its critical history to engage with. It was a marginalised and problematic presence in many ways, but still a presence that has surfaced intermittently even in the official canon of English literature over several centuries. Although partial and incomplete, something of the invisible story of race emerges through centuries of drama, novels and poetry in English literature. In the twentieth century especially, literature was a more accessible medium to outsiders, as writing does not require the capital and access to resources of film and television through established production networks. In many film and television works, people of colour (when they did appear) were at the poles of perception. Angels and devils, with little exploration of three-dimensional character. One of the few responses to racial

difference that survived the processes of exclusion or demonization were traditions of the 'Noble Savage', a romantic impulse shot through with nostalgia for the west's own pre-industrial past and visited upon indigenous or colonised peoples which, through *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty 1922) marked the arrival of documentary narrative film as an international popular form. The trope of the 'Noble Savage' works on many levels, offering a critique of the totalising gaze but ideologically such figures also serve to showcase the triumph of Empire and its exotic curiosities (for example Queen Victoria's favoured *Munshi*) or a romantic interlude betwixt the putative depravity and backwardness of people subjugated or to be subjugated.

Key thinkers influencing ways of formulating a response to this tradition emerged in the critical theory group at Sussex University in the mid-1980s. Many applied the thinking of Edward Said (1978), Stuart Hall (1980) and Raymond Williams (1980). Williams' emphasis on 'cultural materialism' helped map out a context and his historicism underpins Hall's work and both inform documentary practice submitted here, which is rooted in close attention to the history and presence of post-colonial British cultures. Hall's towering influence in establishing a framework to think these issues through continues to shape both the academic field and the broader culture through contributions to the Parekh Report (2000).

In both the USA and UK, literary studies quickly took up questions of cross-cultural interaction. Studies such as Leslie Fiedler's seminal work *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (1974) features a chapter on the intersection of race and gender in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Fiedler's study listens to and finds meaning in the dynamics of cultural difference rather than collapsing the tragedy into universal ideas such as jealousy which had dominated literary criticism and effectively glossed over the racial dynamics of *Othello*'s trajectory to downfall.

The work of feminist critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) marked a parallel project in women's studies. The book's title is drawn from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, in which Rochester's wife Bertha is described as 'mad' and kept locked in the attic of a house whose wealth is built on slavery and the plunder of her former home in the Caribbean. Her absence from the novel offered psychoanalysts a new angle of critique in a view from the

shadows of 'victor history'. In this sense the narrative gaps and omissions became a key marker of colonial exploitation that can emerge despite imperial ideology.

The cultural figures questioning and problematising monocultural dominance and able to sustain awkward questions from within were more established in literature and drama than in documentary practices. James Baldwin and VS Naipaul were joined by Meera Syal, Hanif Kureishi and Caryl Phillips – all narrating other stories. It was not unusual for their embrace to include awkward home truths, sometimes problematic for the communities that they emerged from. Each writer offered uncomfortable insights into majority communities without sparing their own; they yet hold both in a kind of dance, evidencing an ability to embrace tensions within their own positions. Kureishi's autobiographical essay *The Rainbow Sign* (1986) itself a reference to James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* (1963) embodies both the political edge and willingness to explore tensions within and between communities. However, even up to 1980 there remained little in the UK documentary world which modelled such an approach.<sup>3</sup>

In documentary film, such enquiries were slower to take off. The academic discipline of Documentary Studies itself is a much more recent development barely underway until the early 1990s. Seminal texts by Michael Renov (2004) Brian Winston (2000) and Bill Nichols (2001) post-date some submitted works but are cited as significant developments that crystallise how documentary studies as a discipline has recently started to theorise and respond to the telling of more diverse stories in documentary form.

## **Multiculturalisms and Documentary**

In the USA, advances of the 1950s and 1960s civil rights movement led to new concepts in the development of a racially diverse multi-culture. A key image from the American experience framed a plural society as a 'melting pot', a place where many sub-cultures are brought into a blend.

In the UK, there was a twin response to adopting the metaphor of a 'melting pot'.

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<sup>3</sup> There are some exceptions in Channel 4 commissioning by the 1980s e.g. Udayan Prasad's *The Corner of A Foreign Field* (1986) that examines gender tensions within Pakistani migrant communities .

Many found it hard to accept that post-war immigration was once again changing the nature and colour of the national culture. Meanwhile progressive artists and activists persistently questioned the effects on BME communities of the 'melting pot' idea. Would it ultimately mean assimilation or acculturation where distinctive and valuable differences were effaced or dissolved rather than being brought into dialogue?

On television the version of the UK visible in documentary practice did not look or sound much like a multicultural. Despite the advances of portable sound equipment that underpinned the development of observational documentary and enabled crews to access the world much more fully, somehow the attentions of documentary rarely noticed BME communities as subjects with their own agency. There is little documentary work outside of a colonial or anthropological frame until the 1960s (and then only fragments, often to be read 'against the grain') that collects and juxtaposes British BME experiences and seeks to listen to a racially pluralising nation *from within* diverse communities.

In some ways drama had more success in exploring the occasional distinctive voice as in *A Man from the Sun* (1956) and *Fable* (1965). In documentary the racial other was either invisible or the target of easy jokes, except when framed at the top of news agendas in the problematic of 'race relations'. When BME figures achieved visibility as the subjects of mainstream documentary, the frame was typically constricted, stereotypical and described from the perspectives of white majorities, with the occasional (overwhelmingly male) 'community leader' left as a single spokesperson for the often-estranged other. Few singular voices, articulating a breadth of understanding of the broader community were heard in their own terms; even the exception of a rare interview with visionary writers like Stuart Hall or James Baldwin in Horace Ové's *Baldwin's Nigger* (1968) were still framed by 'race relations'.

Until the 1960s, when BME cultures did appear, they were typically framed as dispatches about separate or discrete worlds, approached with an ethnographic eye with 'experts' speaking on their behalf, with very little editorial space for BME communities to define their own experience in their own terms. Sarita Malik identifies four areas where BME experience began to surface through the 1960s: (i) investigative social reports e.g. housing, miscegenation, employment and 'false equality' (ii)

foreign Affairs e.g. in Rhodesia and South Africa (iii) sports & arts profiles e.g. Mohammed Ali and James Baldwin (iv) Britain's imperial past. BME populations were constructed as the problem with minimal reflection on the society making these judgments. Malik identifies 'unprecedented tones of fear and hostility in relation to the Black subject' in television social documentary (2000:41) and notes 'the active role television played in mediating how 'race' came to be framed by a 'Blacks as social problem agenda' (2000:35). By April 1968 and Enoch Powell's inflammatory 'rivers of blood' speech to a Birmingham Conservative Association, such rhetoric was accompanied by increasing street violence against BME populations.

Through the 1970s (and beyond in some programme areas) the idea that mainstream broadcast culture was anywhere near representing a diverse society was inaccurate; risible, even insulting. In his pioneering collection of interviews on the BME presence on British television, Jim Pines describes BME representation as 'essentially regressive, uninteresting and completely pointless from a creative point of view' (Pines 1992:12). Claims that broadcasters reflected the UK population were increasingly seen in BME communities and beyond as partial, inaccurate, grand - or imperial in assumption. The premise being that one version of history (narrow, whitened and Westernised) could speak for all and be passed off yet again as impartial history or the national story. A similar dearth of diverse documentary makers led to editorial lacunae in broadcast documentary that resulted in lopsided coverage and in its wake, distortion and alienation. Only a handful of liberal producers engaged with questions of difference as a challenge to racism (Pines 1992:142).

In the 1970s the term 'multicultural' was becoming more widely articulated. Many opposed this but among those who embraced the recognition of pluralism, a key fault-line emerged in the politics of difference. Some liberals saw 'multicultural' as a way of recognising and embracing the range of influences that make the UK a polyglot 'mosaic' or 'tapestry'. Others, typically describing themselves as 'anti-racists', suspected multiculturalism of being focused on cooking, national dress and festivals as a way of avoiding a discussion of race, prejudice and specifically the dynamics of British racism. Did 'multiculturalism' involve pretending that somehow we could all join hands in a happy circle without naming and replacing prejudices so ingrained as to be commonplace or 'commonsense' in the culture?

Authorities who liked to see themselves as liberal sought to describe the situation as ‘colour-blind’, a kind of fantasy of a level playing-field where black, brown and white could just hold hands together and all would be well, give or take the occasional ‘rotten apple’. An anti-racist critique of this model suggested that ‘colour-blindness’ was a wilful power-blindness that meant pretending that there were no differences despite the manifest realities of differential achievement, de facto segregation, disadvantage and compelling evidence that unequal power relations resulted in myriad forms of discrimination. The revelation that a ‘colour-blind’ response was little more than a tacit acceptance of racism was finally named on British television through the rise of ‘access’ programming and anti-racist media campaigns. Both strands came together when the Campaign Against Racism in the Media (CARM) presented *It Ain’t Half Racist Mum on Open Door* in 1979. Stuart Hall, who co-presented the programme with Maggie Stead writes that this questioning of the pseudo-objectivity of broadcast representations:

‘undermined their [broadcasters,] professional credentials by suggesting that they had been partisan where they were supposed to be balanced and impartial. It was an affront to the liberal consensus and self-image which prevails within broadcasting’ (Hall, 1981:37)

The BBC’s Community Programmes Unit was set up in 1972, with editorial control shared<sup>4</sup> with contributors. *Open Door* (subsequently *Open Space* BBC 1973-) enabled BME people to be more directly involved in storytelling, as did specific slots followed such as *Black Londoners*. CARM’s insights were acerbically expressed in popular comedy rather than in documentary. A moment that nailed the practice of racism whilst parroting a rhetoric of colour-blindness was on the *Not the Nine O’clock News* (BBC TV 1979-82) sketch *Constable Savage*, where Police Constable Savage is questioned about arresting and charging a man for ‘Possession of curly hair and thick lips’. Throughout the Constable maintains that he did not notice the man’s colour. He is accused of racism and subsequently promoted to the Special Patrol Group, notorious for its violent and racist behaviour.

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<sup>4</sup> There is a debate about the extent to which the space was fully ‘open’ as programme producers sought to enable specific groups to make and tell their story in a televisual way.

A handful of niche publications such as *Race Today*, supported by the Institute of Race Relations, led from BME, social and political perspectives through the 1970s. The overwhelming emphasis here was a struggle for political change rather than an ethic of close listening. An emphasis on *cultural* difference – the language of ‘culture’ as opposed to a language of ‘race’ - was seen by many cultural activists to efface politics and the brute truths of deteriorating race-relations. The central concern here is whether the move from ‘colour-blindness’ to an acknowledgment of cultural difference would de-politicise. The suspicion of many cultural activists was that ‘multiculturalism’ was more about helping white Britons feel comfortable about their kids learning about Ramadan and Diwali rather than dealing with the realities of for example racial attacks ignored on the street and meted out inside police stations.<sup>5</sup>

In comedy and entertainment on British television, *Love thy Neighbour* (Thames TV/ITV 1972-76) and *Til Death Do Us Part* (BBC 1, 1966-68, 1972, 1974-75) were popular staples of the broadcasting schedule in which casual and cultural racism were normalised features of national life, attracting big audiences, like other peak time comedies *Mind Your Language* (LWT/ITV 1977-79) and popular entertainment *The Black and White Minstrel Show* (BBC 1958-78). These programmes, some of which had audiences of half the households in the UK became the main way that white audiences encountered ways to relate to growing populations of colour, especially migrant families from South Asia and the Afro-Caribbean. Hanif Kureishi writes:

‘Television comics used Pakistanis as the butt of their humour. Their jokes were highly political: they contributed to a way of seeing the world. The enjoyed reduction of racial hatred to a joke sanctioned two things: it expressed a collective view (which was sanctioned by its being on the BBC), and it was a celebration of contempt in millions of living rooms in England. I was afraid to watch TV because of it; it was too embarrassing; too degrading.’

(Kureishi 1986:76)

Significantly absent from mass media and mainstream broadcasting was meaningful engagement with communities of colour in their own terms or led by their own

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<sup>5</sup> Further evidence of police violence have come from former police officers in succeeding years including: *The Reunion: Brixton Riots*, BBC Radio 4, 25.3.11.

authorship. The few fragments that have been recovered (Julien:1992) only serve to underline the general absence and misrepresentation.

In the art sphere, by the late 1980s, spaces such as the 198 Gallery, Railton Road, Brixton showcased an important thread for independent BME work. Marginalised BME artists, part of what Naseem Khan called *The Art that Britain Ignores* (1976) at last found a more mainstream expression in Rasheed Araeen's *The Other Story*, at the Hayward Gallery, Southbank, 1989. The show had a significant impact because it evidenced a substantial yet overlooked or excluded strand of art practice. It was noticeable however that even at this exhibition, film work in general and documentary film in particular had yet to be fully recognized. In the 1980s it would have been unusual to see documentary film practices explored in gallery contexts; only in the last decade has the documentary 'turn' in fine art spaces has become newly central (Stallabrass 2013) and shown extensively through a new focus on the relationship of documentary to art practice – despite the history of documentary's experimentation with form.

The Brixton 'disturbances' of 1981 (variously narrated as riots or uprisings) changed the equation of British national life in a way that the Notting Hill riots of the 1950s and a history of campaigning had not. New generations refused the deference of their immigrant parents - often migrants overwhelmed by work and establishing a new home with little space or time to stake a claim in the polity of British life.

Until Brixton, public discourse failed to credibly engage with the manifest pluralism of life in many UK cities and their burgeoning sub-cultures and fusion cultures. The weekend of 10-12th April 1981 marked a watershed, with a sequence of disturbances through the summer, focused on impoverished inner-city areas from Brixton in London to Handsworth in Birmingham, Toxteth in Liverpool and Moss Side in Manchester among many other places. A radical Conservative government turned to the liberal Lord Scarman to chair a commission which concluded that 'urgent action' was needed to prevent racial disadvantage becoming an 'endemic, ineradicable disease threatening the very survival of our society.' (BBC News, Scarman Report, 1982).



In the fallout of the Brixton disturbances Conservative Home Secretary William Whitelaw set up Channel 4 with a remit to reflect and serve culturally diverse audiences. This marked a structural shift where BME voices were needed as part of a broadcasting institution, joining commercial regional broadcasters in London who were waking up to the significance of BME viewers as a target market.

Many elements were crystallising within ‘multiculturalism’ which can be unpacked extensively. Despite criticisms of multiculturalism it was hugely significant to recognise the UK’s pluralisation in order to affirm it at a time when repatriation policies were still discussed as a ‘solution’ though the idea remains deeply contested (Hesse, 2000:211). Paul Gilroy, author of *Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*, (1987) notes that there is a burgeoning debate and extensive literature on the meanings of multiculturalism but that ‘there is no consensus over how the term multi-cultural should be defined or employed in the human sciences’ (Gilroy 2005).

Despite advances at Channel 4, Black Audio Film Collective’s seminal documentary *Handsworth Songs* (1986) observed the racism inherent in media reportage of BME communities and records a moment when this was challenged. The media, like the police, are observed so that they appear conjoined as instruments of state exclusion.

Conversely, though BME communities were rarely considered unless their race, ethnicity or culture was the defining story there was little parallel interest in investigating pluralism within ‘white’ ethnicities. The subject of whiteness was largely absent, assumed to be the norm and therefore naturalised into invisibility, so that its dynamics, operations and particularities continued remarkably unexamined for another generation (Ware & Back 2002).

The BME presence offered a way of reading UK culture ‘against the grain’ providing an oblique view from the margins which was able to reflect back glimpses of the gaps and blindness of a culture to itself. With the success of Channel 4, a new generation of BME practitioners found crevices in the broadcast schedule to produce broadcast documentary work. Often it was their cultural background that enabled film explorations of their own communities or questions of race, as illustrated in works by

Udayan Prasad, Colin Prescod, Pratibha Parmar, Samir Shah, Trevor Phillips and Gurinder Chadha. Most developed their own singular practices by creating opportunities through insights into diverse communities, while seeking to avoid essentialism. Many occupied roles as both advocates for cultural change and as producers and directors of their own documentary projects, following only a handful of pioneers like Horace Ové who had demonstrated that it could be done (Malik 2002).

Representing BME communities and finding Documentarists from these communities has remained a question for broadcasters like the BBC in both its output and employment practices. In an interview with Radio Scotland in January 2001, BBC Director-General Greg Dyke famously described the Corporation as still being 'hideously white' (BBC News 6.1.01). Some of the UK's most celebrated producers of colour struggle to make work as described in *The Colour of Commissioning* (Phillips 1999). Mark Cousins in his *Story of Film* argues that there is still a long way to go to broker a broader conversation in relation to the tilt of film culture too:

'Much of what we assume about the movies is off the mark. It's time to redraw the map of movie history that we have in our heads. It's factually inaccurate and racist by omission.' (2011)

Comedian Meera Syal ruefully recalls her television game 'Spot the Asian' when she was growing up, as the appearance of BME faces on television were so rare. A game she says (in August 2013) she has recently gone back to (BBC, *The Reunion*).

In the streets around Shepherd's Bush and Kensington House (home of the BBC Documentary Features and Science Features Units) there was clearly a multi-culture, yet little of this manifest vibrancy and the insights of difference crossed the threshold into BBC buildings or made it on screen.

The recovery of and engagement with difference is central to the UK understanding its pluralism. Concerns with the 'melting pot' model's tendency to efface difference led to the image of the 'salad bowl' which symbolized a move towards closer attention to recognizing the reality of difference manifest on the streets, if not yet in documentary

practice. In the 'salad bowl' each element retains its distinctive difference, yet is held in relation to a bigger whole.

By the mid-1990s key British institutions were being charged with racism. The Commission for Racial Equality (now part of the UK Equalities Commission) described many organisations as institutionally racist. In 1996 the Queen's regiment, the Household Division of the British Army was prosecuted for blocking the transfer of a Black soldier. When he questioned the decision, his file had the simple phrase 'WRONG COLOUR' written across it. The arrival of a new Labour Government in 1997, more influenced by multi-cultural realities and with the UK's first BME MPs in government, led to a government commitment to take such commonplace racism as about to be taken seriously and the army was forced to re-examine these practices and articulate an equal opportunities policy.

In 1998, Umbrella Pictures, under the respected documentary-maker Roger Mills, was commissioned to make a series about the experiences of Black and Asian soldiers in the British Army. The resulting series *New Model Army* (2000) was broadcast on Channel 4. Having agreed access to this attractive but generally forbidden territory, some army officers later threatened (unsuccessfully) to injunct the series which shows a mixed picture of soldiers' experiences and went on to be shortlisted for the Grierson award and won the Race in the Media (RIMA) award for best documentary series.

There are many examples of documentary portraits of institutions (from Wiseman's American Direct Cinema picture *Titicut Follies*, 1967 to *At Berkeley*, 2013 and on UK television, series such as *Sailor* 1976 and *Queens*, 1985) it is unusual to secure institutional access focused on acknowledging questions of cultural or racial difference. By contrast, such an acknowledgment is ideal territory for intercultural documentary practice as it names experiences that many institutions find awkward, exposing and difficult to speak about.

The eventual tone of this series and its insistence on looking at race relations coincided with the increasing prominence of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT achieved prominence in the USA from the late 1980s, stimulated by the work of legal theorist Derrick Bell. CRT charges that the gains of the Civil Rights movement had either been

so watered down that they were barely perceptible, or ignored when it came to the implementation of change, thus reproducing monocultural dominance so effectively that systemic or ingrained racism continues to thrive and does not need individual racists to flourish. Its analysis anticipates what came to be called ‘cultural’ or ‘institutional’ racism. Whilst this new emphasis developed, a principle for the production team of *New Model Army* was that the series on Black and Asian soldiers should not be made from ideas about cultural difference or racism in the institution that were fixed *a priori*.

Whatever the private views of individual Documentarists, it was essential that the story was led by unfolding realities and not simply rehearsing pre-formed views about for example the extent and nature of army racism. In this sense *New Model Army* did not seek to advance a case within a CRT, multicultural (or any other) model. Instead, the series was conceived as a test of the ‘colour-blind’ approach to the realities of race and as such has its roots in intercultural communication. In this sense it was open to the range of responses that make for multiculturalisms rather than being bound to one approach. The arguments of Karl Popper (1945) against teleology and towards open debate in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* are resonant here. The resulting films and their sometime sardonic tone emerge from the experience of making the *New Model Army* series where the filming process was configured with space for open explorations and response to events unfolding, a process examined in the exhibition catalogue essay *British Homeland*.

Debate was further problematised in the context of the ‘war on terror’ where some notions of multiculturalism were criticised as promoting ethnic separatism. Meanwhile on television there is still some way to go as BME characters are often portrayed as tokenistic, lacking depth and authenticity according to the UK Film Council audience report *Portrayal vs. Betrayal* (2011:10, 12).

## 2.2 Documentary History

Documentary cinema significantly shaped the development of documentary television and is sketched until the 1970s when the evolution of UK documentary television is the more appropriate strand of documentary form to follow in relation to submitted works.

Documentary actuality film marks the genesis of film itself, born in a meeting of art, documentary and ethnography in non-fiction modes, famously in films like *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon* (1895). Documentary evolved its own aesthetics and grammars - entertaining big audiences at end-of-the-pier shows even as avant-garde artists embraced it. In the 1920s, key practitioners of British documentary were inspired by the exuberant vision and creative brilliance of early Soviet filmmakers, lauding the new Communism, notably Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein.

Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) is claimed by documentary and fiction filmmakers as a key influence and remains an *Ur-text* of creative documentary, which speaks as strongly to artist filmmakers as it does to propagandists. Political strands of documentary making and distribution were joined by corporate sponsorship and artists' film to create many documentary modes of address (Barnouw 1974). Mark Nash addresses the mobility and fluidity of documentary across many media forms to create a mixed economy of documentary production that spans many social and political purposes and functions from galleries to activist meetings (Nash 2006).

John Grierson's famous review of Robert Flaherty's *Moana* (1926) is frequently cited as the moment when the term 'documentary' came into more general use. Grierson famously described documentary as the 'creative treatment of actuality'. Its breadth and flexibility may explain the persistence of this phrase. The paternalism and 'voice of God' commentary style that is popularly associated with Grierson established a dominant mode of the form. This was rehearsed across government departments (Empire Marketing Board, later the GPO etc.) and significantly influenced British

post-war television services. Grierson's documentary film output however was more diverse, creative and even experimental than the popular stereotype suggests. Film poets from Auden to Cavalcanti, Jennings and Len Lye were drawn to the Grierson stable and form a significant part of documentary's inheritance including experimentation at the borders of non-fiction and animation.

The colonial project,<sup>6</sup> like significant movements opposing it contains significant counter-currents that are essential to finesse an understanding of cultural encounters. Ignoring this exchange opens the door to the very mistakes that intercultural documentary seeks to interrogate and can lumber us with the idea that 'there exists an essence of being colonized independent of what anybody did in a colony' (Cooper 2005:405). In the Indian context for example, the linguistic and historical research of William Jones at the end of the eighteenth century (as distinct from his work as Judge in Calcutta's Supreme Court) is widely recognised as dropping the Eurocentric norm of colonial administrators and through scholarship triggering a revival of Indian cultural traditions. In this sense he does not fit the mainframe of *Orientalism*, which Said later reconsidered to acknowledge such exceptions. Intercultural documentary is deeply interested in the truths of such counter-currents and how an engagement with them informs the process of making documentary works. The ethical implications of this are detailed in section 2.3.

Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* (1933-4) was made for the Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board through the Empire Marketing Board during the British Raj. Wright describes how he was reaching for a dramatic structure informed by aspects of Sri Lankan religio-philosophy. Though Grierson insisted on some changes to this structure Wright describes an attempt to see beyond orientalist views:

'I became very impressed by the Buddhist religion, by its depth and contemplative nature. I tried to put that feeling in to *Song of Ceylon*.'  
(Aitken 1998:248)

*Song of Ceylon* encodes a fundamental ambivalence towards the colonial project but

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<sup>6</sup> Cooper gives a significant caution to referencing colonial or imperial ambitions in broad brushstrokes as this can blind us to a fuller picture of some colonial exchanges. He usefully emphasises a necessary attention to historical detail in order to understand the deeper dynamics of cultural interaction.

equally it fails to give Sri Lankan people the chance to speak on their own behalf (unlike the East End tenants whose articulation of their own conditions was such a breakthrough in Grierson's *Housing Problems* the following year 1935. Instead Sri Lankans are exoticised and displaced by romanticism even as aspects of their culture are celebrated (Guynn in Grant & Sloniowski 1998:97).

In 1960 the arrival of portable sound equipment meant that documentary teams were newly light and mobile and could follow events unfolding in much more intimate situations. This was embodied in the USA by the pioneers of Direct Cinema Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, Albert Maysles, D.A. Pennebaker and Frederick Wiseman. *Primary* (1960) about the Democratic Party's Primary election campaign fight between J. F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey made such an impact that it re-modelled how makers and audiences across the Anglophone world thought documentary should look and feel. Direct Cinema developed in Britain as 'Free Cinema'. Its apparently intimate access and synchronous sound revealed the world in exciting new ways with a fresh hand-held camera style that gave a powerful visual statement, supported by the makers' rhetoric that this really was a 'slice of life'. Direct Cinema style became a new orthodoxy and offered a new and different experience to Griersonian approaches. Its focus on the long take and drive against commentary and interviews reduced their presence. However the claim to behind-closed-doors access turned out to be in part an illusion or at best a simulacrum:

'Rather than representing a breakthrough in the cinema's ability to illuminate the nature of the 'real' world, *Primary* flags the onset of... the failure to control, and effectively explicate, the political image.'

(Winston 2008:154)

Documentary series such as *New Model Army* still inherit an imprint of Direct Cinema in shooting naturalistic sequences that move from behind-the-scenes preparation to public event, such as Marcelous Pusey's preparation of his kit and horse in the film *One of the Family?* Such access is ideal for Direct Cinema but in *New Model Army* its rules are also broken, such as the convention of concealing the maker and process of making. Instead both are intentionally revealed at key moments to underline editorial constraints and glimpse the construction of the documentary in both *Playing Model Soldiers* (when the filming team are asked to leave the seminar on race, discussed in

3.3) and *One of the Family?* (when army minders are shown when they stray into shot). A methodology of continuing to film even when the minder appeared in shot was developed as their attentions were so intrusive. A montage of these moments at the beginning of the series reveals this pattern and helps audiences see the limits of the access that was negotiated.

In time however the success of Direct Cinema's claim to naturalistically 'reflect' reality whilst effacing the artifice and construction needed to make it unwittingly opened the door to a counter position that was equally one-sided. As audiences got used to the idea that all film is mediated to some degree (because shots and sequences must be selected, framed and constructed) then documentary, it was claimed, was in fact little different in its artifice from the techniques of drama or feature films. Rather than protect its truth claim, film should instead embrace the 'power of the false' (Deleuze 2005:142).

In France a very different formulation of documentary, embracing the subjectivity of the maker rather than effacing it mapped out the trajectory of cinema vérité, distinct from the naturalistic, unmediated claims of Direct Cinema. However the triumph of Direct Cinema in the Anglophone world eclipsed the significant theoretical moves made by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin in owning the subjectivity of the researcher's position in works like *Chronique d'un été*, also made in 1960, the same year as *Primary*.

UK documentary was remarkably untouched by the breakthroughs of Rouch, Morin and others in establishing a central place for reflexivity. Their influence was delayed by thirty plus years and did not get substantially underway until the mid 1990s in UK broadcast documentary when makers such as Nick Broomfield featured themselves in their work.

The need to explicate and make intelligible to large, often mainstream audiences led to naturalistic illustration in television documentary's visual style often in the service of journalistic storytelling. By the 1980s and 1990s, observational series relied on increased explication to supplement guide commentary in documentary and factual programming. In the broadcast sector the visual conventions of documentary series are



often well established in each department's output. *New Model Army* was a peak-time series commissioned for a national network (Channel 4) and each film had to work within existing visual frameworks, rather than having licence to experiment significantly with the visual form.

Some practitioners like Trinh T Minh-ha have long questioned documentary's claim to represent 'real life' preferring to emphasise the fluid process of making and the instability of visual signs as referents. This strikes at central claims in documentary to provide regimes of 'truth'. Minh-ha offers her critique even as her artistic practice unfolds through documentary technique:

'There is no such thing as *documentary* – whether the term designates a category of material, a genre, an approach or a set of techniques. This assertion – as old and as fundamental as the antagonism between names and reality – needs incessantly to be restated, despite the very visible existence of a documentary tradition.' (Renov 1993:90)

Such a position takes us to the borders of documentary definitions insisting that the relationship between image or representation and how things are in the world is necessarily constructed.

At this juncture, both 'documentary' and 'art' are traveling concepts (Bal 2002) which mean very different things to practitioners related to their trajectory towards the form. The documentary artist Hito Stereoyl describes the current period as one of deep 'uncertainty' in relation to what documentary is and its language of 'truth', an ambivalence that has much to say about the nature of representation itself:

'Terms like 'truth', 'reality', 'objectivity' and so on are characterised by the lack of any generally valid interpretation and of any clear cut definitions. Thus, we are faced with the first paradox: the documentary form, which is supposed to transmit knowledge in a clear and transparent way, has to be investigated using conceptual tools, which are neither clear nor transparent themselves. The more real documentary seems to get, the more we are at a loss conceptually. The more secured the knowledge that documentary articulations seem to offer, the

less can be safely said about them—all terms used to describe them turn out to be dubious, debatable and risky.’ (Steyerl 2007)

This is not to say that specific modes of documentary do not operate effectively in their spheres. Before considering the ethical implications of intercultural documentary in broadcast and gallery contexts, it is worth recalling the history of documentary as evidence in comments by creative Documentarist Errol Morris, whose *Thin Blue Line* is widely credited with the release from prison of Randall Adams who had been convicted for a murder he did not commit:

‘To those who argue that there’s no such thing as objective truth, I say ask a man strapped in an electric chair who says ‘I didn’t do it’.... forgive me there is such a thing as truth – the truth’ (BAFTA 2011)

## **2.3 The ‘Golden Thread’ of Ethics**

### **Lévinas and a Frame for Documentary Ethics**

The focus on ethics contrasts with much industry practice where, for most of Rughani’s working life, questions of documentary ethics were kept internal to production teams. Approaches to evidencing legal compliance or negotiating filming access were seen as hurdles to cross rather than as a central practice of documentary production to be debated as a mainstream concern (Rughani 2013:98). Today, UK media ethics are regularly the nation’s leading story. The Leveson report (TSO 2012a & b) led to a proposed framework of legal underpinning for media ethics. It remains unclear how some large media organisations will respond or whether they will comply but there is a widespread recognition that the corruption of standards between politicians, state and swathes of the mass media, especially the Murdoch press, is now a national concern. From being a peripheral conversation, how documentary takes form and the nature of the relationship between filmer, filmed and audiences is newly central.

For documentary, what do ‘ethics’ mean? Ethics flow from principles (the OED definition describes ‘moral principles’) such as accuracy or honest dealing. These principles unfold within a production context, and for the maker combines individual and institutional responses codified in industry guidelines. Choices of what and where to shoot, whose stories to tell and how they are conceived, framed, directed and edited, embody ethical decisions for the chameleon Documentarist, who is often striving to please disparate constituencies, from contributors to commissioners, in order to construct the film. These codes, like the BBC Producer Guidelines or National Union of Journalists’ Code of Conduct suggest a skeletal structure.

Intercultural documentary ethics come from a much broader engagement in reciprocal human interaction and the detail of documentary practice. In contrast to codes of conduct, ethics here are not thought of as primarily as restraints that stop filmmakers doing what they really want. They are more in the nature of an invitation; ethical

enquiry is seen as an opportunity to unfold the key documentary relationships in a way that attends to the human journeys of filmer and filmed through which documentary practice emerges.

Eva Hoffman argues:

‘within our intermingled and simultaneously multicentred globe, it is no longer possible to think of cultural relations in terms of promoting ‘our culture’ abroad, or exporting culture from a few privileged centres to the putative peripheries; rather, we need to envision cultural exchange as a two-way – or perhaps even a multidirectional – process, which happens through dialogue and mutual participation, and which hopefully leads to reciprocal and fertile forms of engagement.’ (Hoffman 2011:6)

David MacDougall looks towards increasing film explorations of crossing and mingling cultures that ‘help us to recast the problem of Self and Other more productively as a set of reciprocal relations’ (1998:149). Theorists such as Jay Ruby argue that the multi-vocal may be the only credible form in documentary’s future: ‘So long as our images of the world continue to be sold to others as *the* image of the world, we are being unethical’ (Ruby quoted in Barbash 1997:60). As John Berger (1972) writes in *G.*: ‘Never again will a single story be told as if it was the only one.’

Discussion of personal ethics is attractive to humanist readings of the world because it insists on the individual’s decisions, role and conscience. Some responses to the notoriously celebrated director Leni Riefenstahl and her *Triumph of the Will* (1935) are focused on her individual choice to make what came to be the *Ur-text* of Nazi propaganda. Her individual talent served the Third Reich, yet to over-focus on the individual risks losing sight of the structuring dynamics of politics, institution and culture in creating the environment for this work. If the surrounding culture legitimises hatred, deception or routine invasions of privacy, then the individual’s decisions will only stand out if made by Documentarists with courage, a higher moral compass and a way of making work despite such odds.

Ethical questions can address the practitioner holistically – in mind, body and spirit – and touch the ground of a bigger philosophical enquiry. What, after all, is

documentary for? In philosophical terms an ambitious vision for human communication was given by the European philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas. Having survived Nazi occupation in France Lévinas was wary of collective participation rather than individual agency (Hand 1996:67). Lévinas mapped out a radical view of human connectedness, insisting on *relational* ethics. He rejects much in Western philosophy and asks us to pay close and deep attention to the person before us – to look into the face of the other. Lévinas insists on considering the other first; that is to say that our first duty is an ethical one of realising our relatedness. For Lévinas this is ethics as first philosophy, the primary responsibility, which implies questions for makers and audiences alike, and which intercultural documentary works towards. Lévinas has had significant influence on cultural theorists and practitioners but a delayed impact on film studies. This may be because he made few direct comments about cinema and was distrustful of the adequacy of representation through the image (Saxton 2007:5).

In his seminal work *The Subject of Documentary* Renov maps out an initial framework for documentary studies to encounter Lévinas (Renov 2004:104-105). Renov observes that (unlike much fine art practice) ‘in the documentary tradition, the subject is most often faced not with an object but with another subject.’ (McLaughlin & Pearce 2008: 23). This encounter with the human form, Lévinas calls ‘a knot or denouement of being ... a knot that cannot be undone’ (Butler 2005:83)

Lévinas challenges us to pay profound attention to the face of the other as a path away from subsuming another’s being into a ‘totalising vision’. He insists that the gaze of the other is primary, leaving us the ethical duty of creating and responding to our relatedness, a connection that is only just starting to be thought through for documentary production, significantly by Renov:

‘Open exchange may begin to replace the one-way delivery of ideas. This ethical challenge in the field of documentary practice echoes those in contemporary art and philosophy that question models of mastery or absolute certainty, placing greater emphasis on open-endedness, empathy and receptivity’ (Renov 2004:130)

Lévinas invites a closer attention to the ways in which cultures communicate in the spaces between. In this frame, the ethics of documentary practice assumes a new centrality, a re-learning of how to listen, how to speak, where and with whom to rest documentary's attentions. Given the critiques of Hall and Said and the trend for the other to be ignored, subsumed through assimilation or romantically understood as a tool of Western self-knowledge, Lévinas' insights invite significant reflection for intercultural documentary.

### **Freedom of expression**

This section unpacks the ethics of intercultural documentary practice through an examination of questions of freedom of speech; from a decision in Rughani's practice to exclude expressions of hate speech (for ten years from the mid-1980s) to a significant transition towards a broader conception that could accommodate expressions of prejudice. The shift is informed by reflection on the 'conditions of contact' (Pratt 1992) that can re-frame the discourse of racial difference to enable problematic areas such as the expression of racist views to be engaged with rather than excised. In order to examine this shift in detail this section focuses on *Playing Model Soldiers*, which reflects the multi-layered nature of prejudice and the need to ask awkward questions from within diverse communities.

At the heart of both documentary and democracy are judgments about whose voices to privilege and whose to exclude. These cultural judgments carry a political edge especially when dealing with questions of prejudice and how freely contributors can speak. Democracies are, rhetorically, built on a commitment to freedom of speech. Article XIX of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.'  
(UN 1947)

Many accord with Chomsky's liberal view that: 'With regard to freedom of speech there are basically two positions: you defend it vigorously for views you hate, or you

reject it and prefer Stalinist/ fascist standards' (2005:167)

Yet are there legitimate – even necessary - limits to freedom of expression? For documentaries (as for democracies) how are anti-democratic views, for example racist or fascist views best handled when they are designed to destroy the very pluralism that protects them? Is it more dangerous to limit expression – to effectively vitiate the principle of free speech – than to allow extremists their moment in the sun? If fascists are silenced then does that not leave them ready to be recast as the true standard bearers of free expression? Rughani's documentary work began with a clear rejection of this argument. The author welcomed a more clearly observed taboo on hate speech, preferring censorship and the exclusion of extremist expression in British mainstream print and broadcast contexts, where he worked from 1988. A generation ago (with its echoes again in the London riots of the summer of 2011) London appeared more polarised than cosmopolitan. In several British cities in the early 1980s, tensions erupted in violent disturbances marked by racial division. Far right parties like the neo-Nazi National Front regularly held 'keep Britain white' [sic] and anti-immigrant marches and demonstrations, choosing areas where they could incite or capitalise on racial tension. Whilst the National Front had permission to march and police protection many BME families organised self-defence groups to accompany their children home from school as there was no police protection for them.

On 11<sup>th</sup> June 1978, a gang of about 150 skinheads came to Brick Lane, east London to smash up what they could of the Asian community. Instead of the usual withdrawal, Asian youth organised and fought back, chasing the gang away. Documentary actuality as a form recorded these urban flashpoints. It was a turning point celebrated in *Temporary Hoarding*, (No.6, Summer '78) featuring the documentary photography of Syd Shelton.

To me, the principle of protecting the freedom of expression of a few hundred skinheads to chant racist slogans seemed a strange priority for authorities and police in a democracy, when the more fundamental right of children to get home without fear of racial abuse or violence was not. The commonplace or cultural racism of key British

institutions and the culture more broadly had yet to be effectively challenged in mainstream culture. The then Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher signalled sympathy with racist groups in her totemic electioneering reference to being ‘swamped by people of a different culture’ (*World In Action*. ITV, 1978; cited in *The Daily Mail*, 31 January 1978). As Salman Rushdie put it in his searing 1982 essay *The New Empire within Britain*:

‘If we want to understand British racism - and without understanding no improvement is possible - it's impossible even to begin to grasp the nature of the beast unless we accept its historical roots. Four hundred years of conquest and looting, four centuries of being told that you are superior to the Fuzzy-Wuzzies and the wogs, leave their stain. This stain has seeped into every part of the culture, the language and daily life; and nothing much has been done to wash it out.’ (1991:130)

In this climate many community groups and Trades Unions argued that ‘no platform’ be given to racism or fascism. In documentary projects exploring questions of race at that time, prominence was given to participants from diverse ethnic communities and extremist views were not used. This was a view shared by some television executives seeking ‘to reduce prejudice and bigotry’ (Pines 1992:138)

Rughani’s practice consciously aspired to anti-racism, which meant actively undermining expression of hatred. At the same time, when it was useful to employ journalistic tools to engage and expose aspects of how the political organisation of extremists worked, then this was done. For example Rughani conducted phone interviews with British Movement spokespeople in 1988 when working for *The Independent* newspaper.<sup>7</sup> It was a clear-cut a moral position but this subsequently shifted as intercultural work led to a broadening of the documentary ‘arena of expression’ in two documentary films for the Channel 4 series *New Model Army*. As discussed, the brief for *New Model Army* was open and story lines evolved through the 18-month filming period and were not decided *apriori*. What was uncovered led each film of the series to a clear perspective. Campaigns of quiet intimidation aimed at black recruits resulted in racist graffiti, for example the following message found

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<sup>7</sup> Rughani conducted telephone interviews using a Christian name as it was unlikely that he could continue the investigation either with his real name or in person.



scrawled in a washroom at the Knightsbridge barracks:

‘Niggers don't belong here. Niggers don't wear Eagles’<sup>8</sup>

A BBC series of the experiences of black police recruits ten years earlier found real hostility from middle managers to diversity (Pines 1992:143) so it was not entirely surprising. Reluctantly, some soldiers used the complaints procedure that the army trumpeted as their protection, yet we found that their allegations of racial bullying were not investigated promptly or effectively, despite army promises that racism would not be tolerated. Careful thought was needed when considering whether and how to feature the N-word in the work. As a threat it still carries the power to hurt and offend. However, in interview, soldiers’ mothers described the graffiti and their use of this language turned the focus on the perpetrator’s intention to intimidate. This became an effective *modus operandi*. Racist abuse, when included for editorial reasons was always described in terms of its effects rather than expressed directly by perpetrators who used hate-speech as a weapon.

At times, the filming process became both strained and strange. The conditions of access to filming on army bases included having a full-time Project Officer on location with us at all times. It is not unusual for the army to stipulate this but to the knowledge of the team rarely has it been so rigorously enforced (Mills 2000). The army were clearly nervous about this project – colleagues on another broadcast documentary series just ‘clocked in’ with their Project Officer while we were under constant surveillance. Our Project Officer was sometimes joined by other officers who would sometimes stand within sight or even within the direct eye-line of the interviewee, listening and even eyeballing BME soldiers as they talked about their experience of being in the army. It was a near-comic attempt to intimidate and to keep the soldiers and thus the series ‘on-message’ for the army. The filming team responded by being as transparent as possible with audiences about the conditions of access. *New Model Army* opens with a sequence of Project Officers visible, having strayed into shot, thus showing how the army sought to monitor our work. Including this footage at the start of the film was essential so that audiences have a fair chance to judge for themselves the context of what they are seeing. The filming team kept on as friendly terms as

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<sup>8</sup> The Guards regiment take great pride in their Eagle badge.

possible with full-time Project Officers but when an officer was distracted, late, lazy or incompetent there were moments where we were left unsupervised, some of which yielded good results for the series with greater openness about an individual's truer observations or feelings.<sup>9</sup> The army-monitored sequences in the final films are interwoven with extensive filming in free environments, such as with the soldiers' families at home. In this way a fuller picture was created.

The piecemeal attempts of some senior officers to oppose racism ran in to resistance from officers who described the army's equal opportunities policy as 'being nice to Gollies' all of which 'had gone too far'.<sup>10</sup> In the course of research and filming we did not expect to find soldiers or officers ready to speak publicly against the equal opportunities emphasis, as it is forbidden for serving soldiers or officers to criticise army policy. Yet racist sentiment kept surfacing, including through a complaint made by one officer against another, which was leaked to the team. In order to give a glimpse of this Rughani directed a reconstruction of the scene including the racist language used to give a flavour of the exchange.

Dropping the taboo against broadcasting racist language marked a shift from exclusion to engagement in Rughani's work. In earlier films space had not been given for gratuitous racist insults (following the 'no platform' emphasis) but the more Rughani looked into the incident, the more the context seemed important. It was clear that we *had* to use this material. What had changed from ten years earlier? The clear grain of the films mean that racist sentiment, conscious or cultural, was challenged. Racist comments when questioned in this way would demean the speaker, rather than incite hatred; so however unpleasant or even abhorrent, these views needed to be heard, engaged with and understood. In so doing, a broader intercultural view emerged; audiences needed to make up their own minds based on a fuller view of the other. This move is contingent on context and held in a historical frame. The new Labour government were actively legislating concepts like 'institutional racism' in the wake of the Macpherson report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence. A crucial factor in this

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<sup>9</sup> For example in *Playing Model Soldiers* Corporal Terry Overton describes in interview the resentment he saw among Davatwal's peers because of the attention Davatwal was getting through the army policy of 'encouraging recruits to promote themselves'. The interview was only possible because the army minder had clocked off early to catch a train home.

<sup>10</sup> One of many racist epithets described in an official complaint leaked to the production team during the 1999- 2000 production period.

judgment was that the series was being made at the same time that new legislation was progressing through parliament (the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000) that would provide a legal instrument to deal more effectively with endemic racism.

The first film of the *New Model Army* series *One of the Family?* became a case study of white racism. If it were surprising that institutions brandishing their equal opportunities policies had still failed to stop overt racism, some found it predictable, given the army's track record. The *Independent on Sunday* headline in a feature article on the series 'The Military flings open its doors to reveal a closed mind' (6.8.2000) summed up how the army emerged in *One of the Family?*

So far so straightforward, but other uncomfortable truths emerged which tested intercultural questions in the exploration of race and identity. *Playing Model Soldiers* focuses on the journey of the first Sikh trooper in the army's Household Division, Gurmit Davatwal, on his quest to stand guard at Horse Guards parade, an archetypal image of British ceremonial life. *Playing Model Soldiers* charts his journey from bright-eyed recruit and 'model soldier' to his expulsion from the army on a drugs charge: a charge that he hotly contested, maintaining that his drink had been spiked the night before a random drugs test. As filming unfolded Rughani got to know Davatwal's family, including his mother Kaye Davatwal and sister Satwinder Davatwal. As we filmed Davatwal starting his army training, his sister Satwinder was also being prepared for her own new life, as the Davatwal family set about arranging her marriage. Despite the brief to follow Davatwal in the army, understanding the integration of public and private worlds led us into the family culture of the Davatwals. Both Kaye and Gurmit Davatwal were filmed as the groom was selected, astrologers consulted, jewellery bought and marriage preparations made. However, as the commentary script describes:

'Satwinder was growing alarmed. The prospect of being caught in a marriage that felt more and more like a trap was overwhelming'.

During the autumn filming period Satwinder disappeared from the family home. The drama unfolding at home seemed key to me, but took us further from army life and the commissioners needed reassurance of the relevance in exploring the bigger frame of Davatwal's family life.

Gurmit heard rumours that Satwinder was seeing a Muslim man, which incensed him. After Guard duty, he regularly drove the local streets at night to look for her and to find information that could lead to her. As we filmed and talked it was clear that he was worried on many levels:

‘It’s been ten days I’ve had no contact. I’m very worried about where she is and what she might be doing... it’s very annoying and upsetting especially to know that your sister’s away. She’s with one of these mad, loony extremists.’

Gurmit grew up among Sikh-Muslim tensions in his home in Slough, outside London. He was very worried that his sister had chosen a Muslim man and it became clear that his broader world of army and home life was profoundly human in being shot through with counter-currents of prejudice and the contradictions these exposed. By day, Gurmit believed that discrimination was wrong in the army, yet in the evening maintained that discrimination against Muslims was acceptable within his own family.

Intercultural documentary necessarily has its originating co-ordinates in attention to counter-cultural voices but the documentary practice that emerges needs to be open to the complexity of human experience and the limits of political or ideological narrative from whatever direction. The commitment to create work that interrupts the progression of a fixed episteme is at the heart of intercultural documentary. The final work follows shifting perspectives and the process of production, follows the Documentarist’s duty to be alive to voices even (perhaps especially) when they pull away from the assumed direction of a narrative. In this way the Documentarist can ‘course-correct’ in the light of shifting stories an essential freedom in work that aspires to a philosophy of more open engagement between peoples of radically different backgrounds.

Intercultural documentary, though critical of the mirage of ‘objectivity’ should be even-handed in its exploration of subjectivities. Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*: ‘In the absolute, the black is no more to be loved than the Czech, and truly what is to be done is to set man free.’ (1986:11)

This is significant as a way of avoiding the ‘gravitational pull’ of essentialism – another kind of trap. Developing a methodology of documentary ethics is a key method to move towards this. Essentialism collapses the many forces that comprise subjects’ experience into single aspects of human existence like gender or ethnicity. Fanon (1986) describes the ‘epidermisation’ of racial difference. Countering this requires being open to many factors that influence a whole person and the biases and beauty of a surrounding culture, without limiting such experience to a single reading of identity politics. It means being open to exploring uncomfortable realities such as the nature of prejudice within and between minority groups.

Commissioned with a brief to explore BME experience, what quickly emerged during the making of *Playing Model Soldiers* was how individual seams of identity elide. Issues of race, although privileged in the films, unfolded alongside questions of class (signalled in the speech and ranks of officers and soldiers) culture, gender, religion, sexuality and ethnicity. The intersection of these forces configured the journey of *Playing Model Soldiers* as the central subject found himself handling the mantle of Sikh patriarchy, inter-communal tensions, his sister’s agency and her choices about gendered roles and sexuality. In this sense Rughani’s aspiration was to include the human plurality of these forces as a matrix– revealing the pressures on a Sikh soldier as he sought to found an army career, even as the army itself single-mindedly used him to promote their agenda. At the point of collapse of Satwinder’s arranged marriage Rughani’s commentary in the film exposes the contradiction: ‘Gurmit’s worlds are colliding – primed for bigotry in the army, instead he exposed it in himself’

Visual transitions give form to this, including framing Gurmit in central areas of medium close-ups and then mixing these.

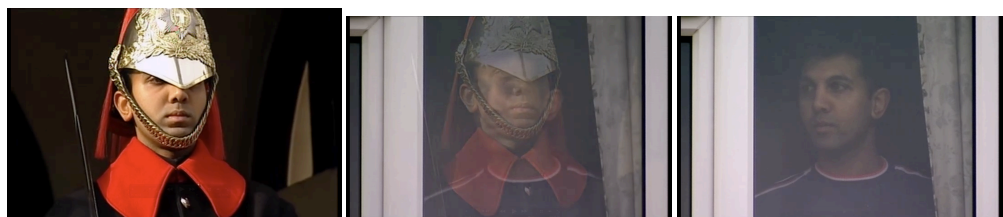


Figure 1. A half mix holds both public and private faces of Gurmit Davatwal (central image above). Image source: *Playing Model Soldiers* © Umbrella Pictures, for Channel 4 UK. All rights reserved.

The film examines the integration of these, initially in terms of army policy in the attempt to recruit from more racially diverse communities and then in terms of the personal decisions that shape Gurmit's experience. Gurmit was honest, and clear in an interview broadcast in the film:

'I'd say discrimination in the army is wrong, but in my personal life I'd say it's OK because... there's been a lot of tension between Sikhs and Muslims... At the end of the day if it comes down to my own personal family, that's when I strongly put my foot down and say 'no' this is not what's happening – this is not what's gonna happen.' *Playing Model Soldiers*.

In terms of the cultural politics of documentary, the aspiration had originally been to broker dialogue with marginalised people - the under-side of official history. If prejudice surfaced then its effects were explored, as a way to expand a circle of concern by bringing the work to broader audiences who may neither know nor (yet) care about the effects of casual or cultural exclusion. The formula of 'racism = power + prejudice' led to a preoccupation with the abuse of power and by implication a tendency to overlook the flaws *within* marginalised communities. During this project, instead of overlooking the contradictions in Gurmit's criticism of the army's discrimination whilst still nurturing his own prejudices, those very contradictions became the crucial locus of *Playing Model Soldiers*, a film whose narrative brings these parallel realities into communication. A more fully intercultural documentary process could only evolve by being true to the contradictions within the pro-filmic situation and allow a more three-dimensional exploration of these conflicted responses within both the army and Gurmit himself.

Taboos preventing such explorations within BME communities were in effect suppressing key truths, delaying the development of a more inclusive culture that could navigate competing rights. *Playing Model Soldiers* does not offer a neat political narrative of marginalised people making progressive change. Moreover, if BME communities decry racism then we had to be held to that same standard ourselves. If the critical reception of the films, and their awards success was heartening, there was also an angry message that came via Channel 4 from a Sikh man incensed that the film betrayed the Asian community by 'showing our dirty washing'.

Who was ‘betrayed’ here? It was essential to include Satwinder’s experience rather than repress it. During the filming period she sent a letter to her family explaining that she felt that people had turned against her, leaving her ‘just one choice – to leave’. A safe time after the arranged marriage date had passed, she returned to London to say that she had no intention of dropping her Muslim boyfriend but wanted Gurmit to understand why she fled. Her interview was central as it draws a distinct parallel between the traditions of two institutions (the army and the Asian arranged marriage system) with the weight of their histories and expectations:

‘This community... It's a bit backwards. They're like ‘you’ve got to get married to the same religion’ and that. They’re more into people from India and if you don't like the guy then they’ll moan and say he’s good but the thing is, they don't know the guy’s background and so they’re pressuring me saying he’s really nice but afterwards, I have to put up with it at the end of the day.’

*Playing Model Soldiers*

The gender politics of duress in arranged marriages was hardly the subject of the commission – yet it was central to understanding the nature of the family at the heart of the film. The process of making is the process of navigating many agendas and pre-conceptions. A confluence of social, economic and (in the case of commissioned work) institutional factors shape the context of production ethics. In *Honest Truths: Documentary Filmmakers on Ethical Challenges in Their Work* (2012) an empirical study of Documentarists describing their own experience in production, many reported increased pressures in pitching and selling a story to confect ‘characters’ with story lines anticipated or even set in advance. In this environment, Kate Nash asks:

‘To what extent were the ideals of fully informed consent approached? To what extent does the documentary reduce the participant to a stereotypical role, dictated in advance by the filmmaker’ (Nash 2012:5)

This argument reaches its denouement in the evolution of ‘structured reality’ programming, a high-rating strand of television programming that developed from docu-soap, through ‘Reality TV’ to the kind of work where events in scenes are

negotiated between producers and contributors, who create performances<sup>11</sup> prefigured for an audience focused on clothes, fights and romantic lives. *Made in Chelsea* (Monkey Pictures/ E4 2011-) and *The Only Way is Essex* (Lime Pictures/ ITV 2010-) are exemplars of this, where the idea of ‘actuality’ is now so concocted that the notion of documentary observing rather than inventing life no longer makes sense. Molly Dineen argues that so-called ‘structured reality’ is now becoming ‘basically fiction’ (BAFTA 2012).

To Yasmin Anwar, the Commissioning Editor of the Multicultural Department at Channel 4 during the making of *Playing Model Soldiers*, it looked curious that the production team invested significant research time and filming days in our main subject’s sister rather than the recruit who was the original subject of the film. However, with explanation and descriptions of the rushes and the larger dynamics being drawn out, Channel 4 quickly accepted our reasoning. The most effective commissioning editors understand that their investment is as much an investment in the maker’s sensibility - in this case an intercultural one - as it is in a specific story direction.

Faced with his sister’s clarity, Gurmit came to a bigger realization, enabling the family to come to terms with Satwinder’s choice and allowing the story line to resolve. Much to his credit, Gurmit was willing to talk about what he’d been through:

‘At the end of the day you can’t pick on anyone ’cause it will revolve and hit you back in the face. Obviously that’s what’s happened. The more I used to hate Muslims, you know, it’s just turned back and – you know – slap bang. But I’ve come to terms with that now and I will not hold any grudges against anyone. For my own experience now it’s just a case of being very open minded and knowing a lot more about people and a lot more that goes on.’

In Rughani’s own practice the ‘no platform’ taboo had by now nearly collapsed and in so doing opened out a more complex exploration of the nature of prejudice and change. Taboos and self-censorship, even when well intentioned have only a provisional, historically contingent place. *New Model Army* opened out sensitive

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<sup>11</sup> Julia Raeside, ‘A Different Kind of Reality TV’, Guardian, 1 June 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/tv-and-radio/2011/jun/01/reality-tv-only-way-essex>. Accessed 30 July 2012.



ethical and editorial challenges of handling layered prejudice. It was a heuristic experience with discoveries and re-configuration emerging through the liminal skin of the film, its makers and subjects. By contrast, the army as an organisation in the series found the required adaptation, learning and flexibility much harder to embody.

A key question for documentary film-making emerged from this work; how central is it to identify and feature voices that pull away from the assumed direction of a narrative or are there moments when ignoring or even self-censoring a more problematic exploration of a story is the price of creating work which coheres or delivers an assumed outcome? The latter approach tends towards a teleology which for committed film makers has value as strategic politics (for example concentrating on the abuses of the powerful rather than their victims' flaws). When minority communities feel at risk or are busily overturning histories of hatred, the demand may be for positive imagery. If extended into a policy (or naturalised as a reflex) the potential for post-colonial, intercultural communication is vitiated which risks deadening debate or driving it underground in the longer term.

## **Ethics and Aesthetics**

There remains a tension between narrative or observational approaches and artistic impulses at the heart of documentary practice, which raises under-discussed ethical questions which explored by Rughani in the British Film Institute (BFI) *Documentary Film Book* (Winston 2013:98-109). The chapter argues that a framework of ethical judgments is central to any documentary endeavour even - perhaps especially - when not acknowledged. Such a framework holds a movement from the individual maker's responses to the world melded by the institutional and industrial context of production, within which specific projects find a form. Practitioners' ethics, having long been obscured from broader discussion, are encoded in the work and can be made visible to some extent whether or not practitioners (or institutions) talk about them.

‘Is there a place in documentary innocent of filming choices? Their implications unfold, whether we are alive to them or not - as makers, subjects or audiences. Far from being an added extra, documentary's principal

questions of whose story signifies what to whom - whose 'truth' to privilege - are more urgent in a new century for the documentary as its forms become mobile, interactive and online, alongside their linear ancestors in television and cinema.' (Rughani in Winston 2013:98)

Several submitted works share an interest in exposing and discussing the ethics of documentary practice. Ethical questions are both the central focus of the chapter *Are You a Vulture?* and the fault line in *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'* between Islamic and Western science that left some Muslim scientists trying to navigate divergent value systems. As the discussion moves closer to core ethical questions, the text shifts increasingly from the third person to the first person in order to offer questions, responses and reflections more personally and directly.

*Are You a Vulture? Reflecting on the ethics and aesthetics of coverage of atrocity and its aftermath* deals head-on with the ethics of documentary enquiry. It is discussed here to locate the enquiry in a broader field of documentary ethics and detailed practice-based questions are further explored in chapter three as they inform the production process. The filmmaker develops an aesthetic and/or narrative shape that interprets what funders, curators or commissioners support in the project. Filmmakers need inner and outer space to create and direct the work and must protect this space in order to have a chance to be open to reframing and being led by the dynamics of what is unfolding for subjects. Ideally the maker allows the film to 'become' something which authentically emerges in life. Documentary thrives through individual human relationships which have their own to-and-fro dynamic of revealing, thus observational work unfolds in ways that cannot be fully anticipated.

## **Documentary: a meeting with the other as an appointment with the Self.**

A key part of the maker's inner compass is a sensibility to anticipate the dangers, temptations and limits of what the camera can do, alongside its many opportunities. A contributor's pain can be a Documentarist's opportunity, with consequences that cannot be fully anticipated at the time of making. Choices of story and treatment remain led by responses to what unfolds in the research process and individual relationships. Documentary filming works effectively in moving from individually observed and articulated human experience towards the structural observation (and back again). There is a danger for documentary makers who miss the centrality of individual experience and the ethical reflections, which this requires. This involves a move towards a *relational* frame for the documentary encounter. It shapes a dialogistic process in the struggle for meaning which at best is informed by exchange between subjects (Bal 2002:43) predicated on the attempt to interrupt the authority of the filmer/filmed, subject/object axis in the move towards intercultural space in documentary practice.

Trinh T Minh-ha describes her aspiration in video as restoring *proximity* of the subject and recognising the place of subjectivity:

‘In the context of power relations, speaking for, about, and on behalf of is very different from speaking *with and nearby*... what has to be given up first and foremost is the voice of omniscient knowledge’ (Hohenberger 2008:118-119)

*British Homeland* includes Rughani's reference to a personal experience of racial harassment and how it informed a way of thinking about cultural identity. The essay takes up an invitation to connect with a diversity of opinion within sub-cultures and marginalised groups and to do this meant trying to see more clearly the imprint of personal experience in shaping subjectivity and how a recognition of this can open doors to resonate with others. To do this is a significant step in seeing how experience informs an empathic response to the world. Paradoxically, documentary that does not understand its own influences is more at risk of not getting beyond them as their authors are less aware of their operation and they are not so easily made visible.

For the purposes of exploring personal documentary judgments, individual ethical questions are emphasised, but this is done with a critique of bourgeois individualism in mind (Plekhanov 1941). The individual is not conceived as an atomized, lone agent, but as a figure who embodies responses to many structural forces, from subjectivity and identity, to finance and the means of production.

Filming situations are fluid and emerge from living responses to shifting situations. There are principles to follow but the detail of how filmmakers should respond cannot (and should not) be specified by *apriori* codes: they arise through individual judgment, rapport and relationship. Much documentary production involves arranging shots, interviews and encounters. As Winston describes:

‘Everyday subterfuges [are] inevitably used because in the very nature of the case the camera cannot simply deliver an unmediated reproduction of the truth’ (Corner 2005:181)

On a sunny day, photographing on location in Maharashtra, central India, these concerns crystallised to trouble me with a single question burned vividly into Rughani’s memory and practice...

### **‘Are You a Vulture?’**

In this section, I reference significant personal responses which inform my documentary work in order to illustrate the evolution in my thinking and reflexive practice as key ideas formed, were challenged and became re-modelled. I do this because documentary practice that can respond to what is happening in front of the camera involves a heart-response as well as a head-response from the practitioner and the integration of these are rooted in the documentary moment and become part of the process of knowing what to shoot and how to navigate the filming and editing process. This is not an essentialist argument but one that puts emphasis on close listening to both self and other. To do this I quote my personal field notes. I was reticent to show anyone or discuss these notes for many years not just because they are private and not meant for anyone else, but because I have been wary of the trend of the film maker, photographer or writer starting to situate *their* experience as somehow central – rather than the people that practitioners go to film, photograph or write stories about. As my

thinking about intercultural documentary deepened the significance of the dialogistic process including discussion with oneself and the importance of doubt, signified the value of making subjectivity more consciously visible at key moments.

The move to recognise the role of the author's subjectivity came gradually to me, assisted by a growing appreciation of those practitioners who have been willing to talk openly to me about their sometimes muddy judgment and to recognise the structural tensions of media production alongside the inner contradictions that thoughtful practitioners dare to embody. In my recent publications this discussion expanded to include original interviews with Andrew Gilligan, Frederick Wiseman and Peter Kosminsky, the last of who dared to wonder whether he had made the right choice in pursuing an interview which produced compelling material but perhaps at too high a personal cost to the contributor (Rughani 2013:104). Opening out one's personal and documentary process and even questioning the judgments made risks criticism not just of the final work (which is to be expected) but of the process by which one's own practice is made.

I therefore decided to open out tensions in the process of making work whilst experiencing conflicting thoughts and emotions, to see if it could help develop a dialogue which might help crystallise questions of documentary contact. People tend not to do this whilst still making work as it exposes our (often flawed) process of making and may involve criticism of organisations and thereby compromise working relationships. Practitioners tend to do this at the end of their careers, if at all.

In my documentary practice I have been left with a sense of unease in different locations: I can experience a tension between being drawn to using documentary practices as an essential way of engaging with stories that need to be told, yet troubled by how to do this humanely. This has struck me forcefully in environments where families and sometimes whole communities have been dehumanised or brutalised; in Rwanda, Cambodia, on the edges of Gaza, in some South African townships, at Aushwitz/Birkenau, in Aboriginal Australia, in Hiroshima and when photographing in a small village called Khairlanji in the Indian state of Maharashtra.

Since 2002 I have been commissioned annually by the international development

NGO, the Karuna Trust to make photographic essays in response to their projects. This is an abiding relationship with the Karuna Trust. They invite me to take a significant role in story and image selection. We produce an annual publication and in 2007 one project involved working with activists campaigning for a trial following the shocking murders of a family in central India. In the Khairlanji photographs, I had a free rein to discuss my visual judgments and the development of a brief with the Karuna Trust including the choice of images and how they should be presented with the publication's designer, Ian Waddell.

In the village of Khairlanji a series of murders were planned and carried out to destroy a so-called 'untouchable' or 'Dalit'<sup>12</sup> family who were rising in power and success. The motive for the murders was the refusal of the family, the Bhotmanges, to give in to a land-grab by higher caste Hindus. This extreme violence was a hateful response to the changing social status of the Bhotmange family, one of a handful of Dalit families whose success in their beguilingly picturesque village of 178 households gave new confidence to the eldest daughter Priyanka Bhotmange who topped the class at secondary school, won a local award and was clearly on her way out of the shadows of caste constriction. In showing my own photography in response to this, I did not include the crime scene photographs shown to me of the bodies of murdered members of the Bhotmange family in either the *Karuna '08 Newsletter* or the book chapter 'Are You a Vulture?' In some forms of photojournalism graphic images would be the obvious ones to use but I did not want these distressing images to be readily available to anyone flicking through either publication. Those who wish to consider the questions of documentary ethics raised may wish to see crime scene photographs and to note their responses as part of the enquiry, so some images can be accessed via a web link – but this would be an active decision informed by engaging with the academic chapter. This approach also suited the publisher as it avoided the cost implications of publishing such images but the decision was primarily an editorial one for reasons outlined. Likewise, when presenting the work, viewers are given clear choices about whether to look at the crime scene images and signposts of when they are visible and when not.

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<sup>12</sup> People from what were once called 'untouchable' communities often choose the word 'Dalit' to self-identify. It is the term used here as it avoids the dominant caste language of 'untouchability', though 'Dalit' (which translates as 'oppressed') also has its own problematic in terms of political identification.

To help reflect on and clarify my own intentions and responses, I keep field notes and have done so since my first freelance writing from a Vietnamese refugee camp in Hong Kong as a second year undergraduate student in 1985. I found the process of writing notes about my own responses helped me think about what was unfolding, and sometimes just allowed me to empty it all from my mind. Only later did I start to see that the practice was helping me to process such experiences – I cannot say ‘make sense’ of these experiences as sometimes the events I witnessed appeared senseless. I wrote about this in the chapter *Are You A Vulture?* for the book *Peace Journalism*.

In this period my research focussed upon the ethical and aesthetic responsibilities that attend documentary work which seeks to witness and record, often from a committed perspective, hand-in-hand with contributors. The vulture question must be weighed with the survivor’s need to both communicate and to forget. Cahal McLaughlin maps out the ethical parameters of collaborative work and signals a new centrality to the ethical dimension of documentary practice and the necessity in some production contexts of fully shared editorial control. (McLaughlin 2010:144)

A third, less discussed question comes into view even outside of formally shared editorial collaboration: what are the intentions and responses of practitioners who file video, photography and words from such extreme situations? Key ethical considerations include the challenge of how to document the unspeakable (Rancière 2011: 89): how much to show of ‘reality’ while honouring the memory of people who had been so dehumanised that such violence was possible (Rughani in Keeble 2010: 157-71). Susan Sontag identified the problem when she happened upon Holocaust imagery in her local bookshop – how much of this work risks ‘re-victimising the victim’? This is a pervasive phenomenon for audiences too who are now, Sontag writes, ‘spectator[s] of calamities’:

‘Wars are now also living room sights and sounds. Information about what is happening elsewhere, called ‘news’, features conflict and violence – ‘If it bleeds it leads’ runs the venerable guideline of tabloids and twenty-four-hour headline news shows – to which the response is compassion, or indignation, or titillation, or approval, as each misery heaves into view.’ (Sontag 2003:18)

## Ethical Codes

I ended the *Peace Journalism* chapter with a series of questions for practitioners:

- ‘Am I clear enough about my own intentions and motives and the motives of those who may seek to be featured? What do victims of atrocity want others to know?’
- What impact might involvement with the project have on the subjects featured?
- Can the representation and framing of subjects help subjects recover their dignity?
- How aware am I of the sensitivities of subjects and audience?
- What are my instincts telling me?
- Is there a way to do more than trade in misery and inhumanity? Are there even moments of renewal or empowerment?’ (Rughani 2010:169)

I had looked to editorial guidelines industry codes and codes of ethics (Hanna 2012, Winston 2000) but felt that the enquiry naturally opened out with further questions and reflection rather than being closed down by attempting definitions of how to respond. Ethical questions raise deeper philosophical ideas. In terms of Western philosophy, codified ethics can be examined in terms of deontology (emphasising duty and obligation and looking for precedent as a guide) or utilitarianism (pragmatic justification in the future for good deeds done). Both are key to generating codes of practice such as producers’ guidelines in television documentary work. However neither approach can fully embrace the centrality of the individual relationship of documentary-maker to the individual participant (*this* director with *this* subject) and the specific character of individual connections that shape and inform decision-making and the documentaries that evolve. Sensitivity to these defining relationships cannot be wholly described by codes of practice; one can follow the letter of the law (e.g. obtain a signed release form) or lean into the argument that any exposure of atrocity may be a good thing, yet handle a contributor or victim poorly. Communication ethics continues beyond codes and (as discussed in Chapter 1) is interested in the contact zone or conditions of contact, where film makers and contributors can listen hard and mutually



influence each other in a dialogue that nurtures the work.

In Khairlanji, advancing this project is more usefully discussed in terms of ‘virtue ethics’ (Blackburn 2003), an approach which emphasises notions of connection and the responsibilities of coming in to relation with another. In time, this shapes the character and sensibility of the documentary-maker in the encounter, giving further weight to the integration of head and heart responses in how the maker relates to the pro-filmic situations unfolding in front of her/him, taking us into a different dimension to relying on external codes and laws to give directions as to for how to behave, preoccupied as they are with giving the maker and publisher legal protection. As Rancière emphasises in his conclusion to *The Intolerable Image*: ‘Images change our gaze and the landscape of the possible if they are not anticipated by their meaning and do not anticipate their effects’ (2011:105)

# CHAPTER 3: REFLECTION AND REVIEW OF UNIFYING THEMES WITHIN THE SUBMITTED WORKS

## Introduction

This chapter discusses the unifying themes of submitted documentary practice and the thinking that informs them. Breaking down the formulation of intercultural documentary, two key themes interleave and connect the submitted works:

- (i) The centrality of brokering dialogue with the other through engaging the realities of pluralism and recovering its hidden histories.
- (ii) The ethics of the research that informs documentary practice, writing and reflexivity.

As implied in earlier sections, these are not separate impulses in the works but are interwoven so that the approach to intercultural communication embraces an ethics of listening, reflection and dialogue which informs and shapes the production of film and text.

I have long had a strong ‘inner knowledge’ that these impulses (rarely juxtaposed) are in fact twins. They make best sense in combination and there is a philosophical logic to this conviction which became increasingly apparent through the process of reviewing twenty-five years of practice. The aspiration to engage the other must mean brokering differences in an expanded dialogue. To do this will touch on the deeper values that inform diverse cultures and how the world appears through diverging perspectives, especially when dealing with essential and tender questions raised in the submitted works: of science and art; of racial difference and the representation of violence. If the other is not to be subsumed into what Lévinas warns of as a totalising vision (Hand 1996) then some way of negotiating the opposite extreme needs to be examined – the idea that each simply has her/his own vision with its own valid ‘truth’.

This raises the key question of cultural relativism. The emphasis developed here in the centrality of how documentary ethics informs documentary practice provides a way through the cultural relativist's dilemma of how to judge cultural habits which appear for example to be exploitative from the perspectives of a different culture. Lévinas' invitation is not to romanticise the other but to dare to look into the face of the other, to strive to meet another way of seeing the world and listen closely from that place. What emerges is likely to have its own beauty and frustrations for each party but is rooted in a more genuine engagement. By attending closely to the ethics of this encounter, the 'conditions of contact' discussed in 2.1 and informed by a human rights framework, intercultural documentary looks for a way between the extremes of cultural imperialism and cultural relativism.

The form that intercultural documentary practice takes depends on the context of production. This chapter therefore continues the discussion of the industrial production context of documentaries submitted (3.1) before considering brokering dialogue with the other (3.2) and documentary ethics (3.3).

### 3.1 Industrial Context of Production

Until the mid-1980s, many practitioners of colour felt rebuffed, excluded or that they could find no home for their ideas in mainstream broadcast commissioning environments. Instead, significant parallel video and film practices integrated documentary actuality, often beautifully crafted for independent distribution and avant-garde spaces. In the 1980s a new generation of work by *Sankofa*, the *Black Audio Film Collective*, *Ceddo* and others produced practitioners like John Akomfrah and Pratibha Parmar. Significant developments in cultural studies helped shape academic thinking and connected post-colonial thought with some fine art spaces (Wyver 2009) but these rarely crossed over to mainstream documentary making and exhibition. There was only limited influence and few direct connections between documentary studies and broadcast documentary practice, which typically operate in different spheres and speak different languages.

Lina Gopaul co-producer of *Handsworth Songs* (1986) recalls her experience in trying to get support for the film:

‘The BBC said that we were over-ambitious. We were met with hostility, surprise, shock that we were making something but we wanted to bring in the voices of silent immigrants in the way that they talked about *our* politics and *our* subjectivity.’<sup>13</sup> (speaking at the twenty-fifth anniversary screening of *Handsworth Songs*, Tate Modern 2011)

The BBC (like many British institutions in the 1980s and beyond) appeared to be an impenetrable monoculture. The means of production for film and television needed significant resources, accessed typically through contacts, jobs and union cards and staffed by gate-keepers who did not look like Gopaul: it meant navigating budgets and a complex system of editorial compliance. Added to this was a non-comprehension of difference in ideas and staffing which made BBC support very unlikely. Gopaul emerged through the workshop movement, a significant development nurtured by the Association of Cinematograph Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT) union and boosted by the gradual but seismic change to the broadcast landscape engendered by

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted from panel debate following Tate Modern screening of *Handsworth Songs*, 26/8/2011.

the newly formed Channel 4 (Brown 2007:15). The perceived exclusion (or at least non-participation) of people of colour influenced the ACTT to support the workshop movement proposal and Channel 4's remit meant that they had to commission and produce broadcast content about the UK's minority communities and even to recognise (a radical realisation at that time) that some people from those communities should be hired to make such work. The structural shift came with Channel 4's creation of a Multicultural Department and the commissioning of programmes such as *Black on Black* and *Eastern Eye* (1982-85) which made targeted programmes for specific communities. In turn this stimulated the BBC to commission *Ebony* (BBC 2 1982-9) but much of the output was in current affairs modes and studio discussions, rather than exploring documentary modes.

The opportunity for broadcast commission and distribution marked a significant change and required practitioners with an ability to both engage with how broadcasters thought about audiences and a desire to work with television conventions. Some artists, like Isaac Julien, crossed borders between art and broadcast arenas, especially in the few moments where a handful of key practitioners were met by film and television executives who understood both contexts. Julien's ability to work in both environments remains an atypical exception, successfully developing avant-garde storytelling in film and television, alongside mainstream gallery contexts.

The success of Channel 4 led to the reinvention of BBC 2 which in turn brought work to larger audiences who would not necessarily be familiar with or naturally sympathetic to a culture of pluralism. As Hanif Kureishi put it in a parallel debate between television drama and theatre, broadcasting offered new opportunities:

‘The great advantage of TV drama was that people watched it; difficult, challenging things could be said about contemporary life. The theatre, despite the efforts of touring companies and so on, has failed to get its ideas beyond a small enthusiastic audience.’ (1986:3-4)

The particular focus in broadcast works submitted here was to attempt dialogue and counter-argument through documentaries for large audiences and organisations, rather than focusing on the freer but more rarefied spaces of avant-garde practice, where progressive work traditionally had a greater range of expression. Rughani had written

for *The Independent* newspaper and made internationally broadcast radio programmes, which enabled him to develop journalistic stories. This aptitude for narrative development is closer to the currency of broadcast documentary than artists' film. However the extremes and polarisation that often attends the news agenda especially in relation to racial and cultural difference missed the kind of exploration of difference that the author has come to describe as central to intercultural documentary. The method of juxtaposing polarised views rarely reached a deeper understanding and led Rughani to develop a more sustained dialogue through documentary practice rather than current affairs journalism. Rughani found the documentary form particularly attractive because the human value of specific experiences can be weighed and sustained with a longer attention span and a tighter focus on specific journeys and is more satisfying to audiences looking to stay with an idea over a longer period.

After joining BBC TV as a Production Trainee, Rughani helped establish the BBC's first Black Workers Group (1988) and argued for embracing an engagement with difference by both pitching ideas that aspire to intercultural dialogue from within BBC documentary departments<sup>14</sup> and lobbying for change through interviews on network documentaries including the *Black and White Media Show* and *Big Words, Small Worlds*. Behind the camera, the culture of developing programme ideas was by turns confused and preoccupied with stereotype in some departments. When on an internship to the BBC London Current Affairs flagship programme *London Plus* in January 1988, Rughani noted:

‘I got a call from the editorial desk asking if I had a story on ‘curries or arranged marriages’. It took a while for me to work out that this wasn’t a ‘joke’. I offered neither and instead worked on a story about why so few minority applicants were accepted at elite universities.’<sup>15</sup>

As discussed earlier, when BME experience appeared on television, it was often about problems where minority communities were spoken ‘on behalf of’ or shunted to the

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<sup>14</sup> The class and cultural specificity of BBC TV's Production Training Scheme helped form a largely self-perpetuating elite. For example ‘general knowledge’ written tests in the selection process included questions about esoteric knowledge of London restaurants and opera, which assumed a level of disposable income and cultural literacy more likely to be associated with private education and familiarity with classical literature.

<sup>15</sup> Author's production notes 1988 (unpublished).

margins of the culture in ‘ghetto programming’ (Twitchin 1988). Broadcasters’ mentality was reflected in the schedules. For many years, ‘Asian’ programming for example was scheduled at 7am on a Sunday morning or after midnight. ‘Is that when you think Asians watch TV?’ producer Parminder Vir asked only half joking at a broadcast diversity consultation.

A goal with *Islam and the Temple of ‘Ilm’* and *New Model Army* was for the films to be commissioned for a peak time audience, which they were. This meant working within accessible visual conventions that govern the conventional relationship between form and content for documentary. Innovative and occasionally counter-cultural arguments could be made, but were only considered in peak-time viewing if presented in an immediately accessible way, which typically meant directing within an established visual grammar and naturalistic aesthetic norms of mainstream broadcast programming of that time.

As discussed in Chapter One, for *Islam and the Temple of ‘Ilm’* there is no director credit and Rughani is credited as producer, despite directing the film, signalling the primacy given to the producer’s role in this context. The key element for science documentary was progressing an overall story through clear case studies or examples of individuals, thereby building stages in an overall argument. Rughani was reasonably free to find the kinds of images and sequences that would illustrate the argument as long as they worked within conventions described. In some areas of artists’ documentary practice, talk of ‘illustrating’ an idea smacks of imposing a formed pattern on events, rather than the director finding the imagery that emerges from an evolving story, which is more possible in observational documentary.

Attempts at visual innovation were harder to pursue than the editorial emphasis on pluralism. Aesthetically, several submitted documentaries work within the parameters of BBC 2 or Channel 4 story-telling frameworks for peak time programming, rather than having licence to experiment with the form. For *Islam and the Temple of ‘Ilm’*, this influenced the decision to have a presenter take the viewer on a journey and

explain turning points in the story through delivering pieces-to-camera (PTCs).<sup>16</sup>

A significant judgment for a Documentarist when a commissioner is interested in a documentary is negotiating how to develop the film or series. Central to this is assessing whether the pressures on how the story is treated will support the work being realised in a way that is true to what unfolds for contributors; to the director's vision and to what 'works' for the Channel. Programme makers rarely speak about these pressures publicly as this can compromise commissioning relationships, but the need to agree and protect an effective working ground for the documentary to develop is critical to the project's success and the relationships with contributors that underpin it. The climate in which these judgments are made are in continual flux as commissioning editors and the perceived needs of the channel flow with social currents. At the same time certain structural changes are worth noting in the sector.

The UK television factual programming sector has become yet more reliant on celebrity and on-screen presenters in recent years, making a much more difficult environment for observational documentary. Within BBC TV, documentary has been largely absorbed into 'factual programming'. On Channel 4, the inexorable rise of formats franchised internationally like *Big Brother* (Endemol/Channel 4 1999 fwd.) and *Wife Swap* (RDF/Channel 4 2003-9) changed the landscape. Some began with experimental elements and won big audiences which quickly settled into commercial formats. As their formulae were copied, television documentary offered less and less space for individual directors' vision. *The Hotel* (Lion TV/BBC 1 1997) and *Driving School* (BBC 1 1997, 1998, 2003) likewise marked a new direction towards docu-soap and 'reality TV'. Their commercial success has drawn increasing resources and now shapes broader factual and documentary programming across the sector and internationally. By the early 2000s there was a substantial shift in resources away from showcases for individual documentary styles and series, towards the formats of reality TV shows and docu-soap. This output claims much of the factual budget today, so that individually authored documentary spaces are increasingly rare on mainstream British television or confined to niches for documentaries that have already had a big

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<sup>16</sup> Working with the post-colonial critic and thinker Ziauddin Sardar Rughani encountered little resistance to the structure of the argument but a clear insistence in the edit that visual norms were followed e.g. in the way that PTCs were edited. Attempts to innovate simply hit the cutting room floor.



impact through theatrical release or commissions which are hard to access, even for star documentary directors. The emphasis on ethics is timely. Recent anonymised research shows that Documentarists are often stretched between personal commitments to the relationships they develop and industrial demands of, for example, the broadcast sector:

‘Documentary makers generally do feel a sense of obligation toward participants; that they are conscious of a difference in power and often work to protect their subjects. The report [the Center for Social Media’s *Honest Truths Report*, 2009] also found that the structure of the production process and the financial pressures facing broadcast institutions often cut across documentary makers’ obligations. The report implies that documentary makers, like other professionals, may experience a level of ethical stress in the course of their work.’ (Nash 2012:5)

Directors’ space to evolve broadcast stories now works with the current conventions of mixing a range of factual styles. Observational documentary filming is now more commonly an element in the mix of interactive, magazine and other factual formats. A handful of reservations in broadcast schedules continue to showcase longer-form and authored documentary like *Storyville* (BBC 4 2005-) and *Wonderland* (BBC 2 2008-) but as these opportunities become very rare, authored documentary film has found new audiences in cinematic releases, a burgeoning documentary festival sector, NGOs and fine-art contexts (galleries, installations and residencies). By the mid-2000s the climate was such that projects like *Glass Houses* (2004) were much more likely to be realised in spaces where the director’s role is in a more recognised and protected space. Submitted work reflects this pattern, with *Glass Houses* funded by the British Council and photography from Khairlanji commissioned for the NGO, the Karuna Trust.

These contexts attract different audiences, attitudes and expectations. Free from the demands of mass appeal that the broadcast sector specializes in, the individual role of the director is more clearly understood in independent film and gallery contexts where greater artistic freedom is a pre-requisite. A higher value is placed on the individual voice and distinctive authorship. This enables the Documentarist to work with greater freedom or space to configure how a documentary can find its own form aesthetically as well as editorially, including the potential to find its life and audience as an artwork. As Rancière writes of the ‘intolerable image’: ‘The problem is not whether to write

and view such images, but the sensible system within which it is done.’ (2011:100)

If the Documentarist can appear in different guises, what are the implications for intercultural documentary ethics? Barnouw (1974) summarises the Documentarist’s roles as: prophet, explorer, reporter, painter, advocate, bugler, prosecutor, poet, chronicler, observer, catalyst and even guerrilla. Their work functions in different documentary modes, described by Nichols (2001) as expository; observational; participatory or interactive; reflexive; performative; poetic. Its practitioners typically emerge from distinct subcultures and the ethical norms are contextually shaped as Rughani explores in the BFI essay *The Dance of Documentary Ethics*:

‘No respectable current affairs or investigative documentary would consider giving contributors editorial rights, in part to protect the project’s putative impartiality. In collaborative documentary, by contrast, many practitioners find it unthinkable to show a film without the explicit approval of a fine cut by key contributors.

If an investigative documentary has an approved public interest case for pursuing its quarry – typically, exposing the corrupt and powerful – then the human effects on those exposed by it are not a concern. In other documentary contexts the opposite is more often the case: the effects on the individual are central in weighing up the purpose of a project and arriving at an ethic of how contributors are handled. The public interest is absolutely not a licence to pursue anything about which some may be curious, but is a way of testing probity rather than indulging prurience. (Winston 2013:101)

Intercultural documentary thus works with a range of distinct ethical norms which vary between modes. An important trend in the work submitted is an increasing consideration of reflexivity, both for contributors within films (for example the journalists in *Glass Houses* discuss their experience of the project) or revealing aspects of the process of production (in *New Model Army*) and in Rughani’s reflexive self-questioning (as quoted from field notes in ‘*Are You a Vulture?*’). This impacts both content and methodology.

### 3.2 Brokering dialogue with the other

Section 2.1 discussed how sustained cross-cultural communication led to models of multiculturalism (and their limitations) which are informed by developments in anti-racism and Critical Race Theory. Thinking through the tensions and contradictions these exposed opens out the proposition of ‘intercultural’ documentary practices.

The body of documentary practice submitted here emerged through the texture of Britain’s evolution as a multi-culture. Central to this is the twin movement of recovering multi-vocal or plural histories, sometimes juxtaposing different perspectives of the same, often contested event. This re-inscribes narrative to produce more plural readings in documentary films broadcast or exhibited in mainstream, festival and gallery contexts. At times this meant listening and then filming ‘against the grain’ of a dominant monoculture and its favoured reading of history as in the BBC 2 documentary *Islam and the Temple of ‘Ilm’* (1990). The film emerged in the wake of the Rushdie affair. In February 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini pronounced his fatwa on Salman Rushdie. After a hiatus, marches in the UK against Rushdie followed. Peaceful demonstrations were barely reported until a book-burning demonstration in Bradford became national news. Suddenly ‘British Muslims’ were described as ‘a key threat to rational thought in British society’<sup>17</sup>. A polarity emerged of ‘Radical Muslim vs. British values’ (which has resurfaced and resonated in succeeding years) at a time when Thatcherism thrived on polarisation and the declaration of ‘enemies within’. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (2000:147) argues that what was also exposed, though rarely discussed, was a media crisis of representation in failing to engage communities at the heart of these events, underlined by a dearth of writers, documentarists and other media professionals employed from this community.

Against this background, Rughani looked for ways in which British Muslims could be heard in their own terms and thus offer new insights into the broader culture and society. At the time of filming, British Islam was barely considered in the mainstream media. The initial challenge was as much invisibility as misrepresentation.

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<sup>17</sup> *Islam & the Temple of ‘Ilm’* opens with footage of the Bradford march and references this idea in commentary over footage of book burning demonstrations.

Ziauddin Sardar's book *Explorations in Islamic Science* (1989) was striking in its clear examples of how Islamic science had been appropriated by Western scientists who then effaced its origins and in so doing missed key elements of the cultural context that shaped some of the world's most significant scientific discoveries.

Sardar questions how Western science passed itself off as global science. This is a dynamic with a deep and abiding back-story which dovetailed into colonial history and with parallels across the humanities. The much celebrated television arts documentary series *Civilisation: A Personal View by Kenneth Clark* (BBC TV, 1969) for example makes recurrent asides about the triumph of Western art over Islamic cultures. When enthusing about the Book of Kells in the opening programme for example Clark describes it as 'better than anything in abstract Islamic art'.

The framework Rughani aspired to work in was mapped out in Said's *Orientalism* (1978) which questions the bias of much Western scholarship in its relations with the East. Rughani approached Sardar to present the film who also sees himself working to overturn Orientalist ideas. The film ends with examples of how the sensibilities of Islam have inspired many scientists and includes an interview with the Nobel-Prize-winning physicist Abdus Salaam who explains the cultural attraction of seeing the unity of elements that inspired his breakthrough. Muslim scientists go on to argue that their value system offers an ethical base for investigation which, far from being a threat to enquiry *per se*, offers alternative frames for research that reveal the cultural specificity of Western claims to a 'universal' and more rational methodology.

This insistence on the realities of difference uncovered how British sub-cultures were developing their own guidelines for future research truer to an Islamic context, which for some scientists included a critique of Western science's widespread reliance on animal experimentation. The film ends with a hand-held tracking shot of Ziauddin Sardar climbing a minaret in London's Regent's Park Mosque which describes the balance of influences that shape other expressions of science – other ways of being. The moment attempts to imagine an integrated, holistic response to science rather than the 'split personality' that Sardar endured during his earlier scientific research

Crucially, the fault line for many Muslim scientists interviewed was that their cultural perspective brought with it an ethical imperative that made working within some Western models of research ethics untenable. *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'* was conceived as working outwards from the experience of people who embodied the putative contradiction of both Islamic and British values. In Western science there is (roughly speaking) a defining difference between religion or belief and 'rational' or 'scientific' thought, underpinned by a broadly secular public sphere. In the traditions of Islamic science this distinction does not obtain and the film questions the separation of religious and secular thought as a pre-condition for scientific thought. In the process it recovers aspects of a hidden history. *Islam and the Temple of 'Ilm'* describes how many of the key advances of Western science and medicine were in fact drawn from discoveries in astronomy and medicine achieved in the Muslim world and plagiarised by Western scientists. Having colonised such scholarship from the Muslim world, Western scientific narratives typically effaced their origins and passed themselves off as the inventors of a superior methodology (Sardar 1989).

Revising history to be cognisant of pluralism and the recovery of ignored or submerged narratives 'from below' is a recurring theme in submitted documentary practice. This approach also informs documentary work in Rughani's extended body of work including the Channel 4 series *An Indian Affair* (Takeaway Media/Channel 4, 2001) and the BBC 2 series *Africa's Big Game* (Scorer Associates/BBC 2, 1995) both of which re-read the impact of colonial policy on Indian and African cultures.

Parekh (2000) and Hall (1980, 1992, 2000) significantly analyse and contribute to thinking about the evolution of multiculturalisms. Their emphasis models a willingness to *embrace* difference – embrace in the sense of 'hold' as well as 'encourage' and to do this without resiling from self-criticism. Pluralism emerges through an ability to broker a conversation across the lines of separation through which a deeper listening can emerge. This approach proved essential to the documentary project *Don't Call Me Battyman* (2004) on homophobia among artists and musicians featured at the MOBO (Music of Black Origin) awards. Rughani directed a taster tape with Black gay artist and activist Topher Campbell. Although this film was not commissioned it marked a further juncture in how intercultural documentary (informed by human rights

perspectives) insists on finding a way to address race and sexual equality agendas together.

*Playing Model Soldiers* worked from such insights to explore the lived experience of post-colonial subjects in one of Britain's oldest and most traditional institutions. In so doing, the filming process exposed a new problematic in the tensions arising between gendered and racialised strands of cultural politics. The challenge was to cultivate a documentary ethos of filming that holds these contradictions rather than avoiding uncomfortable or inconvenient truths. It marked a move towards close attention to the significance of contradiction rather than exploring a perspective through conviction.

Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (revisiting and updating his earlier aspirations of *Orientalism*) offered a utopian vision for a culture that:

‘refuses the short term blandishments of separatist and triumphalist slogans in favour of the larger, more generous human realities of community *among* cultures, peoples, and societies’ (1993:262)

Said's vision anticipated the new responsibilities of marginalised subjects as they become more able to exercise agency. It is in this more pluralized space that intercultural documentary lives, i.e. one that refuses to replicate an inheritance of hierarchies of oppression between groups. Both *Playing Model Soldiers* and the end-of-apartheid film *Such a Wonderful Thing* (Granada TV/Channel 4 1998) became prisms through which to explore the *layered* nature of experience (and prejudice) in intercultural communication.

Rughani's documentary practice aims to embrace a holistic view of identity, as it is understood by subjects, alive to gender, sexuality, disability, politics, class, race and faith - or none of these - rather than ignoring difference or limiting the enquiry to an aspect of identity that sees any single facet of being things as an ‘essence’.

Intercultural documentary aspires to develop an ethics of communication that can cross these divides - both understanding their importance yet not being defined or limited by them. Rughani did not articulate such ideas in this way initially, but discovered this through the process of developing projects where he felt dissatisfied with the way that some people were used as a mouthpiece for a particular thread in the

culture, like 'black experience' and that a documentary could simply illustrate a preconceived idea through a director's (or commissioner's) diktat over editorial meaning in order to prove or illustrate an issue or idea. Missing in such an approach is an ethic of listening closely enough to contributors' inner experience (Carlyle & Lane 2013) to allow what emerges to inform the filming and directing relationship. Time as well as attention is needed to give a chance for the relationship to develop. For *New Model Army* the whole production team decided to go on half pay which nearly doubled the filming period. There were still the same number of filming days but significantly much more time for research and listening was created which nurtured our key relationships.

The idea for *New Model Army* emerged from news reports in 1998 which described how senior army officers were being sent on equal opportunities training. This was in response to the Commission for Racial Equality's decision to issue a discrimination or 'D-Notice' to the Army for racism, its strongest sanction. The Blair government had come to power a year earlier and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) needed to show their new bosses that they were changing and decided to prove publicly that equal opportunities were being taken seriously. In 1998, the Minister of State for Defence acknowledged to the House of Lords his concern 'with the problems of racial harassment and bullying.' (Hansard, Lords, 20 May 1998: Column 1726). Such admissions are hard won. They are not made freely or lightly and were the result of many disturbing cases of racist abuse and routine discrimination that had been ignored or swept under the carpet, though anecdotally discussed in many BME communities.

In this unusual climate, the independent television production company, Umbrella Pictures, negotiated access to key divisions of army training, to film a documentary series on the experiences of Black and Asian army recruits. For the army it was a golden chance to attract new recruits and get their friendlier message across - if they could shape the series. For the documentary team and Channel 4, *One of the Family?* became a chance to see (as the commentary asks) 'whether this leopard could change its spots'. The second film *Playing Model Soldiers* explores the nature of prejudice itself, as it moves beyond white racism to tackle prejudices within and between minority communities - one of the most difficult areas to explore in the racism debate. Neither storyline was set in advance as both emerged from unfolding events.

The need to work within visual conventions for peak time documentary has been noted, but some conventions offer editorial opportunities. The visual poetics of the documentary interview are a chance to configure the image so that contributors are given equal prominence in the frame whatever their social power outside it. The background detail can signal support (or detract from) the contributor's perspective in the foreground. In the more equalised space of a frame conceived in this way, the powerful cannot assume automatic advantages of privilege. The conscious choice to explore the interview as a key mode of film construction had a levelling effect in *New Model Army* between powerful and marginalised people in the army hierarchy and beyond. Rughani often chose medium close up (MCU) and close-up (CU) interview frame sizes to deploy traditional connotations of authority, supplementing these with wide shots that revealed context, sometimes with classic proportions for composition and use of light in the space. Carefully shot and framed interviews enabled the screen presence of ignored or excluded people to assume a new significance and authority.

At a British Council screening of *Playing Model Soldiers (Representing Cultures* conference, August 2001) the audience discussed the composition of the background of an interview with Trooper Darren O'Connor (below). O'Connor described how he was sprayed in the face with CS gas in a racially motivated attack.



Figure 2. The beaming face of British comedian Jim Davidson (LHS) looks over the shoulder of Trooper Darren O'Connor. Image source: *Playing Model Soldiers* © Umbrella Pictures, for Channel 4 UK. All rights reserved.



As Darren O'Connor recounts the experience he displays his courage to recover and continue with guard duty immediately after the attack. Rughani spotted the popular army magazine *Soldier* (June 1998) in the barrack room where the interview was held and arranged it in shot. For many people in BME communities and beyond, the cover image of Davidson symbolised a current of casual, culturally ingrained racism still popular in Britain in the 1990s. Davidson was particularly known for his black Jamaican stereotype character 'Chalky White'. When Davidson's broadcast work dried up, in part due to complaints about his racist material, he still topped the bill of army entertainment shows. His presence summed up a crucial aspect of the army culture in which Black British recruits sought a new home. The medium close up shot for the interview with O'Connor was thus composed with the familiar smile of Jim Davidson behind his back.

The use of commentary was significant. Channel 4 expected voice-over but this script became ironic and even sarcastic in places in the light of what was happening to the main characters. This was not the so-called Griersonian, pseudo-objective 'Voice of God' voice-over claiming authority, but something much more specific: a voice alive to its own specificity reaching a point of view through attention to what unfolded through an extended period of detailed observation.

Rughani started out focused on disinterring hidden histories and voices. As his documentary practice shifted to exploring relations *between* communities, it involved increasing acts of cultural crossover and translation to bring stories to bigger audiences that were often splintered by the diverging experiences of racially divided groups. This is explicit in *Playing Model Soldiers* and is a significant unifying theme in both *Glass Houses* and *British Homeland*. Intercultural documentary is therefore interested in cultural engagement wherever the trajectory leads, including how the nature of prejudice opens on to challenges *within* minority communities as well as between such communities and wider society.

## Nation and beyond

Many nation states like the UK tell a central story of what it has been and how the nation is in the process of re-becoming. Telling this story is essential to states' ideology. Said writes:

‘The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism’ (1993:xiii)

This is equally a danger of the post-colonial period as Spivak incisively observes when describing Kristeva's ultimately self-regarding *On Chinese Women* (Almond 2007:132). Here she charges that authoritarian knowing performs acts of ‘epistemic violence’ even when this is not intended.

At times, exploring the realities of UK identity forming itself anew threatens to be subsumed into a debate about nationality and the nation. Bhabha emphasises that national stories, such as those implied in *Song of Ceylon* are constructed narrations:

‘To encounter the nation *as it is written* displays a temporality of culture and social consciousness more in tune with the partial, overdetermined process by which textual meaning is produced through the articulation of difference in language; more in keeping with the problem of closure which plays enigmatically in the discourse of the sign’ (Bhabha 1990:2)

*Glass Houses* is more concerned with understanding how difference is explored between peoples rather than definitions of a nation. The debate shifts into an international zone when journalists of ten nationalities from majority Muslim countries come to Britain and report on the UK during the Iraq war, through whatever lens interests them. It marks a transition point in the trajectory of submitted works from interrogating ideas of a British nation to increasing internationality. As the journalists explore their responses to each other, nationality is less significant than how they make sense of each other. In so doing, such works can help inform yet bypass parts of a nationality debate often stultified by its own backward glances (Gilroy 2000). Allen Chun in his *Diasporas of Mind* argues that cross-cultural exchanges are the norm of human history. This norm is newly troubled by the rise of nationalism:

‘one should really ask what is it about the nation-state that makes culture, ethnicity and national identity problematic *issues*. Similarly, multiple identities have been a standard axiom of pre-modern life everywhere, especially ones that have been defined by on-going and regular interaction between local cultures. In such contexts, multicultural skills were a functional necessity rather than the product of ‘identifying’. They were common features of most forms of economic trade and social exchange, whose effacement really begins with colonial imperialism and the standardisation of nation-states’. (2001:95-96, Chun’s emphasis)

One of the most troubled conversations across national borders of recent years is between the West and the Muslim world. So often the trend of documentary and reportage about the Muslim world is a narrative of Muslim nations shown in and by the Euro-West. *Glass Houses* (2004) reverses this trend of perception by bringing journalists from majority Muslim countries to report on the UK at a time when the revolution of more independent broadcasting from the Middle East, symbolized by the rise of *Al Jazeera*, was only just getting more fully established. This idea of reversing perceptions was one Rughani pursued when co-editing the *New Internationalist* magazine where he commissioned the Indian novelist Firdaus Kanga to write about his impressions of the British from London, after having observed the British in India for some years (*New Internationalist*, July 1993). The idea is not new. For the Channel 4 series *An Indian Affair* Rughani selected impressions from the diaries of Mirza Abu Talib Khan a Mughal courtier during his visits to London in the early nineteenth century.

*Glass Houses* has a twin focus on what the journalists make of Britain but also how they started to make sense of each other. This modelled a key dynamic in the shift from cross-cultural to intercultural communication in that the journalists’ construction of their own identities became more visible in the process of reporting. The space to allow many foci and a multi-vocal narrative was integral to the film. Committing to this plurality helped navigate what João Moreira Salles calls a ‘tyranny of narrativisation’:

‘After a few weeks in the editing room, the director too becomes hostage to the

film. The theme imposes its priorities, and the structure leads the narrative along paths that allow no diversions.’ (2009:231)

Towards the end of the film, Michael Koma a leading Southern Sudanese journalist and former refugee reflects after hearing a colleague’s prejudice against him that: ‘It needs a personal adventure to discover how a black man is human and tolerant and how a white man and Pakistani is also human and tolerant’ (*Glass Houses* 2004)

For the catalogue essay *British Homeland* Rughani interviewed and wrote about artists who embraced new and emerging British identities, like ‘British Asian’ including some who found that the new definition was a liberation, ‘a gang of my own’ said artist Ansuman Biswas (Rughani 2004:54). Recovering something of ‘the wide range of illegitimate disqualified or subjugated knowledges’ (Gandhi 1999:53) responds to aspirations and insights from postcolonial theory. Soon however Biswas argues, such identities could become another kind of prison so Rughani was keen to find a language of connection through continuities of culture or resonance that were mediated by bigger ideas than the problematics of the nation. The South African art show *A Place Called Home* (2004) marking the tenth anniversary of the country’s first free elections, was an ideal way to take the development of British Asian identity into a such a context.

Rughani had filmed twice in South Africa (*Africa’s Big Game*, BBC 2, 1995 and *Such A Wonderful Thing*, Channel 4, 1998) and seen something of the transition from the end of Apartheid to the Truth and Reconciliation process. South Africa was in the process of establishing a new sense of itself - not so much as a society of many ethnicities - Apartheid, perversely was a secure acknowledgment of that – but as a society where the conditions of contact for a new pluralism were being reinvented on a more equal footing.

The pluralisation of UK identities in *British Homelands* offers case studies for how other definitions of nationality are re-forming, a subject at the top of the cultural agenda in the formulation of the new South Africa. Taking the UK experience to South Africa situated this conversation in a diasporic frame that worked beyond national borders. The mother-cultures of South Asia thus inform a transnational

conversation with a critical distance from British or South African nationalisms. This allows a space for something else to come into being - including the sometimes awkward insights described in the essay. As Jatinder Verma says in *British Homelands*: 'Merely beating the drum of culturally diverse arts... will only help marginalize these artists within the confines of 'identity.' (Rughani 2004:52)

Intercultural identity in the melting and reforming subcultures of both Britain and South Africa confounds stereotypes (Malik 2002:102-3) an ideal moment, Homi Bhabha argues to: 'shift from ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the processes of signification made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse.' (1994:67)

In a sequence in *Glass Houses* filmed at the home of Britain's only national newspaper columnist with a Muslim background, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, she describes to Egyptian journalist Abeer Saady how Arab and Western journalism feed on stereotypes of each other. Alibhai-Brown exhorts people not just to complain about each community's stereotyping addiction but also to urge the unspeakable - an engagement with why some stereotypes are so persistent and plausible and whether 'sometimes there are some truths in these stereotypes'.

Incorporating the journalist's own sensibility in shaping a story or the artist's imperative to create a connection between self and other as discussed in *British Homeland* (Rughani 2004:53) helps facilitate an otherwise difficult discussion. In *Glass Houses* Rughani's presence and the camera's act of looking can reach towards underlying motives or even explore counter-currents of experience until contributors feel comfortable and confident enough to examine the thorns in delicate issues such as stereotyping.

Observational filming involves patient listening and waiting to see what the process unfolds. Towards the end of *Glass Houses* such a moment came in a discussion between participant journalists which unravelled prejudices borne of stereotypes that some experience in relation to each other *within* the group. Several describe how they are both other and 'othering'. For journalists schooled in questions of representation, like Ayesha Akram from Lahore, 'the best part of being a journalist is getting to know

the other side of the story'. Yet seeing and feeling what is revealed about one's own approach to a story could be a shocking discovery, as she discloses to Michael Koma, a black journalist from southern Sudan. In the debrief from reporting assignments Akram describes that despite knowing Koma, when she passed a group of 'coloured' men late at night she secretly 'wished that a white man would pass by... It was probably the most shameful moment of this year, I mean it taught me so much' Akram says.

Thus the question of stereotypes and navigating one's own limitations becomes not just a key subject for the film but also a series of embodied reflections for several journalists filing their reports. Dina Hamdy says:

'You're faced with the oddities and singularities and idiosyncrasies of other people and it might irritate you; it might rub you the wrong way but you have to stop yourself and say, well, that's what I've been telling others to do so I should start actually with myself and it hasn't been a very pleasant experience but actually it made me stop and think and learn from it.'

Such reflections emerged from the confidence to see contradictions and doubt in the way that each experiences otherness and thus to risk a more three-dimensional picture emerging. Nova Poerwadi from Jakarta describes how he was asked for 'fried rice and spring rolls' by a gay man on the street: 'You'd think they'd know better after facing discrimination but no, it's because it's irrational.' A parallel fear is captured by the discomfort that Nigerian journalist Muhammed Jameel expressed if he were seen to be 'discussing gay behaviour'. Again the fear of the other is revealed, despite Jameel's earlier explanation of his own frustration at the misrepresentation of Islam which 'is portrayed as a religion of terrorism... when in reality Islam preaches peace'.

Music in the film also seeks to embody intercultural expression. Rughani commissioned the vocalist Faheem Mazhar and musician Dan Gareh to write and perform fusion pieces on a theme of understanding the other. The first excerpt is used over the transition from a Sudanese refugee camp to the Sussex village of Ockenden and is from the Ghazal tradition of Sufi music in India where Mazhar sings of how there is common humanity whether the name is 'Ram' or 'Rahim' (these are emblematic Hindu and Muslim names in India).

## Recovering History

A key drive in Rughani's documentary practice was a response to the politics of exclusion and the particular edge to his perspective came from an insistence that documentary practices reflect and include experiences of marginalised and excluded peoples and the movements that supported their recovery, especially in broader national conversations. In the case of many indigenous peoples facing the destruction or denaturing of their cultures, this had become imperative.

Rughani's first radio documentary feature (July 1987) was with the handful of surviving families of indigenous Piscataway Indians, original inhabitants of what came to be Washington DC. As Chief Billy Tayac says in an interview at the Piscataway's sacred ossuary (traditional burial ground) where the state of DC tried to build a sewage works, 'survival's a win here':

At times (as with the Piscataway recordings) these were voices whose ability to continue and bear witness to the shadow side of victor-history was remarkable. Their existence has been so threatened that the act of documenting some kind of record of their language, values and views had significance simply as a record of their community as well as providing a political intervention by creating a platform for their voices. This is apparent now but such a reflection would have troubled the author at the time of recording, as his interest was in engaging with difference, not seeing 'otherness' through the anthropologist's eye. Observing or preserving aspects of other cultures to be studied and catalogued as separate worlds risks relegating them to a museum. Rughani tried to meet them as people with agency, desires and struggles to be heard, reflected and (where possible) brought into some kind of dialogue with the authors of their dispossession. In this sense the drive was different from installation artists using documentary recordings, such as Susan Hiller's film *The Last Silent Movie* (Matt's Gallery London 2007) which created a sober space for the appreciation of languages lost or even 'extinct'.

Occasionally a broadcast documentary broke through on mainstream commercial television which sought to listen to difference (often in current affairs modes rather

than cinema vérité or direct cinema observational styles). An abiding example was John Pilger's 1985 ITV series on the bicentenary of white landings in Australia, *The Secret Country – the First Australians Fight Back*. Pilger's insistence on recounting the story of the bicentennial 'triumph' from perspectives of survivors of the Australian genocide supported an important editorial function of documentary as 'witness' in a way that rarely surfaced. The norm was to have a celebrated reporter or presenter lead the story telling 'on behalf of' the excluded rather than protecting sufficient space for Aboriginal voices as the central storytellers of their own songlines and authors of their own stories of survival and dispossession. A special effort and sustained arguments were needed to help cultivate a space for indigeneity to be part of the American, Australian or global conversation even though this is a pre-requisite of any credible dialogue on our histories and future.

In several films (not submitted with this PhD) Rughani develop film ideas to include work with indigenous peoples describing their own experience of survival (BBC 2 *Water Wars*, 1990 & Channel 4 *Beautiful Death*, 1998). Succeeding documentary series such as *Africa's Big Game* (BBC2, 1994) and *An Indian Affair* (Channel 4, 2001) sought to understand the impact of colonial history from the points of view of colonised people and use these insights to problematise the more familiar narrative of derring-do, imperial ambition or the 'necessity' of colonial or neo-colonial intervention.

The invisibility of people of colour from much of British media until a generation ago disfigured attempts to develop a national conversation. The BME presence in Britain may well be centuries old (Visram 1986, 2002) but this experience has rarely found articulation in the arts and culture of mainstream British life. As Leela Gandhi writes, what is often constituted in the West as disinterested history is in fact partial and limited: 'By attending more carefully to the silence of the archive we need to interrogate this construction of history as certain knowledge.' (Gandhi 1999:172)

In its place, the historian Linda Colley argues for a re-visiting of the stories that we make history from, freer from the poles of imperial nostalgia or post-colonial



condemnation: 'We have a perfectly usable, innovative, collective past, if we only look for and select it.' (1999)

The first move in *Islam & the Temple of 'Ilm'* was to recover hidden histories, to re-tell a more accurate story of how 'Western scientific thought' is itself a coalition of influences and discoveries, derived from many cultural contexts of enquiry including the scientific triumphs of Islamic cultures from the ninth to the twelfth centuries A.D. The film moves on to the present day, examining how western definitions of science forced some British Muslim scientists to make an artificial choice in their identities, between life as a Muslim and life as a scientist.

Understanding this history reflects on present day decisions. The choice of story and its treatment helps shape our collective sense of ourselves and how we describe and imagine community.

For intercultural documentary, these parameters are joined by a new and central question - the ethics of story telling including the selection and handling of contributors to documentary film.

### 3.3 The Trajectory of Ethics

This section draws out the unifying ethical considerations, by turns implied or explicit that inform the documentary practice in submitted works. In an intercultural context the term ‘ethics’ is broadly drawn as it encompasses the recovery of plural histories and storytelling that can hold diverging perspectives as discussed throughout this chapter.

Section 2.3 discussed the ethics of ‘free speech’ and intercultural documentary in relation to *New Model Army*. In this series the opening film *One of the Family?* had no option but to focus on white racism before *Playing Model Soldiers* tackled the counter-currents of prejudice engaged by listening closely to Asian women’s experience. Underpinning this shift is an attitude to documentary practices informed by a cultural politics where the subject’s ethics can be questioned as part of the film’s narrative, alongside the relational ethics of documentary communication, especially between the filmer and the filmed. In ‘*Are You a Vulture?*’ the Documentarist’s ethics are more openly examined through self-questioning as the gaze that turns life into images or narratives is examined through reflexive practice.

Documentary ethics have come increasingly into focus as Rughani’s research and directing experience evolved and he was able to nurture relationships with contributors through a longer, more sustained production period across a documentary series and to think through the process of making and exhibition in different documentary contexts.

There were many ethical challenges that emerged with each story. In *Playing Model Soldiers* some family members shared information with members of the production team that they had not confided in each other. As the director, Rughani sought to honour that trust but not take advantage of it, which left uncomfortable situations when some of the filming team were aware of some parts of the picture not yet available to some contributors. In such cases contributors were encouraged to communicate directly to their close circle when they felt able to.

In another case worrying allegations of racism by serving soldiers were filmed. An

important consideration when a subject confides on camera is to think through why this is said. In this case, soldiers had little to gain and much to lose by admitting that they were being threatened. It goes against the grain of army culture for any soldier to criticise their regiment, especially to non-soldiers and even more so to the public via film-crews. This, combined with the male pride in finding a way to 'fit in with the lads' and a desire to avoid appearing to look for 'special treatment', meant that BME soldiers were slow to speak up when problems came. But the long filming period allowed connections to unfold with the production team and greater trust developed as contributors got used to the filming team as individuals. Gradually, key characters started to speak of their worries. In an interview outside Hyde Park barracks a serving Trooper went on record to describe an endemic culture of racism. As a serving soldier his views carried real weight, yet their broadcast threatened to expose him to further hostility within the regiment when he still had two years of his commission to run. Although it was possible that he was aware of the risk he was taking, to use this material from his own mouth risked worsening the abuse.

Weighing up the public interest of the allegations becoming more widely known, against further risks to his person and career, for the 'disloyalty' of challenging racism from within, the filming team were left with an ethical question of how and whether to use this material. Some production team meetings involved decisions *not* to use some of the strongest testimony from BME soldiers about the racism they encountered. Was this censorship or sensitivity? We took the view that it would heighten the risks to serving BME soldiers if they were seen initiating allegations of racism and were left to carry the burden of this struggle for redress. The film needed a way to explore the allegations without over-exposing serving soldiers and achieved this through the responses of the soldiers' mums: women beyond the direct control of the army - women who reluctantly concluded that they had to speak out to protect their sons. Their decision to participate meant that the key allegations could be made public while minimising the risk to serving soldiers.

Under Chatham House rules, army lawyers tried the tactic of arguing that it would be 'against the national interest' to air allegations of racism. This was very instructive as it demonstrated that the army's interpretation of the national interest was to suppress reports of racist bullying rather than to root out the practice. When this was pointed

out, the army's threat to have the series injunctioned did not materialise and the broadcast went ahead on schedule.

### **Reflexive Practice**

The army were hungry for headlines about their new inclusivity. Unlike *Handsworth Songs*, where media and government are seen conjoined as part of the same state apparatus, *New Model Army* offers a view from inside an army regiment where BME perspectives drive the narrative, with the media presence prompting serious questions for the army. The documentary camera shows how the army uses a handful of new recruits to win positive PR headlines and convince its political paymasters of change. Indeed, filming access for *New Model Army* was enabled by this unique historical moment. The documentary series seeks a more three-dimensional view of how experiences unfold for BME soldiers who 'had to be invited to promote themselves' as 'demonstration models' as Commanding Officer, Major-General Evelyn Webb-Carter calls them. Central to *Playing Model Soldiers* is how the army uses people like Davatwal as a 'strike weapon' for media appearances to respond to army critics. BME recruits were regularly gathered and shown off as evidence of change and several sequences include the photographer or journalist's perspective when Davatwal is regularly wheeled out for the press even after just a few weeks service.

How this image was made was implied by shooting across the curved surfaces of the reflective centre of Davatwal's army kit. The preparation of a surface of reflection, in the Blues & Royals regimental soldiers' breast-plates, became part of the mise-en-scène of two sequences of the film. For example, it is the context for an interview with Davatwal, where he shines his breastplate, followed by a long tracking shot of him walking through the barracks. The curved surfaces of the breastplate render a fun-fair mirror reflection of the world, moulded around his torso. The sequence ends with a standard practice, called 'squash', where Davatwal is pressed bodily against a locker to enable the front and back breastplates to be attached. Here, he is literally pressed into shape. The trope of distorted reflection also returns to close the film – where we see Davatwal's reflection in the metallic lenses of a row of sunglasses, offering a final space between image and its construction from lived experience.

The army's confection of an inclusive image is a central theme of *New Model Army*.

The logical next step was to signal the construction of the film itself. Rughani's wariness of situating the Documentarist's experience as somehow central rather than the people who are the main subjects of the documentary made him cautious about incorporating self-reflexive elements (as discussed in 2.3) although this trend in documentary making had come increasingly into vogue since the mid-1990s.

*One of the Family?* reveals some army attempts to control the filming process by leaving minders visible when they strayed into shot. *Playing Model Soldiers* included footage of a reflexive moment of the filming team, see screenshots below and also discussed in 2.2. Access in observational documentary is not necessarily granted for the whole of an event and typically scenes cut from what we were allowed to record, to the next scene. However at a Horseguards' seminar on race, Rughani instructed the cameraman to keep filming the process of being removed and included hand-held footage of this. The moment is described in commentary as army discussions being kept 'strictly under wraps'. The team is glimpsed being removed from the seminar, drawing attention to three elements: the filmic construction of the scene, the mediated access to the event and the fact that we were only allowed to observe part of this conversation. This kind of transparency emphasises the dimension of production ethics on screen. Integrating such shots goes against the conventions of Direct Cinema, Free Cinema or the main swathe of television documentary directing where continuity and naturalism (Hall 1975, Williams 1977) dictate that shots are edited into sequences that flow without drawing attention to their construction.



Figure 3. Above left, an army minder in the doorway signals the film crew to leave. Above right, director and producer caught in shot with recording kit.

Image source: *Playing Model Soldiers* © Umbrella Pictures, for Channel 4 UK.

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Revealing the process of production raises other questions. Barbash and Taylor warn that ‘self-reflexivity is no more an assurance of authenticity or sincerity than any other style’ (1997:61) and Bruzzi argues that the director’s presence should be seen in the context of performativity (2000).

Documentary film is always a mediation including performative layers but the way the pro-filmic event is configured sets ethical as much as aesthetic parameters for the transition from actuality to cut film. In her seminal essay, *The Totalizing Quest of Meaning*, Trinh T. Minh-Ha criticises the effacement of documentary relationships which can mislead:

‘The relationship between mediator and medium or, the mediating activity, is ... ignored – that is, assumed to be transparent, as value free and as insentient as an instrument of reproduction ought to be’ (Renov1993:96)

Unless there is honesty about this the resulting film can tend towards manipulating an audience who may be unaware of the context of what they see. Being clear about how access is circumscribed was essential in *New Model Army*. There were conditions of access. We agreed to a preview screening (prior to broadcast) to give the army an opportunity to (i) correct any material or factual inaccuracies and (ii) register any concerns related to national security. This did not mean giving the army ‘editorial rights’ since Umbrella Pictures and Channel 4 retained their independence but we did have a duty to respond to significant objections under (i) and (ii). In addition we took each film to the family involved and showed it to them prior to broadcast. Again we did not surrender editorial control, but wanted to ensure that we remained in a dialogue and could respond to any questions or concerns. The families raised no objections to the films and it helped them prepare for responses after broadcast. In the case of the Davatwal family in *Playing Model Soldiers*, both Kaye and Gurmit Davatwal (mother and son) were happy to be interviewed for *The Guardian* newspaper about the project.

The path to an interview or image can say much about the conditions of contact that shapes the final work. Yet this is seldom articulated by working practitioners. Section 2.3 discussed the context of Rughani’s decision to use self-reflexive field notes in the discussion of creating work in the aftermath of atrocity, published in the chapter ‘Are

*You a Vulture?*’ for the book *Peace Journalism*. Revealing the choices that inform the creation of these images felt like the logical next step in reflecting on Rancière’s provoking question ‘is it acceptable to make such images and exhibit them to others?’ (Rancière 2011:83)

The field notes quoted were made during an intense two-day period in December 2007 when photographing the aftermath of a series of caste-based murders and are based on access negotiated with activists agitating for a trial of the murderers, which subsequently went ahead. Rughani also presented some of the imagery and key arguments from the paper in a series of academic and arts contexts, from the Institute of Contemporary Arts (London) to Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Arts and Humanities Research Council conferences and the documentary *Histories of Hatred* (2010). The developing interest in this work only serves to heighten its core question, which resonated in field notes from Khairlanji:

‘I have the comfort of a purpose here or at least its illusion. I remember [the leading war photojournalist James] Nachtwey’s face in a documentary just as he’s being asked: ‘What kind of a vulture are you? Preying on others? Making your shots from the disasters of others?’ It’s a harsh and tender, precisely aimed and necessary question; one that visitors and viewers should be decently troubled by’ (Rughani in Keeble 2010:165)

*‘Are You a Vulture?’* took as its focus not the essential question of what kind of coverage is permitted in war or conflict, but the practice of connecting with victims of hatred whilst creating stories and imagery. Are graphic images of suffering, war and atrocity necessarily exploitative? It is a many-layered process requiring clear decisions, typically under time pressure as these field notes from Khairlanji attest:

‘I spent the day with the one surviving family member, Bhyyalal Bhotmange to do some photography with him. He has a bodyguard and needs protection since his living presence has become a rallying point in the fight for a fair trial. For some time I hadn’t taken the camera out of my bag. I’m waiting until it feels right – is it intrusive? – am I planning some kind of theft? He must expect me to have a camera but I don’t want to initiate. As we talk of his loss, part of

my mind is clocking light sources and possible angles’  
(Keeble 2010:169)

The process of finding a documentary response is complex and challenging process. Responding to situations saturated in violence requires the ultimate appointment with yourself, as the leading British photographer of conflict Don McCullin says, when covering extreme situations of war:

‘Moral sense of purpose and duty. You have to work out which of those purposes and duty you’re there for. You want to take this picture and you want to stop it. It came up more and more in my life, seeing people executed in front of me’. (*McCullin*, 2002:TC 26:15)

For founding Magnum photographer George Rodger, the process of reflection brought an end to his photography. McCullin now questions the efficacy of any of his groundbreaking work in Vietnam and elsewhere. Rughani’s reflexive self-critique when photographing the aftermath of caste-based murders in India aspires to use reflection on location experience to critically consider and refine the practitioner’s response to the competing forces that inform the practice of documentary ethics, especially when practitioners are faced with extreme events.



## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This submission has given a critical review of the documentary practice selected (four documentary films and two essays) detailing their position in fields of study, their unity as a body of work and their contribution to knowledge in developing the newly inflected inter-disciplinary concept of ‘intercultural documentary’ practice including examples of methodologies employed.

The concept developed through twenty-five years of practice fired by an impulse to deepen and connect parallel conversations in postcolonial communities which Rughani found to be fractured by lines of cultural and racial difference. A bigger picture was more likely to emerge if it could create dialogue by connecting broader, multi-racial audiences ‘to contest singularities of difference and to articulate diverse subjects of differentiation’ (Bhabha 1994:74) across and between a larger *polis*, as discussed in *British Homeland*, *Glass Houses* and *Islam and the Temple of ‘Ilm’*.

As documentaries developed and relationships with contributors deepened, Rughani witnessed and filmed expressions of sometimes entrenched prejudices which raised timely questions about the efficacy of censorship and self-censorship when trying to develop intercultural dialogue. The author charts the development of these ideas alongside the necessity to recover hidden histories, thus cultivating a space where a more plural intercultural history may have a chance to unfold in mainstream documentary media.

A central example is given by analysing the Channel 4 documentary series *New Model Army*. Commissioned with a brief to explore BME experience, what quickly emerged was how individual seams of identity elide. Issues of race, although privileged in the discourse, unfolded alongside questions of ethnicity, culture, gender, class (signalled in the speech and ranks of officers and soldiers) religion and sexuality. Their intersection configured the narrative journey in *Playing Model Soldiers*. As Stuart Hall concludes in John Akomfrah’s *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013) race or ethnicity becomes a touchstone for many factors and, in the right hands, is a gateway in to exploring a fuller picture. Rughani’s aspiration in proposing ‘intercultural

documentary' is to shine a light, informed by practice-based experience, on to the range of forces that play out in documentary making and examine the ethics involved in navigating these forces. In *New Model Army* a matrix becomes visible, revealing the pressures on soldiers at home and in their army careers, even as the army single-mindedly uses them to promote a strategic image of pluralism.

All submitted works likewise seek to recover and re-situate suppressed histories and thus create documentary practices with a new centrality for BME experience and intercultural relations, as demonstrated in *Glass Houses*. Works are located within evolving debates of multiculturalism, intercultural communication, representation, editorial freedom (viz. the fine-grain decisions of broadcasting racist views) and the ethics of documentary film's evolution as a form within an industrial context of practice.

Intercultural documentary emphasises the centrality of brokering dialogue with the other and in the process offers a renewed focus and emphasis on the *ethics* of the research that informs documentary practice, writing and reflexivity. Ethical questions address the practitioner holistically - in mind, body and spirit. The light of ethical reflection refracts according to each situation and connects all submissions. They touch the ground of a bigger philosophical enquiry of whose story to tell and the standards to which different contributors are held as has been discussed in *New Model Army* and *Glass Houses*.

Self-reflexive work requires the integration of head and heart responses in how the maker relates to the pro-filmic situations unfolding in front of her/him, taking us into a different dimension than relying on external codes and laws to give answers for how to behave, or at least cover the maker and publisher against a possible law suit. The practice of investigating how documentary ethics informs a more refined and honest engagement with the dynamics of making work underpins the book chapter '*Are You a Vulture?*'

This work has deepened further in the period since the last submission considered in this thesis. Rughani's most recent published work is the observational documentary film *Justine*, (Lotus Films, August 2013) which premiered at the Stockholm Academy

of Dramatic Arts. The film portrays the rhythms of life for a young woman with advanced neurological disorder who is unable to speak (and is thus unable to express consent) in the usual way. Industry codes of working with vulnerable people emphasise standard practice of negotiating consent with those responsible – typically the family, guardians and carers, under the provisions of the Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice (TSO 2005). *Justine* lives at the edge of what useful guidance such industry codes of practice can offer. Guidance typically places the questions of consent in the hands of the ‘neuro-typical’, rather than those with the kind of neurological difference discussed here. *Justine* is the latest exploration of the argument for intercultural documentary in submitted work and continues the trajectory of aspiring to encounter difference on more equal terms.

The thesis has unfolded by investigating a series of challenges for how documentary practice can more fully meet the experience of the other. Intercultural documentary’s stress on the conditions of contact between makers and subjects are at the heart of the documentary encounter and the recovery of plural realities in history and contemporary life. The way in which intercultural documentary has drawn on interdisciplinary insights and then been developed in the field of Documentary Studies renders this body of work a significant and unified contribution to scholarship and new knowledge. It thus fulfils the regulations of the University of the Arts London as part of the overall submission for the award of PhD by Published Work.

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