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U Know Them By Their Fruit

Unfinalizing the 'Extreme Other Self' in Documentary Filmmaking

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Doctorate of Philosophy

The University of Sussex

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that neither this film nor written thesis has been or will be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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(Signature)   (Date)

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Summary

My research explores the documentary encounter between the filmmaker and a familial subject who is also politically opposite to me, or what I term an 'extreme other'. The Thesis consists of a one-hour film and a forty thousand word critical and reflective work analyzing the ethical, aesthetic and political implications of this documentary encounter. The subject of my film is my cousin from the USA who used to work as a high school principal, but who over the past decade has adopted ethno-religious nationalist views—including the view that only white males should be allowed to vote in the USA. My aim was to create a representation of my politically 'far right' subject which would be, to use Mikhail Bakhtin's term, *unfinalizable.* My film and my writing both focus on navigating the possible obstacles to *unfinalization,* such as the fact that my views may be considered oppositional to my cousin's, my marginal authorial status as a national other, and the implications of theorist Michael Renov's designation of family film as *domestic ethnography*—a type of film which he writes is so highly intersubjective due to blood relations that the familial subject "refracts" (2004: xiii) the filmmaker and the film becomes an "autobiographical" self-portrait (*ibid*).

I responded to my quandary of representing radical intersubjectivity between myself and a familial 'extreme other' by experimenting with narrative, thematic, and montage strategies deeply influenced by concepts from life-writing, documentary theory, literature, psychoanalysis and ethnography. Through the process of integrating critical exploration with filmmaking practice, I invented a form and style for the film to approach my goal of *unfinalizing,* while leaving traces of my ethical and aesthetic choices, and of my grappling with the problematic nature of representing opposing political views. Meanwhile I reflected on the ways in which intersubjectivity has been represented between filmmakers and 'extreme others' in existing documentaries, featuring both familial and non-familial subjects. Furthermore I reflected on the autobiographical and performative techniques of marginal authors.

I began the film as a way of defending my cousin's liberty to criticize the US Government, in 2004 when the 'War on Terror' was rapidly shaping the zeitgeist. However, I soon found myself in opposition to his *ethno-religious nationalist* views (to use Manuel Castells' term). Given the radical

intersubjectivity indicated by Renov's domestic ethnography, I brought critical concepts to bear on filmmaking practice in order to negotiate my goal of *unfinalizing* my cousin whilst maintaining my own political views which are radically different from his—and I did this while testing the degree to which this film about him was also about me. Furthermore, I carried out this research to find out how such a conceptual exploration could make an integral and visible impact on the film.

I found that part of my motivation for articulating my cousin's criticisms against the US Government was indeed autobiographical—especially regarding my personal desire to escape what I perceived as the American stereotype in England. Meanwhile my reflections on existing documentary work showed me that other documentary makers were also personally invested in their encounters with 'extreme others'—even non-familial ones. Furthermore I developed the view that designating family films as 'domestic ethnography' can serve to obscure the political messages in such films by overemphasizing the importance of the domestic milieu. However, as the director and editor of *U Know Them By Their Fruit*, my persistent experimentation with autobiographicality eventually led me to further emphasize the public and political aspects of my film.

I have contributed an original film built in the *unfinalizing* tradition of critical reflexivity, while problematising the power of authors to construct subjects. Moreover, I have based much of my filmmaking practice on an approach which considers what is unsaid, the potential we have for radical intersubjectivity. For lack of a better name I have termed this approach my 'spiritual' conceptual framework, and it is tailored for exploring and representing radical intersubjectivity in the documentary encounter. This conceptual framework includes Jean Rouch's *ciné-trance,* Levinas's *I-Thou* relation, and psychoanalytic theory of the doppelgänger device. Furthermore, I have tested Renov's designation of family film as *domestic ethnography*, and provided a critique based on the specific filmmaking circumstances of featuring a familial 'extreme other' subject, in a cross-national US/UK context, where the author is marginal. I have also provided an analysis of radical intersubectivity in non-familial film, based largely on my 'spiritual' conceptual framework. Finally, I took inspiration from performative techniques deployed by other marginalised authors, as well as non- or less marginal authors.

Acknowledgements

Contents

Preface

This practice led research explores the ethical, political and formal terrain I have navigated in the process of making an hour-long video portrait of my cousin Jay in Missouri, USA.[1] As a documentary subject, Jay is what I term an 'extreme other' in relation to me: over the past twenty years, he has come to hold nationalist views backed by Christianity, and he has also claimed that only white males should be citizens of the USA. Even though I am a female filmmaker, it has always been my intent to make a representation of Jay which portrays him as *unfinalizable* to use Bakhtin's term (Morrison and Emerson: 1990: 40)—as a constantly changing person with future-potential rather than as a static 'object' of curiosity. Bakhtin claims people always have a "surplus of humanness" (1990: 287) and I support this claim.

As for form, I originally intended to make a fairly 'straightforward' film about my cousin's politicisation—a somewhat self-reflexive film which did not hide its construction, but did not consciously emphasize myself as the filmmaker/author. However reading documentary scholarship about 'family films'—and the radical intersubjectivity theorised between subjects and filmmakers—eventually led me to adopt Marcus's term *auto/biography* to describe the project. After adopting *auto/biography* as a description for my film, I began encouraging my stamp of authorship to the surface. With this increased authorial expression, came a greater level of authorial involvement.

The description of 'family films' that led me to auto/biography is Michael Renov's designation *domestic ethnography*, which he describes as in part (not only) a form of *autobiography* of the filmmaker (2004: 218) due to a high degree of "intersubjective reciprocity" between filmmakers and subjects (Renov: 2004: 224). At least four factors complicate this designation for my film, *U Know Them By Their Fruit*: firstly, my family connection with my cousin is distant rather than close, because we had hardly met before I began making this film; secondly, if his envisioned political

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[1] Jay is my Mother's Sister's son, but has always lived far away from me, so I had only met him a few times in my life, mostly in childhood, before I began making a film about him.

utopia were possible, he would disenfranchise me as a female, yet my goal was to *unfinalize* him; thirdly, I am officially resident in the UK and made the film for a British audience, but I am a marginal author because I am a national other here in England, therefore the connotations of *ethnography* may contribute to the Othering of my subjects based on national identity; and fourthly, my marginal status as a national other and as a female author may already serve as a cause for my film to be perceived as 'personal' and 'confessional'—even without the family milieu being the main emphasis.

Among other issues, I will be analysing how the filmer/filmed relationship and the domestic milieu can serve to categorise a film as it does in Renov's domestic ethnography*,* and how such categories can be problematic in relation to individual films, such as mine. Some of the attributes which Renov gives to domestic ethnography, such as authorial desire and intense intersubjectivity, are applicable to non family films; and some of the attributes ascribed to domestic ethnography are not applicable to my film even though my film may be categorised as domestic ethnography. Analysing the attributes of domestic ethnography, and comparing these with my film and other films, helps illuminate some problems of emplotting films as 'family films' at all—especially for marginal authors and in a cross-national context.

However, thinking through the implications of these designations—Renov's *domestic ethnography*, Marcus's *auto/biography*, and also the field of *autobiography*— has been very productive, leading me to experiment with the style and shape of the film in complicated ways which I will describe, analyse, and reflect on throughout the Thesis. To explore the practical implications of domestic ethnography's radical intersubjectivity, I began demonstrating my authorship more. Before I chose to focus on intersubjectivity and domestic ethnography, I was already emphasizing the encounter in my film, to share with my cousin Jay the burden of being represented, and to reveal the subjective constructedness of my film: from the start, I let much of my voice be heard from behind the camera, I used jump cuts and other playful edits to signify that the representation had been 'tampered with', and I was already using an unusual musical score.[2] However, experimenting with emphasizing my authorship

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[2] Early in the filmmaking process I asked an electronic musician to make arrangements of patriotic songs, and render them as electronic filmic music with a more gloomy, mysterious, un-patriotic sound. I liked all of what

caused me to push my choices more into the unconventional, so it would be clear that I had consciously chosen: for example, I allowed the musical selection to become wilder and funnier (by including a 'clownish' song I had earlier chosen to leave out) and my video editing became less conventional too (as I became more adventurous with cutaways). Furthermore, I found a conceptual strategy through experimenting with ideas of radical intersubjectivity: I chose a 'spiritual' (rather than entirely rational) research design to represent the auto/biographical relationship between Jay and myself. I focussed on my responsibility to learn from Jay based on Levinas's *I-Thou* relation concept; moreover, I figured my cousin and myself as doppelgängers, partly inspired by Rouch's idea of *ciné-trance*, which involved his becoming "possessed" while filming possession rituals (Cholodenko in Rothman: 2009: 158).

Taking an interdisciplinary approach, I can identify four interrelated research questions. The first and broadest question asks whether a filmmaker can make a film about an 'extreme other' that avoids the reduction of the subject and allows him to remain *unfinalizable*, and what implications such a goal may have for the filmmaking process and the resulting shape of the film. The second questions how far a subjective approach to making a documentary portrait, including self-reflexivity and even performativity, might enable less finalized representations of subjects, including the filmmaker. The third has two parts and considers the effect which the designation of *autobiography* (or *auto/biography*) can have on stereotyped marginal authors whose work may be reduced to a label about their social group: how can a marginal filmmaker mould the shape and style of her film to minimise the possible negative effects of the autobiographical (or auto/biographical) label? Connected with my overall aim of unfinalizing subjects, and the question of marginal authors, the fourth main research question seeks to understand the effect in a cross-national context of Renov's designation *domestic ethnography* for films about family members, and it has three parts: firstly, might this designation, with its connotations of the domestic and the ethnographic, contribute to the finalization of both subjects and authors? Secondly, what measures might the author take, such as performative editing, to reduce the finalizing effects of this label? And thirdly, how might these measures affect the shape and style of the film?

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he made but thought at first that one song in particular sounded too strange to use. Then I later changed my mind.

Chapter One describes how I came to consider my film as a case of auto/biography rather than biography, and explores some of the implications of this label on my filmmaking practice. First I trace the theoretical rationale for the impossibility of straightforward biography, given the self-inscription which authorship inevitably entails. Then I describe the practical editorial choices which were influenced by the designation *auto/biography*, and how this process and this designation helped me realise the strength of my personal investment and desire as an author. The chapter will then draw out the implications the *autobiographical* label can have for marginal or minority authorship. Supporting this argument is a discussion of filmic and written work by female authors who have deflected from the *confessional* connotations of autobiography by resorting to device, or *performance,* in an effort to ambiguitize and divert from the personal and enable a more socially relevant type of authorship. The Chapter then addresses Renov's designation of family film as *domestic ethnography* (and as *autobiography*) arguing that, especially in my UK/US context—or what I term my 'cross-national' context—the label leaves subjects and authors vulnerable to national stereotyping. I will critique *ethnography* generally, which can essentialize entire cultures according to their 'roots' while discounting the common 'routes' shared across a globalized society (Buzard 2003: 69; Clifford: 2003: 65). Finally, I will analyse specific choices I have made in the editing of the film to try to avoid finalizing effects, such as those arising from national identity and narrative clichés.

Chapter Two contains a discussion of films by Errol Morris and Ross McElwee, both of whose productions influenced my thinking about my own film. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse how these documentary makers handle biographical portraits of 'extreme other' subjects, like my cousin Jay, intersubjectively. In one of two instances, the extreme other subjects are not relatives of the filmmaker. However, analysing these biographical productions alongside interviews with the filmmakers, I will show that highly subjective portraits of non-family members can nonetheless be seen as auto/biographical of filmmakers. I will also analyse these productions using critical concepts relevant to intersubjectivity which also helped me theorise and resolve the intersubjectivity in my film. The concepts, from ethical philosophy, documentary theory, literature and psychoanalysis, also illuminate what is auto/biographical in the documentary productions by Morris and McElwee.

Firstly, Chapter Three closely examines the encounter between myself and my documentary subjects. It uses ethical theory from Emmanuel Levinas to analyse how my treatment of my cousin changed over time, beginning in an open and generous way, and proceeding to *totalize* him. The chapter also elucidates my twinning of myself and my cousin, and analyses my use of the doppelgänger device in *U Know Them By Their Fruit*: in doubling myself with Jay, I found a performative solution to problems such as my auto/biographical anxiety and fear of being reified as a stereotype, as well as the puzzle of considering Jay's story to be my story or a 'sample' of my culture (Trinh: 1990: 92). Next I will reveal how my study of the doppelgänger device impacted the film and enhanced my authorship, deepening my reflection, shaping the narration, and engendering experimental editing that brought multivocality to the film beyond what I had imagined was possible. The third part of this chapter will evaluate how far I managed to carry out my intended *unfinalization* of subjects in the film. Here I will discus the possible finalizing effects of the label *domestic ethnography,* especially in a cross-national context. Moreover, I will reflect on the effect of my being a woman—as my *femaleness* may contribute to Jay's finalization (due to his beliefs about female roles). Furthermore, I will discuss inescapable finalizing effects, such as linguistic metaphors and associations, and the visual trope of the American flag, both of which finalize Jay in numerous ways, such as incarcerating him in his national identity.

Introduction

Problems of *Unfinalizing*

> In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition.[3]
> *(*Mikhail Bakhtin: 1984: 58)

Part One: Background and Aims

This Introductory chapter will explain the aims of my research, regarding the film as well as this written thesis. It will also clarify the terms used throughout the writing, and provide the background for my project as well as the research context in which my film developed and took shape. Moreover, I will introduce key aspects of my critical thinking here, which will be discussed throughout the thesis for the ways they influenced the shape and style of my film, *U Know Them By Their Fruit*. I will begin with reference to the main subject in my film, around whom my research has centred: my cousin Jay from Missouri, USA, whom I hardly knew until I began making this film. In the interviews that make up most of the film, I explore Jay's frustrations with being American and his vision of what the USA should be.

 My large, sprawling family in the USA is among many families globally with a highly politicised member whose behaviour they struggle to interpret: the family member, my cousin Jay, is the focus of my thesis film. According to Manuel Castells, politicisation based on frustrations related to national sovereignty, ethnic origin, and religion—or *ethno-religious nationalism* as he terms it—is everywhere on the rise due to the pressures of globalisation on national identity and related issues such as the waning of patriarchy (Castells: 1997: 23). After filming many hours of interviews with my cousin, I have come to understand his beliefs as belonging in the broad category of *ethno-religious nationalism*: he believes the USA has lost sovereignty to corrupt elites and he uses Biblical scripture to justify his conviction that US citizenship should be limited to white, property-owning Christian males only.[4] However, when I first heard about my cousin's dissidence (from my Mother and Aunt

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[3] This quote is from Mikhail Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, in reference to Dostoyevsky's approach to his characters.

[4] These were Jay's views at the time of our last interviews in 2006. It is possible that he has adjusted or changed them since that time.

June, seen in the film as 'the Mississippi Aunts') I sympathised with what sounded to me like anti-war and anti-corporate views. My long-lasting intent for this project has been to try and understand my cousin's beliefs through making a complex, human portrait of him, so that if he were ever to be arrested and demonised in the media, there would exist an alternate representation of him to counteract the caricaturic representations of dismissible and dangerous right-wing 'nuts' in entertainment news.[5]

I wanted to embark on this project in the spirit of Bakhtin's *Unfinalizability*—his view that people cannot be fixed in other people's descriptions of them because there is always more to people than what we can discern, and people are constantly developing (Morrison and Emerson: 1990: 36). *Unfinalizability,* or avoiding the reduction of documentary subjects did become my primary aim for the film, and heavily influenced my film structure and montage. The concept also served me well as a reminder to prioritise continued reflection, which I think has encouraged integration of theory and filmmaking practice in my project, and has helpfully deemphasized the 'final film product', opening up possibilities for experimentation. However, from the beginning of my research I sensed that *unfinalizing* would be a major challenge for four interlinked reasons, including oversimplified and sensationalised representations of political extremists in news reports, a "dismissive" approach to those on the Right among historians (Brinkley: 1994: 411), the necessity as I saw it of forming my work into some kind of narrative (which it seemed would inevitably result in rendering my cousin as a 'them' to our 'us')[6] and the 'othering' American stereotype in Britain (which I refer to as the situation of my *cross-national* context). In some ways I was responding to such *finalizing* factors as these throughout my filmmaking-as-research process: they helped lead me to the feeling that *unfinalizing* should be my worthy if lofty goal.

Firstly, news narratives about people with extreme political views (whether right or left-wing) often render the subjects as 'others' by presenting only the most lurid details of their stories. American television news reports of the confrontation and shootings at Ruby Ridge in 1992, the standoff and conflagration at Waco in 1993 (both of which involved anti-

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[5] Jay sometimes mentioned that he feared being labeled a *terrorist*, and I was wary of this also: here in Britain, protestors were being arrested under anti-terrorism laws (BBC News website Wednesday, 10 September, 2003) and it seemed to me that in the US the word 'terrorist' was being used loosely. Thus, it was not just because Jay was my relative that I wished to 'protect' him, but also for my own ethical/political reasons: because of my own beliefs about justice and the meaningful use of words.

[6] This is a reference to Bill Nichols, who notes the difficulty of representing "others without reducing them to stereotypes, pawns or victims" (2010: 212).

government, religious people) and the attacks by the anti-modernist 'Unabomber' in 1995 were short on context and complexity in favour of quick-gratifying spectacle. Such representation can lead to caricaturic depiction in the wider culture (such as the iconic sketch of the 'Unabomber' wearing a hooded sweatshirt and aviator sunglasses): I think this results in serious critique of the political status quo generally being quelled.[7] Meanwhile it is fairly well acknowledged that hard news does not really serve the purpose of a public sphere or cornerstone of Democracy as it relies on alluring images for content and in the USA on advertisers for revenue (Jamieson and Campbell: 1997: 58, 4, 102 and Berger: 1995: 48).

Secondly, before my Thesis became practice-led filmmaking research, I was exploring Jay's belief system and politicisation in a written format only, using an Historical approach—which one could expect to be relatively free from mockery or sensationalism. Guided by an Historian and American Studies scholar in Britain, I pursued the research as historiography, and contextualised Jay's politics by comparing him with other figures from white supremacy (on the Right) in the USA. During this time I noticed with dissatisfaction that much of what I read at the time accorded with what the historian Alan Brinkley calls a prevailing "dismissive view of conservatism" (1994: 411).[8] Brinkley notes that this trivialising attitude constitutes "a problem of historical imagination" (1994: 429), recommending that historians should reconsider their "categories and paradigms" if they do not wish to leave the proper study of the Right "neglected" (*ibid*).

Thirdly, such oversimplified representations of certain subjects could result not only from American "so-called consensus scholarship" post WWII (Brinkley: 1994: 411) but could also be an unavoidable effect of using narrative to connect parts of research into a coherent whole. According to Hayden White historians like other writers are so infused with myths

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[7] My impression of the need for political openness resonates with statements made by Castells (1997), Wilcox (1992) and Barkun (1997). Castells asserts that any political stability "requires the processing of social movements' demands by the political system and the institutions of the state" (1997: 109). Laird Wilcox notes that those on the 'fringe', whether right or left, have a good view of mainstream culture from their outside vantage point, with the implication that their critiques could be valuable (1992: 7). Meanwhile Michael Barkun writes about a "cultic milieu" of excluded ideas to which disparate groups of outsiders, feeling alienated from mainstream culture, may be receptive (Barkun: 1997: 248). For me, all this scholarship points to the need for a more diverse range of political views to be allowed into mainstream discussions, through media. The "cultic milieu" is invoked again below, in relation to my intended film audience.

[8] Brinkley cites especially the writings of Lionel Trilling and Richard Hofstadter as being "dismissive" (1994: 411)—especially the "leading historical voice" of Hofstadter (1994: 411) who wrote *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (1965) in which conservatism, according to Brinkley, was "a kind of pathology" (1994: 412).

featuring certain types of characters that ultimately, whether intended or not, even historians use such myths to form narratives from their research content—thereby limiting the possible meanings we can make from their research (1984: 20-21). In White's *emplotment*, people of historical interest are figured as certain types of characters in certain types of narratives—resulting less in a scientific or scholarly way of understanding the past than in a *literary*, *mythological* way (1984: 21). I think this can be seen as partly a mechanical problem, of how to put things together, but sometimes the mechanics are inseparable from ideology and our self-identity. As White writes we use stories about the past to validate the way we understand ourselves already:

> In the historical narrative, experiences distilled into fiction as *typifications* are subjected to the test of their capacity to endow "real" events with meaning. (*ibid*, italics in original)

Fourthly, I think narratives of national identity highlight problematic issues around representing 'the other'. Living in Britain, I found that representations of Americans, even when light-hearted like *Louis Theroux's Weird Weekends* (of which I am a devoted fan) fit an 'othering' pattern and propagated existing stereotypes of Americans. I think such representations have been serving what Barthes terms a *mythological* purpose: strengthening British people's sense of worth by encouraging a positive national identity. Barthes called *myth* a "type of speech" intended for a specific audience, such as a certain nationality, to bolster a positive identity for that audience (Barthes: 1987: 126). Therefore, my *cross-national* situation might mean that my intended audience, British people, would tend to dis-identify with Jay even before his retrograde beliefs are revealed in the film.[9] Such dis-identification may be inevitable because of the dynamics of national identity, in which national Others are suitable vessels for externalising attributes we ourselves do not want to claim (Caputi: 1996: 692-683, 686, Billig: 1995: 65).

It was partly *Weird Weekends* which inspired me to make *U Know Them By Their Fruit*. Louis Theroux has made several programmes about Americans on the Right of the political spectrum, and though his tone can be mocking, he may be said to provide more context than television news, which rarely includes the voices of extremists themselves. However, in an interview in which Theroux is questioned about the tone of the representations and

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[9] I first heard about Jay's politics while I was living in Britain in the lead up to the 'War on Terror' and spending some time with British protest communities while protesting against the war; so I was thinking mainly of a British, anti-war audience when I began making the film.

his selection of American subjects specifically in *Weird Weekends*, he admits there is a "tradition" shaping British representations of Americans, which has an othering effect:

> It sounds harsh to say it, but there's a huge Anglophilia over here, because America's got nothing to fear from Britain really. So British people console themselves with the idea that maybe they're a bit more cultured and sophisticated. There's a long tradition of programs in Britain that cater to that sense of cultural superiority. And I think some of the people in Britain who watch "Weird Weekends" get a sense of "Oh, those Americans, they're so vulgar and tacky and weird and stupid." I happen to think there's more to the shows than that. (Joyce, 1999)

Given the dynamics of nationality generally, this is no surprise. Moreover, such us/them representation is not the reserve of British representations of Americans like Theroux's. Indeed according to Bill Nichols stereotyping and 'othering' is the conventional manner of representing documentary subjects: Nichols notes that a performative documentary style such as autoethnography can be a good "corrective to those films in which "We speak about them to us" " (2010: 205).

All of these general factors—related to news, history, narrative and national stereotyping— though not the central foci of my research, influenced my focus on *unfinalizability*. They helped lead me to commit to my aspiration of making an *unfinalizable* representation. However, I soon encountered a specific area of documentary theory with its own difficult implications for *unfinalizability*, which the rest of this section will address.

Potentially decreasing further the likelihood that I could make an *unfinalizable* portrait of my cousin is the complex set of processes which theorist Michael Renov raises in his discussion of films featuring family members, which he designates as *domestic ethnographies* (2004: 216). Renov writes that these family films entail a "supplementary autobiographical practice" (2004: 218); are *autobiographical* of the authors (2004: xiii); and are "a form of self-portraiture" (2004: xiii). He also suggests (with reference to Fabian) that these films as *ethnographies* can represent "cultures and societies" (2004: 229). Renov writes that what characterises domestic ethnography or family film is "consanguinity and co (i) mplication" (2004: 221), meaning that both blood and responsibility are shared. However, this formulation is problematic in the case of my film because I hardly knew my cousin when I began the film project, so the "intersubjective reciprocity" Renov indicates between filmmakers and blood relations did not exist between us (Renov: 2004: 219). Moreover, the

question of whether or not a film represents a culture is more sensitive in the case of my film because of the cross-national, UK-US context in which it was shot and edited, given the British stereotype of Americans: though this stereotype is of course malleable, I have noticed characteristics being attributed to 'us' such as materialism, political complacency, insincerity/over-earnestness, inarticulacy, irrationality, violence, and disloyalty (etc.). Finally, conditions of "intersubjective reciprocity" could exist without a familial subject (Renov: 2004: 219). My relationship with my cousin, whom I had met only a few times in my life before I began this film, is probably more distant than it would be with a non-familial subject more politically aligned with me. What's more, given the now-routine practice of global migration, as well as the obliteration of geographical distance due to online media, a 'domestic ethnographer' does not necessarily have to continue the relationship with a familial subject, while a non-familial subject could come back to 'haunt' a filmmaker almost as easily as a familial one.

For me, the implications of the designation *domestic ethnography* increased the complications of marginal authorship, as the more the film was thought to be about me, the more it might be imbued by British audiences with the British stereotype of Americans, and thus distorted and misunderstood. Renov's domestic ethnography is explicated in his book *The Subject of Documentary*, which, he writes in the Introduction, is "all about autobiography in film and video" (2004: xi). In the book he discusses an important change in culture that led to increased authorial inscription. Known as the 'new subjectivity', this change in culture and authorship is linked to a change in scholarship in the 1980s, the 'new historicism', which insisted on the importance of literature and culture to the writing and teaching of History (2004: 10). Furthermore, with more 'bottom up' histories appearing, otherwise known as 'outsider' histories or 'people's' histories, it was not long before there were not only books about outsiders, but books written by the outsiders themselves. These new works linked non-elite subjectivity to the Historical. In the 1980s and 1990s, where Renov places the 'new documentary' we have a greater number of filmmakers representing their place in the "historical world", often turning their cameras on themselves and their families (2004: 176).

The 'new subjectivity' resembles the essay form which had existed since Michelle de Montaigne's *Essais* in the 16th Century, and like autobiography, the essay has malleable borders, myriad forms, and porous rules if any at all. Montaigne described the form best by

reference to his approach of "Taking the measure of my sight, not the measure of things" (*Essays*, in Renov: 2004: 104). The essayistic, alongside both of the 'new' designations— the 'new documentary' and the 'new subjectivity'—resemble Virginia Woolf's 'new biography', works of biography appearing in the early 20ᵗʰ Century, which were so subjective and included so many stylistic devices associated with fiction that they seemed to be autobiographies of the authors, albeit disguised (Marcus: 1994: 91). Woolf approved of the 'new biography' as she thought its self-reflexivity was a good guarantor of the writer's avoiding the oversimplified writing of somebody else's life: by considering her own complexity first and identifying with the subject the author should be able to render her subject more complex, less finalized or distorted. (Marcus: 1994: 90). Growing levels of intersubjectivity can also be traced to the inclusion of more people in the stories of History, which meant an inevitably increased equality between subjects and biographers (Marcus in France and St. Clair: 2002: 196). According to Marcus, who coined the term *auto/biography,* a greater level of self-reflexivity makes clear "the biographer's identification with or desire for the subject" (Marcus in France and St. Clair: 2002: 211).

Renov notes that the *desire* of authors is taken as given in the field of psychoanalytic criticism and fiction film but is often ignored in documentary, partly because of the "critic's desire" to minimise doubts about the validity of the knowledge disseminated in documentary films (Renov: 2004: 100). In domestic ethnography however, desire is not to be ignored:

> The desire (figurable as dread or longing) of the domestic ethnographer is for the Other self (2004: 219)

The notion of desire is a complex one: Renov relates it to Lacan, writing that desire is, "precisely, the presence of an absence" (2004: 95), meaning that we feel something is lacking, which the subject may fulfil. [10] Therefore, in my thinking, we are interested in the subject *for ourselves*. Renov adds to the description of desire "terror and fascination" (2004: 96), which resonates with me since fascination with Jay's ideology was definitely a factor in my interest, as was my fear of his imagined utopia. Throughout this thesis, however, I will argue that my "terror and fascination" and thus my desire do not necessarily stem from kinship or even nationality, even though my cross-national context—and the self-alienation

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[10] Renov also mentions Peter Mason's work on alterity, in which Mason refers to Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* (1978) (Gaines and Renov: 1999: 140). Renov includes this quote from Levinas in a footnote to his discussion of desire: "Desire is desire for the absolutely other. . .A desire without satisfaction which, precisely, *understands* the remoteness, the alterity and the exteriority of the other" (Gaines and Renov: 1999: 153).

I felt because of the American stereotype—influenced my choice of research focus. Part of my desire was to represent an American who would disrupt at least some of the elements of the stereotype (my cousin Jay is neither politically complacent nor materialistic, for example), and *through* that representation to partially correct the negative self-image this stereotype was helping to foster in me: but my desire was not fully conscious for a long time and I only became completely aware of it during the course of this research.

In a chapter focussed on desire in documentary, Renov writes that the desire of the author is never clearer than "when the Other is the subject of representation"; here he makes no mention that the Other must be familial (2004: 219). Similarly, I think that in *U Know Them By Their Fruit*, my authorial desire is for the Extreme (political and cultural) Other—and this is what reveals me. 'Extreme other' is my term for describing the *dreaded* and *longed for* Other that Renov describes above in relation to the domestic ethnographer; however, I argue that the filmmaker who eschews family films may still seek out the 'extreme other' as a documentary subject. For instance, documentary makers such as Errol Morris express this kind of desire for non-familial extreme others (I will discuss his work and that of Ross McElwee in Chapter Two).

For now, I will continue clarifying my focus on *intersubjectivity*, before introducing the critical concepts and processes I have employed to explore it. Authors' feelings of equality with subjects who are in some way like us, or with whom we identify, causes us to compare ourselves with our subjects, as Marcus notes (2002: 211). This comparison is evoked by her term *auto/biography*, which I adopted to describe my film, and which I kept in mind as I edited and shaped it. Writing of domestic ethnography, Renov refers to Taussig's *mimesis*, our desire to "become" the other (Gaines and Renov: 1999: pp. 140-141). I would formulate it differently, that we project ourselves across the self/other boundary, wanting to explore or protect in the other person something about ourselves which is puzzling or vulnerable in a complementary way (as we perceive it)—which is another way of saying that we identify with the Other *for ourselves*. We also want to understand ourselves through the Other whom we are studying. We indulge our fascination with the Other by, for example, asking our subject lots of questions in an interview, but we must try with our subjects, whether familial or not, to do as Virginia Woolf recommended and consider our own "complexity" as we listen to the answers, then go a step further and try to render the

life we are representing with as much convolution (Marcus in France and St. Clair: 2002: 205).

Auto/biography denotes broader, more open possibilities for intersubjectivity than domestic ethnography, which may evoke the primitive—not only because of the colonialist background of ethnography and the marginalisation from the social world which the *domestic* implies, but because domestic ethnography suggests continuity in a world full of change. The connotation is that all such films 'stick' to one type of story (the 'family story') in one type of setting (the home). Ethnographic theorist James Clifford illustrates the importance of mobility in his discussion of ethnography, using his roots/routes spatial metaphor: there is an unchangingness implied of family members held together and immobile by their *roots*. It is my feeling that designating films according to geography and kinship deemphasises growth or becoming—the *routes* aspect of people represented in the family milieu.

Renov's designation does helpfully point to a radical intersubjectivity between authors and subjects, however. Meanwhile, Susanna Egan emphasises intersubjectivity over independent authorship in documentary film generally, and lauds the great suitability of film for capturing the encounter:

> film may enable autobiographers to define and represent subjectivity not as singular or solipsistic but as multiple and as revealed in relationship.
> (Egan: 1994: 593)

Perhaps it follows that there must also be a great deal of the author's *culture* in an intersubjective portrait of an author (or subject) *at home*. In Renov's discussion of domestic ethnography, he refers directly to this link, writing that every self being represented must be "a self culturally specific and publicly defined" (2004: xvii). However, he does add the caveat that if portraits of cultures are created, then they are only created "in miniature" (2004: 229). In Chapter One I will explore in detail my adopted context of *auto/biography* and its relevance to my film project.

Part Two: Critical Enquiry, Audience and Limitations

This section describes the critical concepts central to my enquiry, and some of my filmmaking processes (which will be discussed further in Chapters Two and Three); the first of the critical concepts on which I focussed were Bakhtin's *Unfinalizability*, Renov's *domestic ethnography* and Marcus's *auto/biography*. Thus, while aiming to shape my footage into an unfinalizable portrait, I have deliberately taken steps to construct my film as auto/biographical, in ways that test my film and its circumstances against the designation *domestic ethnography*. The domestic ethnographic designation, when set alongside my cross-national context, echoes for me the American stereotype in Britain: place equals self, and inevitably limits the self through a firm association with place and by extension nation.[11] Therefore, I assembled a theoretical framework to help me explore the 'ultimate intersubjectivity' ascribed to families in discussions of domestic ethnography and to test how far there may be unnecessary essentialisation readable in the designation, especially in the situation of my cross-national context and considering the political content of my film.

Using what I think of as a 'spiritual' (rather than entirely 'rational') theoretical framework— including Jean Rouch's notion of *ciné-trance*, Levinas's ethical theory of the *I-Thou* relation and literature's idea of the *doppelgänger* or 'evil twin'—I emphasized the limits of intersubjectivity in my film.[12] As far as possible I put these critical concepts into the form of the film: there is visible and audible evidence of their integration into my film practice, as the concepts influenced several editorial choices, including how I would figure myself in the film to test its auto/biographical limits. Moreover I used this theoretical framework to link my film to existing work by documentary portraiturists interested in 'extreme others'. Finally I used this framework to help me understand whether and how far I was successful in unfinalizing the people in my film, allowing them to retain their (to use Levinas's term) *infinity* (Nealon: 1997: 136).

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[11] For me, Benedict Anderson's concept of the "imagined community" well describes the absurdity of national identity: Anderson explains, "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson: 1991: 7). For example, I am from a small town in Mississippi, not the entire USA, yet I am thought of as an 'American' person.

[12] The doppelgänger literary device is a gothic/irrational device (Faurholt: 2009); moreover my use of the doppelgänger was partly a product of my taking intersubectivity to absurd lengths. In addition to 'spiritual', the term 'irrational' may also be suitable, in the sense in which Adorno uses it in *The Stars Down To Earth and other essays* (1994) to mean "with an "absence of ultimate 'seriousness' " (in the Introduction by Steven Crook, p. 21).

I was inspired by the ethnographer Jean Rouch and his theorisation of intersubjectivity: Rouch filmed possession rituals in Africa and said that he went into a trance with those possessed (Cholodenko in Rothman: 2009: 158). The African priests he filmed were possessed at their own invitation by their *spirit doubles* (*ibid*). Rouch called these conditions of extreme intersubjectivity the *ciné-trance*, marking off the documentary-making milieu as a more spiritual world than the everyday, individually-embodied one. Moreover, the spirit doubles hosted by the Africans reminded me of my filmic relationship with my cousin—especially in my cross-national context and combined with Renov's 'family film' designation of Jay as my "Other Self" (Gaines and Renov: 1999: 140). Furthermore, when I told people in England about my film, I received surprised reactions that two people from the same American family could hold such different political views. From Britain Jay seemed like a kind of 'evil twin' of myself, therefore I decided that the doppelgänger literary device would be a proper concept with which to experiment. It is a "highly visual" (Webber: 1996: 118) device expressing a literal *Other self*. Moreover, this device would express my self-alienation due to the negative American stereotype, while obliquely parodying the degree to which 'my culture' was already seen *in miniature* from my British home.[13] Meanwhile, further study of the doppelgänger literary device caused me to deepen some of the film's themes, and to let them determine voiceover and other editorial choices (both of which I will discuss in Chapter Three). In addition to Rouch's *ciné-trance* and the literary theory relevant to alienation (the doppelgänger), I incorporated ethical ideas from Levinas, including the *I-Thou* relation, which explicates the importance of the *face-to-face* encounter for revealing the vulnerability of the Other (Renov: 2004: 151)[14]. Meanwhile, Levinas also wrote that we must *receive* from the other, and let the other *teach* us (Renov: 2004: 151).

These ideas not only helped me to imagine and construct filmically the intersubjective relationship between myself and my cousin, they also helped me to see similarities between the core relationship in my own work and intersubjective relationships in some other documentary work in which filmmakers focus on *extreme others*. In Chapter Two I analyse existing work in the field: *Sherman's March* (1984) by Ross McElwee and *Mr. Death* (1999) by Errol Morris both express intersubjectivity with the extreme others on whom they focus.

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[13] This device would also help me to share the burden of being represented with my cousin, who feared the US Government and worried about his exposure in the documentary, despite my intention that the representation should demonstrate his humanity rather than making him a target.

[14] Levinas's *I-Thou* relation theory also explicates our "unlimited responsibility" for the Other (Renov: 2004: 148).

Since McElwee features family members but Morris does not, the two make an interesting case study for problematising the assumption that the highest degree of intersubjectivity comes from "blood ties" as Renov writes (2004: 218). I analysed these films using the concepts which helped me reconcile extreme otherness in *U Know Them By Their Fruit*—the doppelgänger device and Levinas's *I-Thou* relation. Also discussed in Chapter Two in relation to McElwee's *Sherman's March* is the 'colloquial metaphor'—an ethnographic method wherein the author sources local metaphors to construct her representations (Roseman: 1991: 517). Despite the fact that McElwee uses such colloquial metaphors, I argue that his irony and melodrama render his work *performative*, allowing him to avoid *confession* or revealing too much of himself: his performativity helpfully softens autobiography.

Besides expressing my alienation and helping to place my film in context—as well as determining voiceover and other editorial choices, these concepts helped me decide how to place myself in the film to better test the limits of auto/biography. I did not originally intend for the film to figure my face or body, but decided to figure myself as a method of testing auto/biographicality in the film based on family ties. Even though it is not necessary for a filmmaker to be figured in a domestic ethnography in order for it to qualify for Renov's designation, it is a common trope according to Renov for a filmed subject to turn the camera on the filmmaker, a trope he terms the "shared camera" (2004: 224). My appearance was more of a performance: it did not arise from others filming me but from my construction of myself and Jay as doubles and my experimentation with auto/biography, through narrating obtrusively.[15]

The terms *performance*, *performativity* and *performative* will refer here to filmic style revealing constructedness—and will be used to refer to moments in my film rather than as a statement that the film as a whole as *in the performative mode*. Bruzzi summarises performance in documentary, that it "formally engages with its own constructedness" (2006: 252) and is used "to draw attention to the impossibility of authentic documentary representation" (Bruzzi: 2006: 185). Performance, in my formulation, has the added benefit of offsetting pure confession, and protecting me from the scourge of marginal authorship—wherein the negative stereotype of a marginal author limits the ways her work can be read. Performance

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[15] I think that the most truly 'autobiographical' (and/or *auto/biographical*) moment in the film is near the end when my Aunt Jean compares Jay and me by saying that we both do what we want without considering how it will affect others, because people in my family are "not afraid to say what we believe in" (Interview: 2005).

can contain confession (as I argue it does in McElwee's *Sherman's March*) distracting viewers from their usual bases of blame or habits of identification/

dis-identification, such as that based on national identity. In Chapter One I will write at length about the value of *performance* to marginal authors wanting to divert from an impression of confession. While I do not have space to write about all the aspects of performance in my film, I will focus on my own performativity as an author.[16] As author, I try to locate myself, question my own authority, show myself as self-interested and even whimsical. This also fits with my target audience (discussed below) who are suspicious of mainstream media and who should appreciate authorial acknowledgement that "documentary only comes into being as it is performed" (Bruzzi: 2006: 186).

Audience

My cousin consented to participate in my film largely because he craved an international audience for his ideas, and saw my film project as an avenue to having his views heard outside the USA. Even after I discovered that Jay's beliefs and mine were too opposite to be in league, I thought one group of Britons in particular would be the perfect audience for Jay's story: the anti-war protestors and the activist/anarchist community. The anti-war movement people I had met, including left-wing anarchists and other activists such as No Borders, were critical of their own governments as well as mine. Both the far right and the left are critical of American and British military aggression, suspicious of corporatism and discouraged over the disappearance of privacy. Moreover, the right and the left both want fundamental adjustments to society: thus both groups feel like outsiders to, and act as critics of, mainstream society (Wilcox: 1992: 7). Furthermore, these two groups may constitute a single audience in some respects: Barkun discusses a "cultic milieu" of excluded ideas to which various outsiders are receptive because they are suspicious of and alienated from the mainstream ideology which excludes them (Barkun: 1997: 248).[17]

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[16] My research focuses on authorial performance, rather than the "virtual performance" of subjects (Nichols: 1991: 122) appearing in the film. Though subjects in my film do seem to perform in the sense of being "camera conscious" (*ibid*) this type of performance is outside the scope of my research, which focuses on authorship.

[17] The idea of the "cultic milieu" originally came from the British sociologist Colin Campbell (Miller: 2012: Journal *E-Flux*).

While I regret some of the low production quality in my film (some low lighting, awkwardly staged interviews, background noises, etc.) and consider these problems as limitations on the film's distribution, these characteristics stemmed both from my own inexperience in filmmaking and from the tensions and spontaneity of the particular filming situation. This is my first film and I shot it with the best video camcorder I could afford (with an external microphone jack for improved sound), so a seasoned and better-equipped filmmaker with the same access would have produced a product of much higher technical quality, with higher definition and clearer sound. In addition to my having been a first-time filmmaker, there were emotional or psychological boundaries. Though I was able to obtain intimate footage, I had not seen Jay in years and I knew his parents as following a form of religious fundamentalism with an emphasis on male superiority. Partially in response to this, and also in response to Jay's initial hesitancy as an anti-Government protestor to be filmed—I was happy to get any footage I could, and tried to be as unintrusive of their way of life as possible. As a result, I did not ask Jay and Angeline to turn off the air-conditioning in the heat of Summer; I did not bring in extra lighting for our first filmed meetings in their shaded living room in Arkansas, and I did not ask them to repeat themselves during interview situations with background noise—such as yelling children, loudly droning or hissing air conditioners, revving car engines, or wheels driving across very rough roads.

However, I do not think the audience I had in mind will judge me too harshly. Indeed, my documentary responds to the mass media bias that fails to address the concerns of the left. Furthermore, I think it is possible that a media-suspicious audience will be more open to a digressive narrative, which I use to avoid finalization by categorisation. For instance letting the narrative of the 'law-breaking extremist' break down into a banal interaction between a husband, wife, and videographer (as occurs 23 minutes into the film) is at least partially intended to appeal to an audience suspicious of over-narrated documentaries that tell them what to think and how to read a film.

Limitations

Other than the limitation of some low production values in the film, I wanted to do more, say more, with the film than I did. With a voiceover, for instance, I could have spoken explicitly of things the film only suggests: for instance, I think there is an implied critique

of democracy not only from Jay but from me also. By *critique of democracy* I mean mass 'video democracy' in which we choose a leader based on television speeches and advertisements. A charismatic speaker like Jay, or a more radical candidate, could be elected on the basis of his charm and articulacy, and never be asked whether he might disenfranchise certain Americans. Though I could have made this point clear using voiceover, I did use other strategies that, for instance, evoked the idea of revolution in the USA; the election of someone like Jay would amount to a type of revolution, as would a tide of people adopting his views and 'dropping out' of US citizenship. My addition of the protest footage at the beginning of the film and the protest noises that emerge at some points in the film evoke the possible instability arising from Jay's message, or from any strong voice of protest in the USA. Moreover, the fact of him being represented in an unfinalized way even though he clearly has some (for me) dystopian ideas may serve to illustrate the riskiness of electing charming political candidates, who are never asked truly probing questions, after having only seen audio-visual representations of them. However, I am not sure if viewers will detect this critique implanted in the film—an uncertainty which could not remain if I had raised the problem of 'video democracy' explicitly using voiceover.

Furthermore, another weakness of my project is the passage of time between the film's beginning in 2004 and its time of release in 2013. I would have liked to finish the film closer to the time when it was shot. There have been changes in US and World politics that date the film. For instance, there is no mention of the first African American president, Barak Obama, or the Occupy Wall Street movement, or the revolts in the Middle East known as the Arab Spring. It has been difficult to conduct additional interviews as time has passed, given the distance to the USA and the expense of getting there. Finally, some issues are completely un- or undertreated in the writing, such as the matter of Jay's wife Angeline and to what extent the film is about the intersubjective relationship between the two of us.

Before introducing my research questions below, I want to clarify how I will employ the terms *auto/biography* and *autobiography*, as both will be used within this thesis. Marcus introduces the term *auto/biography* in her 1994 book *Auto/biographical Discourses*, and the term denotes the discernable authorial stamp in biographical work: it takes intersubjectivity between authors and subjects as inevitable. However, I will also be using the term *autobiography* without the slash mark in some instances: firstly, I will use the term

autobiography when intersubjectivity is not necessarily taken for granted; and secondly, I will use it when discussing some theories in the broad field of autobiography that preceded Marcus's coining of the intersubjective term *auto/biography*. Sometimes I will use the two terms together (autobiography/auto/biography) in instances where the distinction between them is not significant.

It is important to note that I was largely unconscious of my own motivations for studying Jay's ideology when I began, and I see them more clearly now, after having finished the research. I discovered through my journey of testing auto/biography, that in making a film about Jay I was seeking unfinalizability not only *for* Jay but *through* Jay, for myself. I sought to reinstate my own complexity and shake off the projection of the stereotypical American (or the simply 'Weird' American from *Louis Theroux's Weird Weekends*) by making a film about another kind of person. I wanted to hold up a portrait of someone different from the stereotype, to destabilise the label at least. I thought a good way of doing this would be to make a portrait of an American who stood up to the US Government, made anti-war statements against the invasions in the Middle East after the 2011 attacks and called the US Government a 'Wal-Mart corporation'; and I thought this would serve as an example that some Americans were indeed sceptical and even critical of their own government.

Research Questions

Finally, I have identified four main questions across my theoretical thesis and filmmaking practice, which address the ethical, political and formal considerations involved in making a documentary portrait of an 'extreme other' with both a family context and a cross national context where the author is marginal, as with my film. The first and broadest question asks whether a filmmaker can make a film about an 'extreme other' that avoids the reduction of the subject and allows him to remain *unfinalizable*, and what implications such a goal may have for the filmmaking process and the resulting shape of the film? The second questions how far a subjective approach to making a documentary portrait, including the use of self-reflexivity and even performativity, might enable less finalized representations of subjects, including the filmmaker. The third has two parts and considers the effect the designation *autobiography* (or *auto/biography*) may have on stereotyped marginal authors whose work may be reduced to a stereotype: how can a marginal filmmaker mould the shape and style of her film to minimise the possible negative effects of the autobiographical (or

auto/biographical) label? Connected with my overall aim of unfinalizing subjects, and the question of marginal authors, the fourth main research question seeks to understand the effect in a cross-national context of Renov's designation *domestic ethnography* for films about family members, and it has three parts: firstly, might this designation, with its connotations of the domestic and the ethnographic, contribute to the finalization of both subjects and authors? Secondly, what measures might the author take, such as performative editing, to reduce the possible finalizing effects of having one's film considered as domestic ethnography? And thirdly, how might these practical measures affect the shape and style of the film? With reference to concepts of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, ethnographic and documentary theory, performativity, literature and psychoanalysis—and to my film as well as existing pieces of documentary and written auto/biography—I hope to find insight although, subjectivity being individual and changeable, my 'findings' may not be the same as the reader's.

Chapter One

The Impossibility of Biography

Introduction

Most of this chapter will contextualise and analyse my film project as auto/biography. However, the first section of Chapter One will describe my film as a biographical portrait, because my original intention was to depict my cousin Jay and his journey of politicisation, his oppositional political stance against the US Government, and his predicament of being an outsider of the law and apparently an outsider within the extended family. This chapter will trace in detail how I came to conceptualise the film as auto/biographical—using documentary, literary, and psychoanalytic theory related to intersubjectivity, and through experimenting practically with montage; meanwhile, my cross-national context was influencing my choice of which critical concepts to study and how they would become integral to my filmmaking practice.

First, however, I will describe Jay's suitability as a complex and fascinating subject for a biographical documentary portrait. Then I will describe my growing involvement in Jay's story, and how my authorship became more essayistic. As I adopted the concept of the auto/biographical into my project, I embarked on a thorough examination of my investment in Jay's portrait. Thus, one product of my taking up the mantle of auto/biography was the discovery that on some level my strategy to unfinalize Jay was an attempt to restore my own complexity. During my long residency in Britain, I had often despaired at the force of the American stereotype, and longed to be received on more open terms: I discovered that my identification with Jay was partially to do with my feeling of self-alienation.

The central auto/biographical idea around which my research centres is Michael Renov's designation of family films as *domestic ethnographies*. The connotations of the ethnographic are problematic; therefore the practice of ethnography as it relates to my project will also be discussed in this chapter. With the label *domestic ethnography* there is the implication that I am making a 'portrait of my culture', and I do not think it is possible for a single filmed portrait, of a small section of a large family, to stand as representative of an entire culture (even the term *culture* is problematic, as I will discuss). Finally, as my film has a cross-national, UK/US context, the dynamic of national identity is at work strongly. National

groups often define themselves in contrast to each other, and the connotations of *ethnography* suggest that documentary subjects may reasonably be finalized according to their national identity. This chapter will discuss some of the first measures I took in the construction of Jay's portrait to ameliorate finalization according to national identity.

Renov also designates family films, or domestic ethnographies, as *autobiographical* of the filmmakers. Therefore, in part three of this chapter, I will discuss problems with the family-film-as-autobiography designation in the case of marginal authors specifically. Firstly, the label *autobiographical* leaves especially marginal authors such as women and national others vulnerable to having their work labelled *confessional* (as I will discuss below). Moreover, the *domestic* sobriquet on its own may 'privatise' the filmic voices of female and other marginal authors, rendering the political aspects of their work as merely personal. Therefore, I will explore this facet of the auto/biographical by analysing the work of two marginal authors, a filmmaker and an ethnographer/folklorist, who include the autobiographical in their work, yet also use performative strategies to limit confession and attain or maintain authorship.

Finally, I will discuss some of the strategies I used in my film to disrupt the various means by which Jay might be finalized. For instance, to try and 'block' Jay's reduction to 'American', I used "expressive techniques"[18] in *U Know Them By Their Fruit* such as pairing video footage of a London anti-war protest with audio from an 'anti-American' monologue by my cousin in the USA (Nichols: 2001: 134). Moreover, when editing, I sometimes let the narrative digress to prioritise the banal, in an effort to avoid finalizing Jay through a 'typical far right extremist' narrative. Furthermore, I used performative devices such as the 'smoking narrator' with the intention of rendering the narration somewhat unreliable, in hopes that my opposition to Jay, and indeed my sympathy for him, may be questioned by audiences. I think these unfinalizing strategies are appropriate for the viewers I had in mind, a British protestor/anarchist audience, who would not want to be told what to think (but would want to make their own judgement) and who might be inclined to be more suspicious of a very scripted and polished style of storytelling. Moreover, a British protestor/anarchist audience would sympathise with Jay's monologue about American militarism and his criticism of mainstream patriotism.

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[18] Nichols uses this expression in describing performative documentary, writing, that these are the same techniques that "give texture and density to fiction" (2001: 134).

Part One: The Essayistic Biographical

Jay is a youthful man in his 40s, a former school principal with a beautiful and devoted wife, and seven healthy children. While he calls himself a 'Christian Patriot', his disaffection with the US Government has led him to a radical mistrust of the mainstream patriotism he learned as a child and which he now sees as propaganda. He lost his position as school principal when he stopped paying most of his taxes; he refuses to give the government the names of his children because he does not want them to be given Social Security numbers; and he has suggested that the US Government intentionally bombed the World Trade Centre on September 11th, 2001 to gain increased powers over citizens (Interview: 2004). He also criticises the US invasions of Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2003 as "barbaric" and "mindless" (Interviews: 2005).

As a documentary subject, Jay is an energetic and charismatic storyteller whose alienation may resonate widely: his criticisms of American military aggression are shared around the world, and his clean-cut appearance may give him extra credibility, even as it jars slightly with his somewhat paranoid political extremism. His complexity adds to his magnetism: as he shares the story of his political, personal and spiritual journey, he seems unhindered by thoughts about whether he is contradicting himself, and as such he seems (to me) to be in a continual state of *becoming* (Bakhtin: 1984: 19). This complexity extends to his personality, which is amiable and warm as he invites viewers to sympathise with his ideas about a corrupt US Government and the absurdity of mainstream American patriotism, but then turns rigid and defensive when discussing his retrograde beliefs about racial purity and traditional gender roles. As a former schoolteacher and principal, he has a clear and cheerful presentational style, with an air of middle-class self-reflexivity—seen in moments such as when he announces that he is the 'real Governor of Missouri', then admits that this announcement is "freaky-weird-crazy!" (Interview: 2004). Thus he communicates to viewers that he can see himself from their perspective, and shares their sense of his position's absurdity.

Essayistic Authorship: the *Unfinalizing Auto/biographical*

After I had shot approximately 10 hours of interview footage with Jay, and began trying to select which parts of it to use, I realised that the portrait would inevitably be a reduction. To begin with, the footage would represent only a few moments in time.[19] I realised while digitising the first footage I had shot that this material was already part of a past which would only become more remote. I considered that Jay would continue searching, changing and *becoming* in his real life while I edited and manipulated what I had filmed. Simply trimming the material down to a reasonable length showed me the distortion imposed by selecting what to include and what would be lost. As I then began to mould the footage into a narrative arc with a beginning, middle and end, I started to doubt that an *unfinalizable* portrait of him would be possible.

As I assembled the first rough cut (of many) I took editorial measures against reducing him to caricature. For instance, Jay is sometimes defiant or defensive in the film. However, to ensure that he would not appear as angry-by-nature, I decided to include my voice from behind the camera, so that viewers can hear me not only asking questions but sometimes challenging his answers or eliciting his frustration. With each effort I took to mitigate Jay's risk—coupled with my readings on domestic ethnography and auto/biography—I became more aware of my investment in his representation, and of how the narrative I was creating of his story was intertwined with my own desires, thoughts and fears. Even though my intention was biographical, I was already working in the essayistic mode. As the Father of the essay, Michel de Montaigne put it, I was not simply giving "the measure of things" in Jay's life, but was also expressing "the measure of my sight" (in Renov: 2004: 104). Moreover, I began to see similarity between my filmmaking practice and some of Renov's descriptions of domestic ethnography, such as this one:

> a vehicle of self-examination, a means through which to construct self-knowledge through recourse to the familial *other* (2004: 218) (italics mine)

With hindsight, I think I wanted to avoid portraying Jay as angry-by-nature because I sympathised with him as an outcast. He was a pariah: 'anti-American' according to some family members, and a 'right wing extremist' according to outsiders (George and Wilcox: 1992: 7). Meanwhile, in Britain, public opinion seemed to hold that Americans were

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[19] I took the footage in 2004, 2005 and 2006. After that, Jay grew tired of being interviewed. Meanwhile my residence in the UK and the expense of travel further reduced my opportunities to obtain more interviews.

without authentic identity, yet somehow still flawed in predictable ways: in my sensitivity, I felt contained in a vessel holding all of the bad attributes that Britons and Europeans did not want to have. I think it is partially the 'angry American' facet of the stereotype that made me want to show that Jay was not *merely* angry or constantly angry, but was angry in a moment, for a reason, albeit sometimes an unacceptable reason. By allowing Jay's complexity to show through, I think I was trying (perhaps unconsciously at first) to do the same for myself. Therefore, my film about Jay was indeed a kind of "supplementary autobiographical practice" (Renov: 2004: 218). Yet, I am still unconvinced that this strong identification can be put down to "communal or blood ties" (Renov: 2004: 218) any more than it can be put down to the post-Freudian 'new autobiography' itself, whose authors possess a "forceful reflex of self-interrogation" (Renov: 2004: 105). I certainly was daunted from the beginning by the feat of making a portrait of Jay to convey as much complexity as I feel inside myself.

As the next section on 'family film' or domestic ethnography will illustrate, the complexity of subjects in auto/biographies can be difficult to ensure across national boundaries. In a cross-national context in which citizens from one nation are subject to the gaze of citizens from another nation, as with *U Know Them By Their Fruit*, representing one's self (and perhaps one's *culture*) may reduce both authors and subjects by enabling a reinforcement of myths of nationality, perhaps by simply evoking the idea of nation (Billig: 1995: 66-67). When a filmmaker presents her own family in a cross-national context such as the UK/US one, the thorny assumptions of *ethnography* add to the problematic ideology of nation. On one hand, I tried to use my subjectivity to unfinalize Jay, but as my authorial investment increased, so, I felt, did the threat of reinforcing British stereotypes of Americans.

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Part Two: A-Typical Representation
Autobiography as Auto*ethnography*

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As Renov's domestic ethnography has been an especially productive idea for my problematisation of autobiography, it is important that he himself notes the difficulty for any theorist to define and set its limits: in fact one of his descriptions for autobiography generally is that it is "boundary defying" (Renov: 2004: xii). However, artistic boundaries are easier to blur than ones of national identity, and in a cross-national context, a filmmaker may want to avoid the appearance of autobiography in order to avoid the

semblance of auto*ethnography*. Accordingly, I want to problematise domestic ethnography *as ethnography*.

However, first of all, there are some aspects of my 'family film' which can easily be contrasted with some of Renov's descriptions of *domestic ethnography*. For instance a) my cousin and I hardly knew each other growing up, so we did not have precisely the "depth and indelibility of familial attachment" to which Renov refers in defining domestic ethnography (2004: 22) b) my cousin Jay is of a similar age to me, while most of the films Renov discusses in relation to domestic ethnography are about parents or grandparents and c) we discuss politics and society in the film rather than our family, so the importance of 'family' as a category for the film is diminished, to my mind.[20] Thus, even though the film is shot in homes of familial relatives of mine, I think the 'domestic' aspect is less important (if not less pronounced) in my film. However, I also take the *ethnographic* itself as being problematic, particularly in the UK/US cross-national context.

Ethnography is a problematic pursuit in many ways, beyond its undeniable "checkered colonial past" (Lebow: 2008: xv). Trinh-T. Minh-ha asserts that anthropology focussing on 'the other' is "an outgrowth of a dualistic system of thought peculiar to the Occident" (Renov: 2004: 217). As Ethnography has sought knowledge about cultures, it has objectified them, misapprehending multitudes of people at once, reifying cultures and incarcerating them in alienating, externally created and 'othering' definitions. Indeed Catherine Russell writes that, "the history of ethnographic film" is "a history of the production of otherness" (1999: 19).

It is not my intent that my film should be considered as ethnographic: it is a filmed portrait about a young man politicised in a way that is on the rise globally, across many nationalities and languages (Castells: 1997: 2-3). Furthermore, despite the film's having been made as part of my research process, it is not meant to be viewed alongside a booklet of "study materials" to inform viewers about the 'culture' represented (Russell: 1999: 14). Moreover, it seems to me that if seen in the (scholarly) context of the ethnographic, my subjects will

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[20] Though Renov does not specify that domestic ethnography should only include films about parents or grandparents, his discussions of domestic ethnography, barring one film, *Vintage: Families of Value* (1995), does not include films about siblings or cousins of a similar age to the familial filmmaker (there is one about a filmmaker's child). The films Renov discusses are *Trick or Drink* (1984), *The Rainbow Diary* (1994), *Sink or Swim* (1990), *Tomboychick* (1993), *Delirium* (1993), *Tarnation* (2003) and *Nobody's Business* (1986). Moreover, all of these films take the familial milieu itself as a major focus of the film.

not only be Othered, but may be undermined unfairly. As Trinh points out, the " "civilized" mind" has "classified many of the realities it *does not understand* in the categories of the untrue and the superstitious . . ." (Nichols: 1994: 73) (italics in original).[21]

Meanwhile, *ethnography* recalls anthropological *field work* undertaken to catalogue a culture in a framework of rational enquiry. James Clifford finds the word *culture* itself problematic, though he admits it is a category he cannot work without (Buzard: 2003: 10). It seems that a 'culture' or nation, after being named as such, is already objectified, distorted in the imagination of the researcher, whose interpretation will consist partly in projection. After all, every academic researcher, according to Pierre Guerlain, wears her own version of "national and cultural glasses" (1999: 33-52). While the observed culture is reified, the researcher stays fluid, mobile, changeable and *unfinalizable*.

Clifford has also raised concern about the problem of spatial terms "in the construction and representation of "cultures" " (1997: 19). This spatial model may naturalise as immobile our view of the "mappable" peoples we study (Buzard: 2003: 65). Clifford proposed that culture is more contained within "folkways" or *routes* than tethered (and contained) by *roots* (Clifford: 2003: 65; Buzard: 2003: 65). 'Roots' suggests the culture is not only bound to a single geographical location which overdetermines it, but that the culture is also finalised in a particular state: it is knowable in its level of development, it is reliably findable on our map, it will predictably remain consistently like our idea of it. Being knowable, the 'culture' approximates a permanent state—and therefore a non-developing one—held fast by its roots.

Autoethnography could be seen as a solution to the problem of objectification, because the filmmaker is then a participant as well as an observer. Renov's domestic ethnography seems practically coterminous with *autoethnography*—whose coinage was, according to Alisa Lebow,

> in opposition to the colonialist ethnography, signalling the subaltern's
> appropriation and arrogation of the colonizer's gaze (Lebow: 2008: xv)

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[21] I think *Louis Theroux's Weird Weekends* is a good example of this, as it represents Americans (however light-heartedly) as irrational, quasi-ethnographic subjects. The show constructs all Americans on the basis of a few on the fringe: Theroux said in an interview, "Americans have this unusual degree of commitment to things that just don't square —they seem based on a misunderstanding of objective reality" (Joyce: 1999).

In other words, autoethnography represents an objectifying gaze not simply returned but usurped. Colonized 'objects' become voiced subjects/agents. Moreover, these ethnographers may weaken *othering* definitions of them by presenting their own alternative representations of themselves, representations which bear that seal of authenticity unavailable to the colonizer: that the words come 'straight from the horse's mouth', from the *subalterns* themselves. However, there is also the question with autoethnography of how far the marginalised can overthrow or even weaken a definition of its associated social group, which has taken root. First, however, we have to consider the question of whether a film may even qualify as extending beyond the "solipsistic" (Egan: 1994: 593) limits of autobiography into the socially relevant realm of autoethnography at all. Catherine Russell gives the following criteria for qualification as autoethnography:

> [a]utobiography becomes auto-ethnography at the point where the film- or videomaker understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes (Russell: 1999: 276).

Russell's description renders all autobiographical documentary as auto*ethnography* as long as the filmmaker herself acknowledges the connections: one might reason that, after all, every personal history is part of the historical world and the larger society, therefore every personal history is societally relevant. Lebow, on the other hand, amends Russell's definition by adding external vetting agents. She writes that autobiography can be thought of as auto-ethnography only,

> where *the critic or viewer* understands the film to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes (Lebow: 2008: xv) (emphasis mine)

With these descriptions of autoethnography, we have the familiar hierarchical distinction of public over private (which Renov goes some ways towards amending in his work emphasising the subject in history): for a film to qualify as autoethnography is seen as advancement from mere autobiography. Meanwhile, relevance to the world's "social formations and historical processes" (Russell: 1999: 276) may be seen to leave autoethnography less vulnerable than personal art films to charges of self-absorption. However, it seems to me that looking at a family portrait as ethnography (*auto-* or otherwise) could in fact be considered a form of self-centredness at the least, as the reification of Others is put into service for the sake of our own fluid, yet secure identity ideation. Renov notes that documentaries made in the mode of the 'new subjectivity' (and

that sometimes qualify as autoethnography) express selves of "instability rather than coherence" (Renov: 2004: 104)—and this instability could help soften the finalizing effects of autobiography. However, the 'new subjectivity' does not (seem to) have the effect of unfinalizability where the work is categorised by "the critic or viewer" as *ethnographic* (Lebow: 2008: xv), a concern which becomes especially salient for a filmmaker working in a cross-national context.

As ethnography is *our view of the Other*, the social relevance of a work of autoethnography may be completely different in the country where it was made versus another country in which it might be viewed. In her latest work on national identity, Julia Kristeva claims we need national identity as a "suitable target for externalization" in order to keep us from feeling too psychologically fragmented (Caputi: 1996: 692- 683). Moreover, Billig points to the need of people for group identities formed through positive self-comparison with national Others (1995: 65).[22] Hence, the social *relevance* of a work of ethnography or autoethnography could lie in its social *use*, with (some) foreign or national-minority subjects serving as "devalued external objects" (Caputi: 1996: 686). Moreover, watching a family whom we definitely consider to be from an 'Other culture' may cause one to see more "interpenetration and co(i)mplication" (the characteristics of domestic ethnography according to Renov) (2004: 221) than we would if we were from that family's 'culture' ourselves—in which case we would more easily appreciate subtle differences and tensions, or complexities. However if there are so many representations of the culture in circulation (as with the USA) that outsiders feel they 'know' it, then, encountering a representation that goes against that "knowledge" the outsiders might classify the work as 'autobiography' to confine the contrary representation to one perspective. That way, assumptions of knowledge about the culture overall can remain unchallenged, alongside national identities contrasted or defined against that culture.

The public versus private distinction and its socio-hierarchical implications may be especially problematic for certain authors such as national others, as well as women and racial others—the focus of the next section on marginal authors. For me, Clifford's warning against spatial metaphors points to the connotations of *domestic* ethnography—as the home is the non-public, the seat of psychosexual formation, the place where, as

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[22] For evidence of his theorization of 'banal nationalism' in his book by that name, Billig uses the Social Identity Theory introduced by Tajfel and now better known through the work of Abrams and Hogg etc., as Self-Categorization Theory (also see Hutnik's 1991 book *Ethnic minority identity: a social psychological perspective*).

psychoanalysis has it, boys move away from dependence on their mothers, and girls do not. Meanwhile, profession is defined against *the domestic* even though every human can be traced to a domestic space: but the scientist's privilege would be to deny the influence on his profession of the private and the domestic—the place where the scientist is a participant as well as an observer.

Part Three: Marginal Authors

In this section I consider the work of marginal authors who have resisted straightforward autobiography in their work for reasons, it seems, which are similar to mine: not wanting to have their work reduced to the negative stereotype of the marginalised group or groups with which they are associated. I chose to focus on the filmmaker Michelle Citron and the Folklorist Zora Neale Hurston, because they both worked in a mode of auto/biography but used performative strategies to produce output that could not be reduced completely to the autobiographical. Choosing women as marginal authors seems appropriate, since Women have been (and to a degree still are) constructed by science and religion—and thus culture and civilisation—as hysterical, childlike, of limited intelligence, out of their own control and ultimately, untrustworthy, especially outside the home. Meanwhile, no author wants the assumption of untrustworthiness attached to his or her work: while an *unreliable narrator* can be an effective authorial device, *unreliable author* is oxymoronic. It is therefore no surprise that marginal authors would want to complicate the autobiographical lest their work be imbued by society with (or reduced to) the same characteristic of unreliability attributed to Woman generally.

 The incarcerating female role as justified in the Bible is a prominent theme of my film, but I do not engage as deeply with gender theory as I could in my written thesis. Firstly, and most importantly, my project was inspired by my 'marginal' national identity in a country where the negative construction of Americans caused me to *feel* mistrusted. All my life (including in Britain) I have experienced what it means to be a woman-as-marginal but I have only experienced national Otherness for the past decade, so I was eager to explore that.

Secondly, as national identity is a central struggle for my main documentary subject, national identity seemed the more appropriate focus. Thirdly, Renov's formulation of domestic ethnography as a form of autobiography deepened my fascination with the cross-national situation. Fourthly, the relevant fields of gender theory are vast and varied, so I thought treating this area as a main thread of my theoretical framework would require a major change of emphasis for my thesis, especially given the shorter word length of a practice-based project (forty-thousand words). While focussing on gender theory may have yielded a more tightly focussed thesis, I think it would have crowded out other interests and ultimately restricted the experimentation with documentary film form which I found so enlightening.

While I feel strongly that my being female should not determine that I must focus mainly on being female in my research, I am nonetheless very interested in the "intersectionality" of nation, race and gender (Hill Collins: 1998: 63; Choo: 2012: 42) especially as it relates to the "traditional family ideal" (Hill Collins: 1998: 63): furthermore, I would add religion to this triad. While I do not discuss gender theory at length in this thesis, I do represent the issue of gender relations prominently in the film—through the Bible verses focussing on white male privilege (the Jacob and Esau story), and by including footage which emphasizes how religion helps to hierarchalise family relations in favour of the masculine/male (as when Jay's Father tells the Adam and Eve story as Jay's Mother walks into the kitchen).[23] Furthermore, I represent my personal and collective female *perspective* more than sufficiently in the film through the Bible verses, my on-camera arguments with Jay, and cutaway edits (which I discuss at length in Chapter 3), in addition to footage selection. Furthermore, I address the risks of female authorship in the written thesis through the idea of the *marginal* author (which also describes the stereotyped national Other), as in the section below.

I will now discuss Zora Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road: An autobiography* (1942) and Michelle Citron's ambiguously autobiographical film *Daughter Rite* (1980). Both authors had to contend with the stereotype of woman/female as 'private' (or civically passive) and therefore un-authorial. Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* was criticized for focussing too

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[23] The Adam and Eve story is about 52 minutes into the film. I also hint at the power dynamic between Jay and his wife in the film: by rendering in slow motion the moment during the Thanksgiving dinner scene when Angeline makes a statement but then looks to Jay apprehensively before taking back and redelivering her words in an altered, softened form (at about 44 minutes into the film).

much on people around her rather than herself specifically, and for being too tonally playful for an autobiography. Meanwhile Citron has (unconvincingly) insisted that her film, *Daughter Rite*, is not autobiographical.

Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography,* is a book of essays based on African American folklore gathered in her Florida hometown, and uses stereotypes of African Americans to question the existence of a separate 'race'. Hurston was Southern and from a poor background, but educated in an elite Northeast university, under the tutelage of anthropologist Franz Boas (Buzard: 2003: 71). I can understand why Hurston, living between the two worlds, would inevitably see her hometown as limited from her new distance; but she would also discover the misunderstanding of the Northern elites towards the people who shared her origins. Hurston reminds me of Trinh's 'inappropriate other', a *between* figure who,

> resorts to non-explicative non-totalizing strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure. (This is often viewed by the outsiders as strategies of partial concealment and disclosure aimed at preserving secrets that should only be imparted to initiates.) (Trinh in Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin: 1995: 218)

The cagey aspect of Hurston's writing is performative: her writing defers, diffuses, and confuses meaning, while providing textual pleasure, and parading her skill as a humorist, an author, and not just an 'autobiographer' (or ethnographer). Sidonie Smith writes of Hurston's multivocality that she "undermines the fixedness of any identity" (Smith: 1993: 124):

> Through her textual performance, the black woman resists her reader's attempt to fix her in the identity of the exceptional black woman by undermining the bases upon which that identity is founded. (Smith: 1993: 105)

It seems to me that this unfixing of identity, this de-finalization, is indeed what Hurston intended, as she both plays up to and subverts American stereotypes of African Americans. In one of the essays included in *Dust Tracks*, titled 'My People! My People!', Hurston enumerates a set of humorous tests for identifying African Americans, such as "If he hunts for six big words where one little one would do, that's my people" and "my people never steal more than a dollar and a quarter" (Hurston: 1942: 304). Then she delivers the real message of the essay:

> Now you've been told, you ought to know. But maybe, after all the Negro
> doesn't really exist. What we think is a race is detached moods and phases of
> other people walking around. (Hurston: 1942: 304)

As a result of her humour, her caginess, and, I would argue, her deft management of the
between position, Hurston remains somewhat of a mystery, somewhat unfinalizable as a
person. Hurston's performativity, which seems to be a remedy against autobiography's
threat of reducing a marginalised (or subaltern) author to a negative stereotype, is partially
responsible for inspiring performativity in my film, *U Know Them By Their Fruit*, in which I
sometimes prioritise humour and an address to the viewer which challenges fixed national
identity. In some ways, my film also plays up to the American stereotype (by for instance
using traditional patriotic songs, filming inside a church and setting much of the interview
footage in front of an American flag) while also subverting the expectations of mainstream
patriotism attached to these symbols. [24] I will include a longer discussion of how I use
performative gestures to unfinalize Jay, myself, and other Americans at the end of this
chapter and again in Chapter Three.

Like Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road,* Michelle Citron's *Daughter Rite* (1980) also performs
to avoid the finalizing effects of direct autobiography. *Daughter Rite* critiques the negative
effects on women of the patriarchal household—the unrealistic expectations it can place
on Mothers and the potential sexual threat it can pose for Daughters. However, the
director uses performative strategies to avoid making a sad story or a screed, as may be
expected from a film that confesses about such *private* matters as Mother-resentment and
sexual abuse of Daughters in the home. In her essay about the film, titled "Fleeing From
Documentary" Citron reflects on the opposition between confessional and performative
approaches, expressing particular anxiety about women's films being labelled *confessional.*
She writes:

> the autobiographical act is a political act, something we risk losing sight of
> when women's autobiography is labelled confessional.
> (Waldman and Walker: 1999: 272)

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[24] Though the flag was originally used to cover an ugly window in a back-office building/shed—which was
the only quiet place Jay and I could find away from the noise of the children—as we shot more interviews, I
began to notice and enjoy the irony of filming in front of a US flag a figure who was called 'anti-American',
especially in a film intended for a British audience. Rather than inserting cutaways to break the monotony of
the flag background, I used a preponderance of 'flag footage', and I think it helps create humor and tension,
given the 'expatriate' and 'patriot' relationship between myself and Jay.

Meanwhile, though her film is in the documentary canon, Citron denies it is a documentary. She also denies it is autobiographical, but adds this wavering caveat:

> Through this semantic sleight of hand, I let myself off the hook. Of course, the reality of the film's verisimilitude is more complex.
> (in Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 276)

While Citron insists on the political nature of the "autobiographical act" (Waldman and Walker: 1999: 272) she seems unable to escape worry over the exposure of clear-cut autobiography, with its danger of the *confessional* label that threatens to drain political relevance from female autobiography. Performativity helps filmmakers escape this worry, as Nichols states, since it "joins the general to the particular, the individual to the collective, and the political to the personal (2001: 133)".

Citron insists that though the emotions in *Daughter Rite* are autobiographical, the *film* is "about mothers and daughters in general" (in Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 277). The two 'Sisters' who are the main characters/subjects in the film are identified as actresses during the end credits. Citron also interviewed thirty-five daughters and then somehow incorporated those interviews into her scripting of the sister actors' lines though, in her article about the film, she does not specify how these interviews impacted her script. Moreover, the 'Sister' segments are joined with actual home movie footage of Citron's mother, slowed down and repeated in a way which makes these portions of the film "experimental" according to Jane Feuer (1980: 12-13).

Citron justifies her avoidance of first-person confessional film by arguing that we as viewers more freely identify with fictional characters, an identification which we are apt to guard against with documentary or non-fictional characters. Here is a long quote from the artist/ filmmaker/ auto/ biographer in which she outlines this idea:

> Documentary potentially sets up a dichotomy between us and them; we sit in the audience as voyeurs and watch someone else's life unfold. It is all too easy to think, "It's just their problem, it's goddamn for sure not mine. I've never been raped, or have AIDS, or . . . [fill in the blank]." Ironically, a fictional character potentially allows for greater identification because our knowledge of their fictional nature makes such identification safer. The character is not "real" so we can experience the overlaps without having to actually be too much *like* them. (Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 283) (emphasis in original)

As Citron indicates, there are some types of people with whom we do not want to identify (people who have "been raped, or have AIDS, or . . . [fill in the blank]"). Foucault linked confession to the assumed immorality of sexual activity—about which church authorities required full disclosure from guilty parties (Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale, in Smith and Watson: 1969: 61). In the confessional form, I think an implied listening-authority figure renders the *confessor* the least authoritative person in the author-subject-audience triangle, and, as a result, authorship itself is rendered impotent, unreliable, and irrelevant. The performativity of *Daughter Rite* protects Citron's family from exposure of its (possible) sexual trauma and the judgements of guilt or pity likely to follow. Moreover, insofar as performativity is a refusal of confession, it helps to secure Citron's authorship.

Citron's *Daughter Rite*, according to Ruby Rich "challenges identification itself—its false and easy notions of unity and truth" (Rich: 1998: 214), and Hurston also challenged such simplification. *Easy unities* after all, are perceived from the distance of dis-identification. *Easy truths* apply to Others and depend on externalisation and "reflecting a good narcissistic image" (Caputi: 1996: 689); in order for us to feel complex, the Other must be perceived as simple. Hurston and Citron intentionally dodged stereotypes—or "false and easy notions of unity and truth"—stemming from racial and sexual prejudice (Rich: 1998: 214). They also chose to *"*suspend meaning and resist closure" to avoid the false finalization of those they represented (Trinh in Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin: 1995: 217).

Hurston *performed blackness* to avoid the suggestion that she was unique among African American women—which would only support a notion of black inferiority. Furthermore she did not reveal the lives of those from whom she gathered the folktales without a veil of performativity to throw doubt on the accuracy of those representations, disrupting some prejudicial assumptions about African Americans. Meanwhile Citron performed and complicated daughterhood, using theatrical dramatisation and the *public* information of the interviews with various women to keep her message from being contained to her family alone—by a patriarchal society eager to deny the prevalence of female sexual abuse inside the family home.

The next section of this chapter will discuss some of the strategies I use in my film to block various types of finalization of the subjects represented. I wanted to encourage UK viewers to identify with my filmic subjects and prevent as much of the dynamic of cross-nationalism as possible, to ameliorate the "false and easy" distance "between us and them" (Rich 1998: 214; and Citron in Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 283). This dynamic, of using national others as "suitable target(s) for externalization" (Kristeva in Caputi: 1996: 692- 683) is crucial to forming a secure and coherent national identity amid the ideology of nation. Therefore I have used performativity in various ways to allow UK viewers to, as Citron explained, "experience the overlaps without having to actually be too much *like* them" (Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 283).

Part Four: Performing Auto/biography
U Know Them By Their Fruit

This section is an account of some of the specific editorial choices I made to avoid the potential finalizing effects of filmic portraiture of an 'extreme other' in a cross-national context, by a marginal author, as is the case with my film. As Citron noted, a non-identifying viewer is more likely to watch as a "voyeur" a straightforward, non-performative, or confessional documentary, and to guard against identification with subjects (in Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 283). Issues of identity and distance were at the forefront of my concerns as I took the original footage and formed my montage using techniques such as the unreliable cigarette narrator, comic narrative digression from the 'typical extremist' story and the splicing together of audio and video from separate footage (for instance, London anti-war protest visuals with audio from Jay's monologue in the USA) to draw out viewer ambivalence over viewer judgement and to signify a broader scope for the film than 'confessional family film'. These "expressive techniques" fit with Nichols' description of the attributes of performative documentary, which he writes, "give texture and density to fiction" but appear in documentaries alongside "oratorical techniques" for the purpose of "addressing the social issues that neither science nor reason can resolve" (2001: 134). Through these techniques, I hoped to help unfinalize subjects, including myself. Firstly, I will discuss how I attempted to unsettle national-identity assumptions of unity and difference. Next, I will discuss examples in the film where I intentionally

undermined my own authority using the unreliable narrator. Finally, I will give examples of fictionalising devices and a sometimes digressive narrative which I employed to undermine the expected 'American extremist' narrative.

Confusing National Identity

In the pre-title sequence of the film we see footage of the 2003 anti-war protest in London. There is a young woman marching on stilts, dressed as 'Uncle Sam' and holding a leash to which an effigy of Tony Blair is attached. Sounds of a helicopter can be heard in the background, as the calm voice of my cousin Jay is heard in voiceover:

> Americans are biggest bunch of gutless, principle-less, backbone-less clones that have ever walked the face of the Earth.

> If you Americans think your government gives a rat's ass about you. . . quit doing what they tell you. (chuckle) They don't care if you starve.
> (Interview: 2005)

The combination of his critique of Americans coupled with the London protest footage and protest sounds helps disrupt (dis)identification with Jay on the basis of national identity; in fact, I think that in this footage, Jay seems politically aligned with Britons who resent American military aggression and mock American patriotism.[25] Moreover, he is indeed speaking to them, as he was fully aware of having a British audience through me. A red protest banner stitched with the location "London" and a title reading, "Don't Attack Iraq! Anti-war Protest 2003", should further invite the attention of British viewers. I think that the mix of the protest footage and Jay's voiceover lends the feeling that Jay and the British public together are chastising Americans about their naïve patriotism and acceptance of militarism. Though Jay's political stance is at later points in the film shown to be retrograde in terms of religion and equality for minorities and women, he is initially associated with protest against military aggression. Therefore, viewers are given the chance to identify with Jay from the start of the film in a way they could not identify with an 'American right wing extremist' introduced in a more traditional way.

Moreover, I used chants and sounds recorded at the 2003 London protest in later parts of the film, which I think served several purposes: the noises represent Jay's rebellion and

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[25] One British respondent at a test screening of the film in August 2010 said that the opening scene made him think, "He's on our side!" (August: 2010)

courage in his challenge to US law and policy; they are also used to draw attention to the polarisation of opinion between Jay and the 'Mississippi Aunts', and to evoke the wider 'culture war' of a polarised USA; furthermore, the protest noises add an atmosphere of revolution, changing the American landscape and making it strange—perhaps with the possibility of revolution itself. This soundscape was inspired by my conversations with British people in which Americans were criticised for being politically complacent. I think the sounds contribute to problematising protest and revolution in the USA in a complex and unsettling way, since many people who would support Jay because he is a kind of likable dissident, would turn against him politically once they discovered what lay behind his activism.[26]

It might be expected that a film about people in the American South and the Mid-West would use 'Americana' sounds including banjos, harmonicas, and guitars, and several people have suggested this type of music for the film. However, I used electronic arrangements of American patriotic songs throughout the film to evoke a British sensibility and a revolutionary rather than a traditional feel. The original arrangements of patriotic anthems are irreverent towards American national identity and should therefore be more attractive to my intended audience, some of whom reject nations entirely in favour of open borders. Moreover, it is commonly understood here in the UK that 'techno' music is unpopular in the US: therefore the American patriotic songs are 'British-ised', further disrupting British dis-identification with Jay (and perhaps myself) based on national identity.

Unreliable, *Unfinalizing* Narrator

Throughout the film, I use ambiguitizing, performative devices intended to point to the construction of my filmed subjects, and one device which I employed with the intention of disrupting the expected authorial narrative and therefore promoting unfinalizability is the close-up cigarette or 'smoking narrator'. Long fades between cigarette smoke and Jay's face at the beginning of the film create the illusion that I am forcing Jay to passively smoke, which I intended to signal his vulnerability as a documentary subject. I think the cigarette narrator may also evoke 'research'—the emotionally distant psychoanalyst or scholar with a critical gaze. Furthermore, the

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[26] I am hoping that the effect is unsettling enough to cause viewers to watch more consciously and look for further critique and comment within the film (such as the implied critique of mass 'video democracy').

device is intended as a warning to viewers against accepting all of my editorial choices unquestioningly, as I force the cigarette into viewers' faces as well. I hope that this performative narrative device helps to unfinalize Jay by problematising my critique against him later in the film. Originally, the idea for this device came from the first moments of filming the Aunts, during which I brought my own cigarette to the camera: I realised during that first moment of filming that 'the Mississippi Aunts' might be judged for smoking, and decided it was only right that I should reveal that I was smoking with them.[27] This device could also reduce judgement against the Aunts for gossiping, by signalling that I am gossiping with them. Through showing that I smoke with them, I intended to show identification with them too, and implicitly to invite others to identify with them, at least partially.

Another narrative device is the semblance of fiction which attaches to the 'the Mississippi Aunts', who provide most of Jay's backstory. Segments in which they appear are always introduced by imagery of blue skies with white, fluffy clouds. While this device also serves my critique of uncritical patriotism by characterising their generation (the 'baby boomers') as somewhat naïve, the framing of the Aunts as fairy tale characters makes the film more like a fable. Therefore, the device helps to lend a hint of the universal or general to the film, which I hope will deflect the sense that this it is an in-depth expose about one family.

Narrative Digression

I attempted to minimise the finalizing effects of narrative by including moments in which Jay's wife and children interrupt his presentations to the camera. These interruptions change the narrative, loosening it from the more sensational focus of Jay's outcast status in the family, or his tax protest. Moreover, these interactions appear contingent in the expected narrative of 'an(other) American extremist'. Through these moments of everyday family interaction, I encourage viewers to see Jay as *not only* a proto-demagogue, but also as a husband and father who can be flexible and good-humoured. For example, when Jay is giving a detailed presentation of his political beliefs to the camera, complete with evidence and a tour of his

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[27] This device was probably also inspired by the "smiling cigarette-man" character 'Mr. Butts' from the *Doonesbury* comic strip (Wiener: *The Nation*: November 2010).

bookshelf, his wife Angeline (whom viewers have already met) is heard from outside the frame, saying:

> Hey wait, stop: hold on minute. Jay, can you drink your juice? The enzymes . . .I don't want the enzymes to die (before you drink it) . . . .
> (Interview: 2004)

In the next frame, we see Jay pick up the glass of freshly squeezed vegetable juice while asking me to stop filming him for the moment. The disjunction between his political speech and his being told to drink his juice adds comedy to the sequence not only because of Jay's grinning embarrassment but also because of the incongruity of the (female) domestic interrupting important 'public' political speech. I think the effect is also comedic because it is excessive to the expected 'American extremist' narrative. Comic moments such as this should also provide further possibilities for viewers to choose the aspect of the story on which they wish to focus: for instance, from focussing on the 'American extremist' story, a viewer can chose to concentrate on their married life. Not only does the latter focus make it easier to identify with Jay, these moments of banal comedy in the midst of 'serious business' are a trope of fictional film, and may therefore help distract viewers likely to dis-identfy on the basis of national identity.[28]

Another instance of narrative digression along these lines occurs during Jay's story about challenging the Internal Revenue Service by attempting to pay them with gold and silver coins instead of dollars. There is potential for excitement in this story, as Jay describes the moment when an IRS agent phoned the Criminal Investigation Unit to detain him for refusing to pay in the expected manner of cheque or credit card. However, the excitement is diffused when the story breaks down as Angeline interrupts again, seeking clarification from Jay about *when* the event he is relating took place. Rather than cutting out this period of confusion, I follow this naturally occurring narrative digression between Jay, Angeline, and myself as Angeline tries to apprehend whether this is a story she has already heard, or a new (but similar) one which is he relating. I could have trimmed this sequence down to include only the threat from the tax authorities and Jay's reaction to it, but I think withholding or deferring such narrative satisfaction better serves the intentions of the film. The

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[28] Here, I am referring back to Citron's assertion that fiction helps viewers identify with subject "without having to actually be too much *like* them" (in Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 283).

confusion helps to unfinalize Jay as it shows him as somewhat of a bumbler rather than a cold calculating criminal; moreover, the exchange between Jay and his wife reveals the sense of fun and adventure they share in their 'outlaw' status, shifting the interest from a sensational 'crime story' focus to the softer subject of their relationship.

My editing of 'the Mississippi Aunts' also favours digression. As they 'gossip' and smoke cigarettes, they are providing background to the film by stating how they interpret Jay's behaviour. However, they disagree on the details of his situation, such as which taxes he pays and which he does not and how he writes his address to indicate his status as 'outside the American system'. They also disagree about what word correctly characterises his critical stance: while one of the 'Mississippi Aunts' interprets Jay's unusual views as 'anti-American' the other Aunt offers the more nuanced view that he is 'anti-government'—but then has to retract her nuanced view and agree that he is indeed 'anti-American', in order to satisfy the first Aunt.

The Aunts' digressive interaction does serve my overall narrative, as it illustrates the 'patriotic peer pressure' that can silence American critics of the US government, especially in the US, since the 'anti-American' label is difficult to deny, much less disprove. Therefore, leaving this moment in the film implies the criticism, which Jay and I share, of mainstream American patriotism. However, using this digression to convey the criticism also has the effect of deferring any 'final judgements' or finalization of Jay, as it shows that even his family members do not understand his stance. I did at first try editing this scene with the moments of disagreement between the Aunts cut out, as they are not crucial to providing the background of Jay's story. However I came to feel that their disagreement in this scene added complexity in the form of unknowability: the Aunts do not know how to categorise Jay, so neither, perhaps, should we. Moreover, I hope that the spontaneity added by the digression suggests that the Aunts are only beginning to apprehend the situation, and may change their interpretations later.

Chapter Two

Sympathy With Extreme Others

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss existing works of film/video portraiture marked by auto/biographical intersubjectivity, even where family members are *not* featured. Moreover, I will look at the formal strategies used by each filmmaker to transpose their encounters with subjects to the screen using re-enactment, montage, voiceover, and film titles with metaphorical resonance; I will then relate their strategies to my own. These productions by Errol Morris and Ross McElwee were chosen because of their content, as they deal with national/regional and ethnic/diasporic identity through portraits of what I term *extreme others*: non-familial others in the case of Morris's productions *Mr. Death* (1999) and *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008) and a mixture of familial and non-familial ones in the case of McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1986). Both Jewish American and Southern American Identities are problematised in these productions. In *Mr. Death*, (1999) the Jewish Errol Morris presents an unremarkable man's journey to becoming a Holocaust denier, depicting the man's humanity as well as his fallibility. In *Sherman's March* (1986) Ross McElwee expresses his ambivalence about Southern American identity and the Civil War legacy by figuring himself—half ironically, half seriously—as the most hated 'extreme other' in his home region.

My intention is not to claim that these films are the most similar ones to my own, but to situate my film according to existing documentaries, and to acknowledge that my own work was not made without references to others'—as well as to acknowledge how these works influenced or helped me to reflect on mine. I will explore how each filmmaker expresses a highly subjective form of authorship in encounter with an 'extreme other' subject. I will also analyse these productions using critical concepts which served to help me imagine and construct the intersubjective, author/subject relationship in my film—concepts from ethical philosophy, documentary theory, ethnography and psychoanalytic literary theory.

As Renov himself notes, the *desire* of authors for subjects is taken as given in the field of psychoanalytic criticism; however Renov implicates authorial desire most strongly in the case of family films, about which he writes

> The desire (figurable as dread or longing) of the domestic ethnographer is for the Other self (2004: 219)

On the other hand, I argue that 'the Other self' to whom a filmmaker is drawn does not need to be familial to implicate the author and to *graph*, or record, some aspect of the author. Indeed Renov also notes that the desire of the author is never clearer than "when the Other is the subject of representation" (2004: 219). I think that this desire for the *extreme other* is what reveals me in my film, and what reveals these filmmakers in the works discussed below. For Morris, I will argue that his re-enactments interpret the inner states of interviewees, making his work both sympathetic and highly intersubjective. For Ross McElwee, though he interviews family members in their homes and *Sherman's March* may therefore be categorised as domestic ethnography (and therefore autobiography) I would argue that McElwee prioritises performance over autobiography, through his literary voiceover and his self-doubling with the Civil War general William Tecumseh Sherman.

Part One: Encountering Errol Morris *Through* 'Extreme Other Selves'

> "We are all truly capable of doing really, really bad things."
> (Errol Morris, Interview with Rosenbaum, 1999)

Errol Morris often chooses *extreme others* as documentary subjects. In fact, he jokingly called his last three films the 'Pariah Trilogy', as they all featured widely despised figures (Austin: 2011: 355). One of the 'pariahs' is execution-machine designer and latecomer to the Holocaust denial (or *revision*), circuit, Fred Leuchter, the main documentary subject of *Mr. Death* (1999). Though Morris is Jewish and he lost relatives in the Holocaust (Interview: Lybarger: 2000) he does not reduce Leuchter to a stereotype, or portray him as unredeemable, therefore Leuchter is not completely finalized.

Morris has a "fascination with the self-deceiving narrator" according to Druick (2007: 216), and Leuchter is self-deluded because he claims to have debunked the Holocaust using a 'scientific test' (which gave him a chance at fame and public

speaking engagements) when he never had the expertise to carry out such a test. Leuchter's self-delusion, according to Druick, amounts to a failure to recognize "the passing of time or. . .history itself" (2007: 6). This statement describes my main documentary subject also, as he insists the time of the US Constitution's creation—when only white males could be US citizens—had the ideal type and balance of power, and that it was only government corruption which changed the laws. As with Leuchter's self-deception, Jay's is in his own self-interest: in interviews he makes it clear that he believes males ought not have to compete with females in public life. Therefore, the 'extreme other' relationship between Morris and Leuchter is quite similar in its oppositionality to that between myself and my cousin.

Even though my cousin Jay would prefer it if I were disenfranchised, I do not construct him as purely a villain, but try instead to convey the tragedy of his situation, and also to implicate myself and accentuate my own imperfection. Similarly, Leuchter is not demonised in Morris's film, even though Leuchter's 'research' is tantamount to a claim that Jewish people have lied about the Shoah. Rather, Morris tells a tragic story of a man who loses his career, wife, and reputation in return for refuting the existence of the gas chambers, rendering Leuchter a hapless and confused bungler on a mission, who gets it awfully wrong but never means to *do wrong*. In an interview, Morris said Leuchter had become "an accidental Nazi" (Interview with Druick, 2007).

The *I-Thou* Relationship

Typically for a Morris film, we look into Leuchter's eyes lot in *Mr. Death*, and he almost seems to look into ours. [29] Morris has said that his films are actually *about* eye contact (Onion Interview: 2005).[30] This eye contact not only encourages our sympathy with Leuchter

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[29] My main subject Jay sometimes looks directly into the camera to speak to the audience 'beyond' me. Moreover, he seems to look directly into the camera through much of the film, as a) I sat with my head very close to it and b) he was very aware of audience and seemed always to be speaking to the audience at least as much as he was speaking to me. I was not (that I am aware) influenced by Morris in filming Jay this way, though when viewing the rushes I noticed the immediacy it created, and I thought it was appropriate, given Jay's desire to reach an international audience.

[30] Morris said that he hates it when people think his film *Gates of Heaven* (1978) is about pet cemeteries (as it seems to be), saying that actually the film "embodies many of the ideas that are in every single film I've made. The obsession with language. Eye contact" (*Onion* Interview: 2005).

but also reveals Morris "refracted" (Renov: 2004: 216). Moreover, Morris is literally *reflected* during his interviews, on the screen of his customised interviewing set-up, the 'Interrotron':

> a series of modified teleprompters…[which] bounces a live image of Morris onto a glass plate in front of the interviewee'; the interviewee 'respond[s] to an image of Morris that floats directly in line with the camera (Rosenheim, 1996 in Gerbaz: 2008: 18).

Paul Schrader has argued that Morris's Interrotron enables a more ethical interview. With this contraption, the gazes are orchestrated so that that an ethical " 'I-Thou' relation" exists between interviewer and interviewee (Schrader, 1972 in Gerbaz: 2008: 18). 'I-Thou' is a term used by Levinas to foreground the importance of the *encounter with the Other* and our responsibility to "receive" from the Other (1961: 51). The *face-to-face* encounter in particular was crucial to Levinas (who was also Jewish): he argued that it was our responsibility to "receive" from the other, and that in the face-to-face moment, we cannot help doing so (1961: 51). In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas writes,

> To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression. . . It is therefore to receive from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But this also means: to be taught. Teaching (. . .) brings me more than I contain.   (1961: 51)

In Morris's films viewers experience very close face-to-face encounters with people like Fred Leuchter, and if we see their humanity, as Levinas claims we do, then we must also identify with them to a degree.[31] In interviews Morris repeatedly claims that he does not consider himself to be morally superior to his subjects: as the quote at the top of this chapter indicates, he includes himself and all of us as having potential for evil. Such statements suggest that Morris is able to put himself into the uncomfortable, but ethical, position to "be taught" by people like Fred Leuchter, whom most of society may feel they can only judge, lest they themselves be judged. [32]

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[31] Murray Smith's idea of 'alliance' versus 'allegiance' with characters is certainly relevant here, but analysis of overall allegiance or alliance in the films discussed here, including my film, is outside the scope of my research. As David Bordwell writes, "alignment and allegiance are complicated matters (. . .) the fluctuations of alignment and allegiance can be quite small-scale, and they often depend on niceties of directorial technique" (David Bordwell's website on cinema: May 16th 2011).

[32] As for viewers, I think they are at least encouraged to consider the dilemma of people like Leuchter and think about themselves in relation to him. As one *Mr. Death* reviewer put it, "the movie forces us to question the degree to which we share his capacity for denial" (Holden: New York Times: 1999).

Ciné-trance and re-enactment

Morris says, "The Interrotron inaugurates the birth of first-person cinema"
(Errolmorris.com Bio). However, Morris is wrong to leave himself out of the description,
as self-examination is always underway for him as well. Morris has remarked that what
compels him about documentary is not only his deep interest in other people, but *himself*
"through others" (Kaufman: *Indiewire*: 2003) which makes his work interesting to examine
for traces of auto/biography without domestic ethnography (as he has not made any films
about his family members).

With the Interrotron, Morris changes himself into both a camera and a screen, evoking the
metamorphosis remarked on by Rouch: the '*ciné-trance*' in which a filmmaker becomes "a
medium of the camera" (Cholodenko in Rothman: 2009: 158). Rouch said filmmakers are
predisposed to melding their identities, not only with the apparatus but also with filmed
subjects, because filming is like entering a trance, and facilitates a loosening of the
filmmaker's personal identity (Rouch: 2003: 39). Rouch's *ciné-trance* was an important
concept for helping me to imagine and construct the encounter between Jay and me in my
film—in addition to the radical intersubjectivity in Renov's domestic ethnography. Rouch
also compared filming to "possession phenomena" and felt that he himself became
possessed when he filmed possession rituals in Africa (Rouch: 2003: 39). Renov's
description of domestic ethnography, distinctive because of "blood ties" and
"consanguinity" (2004: 219, 244) is like a weaker version of Rouch's *ciné-trance* —with its
literal combination of psychology, morphology, and magic. However, I favour the broader
scope for intersubjectivity in Rouch's designation: for Renov, the *familial* Other is the 'other
self'; for Rouch, *all Others* are possible 'other selves'.

Morris uses re-enactments in all of his films, and I would argue that in some cases,
these re-enactments are the result of Morris having genuinely *taken on* his subjects,
so that he can invoke their interiority for us, so we can also *receive* from them.
Morris has said that one of his "favorite" [sic] re-enactments is from a scene in
Standard Operating Procedure (2008) in which a soldier is struggling with his culpability
for torture (Gerhard: *SF 360*: 2008). Morris says about the soldier:

> He describes how a drop of blood fell on his uniform. He tells himself that
> he is not involved, but he knows he is involved. I illustrated the falling drop
> of blood. It takes us into Diaz's moral quandary. . . .
> (Mitchell: 2008)

In this re-enactment Morris conveys his sympathy with a torturer, thereby risking the moral opprobrium of people who would judge without listening to the perspective of such a 'pariah'. It must be noted that Morris has not *received* from everybody in *Standard Operating Procedure:* Austin rightly points out that the film, "never grants interiority to the Iraqi victims and has little room for their perspectives" (2011: 344). Personally, I found the film's examination of the US Army personnel unsettling and uncomfortable because in one sense the film was an American filmmaker advocating for American soldiers. Furthermore, the accusation against the US Military and by extension the US Government—that they intended for US soldiers to torture prisoners despite their denunciation of torture— sometimes went amiss during the film: perhaps the nice young soldiers drew Morris into sympathy with them during the long conversations under the gaze of the Interrotron.[33]

In addition to Morris's *I-Thou* empathy, there is also a measure of *reporting* in the way Morris makes films, as suggested by his description of creating re-enactments: "I hear a line in an interview and it suggests an image" (Mitchell: 2008). Meanwhile, Morris has said that he does not think it is his role to "editorialise" (Cronin: 2010). Morris certainly seems to "editorialise" though it may be that he prefers to interpret what he does as performing rather than editorialising, offering observations rather than demanding belief. He certainly performs, often inserting what Austin terms "authorial intrusions" (2011: 20), which serve as remarks on the people and topics in his films. This commentary, however, draws attention to itself: Morris's style may in fact be intended to parody the style of sober editorialising. In this way Morris's films are performative: they point to the fact that truth cannot be guaranteed through the choice of representational methods. Indeed, though *performativity* can be a difficult characteristic to pin down, Morris's films seem to fit every description, including Bruzzi's clarification (of Nichols's description) of the performative mode, in which a film,

> uses performance within a non-fiction context to draw attention to the impossibility of authentic documentary representation
> (Bruzzi: 2006: 185)

Morris does not just "draw attention" to his authorial interruptions, he makes a burlesque of them. This, I think, makes him a self-consciously over-zealous and thus unreliable narrator—serving the purpose Rascaroli states, of distancing viewers

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[33] Morris likes to get a lot of footage, and has joked about conducting 27 hour-long interviews, but not telling the interviewees in advance. (Hughes: 2006), though perhaps the interviewees in SOP enjoyed being interrogated.

(Rascaroli: 2006: 185). For example, Morris often inserts a second's worth of black leader, which interrupts the flow of a subject's monologue. This device can be used to allow the audience a moment to think about what the subject has said, or it can be used to add comic timing. I borrowed this device for *U Know Them By Their Fruit*: at first I used it because my main subject Jay speaks a lot, and important meanings can be missed under a deluge of words, so pauses are helpful. However, as I became more comfortable as a performative editor, I used black leader pauses to draw attention to meanings both comic and dark.[34] This is just one of the means through which I tried to convey Jay's message, but also tried to demonstrate that Jay's story was selectively filtered through my awareness.[35]

Indeed, Morris's playfully exaggerated cutaways or re-enactments have been called "fetishistic" (Singer: 1989). Perhaps it was Morris's playful tendency that kept him from attempting to depict the dire mental landscape of Abu Ghraib prisoners. As Morris does not use voiceover, the re-enactments in his films are crucial visual accompaniments to the audio from his extremely long interviews (Hughes: 2006). For *U Know Them by their Fruit* I also had many hours of interviews (more than thirty), and I definitely wanted to avoid voiceover. Initially, I felt that the abundance of interview footage would enable me to convey Jay's story without voiceover. However my avoidance of voiceover also had to do with unfinalizability: I felt that, inevitably, some of the words I used to describe Jay's situation could serve as Historical or political 'buzzwords' that would distort identification with viewers, and ultimately simplify Jay falsely.[36] This 'buzzword risk' points to the projections and associations viewers bring to productions, which imbue their interpretations (I will write further on viewer subjectivity in Chapter Three).

I was definitely influenced by the spirit of Morris's editing. My decision to eschew voiceover was entirely mine (as far as I can tell). However, there are moments in my film when I use performative "authorial intrusions" (Austin: 2011: 20) or visual cues, which

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[34] Also, he often took a long time to get to the point when speaking, so I had to find a way of cutting the interviews without using ugly fades.

[35] Much of Morris's work is more performative than mine, such as *Tabloid* (2010) in which he often takes a word from an interview and enlarges it on screen as a kind of 'joke'—which consists only in repeating a word said by someone else but giving the word an exaggerated 'tone' by enlarging it.

[36] Levinas echoes my feeling that language can divide by oversimplifying, when he writes that only by using language can we create oppositions (1969: 195).

remind me of Morris's cutaways. [37] The cigarette narrator, which I think figures me as unreliable, resembles a Morris fetish object, and it also serves to point back to my authorial self. The cigarette, being a dubious symbol, also interrogates the role and intent of the narrator. Furthermore, it signals the distance which the medium of documentary film can seem to erase, drawing attention to the "interaction between performance and reality" (Bruzzi: 2006: 186). According to Rascaroli, such performance is inherent in *essay* films, and such *intrusions* are part of the "self-reflexive tradition" (Rascaroli: 2009: 87). What marks out performativity, perhaps, is the way it strays from the *discourse of sobriety*: self-reflexive but not self-serious. This lack of seriousness, like an unreliable narrator, can also be seen as an ethical strategy, which asks the audience to pay closer attention, by pointing to the unreliability of learning the truth from a documentary.

Furthermore, I can also compare my use of the X-Box controller to a fetishistic Morris cutaway (Singer: 1989). The X-Box controller appears in the sky above a rural, tree-lined road at sunset, then gets larger or 'closer', and we see fingers manipulating the buttons, while a techno version of 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' plays. This segment with the controller is intended as an absurd echo of the Aunts' summary of Jay's strange beliefs: that he thinks "the Government blew up our buildings by remote control" (Interview: 2003). However it is also intended as a response to something Jay's Mother has said in the interview segment that precedes it, about how the US Government can make citizens feel powerless. In this interview, Jay's Mother (my Aunt Jean) is explaining to me how a harsh fine levied on Jay for a driving offence a few years back had seemed to spark a grudge against the US Government. She says,

> And he just kind of turned, and starting talking about the Government. . . .
> Because when you really get into it, and look at it, sometimes. . . you feel like
> you don't really have a voice, and your opinion don't [sic] count because they
> can do whatever they want to with you.
> (Jay's Mother Interview: 2005)

Moreover, the X-Box controller (like the cigarette narrator) is meant to reflect critically on the act of filmmaking: both devices are intended to point back to me, the filmmaker

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[37] Though I was inspired to adopt some editing techniques of Errol Morris, I did not adopt all elements of his style. For instance I did not use re-enactment or archive footage to undercut immediately previous interview testimony. (I do however cut between my interview footage for contrasting perspectives, as when one of the Aunts says she is not sure if Jay's children can read, and I cut to Jay's son Evan reading Bible verses.)

manipulating everything. An additional advantage of such close-up or "fetishistic" (Singer: 1989) objects is that they can represent various meanings, and so help authors to infuse documentary with themes. For example, the X-Box controller is also intended as a foreshadowing of Jay's suggestion at the end of the film that we all should "maybe turn the TV off, and crack a book, and start looking for truth" (Jay Interview: 2005). Furthermore, I think the controller can be read as symbolic of the manipulation inherent in mediating communication, especially on a mass scale—though it will not necessarily be read this way.

The close-ups which remind me most of Morris are of the rooster, who crows for the camera near the beginning of the film, and later appears in slow motion, on one side of a split screen which is occupied on the other side by the moon.[38] The rooster footage was very useful to convey the themes of the weirdness of Jay's beliefs. Moving in slow motion beside the bright moon, and combined with the clownish electronic version of 'Star Spangled Banner', I think it conveys an ironic sense of how the "civilized" in society can automatically dismiss unconventional viewpoints as "untrue and superstitious" (Trinh in Nichols: 1994: 73) rather than questioning the status quo.

Before moving to the next section on the filmmaker Ross McElwee, I will offer another comment on *ciné-trance*, the Rouchian idea about the transformation undergone by the camera operator once she starts filming. I have discussed this idea in relation to intersubjectivity and the blending of identities (Rouch: 2003: 39) as it helped me conceptualise the figuration of Jay and myself in the film (which I will discuss further in Chapter Three). However, it is also relevant as an immersion in filming which distances the camera operator from her immediate surroundings, cutting her off from a clear awareness of the world in which she is filming. For me, the most powerful instance of this occurred when I was interviewing Jay's wife Angeline. I sympathised with what I saw as her predicament as a woman and mother in a fundamentalist Christian environment, where she sometimes seemed to have less authority in her home than her male children. Furthermore I genuinely enjoyed her company, as she was adventurous, fun loving, and feisty. Perhaps as a result of my enjoyment, I sometimes missed things she said, and did not notice them

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[38] A close-up of a rooster appears in segments of Morris's documentary about Steven Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (1991), superimposed against a background of stars in space. Hawking is heard questioning the origins of the universe, and says "Which came first the chicken or the egg?". The strangeness of the rooster and the jerking movements of its head against the space background somehow echo the non-human sound of Hawking's electronic voice simulator; together these elements help to convey the mystery of space.

until reviewing the footage later. One of these moments occurs near the beginning of the film, while she is driving the family van and I am filming from the passenger side.

I was absorbed in what I was experiencing. Through the LCD screen, I watched this unlikely woman, beautiful and outspoken with strange beliefs; I was also monitoring the sound, and my role as "camera operator" was monopolizing a significant part of my attention (Feld and Rouch: 2003: 39). Furthermore I was preoccupied by my epistephilia: I was interested in the Biblical story she told of Jacob and Esau, especially what she was saying about different kinds of Jews, as I had been reading about the various 'tribe stories' which are important to people within ethno-religious nationalist groups.[39] My absorption through this combination of *ciné-trance* immersion and epistephilia caused me to miss Angeline's words when she (partly) explained their use of a rabbi for circumcising their boy children by saying ". . . . the White race is [sic] Israelites" (Interview: 2004).[40] While *capturing* everything that Angeline did or said with the camera, I did not filter this statement through my awareness, and in that sense I ingested all that she said.

A similar 'trance moment' occurs in a scene nearer the end of the film, when I am interviewing Angeline in her kitchen. I ask her whether her children will still be welcome in her home later in life if they do not share her beliefs, or if they wind up working for the government. She says,

> Yes . . . . Unless they marry a black person or somebody who's not white. . .I
> have a problem with that (Interview: 2005)

In that moment: I was eager to find out *why* she felt that way, as I was often surprised by the explanations Jay and Angeline provided for their beliefs (even when the explanations were religious, I sometimes found them refreshing, such as their disbelief in Hell). Perhaps there is actually some combination of *ciné-trance* and epistephilia, which causes the filmmaker to keep filming, and the subject to keep contributing to the documentary

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[39] A 17th century 'tribal belief' from the British Isles was "British Israelism" which held that the English were from a particular Israelite tribe which left the middle east and immigrated to Britain, and thus there were British people with a pure blood line connecting them to God's chosen people. This belief eventually became known in the USA as 'Christian Identity', and it seems to describe at least a part of Jay's belief matrix (Barkun: 1997: 4).
[40] Angeline's entire statement was "We feel like we're Israelites . . . . The White race is Israelites. It's a long story; We're not Jews . . ." (at which point I interrupted her) (Interview: 2004).

filmmaker—and to the camera whose attention offers the possibility of many consciousnesses more than that of the filmmaker.

In the next section I will discuss *Sherman's March* (1986) by Ross McElwee. *Sherman's March* is made from *between* 'the North' in Boston and McElwees's family home in the 'deep South'—and he negotiates this incommensurable position using some of the same performative devices I use, two of which I will discuss below: the doppelgänger and the (subverted) colloquial metaphor. Moreover, his film, like mine (and unlike Morris's) *could* be considered domestic ethnography, as it includes some of his family members and also seems to portray his 'culture'—albeit "in miniature" (Renov: 2004: 229). However, the film's devices, such as the doubling between McElwee and Sherman, offset sincerity and thus *sincere* confession, and mitigate autobiography, as well as helping to illustrate the difficulty of the domestic ethnographic designation—which may be as "boundary defying" (Renov: 2004: xii) as autobiography itself.

Part Two: Ross McElwee Becomes the Extreme Other

 "I both consider myself to be a Southerner and to no longer be a son of the South. In some sense the South is alien territory for me."
(McDonald: *Film Quarterly*: 1988)

As an American Southerner who became a Northern academic and filmmaker, McElwee demonstrates anxiety about the 'mixed company' of his North/South (not to mention European) audience; thus, McElwee and I have in common our alienated filmmaking position. In examining his film *Sherman's March* (1986) I was able to better reflect on the storytelling devices which both myself and McElwee use in negotiating our *between-ness*: the doppelgänger device and the colloquial metaphor. Putatively about a Civil War General, *Sherman's March* amounts to a critique of the enduring divisiveness of the American Civil War in the early 1860s, and the quasi morality-contest that persists between the Northern and Southern states—wherein each side proves itself more morally upright or 'innocent' by pointing to the

culpability of the other.[41] Meanwhile, my film also critiques US society, especially the misuse of religion to enforce inequality. There is also an (implied) critique of the corrupting effects of the mass media.

McElwee's one-man filmmaking excursion in *Sherman's March* (1986) takes in his sister, his father and stepmother, his high school art teacher, ex-girlfriends, and prospective girlfriends, often in their homes. Therefore, the film also makes an interesting test case for domestic ethnography, in which, according to Renov, the family relationship between filmmaker and filmed subjects yields intersubjectivity to the extent that the film is rendered as autobiographical of the filmmaker, and indeed autoethnographic of the culture (Renov: 2004: 229). Moreover, the term *ethnography* may seem appropriate for 'the South' as it is the *orient* of the United States: the place of danger, beauty, ignorance and religion that tried in 1861 to leave the United States rather than relinquish the right to use slave labour.[42] However, because McElwee left the South years before he made *Sherman's March* and settled in the Northeast, he needs to act as an apologist to both sides, while expecting neither side to share his understanding. The doubling of himself with General Sherman, and the exaggerated confession of which it is a part, can therefore be seen an *inappropriate other* strategy, which Trinh describes as "non-explicative non-totalizing strategies that suspend meaning" (Trinh in Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin: 1995: 218).

The strategies of colloquial metaphor and 'the doppelgänger', wherein McElwee doubles himself with the most hated figure of his home city, are encapsulated in the title of his film. By metaphorically comparing his filmmaking journey to the campaign of 'total war' on the South in 1865 known as 'Sherman's March to the sea' McElwee doubles himself with the Civil War general who, in implementing this annihilating strategy, destroyed McElwee's birthplace of Charlotte, South Carolina. Sharon Roseman writes that colloquial metaphors "seem to develop out of the concerns of those interviewed and filmed" (1991: 517) and are recommended in ethnographies "in lieu of those developed out of academic concerns"

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[41] The historian C. Van Woodward describes a 'burden of Southern history', wherein the Southerner is outside the "legend of American innocence" because of the inescapable awareness of a slave-holding past which was only ended forcibly from the outside (Woodward 1960: 19).

[42] I am also from 'the South': but while McElwee is from the old Southern city of Charlotte, South Carolina, I am from Northern Mississippi, so close to Memphis, Tennessee that it is practically a suburb of Memphis. Where I grew up, obsession with the Civil War did not exist in the way it is portrayed in Charlotte, though—especially as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis—racial tensions did.

(1991: 518).[43] In the case of McElwee's film, his subjects did seem to be concerned with the Civil War and the South's reputation in contrast to Northern states. However there certainly is something clever if not absolutely "academic" (Roseman: 1991: 518) about the way McElwee stretches the Civil War metaphor.

(Auto/biographical) *Unfinalizing* through Performance

Regarding McElwee's literary turn in *Sherman's March,* Lucy Fischer writes that the film, "uncovers a repressed aspect of the historian's stance—a penchant for fiction" (in Grant and Sloniowski: 1998: 342). I would add that McElwee's voiceover shows a penchant for melodrama through overstatement. This style allows him to *perform* confession—thereby avoiding *sincere* confession of guilt as a representative of 'the South'. Moreover, this device allows him to construct an identity which is not entirely reliant on his status as a 'Southerner', or even an American: the feeling of loneliness which he expresses throughout the film is something with which many people can identify. Furthermore, the doppelgänger device seems to work both ways for McElwee: by (falsely) taking on the guilt of the South's destroyer General Sherman, he becomes a martyr, which makes his self-obsessed neurosis more forgivable. It is as if McElwee does not mind being thought guilty, as long as he gets to decide of what he is guilty; for instance, he accepts responsibility for his own neurosis but not for the entire region's racism. By performing, he maintains authorship, which would be undermined by straight confession. Indeed, between his metaphors, his personal voiceover, and his montage, McElwee sometimes seems (to me) to direct viewer attention like an illusionist in a thrust theatre.

In the following example, McElwee's voiced-over emphasis on his own neurosis is contrasted with his understatement of the link between race and religion in the South (something which causes Southerners to feel guilty). McElwee films Civil War ruins, and refers to the tragic conflagration that occurred there; then he suddenly, melodramatically shifts focus to his alienated and fragmented inner state personally and as a filmmaker—and irrelative to the Civil War. He confesses that a sublime drive motivates his filmmaking rather than a rational purpose.

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[43] Roseman is following Fernandez's recommendation specifically (Roseman: 1991: 518).

> The caskets in the church burial crypts superheated and exploded in the fire. It seems like I'm filming my life in order to have a life to film, like some primitive organism that somehow nourishes itself by devouring itself, growing as it diminishes. (. . .) I'm beginning to lose touch with where I am in all of this. It's a little like looking into a mirror and trying to see what you look like when you're not really looking at your own reflection. Anyway, I decide to resume following Sherman's route through South Carolina.
> (*Sherman's March* Transcript: 1985)

This performative confession of his own instability is a subversion of the narrative one might expect: surely a Southern filmmaker, looking at Civil War ruins and recounting the destruction, should not begin a self-pitying monologue.[44] Meanwhile, as viewers are tuned to hear McElwee's next wry comment, his montage is acknowledging dirty facts about the South without drama or even remark. For instance, McElwee cuts from a scene showing a white and a black female child playing dolls, to a scene in which a wooden cross is being erected at an outdoor church sermon by a fundamentalist preacher. Though the cross is being erected by deacons, and the preacher is speaking of the 'end times' rather than the 'lost tribes' (or racism) the wooden cross evokes the Ku Klux Klan, and it is not a stretch to imagine the preacher intoning a speech full of racial hatred.

During another scene, McElwee de-emphasizes an ignorant and arrogant (and a bit intoxicated) statement by a blonde woman who—after a conversation about nuclear war worries—claims that the South was not wrong during the Civil War *except* that slavery should not have been enforced but rather should have been a "right" (*Sherman's March*, 1986). She says, "if you want to be a slave, be a slave, if not, fine" (*ibid*). She then claims that if the Civil War happened again, the South would win because "all the industry is moving South" (*ibid*). McElwee gently undermines her second claim by cutting from her scene, to a costume shop from which McElwee is renting a Rebel soldier's uniform for a Civil War re-enactment party—a symbol of stagnation rather than regeneration.

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[44] From the subtitle to the film, *A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love in the South During an Era of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation* (1986), McElwee was also pointing to the nuclear war threat, and perhaps chastising those Southerners who would ignore ongoing nuclear weapons proliferation whilst engaging in self-pity over defeat in the Civil War more than one hundred and fifty years ago.

If McElwee had made some wry comment on the blonde woman's defiance, denial, and insensitivity about slavery he may have been seen by some Southerners as rubbing salt in old wounds. However, *not commenting* risks seeming dishonest to Northerners and other outsiders. Meanwhile by comparing himself with William Sherman, 'the South's worst enemy' [45] McElwee blocks in advance any accusations by Southerners who could, for example, cry disrespect for the Civil War dead, by going one step further than their blame could and admitting to personal responsibility for the death and destruction one hundred and fifty years ago (in 1864). While I can *personally* identify with, and find humour in, McElwee's distracting 'outsiders' from shameful Southern faults while teasing 'insiders' about manipulating the past to preserve their illusions, McElwee is unlikely to garner fans among those interested in Sherman's March as an unambiguous historical event. However, I, like McElwee am "both a deceptive insider and a deceptive outsider" (Trinh in Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin: 1995: 218). From my cross-national context, I understand that there are multiple "regimes of truth" and that no matter how careful one is, being on the wrong side of a regime border will cause one to offend (Trinh in Nichols: 1994: 73).

While Renov's domestic ethnography suggests filmmakers and subjects become doubles of a sort with the "interpenetration of subject/object identities" (Renov: 2004: 218), McElwee's explicit doubling of himself with the dead Civil War General is absurd, and I think it can be seen as a commentary on the reductive connection between a person and his or her culture. The double device helps to open up a space of ambiguity and play between the usual representations of historically polarised sides: industrialised/academic/abolitionist North and agricultural/ religious/slaveholding South. As McElwee compares himself to "some primitive organism that somehow nourishes itself by devouring itself, growing as it diminishes. (. . .)" (*Sherman's March* Transcript 1985) it may be that the "comically ironic" device (McDonald: 1988) of the doubling with Sherman is the space into which McElwee can grow as a filmmaker/artist. Moreover, within my cross-national context, wherein I may be seen as more representative of my culture than is the case, I think I understand McElwee's sentiment about "looking into a mirror and trying to see what you look like when you're not really looking at your own reflection" (*Sherman's March* Transcript 1985).

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[45] From their red beards to their insomnia and shared penchant for making portraits of Southerners, McElwee likens himself to the Civil War General, William Tecumseh Sherman.

I also use a subverted colloquial metaphor for my film's title. *U Know Them By Their Fruit* is an adapted Bible verse, which I selected as a title early in the filming process, when Jay answered my question of whether George W. Bush was a sincere Christian by saying, "You know them by their fruit"—with Bush's 'fruit' being imperialism and warmongering.[46] I liked this summation of G.W. Bush's hypocrisy, especially coming from a Christian—many of whom supported G.W. Bush because of his claim to not only believe in God but to be guided by Him in governing (Harris: *The Observer*: 2003). Moreover, the title seemed appropriate because scriptural interpretation underpins Jay's belief system, as well as that of his parents and many other devout Christians in the USA.

Moreover, another advantage of this adapted Bible verse was its scope for meaning: so I, like McElwee, broadened my "colloquial metaphor" (Roseman: 1991: 518) allowing it to take on several meanings or senses. In the first sense, the device is used in Jay's favour, as it represents a recommendation to viewers that they should suspend judgement of Jay—even on the issue of his children. Ultimately, Jay will be remembered in part by how his children turn out as adults, and even though many people would disapprove of how they are being raised, other children are questionably raised also, and Jay's children have the *potential* to turn out okay, especially given his good qualities, which may outlast his ideological stance. The first meaning of the verse, therefore, may serve to warn 'outsiders' of judging the situation too quickly and too thoroughly.[47] On the other hand, the verse undermines Jay's claims, serving as a riposte to his argument that white males deserve to be at the top of all hierarchies: after all, it may be said that US corruption and warmongering are the 'fruit' of white male power.

 However, the verse has wider scope as well, as it also (to my mind) responds to those Britons who disavow any identification whatsoever between themselves and Americans, even though Britain is 'Mother country' to the USA—and therefore in some aspects, on some level (I suggest) Britain may be better understood by looking at the USA. Moreover, my adapted Bible verse challenges the complacency of an American society, which is often considered to be Christian (and therefore highly moral), but has not truly faced as a country

[46] Jay says 'You know them by their Fruit', but the verse in the King James version of the Bible I have used reads: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew, Chapter 7, verse 20).
[47] Meanwhile, I also highlight the risk to the children of Jay and Angeline's beliefs about racial mixing in the scene where Jay's youngest daughter is seen with her young mixed-race cousin, Avian, kissing: I use a freeze frame to emphasize the divisive ideas which are possibly coming to bear on the children.

historical 'sins' such as the Native American genocide and African slavery. Furthermore, the title will beckon to Christians, who would expect confirmation of their beliefs, but will only find that my film holds Christianity partly to blame for racism and sexism. In this way, my title is "deceptive"—as McElwee's title is also, as it beckons to those interested in Civil War history but does not deliver a typical Historical documentary (Trinh in Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin: 1995: 218). Additionally, my film title may be seen as a call to all viewers, that they should examine the results of their own actions (or non-action) before stereotyping others and then rejecting communication with them: in this way, perhaps some common ground could be found. Finally, the adapted verse applies to me as a filmmaker, and acknowledges my feeling of responsibility about the outcome of the film's creation. By doubling myself with Jay, I highlight that responsibility.

Explicit signalling of the double device occurs primarily at the beginning and the end of my film. At the beginning, split screens show my cousin and myself, side by side but separate, each sitting in front of American flags, each looking uncomfortable in that scenery and by extension with our national identity. Meanwhile, the doppelgänger device helps me visually to 'stand beside' Jay as an outsider but excuses me from claiming explicit identification with him. This is appropriate, as I do identify with him, but not unambiguously. Performing allows me to ambiguitize and evade earnest confession of my feelings as a filmmaker—a filmmaker with a particular 'brand' of identity, which will look different according to the angle or location from which it is seen. It allows me to deliver my critique of the national conscience and to question the status quo without trusting that audiences will be diplomatic, but also without the *need* for their acceptance or approval.

In the next chapter I will write more about how my use of the doppelgänger device is intertwined with ethics, especially as the relationship between myself and Jay changed over the time I was filming and editing. I will also write about how studying the history of the doppelgänger, including psychoanalytic analysis of its use in *fin de siècle* literature, helped me find deeper meanings in my film and hone the film's thematic construction (for instance it led me to the Bible verses I used as voiceover). I will also discuss how far I think the performative strategies I have employed (such as the doppelgänger device) served their purpose in unfinalizing subjects, as well as where I believe they failed, sometimes as a result of the inevitable traps of linguistic and visual tropes.

Chapter Three

Theory guides practice in *U Know Them By Their Fruit*

Introduction:

This Chapter focuses on the fusion of theory and practice in my film, *U Know Them By Their Fruit* (2013). Here I will reflect on how the critical concepts I have employed influenced the final shape of the film—taking into consideration the ethical, formal, and political issues at stake. In part one (of two) in this chapter, I will focus on the ethics of the encounter between myself and my main documentary subject, Jay. Here I will deploy the ethical theory of Emmanuel Levinas in a discussion of how my portrayal of my cousin changed over time, as I discovered his retrograde beliefs—some of which had female liberty as their main target (Castells: 1997: 136).[48] I will then consider my use of the doppelgänger device to represent the perplexing intersubjectivity between me and Jay— especially given domestic ethnography's approximation of Jay as my "other self" (Renov: 2004: 216). I will then focus on how literary and psychoanalytic theory of the doppelgänger enriched my practice: it served as a form of reflection that had wide ranging effects on the 'voice' of the film, such as my use of Biblical narration, and the addition of ancestral and nonhuman phantom narrators.[49]

In part two I evaluate how far my cousin and others in the film are rendered unfinalizable, and what the mechanisms for finalization are in my film—some of which are of my own making and some beyond my control. I will briefly consider the ethics of filming family and the finalizing effects of the *domestic ethnography* designation in a cross-national context. Moreover I will reflect on how my 'opposition' to my cousin as a female filmmaker could contribute to his finalization (and mine) despite my efforts to the contrary. I will then point to some unintended finalization resulting from the tropes of language as well as visual signs. Finally I will consider the role of viewer subjectivity and identification.

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[48] In *The Power of Identity*, Manuel Castells writes: "the challenge to patriarchalism is one of the most powerful factors presently inducing fundamentalist movements aimed at restoring the patriarchal order . . ." (Castells: 1997: 136).

[49] Here I am referring to my representations and evocations of the long-dead or inanimate, however, "phantom" is also a psychoanalytic idea created by Abraham and Torok, explained by Esther Rashkin (here in relation to the doppelgänger in Henry James's 'Jolly Corner') as, "Silent and integral transmission of a secret through successive generations of a family" (Rashkin: 1992: 143). I will revisit the psychoanalytic theory of the phantom as it relates to my use of the doppelgänger, later in this chapter.

Part One: The Change—*Caressed➔Annihilated➔* 'Evil-twinned'

This section will trace the evolution of my feelings about Jay and the corresponding visible change in my construction of him: in short (and using Levinas's terms) I *caressed* him with my camera at first, then I *annihilated* him with Historical facts and categories (Levinas: 1987:89, Terreblanche: 2008: 887) before resolving the complexity and rendering him as my 'evil twin' or doppelgänger. I began as an open-minded filmmaker: my ethical attitude in the beginning, to use Levinas's terms, was one of *caressing* my subject: later I *annihilated* him with Historical labels such as 'adherent of the American far right' (*ibid*). However, my *annihilation* of him caused me remorse and confusion, especially as it went against my intent of unfinalizing. Eventually I resorted to an "expressive technique" which helped me out of my representational quandary and also served as a (performative) storytelling device to help me manage what "neither science or reason (could) resolve" (Nichols: 2001: 134): the doppelgänger. However, I progressed through many stages of thinking, feeling, reading and drafting the film before I reached this state of overwhelmment and turned to this somewhat irrational device.[50]

When I first filmed Jay, I listened and filmed with "wonder", as Luce Irigaray interpreted Decartes's use of the term:

> a nonjudgmental response to something unfamiliar to express our ideal
> response to the difference of the other
> (Descartes 1649/1989; in La Caze 2008: 121).

In the first interviews with Jay, I wanted to counteract the family gossip, which, like History, *totalized* Jay by categorizing him (Levinas: 1961: 56).[51] When I finally filmed him, my camera's gaze was one of attention without expectation, akin to the touch Levinas termed *caress*—an escape from the totalizing "threat of history" (Terreblanche: 2008: 888):

> The caress does not know what it seeks ... The caress is the anticipation of this
> pure future [*avenir*], without content. (Levinas: 1987:89)

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[50] The doppelgänger is considered a *sublime* device, and one type of the sublime according to Kant was the "mathematical sublime—arising out of sheer cognitive exhaustion (. . .) with no hope of bringing a long series or a vast scattering under some sort of conceptual unity" (Hertz: 1985: 40). I relate this idea to my feeling of overwhelmment, as I tried to reconcile the various ways in which intersubjectivity could be expressed in my film.

[51] One of 'The Mississippi Aunts' says that Jay's wife feels unwell because "she's married to a psycho that's running from the Government": this is humorous, but also illustrates the ease with which people 'on the fringe' can be categorized, and how reductive these categories can be (Interview: 2004).

The scenes in which the caressing treatment can be seen come from our earliest interviews at Jay's former home in Bakersfield, Arkansas (for the most part). While he presented his beliefs—about our natural rights to travel, marry and labour (tax-free)—I followed his every gesture and word with my camera, and did not contradict him. Similarly, when he told the story of escaping possible confiscation of his gold and silver coins by the IRS, I followed him with *wonder* and appreciation, zooming in closer when it seemed he wanted the viewer's closer attention. In the film, after we hear him tell of the IRS's Criminal Investigation unit being called on him, we hear my voice from behind the camera defending him explicitly. Sounding slightly outraged, I say, "Criminal? So they've already labelled you as a criminal?" (Interview: 2004).

Caress is a touch-with-wonder, which, in Levinas's thought, recognizes a person's *infinity* and avoids *totalizing* him or her: Levinas writes that the caress is important because it produces a *child* which adds an ever-changing or *infinite* dimension to the parent (Levinas: 1961: 268). However, the caressing is also important in itself, because it incorporates *wonder* and thus allows people to continue "coming into being" (De Man; 1979: 922). On first hearing about Jay's beliefs and how they were being interpreted by 'the Mississippi Aunts', I was curious to discover the complexity lying beneath the totalizing labels like 'anti-American'. I also found totalizing the implied comparisons to violent 'right wing nuts' in recent American history. For example when one of 'the Mississippi Aunts' says "He's starting his own colony, ok?" (Interview: 2004) I detect an allusion to David Koresh, who claimed to be the Son of God and presided over a colony destroyed in Waco, Texas in 1993. Soon, however, I was making my own damning comparisons to 'right wing nuts' further back in American history, such as the White Citizens' Council (whose agenda is self-explanatory), and the reverend Billy Sunday, proponent of "muscular Christianity" (Kazin: 1995: 110) a movement that ordained the suppression of women through strict policing of gender roles (Messner: 2000: 24-25).

It was Jay's views of African Americans and Women, of which I learned during my third or fourth set of interviews with him, that triggered my change in attitude. Moreover, as my 'personal' attitude changed, I was also developing my research into the History of the 'American Right', with a British scholar of American Studies in England, and discovering

categories to explain Jay's unusual religious beliefs.[52] My historical research coincided with the point at which I begin to challenge Jay consistently about equality between the sexes. As my 'knowledge' about my cousin grew, my camera work became less 'following' and more 'pinning down' as can be observed by the footage of Jay sitting against a wall in front of an American flag being questioned harshly by me.

By the time of these (later) interviews, I was armed with History, and had brought a list of questions whose answers I already 'knew'. Once our differences were out in the open, it was difficult to recapture any *wonder*. An example of this change occurs thirty-seven minutes into the film, when I make a cut from 'gentle Jay' to 'defiant Jay' to emphasize the transition from *wonder* to *annihilation*. Before this cut, Jay is standing in his barn in Bakersfield, Arkansas: he says that "historically" only white males could be citizens, and I challenge him softly on his exclusion of women and African American people, after which he seems vulnerable and says he "shouldn't say that" about women, because he has "worked with some women, and they were better than the men. . .a lot better" (Interview: 2004). Here I insert a freeze-frame of him in 'gentle mode', before cutting to a scene in which he sits before the American flag, looking defensive as I challenge him rigorously on his views about women's place in society and his prejudicial beliefs generally— eliciting from him (perhaps) the most damning statements in the film:

> "Originally the nation was . . . it was a *racist* nation. And when I say that,
> Whites could only be citizens: that's all that could be citizens, Whites. Was that
> right? Was that wrong? I don't *care* about all that!" (Interview: 2005)

I then challenge him again, on his dismissal of right and wrong, and of all History apart from the moment of the original US Constitution: I think these arguments are fair, but they are markedly tougher than my earlier objections to his views.[53] However, as I watched the raw footage and tried editing it into sequences, I felt guilty about my *annihilation* of him, especially the more I considered his risk in participating in the film. Adding to my discomfort with representing him was my collaboration with the British scholar of American Studies, from whose perspective

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[52] This research journey began with the book *Them* by Jon Ronson and the 1994, seminal article 'The Problem of American Conservatism' by Alan Brinkley. The Brinkley article describes "a problem of historical scholarship" wherein it has been difficult to properly "place" the American Right, "it's intellectual traditions and its social and political movements" (Brinkley: 1998: 278). *Them* is cited in this Thesis.

[53] This toughness could also be attributed to a sated epistephilia: by this time, I had heard his arguments many times. During earlier recordings I would have felt that I could not interrupt him without loosing valuable footage of him explaining his beliefs.

(it seemed to me) Jay was neatly categorizable as an-adherent-of-the-American-far right, and thus *annihilated* again. According to the European scholar of American Studies, Pierre Guerlain, "foreign Americanists" cannot help seeing the USA through their native "national and cultural glasses" (1999: 33-52). This echoes the work by Kristeva and Billig pointing to our identity-need to feel superior to others, and the way national identity specifically helps serve that need (Caputi: 1996: 692- 683; Billig: 1995: 65). Moreover, when I described my film project to people in Britain, many responded with shock that Jay and I could be from the same family, yet so different politically: it was (almost) as if we were seen as *total opposites* and more complexity was not possible. [54]

Working in a Trance

I was finding it difficult to conceptualize the auto/biographical relationship between myself and my cousin for the film in a way that would 1) take into consideration both US and UK audiences 2) interrogate the designation of family film as domestic ethnography 3) problematise family film as autobiography and 4) problematise family film as quasi-autoethnography. From my strained perspective, even the language of domestic ethnography seemed to objectify: Jay and I would be "mirrors or foils" of each other (Renov: 2004: 216). I felt that in my UK context, the domestic ethnographic would be enlarged to national size, and we would be seen as something like 'two sides of America'. Therefore, I began to think of the 'evil twin' or 'double' as a way of parodying my situation: we would be one *good* American and one *bad* one—or one Anglicized one and one un-tempered American one.

Meanwhile there *were* some similarities between us: we were both rebels within the context of our family because we were both cynical about mainstream patriotism; we both felt incarcerated in our national identities in one way or another; we both found the American military machine brutal; we both felt dehumanized by a world without privacy. The

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[54] Around this time I was thinking about lack of complexity in relation to the idea of the 'primitive', and found a discussion by Egan in which she cites the work of Claude Levi-Strauss on "primitive comprehension" (1984: 69). He refers to writers of children's stories, and how the "primitive or childlike mind makes sense of experience by conceptualizing things in terms of polar opposites" (Levi-Strauss in Egan *ibid*). While I would never impute Britons with basic conceptualizing, it has seemed to me that, since the US stereotype causes people to think about Americans *as* primitive, 'primitive limits' are somehow set on conceptualizations *of* Americans.

representational pitfalls seemed to accumulate, especially considering the 'mixed company'
of various audiences to whom I would address my film: it would be difficult to
communicate with a British audience, an American audience, and the audience of my large
family all at once. Meanwhile I was haunted by the possibility of a mad and violent neo-
Nazi audience out there somewhere, who would agree with Jay in the wrong ways, and
perhaps hijack my film for the far right. It seemed there was more responsibility than I
could (reasonably) bear.[55] Rouch's 'explanation' of the intersubjective relationship between
subject and filmmaker made more sense all the time. Rouch claimed that in his *ciné-trance* he
actually *became possessed* with the African priests whose rituals he filmed, and I felt I
understood his point. I liked the vulnerability of it, as he admitted that he could not help
what was happening: something, someone, possessed him.

Complicating the 'trance theory' however, is the fact that I am sometimes truly implicated
in Jay and Angeline's beliefs, because in some respects they resemble my own feelings
about the world, even before I met them. However, it's open to questioning whether my
sympathy with them about privacy issues implicates me in views with which I disagree. An
illustration of my affinity with them comes after the Wal-Mart scene (just past the half-way
mark of the film), when Angeline is telling me that she did not give her actual date of birth
to the policeman who took our information. I feel implicated first of all because she lied to
the police as I stood there. Also I am implicated because I not only sympathize with her, I
laugh wholeheartedly when she gives her justification for withholding her birth date. Our
conversation goes as follows:

> Angeline: "I don't *know* when my birthday is anyway: do you remember the day
> you were *born*?"
> Me: "I don't remember."
> Angeline: "I mean, you *think* you know because your parents tell you, but what
> if they're wrong?"
> Me: "I know."
> Angeline: "My Mom was young and stupid, she could have got it wrong; I
> mean, I'm sure she didn't get the year wrong, but it could have been the day
> after, or the day before."
> Me: Mmm.
> Angeline: "So don't ask me for *my* birth date, because I really don't know."
> Me: (wholehearted laughter)

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[55] I am thinking again here of Kant's "mathematical sublime" as described by Neil Hertz: "arising out of
sheer cognitive exhaustion (. . .) with no hope of bringing a long series or a vast scattering under some sort of
conceptual unity" (Hertz: 1985: 40). Hertz relates this feeling to the artist's "turn" to using a device which
somehow highlights contrast in his or her work—as I did with the doppelgänger device, discussed further in
the next section.

I enjoyed being a part of this moment with Angeline not only because her justification was (to me) hilarious in its boldness, but also because I am interested in the maintenance of privacy; moreover, I thought she provided a good argument against being forced to use one's date of birth as identification. Furthermore, she seemed unafraid of putting it forward: since I also agree with Jay and Angeline that even democratic governments can be oppressive (especially in their ties to business, as demonstrated by the fact that our information was taken by police simply because we filmed inside a Wal-Mart), I found this moment liberating from such feelings of oppression. However, the problem is that this moment cannot be separated from other beliefs about racism and sexism that encapsulate their foundational beliefs as I understand them, so the level of my implication overall is uncertain. In this moment the problematical issues were obscured from my mind, as I was caught up in the moment.

The Perfect Doppelgänger

In further reference to the radical intersubjectivity underway in the film, I can sometimes be seen (or heard) to act more like Jay and less like myself, as when, during an interview with Jay's Mother (about 30 minutes into the film), she contrasts Jay's bad behaviour now when he does not pay his tax, with the good behaviour of his childhood when he went to church all the time. In defence of him, I begin quoting Bible verses—highly unusual for me—which I had heard from Jay during our interviews. Reading about Rouch's *ciné-trance* validated my feeling that these moments were somehow beyond the purely rational, and gave me the confidence to figure Jay and myself as 'doubles' or doppelgängers. I found relief in thinking of our similarity in this way—which is more literal but less serious (and thus more flexible) than the description of our intersubjectivity in domestic ethnography—which would have us as similar due to family ties (and by extension, nationality). I have come to connect this un-seriousness with *performativity*, which helpfully ambiguitizes and is thus more appropriate for a mixed audience. My use of the doppelgänger is intended partially as a pre-emptive riposte to a mixed audience, a kind of exaggerated *confession* of the worst, a strategy that protects the filmmaker from being assumed guilty without any agency. Therefore, this performative device is a statement of independent authorship.

Furthermore, the 'double' or doppelgänger device seemed to present an amelioration of the *annihilation* I had inflicted on Jay, by giving me an excuse to take some of the spotlight from him: instead of making a film simply about my cousin Jay and his radical views, I would be implicating myself. For one thing, in order to present Jay and myself as 'doubles', I would want to *figure* myself in the film. I thought this would please Jay, as some of his initial fears about participating were of being exposed to the US Government. By appearing with him in the film, I would share some of the responsibility by appearing as more of an ally in his representation. [56]

As I studied the doppelgänger device, I was amazed to find how appropriate it seemed: I learned that it had been a favorite among expatriate writers who are "suspended between languages and cultures" (Coates: 1988: 2).[57] Moreover, it is relevant to the era of 'war on terror' as the device is known as being popular "during or just after major upheavals of society" (Rank: 1989: xix). In psychoanalysis, seeing one's double was a symptom of self-alienation and self-fragmentation (Rank: 1989: 7, 12) and it certainly helped me illustrate my self-alienation due to a national stereotype. Furthermore, Freud—who saw the double as a neurotic symptom of alienation and repression—noticed that whenever a female patient saw her double, she saw this 'other self' as male (Webber: 1996: 334)—and my 'double' was also male.

Studying the doppelgänger device helped me to cope, through absurd humour, with my feeling of being 'reduced' not only to a stereotype of my country of origin but also to my huge, sprawling family. Moreover, it helped me to cope with the feeling that my film was going to be categorizable as, or reducible to, 'a family film', with other aspects of it possibly being ignored or dismissed.[58] Moreover, studying the doppelgänger device in depth led me to discover what I now consider to be a core truth about the film (discussed in the next section) which should enhance its relevance to US and UK viewers. Thus, the

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[56] Once Jay told me that he reckoned I would edit myself entirely out of the film. I think he meant it was understandable for me to hide from any association with him, because he thought he was known as 'anti-Government', and therefore a target for some kind of surveillance, prosecution, or other punishment for political dissidence.

[57] The Anglo-American Henry James wrote the short story "Jolly Corner" in which the protagonist is haunted by a double. Esther Rankin writes about the double in James's story as representing what the protagonist might have been had he stayed in the family home he inherited instead of living in Europe (Rashkin: 1992: 93).

[58] An example of this dynamic (or me) is Su Friedrich's *Ties That Bind* (1984), which is by a Daughter filmmaker about her Mother, filmed inside what seems to be her Mother's home. Therefore, Friedrich's *The Ties That Bind* could be described as a domestic ethnography even though it deals with the most significant events in the 20th Century: the rise of Hitler and the legacy of genocide left for the Jews, the Germans, Europe, and ultimately everyone in the world.

doppelgänger became a theme, which influenced both my montage and my voiceover. Furthermore—in a rewarding meeting of theory and practice—it inspired me to add ancestral and Biblical narrators to the story, via the theory of the "false heir" (Rashkin: 1992: 143).

Theory and Practice: The False Heir

The aspect of my research into the 'double' which was most fruitful for the shape, style and content of the film was the discovery that its appearance in literature sometimes signals a "family secret" from a previous generation, passed down or "transmitted" to a person who does not realize they have received this secret, but still bears the burden of it (Rashkin: 1992: 143). Rashkin writes of "encrypted narrative(s)" in doppelgänger stories, and these two ideas led me to ponder again an encrypted narrative in my film, which I had avoided, hesitating to offer it up plainly: the fact that Jay has a mixed-race niece, his sister's daughter, for whom, in Oak Grove Missouri, he probably suffered a traumatic fear of being outcast. I never asked Jay about this, though his mixed-race niece, Tara, does appear in the film with her daughter, Avian, in the Thanksgiving Dinner segment (which I consider to be the climax of the film). Even though the 'secret' of Jay's mixed race niece is not a secret to him, or from another generation, I found it compelling as an idea connected to doppelgänger narratives.

A broader, but closely connected, encrypted narrative then came to my attention, through Rashkin's formulation that the 'family secret' in doppelgänger stories will often be an "illegitimate heir" (Rashkin: 1992: 159). To my mind, there is a *false heir* at the heart of this story: those who colonized America and committed genocide against native Americans—and by extension the Christianity they brought with them, whose Bible verses are used by ethno-religious nationalist groups to designate white people as 'chosen' (and men as superior). Though I do not offer this critique explicitly in the film, I do allude to it several times—for instance, at the beginning and the end of the film I show the 'buffalo nickel' representing the absent Native Americans. I also allude to the *false heir* in other areas of my montage, and especially in my voiceover, in which I recite part of the Biblical story of Jacob and Esau, which concerns a stolen birthright. Below I describe some of the elements and moments in the film that grew out of my use of the 'evil twin'/doppelgänger concept. Using montage, voiceover, and an experimental video transition, respectively, I refer to the

missing Native Americans, the continuing influence of Biblical blessings/non-blessings, and the divided self which the doppelgänger can also represent (Webber: 1996: 1).

Voiceover Narration

I wanted to forego expository voiceover because, among other reasons, I felt that using descriptive words would be finalizing of the people and issues being described. Furthermore, I wanted to avoid giving a British audience a(nother) American-voiced-over film, as I felt this could be off-putting. Finally, I had tried to 'narrate' using montage, and thought I could do so without voiced narration. However, in the end I decided to read some verses from a Bible story that Angeline mentioned in relation to white people being "chosen" (Interview: 2004). This Bible story from Genesis is about twins, and involves a false heir: Angeline had told me during an interview that "God chose Jacob" to bless (Interview: 2004), because he loved him over his twin brother, Esau (whom Angeline told me God "hated").

When I was exploring the idea of using the Jacob/Esau story as voiceover, I read the Biblical text for myself, and saw that the younger twin, Jacob, is described as "smooth" and apparently readable as white, while the elder twin Esau is "hairy" and "red all over" and apparently readable as non-white (Genesis: chapter 27 verse 11). Also I found that in the actual text, Jacob effectively steals the elder brother Esau's birthright, by placing goatskins on his arms so that he will seem hairy to the blind father Abraham who, on his deathbed, blesses Jacob by mistake (Genesis, chapter 27 verses 16-30). Initially, I did not know that I was hearing a misinterpretation of the story from Angeline, but once I read it myself, I realized that this story of loss of entitlement resonated in relation not only to Native Americans but also to African Americans and even Women.

In the following example of the Bible-verse voiceover, I use the verses from the Jacob and Esau story to represent my disenfranchisement as a woman in Christianity, and I hope that the disenfranchisement of Native Americans and African Americans is also *echoed* or evoked. In this scene, Jay's father, a Protestant 'Bible Church' preacher, has just told me about how Woman caused the Fall of Mankind—without mentioning women but by saying "Man listened to *somebody* besides God. . . .". Less than a second after the last word of his story, while he is still smiling at my camera, my voiceover begins, reading the verse from

Esau, who, at this point in the Biblical story, has just found out that his father blessed Jacob by mistake:

> And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said, "Bless me. Bless *even me also*, oh my father." (Genesis chapter 27 verse 34)

Presented in this context, I mean for Esau to represent all those *not blessed* in Christianity. Though I read these verses with my own voice, it is not made completely clear in the film that the voice is mine.[59] However, I think that disembodiment in the voiceover is a good thing: firstly because these words are not written by me; secondly, because the verses can then be more easily shared around by other narrators—such as the Native American ancestors (through the 'buffalo nickel') and Jacob himself (through the goat) both of whose speech will be discussed in the next two sections.

Speaking Goat

I happened to have taken some close-up footage of a goat on Jay's former property in Arkansas, and this footage appears while I read the words of Jacob in the Bible story, describing his moment of doubt before he tricks his father (by wearing goat skins) and steals his brother Esau's blessing. The 'speaking goat' along with the chapter title 'Infiltration' introduces the second interview with Jay, in which he explains what he sees as his own loss of entitlement: according to Jay, an infiltration occurred of the nascent American Government by the English, who could not accept having lost America as a colony (he says that another infiltration occurred when African Americans were enfranchised). As we see the goat's face and eyes in slow motion, my voiceover reads a verse in which Jacob expresses doubt over stealing his brother's birthright:

> "Behold, Esau my Brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. My father will feel me and I shall seem to him as a deceiver" (Genesis: chapter 27 verse 11-12)

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[59] I consider the voice to be disembodied even though viewers hear me reading out the first part of this Bible story in voiceover at the beginning of the film, while I am seen onscreen. Moreover, viewers may connect the voiceover to me after my voice-to-camera 'diary' moment, following the Wal-Mart scene.

For me, this part of the film, with its reference to the mistake in entitlement, represents the Biblically-justified disenfranchisement of Women, non-whites including Native Americans and even non-human creatures—whose given role according to some Christians, is primarily as food for Man.[60] The next section describes how I take Jay's own words (rather than Biblical verses) and use them on behalf of the Native Americans, whom I represent using a 'buffalo nickel', a US coin worth five cents which has a Native American brave on one side and a buffalo on the other.

Speaking Indian Brave

The 'buffalo nickel' has appeared only once in the film so far—during the pre-title sequence (where it links the protest footage to the split screen of Jay and me in front of US flags). The second appearance of the coin occurs near the end of the film, just after the penultimate 'flag interview': this interview is followed by a montage-with-music segment which ends in silence and black leader, before the 'buffalo nickel' appears in close-up. Perched on the end of a finger and showing the face of the Native American Brave, the nickel looks (to me) like a finger puppet of the Native American. When Jay begins speaking off-screen, his words are attributable to the Native American perspective. Thus, Jay/ the Brave says,

> This one will knock your socks off, ok? There's nothing that limits sovereign
> citizens from having an election. So this year. . . .
> (Jay Interview 2004)

Then Jay appears onscreen and announces that he has been elected as the 'real' Governor of Missouri. However, because Jay has referred to the issue of sovereignty while viewers were shown the 'buffalo nickel' portraying or evoking the Native Americans—whose sovereignty and even lives were dismissed by Christians—a contradiction of Jay's stance is highlighted: that his proclaimed inheritance by white people of a large part of North America can be seen as a false inheritance or stolen birthright. Though some viewers may not understand that the 'buffalo nickel' is used

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[60] Some Christians use the following Bible verse to justify 'dominion' over nature, culture and government: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26: King James Version). For more on Christian Dominionism see Chip Berlet, Political Research Associates, online at PublicEye.org.

as a means of alluding to the Native Americans' loss of sovereignty (and life) I think
Native American viewers should detect it. The next scene described uses montage
without voiceover to refer to Jay's split perspective.

Jay's Visual Division

Despite Jay's stated belief in white people being the true inheritors of the USA, the Native
American genocide is a historical fact over which he is clearly at odds (in contrast to
seeming merely embarrassed about America's slaveholding past). The doppelgänger device
inspired me to portray his struggle as literal *dividedness*. During the Thanksgiving lunch
scene the Native American genocide is evoked when an argument occurs between Jay and
his brother-in-law, in which Jay is skilfully challenged on his view that the US Government
does not allow freedom to its citizens. When the argument turns to hunting licenses, Jay's
brother-in-law raises the issue of the near extinction of the buffalo, against Jay's view that
hunting should be an unregulated right. The allusion to the Native American genocide
causes Jay to lean back and become uncharacteristically quiet and reflective. For this
moment, I made a cut in the video and added a very slow fade transition with a freeze
frame at the end so that we may see his 'split consciousness' as he appears imprinted twice
on the screen. In my view, portraying Jay as 'being of two minds' highlights his potential to
second-guess his own views. It may also help undermine his claimed certainty in the justice
of white supremacy. As his brother-in-law's argument has made an impact on Jay,
highlighting this moment is also meant to highlight his humanity through his apparent
sorrow over the lost buffalo (and by extension the Native Americans) thereby bringing into
question his other harsh beliefs. The next section will continue considering the extent of
Jay's finalization, and will also discuss how far other subjects are finalized.

Part Two: The Inevitability of Finalization

In this section I discuss the various risks taken by subjects and how far I feel subjects are finalized in my film despite my desire to unfinalize them. Among the risks to subjects are that of being represented as a family member, that of being represented by an oppositional or challenging interviewer, the pitfalls of linguistic tropes, and the power of visual tropes derived from national identity to finalize, in a cross-national context. I will also consider the subjectivity of viewers, and the (mis)uses to which documentary and other films can be put, regardless of the intent behind them or what kind of messages their authors think they impart.

Family members, generally, are more liable to finalization than anyone else, if only because they are more likely to assent to being filmed in the first place (Katz and Katz: 1988: 124); perhaps this is one reason why "intersubjective reciprocity" is ascribed to domestic ethnography (Renov: 2004: 219, 224). Moreover, once subjects have signed a consent form, they can lose control over their representations from that point onwards. In 'Fleeing From Documentary', about Michelle Citron's 'family film' (which she simultaneously denies is about her family) Citron grapples with this issue:

> Unless a subject is media sophisticated, and few people including my family
> are, what significance does informed consent really carry? And what right do I
> have to display them to audiences in often unpredictable ways?
> (Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 280)

Moreover, Katz and Katz note that, as a culture we assume a higher standard of treatment for family members than for strangers (1988: 124). Moreover, they posit that family member subjects are presumably more vulnerable to other family members than to filmmakers who are strangers, as they are more likely to participate due to factors such as "guilt, the fear of loss of love (. . .) a desire to help" (1988: 124).

To my mind, the people most vulnerable to finalization because they are family members are 'the Mississippi Aunts', as they are called in my film—my Mother and my Aunt June—because I have been close to them all my life, and we have a routine of their telling me the 'family gossip'; therefore they were less suspicious of my camera. I think that my Mother is especially vulnerable in the representation, as she appears less guarded than my Aunt June, who seems to distrust the camera inherently

and to be more cautious about what she says. Discomfort is apparent in Aunt June's facial expressions when my Mother is offering up private or sensitive information about Jay, such as his name, his former home address in Arkansas and the fact that his wife was married previously and has a child from that marriage.

However, Aunt June's greater care is not necessarily down to her greater distance from me as a family member (being Aunt rather than Mother): she also seems more determined to get the details accurate, as when she corrects my Mother that Jay's address was "non-domestic" not "common domestic" (Interview: 2003). Moreover, she demonstrates a somewhat more nuanced understanding of Jay's ideology, as when she corrects my Mother that Jay is "anti-government" rather than "anti-American" (Interview: 2004). Aunt June then has to retract her correction, as my Mother finds it unacceptable to forego the designation 'anti-American': this moment provides not only humour but it also slightly finalizes my Mother, as it suggests an ideological interest. Moreover, my Mother's demeanour is more serious and worried, while my Aunt is light-hearted, as demonstrated by her laughter (which seems to cause camera shake) after she says that the reason Jay's wife had a skin rash is because "she's married to a psycho whose running from the Government!" (Interview: 2003).

For Citron, the tension between making a family film on the one hand but wanting to preserve the privacy of her own family on the other was "solved by fiction" (Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 280)—as demonstrated by her trick of using actresses to play two sisters in the film. There is also an element of quasi-fictionalisation in the way I turn 'the Mississippi Aunts' into (to my mind) the most story bound characters of the film, by always introducing them with white fluffy clouds in a blue sky, which 'blink' in time with the electronic anthems towards the end of the film. I also apply a long fade between an aerial view of the Mississippi river and the two of them sitting at the kitchen table smoking, so that they are figured as at one with the landscape of Mississippi. I intended for these tactics to fictionalize them somewhat, and also make my representations of them self-consciously caricatured, to emphasize my manipulation of the digital tape. The Aunts may be seen as a 'Greek chorus', filling in and commenting on the story. By presenting the very surface of the Aunts only, and

binding them somewhat ironically to the land they are from, I hope to avoid doing them what Levinas terms the "violence of comprehension" (1994: 2-3).[61]

Jay's Risk

My main subject Jay, unlike 'the Mississippi Aunts' is rendered in some detail: much of the film consists of him telling viewers about his beliefs, his politicization, and the struggles he has endured in trying to maintain his stance. I think it is appropriate that the first shot of him in the film (past the opening title sequence) shows him with his eyes closed as he speaks the words, 'You're right. . .I can't remember what you said, but. . .'' (Interview: 2005). This visual cue alludes to the risk he is taking in participating in the film, and the complicated notion of documentary consent, to which Citron refers above.

However, though Jay is a blood relation, he does not fit the description Citron gives of herself and her family members being "intimately attached" (Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 280). Jay and I were practically strangers when I started this film and we are by no means close now, though I became more familiar with his wife than with him. Moreover, while Citron's family members are not "media sophisticated" Jay is more so (Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 280). He chooses his words carefully much of the time, and he only speaks of his prejudicial beliefs when I press him. Indeed his presentation style fits the contemporary Right's tactic of using coded language rather than openly racialist language, to blend with mainstream politics (Ronson: 2002: 144, 179).

As a result of my studies into the 'new American right', I was prepared to encounter polished political presentation—something that was not difficult for Jay, as a former teacher and school Principal. Despite my desire and efforts to unfinalize him, my detective work led me, especially in the later interviews, to find coded language beneath his charm, and to label him with the reifying '-isms' for which right-wing extremists in the USA and around the world are known: rac*ism*, religious fundamental*ism* and the patriarchal*ism* they both foster. The problem of coded language is where the "trope of detection" is relevant for my film. Marcus writes that in the 'new biography' those writers who did not have access to their subjects would instead write about pursuing or *detecting* their subject (in France and St. Clair: 2002: 196). Though I had access to Jay, I carefully scrutinized his

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[61] I realize one always runs the risk that their ironic expressions will not be understood.

words and facial expressions during interviews, staying on the lookout for coded racism (and sexism).

Moreover as an editor making cuts to the video, I sometimes highlighted suspicious or aborted phrases, which I thought could represent hidden bigoted views. For instance, when Jay is explaining why he believes mixed race persons should not be eligible to run for public office in the USA, he seems to begin pronouncing the word 'mongrel' but stops himself just in time. At this moment, I insert a longer flash of black leader, to give the viewer a moment to reflect on what he may be saying. At various points throughout the film he also expresses views about the inferiority of women. When he does, I highlight it: for instance, when Jay refers to a Bible verse that ordains the superiority of men over women, I insert black leader again, as a 'long pause' for reflection. Moreover, I not only draw attention to his faults using montage, I was a challenging and oppositional as an interviewer, especially on the subject of Women, and this factor may have contributed to his finalization (and mine).

Oppositional Woman

Though I sympathized with Jay's desire to critique his world and to reject a mindless patriotism—and though I admired his courage to take a stand—I felt both moved and responsible to object publically to his view that only white males should be citizens of the USA. Of the many hours of interview footage I shot with Jay, the final film includes some of our most oppositional moments—the strongest of which is when I challenge his use of History to justify the disenfranchisement of African Americans and Women. During this scene he sits in front of a flag, speaking about the infiltration of the US Government (by the English); he then complains that voting is currently too widespread to be meaningful, and that this wide franchise is one reason why people are loosing their 'natural rights' in exchange for government privileges. One of his favorite topics is the loss of 'God given natural rights' and this is what he wants to continue speaking about, but I interrupt his speech to challenge him about disenfranchising American citizens, specifically women. He tries to minimize my question:

> Was that right? Was it wrong? *Historically* that's the way it was. I don't *care* about all that. . . .   (Jay Interview 2005)

Here, I take advantage of his weak statement, in which he accidentally disregards morality, to challenge his use of *History* as an excuse for placing himself at the top of the hierarchy. I say,

> So, you don't care whether it was right or wrong . . . . You keep going back to *Historically*. So it seems to me you've chosen a time in history, and you've decided that going back to *that* time would be good. But what about the time before and what about the time afterwards?
> (Interview: 2005)

A stalemate is reached in the interview. He only sighs, looks off camera and says to himself, "Recognizing rights. . . . " (*ibid*) because I am not engaging with his preferred emphasis.

On the one hand, this moment is an example of my exertion of authorial power, because I get him to confess to something to which he does not want to confess. On the other hand it may be seen as my taking advantage *as a female author* to finalize him. The fact of my female-ness no doubt contributes to his finalization, as I take it upon myself to ask the questions which many male filmmakers would not ask (and could get away with not asking), forcing him to reveal his views on women. Moreover, the plain fact that he is onscreen proclaiming divinely ordained male superiority to a female filmmaker evokes a certain friction that probably would not exist with a male filmmaker. However, I have endeavoured to ensure Jay's likability onscreen: for example I cut the footage where, after I asked him, he answered that the punishment for abortion in his ideal nation would be the death penalty (Interview: 2005). Nonetheless, this argument between myself and Jay brings excitement to viewers at Jay's expense. This excitement is similar to what Silk Panse calls the "labour of defence" or the discomfort of the subject/protagonist while the filmmaker and the audience sit in judgment against him or her (in Austin and de Jong: 2008: 74). We in the audience see him 'squirm' onscreen, and we enjoy it, though we may also pity him.

However, I would argue that in some ways I am also finalized by my harsh questioning, for in a sense I am by virtue of my female-ness impelled to argue on behalf of women. I could not obscure my female-ness—in contrast to documentary makers like Louis Theroux, who has been known to obscure his Jewishness from white supremacy adherents ('Louis and The Nazis' 2003). Moreover, I think that the relationship between myself and Jay, as I have been describing it, further proves the uncertain fit of my 'family film' into the category of

domestic ethnography. There was not mutual respect or "reciprocity" (2004: 219) between us, and it was unlikely that there ever could be, since, given the chance, he would relegate people like me to submission and motherhood exclusively. The absence of a certain "textual gesture" that Renov notes as distinctive in domestic ethnography denotes the lack of *reciprocity* in my film: this is when the filmmaker's subject, usually a family member, takes the camera and films the filmmaker—a trope which Renov credits with being "a moment of authorial crisis" (Renov: 2004: 223). However, the occurrence of this gesture seems impossible in my film: because of Jay's Bible-based male supremacist views, I do not think he would want to have people see me in my role as author of his story. Far from aiming the camera at me and asking me tough questions, he often speaks directly to the audience 'beyond me' 'around me' or 'over me', saying ,"You out there!". By doing this, I think he is not simply "implicating the viewer" (Beattie: 2004: 103) but also seeking a viewer without my concerns about equal rights for women (or other non-white non-males) perhaps imagining white male viewers like himself.

However, let us be counter-historical for a moment and question what may have happened if my cousin Jay *had* filmed me, since, taken to its logical extreme, the *domestic ethnographic* means Jay would identify with me as a kind of reflection of himself. Given his ideology's construction of women, it seems unlikely that Jay could see a female as a reflection of himself because he does not consider women to be agents. Moreover, my advocacy for 'female rights', means that, at least in this area, our identities do not so much meld in encounter as repel each other. If, following on from Renov, he cannot help *seeing himself in me* because of our "blood ties" (Renov: 2004: 218) then it must be a strange and depressing experience for him to see a woman in his reflection. On the other hand, a biography of Jay was what I intended originally: so his *not* trying to film me in my authorial role, added to the fact that he 'goes around me' to communicate with the audience, helpfully emphasizes his story over mine, and biography over auto/biography.

De Man and Linguistic Tropes
There are more threats to Jay's *authorship of himself*, than just the intersubjectivity which means that to some degree we share authorship. There is the threat of language itself to undermine self-presentation, and in audio-visual work, there are both linguistic and visual tropes to undermine our intentions, especially if we are subjects rather than filmmakers

(who can edit parts out). It is because of linguistic tropes that Paul de Man insists autobiography is "undecidable" (1979: 920). He writes that autobiography "*seems* to depend on actual and potentially verifiable events in a less ambivalent way than fiction does" (italics mine), but that autobiography can be no more reliable than fiction because of the unreliability of language, which is tropological (1979: 920). Using the example of a revolving door to illustrate the "turning motion of tropes" he insists we cannot interpret language consistently with one another because even our thought processes are operating on the shaky ground of tropes (1979: 922). He credits this impossibility to our thinking in metaphors: as our individual metaphorical associations are unpredictable, meaning is too liberated, too malleable to be agreed on (1979: 921).

An example of Jay being caught out by the tropicity of language occurs during one of the interview segments in which Jay tells me (as he often did) that whites-only citizenship was simply the *history* of the US—by which he implied that it was not necessarily his personal preference or his judgment. However he pauses and lowers his head as he thinks back to the USA's involvement in slavery. He then says, "Slavery was a black eye" (Jay Interview 2005). He means to say that the fact of slavery in the USA's history spoils the reputation of the country. However, he fails to detect an association before choosing his words: unintentionally, he is using language that is infected with the same prejudice about *blackness* that propagated slavery.[62] It is difficult to tell whether Jay recognizes his linguistic gaffe after using the *black eye* language. He might also have remembered his UK audience, whose associations with 'black eye' he could not predict as easily as an American audience's (or he may have forgotten about his UK audience completely during moments when I challenged him forcefully). This is another instance in which I added a flash of black leader as a pause, to emphasize the meaning I saw in "black eye" that could go unnoticed by some viewers— and to give viewers the chance to enjoy the comedy (and/or tragedy) in this tricky language.

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[62] Jay's comment recalls the point made by Richard Dyer in *White* (1997) that our use of language indicates the common assumption that whiteness is the unmarked, universal norm (Dyer: 1997: 98).

Visually Incarcerating Tropes

The "black eye" interview features the US flag background—a visual trope that enhances the comedy of the "black eye" moment, particularly, perhaps, for UK audiences who find humour and hypocrisy in American patriotism. Visually, it seems impossible to avoid incarcerating Jay in his national identity, especially in a cross-national context, wherein a national other makes a "suitable target for externalization" (Caputi: 1996: 691). The US flag background was provisional, as Jay and I hurriedly placed the flag over an ugly window in the only quiet place we could find to do interviews away from the noise of the children. Each of us seemed to register the irony of the flag background, given our (individual) criticisms of American patriotism—though we did not discuss it explicitly because his family commitments meant we were short of time. However, in a cross-national context, it might never be suspected that the flag had to be dragged hurriedly out of storage to cover an ugly window—especially for a British viewer used to the stereotype of American patriotism, to which perspective it is perfectly sensible for Jay to appear before a flag.

In a scene near the end of the film, I not only visually incarcerate Jay in national identity, I also visually blame him for my expatriation from the US, by walking out of the American-flagged frame at a particular moment. Additionally, I interrupt using cutaways that emphasize the implications of his views for women, including myself and my nieces. In this scene, I ask Jay about his children's futures, and what careers they want as adults. He focuses his (rather long) answer on his eldest son Evan, and characterizes him as morally and intellectually sophisticated—after commenting cursorily (and through a yawn) that his eldest daughter will most likely want "to be a Mommy" (Interview: 2005). During the course of Jay's answer to the question about his children (and directly following it), I interpose four cutaways. The first is of his eldest daughter Jaycie making a snowman, and it is intended to show that her energy and potential go beyond his prescriptions for her. The second is of me sitting in front of an American flag rolling my eyes to show my frustration and displeasure at his lack of faith in his daughter's potential. The third cutaway is of me getting up and leaving the American flag set: representing my disgust with Jay's sexism and also my expatriation from the USA. Finally, the fourth cutaway is of his youngest daughter Bethany's white shoes, fading from view, to represent the background role of women under fundamentalist Christianity. My addition of these cutaways also serves to suffocate his answer and his perspective, because they surround the footage of him with images

critiquing his perspective, and portraying him as a kind of scapegoat for Christian sexism in the USA.

Viewer Subjectivity

I think Jay appears to be blamed in the scene described above; nevertheless, I cannot predict whether other viewers will interpret it this way. Documentary viewing is subjective, and various viewers will construe the film in different ways, according to their "personal embodied existence and knowledge" (Sobchack in Gaines and Renov: 1999: 242). Viewers who identify with me (or my perceived political persuasion) may read the scene described above as imparting blame onto Jay, as I do, and may approve of this blame as fair comment. Meanwhile, viewers who do not identify with me such as other far right adherents or fundamentalist Christians may resist seeing Jay blamed and interpret the scene differently. According to Vivian Sobchack, the way viewers relate to and interpret films depends on more than the viewer's unique personal subjectivity and with which character they choose to identify. Variation exists within the individual also, so the fluid subjectivity of an individual person may change its focus and identification several times within one film viewing; therefore a film may indeed be experienced as documentary one moment and fiction the next. Reviving a theory of identification from Meunier, Sobchack writes that even when we view fiction film we may dream of and thereby re-experience our own childhood memories or home movies —which she terms 'film-souvenir(s)' here:

> we should foreground how often the fiction film experience for us is
> interrupted by a shift in the structure of our identification to that of
> identification with the film-souvenir or documentary
> (in Gaines and Renov: 1999: 252)

In other words, viewers may 'see through' a scene to their own experience, reliving personal memories which then take precedence over what an author may have intended. A male viewer who identifies with Jay's ideology, for instance, may dismiss (or miss, or block) my sense of the sequence discussed above, while perhaps associating the scene with a memory of feeling castigated by an overpowering female—leading such a viewer to charge me with labouring the point about women, and/or *going off topic*.

Viewers of the far right persuasion may also impute me with falsely representing Jay's interview to the point of dishonesty by manipulating it and mixing it with other footage

which Jay did not intend. However, I think it would be more dishonest for me to fool the audience by, for instance "allowing a change of emotional state to appear unmotivated"—something which I did not do, because I include my harsh questions to Jay: to that extent I can enjoy a feeling of documentary "ethical probity" (Vaughan: 1999: 70 and 68). From my perspective, the fact that Jay's beliefs support disenfranchising all women would be an important part of the story whether it was addressed by the filmmaker or not; my being a female filmmaker makes it even more a part of the story, especially as my research focuses on the documentary encounter and addresses the issue of ethno-religious nationalism.

However, originally, I did not intend for the film to figure my face and body at all, but decided to do so as my research progressed, as a method of testing the auto/biographicality of the film based on kinship. Moreover, I was only led to this method through thinking about, reading about and experimenting with the doppelgänger device; this is what led me to decide to juxtapose myself with Jay, solidifying me into 'the expatriate' to Jay's 'patriot'. Thus, originally, my interrupting montage in this scene was intended merely to confuse or combine our two identities, by replacing his image with my own and thereby evoking some interchangeability about us. However, with further experimentation, this sequence grew into a statement about his ideology's disenfranchisement of women—and my editing style grew more adventurous and performative.

Therefore, Bruzzi's description of performance in documentary as a strategy used "to draw attention to the impossibility of authentic documentary representation" (Bruzzi: 2006: 185) fits with my use of "expressive" (Nichols: 2001: 134) cutaways in one sense but not in another: the cutaways *may* be described (by critics, for example) as drawing attention to the fact that I had to manipulate the footage to tell what I consider to be the whole story, because otherwise it would be "impossible" (Bruzzi: 2006: 185). However, alerting viewers to my struggle to tell the story was not the purpose of the cutaways: rather, the original purpose was to express intersubjectivity between myself and my cousin, and their subsequent purpose was to highlight the implications of Jay's words about his children's futures.[63] Thus, my performative purpose diverges slightly from Bruzzi's description, as she also writes that performance in documentary is "an alienating, distancing device, not one

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[63] This argument is complicated by the fact that the doppelgänger device expresses alienation and overwhelmment (Hertz: 1985: 40) with the issue of intersubjectivity in my film: thus, Bruzzi's quote about performance expressing the impossibility of representation *could* be entirely true of my film, but I do not think so, because the doppelgänger in my film is not *only* an 'evil twin' device, but is used to show genuine sympathy with Jay as well.

which actively promotes identification and a straightforward response to a film's content" (Bruzzi: 2006: 185). In my film performative devices will make viewers aware of distance, but often my purpose is to *actively promote identification (ibid)*—by discouraging an habitual response of disidentification, such as that based on national identity.

In the sequence described above my cutaways had the opposite effect from what I first intended: from demonstrating our intersubjectivity, they grew to become a sign of our incommensurability. One reward of this juxtaposition I think, was to help me alienate the wrong kind of appreciation: I did not want sexists (or indeed racists) to be able to identify with Jay as a hero, and these interruptions could help to repel such viewers. However, another unforeseen consequence is that the cutaway of me leaving the American flag set could be construed as my making a strong 'anti-American' statement. This scene could upset the older generation in my family who still feel a sincere patriotism that I never felt and therefore never had to lose. An impression of betrayal is made more likely by my cross-national context: the fact that I live in Britain instead of the USA makes the inclusion of this footage a gesture of expatriation, even though originally the footage was taken only to check the composition in the camera. The fact is that my feelings about the USA are ambivalent, not solidly *for* or *against*. The cutaway of my leaving the flag set *does* represent my disappointment with gender relations within Christianity and by extension in the USA—where I consider Christianity to be a discourse intentionally used to disempower women. However, it also represents my 'walking out' in disgust because of the specific statements Jay is making about his children's futures, and because he is a father with daughters. However, the risk of a more simplified interpretation of my simply 'leaving the USA' is amplified because of my being represented with the American flag and the presumptions of either patriotism or betrayal with which the flag is associated

Conclusion

The first part of this chapter has reflected on the ethics of the encounter, and accounted for the changing representation of the encounter between myself and my main documentary subject. It has also discussed the device (the doppelgänger) to which I resorted to resolve the implications of representing this particular 'extreme (familial) other'. I have also considered some of the rewards of this process of complication and resolution, as the doppelgänger literary device had a deepening effect on the themes, montage and

voice narration in my film. My research into the far right, alongside my discovery that my cousin held religiously-justified racist (and sexist) views, caused me to begin to stereotype or finalize him a little, while still wanting to unfinalize him. Meanwhile, from here in the UK it seemed that people could not conceive of our difference. Using the formal device of the doppelgänger helped me find a way to continue the project and embrace its various contradictions.

Furthermore, delving into psychoanalytic theory on the doppelgänger's use in literature inspired experimentation and (in the end) led to a more auto/biographical (and autobiographical) visual effect. Moreover, it also created a space for me to address the religious landscape in the US and its connection to hierarchical power. This device finally led me to include ghostly voices from Native Americans, non-humans and Bible characters, and to combine them to highlight my personal feeling of disenfranchisement as a woman. Finally the device inspired me to bring out Jay's self-dividedness, which, given his harsh views, brings out his complexity and renders him less finalizable.

The second part has focused on my aspiration to unfinalize subjects, and how far I was successful. I began with the 'Mississippi Aunts', whom I think are the most finalized of anyone. Not only are their statements about Jay's beliefs contradicted often throughout the film, they are the subjects most vulnerable as family member-subjects, as I have close ties with both of them. My mother is particularly susceptible to finalization, as she is more serious than my Aunt June and more generous with information—approximating a confessional mode of communication. Meanwhile my Aunt June guards what she says factually, while letting her sense of humour deflect any semblance of confession. While I use fictional effects intentionally to make 'the Mississippi Aunts' into caricaturic characters, this performative device is not, I think, as effective at containing confessional effects as the doppelgänger device is for helping to unfinalize Jay (and me).

The remainder of the chapter considers Jay's finalization, and secondarily, my own. I could not avoid scrutinizing Jay's charismatic presentation because while I was interviewing Jay I was also reading about the far right's use of mainstream and coded language. Thus I became an oppositional interviewer of Jay, especially because of my femaleness. This facet of our intersubjectivity contributes to Jay's finalization, as I refute his arguments about (white) male supremacy and try to expose weaknesses. At the same time my arguments

against his sexism could finalize me also, as a filmmaker only concerned about myself as a woman. While I argued with his prejudices, however, I also made the effort to portray him positively and not to demonize him, even though I find many of his views alarming. I am not entirely sure whether he would do the same for me: I doubt that he would be able to 'see himself in me', which is perhaps demonstrated by the fact that he did not try to seek my views or film me.

In this chapter, I also considered other means by which Jay might be finalized, such as the tricks of both linguistic and visual tropes. Coupled with the visual trope of the American flag background, Jay's linguistic slips became even more comedic, more tragic, more finalizing. This is especially true in the cross-national context in which I write the thesis and edit the film. The mechanisms of cross-nationalism, added to the British stereotype of Americans, may harden opinions of Jay. On the other hand, I think any judgment will be against both of us together, not only because I have presented us as doubles but also because in a sense we already are doubles due to the logic of nation: we share the same name, *American*. Moreover, the frequent appearance of the American flag may trigger the stereotype of thoughtless American patriotism.

However, I am glad that at least I appear before the flag with Jay, so that he does not have to endure representation alone: this explicit sharing of the burden was the first effect of the doppelgänger device. However, intercutting myself with Jay (on a flag background) at the end of the film does blame him for sexism and for my expatriation to Britain, as do my cutaways of his daughters (whom he seems to have already disenfranchised in his mind). He is not only visually incarcerated in his national identity by the flag, then, he is also blamed for any ill treatment of women in the country.

Finally, my appearance alongside Jay visually indicates auto/biography, or maybe even the less equivocal *autobiography*. Moreover, figuring myself in the film (even as a shadow of Jay or his doppelgänger) caused me to strengthen my narrative voice, without making the story about me entirely. However, the more indications I gave of my presence, the more (I felt) could be expected of me. As a result I became an interrupting narrator who verges at times on ventriloquism, by for instance adding black leader to imbue Jay's words with my timing and emphasis. Such risks for documentary subjects, however, are always present, whether the filmmaker keeps it in the forefront of her mind or not.

Concluding Chapter

This concluding chapter has two main parts: in the first half, I will reflect on insights I have gleaned through my research questions—which focussed on the overall unfinalizability of subjects and filmmaker; the usefulness of reflexive and performative devices in unfinalizing; the problems and solutions I encountered as an *auto/biographical* marginal author; and the effect of Renov's domestic ethnography designation on my main film subject. As my first research question about unfinalizability is an overarching question, the other three will also reflect back on the first. In the second half of this chapter, I will discuss the second sub-question of the fourth research question, about the designation *domestic ethnography*, focussing in on why I feel validated in my rejection of it, and why other authors may also refuse to accept it. I will argue that this designation can categorise the *desire* of authors based on the domestic milieu, and that the result of this categorisation of desire can only be a less open interpretation the film's 'voice' than what may be intended by authors (especially female authors). [64] Moreover, the term *ethnography* especially in a cross-national context can support stereotyping not only of filmed participants but also of authors. The second part of this chapter will also outline what I see as my contribution to knowledge.

Firstly, however, I would like to acknowledge that, as an author working through the necessary ethical, aesthetic and political choices of my film, and trying to make their difficulty and importance clear in the form of the film, I am following documentary filmmakers who have also combined theory and practice by thinking reflexively about these dimensions of filmmaking. Contemporary filmmakers like Errol Morris and Ross McElwee, whose work I have discussed here (mainly in Chapter Two), fit into this critically reflexive group, as did the anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch, who contributed vital theory as well as films to the field over many decades, including the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. In addition to *ciné trance* he developed other concepts concerned with intersubjectivity, like 'shared anthropology', which maximized the involvement of subjects in the filmmaking process (Losoda: 2010). Previously, Dziga Vertov had critically analysed the power of the filmic medium in *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929), in which he revealed

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[64] Here I am using 'voice' in the sense used by Nichols, described both as "a text's social point of view, of how it is speaking to us and how it is organizing the materials it is presenting to us" and as "intangible" (Nichols in Rosenthal and Corner: 2005: 18).

the apparatus of filmmaking to viewers, including the camera, editing and audience. Other filmmakers like Luis Buñuel, who was associated with the surrealists and who also made fiction films, helped lay the foundations of critical reflexivity in documentary, especially with *Land Without Bread* (1933), in which he emphasized problematic practices in documentary and ethnographic film by using an 'unreliable' narrator. Though I did not write about Vertov and Buñuel in the main body of my thesis, I was influenced by their approaches, and I will refer to their work briefly in the answers to my first two research questions, in the next section.

The critical reflexive tradition influenced Morris and McElwee in many ways. Rouch's insistence on the provocative role of the camera's very presence is echoed in the sentiments of Errol Morris, who rejects the idea that an unobtrusive, observational camera can be a guarantor of 'truth' in non-fiction film (he also rejects the term 'documentary'). Moreover, Morris's naming of his interviewing machine (the 'Interrotron') conveys the idea that questions substantially influence answers. Morris also calls attention to the film apparatus in his work, following the example of Vertov, by frequently reminding the audience of his machinations through "disturbances" (Ira Jaffe in Rothman: 2009: 21) that point back to him. Moreover, these authorial reminders sometimes question his authority as an author by their unsteady manner: indeed, Ira Jaffe writes of *Mr. Death* (1999), "often it appears that the film has gone out of control" (*ibid*).

Meanwhile, McElwee also points to his *efforts* to make a film, rather than nurturing illusions about seamless filmmaking: he shows himself with camera, comments about difficulties he is having with the progress of his film, and foregrounds storytelling through a well-written documentary script, including "fantastic" coincidences, thereby showing himself to be part of a Southern Gothic storytelling tradition (Diane Stevenson in Rothman: 2009: 63). Meanwhile, to my mind, his persona in his films is of a somewhat unreliable narrator, and his narration, with its tenor of insecurity and wavering uncertainty, undermines the traditional, all-confident *voice of God* narration style. Diane Stevenson writes that McElwee's documentaries "are stories about how stories are told" (in Rothman: 2009: 70). Furthermore, McElwee has ethical considerations in mind as well, as he says in an interview with *The Harvard Advocate*: "I try to render people's lives with as much complexity and—when appropriate—affection as I can, which I hope prevents people from being reduced to mere images or symbols" (Interview with Lahav: 1994).

I agree with McElwee that our documentary subjects' identities are complex and so are we as authors—and furthermore that encounters between filmmakers and subjects do shape films. By pointing to the provocation of the filmmaker, Jean Rouch insisted that we consider this additional complicating factor. Rouch conveyed this idea by proclaiming that one can only film "life as it is provoked" (Rothman: 2009: 159)—a comment that went completely against the new claims (at the time) for observational cinema. In my film I have tried to enhance complexity by interrupting the story and reminding viewers of human unreliability in authorship. The critical reflexive tradition in documentary can be seen as one of embracing complexity while rejecting pacifying illusions of simplicity and a single 'truth'—a political rejection, as simple truths are easily converted to slogans and used for political gain.

Part One:

Response to Research Questions

Not only has the "civilized" mind classified many of the realities it *does not understand* in the categories of the untrue and superstitious, it has also turned the story—as total event of a community, a people—into a *fatherly* lesson for children of a certain age.
    (Trinh in Nichols: 1994: 78) (italics in original)

Americans have this unusual degree of commitment to things that just don't square —they seem based on a misunderstanding of objective reality.
    (Louis Theroux: Interview with Joyce: 1999)[65]

Question 1

My first and overarching research question asks about the possibility of presenting a documentary subject as unfinalizable and always *becoming* (Bakhtin: 1984: 19); this has been both pertinent and difficult in the case of my film. This question also asks what implications my authorial efforts to *unfinalize* have had on the shape of the film.

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[65] In the Sunday November 20, 2005, *The Observer*, Louis Theroux's *Call of the Weird* book is listed by genre in the category of 'Politics, Philosophy and Society'.

The problem of unfinalizing is one I dealt with from the very start of my research, before I decided to make a film instead of writing an historical thesis. After I abandoned my written historical approach in favour of making a film as research, more issues emerged besides Jay's 'extreme other' status and my wish to maintain unfinalizability: firstly the impact of considering the film as autobiography; secondly the impact on the film of my being a marginalised national other as well as a woman; and thirdly the impact of measuring my film against Renov's domestic ethnographic in my cross national context. Though the first question of *unfinalizability* is an overarching one, this section will address only my initial concerns to unfinalize and the early approach I took, which I think had a visible unfinalizing effect on the film.

The primary visible sign that I have been working to unfinalize Jay is the film's existence at all: deciding to use my video interviews to make a film rather than writing an historical thesis was my first gesture towards unfinalizing. In the American Studies department, with the British scholar of American studies, my primary task was demonstrating exactly where Jay fit into the matrix of far right political movements in US History. I felt that making these connections, while interesting, was indeed finalizing, and even seemed dishonest, as different historians disagree on the criteria for linking far right figures. Film is polysemic and I felt that film's capacity for excess was more appropriate to unfinalizing. This harmonises with Egan's view that film is better suited to represent a person as "multiple and as revealed in relationship" (Egan: 1994: 593): I think it would have been much more reductive to explore the encounter between Jay and myself through a written historical thesis.

Secondly, Jay addresses audiences directly by looking straight into the camera, and I never directed him to do otherwise. In the moment of filming, I did not want to interfere with the presentation style he seemed comfortable with, and as a former teacher, he is a natural teaching subject. Furthermore I think my attitude as a filmmaker conveyed to him that I would allow myself to *be taught* (Levinas in Renov: 2004: 151) and to let him teach viewers through me and my camera. I think this is partly because I was interested in Jay's perspectives on mainstream patriotism and passive support for aggressive wars—but also because I was fascinated (but not yet horrified) by some of his unconventional views on religion, of which I was starting to learn. It was also because I felt he was to some degree

misunderstood by the "Mississippi Aunts" and that if he were ever represented in the mainstream media, he would be misrepresented, simplistically.

Thirdly, once I accrued hours of interviews and began thinking more about film form, I decided to avoid using archive photos or footage. I felt that 'contextualising' Jay with images would be the same as claiming factual historical links between him and these figures—and that such categorisation would not only mis-define him as being completely outside 'normal' society, it would commit against him what I came to think of as Historical *annihilation* (Levinas: 1987:89; Terreblanche: 2008: 887). I wanted to bring out Jay's humanity, which, in a living person, is always developing and *becoming* (Bakhtin: 1984: 19). The next section will reflect on my intentionally reflexive and performative efforts to unfinalize.

Question 2

My second research question asks how far self-reflexivity and performativity might enable the author/filmmaker to make films in which subjects and even authors can remain unfinalized.

I do believe that I managed to unfinalize Jay and humanise him much more with the reflexive and performative conceits I employed than I would have been able to without these strategies. Three examples of intended critical reflexivity are the performative devices of the cigarette narrator, the X-Box controller, and the techno patriotic music. The cigarette narrator is meant to question the role of the filmmaker as the medium of authority between subjects and viewers and to therefore encourage closer communication between Jay and viewers: if my own 'voice' becomes somewhat dismissible, I hope that his may become more urgent. Meanwhile, the X-Box controller is intended to unfinalize him again by calling attention to my control and my interests as an author: the toy controller is meant to present that possibility that my interests are whimsical or unreliable.[66] The X-Box controller is also intended to allow for some critical attention to the claims made against Jay by the 'Mississippi Aunts', that he said the World Trade Center was 'blown up by

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[66] In *The Subject of Documentary* (but not in the chapter on domestic ethnography) Renov also refers to 'whim', in an argument for the use of psychoanalytic theory in documentary: he points to the "less rational principles—erotic desire, horror, whimsy—" found in documentary but theorized only in fiction film (2004: 93).

remote control'. Moreover, I intended that the X-Box controller should serve as a comment on oversimplified stories about 'extremists' given by mainstream-ists, while simultaneously pointing to our tendency to misunderstand the stories we hear, given the tropological pitfalls of language (De Man: 1979: 920). Finally, the 'Britishised' techno versions of patriotic songs places Jay in a musical milieu closer to that of most British viewers than to that of most Americans, and is thus intended to put him on the side of British viewers. The music also sticks out as being a subversion of patriotism rather than expressing straight patriotic reverence: some of it is so silly that it stands out as performance. Through these devices, I wound up *performing authorship,* pointing to the media used, to make audiences aware of the unfolding construction.

Though my reflexivity and performance had some unfinalizing effects for Jay and for me, I think some viewers may resent my authorial attention grabbing, which may result in my finalization. I will concede that reflexive devices can be messier than hiding the filmmaking apparatus, but perhaps unfinalizing 'extreme others' calls for extreme devices. These devices, such as the cigarette narrator, X-Box controller and techno patriotic music, are intended to point noisily back to me and to comprise a form of public political speech (on, among other issues, the topic of mass media representations). Therefore viewers who think me beneath entitlement to public political speech are apt to resent me or perhaps wilfully misunderstand the film—especially if my authorship somehow disrupts their "sense of identity" as Trinh points out:

> a subject who points to him or herself as subject-in-process, a work that displays its own formal properties or its own constitution as work, is bound to upset one's sense of identity—the familiar distinction between the Same and the Other since the latter is no longer kept in a recognizable relation of dependence, derivation, or appropriation (Trinh: 1990: 95)

Furthermore, I think that reflexivity and performativity are always risky, because it is difficult to strike the appropriate level of subtlety, especially when considering mixed audiences. I am thinking of one of my early inspirations for reflexivity and performativity, Buñuel's *Land Without Bread* (1933), which called attention to the hardships of the Hurdanos people while parodying documentary codes through his "vilification of this objective approach" (Gonzalez 2002). Buñuel *vilifies* through the obnoxious narration which takes viewers beyond compassion for the villagers to a distanced arrogance engendering disrespect. By taking the often condescending tone of ethnographic or

documentary work and amplifying it, Bunuel directs viewer attention to problems endemic to the form.

For receptive viewers, the devices I used may not only have helped to unfinalize Jay; they may have had the added benefit of unfinalizing me as an author. By critiquing my own authorship openly and with humour (for it is supposed to be funny that I replace the 'remote control' responsible for World Trade Center destruction with the X-Box controller), I think I may give the impression of being fairly responsible with the authority of authorship. The cigarette narrator is intended to help unfinalize me in its capacity as an additional critique of my authorship, but also because it signals other facets to me besides the one seen in encounter with Jay and the other subjects in the film—and represents me in other spaces besides the domestic space of Jay, Angeline, the children, and the 'Mississippi Aunts': for me it partially evokes a site of authorship, like Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Honestly, it has become difficult for me to separate the interests of Jay from those of myself; however, it seems that I am somehow doubly rewarded for locating myself as an author, being critical of my authorship, and engaging playfully with the audience—and the reward is that both subject and author are less finalized than might be expected.

Question 3

The third research question asks about the effect of the designation *autobiography* (or auto/biography) on marginal authors—whose work may be at risk of reduction to the negative stereotype applied to others in this social group. This question also asks how such an author can mould the shape and style of the film to minimise the possible negative effects.

In responding to the previous question, I partially answered this one, as it was at least my intention that the cigarette narrator, X-Box controller and 'British' techno music should contribute to unfinalizing the 'Mississippi Aunts', Jay and me. My use of these devices is partially a product of my experimentation with considering my film *as auto/biographical* or even *autobiographical*. As I discussed in Chapter One, my desire to unfinalize Jay caused me to edit more purposefully the first interview footage I took, in order to avoid merely producing a stereotypical narrative of a 'right wing extremist'. Thus, I took measures such

as letting my voice be heard during some interviews when I ask Jay probing questions and challenged his answers, so that he does not seem to be angry for no reason. Moreover, I tried to balance his damning admissions of racism (and sexism) by showing him in more light-hearted moments with his children and especially interacting with his wife. However, the more I tried to make a multi-faceted portrait of Jay and the further I strayed from a 'typical extremist narrative' the more I saw that my authorship was becoming distinctive, essayistic and identifiable as mine. As I edited, I saw the influence I was having on the film and started on a quest of "self-interrogation" (Renov: 2004: 216) to question my own investment in this portrait of my cousin: I began to worry.

I did not want my work to be considered autobiographical, however I realised during my research that I was drawn to unfinalizing Jay in large part because I wanted to restore my own sense of complexity and find escape from an incarcerating stereotype (the American as shallow, unreliable, incapable of authentic expression, etc.). I was anxious that the more my work was seen as autobiographical, the more it would be stereotyped. However, as I could not deny auto/biography, I experimented with it. Through studying the work of Citron, Hurston, McElwee and others, I reflected on the importance especially for marginal authors of avoiding markers of (sincere) confession which can render the work a quasi-admission of guilt, regardless of what the marginalised author originally intended. Therefore in the end, researching the issues of being a marginal author made me more mindful of how I was proceeding; and experimenting with strategies of marginal autobiographical storytelling produced some positive effects for Jay and me on the shape of the film.

The previous question discussed the self-reflexive devices that helped unfinalize both Jay and myself in the end. One aspect of the film which I have not addressed in this section is the 2003 London anti-war demonstration footage which (I hope) gives the beginning of the film impact and international appeal. Using this footage was a result of my interest in (and resistance to) the auto/biographical classification: after I determined to experiment with markers of autobiography I (finally) made the decision to include the 2003 London protest footage at the beginning and end of the film. I had wanted to include the footage for a long time but was unsure of how and whether it could 'fit'. However, the unavoidability of auto/biography led me to dismiss the doubts and include it, thinking (wilfully): *if this film is about me then this footage is relevant*. However, instead of having a 'confessional' effect, the

footage located me in the UK and outside of the domestic sphere; it expressed some of my political feeling (being against the War); and it even provided a 'surrogate' for me—the girl in the procession on stilts and dressed as 'Uncle Sam'. Additionally, it places me and the 'Uncle Sam' girl in an international political sphere, which is appropriate, as ethno-religious nationalism is a global phenomenon that seeks to limit women to motherhood and the domestic (Castells: 1997: 23). As I experimented with this footage, I found that I could match it with a monologue from Jay in which he abuses the American character in a way which I thought would appeal to many Britons. Therefore this footage, which I always wanted to include but for which I felt I had no 'excuse' until I begrudgingly took up the mantle of auto/biography—is ultimately used to help interrupt negative assumptions about Jay based on national identity—and about me too.

Question 4

My fourth research question focuses in on the designation *domestic ethnography* for films about family members. In this thesis, I have explored how far the problematic connotations of the domestic and the ethnographic, as well as the suggestion of radical intersubjectivity within families, might promote the finalizing of 'extreme other' subjects (as well as marginal authors—discussed in the next section) especially in a cross-national context. I also asked what practical measures a filmmaker can take to make the film less finalizing, and how the shape or look of the film can be affected by these measures.

The 'look' of *U Know Them By Their Fruit* was influenced in many ways by my resistance to the label *domestic ethnography* and the autobiographical implications that stemmed from it. I have discussed here how efforts to unfinalize Jay and myself wound up lending a self-reflexive and performative "texture and density" (Nichols: 2001: 134) to the film. However, the designation had a deeper impact, by supplying me with a sharper focus on radical intersubjectivity. I have examined this radical intersubjectivity from an ethical perspective, and tried to express it aesthetically. In wondering why Jay had to be my 'Other self' (Renov: 2004: 219) I was sent off on an expedition in search of *other* Other selves. Thus the designation not only led me to look at auto/biography as a form, it also led me to Levinas's ethical *'I-Thou'* relation, the "performative" device of the doppelgänger (Webber: 1996: 8) and the generous ethnography of Jean Rouch's *ciné trance*.

Resisting the designation also caused me to revisit a 'family film' that sits uneasily in the category, *Sherman's March* (1986) and to examine the devices Ross McElwee used (it seems to me) to avoid sincere confession and to express the impossibility of his *between* position— the colloquial metaphor and the doppelgänger. I was already using both of these devices but reflecting on McElwee's film helped me explore and reflect on my choices. The domestic ethnographic destination also led me to study more closely the films of Errol Morris, and to take note of his reflexive methods and the ways he expressed a radical intersubjectivity with 'extreme other' subjects. Eventually I added to my own editing innovations some of Morris's delirious editing style, to further express my authorial *voice* (without voiceover). Therefore my resistance to the label helped me to think about how I wanted to construct, or avoid constructing, my film.

These studies helped me to reflect on my choices systematically, and to theorise about intersubjectivity in my film. For instance, almost from the beginning of this project, I have wanted to title the film after a Bible quote that Jay had used during an interview to describe George W. Bush's hypocrisy—*U Know Them By Their Fruit*. I was later able to reflect on this title choice as a (subverted) colloquial metaphor (Roseman: 1991: 518)—which in turn helped me to discuss the cultural critiques embedded in my film. When I watched footage of myself arguing Jay's case against his Mother using that Bible verse and others he had quoted to me, I was able to consider the effect of some sort of *possession* (Rouch: 2003: 39) by the 'extreme other'—to whom I was receptive in my quest to understand something about myself. Moreover I was able to reflect on myself and Jay and all Americans as suffering from *phantoms* or *family secrets* (Rashkin: 1992: 143)—crimes like African Slavery and the Native American genocide, and the remains of those wrongs, as I see it, in the Christian Bible's continued use to justify white and male supremacy.[67] Thus, the pressure of domestic ethnography forced me to reflect more deeply, systematically and confidently, and to experiment visually with the intersubjectivity between me, filmed subjects, and other entities.

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[67] Here I am referring to for instance the papal bull Terra Nullius of 1095, justifying the appropriation of non-Christian lands (known as the 'Doctrine of Discovery'), the Romanus Pontifex bull of 1452 that promoted such "conquest" on the grounds that non-Christians were "uncivilized and subhuman" and an outgrowth of these, the 1845 'Manifest Destiny' which justified American expansion on the basis of spreading "freedom and democracy", but only for those "deemed capable of self-government" (2005: The Anti-Defamation League).

From the beginning, my goal was to block negative viewer assumptions and promote identification with my film subjects; then I included myself among those I wanted to unfinalize, and attempted to block negative assumptions about the author which could render the entire film and its intended messages dismissible—or "alienate" the meaning of the film by assigning it other messages convenient to viewers (Barthes: 1973: 123). I found that the domestic ethnographic designation worked against my goals. Below, in a discussion based on the interplay of categorisation, authorial desire, and milieu, I will conclude on *how* I think classification worked against me and could similarly cause other authors to feel undermined—especially female authors in a cross-national context.

Part Two:

The Milieu Is/Not the Message

Domestic ethnographies tend to be highly *charged. . .*

      (Gaines and Renov: 1999: 142) (italics mine)

Desire is always destabilizing and delirium inducing, and instability is particularly inscribed in discourses of domestic ethnography
     (Renov: 2004: 219)

. . . cinematic vision has, from the beginning, been charged with a deep yet *fugitive* desire

     (2004: 103) (italics mine)

This final section focuses on the effect on authorship of the description *domestic ethnography*, the designation prominently featured in Renov's latest book, *The Subject of Documentary* (2004)—in which he argues that filmmakers who turn their cameras on family members are doing *autobiography*, whether they intend to do so or not.

As the designation denotes, this (filmmaker's) autobiography is also ethnography—which in a cross-national context, may promote essentialisation by legitimising the " "sampling" of culture" (Trinh: 1990: 92). After testing this designation and Renov's descriptions of it against my own film, I think that interpreting family films as domestic ethnographies designates a *voice* for these films based on the domestic milieu—adhered to which are certain associations and assumptions, including that of being static or unchanging (a *roots* connotation) over developing and renewing (a *routes* connotation) (Buzard 2003: 69; Clifford: 2003: 65). Another way of stating this is that the label suggests *continuity* over *conversion*.

Meanwhile, *unfinalizability* takes becoming and changing as given. For me, the quote from Renov below (in an article intended for a Jewish audience) sheds light on why or how he seems to determine so much more than I find necessary or comfortable according to family ties:

> We are who we are because of who they were. For the Jewish people (and here
> the contrast to Christianity comes to mind), the goal has always been more
> *continuity* than *conversion*, more transmission of values than epiphanous
> transformation.
> (Framework: 2008: pp. 55-65) (italics mine)

This quote drew my attention very late in my research, but I think it goes some way
towards validating my initial and continued feeling that Renov's label on some level
conveys a presumptuousness about family films.[68] Continuity and family ties will not be so
important for every filmmaker who features a family member in a film. *Conversion* is a
theme in my film: my main subject's political and religious beliefs have been in a state of
constant upheaval and renewal—conditions of literal conversion. Moreover, my film deals
on some level with those like myself who were not originally 'blessed' in Biblical stories—
and it would be difficult to argue that the originally unblessed would value continuity over
conversion.

Contrasting my film and filmmaking process against Renov's criteria has led me to think
that the designation increases the likelihood that filmmakers whose films are put into this
category will be mainly *refracted as* (domestic) players in a family script.[69] In almost all of
the examples Renov gives of domestic ethnography—*Tarnation* (2003), *Delirium* (1993),
Trick or Drink (1984), *The Rainbow Diary* (1994), *Tomboychick* (1993), *Nobody's Business* (1996),
Sink or Swim (1990)—parents or grandparents of the filmmakers are the focus, so the
filmmaker may be seen "as child" (Lebow: 2008: 42).[70] Thus, the label domestic
ethnography assumes a lesser degree of autonomy for the author, and therefore may take
away some of the author's freedom to 'give voice' to her film unimpeded.

Moreover, in the case of female filmmakers, the suggestion is of a daughterly voice. A
daughter is the least autonomous member of the traditional Patriarchal household—where
we may take for granted that the Father has the highest degree of autonomy and that he
inhabits "a world of maleness and action, aloof from *the reactive feminine,* which tends

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[68] The article in which this quote appears, "Family Secrets: Alan Berliner's Nobody's Business and the
(American) Jewish Autobiographical Film' (2008) includes numerous references to the importance of
continuity in Jewish families, and it is dedicated to Max Renov (1921–2005), who may be the theorist's father.
[69] *Refracted* refers to Renov's description of domestic ethnography in the Introduction to *The Subject of
Documentary*: "Self entails other; the other refracts itself" (2004: xiii:).
[70] Lebow is writing specifically about Jewish families and the use of archival footage, however, her
descriptions of "family autobiographies" (Lebow: 2008: 44) resemble Renov's domestic ethnography and she
discusses several of the same films. However she includes a discussion of *Daughter Rite* (which Renov does
not)—writing that Citron's film sets up "an oedipal coup" (2008: 45).

towards lamentation and numbing resentment" (Renov: 2004: 221) (emphasis mine): this is how Renov describes the familial milieu in the film *Sink or Swim* (1990), by filmmaker/daughter Su Friedrich, about her emotionally distant father. Though Renov is describing the world of the Friedrich's film, he is using his words, not hers, and I find it problematic that he does not add a caveat to his use of "the reactive feminine"—especially because it appears in a discussion of a *type* of film which he names *domestic*.[71] Women have been in the workforce for decades, undeniably inhabiting a "world of . . .action" (*ibid*); and filmmaking is a conscientious act. Moreover, filmmaking became an even more painstaking act for me, under (what I perceived as) the threat of the domestic ethnographic label.

This feeling of being threatened by a label is linked to Citron's performative devices in *Daughter Rite* (1980), strategies she used to avoid the designation *confessional* (as discussed in Chapter One). Interestingly, Renov does not include *Daughter Rite* (1980) in his discussion of domestic ethnographic films, though I think her film could qualify, as it is at least partly about her Mother. Her insistence that the work was influenced by interviews with many female respondents and thus has an explicit public relevance, may allow *Daughter Rite* to inhabit instead the realm of 'social science' (which I will address further below) (2004: 219). On the other hand perhaps the reason the film is not designated by Renov as domestic ethnography is because it is scripted, and this performativity makes it seem almost fictional. However, I think Citron makes it clear in her writing about the film that it is indeed autobiographical, and is about her family—though her calculated filmic 'voice' gives her space to make the "semantic sleight of hand" she finds necessary to avoid being labelled a confessor (in Waldeman and Walker: 1999: 276). I repeat her words from Chapter One because they mirror my feelings of being dogged by a diminutising label:

> the autobiographical act is a *political act*, something we risk losing sight of when women's autobiography is labelled confessional.
> (Waldman and Walker: 1999: 272) (italics mine)

Confession *is* "reactive" (Renov: 2004: 221): one confesses *to something* and, though the confessor may feel liberated, in the end she is apt to be seen as guilty and therefore in debt for any forgiveness. Meanwhile the "world of maleness and action" (Renov: 2004: 221) is

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[71] Though the list of domestic ethnographies above are by two male and two female filmmakers, Renov only briefly mentions films by male filmmakers and focuses his analysis mostly on female filmmakers in *The Subject of Documentary* and the chapter in the book he edited with Jane Gaines, *Collecting Visible Evidence* (1999); however he does focus more on films by male filmmakers in the *Framework* article (2008).

closer to the political act. Without Citron's performativity, she might be perceived as confessing her guilt for a lack of action—for (lazily or dumbly?) withering in (domestic) "numbing resentment" (*ibid*). Though Renov does not describe the guilefully constructed *Daughter Rite* as domestic ethnography, he asserts that the quasi-genre does employ a "sleight of hand" (2004: 226): its swindle is "the rendering public of private-sphere material" (*ibid*). However, Renov's strict cleavage of "private-sphere material" from the "public" is less advantageous to some than to others, as is family tradition or *continuity*. Some readers may find this line of argument to be hypercritical: however, as I made my film while delving into, reflecting on and writing about the aesthetic, ethical and *political* dimensions of my filmmaking process, I found the *domestic* label marginalising—especially as I wanted to speak to a global *political* movement seeking to disenfranchise half of the public by restricting them to the private-sphere.[72]

To justify women's exclusion from public life, Christian ethno-religious nationalists characterise women as less rational than men (Castells: 1997: 23) and Renov's designation gave me a similar feeling of being dismissed, and, as an author, somewhat negated. As the quote at the top of this section illustrates, Renov explicitly links the *domestic ethnographic* zone with "desire" "delirium" and "instability" (Renov: 2004: 219). For me, this description singles out makers of family films as *driven by* desire and not *driving* their films as authors. While I would not deny that unacknowledged drives and desires do motivate authorship—something McElwee ironically performs in *Sherman's March*—I think we need to look at how other types of filmmakers besides 'domestic ethnographers' are desiring before we can fairly claim that family filmmakers are more desiring and more unstable (Renov: 2004: 219) than others. The problem as I see it is one of overemphasis by association, wherein we define the author in relation to the milieu in which she is filming. Furthermore, this *delirious*, *unstable* 'domestic desire' can be too easily attributed to a film made in the domestic milieu—where the surface of *refraction* (Renov: 2004: xiii), the surface that *bends* the light and *imprints* the filmmaker's portrait, is *domestic*-shaped.[73]

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[72] Restricting women to the home is a primary aim of ethno-religious nationalist groups, globally. According to Michael Kimmel, "women's bodies and control over reproduction are central" to groups pairing ethnicity and nation; these groups also frequently refer to women's "proper sphere" and her "nature" as being most appropriate to child raising (in Ferber: 2004: 1 and xi: also see Castells: 1997: 23).

[73] Su Friedrich performs an acknowledgement to this problem in *The Ties That Bind* (1984), a film focussing on the filmmaker's Mother and filmed in the domestic milieu, but which addresses the political issue of German national identity during Nazi rule in Germany; however, my research has identified no mention of this film by Renov in his discussions of domestic ethnography.

Ethnographic 'Routes' of Authority

Technically, ethnography may be conducted in the developed world, in one's own home
and in one's own 'culture'—wherein *we speak to us*.[74] However, my research has led me to
think that more often *the ethnographic* does indeed construct narratives of authority-through-
travel (Buzard: 2003: 23) in which the ethnographer garners much of his or her authority
through his or her mobility. According to Arjun Appadurai, the ethnographer's descriptions
of the cultures he or she encounters result in their "confinement" and "imprisonment" (in
Buzard: 2003: 24) due to the ethnographer's power of "metonymic freezing" (*ibid*). On the
other hand, the documentary filmmaker or "ethnographer" may also be thought of as "a
traveller" according to Appadurai (Buzard: 2003: 24). After my research I have come to
think that the 'ethnographic' for me was in part my enjoyment of rural life and an
encounter in which conversation rather than television or other entertainment was the
objective—in addition to my interest or "fascination" with the far right (and indeed the far
left).[75] Thus, if I was any kind of ethnographer, I was also a tourist—who returned with a
"film souvenir" (Sobchack in Gaines and Renov: 1999: 252) imbued for me with
memories, but which will look to some like more exotic *miniatures* (Renov: 2004: 229).

However, before we accuse the ethnographer of merely touring, collecting souvenirs and
objectifying what he or she encounters through the practice of labelling, Renov assures that
the domestic ethnographer is "all but indemnified against the pseudopositivism of the
anthropologist who treats the human subject as scientific datum or statistical proof" (2004:
219). From the outdated positivist approach of considering the researcher/filmmaker as
completely separate from, say, documentary subjects, Renov seems to swing to the
opposite end of the continuum with respect to 'family filmmakers' and over-implicate their
desire. He writes, "the domestic ethnographer qua social scientist can never wholly elude
her analytic scene" (*ibid*) and this is why her desire is apparent for all to know. However, I
think Renov's comparison between the social scientist and the domestic ethnographer is
not wholly appropriate, as the latter, in Renov's description, is usually someone who
returns home to peruse the mystery of herself through a parent or grandparent. As a
putative domestic ethnographer myself, I did refer to the work of some sociologists, such
as Pierre Guerlain and Manuel Castells, but I did not set out with ideas of doing social

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[74] This refers to the formulation of address—who speaks to whom about whom—discussed for example in
Bill Nichols's *Introduction to Documentary* (2nd Edition, 2010: pp. 59-65)

[75] In the chapter 'Charged Vision: The Place o Desire in Documentary Film Theory', Renov relates
"fascination" (and "terror") to "the documentary gaze" (2004: 96).

science, so I feel the ethnographic emphasis is a superimposition that works somewhat like *metonymic freezing* (Appadurai in Buzard: 2003: 24).

Instead of comparing the 'family filmmaker' (or domestic ethnographer) to a social scientist, it would be more apposite to compare her (and her *desire*) to that of a filmmaker who does not feature family members. Take Errol Morris for example, who is Jewish and lost family in the Holocaust (Interview: Lybarger: 2000): It seems to me that his process of making a portrait of a Holocaust revisionist in *Mr. Death* (1999) would put him in a difficult-to-elude analytic scene, yet somehow Morris seems to have got away un-"entailed" despite the "charged" nature of the topic, which is perhaps accompanied by a "fugitive" (Renov: 2004: 103) desire to somehow bridge a gap between the Jewish person and the Holocaust denier—between the self and the 'extreme other'. [76]

As a filmmaker/author living as a national other, and feeling confined in an alienating stereotype, my initial authorial reaction against the label *domestic ethnography* was a personal resistance to having my film finalized, even before it was made, through yet another "classification" (Trinh in Nichols: 1994: 73) just as I had begun to understand the first. With the *ethnographic* description, this feeling became a concern that my film project would, as Trinh has noted, be seen as a "sampling" (Trinh: 1990: 92) of "superstitious" people (in Nichols: 1994: 78) who are also a "suitable target for externalization" (Caputi: 1996: 692-683) because they are easily constructed as misinterpreters of the world and "objective reality" (as the British broadcaster Louis Theroux said about "Americans" (Interview with Joyce: 1999).[77] Thus, I took my film as a case of domestic ethnography even though Renov does not list cousins specifically among the family member subjects commonly seen in domestic ethnographies.[78] I wanted to study this category and the implications it had for my filmic 'voice' instead of stumbling into a category after it was too late.[79] To put it differently, my resistance became awareness, through my study and experimentation: in

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[76] *Entailed* refers to Renov's description of domestic ethnography in the Introduction to *The Subject of Documentary*: "Self entails other; the other refracts itself" (2004: xiii:).

[77] My point here is not that I think Theroux believes Americans are generally without understanding, simply that he has said it in an interview. Additionally, it is my view that his BAFTA winning series *Weird Weekends*—although purportedly focusing on only *the fringe* in the USA, serves to mythologize (in the Barthesian sense) all Americans as *weird* (not just 'the fringe') especially in comparison to Britons.

[78] Describing the designation domestic ethnography, Renov writes, "*nominally*, at least, this mode of documentation takes as its object the father, mother, grandparent, child, or sibling who is *genetically linked* to the authorial subject" (2004: 218) (italics mine).

[79] Again, I am using 'voice' in the sense used by Nichols: "a text's social point of view, of how it is speaking to use and how it is organizing the materials it is presenting to us" (also described as "intangible") (in Rosenthal and Corner: 2005: 18).

response, I *performed* my authorship and wound up being more "expressive" and giving the film the "texture and density" Nichols indicates of fiction and performative documentary (2001: 134). Thus, for me Renov's domestic ethnography was like the sand that makes the pearl, the irritant that made me go deeper. Without this inconvenience, I would not have reflected as deeply and methodically, would not have performed authorship as I did, and would not have fallen into the tradition of critically reflexive documentary makers with distinct, unapologetic filmic voices whose resistance, ingenuity, wit, and risk-taking express the desire of multifaceted, less finalizable authors and subjects.

Contribution

My film is original research that I hope will be of interest not only to documentary theorists and practitioners, but also to theorists in the other fields whose concepts I have employed as a means of seeking workable, ethical solutions to representation. I hope that my film will hold interest for historians as well as general audiences internationally, as Jay is part of a global movement against perceived losses of national sovereignty, privacy and patriarchalism. Especially those interested in the influence of religion and religious myth on public life and those with radicalised family members or friends could be interested. Moreover, I have been influenced by and have carried forward the critically reflexive documentary tradition, incorporating Vertov's concern with audience awareness of the filmmaker's apparatus (as well as Morris's), Buñuel and Trinh's critiques of the ethnographic gaze, Rouch's sensitivity to radical intersubjectivity and his refusal to restrict himself to the 'rational', and McElwee and Citron's performative and provocative placement of the family and the political together; and Morris's celebration of many of these concerns.

Furthermore I have contributed a research design combining critical concepts tailored to explore and problematise radical intersubjectivity with an 'extreme other' documentary subject, familial or non-familial. I hope to have helped enrich research on the documentary encounter using a unique combination of concepts from documentary theory, ethnography, ethical philosophy, literature, psychoanalytic literary criticism and life writing. I also incorporated ideas from American studies/historiography of the American Right, alongside ideas from sociology linking *ethno-religious nationalism* with globalisation. By

assembling these ideas and customising them for my film practice, I also re-contextualised them. Additionally, my writing demonstrates the way these concepts were brought to bear on my original film as I was in the process of editing and constructing it, and points to the visible evidence of their contribution to the film's final shape.

Through shaping my film as 'an instance of the domestic ethnographic' but also challenging that label, I developed a critique of the documentary designation *domestic ethnography* centring on many of the self-reflexive concerns listed above, and focussing in on assumptions about familial *continuity* (Framework: 2008: pp. 55-65), the 'family (or culture) as self', and by extension the 'nation as self'. This exploration led me to investigate the connotations of the confessional and the ethnographic, especially for marginal authors, and link these fraught issues with performative expression. I asserted that performance secures independent authorship because through it the filmmaker can determine the voice of the film and even work around certain viewer (or critic) assumptions. I contributed the term 'extreme other' to describe a subject who entrances us with fascination because of their opposition to us, and therefore holds promise to help us understand something about ourselves. In critiquing the domestic ethnographic designation, I linked the 'extreme other' figure to the idea of desire in Renov's work, arguing that our fascination or desire for the non-familial 'extreme other' can *refract* (Renov: 2004: xiii) us just as a family member can, but possibly in a less restricted and more political way.

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Mr. Death **(1999)** [Film] Directed by Errol Morris. USA

Nobody's Business **(1996)** [Film] Directed by Alan Berliner. USA

Sherman's March: A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love in the South During an Era of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation **(1986)** [Film] Directed by Ross McElwee. USA

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Standard Operating Procedure **(2008)** [Film] Directed by Errol Morris. USA. Abu Ghraib Project

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