DOCUMENTARY FILM, OBSERVATIONAL STYLE AND POSTMODERN ANTHROPOLOGY IN SARDINIA: A VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted to this or any other University for another academic programme.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores issues of technique, methodology and style in ethnographic/documentary films, with a focus on Sardinia. How are cultural realities constructed in documentary and ethnographic films? In what ways do practical filmmaking strategies reflect wider epistemological questions and ethical concerns? The thesis examines the general stylistic principles that have guided the making of a substantial body of documentary films about Sardinia. Attention has been paid to a range of different methods used by a select number of documentary and ethnographic filmmakers, covering important theoretical points on the distinctive set of technical, aesthetic and ethical problems embodied in the epistemology of their filmmaking practice.

The study concludes that scholars should look for a more balanced fusion between film as a multisensory medium of ideas and forms of ethnographic enquiry conducted through language. The nonverbal elements and visual imagery in ethnographic/documentary films suggest obliquely that a kind of knowledge expressed in the concrete case requires an acknowledgment of domains of experience that often elude written expression.

INTRODUCTION Documentary Film, Observational Style and Postmodern Anthropology in Sardinia

> The only true voyage of discovery … would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another.
>
> Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past* (2006: 657)

> It is enough for me to hear someone talk sincerely about ideals, about the future, about philosophy, to hear him say ''we'' with a certain inflection of assurance, to hear him invoke ''others'' and regard himself as their interpreter—for me to consider him my enemy.
>
> E. M. Cioran (1998)

This introduction illustrates the concerns to be addressed in the thesis, and offers an outline of how those concerns are approached and investigated. Its aim is to locate the whole thesis within the context of a specific strand of visual anthropology, to present the methodological framework for the thesis, and to introduce some of the academic grounding to the arguments developed throughout this study. Because this work concentrates mainly on the epistemologies of filmmaking in relation to a select number of ethnographic and documentary films made in Sardinia, an overview of the history of documentary film in Sardinia will help to shed some light on the general context of the films analysed in this work. The introduction will also define the meaning of often used but seldom clarified words and justify terminological usages and distinctions.

1 Rationale of the Thesis

This thesis is specifically devoted to the largely under-researched area of documentary cinema in Sardinia. One of its aims is to redress the scholarly marginalisation of Sardinian documentaries, and to introduce a little known subject area to an academic audience. Sardinian documentaries have not received critical attention in English scholarship, and have received almost none in Italian (Olla 2008). The limited body of work undertaken so far has been undertaken mainly by non-academics. Historically, this lack of attention has to do with the consideration of documentary film as a

secondary field of Italian cinema (Pinna 2002) and, more specifically, with a lack of circulation and commercial availability of Sardinian documentaries.[1]

It may be helpful to clarify at the outset what this study intends to accomplish by stipulating what this thesis is not. The aim is not to write Sardinia's documentary film history or to assess the relationship between Sardinia's documentary films and Italian film history within a socio-historical perspective. Neither does this study purport to offer an encyclopaedic catalogue of Sardinian documentary cinema. The ultimate concern is to provide an overview of the development of documentary film in Sardinia, and to situate a certain kind of ethnographic cinema in Sardinia (observational, in particular) within the broad contemporary context of postmodern socio-anthropological inquiry, while simultaneously highlighting the innovations and potential of this kind of cinema.[2] This study is anything but a reception study providing some kind of sociological analysis of film audience. Its principal concern is the interpretation of the formal strategies and methodologies by which ethnographic and documentary films are actually made. It does not follow methodologies of research that seek to contribute to a quantitative or statistical survey of what Sardinians think about ethnographic films. The intention is to develop an analysis of films that highlights how different modes of interaction of text and images in film – but also camera style, shot duration, etc. – tend to structure the audience's consciousness in different ways for reasons related to epistemological considerations. More precisely, the task of this study is to explore issues of technique, methodology and style in ethnographic/documentary films, with a focus on Sardinia. How are cultural realities constructed in documentary and ethnographic films? In what ways do practical filmmaking strategies reflect wider epistemological questions and ethical concerns? The questions pursued in this study are difficult to answer in the abstract; they can only be answered by recourse to the films themselves. Specific examples will therefore be studied in depth. The aim will be to examine the general stylistic principles that have guided the making of a substantial body of documentary films about Sardinia. In particular, attention will be paid to a range of different methods used by a select number of documentary and ethnographic filmmakers, covering important theoretical points on the distinctive set of technical, aesthetic and ethical problems embodied in the epistemology of their filmmaking practice. To employ a case study approach might seem too

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[1] Perhaps there is also a third reason: the marginalisation of the study of Sardinia in Italian Studies Departments in the United Kingdom and the United States. One way of verifying this negative statement with more evidence would mean, for example, to provide a quantitative assessment of the number of Ph.D theses produced from research in Sardinia and compare their number to the ones produced from and about other parts of Italy. Certainly a fair number of English-speaking anthropologists have studied Sardinia. The JSTOR entry "Sardinia" seems to be mainly related to anthropology and archaeology.

[2] The approach to ethnographic filmmaking with which this thesis concerns itself is observational cinema as originally formulated through Colin Young's Ethnographic Film Training Program at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in the 1960s. The program's filmmaking approach was influenced by late Neorealism, U.S. direct cinema, French *cinéma vérité*, and the experiments of the *Nouvelle Vague*. See MacDougall (2002).

reductive, since the focus will mainly be on specific instances and single films. However, this is also a necessity, given the range of variations and examples in the history of documentary film in Sardinia.

The thesis is exclusively focused on films shot in Sardinia, and the identification of the body of films and directors to be studied and evaluated has been a complicated task. The individuation of a body of films in relation to the thematic preoccupations to be explored has been the result of painful decisions related to unavoidable gaps and omissions. Within this delimited study, attention has been paid almost exclusively to films by Fernando Cerchio, Raffaello Matarazzo, Gino Rovesti, Fiorenzo Serra, Silvio Torchiani, Vittorio De Seta and David MacDougall. The films to be examined in this thesis have been selected on the basis of their relevance within a larger discourse on the epistemology and ethics of filmmaking. It will become apparent that not all the films made in Sardinia that fall within this particular field of preoccupations have been explored. These exclusions do not undermine the arguments, but they may constitute a limitation of this research in the eyes of the critic. The critical analysis dwells disproportionately on some films over others; however, the selection of films to be discussed is justified by the implications of the overall approach. The overall structure of the arguments is justified on the basis of specific examples and close readings of single films. The choice of the films to be discussed is related to the inevitably partial nature of research – a necessarily selective endeavour. A thesis that includes all documentary films made in Sardinia is neither useful nor desirable, and certainly impossible and unmanageable. This is because of their sheer numbers, the fact that many are unavailable or lost, and because of the poor aesthetic and formal quality of a great deal of this production.

The modes of analysis used in this work do not follow the methodological guidelines of archival research and quantitative analysis that lead to a comprehensive catalogue of documentary films made in Sardinia. Results of this kind can be gleaned in the form of useful information from different sources: journals, newspapers, and a variety of other publications.[3] Instead, the methodological ingredients of this work focus on a qualitative and interpretive approach driven by specific theoretical concerns that attempt to open new spaces for film analysis – a critical perspective on film based on the dialogue between visual anthropology and film studies. A broad selection of stills from the films discussed will be provided. The images included in this work are integrated and linked to the main text by means of descriptive captions. Particular images and stills, many of which exemplify the orientation in the films, have not been chosen simply to fit the argument, thereby avoiding the tendency of making them subservient to the text of this work. The decision to "show" the images in the text instead of "using" them for the purposes of written

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[3] See Olla (2008) for a detailed catalogue of the documentaries made in the period 1899-2007.

analysis does not mean that the function of stills in the thesis is merely decorative, but rather that images should not be studied as illustrations subordinated to words. The relationship between textual discussion and the stills displayed can be considered as open. This move is coherent with the viewpoint and philosophical attitude that informs this study. It is also consistent with the idea that viewers should be allowed to make more of film images through their own interpretations – beyond comments made on them.

This study might appear to address a limited audience of academics specialised in the field of Italian studies, but this impression is not entirely correct. It can be better understood as an interdisciplinary inquiry that draws from different fields of scholarship, the most notable of which is visual anthropology, especially ethnographic film. Documentary film studies, cultural anthropology and philosophy have also exerted some degree of influence over ideas herein. The research orientation was shaped first of all by a background and training in philosophy; but also by the resonances of an upbringing in Sardinia and a passion for films. The research has been carried out in the UK, but also in Sardinia, where different materials and sources have been consulted.

1.1 Problems of Perspective

Implicit in the technical and strategic processes of filmmaking is a set of ideas about representation and experience. The thinking behind the organisation of a film and the technicalities involved in achieving a distinctive way of seeing also raise ethical problems (Nichols 1991: 77). Once one acknowledges that the epistemological and technical issues of filmmaking also constitute a moral problem, one can no longer think about film without paying some attention to the parallels between ethical norms and traditional problems of representation and aesthetics. No one would contest that similar subjects can be represented in different ways, emphasizing certain ideas and aspects at the expense of others, and that what is presented and how it is presented are influenced by one's philosophical orientation towards the world. There is extensive overlap between epistemological issues and technical procedures, and also between the many ways of using film to show the world and different relationships to authority.

The philosophical stances of filmmaking and the ethical issues implicit in the practical procedures by which films are actually made are often associated with the dynamics of anthropological cinema, a kind of cinema that struggles intensely with the relationships between self and other, sameness and difference, distance and closeness. Ethical and methodological criteria in filmmaking have been discussed at length by critics of the documentary form (Nichols 2001; Corner 2005; Pryluck 2005; Ruby 2005b), and especially by practitioners of the subgenre of

ethnographic film (Ruby 1991: 50; Minh-ha 1993). In the course of this study, constant reference will be made to the principles of a certain kind of anthropological cinema that combines questions of anthropological knowledge with humanist ethics. If ethical issues are particularly felt in the domains of ethnographic and documentary film, it is not because film critics are generally uninterested in the ethics of representation, but because the problem of an ethically informed ethnographic practice is central in the representation of other cultures.[4] The tension between "us" and "them," and the urge of contemporary anthropology to transcend binary dichotomies of self and other, are central features of the relationship between filmmaker and subjects in ethnographic and documentary films (Nichols 1981: 231).[5] One might say that the problem of a methodologically sound ethnographic film today is in large part the problem of an ethically sound film.

It is difficult to define the nature of ethnographic cinema and, on the whole, something similar can be argued in relation to ethnographic filmmakers, a community of practitioners who meet regularly at international conventions, anthropological film conferences and festivals, universities and para-academic institutions. The issue of what counts as an ethnographic/documentary film is a much-discussed issue in visual anthropology. The first ethnographic film was a four-minute piece taken by members of the Torres Strait islands expedition in 1898 (Henley 1985: 5; Grimshaw 2001: 19-24; Griffiths 1996-7). The aim of ethnographic films is to "*capture the feeling, the sounds, and the speech of a culture from the intimate ground of those inside it – and to present this culture to others for serious and intelligent evaluation*" (McCarty 2003: 74). A sensible definition categorises ethnographic films as those made with the intention of communicating cultural patterns (MacDougall 1998, 2006), whereas Henley makes the point that ethnographic films are those made "under the circumstances conforming to the norms associated with the characteristically anthropological fieldwork method of participant observation" (2000: 218). Karl Heider (1976), Jay Ruby (1975, 1981), Jack Rollwagen (1988: 287-315) and John Collier (1988) distinguished ethnographic films from documentaries and aesthetic cinema in general. They maintained that the criteria to define ethnographic films are those of satisfactory written anthropological research. Their definitions of ethnographic film tend to exclude films made by non-anthropologists lacking the *disciplined* way of filming of the visual ethnographer (Rollwagen 1993: 2; Rundstrom 1988: 317; Enevoldsen 2008: 413). For Rollwagen, for example, filmmakers without academic training would lack the "conceptual framework necessary to treat the subject matter in a way that is enlightened by

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[4] Documentary and ethnographic film are particularly contentious forms of expression. Unlike the actors in most fictional films, the subjects in documentary and ethnographic films are often not theatrical performers (Nichols 2001: 5).

[5] The intentions underlying the theory and technology of contemporary ethnographic cinema are related to the realm of ethical responsibility. In making an ethnographic film it is important to "ask whether the "reality" that is recorded on film is generally accepted by the people who appear in it and live that reality" (Hockings 2003: 523).

anthropological theory, ethnology and ethnography" (Rollwagen 1988: 295). Because the scientific credentials of anthropology have been associated with literate and articulate analysis, ethnographic film does not always meet the methodological expectations of the mainstream discipline (Michaels 1982: 133). For this reason, filmmakers such as Jean Rouch (1975), David MacDougall (1998, 2006) and Luc de Heusch (1962) have rejected the adjustment of ethnographic film to a codified filmic lexicon correspondent to the scientific standards of anthropology. Griffith writes:

> The claim that only individuals formally trained in anthropological research techniques can produce images of ethnographic validity has been challenged by many ethnographic filmmakers, who argue that ethnographic film practice is historically and discursively too variegated to be limited by rigid taxonomies (2002: 316).

Ethnographic films "cannot be said to constitute a genre, nor is ethnographic film-making a discipline with unified origins and an established methodology" (MacDougall 1978: 405). Historically, ethnographic films and documentary films have mutually influenced each other (MacDougall 1998: 226). Sardan writes:

> *Ethnographic film is part of documentary, because it depends upon the same constraints upon its forms of communication (in brief: cinematic language) and upon the same requirements as to its purpose (giving an account of a known or unknown reality)*" (2010: 14).

A difference between ethnographic and documentary films is that the former are generally driven by creative interests related to an intercultural exchange, a point developed later. In general, ethnographic film is considered to have a remarkably unbounded nature.[6] In defining ethnographic film, "all formal criteria (no matter how reasonable) will give rise to further decision problems" (Loizos 1993: 8).[7] Following Loizos, this thesis suggests that the "anthropological academy should drop its defensiveness about film as a learning and knowledge channel and start to see those films which are thoughtfully made, as valuable repositories of cultural knowledge" (1992: 50).

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[6] Audiovisual ethnography reflects the convergence of influences from different genres of filmmaking. Balicki writes that ethnographic film "refers to a large and amorphous category of audiovisual productions" (1988: 32).

[7] The difficulties associated with the definition of ethnographic film find resonances in Jean Rouch's writing. He wondered: "what are these films, and by what weird name shall we distinguish them from other films? Do they really exist? I still don't know" (Rouch 2003: 85).

2 Visual Anthropology

In what follows key terms will be defined from the outset, and some of the central issues and concerns to be addressed in this work will be signposted, before providing an historical overview of ethnographic/documentary film in Sardinia. The aim is to guide the reader as to what is being attempted in this thesis, and to clarify terms such as visual anthropology, and the difference between anthropological film and ethnographic film. The sea of influences that fall under the umbrella term of visual anthropology, an academic sub-discipline of cultural anthropology often identified with ethnographic film, is the result of an interdisciplinary dialogue whose blurred boundaries require periodic questioning. From a film studies perspective, the sets of creative interests of ethnographic cinema have always been difficult to grasp (Russell 2011: 149). One of the aims of the thesis is to integrate film studies and visual anthropology, and to establish useful synergies between two fields of academic expertise often conceptualised as two discrete disciplines.[8]

The field of visual anthropology has been essential in shaping this study, especially the work of David MacDougall, which is of fundamental importance to any discussion of documentary and ethnographic film in Sardinia.[9] Before the discussion and analysis of single films in later chapters, the field of visual anthropology needs to be defined more precisely. Visual anthropology can be defined as the product of the confluences of crucially different traditions of critical thinking and media practice. The field has two established journals, *Visual Anthropology* and *Visual Anthropology Review*, whereas the Society for Visual Anthropology (SVA) is one of thirty-eight sections within the American Anthropological Association (AAA). The first systematic attempt to investigate the range of practices associated with ethnographic filmmaking can be found in Paul Hockings' collection *Principles of Visual Anthropology* (1975) (Grimshaw 2011: 248; MacDougall 1998: 264). An interesting comment on the status of visual anthropology has been provided by MacDougall when he writes:

> There is mounting interest today in visual anthropology, even if no one knows quite what it is. Its very name is an act of faith, like a suit of clothes bought a little too large in the hope that someone will grow into it (1998: 61).

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[8] Gray writes: "For many people the words "anthropology" and "cinema" go together like bread and gasoline" (2010: X).

[9] The thesis draws on a wide range of theorists from different fields, but its general orientation is especially indebted to David MacDougall, a central figure in the development of ethnographic film, observational cinema and visual anthropology. As a theorist and filmmaker, MacDougall was one of the co-founders of the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at the Australian National University in Canberra. His most important publications are *Transcultural Cinema* (1998) and *The Corporeal Image* (2006), published by Princeton University Press. In collaboration with his wife Judith, he has made films in East Africa, Australia, India and Europe.

This can be further clarified. MacDougall's comment is no definition at all, even if the image of a suit of clothes may be a nice metaphor. Thus more suitable definitions of visual anthropology should be supplied.

Visual Anthropology is an established branch of cultural anthropology (Ruby 2005a) concerned with the "whole process of anthropology, from recording data, through its analysis to the dissemination of the results of research" (Banks and Morphy 1997: 2; Bexley and Fijn 2007: 279). This thesis is concerned with a limited set of predicaments and intellectual interests of visual anthropology. More specifically, it focuses on the practice of ethnographic filmmaking, excluding for example anthropological writings in visual anthropology devoted to the study of non-Western art. In this more limited and narrow sense, visual anthropology indicates a field at the intersection of cultural anthropology and documentary film.

It is difficult to define the field of visual anthropology and its relative lack of academic constraints. Despite the increasing number of books on visual culture, visual anthropology occupies a marginal position of power within the academy (Weinberger 1994: 3). Appendix 1 at the end of this work lists ethnographic film festivals and visual anthropology training programmes, offering an overview of the activities and vitality of an under-recognised area in the discipline of anthropology. Appendix 1 reflects the incoherent status of visual anthropology in the world of university and its unruly development as an interdisciplinary space that defies clear categorisation. Its aim is to document the amphibious nature of the field, its constant dialogue between the academy and the arenas of television, museum exhibitions and film production, and the liveliness of its festivals, conferences and symposia.

Faye Ginsburg (1998: 179-80) suggests that there are several reasons for the lack of full acknowledgment of the contribution visual anthropology makes to mainstream anthropology. These include the fact that films are often considered as transparent "research documents" subordinated to writing and that writing is the most important medium by which academic knowledge is acknowledged and reproduced. Most visual anthropologists are not able to engage in both filmmaking and academic writing. Historically, visual anthropology has reproduced itself orally through conferences and film festivals, and there is a relative lack of written documentation on these events. Publications in the field are relatively recent, and this partly explains the omission of visual anthropology from official histories. Most ethnographic filmmakers do not find (or look for) academic placement; this indicates a lack of dialogue between filmmakers and the academy

(Weinberger 1994: 4), but also that ethnographic filmmakers often do not transmit their skills and knowledge to university students.[10]

2.1 Rethinking Anthropology

It is possible to identify two strands within visual anthropology, the anthropology of visible cultural forms and the attempt to contribute to anthropology using visual media. The former is concerned with the analysis of visual artefacts, representations and practices, whereas the latter is the attempt to explore cultural worlds visually in order to produce anthropological knowledge. In this study, reference will be made to visual anthropology in this second sense, i.e. to indicate the production of visual ethnography rather than the textual study of visual systems and representations of other cultures. This definition of visual anthropology is concerned with the epistemological challenge consisting in the attempt to "rethink anthropology through the use of visual medium" (MacDougall 1997: 293). It suggests that film produces knowledge in its own right, posing a challenge to conventional textual-based forms of anthropological inquiry (Read 2005: 47). It invites exploration into how film can make a significant contribution to anthropological thought by becoming a medium of ideas and theoretical reflection (Strecker 2001; Griffiths 2002: xxi).[11] Conceived in this way, visual anthropology invites researchers to explore forms of understanding that "extend the possibilities of interpretation and analysis in anthropology" (Bexley and Fijn 2007: 281). The medium of film allows contrasting textual forms of anthropological thought with non-textual forms of understanding that can contribute to academic thought in original ways.

MacDougall writes that "visual anthropology may offer different ways of understanding, but also different things to understand" (2006: 220). Many of the relationships and aspects encoded in film and images can be represented in written works only with difficulty; their experiential quality requires interpretive capacities that differ from those involved in the analysis of expository prose. Thus visual anthropology is the attempt to offer a "way of seeing" that challenges the primacy of textual and verbal exposition in anthropological thought. This challenge is predicated upon the belief that film and images allow for a distinct way of knowing. The re-presentation of lived experiences and subjectivity through film achieves something often unavailable in textual and academic studies. Ethnographic film attempts to develop formal strategies that convey experiential

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[10] For more on the marginal location of visual anthropology within the broader disciplinary field of cultural anthropology see Ginsburg (1998).

[11] Lajoux writes that in general, as a form of scientific investigation in the social sciences, "ethnographic film is not considered to be a research tool" (2003: 165). That film is somewhat considered an inferior medium in the social sciences is apparent in the relatively low number of academic institutions in England and North America that allow their graduate students to present an ethnographic film as a thesis (Hockings 1988: 147).

knowledge in a way that verbal explanations do not. It accommodates relevant matter that remains extraneous in written ethnography, for the latter is not the mere translation of "culture" but the creation of a new object.[12] Knowledge created through film (and pictures) offers an infinite source of details that are specific to the visual as a mode of expression (Barbash 2001: 370; Brakhage 1985: 86). It is a kind of knowledge requiring a visual mind that pursues "other forms of (nonverbal) social practice and personal experience" (MacDougall 1998: 175). The particular power of ethnographic films, despite their limitations in conveying abstractions in the same way as writing, lies in their ability to reconstruct and recreate experiences as they are perceived in life.[13]

Visual media, such as film and video, are means of communicating meanings that affect the viewers perceptually. Visual anthropology relies on cinema's ability to foreground the senses and the body (MacDougall 1998: 61-3).[14] One might suggest that visual anthropology rests on a post-semiotic paradigm related to a new-found interest in the role of emotion and sensation in the constitution of culture (Barbash 2001; Fijn 2007: 306). Filmed ethnography expands the boundaries of anthropology by giving priority to the phenomenological aspects of culture. It provides a critique of semiotic and structuralist perspectives based on the spoken word by re-contextualising the role of corporeal embodiment in contemporary anthropology. This rethinking of culture emphasises the potential of visual media as particularly adequate in rendering sensory experience, especially vision and sound, but also smells and touch.[15] A certain kind of anthropology, rooted in participatory modalities, is especially committed to the study of people's ways of dwelling in the world, i.e. people's relationships to each other and to their place (Grimshaw 2006: 59). The anthropological tradition of participant observation has some bearing on the way in which audiovisual practices intersect with social experience in the effort to explore cultural patterns. Ethnographic works are convincing because they derive their knowledge from the experience of having "being there"

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[12] The words written on a page differ from the experience to which they refer; similarly, the passage from writing and printing into a visual form is not a matter of simple translation. Rather, the decoding of research findings from one medium to another involves the problems of an intersemiotic translation (Eco 2001).

[13] Vaughan suggests that there is "no sharp demarcation between misunderstandings of documentary and the misunderstandings of life" (1999b: 78).

[14] MacDougall writes that it is in the "realm of interpersonal relations that the visual complexity of the image has particular relevance for social research, as it does for cinema as an art. The possibility of grasping a complex social event simultaneously through its various dimensions of gesture, facial expression, speech, body movement, and physical surroundings is something that a text can approach only with great difficulty" (2006: 50).

[15] For MacDougall, ethnographic film "opens more directly onto the sensorium than written texts and creates psychological and somatic forms of intersubjectivity" (1998: 262). In recent years, an increasing number of studies in visual anthropology and the human sciences have focused on film as a method of exploring forms of knowledge that draw from the senses (Taussig 1992; Pink 2009; Pink 2006; Marks 2000; MacDougall 2006).

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(Clifford 1988: 22).[16] Similarly, ethnographic films are taken seriously because they derive from having lived and filmed among the subjects.[17]

The doubts and questions raised by ethnography on film in the contemporary postcolonial world are very much in line with the critique of written ethnography initiated in the 1980s (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988; Marcus and Fisher 1986).[18] Postmodern critiques stress that anthropology is a hermeneutic practice consisting in the writing of texts, or even a form of artistic experimentation with a strong narrative dimension. This critical perspective is marked by collective self-critique and reflection on the relational nature of cultural representation (Loizos 1993: 104).[19] It has "long been realised that any ethnographic text is a crafted job" (Firth 1989: 48). However, the crafted status of ethnographic film has not been recognised as having the same epistemological value as written ethnography (MacDougall 1992b: 91). Grimshaw writes: "anthropology has been much discussed as a particular kind of literary endeavour. What happens if we imagine it differently – as a form of art or cinema? Such a proposal may seem fanciful, perverse even, though it is not without precedents" (2001: 9).

2.2 A Difficult Marriage

Anthropology "had no lack of interest in the visual, its problem has always been what to do with it" (MacDougall 2006: 213). Banks and Morphy state that "anthropologists of art, dance, material culture, ethology, and non-verbal communication have characteristically used film and photography as tools in their research" (1997: 6). And yet many anthropologists still perceive ethnographic films as visual equivalents of written texts.[20] Despite the enthusiasm of anthropologists in the early years of the discipline, filmmaking and photography have been used mainly to illustrate some point in written monographs, i.e. as forms of visual support to existing anthropological ideas (Asch 1992:

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[16] The authority of anthropologists has more to do with direct and participant observation than with the style of a mode of thinking (Geertz 1988: 4-5).

[17] Both "ethnographic filmmakers and anthropologists are engaged and governed by the communicative conditions of human intersubjectivity" (Crawford 1992: 68).

[18] The work of Clifford and Marcus (1986) has been one of the most visible contributions in raising the issue of representation in anthropology. The discourse of anthropology today, fraught with political and moral dilemmas, is marked by "conceptual anguish" (Crapanzano 1992). In this intellectual climate, the anthropologist focuses on speaking along, or speaking with, rather than speaking for or about marginal voices (Ruby 1991).

[19] In stressing the anthropological insistence on the limited, hesitant understandings of other cultures, one should avoid the danger of considering all anthropologists together without recognising their different approaches. The intention here is to emphasise that ethnographic film's tension between science and aesthetics, knowledge and artistic expression, has been addressed in relation to postmodern ethnographic writing.

[20] The attitude towards ethnographic films is associated with a more general theoretical tendency to treat audiovisuals as a way to illustrate textual descriptions. Marc Henri Piault observes: "In anthropology, the image is often viewed with suspicion, at best considered a supplement to dominant verbal discourse or text" (2007c: 16).

203; Flores 2009: 99).[21] Academic anthropology has been unable to accept the potential of images and film as means of ethnographic research. This does not mean that mainstream anthropologists do not engage in visual anthropology, but that their use of visual media has remained limited (Henley 2000: 207). Hockings writes that the perusal of any history of anthropology reveals that "filming of behaviour has never made a major contribution to the development of anthropological or social theory: the subject is not even listed in the book indexes" (2003: 513). Films in general, including many ethnographic films, have been perceived as peripheral to anthropology and their contribution has been seen even as an impediment to the mainstream profession.[22] The anthropologist Maurice Bloch affirmed that "when anthropologists begin to dedicate a large part of their time to ethnographic films it is usually because they have lost confidence in their own ideas" (Houtman 1988: 20), whereas Bronislaw Malinowski wrote: "I put photography on the same level as the collecting of curios – almost as an accessory relaxation to fieldwork" (Malinowski 1935: 460). Comments such as these suggest that often social and cultural anthropologists have been relatively unenthusiastic about the potential of film.

Visual anthropology represents an open field of inquiry challenging established traditional areas of disciplinary specialisation. The dialogue between anthropology and visual anthropology has often been oppositional in nature (Coover 2009: 238). The limited use of media practices in cultural anthropology has been interpreted by visual anthropologists as a penalisation of the forms of knowledge produced by ethnographic film. They claim that anthropology should not monopolise ethnography as a logocentric activity (Taylor 1996) that diminishes the value of the kinds of epistemologies engaged with by film. For visual anthropologists film can be a serious epistemological mode producing knowledge in its own right rather than a tool with which to illustrate anthropological precepts (Ginsburg 1998: 179). They defend the idea that ethnographic filmmaking, even when not directly inflected by an explicit anthropological sensibility, can be a serious form of academic activity that embodies anthropological understandings, whereas certain sectors of the anthropological community persist in considering film as having a more limited function – i.e. a tool for teaching, a recording device (Ruby 1975: 104).

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[21] In a well argued article about the making of Paul Hockings and Mark McCarty's *The Village* (1969), an early example of observational documentary film about an Irish peasant community (180 persons) living in Dunquin, Hockings writes: "I knew all too well that the great majority of anthropologists took a dim view of ethnographic documentaries, even though some tended to use them in the classroom, particularly on the occasion of an unavoidable absence. I had too often seen people make a comment about someone's documentary that run like this: "Nice film…now when are you going to write the book?" (1988: 147).

[22] Hockings writes: "It goes without saying that a great majority of anthropologists in 1995 can still achieve all of their professional goals without the use of photography, and generally feel no need for a sub-discipline called Visual Anthropology" (2003: 507).

In a famous article entitled *Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words*, Margaret Mead denounced what she called the "criminal neglect" of the use of film and academic film projects. Mead wrote:

> All over the world, on every continent and island, in the hidden recesses of modern industrial cities as well as in the hidden valleys that can be reached only by helicopter, precious, totally irreplaceable and forever irreproducible behaviours are disappearing, while departments of anthropology continue to send fieldworkers out with no equipment beyond a pencil and a notebook, and perhaps a few tests of questionnaires – also called "instruments" – as a sop to scientism. Here and there, gifted and original filmmakers have made films of these behaviours, and here and there anthropologists who could make films or arrange for them to be made have appeared, labored, been complimented and cursed in the perverted competitiveness of the unstable and capricious market place (Mead 2003: 4).

Mead considered the situation of film in anthropological research as the "gross and dreadful negligence" of a discipline driven by "outmoded methods." She continued:

> I venture to say that more words have been used, spoken and written, disputing the value of, refusing funds for, and rejecting these projects than ever went into the efforts themselves. Department after department and research project after research project fail to include filming and insist on continuing the hopelessly inadequate note-taking of an earlier age […] Why? What has gone wrong? […] anthropologists not only have failed to support their instrumental potentialities but have continued to use questionnaires to ask mothers how they discipline their babies, words to describe how a pot is made, and a tangle of ratings to describe vocal productions. To add insult to injury, in many cases they have disallowed, hindered, and even sabotaged the efforts of their fellow research workers to use the new methods. I think that we must squarely face the fact that we, as a discipline, have only ourselves to blame for our gross and dreadful negligence. Much of this negligence has resulted in losses that can never be regained (Mead 2003: 4-6).

Never have academics been drawn to the visual as much as today, and yet the marginalisation of ethnographic film is partly the consequence of academic iconophobia among mainstream anthropologists. This sense of "iconophobia" has been defined as the "fear that films will somehow destroy or discredit their anthropological makers and viewers" (Taylor 1996: 67).[23] When anthropologists disapprove of the value of ethnographic film, their reactions sometimes indicate a

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[23] "Iconophobia" is the idea that images should be mastered by words: the iconophobes are those who believe that images should be subservient to words (Mitchell 1986). The abhorrence of imagery in ethnographic film is motivated by the fact that anthropologists "were made anxious by this cinema which eluded them, which was neither science nor mere exoticism, but which trespassed upon their dreams and memories of fieldwork" (Taylor 1996: 88).

sort of guild defensiveness – an "iconophobia" – which is at the heart of the marginalisation of ethnographic film (Grimshaw 2001: 3-5).[24]

3 Ethnographic Film: Between Art and Science

The marginalisation of ethnographic film is also related to the debate about the accuracy of recording for ethnographic research. This debate, with its categories of exactness and scientific process, hypothesis and proof, has often condemned the camera to the role of a mechanical tool limited to the informative. It "reflects an epistemology that maintains that reality is empirically observable and can be represented with some objectivity and accuracy" (Loizos 1993: 9). This interpretive framework derives from a concern with methodological injunctions about authenticity, anonymity and truthfulness. It is exemplified in Goldschmidt's definition of ethnographic film as that "which endeavours to interpret the behaviour of people of one culture to persons of another culture by using shots of people doing precisely what they would have been doing if the camera were not there" (1972: 1). This lineage of ethnographic cinema assumes that the camera can function like the instruments used in the natural sciences, i.e. the microscope or the telescope. The aim of the scientific ethnographic film is to "mimetically record reality as it exists before the neutrally observing camera" (Prins 2010: 283). Similar preoccupations were part of the paradigm of salvage ethnography. The belief in the role of the camera as a means of scientific visual documentation was dominant among earlier practictioners of the discipline: Alfred Haddon and Walter Baldwin Spencer were enthusiastic advocates of the use of film as a technical process for producing objective data.[25]

Contemporary visual anthropology has abandoned the emphasis on the transcendental impartiality of the camera. The way in which visual anthropologists think about the use of the camera today is heavily influenced by the postmodern sensitivities within the mainstream discipline. Issues of absolute ontological truths and scientific metaphors are now shuttled aside as old questions, in favour of a more sophisticated understanding of the camera as a tool of ethnographic representation. In the domain of ethnographic cinematography concerns about veracity are increasingly seen as part of a worn-out nineteenth century topic, a form of scientism, a

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[24] In her reflections on teaching visual anthropology at the University of Tromsø, Rossella Ragazzi writes that in the "common-sense understanding of many of our colleagues, including 'non-visual' anthropologists and ethnographers, and non-practicing cultural studies theorists, the visual publications produced by many faculty and students in our units are regarded with veiled indifference" (2007: 4).

[25] In the period 1895-1920 anthropologists believed in the crucial role of the motion-picture camera in anthropological research (Coover 2009: 246). In a letter to Spencer, Haddon wrote that the "kinematograph" is "an indispensable piece of anthropological apparatus." The original copy of the letter can be found in the Balfour Library, University of Oxford (Henley 2000: 208).

naïve and outmoded positivism that defines ethnographic film in functional terms (Loizos 1993). To speak of the camera as analogous to scientific instrumentation is to equate the camera to a sort of passive recording device. It is absolutely misleading to assume that documentaries and ethnographic films advance truth claims that are independent from the filmmaker's personal response to particular situations.[26]

The most common filmmaking style of ethnographic films made by visual anthropologists follows the modes of looking of observational cinema. Banks writes that observational cinema is a genre of films that "form the jewel in the crown of the ethnographic film canon" (1992: 124). The intellectual agenda of observational cinema is not motivated by neutrality and objectivity. Observational filmmakers refuse the style of the surveillance camera. It is true that observational films present empirical evidence of events, but this does not mean that they register experiences that happen to be recorded.[27] The observer in ethnographic films is not "a machine, much less a god, but an eye and mind behind the camera" (MacDougall 2002: 88). Rather than being transparent, observational films are self-consciously authored artistic works (Grimshaw 2001: 130; MacDougall 1998: 86). The prevailing strand of observational cinema rests on the subjective position, or vision, of the ethnographer-filmmaker (MacDougall 1998: 137; Pink 2001: 19). The figure of the visual anthropologist is not only necessary, but also present and felt within the film.

This conception of observational cinema is based on a revision and critique of the methodological assumptions and objectivist stance of US direct cinema (Rakic and Chambers 2009: 257; Read 2005: 62, n9). Practitioners of US direct cinema tried to maintain in their work a sense of duration of life caught unawares.[28] Their desire was to separate themselves as a "fly-on-the-wall" in order to achieve a direct identification of the eye of the spectator with the eye of the camera. The filmmaker was conceived as a masked presence recording the flow of events that unfold before the camera (Nichols 1991: 38). This type of orientation gave rise to an inconsistency within

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[26] An objective, invisible observer would lead to the creation of amorphous films. The filmmaker's personal curiosity presupposes criteria of judgment, and these influence the interpretation of events. The vision of the filmmaker is organised according to "motivated" criteria of significance and understanding. Film testifies to directorial presence and presupposes a subjective perspective rather than an objective observer with no preconceptions: the "cameraman is selective in regard to time, focus, angle and framing of each shot" (Hockings 2003: 515).

[27] MacDougall writes: "No ethnographic film is merely a record of another society; it is always a record of the meeting between a filmmaker and that society […] the filmmaker "acknowledges his or her entry upon the world of his subjects" (MacDougall 1998: 134). For the filmmaker to "evince no interests, no distinctive way of seeing things, to pretend to anonymity" is disingenuous, for the filmmaker is "already subjectively and physically implicated in the fabric of a film" (MacDougall 2002: 87).

[28] This approach is based on a filmmaking process that, going beyond the restrictions of preconceived ideas, represents a radical critique of idealist aesthetics (Croce 1922). Examples of direct cinema include Frederick Wiseman's *Titicut Follies* (1967), Charlotte Zwerin's and Albert and David Maysles *Salesman* (1969), Leacock and Chopra's *Happy Mother's Day* (1963), and Leacock, Pennebaker, Macartney-Filgate and Albert Maysles' *Primary* (1960). These documentary films were accepted as feature films to be shown in theatres, alongside the latest Hollywood films. For a comprehensive discussion of Direct Cinema in North America see Saunders (2007).

observational cinema, since objectivity and observation are quite different concepts.[29] A filmmaker, however invisible, cannot record the real unthinkingly.[30] Nowadays, it is incorrect to characterize observational cinema as masked or "fly-on-the-wall." This misconception was promoted by critics rather than by filmmakers. Observational filmmaker David Hancock, for example, says:

> We feel it is both limiting and naïve to pretend the camera isn't there (after all we are there) and believe that the interaction of the filmmakers with their subjects is part of the event or process being filmed and as such should be included – not as a superficial narcissistic acknowledgment of filmic illusion; but as part of the film's evidence in which the impact of the filmmaker's presence can be related to the apparent authenticity of what is documented" (Young 2003: 108).

Observational filmmakers would "certainly not make the naïve claim that their representations are objective in any sense, or that the evidence they present of the world has not been manipulated" (Henley 2007: 56). Ethnographic films do not merely record the facts; to some degree, all documentary filmmaking involves manipulation. For MacDougall, what is "disappointing in the ideal of filming 'as if the camera were not there' is not that observation in itself is unimportant, but that as a governing approach it remains far less interesting than exploring the situation that actually exists" (1998: 133). The observational filmmaker is typically engaged with his or her subjects, and this is revealed in observational films in many subtle ways. Young writes:

> the "fly-on-the-wall" philosophy always was a conceit. In fact, the ideal never was to pretend that the camera was not there – the ideal was to photograph and record "normal" behaviour. Clearly what finally has to be understood by this ideal is that the normal behaviour being filmed is the behaviour that is normal for the subjects under the circumstances, including, but not exclusively, the fact that they are being filmed. If we observe, as a matter of fact, that our filming CHANGES the behaviour, then we have to decide whether or not that change is relevant to the total portrait we are trying to make (2003: 101-2).

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[29] Carroll summed up the paradox at the heart of direct cinema, pointing out that "critics and viewers turned the polemics of direct cinema against direct cinema. A predictable *tu quoque* would note all the ways that direct cinema was inextricably involved with interpreting its materials" (Carroll 1983: 17; quoted in Winston 1993: 47).

[30] Hockings writes: "if an ethnographer comes to be accepted by a community, it is along with his clothes, his looks, his questions, his opinions and his equipment. The camera is really not something that intrudes any further into the social situation than does the operator himself. It is as objective as he is" (2003: 517).

In other words, observation and participation are not opposite modes; they are inextricably part of the same process.[31] What marks out observational films is their creative tension between observation and participation in the attempt to catch an action, or a series of actions, on the run. The camera implicates the filmmaker's subjectivity. Filming in an observational manner means to be close to the subjects, but also being involved with the processes of their lives.[32]

Visual anthropology is a personal and artistic endeavour in which the relationship between art and science is never settled (Brutti 2008: 281; Kapur 1997: 169). The genre of ethnographic film is inflected by anthropological theory and simultaneously connected to the personal vision of the filmmaker. Every ethnographic film embodies a mixture of creation and reproduction, knowledge and aesthetics. The dichotomy between invention and discovery has often resulted in the vilification of the aesthetic possibilities of film. Its consequence has been a reluctance to engage in the exploration of the strategies of presentation that result from the dialogue between the domains of anthropology and art. As Brigard writes, "much work remains to be done on the theoretical underpinning of ethnographic film, beginning with the problem of reconciling often rivalrous systems of science and art" (2003: 35). The crossing and transcending of borders between art and science through audiovisual media represents a fertile path between formal academic practices and the potentially reinvigorating input of more subjective forms of engagement (Schneider and Wright 2006). Instead of relegating cinema to the domain of the aesthetic, visual anthropology conceives of ethnography in larger terms, raising the possibility of more evocative visual approaches in the study of cultural patterns.

The distinction between documentary films and ethnographic films, despite their commonalities and extensive overlap, needs further clarification. An important difference between ethnographic film and documentary has to do with artistic engagement (Coover 2009: 329). Visual anthropologists tend to distance themselves from the category of documentary film, for the latter is often identified with current forms of broadcast journalism (MacDougall 1998: 229). Because visual anthropology is conceptualised as a serious attempt to open the potential of discovery in film, its practitioners reject the domesticated and predictable possibilities of television journalism. The aesthetic strategies of television journalism are criticised for their circumscribed topical interests and their insistence on objective documentation.[33]

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[31] Excellent sources for learning more about the misconception that identifies observational cinema with transparency and objectivity are in Grimshaw and Ravetz (2009) and Henley (2009). This point will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 4.

[32] MacDougall writes that the "impossibility of maintaining anonymity in films may be one reason why a focus on individuals has been more common in ethnographic films than in ethnographic writing" (2006: 55).

[33] MacDougall writes: "television producers insist on what they call "signposting," to make sure that no one, not even the proverbial little old lady in Nottingham, will miss the point. That stance, with its implicit fear of film's open-endedness, represents a regressive tendency to return film to the status of text" (2006: 41).

The heuristic distinction between ethnographic and anthropological film needs to be clarified. The difference between an anthropological film and an ethnographic film denotes a "difference of intention as well as a difference of emphasis" (Henley 2000: 217). It reflects the distinction between anthropology and ethnography. The former is concerned with general theoretical issues, whereas the latter tends to focus on the description of particular cases. An anthropological film usually explains abstract issues through voice-over commentary, whereas an ethnographic film uses visual images to explore concrete situations.[34] However, a film concerned with a specific ethnographic case is also anthropological, as it is always informed by the implicit theoretical stance of the filmmaker. Thus the conventional distinction between anthropological and ethnographic film is blurred, and in the course of this study the established practice of using the adjectives "anthropological" and "ethnographic" intercheangeably will be followed. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is important to distinguish between films that illustrate existing anthropological knowledge from films that explore new anthropological territory through visual media. The former will be referred to as illustrative films or "films about anthropology" and the latter as revelatory films or "anthropological films." To a large extent, the aim of the thesis is to contrast these two kinds of film, and to provide a theoretical defence of the latter in the Sardinian context.

3.1 Observational Style

Film is a "means – a very good means – of recording and preserving observations of events" (Hockings 2003: 514). Ethnographic films make an original contribution to anthropological knowledge through a process of observational inquiry. They attempt to break new anthropological ground through a process of inquiry that tries to explore new anthropological territories in the forms of showing and directed seeing. This section focuses on the filmmaking style of observational cinema and its critique of the omniscient voice-over commentary, also known as the Voice-of-God, to give it its well-known epithet.

Traditionally, the availability of lightweight equipment and synchronous sound recording allowed filmmakers to shoot on locations previously inaccessible. Young writes:

> groups of documentary filmmakers went ahead of the available technology in the early sixties and produced for themselves portable, relatively quiet professional cameras with synchronous sound

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[34] The terms "voice-over" and "voice-off" are sometimes used interchangeably (Bonitzer 1975); however, "voice-over" should be distinguished from "voice-off." The latter allows the camera to display a speaker who is only temporarily off-camera, whereas the former has an origin that cannot be shown in the space of the screen by modifying the camera position.

units. They did so because they wished to shoot people in natural surroundings doing what came naturally (2003: 102).

Portable cameras and synchronous long shots created an opportunity to explore the realm of psychological introspection; spontaneous dialogue added biographical notes and elements of personality to the emotional density of conversations.[35] A new filmmaking approach emerged, an approach based on a "stance of humility before the world" (MacDougall 1994a: 31). The advocates of the new approach accused the Voice-of-God of presenting living people as raw material for the illustration of theories. The most important aspect of observational cinema is that it rests on a moral position that differentiates it from other styles of documentary film. This moral position derives from the presupposition that films about real people should be fair to them, but also from the recognition that "the subjects' stories might be more significant than those the filmmaker might wish to tell" (Henley 2007: 56). The central tenet of the observational doctrine is that films about human beings are supposed to take their mandate from the people in the film rather than from the professional commentary of the observer (Young 2003), mainly because such a mandate would restore the reciprocity between spectator and film subjects (Taylor 1996: 75). This implies a sensitive engagement on the part of the filmmaker in the attempt to "devise ways of bringing the viewer into the social experience of the film subjects" (MacDougall 1998: 134). For observational filmmakers, the subjects should be presented and understood in the social and material context of their lives. This includes "how people and things are culturally organised in their social settings, but also how individuals perceive their surroundings and their fellows in physical and sensory terms" (MacDougall 2006: 38).[36] Thus observational films allow the subjects to express themselves with spontaneity (Young 2003: 107), and this partly explains the episodic and open-ended quality of observational narratives.[37] The techniques of inquiry of observational cinema are not word-driven, but tend to get "away from ex cathedra explanations and rely instead upon the self-revelation and social interactions of the people portrayed" (MacDougall 1998: 143). Features of observational films are also the refusal of narration, planning, staging and re-enacting.

Observational films *are* edited, but much of the editing takes place through the viewfinder rather than through the synthesis typical of fictional scene construction. The question of what to

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[35] Factors that have played a role in the introduction of the observational style are also the distrust of media authority, the spread of language advertisement and the unpopular memory of the Nazi propaganda (Aufderheide 2007: 47).

[36] Observational films "constantly drift toward the actual complexity and indeterminacy of the experienced world" (MacDougall 2006: 41). MacDougall writes that films, "despite their fragmentation, are permeated with the imprint of human environments. Each social landscape is a distinctive sensory complex, constructed not only of material things but also of human activities and the bodies of human beings themselves" (2006: 58).

[37] Marhsall writes that the advantage of shooting in the observational style is that "you do not tell people what to do or say" and "try to let the people being filmed express and explain themselves through their own words and actions" (1993: 72).

include and what to omit in a film has to do with selection in the edit suit but also with shooting techniques. Editing and shooting are part of the same selection process. Most of the fictionalisation of filmic materials derives from editorial structuring; the conventions of fiction fragment the footage and manipulate the chronological structure of events. Hockings writes that it is "inadmissible for the ethnographic filmmaker to stray from his subject or subjects, to editorialize blatantly" (2003: 515). Thus editorial interventions can be limiting in the recreation of actual events, the integrity of which is better preserved by the conventions of phenomenological realism. Marshall writes that in observational filmmaking "interpretation follows filming; major selection takes place during shooting and cutting instead of in scripts written beforehand" (1993: 72). Instead of constructing the narrative by stitching together different materials to create a dreamlike effect, observational editing style preserves the sense of something happening in real time. The style of observational films is resolutely realist.[38] The unity of time, place and action is generally respected.[39] The respect for real time is undoubtedly related to the impulse of recording with spontaneity the people at the other end of the camera. It is an integral part of the respect for ordinary individuals as individuals, and of the process of highlighting their points of view and beliefs. Because the cumulative chronology of observational films involves no general statements, the presentation of the topics under investigation follows a more complicated and less conventional structuring (Hockings 2003: 523). The order of scenes in observational films is frequently decided by thematic concerns rather than chronology. Many of the scenes are not in strict chronological order; the structural logic is to organise the scenes according to a certain flow of understanding, and to permit significant juxtapositions between them. The emergence of a thematic reality coalesces in a naturalistic manner from the different threads that constitute the films.[40]

Observational cinema demands an active and engaged audience, one that is sensitive to the resonances of the visual, and yet much of the content of an observational film is either hidden or invisible. Films represent the exterior properties of the world, rendering visible the external manifestations of culture, but they also express nonverbal and implicit knowledge emphatically through metaphorical uses of the image. The exploration of the largely invisible dimensions of the visible and auditory world is one of the central problems facing filmmakers working

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[38] Henley writes that empirical modes of documentary are "predominantly realist with respect to their style and predominantly empirical with respect to their rhetoric" (2007: 56). The ethnographic filmmaker working observationally is often theorised as having the "moral responsibility to record and interpret local life ways with a maximum of empirical fidelity" (Balicki 1988: 34).

[39] The coverage of spontaneous interaction in observational films privileges unbroken sequence shots to preserve the internal time of events in the image-track. Marshall writes that "visual gimmicks like wipes, flips and multiple images reduce film content" (1993: 106).

[40] The film construction gives coherence to different fragments of experience, letting a later sequence explain an earlier one through processes of ordering and selection. Henley writes that the ethnographic filmmaker "typically seeks to convince the spectator of the validity of his or her understanding of the subjects' world by re-presenting evidences of that world in a naturalistic manner" (2007: 56).

observationally. The evocation of intellectual underpinnings and intangible cultural practices through a series of sequences that move from event to event is especially difficult: "one culture's gesture of 'come' is another culture's 'go away'" (Hastrup 1992: 10). Film copes well with the concrete and the specific, but it is often less successful when it has to cope analytically with abstract realities impinging upon events.[41] This can be a limitation of the observational approach, but also its strength. Film produces a kind of knowledge that oscillates between the literal and the metaphorical, stimulating the thought of the audience beyond abstractions. This strength of film is often underestimated: "because film deals so overwhelmingly with the specific rather than the abstract, it is often considered incapable of serious intellectual articulation" (MacDougall 1998: 131).[42] This is a serious mistake. It is "counterproductive to belittle the filmmaker because he cannot generalise and theorise in the manner of many writers of ethnographies. He is doing other things, and doing them well much of the time" (Hockings 2003: 519).[43]

Much of the value of the cumulative understanding emerging from observational films lies in their capacity to elicit emotion. This ability of observational cinema is especially valuable, for it lets spectators share what the subjects in the film are thinking and feeling. Anthropological film artefacts, like motion pictures in general, present life-like elements in an experiential fashion that emphasises the emotional life of the subjects. The combination of rapport and compassion with the subjects touches the spectator at the level of feelings, but it also engenders a deeper form of experience. It corresponds to profound forms of understanding in which the resonances of feeling and thinking are equally significant. This empathetic involvement relies on multiple perceptual modes and plays a part in dissolving traditional dichotomies between body and mind, emotional and intellectual. Responses to the uncertainties of people and situations involve the capacities for listening and seeing, as well as for increasing knowledge.[44]

A brief historical overview of the development of ethnographic/documentary film in Sardinia now follows. The aim is to indicate the general coordinates of the thematic evolution of documentary and ethnographic cinema in Sardinia, with some attention to the legislative framework and context of production. Most of the historical background is contained as an overview in this

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[41] Images enable one to learn from what one sees, but there are serious limitations in the information conveyed through visual images. Certain topics, i.e. statistical and numerical abstractions, are difficult to convey visually and can be more adequately covered in writing. In Marshall's terms, the "camera can only record events that happen, and only behaviour it is allowed to see" (1993: 73).

[42] The German critic Walter Benjamin, for example, writes: "it goes without saying that photography is unable to say anything about a power station or a cable factory other than this: what a beautiful world! … it has succeeded in transforming even abject poverty, by recording it in a fashionably perfected manner, into an object of enjoyment" (1978: 230; quoted in Mermin 1997: 45).

[43] For Hockings, film "does not generalise as a written monograph does" (2003: 515).

[44] This view is also reflected in the thinking of Sergei Eisenstein (Ruby 1982: 121).

Introduction, with the exception of Chapter 2, which is presented in a more chronological mould with respect to fascist documentaries.

4 Historical Overview

This research explores a series of interconnected themes in the interrogation of individual films. The approach of this study follows the analysis of the critic rather than that of the expert providing historiography. The thesis follows a roughly chronological perspective in the analysis of the range of films examined in each chapter but the structure of the thesis is fundamentally thematic.

Although Sardinia does not have a historically established cinematographic tradition and the marginality of its native audiovisual tradition has been recognised, filmic representations of Sardinia are as old as the seventh art (Podda 1982; Olla 1988). The first films made in Sardinia are five Lumiére actualities (55 seconds each) which are part of the series titled *Viaggio dei reali in Sardegna* (1899) (Cau 1995).[45] Apart from these earlier attempts belonging to the archaeology of cinema, Sardinia remains an area of lacunae in documentary film history during the first two decades of the last century (Olla 1995: 25). From the list of titles of films that have never been seen, it is possible to infer that the image of Sardinia was quite stereotypical, and limited to picturesque scenes of feasts and immutable customs.[46] It is the image of a culture out of time that attracts anthropological attention for its folkloric traditions and the wilderness of its environment.

In the 1920s the fascist regime influenced the production of documentaries. Documentary filmmakers produced their films under the control of fascist propaganda.[47] The Istituto Luce produced many propaganda documentaries and newsreels, the aim of which was to de-emphasise, and omit, the cultural differences between Italian regions (Murru 2000). Themes such as banditry and rural backwardness were systematically avoided. Because the fascist regime was interested in a national project of unification, exegetic commentaries and voice-overs described a presentable and safe portrait of Sardinia's condition. The Sardinian documentaries of this period focus explicitly and

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[45] The titles of the actualities made by the Lumière included in the series *Voyage de LL. MM. en Sardaigne* are: *Cavalcade Historique en Sardaigne, Cuirassés de l'escadre française sur les côtes de la Sardaigne, Cuirassés de l'escadres Italienne, Inauguration du Monument de Victor-Emmanuel à Sassari; Visite de LL. MM. à la mine de fer.*

[46] Despite the improvements in recent years, many documentary films about Sardinia are not readily accessible to critics and others for viewing because of their unavailability. Among these is the list of ethnographic materials that Lamberto Loria, the founder of the *Museo Nazionale delle Arti e delle Tradizioni Popolari* in Rome, gathered for the *cineteca etnografica nazionale* from 1906 onwards (Olla 1988: 170; Rossi 1977). The list includes the following titles: *La Sardegna usi e costumi; Estrazione, lavorazione industria del sughero; Vedute di caccia; Visita a una miniera d'argento; Pesca del tonno; Pesca in alto mare; Conservazione del pesce; Pesci e pescatori; Piccoli mestieri del mare; Miniera di mica; Pesca della ragusta; Garibaldi in Sardegna (Pellegrinaggio nazionale); Visioni Italiche; Contrade d'Italia; Sinfonia marina.*

[47] Ben-Ghiat writes: "After the establishment of a documentary production centre (the Istituto Luce) in the early 1920s, newsreels and instructional movies became frontline weapons in the *bonifica* campaigns that Mussolini's government unleashed on Italians" (2001: 170).

at length on institutional images of the visits of the Savoia (the Italian Royal family) and of *Il Duce*, and on those of political authorities and military parades, monument inaugurations and the construction of river dikes (e.g. Tirso, Coghinas). The most important Sardinian documentaries of the *ventennio*, *Mussolinia di Sardegna* (1933), *Carbonia* (1941) [Figures 1 and 2] and *Fertilia* (1942), examined in Chapter 2, address the themes of progress of the agrarian civilisation and the urban spaces of the *città di fondazione* (New Towns), the cities founded *ex novo* by the fascist regime (Pellegrini 2000). Images of *sardità* appear only in the form of picturesque costumes and traditions of the past, which contrast with the celebration of the new cities.

Figures 1-2. Stills from *Carbonia* (1941), directed by Fernando Cerchio. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

The post-war period, with the eradication of malaria and the approval of the *Statuto Speciale della Sardegna* in 1948, marks the beginning of a long process of transition towards modernisation. Albeit in a different context, the formal model of documentaries remains the same: voice-over commentary continues to overwhelm images which take on a purely illustrative function. Despite the formal continuity between the *ventennio* and the period immediately afterwards, the reasons for this continuity in each period are slightly different. Whereas in the fascist period the structure of documentaries is primarily influenced by the monopoly of fascist propaganda, in the post-war period the structure of documentaries is influenced by new laws that regulate the production of documentaries.[48] Here reference is being made to the *art. 8* of the *decreto 5.10.1945 n. 678* and to the corrections introduced with the *legge 16.5.1947 n. 379* and the *legge 29.12.1949 n. 958* (Olla 1995: 27-8). Fascist and post-fascist productions of documentary films in Sardinia were based on

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[48] Aufderheide writes that the production of documentaries can be encouraged or discouraged through government regulations and sponsors (2007: 19-20).

different laws; in this respect it is worth mentioning the economic support guaranteed by the Sardinian Regional Council through the *legge n. 17, 1950*, the *legge n. 11, 1953*, and the *legge n. 7, 1955* (Olla 1988: 171). The legislative context establishing the standard duration of documentaries – the so-called "*formula 10*" – also explains the abnormal increase in the number of documentaries, as well as their poor quality (Carpitella 1997: Figus 2005: 29). In Sardinia the logic of the "*formula 10*," the effect of the abovementioned legislative context, has led to the production of approximately 300 shorts lasting 10 minutes each. One of its consequences has been the creation of a protectionist system of incentives for the production of documentaries: the *modello affaristico* or *modello assistito* (Olla 1995: 28). This system prevented the market from influencing the thematic and stylistic quality of documentaries. In effect, the impulse driving the production of documentaries had less to do with a genuine interest in the exploration of experiences and places than with the profitable opportunities established by law (Carpitella 1997).

In the 1950s most documentaries were shot by Italian directors. A number of filmmakers from the mainland, encouraged by the subsidised system of documentary production, portrayed Sardinia within a hackneyed picturesque scheme.[49] The productive model contributed to the affirmation of a monotonous filmmaking method. The formal predictability of this method led to the creation of an undifferentiated series of documentaries. The constraints imposed on the cameramen by the producers presented an obstacle to the undertaking of less conventional projects. In addition to this model of production, documentaries were subsidised through public regional bodies such as ETFAS (*Ente per la Trasformazione Fondiaria e Agraria in Sardegna*), the regional body for the implementation of agrarian reforms and projects of land reclamation, and ESIT (*Ente Sardo Industrie Turistiche*), Sardinia's tourism promotion agency (Olla 1995: 30). The Sardinian Council was clearly interested in promoting a positive image of its political action. Until the 1960s the most important among the very few Sardinian documentary filmmakers are Fiorenzo Serra (Floris 2005; Olla 1996; Olla 1998; Olla 2007; Novellu 2010), Enrico Costa and Antonio Cara. Costa and Serra are the only Sardinian independent documentarists who started their own production companies. Their documentaries reflect many of the shortcomings of the national production: their tendency is to record Sardinia's folkloric traditions, as well as the social changes that occurred after fascism, with a neutral style of documentation. Among the exceptions to the rule are Vittorio De Seta's *Pastori a Orgosolo* (1958) and *Un giorno in Barbagia* (1958), two documentaries that served as a preparation of *Banditi a Orgosolo* (1961), probably the most famous among the works of the

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[49] The people in these films were spoken about on the soundtrack but rarely spoke themselves. They seldom emerged as individuals but tended to be observed as anthropological examples of social roles – mother, father, child, artisan, farmer, priest. Their emotions and intellectual lives also remained a mystery (MacDougall 2002: 87). In this quotation MacDougall is not referring to early documentary filmmakers in Sardinia; rather, he is writing about early ethnographic and documentary films more generally.

Sicilian director. This work, examined in Chapter 3, despite its fictional elements, represents a visual landmark destined to be discussed for years to come.

From the 1950s there are also some examples of "foreign" gazes on the island. The most authoritative among these is Walt Disney's *Sardinia* (1956), also known with the title *Sardegna antica*, a forty-minute ethnographic documentary included in *People & Places*, a series of eighteen films made between 1953 and 1960 about exotic world cultures.[50] *Sardinia* contains spectacular images of the prototypical Sardinian portrayed within the abstract vision of archaic customs and historical immobility, examined in Chapter 3 with reference to Fiorenzo Serra`s *Il regno del silenzio* (1954-62) and Ubaldo Magnaghi`s *Viaggio in Sardegna* (1953). The most important film that documents a non-Italian perspective on Sardinia is the ethnographic footage recorded by Andreas Fridolin Bentzon (Lobetti 2010), a Danish ethnomusicologist who went to Sardinia with his 16mm camera to study the music and techniques of the *launeddas*' players.[51] The importance of this material is twofold. Firstly, there is no equivalent visual study on the sound of the *launeddas* made by Sardinian or Italian filmmakers (Serra and Olianas 2006). Secondly, traditional musical sounds, as with sound in general, are little explored in ethnographic documentaries about Sardinia, with the important exception of the ethnomusicological research on the *launeddas* made by Diego Carpitella and titled *Sardegna: is launeddas* (1982).

Until the 1960s the approach of documentary filmmakers allowed no intimacy with the Sardinian subjects, who remained strangers to the spectators. As a general rule, the Sardinian was an anonymous figure overwhelmed by the language of voice-over commentary. The explanatory script was imposed because often the author wrote the literary text without looking at the images or even before the images were shot (Olla 1988: 172). This had more to do with a convenient and economically opportunistic approach than with a technical impossibility of recording dialogues. The separation between an already written commentary and a collection of interchangeable images, often recycled in different films and organised in a fairly predictable way, played a role in the creation of the "spazio dell' 'irrealtà' assegnato alle immagini della Sardegna" (Bernagozzi 1979: 89). Just like Italian documentaries produced under the same political and economic conditions, Sardinian documentaries had been incapable of representing the island in a way that goes beyond a collage of images commented on by the voice of a speaker reading aloud the literary text of the script (Pinna 2010: 42-3).

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[50] Some of the films in the series are *The Alaskan Eskimo* (1953), *Siam* (1954), *Arizona Sheepdog* (1955), *Switzerland* (1955), *Men against the Arctic* (1955), *Samoa* (1956), *Disneyland U.S.A* (1956), *The Blue Men of Morocco* (1957), *Lapland* (1957), *Portugal* (1957), *Wales* (1958), *Scotland* (1958), *The Ama Girls* (1958), *Seven Cities of Antarctica* (1958), *Cruise of the Eagle* (1959), *Japan* (1960), and *The Danube* (1960).

[51] The *launeddas* is an ancient three-pipe instrument that appears also in Sardinia's ancient bronze figurines, the *statuette nuragiche*.

In the 1960s there were a number of significant changes. Public television challenged documentary film as an autonomous genre of filmmaking (Pinna 2010: 11). Television reportages, *inchieste* (special reports) and *documentari d'attualità* (current affairs programmes) replaced the propagandist model of the documentaries promoted by the Sardinian regional council. The *Inchieste di TV 7*, such as *Ti sbatto in Sardegna* (1967), *Il No di Ozieri* (1968) and *Il carbone sbagliato* (1969) were the most interesting examples of a broader context of television news, which included national public broadcasting as well as private local channels.[52] Television broadcasts explored the new tourist industry on the Costa Smeralda, in northern Sardinia, and the birth of the first industrial settlements, which emphasised the traditional gap between urban life and rural traditions. Despite the increasing attention towards topical issues, the archaic image of Sardinia survived throughout the 1960s in the news about the recrudescence of banditry. In parallel with these barbaric connotations, the idyllic image of Sardinia is one of the themes of nineteenth century travel writing about the island, and can be found in many tourist advertisements (Olla 1995: 31). This roughly reflects a sort of incapacity to go beyond the projections of an archaic and mythical representation.[53] The 1960s were also the decade of the *Piano di Rinascita Economica e Sociale della Sardegna* (1962) – a government project of social and economic development. The Sardinian Council encouraged the production of documentaries with an explicit political intent, which were accompanied by their politically engaged counterparts: the *contro-inchieste* (political films of counter information).[54] In this period it is possible to identify a group of documentaries that, despite their lack of intentional scientific research, present materials that help stimulate an ethnographic understanding of traditional feasts, dances and customs of the archaic Italian South (Figus 1995: 30). The most interesting examples are Giuseppe Ferrara's *Il ballo delle vedove* (1962) and Luigi di Gianni's *La Punidura* (1959).[55] These documentaries can be interpreted in the context of the discussions about the extinction of the rural world influenced by the ethnographic research of Diego Carpitella and the "inspiration of Ernesto De Martino, who had been the great pioneer for Italians, opening up the ethnography of magic and religion in southern Italy" (Lewis 1996: 22).

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[52] Examples of *inchieste* and *rotocalchi* include *Sette giorni in Parlamento. Un'isola e il Parlamento* (1969), *Ergastolano innocente* (1972), *Banditismo in Sardegna* (1973), *Pesci grossi e pesci piccoli* (1975) (which belong to the series *AZ – un fatto come e perché*), *I giovani di Ollolai* (1967), *Rapimento in Barbagia* (1968), *Cronache italiane: Cagliari in alto a sinistra* (1969), and *Parla un Bandito. Inchiesta a Orgosolo* (1962), *Hanno fretta e paura le donne in Sardegna* (1963), *Dentro la Sardegna* (1968) and *Su balente e sa 'emina* (1979).

[53] Sardinia, especially the areas of the interior, is a destination of idyll-seekers and their nostalgia for "tradition" and "authenticity" (Satta 2001).

[54] Examples of these films are Luigi Perelli's *Emigrazione '68* (1968), Antonio Bertini's *Terzo canale n. 14* (1969), Pino Adriano's *Lotta di classe in Sardegna* (1971) and Salvatore Sardu's *Sardegna base Nato* (1980).

[55] Ernesto De Martino was involved in the production of Ferrara's film as a scientific advisor. The film is based on De Martino's studies on the Italian South – i.e. the tarantismo of Puglia (Gallini 1997). See also Martino (1948; 1958; 1959; 1961).

To summarise, as a whole the documentaries made in the period 1950-79, mostly driven by exegetic commentaries, address issues related to the difficult process of modernisation: unemployment, emigration, reclamation works, isolation and nomadic sheep breeding in the mountainous territories of Sardinia's interior. The organisation of the films produced in this period is close to the structure of fascist documentaries, with which it also shares the rhetoric of its propagandistic touch.[56] Despite these similarities, an important difference between the fascist documentaries and those produced in the post-war period is that while the former ignored the exploration of the archaic face of Sardinia, the latter tried to provide a synthesis of the contradictions between ancient traditions and the prospects of a modern future. Another important difference is that the documentaries made in the post-war period tended to present the image of the countryside and its transformation, whereas fascist documentaries focussed on urban aspects of progress at the expense of the exploration of rural areas (Olla 1995: 34).[57]

The most important formal innovation in the last thirty years is the slow decline of the schematic structure of voice-over commentaries. From the early 1980s onwards, the socio-political commitment of previous years decreases (Pinna 2010: 46). It is important to stress the intense activity of the regional branch of the Italian national broadcasting company RAI (*Radiotelevisione Italiana*) founded in 1979 (Olla 2008). The Italian public television network was financed and monitored by political authorities directly controlled by political parties; thus, stylistic changes were also the result of political changes rather than the effect of a detachment of filmmakers from the socio-political sphere. In this period there is also the emergence of two of the main producers of audiovisual materials in Sardinia: the *Cineteca Sarda* of Cagliari and the Ethnographic Institute of Nuoro (ISRE), in the heart of Sardinia among the mountains. The latter is especially important, for it holds an ethnographic festival every two years, the SIEFF (Sardinia International Ethnographic Film Festival). Although from 1982 onwards the festival dealt with a single cultural theme, in 2006 its monothematic character was replaced by an interest in broader contemporary issues. The editions of the SIEFF devoted to single specific issues are *Il pastore e la sua immagine* (1982), *Il mondo alla rovescia, ovvero la trasgressione controllata* (1984), *Le nozze, rituali di matrimonio nelle società tradizionali* (1986), *Donne e lavoro nelle società tradizionali* (1988), *Isole* (1990), *Montagne* (1992), *L'uomo e il fiume* (1994), *Magia e medicina* (1996), *Musica e riti* (1998),

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[56] Baratieri writes that the "characteristic voice-over of newsreels, which one readily associates with the Fascist period, was not abandoned after the war" (2010: 116).

[57] Perhaps the real difference in the attitude of fascist and post-war documentary film-makers can be found in their different definition of such concepts as "modernity" and "tradition"; in fact, the terms "tradition" and "modernity" are complex mythologies encapsulated in changing historical contexts (Ben-Ghiat 2001).

Bambini (2000), *Cibo* (2002), and *Turismi* (2004).[58] Another important aspect of the festival's evolution concerns the films themselves. Whereas the films made in the 1980s were more descriptive and based on the separation of roles between anthropologist and filmmaker, later films presented themselves as creative works with a higher degree of authorial responsibility. The separation of anthropologist and filmmaker reflects a traditional, historical trend of Sardinian documentaries. Thhe camera operator contributed to the illustration of a script written by scholars or journalists.[59] The principal feature of today's ethnographic films and documentaries lies in their status as autonomous works of art; in other words, they are marked by a much stronger sense of artistic and authorial creation. The most important ethnographic film in this sense is David MacDougall's *Tempus de Baristas* (1992) [Figures 3 and 4], a film that epitomises a kind of independent filmmaking that differs from most television journalism, which is driven by words. Shot with a handheld camera, and only occasional use of a tripod, this film, examined in Chapter 4, differs from films that communicate didactic messages in the form of interviews and picture illustrations, for it provides a kind of insight that can only be grasped by personal experience and careful observation (Salzman 1999). In Sardinia a renewed interest in cinema as a representational medium for ethnographic exploration reflects a concern with new forms of expression and with a growing appreciation of the ability of film to put events in their original contexts, to include people's relationships, complex webs of signification, ambiguities and excess (Pinna 2010: 113).[60]

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[58] The Ethnographic Institute of Nuoro, directed by Paolo Piquereddu, is active in the promotion of visual anthropology in Sardinia through scholarships such as AVISA (Visual Anthropology in Sardinia) and the production of documentary films. Piquereddu's films include *La seta a Orgosolo* (1988), *Sedilo: Sant'Antonio Abate* (1988), *Orosei: riti della settimana santa* (1989), *Villaurbana: panificazione tradizionale* (1990), *Nuoro: preparazione del pane carasau* (1990), *Orgosolo: Sant'Antonio Abate* (1990), *Sarule: riti della settimana santa* (1991), *Lei: San Marco* (1991), *Don Conte a Ovodda* (1991).

[59] This common model often results in hierarchical collaborations in which the media specialists are in a position of quasi-subordination to the discourses of voice-over commentary (Ragazzi 2007).

[60] Examples of such films include Ulla Boje Rasmussen's *Coro di Bosa* (1998), Tiragallo's and Da Re's *Su pistoccu. Il pane estivo di Armungia* (1999) and *Ordire. Le fasi preparatorie della tessitura ad Armungia* (1999) (Tiragallo 2007), Ignazio Figus' *Fonni: S'Urthu* (2007) and *Brokkarios: una famiglia di vasai* (2008), among many others. See Carta's (2011b) review of *Fonni: S'Urthu* [Figures 5 and 6] and Carta's (2011a) review of *Brokkarios: una famiglia di vasai* [Figures 7 and 8]. Figus' films also include *Intintos. Immagini del carnevale di Olzai* (1995), *Teti: su ballu a ifferrere* (1996), *I Giorni di Lollove* (1996), *Il lino a Busachi* (1997), *Dorgali: s'impredau* (1998), *Toccos e Repiccos. Campanari in Sardegna* (2000), *Castelsardo: Lunissanti* (2006), *Sant'Antonio Abate a Torpé* (2007), *Il coraggio della poesia. Voci della poesia logudorese* (2011), among others.

Figures 3-4. Pietro skinning kid and the town of Urzulei, during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

In the last quarter of a century, a change in the legislative context has facilitated the production of documentaries and the distribution of audiovisuals in general.[61] One of the consequences of this innovation has been an increase in the number of documentaries made by Sardinians. It is important to mention also that the online Sardegna Digital Library, established in 2008, guarantees wide distribution of films with high ethnographic content and documentaries of interest to specific academic audiences.[62] It represents a sort of visual encyclopaedia, an act of preservation of the cultural past of Sardinia in the form of audiovisual memory.[63]

If one takes into account the evolution of documentary films in Sardinia, an important field of innovation concerns the development of production technologies. In the 1980s and the 1990s, professional film production companies in Sardinia provided filmmakers with technological equipment at a low price (Pinna 2010: 88). Video is the dominant medium of documentary and ethnographic filmmaking today. Before the age of video, film technology was more cumbersome and expensive (Mead 2003: 6). Film had to be used rather sparingly and, in general, films were more difficult to produce (MacFarlane 2010: 377; Bexley and Fijn 2007: 281; Henley 2000: 209). The advantage of video over film cameras is that documentary and ethnographic filmmakers

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[61] Here reference is being made to the *legge regionale sulla cultura e l'identità* (1997) and the *legge regionale sul cinema* (2006) that promotes the creation of films in Sardinia.

[62] Among the films featured in this online digital archive the series *Memorie in lingua sarda* (2008) and the collection of 25 documentaries entitled *Sardegna: andata e ritorno* (2007) both focus on Sardinian identity. The first is especially important, for it includes 313 interviews in Sardinian, with Italian subtitles. The people interviewed are octogenarians who experienced the Sardinian change since the end of fascism. This series also includes interviews and memories of Sardinian expatriates who have pursued successful professional careers abroad.

[63] The most significant attempt in this direction is Gianfranco Cabiddu's *Sonos 'e memoria* (1995), a compilation film that uses documentary film footage from the Luce Institute archive shot in the period 1930-59. The film was followed by a documentary sequel entitled *Passaggi di tempo* (2005). Examples also include Enrico Pau's *Storie di pugili* (1999), Giovanni Columbu's *Fare cinema in Sardegna* (2007) and Marilisa Piga and Nicoletta Nesler's *Inventata da un dio distratto* (2001).

working with video can film as much as they like.[64] Video equipment is more easily available and the effortless production of material encourages improvisation. It requires minimum preparation for filmmakers with little experience; however, the case must not be overstated. Although shooting may be easier, knowing how and what to shoot – as well as how to position the camera and how to structure the shooting – remains just as difficult as it always was. It requires experience, as well as cinematic sensibility.

Figures 5-6. S'Urthu and sos Buttudos in Ignazio Figus' Fonni: S'Urthu. "© Archivio ISRE&quot.

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[64] The encouragement of self-taught practice has a liberating effect, making video documentary practice more independent of professional filmmaking (Pinna 2010: 89). The advantages are independence from film crews and increased mobility (MacDougall 2001b: 17).

Figures 7-8. The *tinteggiatura* (painting of vessels) in Ignazio Figus' Brokkarios: una famiglia di vasai. "© Archivio ISRE".

Conclusion

This Introduction aimed to elucidate the perspective of the whole thesis. Its aim has been to establish the basis on which the rest of the thesis is built. In the next chapter, the rationale of this study will be developed in a more wide-ranging theoretical context, in order to acknowledge the complex questions raised in the interdisciplinary areas where visual anthropology and documentary film overlap. The chapter will attempt to demonstrate the usefulness of the collaboration between visual anthropology and film studies and to complicate the arguments on the interrelations between theory and practice in the field of ethnographic/documentary film developed in the Introduction.

CHAPTER 1   Representation of Culture in Ethnographic/Documentary Film

The purpose of this chapter is to explain more precisely the methodology used in this research and to lay out the main analytical tools which will form the basis for the discussion of single films. The aim is to map and clarify the theoretical and methodological terrain of this doctoral thesis. This chapter does not deal with Sardinia as an object of empirical attention; however, it is important to keep in mind that Sardinians have been portrayed as exotic others in ethnographic/documentary films, a point developed in the historical overview provided in the Introduction. The chapter, which represents the backbone of this project, attempts to add a theoretical contribution to the field of visual anthropology.[65] It suggests, among other things, that images and film are similar to "natural depictions" in their ability to overcome the twin tyrannies of cultural difference and geographic distance.[66] It investigates the ways in which images in ethnographic/documentary films challenge the notion of cultural difference and discusses the work of visual anthropologists and filmmakers influenced by philosophical ideas on phenomenology. The notion of revelatory film will be introduced, suggesting that the knowledge disclosed by this kind of film allows the materialisation of a human encounter not subjugated to the dead book; the chapter implies that one should have no objection in principle to the self/other dichotomy.

1 Imaginative Geographies and Anthropology

The first question to be examined is that of the representation of self and other and the epistemological-cum-moral dilemmas involved in the depiction of other cultures. In what follows, Edward W. Said's considerations on the procedures adopted in the practice of cultural discourse should be considered as a point of departure.[67] The "main intellectual issue" of *Orientalism* (Said

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[65] It must be emphasised that in this chapter empirical issues will not be covered. In an email message to the author on November 30, 2010, Paul Hockings, editor of the volume *Principles of Visual Anthropology* (1975), acknowledged to be the foundational anthology of the sub-discipline of visual anthropology, writes: "I have talked to our editors and several other prominent visual anthropologists, and they are all in agreement with me that a lingering problem in our (sub)-discipline has been the relative lack of theory."

[66] This point is deliberately stated in a crude, oversimplified fashion, even though it ought to be expressed much more carefully. In the realm of language, there is no such a thing as a "natural" sign. Being arbitrary, a sign places us securely in the realm of "representations *as representations*" as opposed to the domain of "natural depictions" (Said 2003: 22). Exotic representations are mere representations, for the signs in a text are not "natural." The assumption being made in the chapter, however, is that there is a sense in which images can be close approximations to "natural" signs.

[67] Despite the lack of a direct comment on anthropology, *Orientalism* was "one of the most critical books for the reconceptualisation of anthropology in the second half of the twentieth century" (Dirks 2004: 2). The relevance of Said's arguments for anthropology, however, was not entirely new. See, for example, Asad (1973) and Abdel-Malek (1963). An example of the application of Said's ideas in anthropology can be found in Fabian (1983; 1990). See also Carta (2011c).

2003: 45) raises the question of the lamentably dehumanizing effects potentially involved in postulating a clear-cut distinction between "us" and "them." The mental operation of establishing this basic dichotomy can be seen as the premise for the creation of stereotypical constructions of the exotic. These stereotypical crystallisations are the result of historical and literary processes that, defined quite extensively, produce ideological designations establishing a sense of distance between the exotic other and the knowledge and authority of the self. The structure of these processes "resides in its tendency to *dichotomize* the human continuum into we/they contrasts and to *essentialize* the resultant 'other'" so that these "textualizations" function to suppress the "authenticity" of real human encounters (Clifford 1980: 207). As a consequence, the place of the other is turned and constituted as a distant theatrical stage of wish-images subordinated to the dead book through a process of inscription. The nature of this process is "inherently citationary:" it represents the place of the other "less as a place rooted in history and geography than as a chain of references embedded in the library" (Gregory 1995: 51). The sense of this phrase is that the tendency to exoticize the other can be understood as a way of referencing that over-esteems negative cultural tropes, an attitude that subsumes individuals under a trans-individual common denominator of general and inattentive definitions.[68] The sedimentation of a web of textual fantasies creates an altered sense of reality which is due to a rhetorical attitude and style.[69]

The processes of othering have less to do with dilemmas about truth and falsity than with the perilous polarisation of the duality between "us" and "them." Their most interesting aspect lies in the fossilisation of a written mosaic of personal, scientific contributions that gives credibility to placid generalisations constituted out of dramatic binary oppositions. There is a fundamental sense in which confident ideas can be said to suitably replace reality; one should not underestimate the permeability of professional intellectuals to the ideological implications of the discourses to which they adhere. This permeability is revealed in the relation with the archive of previously written texts. Because of its repetitive patterns, the process of representation may not only entail the constitution, rather than the mere reinforcement, of self-congratulatory clichés and preconceptions; it might also entail noxious consequences. Among these, the application of a turgid register of undesirably vague and catchy ideas should be mentioned (Said 1985: 93). By and large, the solidification of such a register is indicative of the tendency to attach easy-to-quote and easy-to-

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[68] Clifford writes: "People prefer order to disorder; they grasp at formulas rather than actuality; they prefer the guidebook to the confusion before them. "It seems a common human failing," Said writes, using the word "human" with significant ambivalence, "to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounters with the human." In certain conditions this textual attitude hardens into a body of rigid cultural definitions which determine what any individual can express about a certain actuality" (1980: 212).

[69] It has been argued that *Orientalism* is characterised by a pervasive idealist impulse that overthrows the order between reality and representation (Richardson 1990: 16-7). The implausibility of this objection can easily be seen, for Said insisted throughout his work on the materialist form and effectiveness of Orientalism (Thomas 1991b: 5).

remember labels whose only function seems to cut through a myriad of allegedly unnecessary details.

It has been argued that it is impossible to dissolve the subject/object opposition in the representation of the other (Richardson 1990), since the separation of subject and object is a necessary condition of knowledge (Sax 1998: 293). Clifford raises a similar epistemological objection in the form of a question: "Can one ultimately escape the procedures of dichotomizing, restructuring, and textualizing in the making of interpretative statements about foreign cultures and traditions?" (1980: 209-10). The distancing of subject and object, as a methodological necessity, does not necessarily imply the denigration of the other; instead, ethical dilemmas originate from political and economic disparities. However, this criticism underestimates the asymmetries involved in the process of representation as such. While it is true that the hierarchy established in the study of difference can also be inverted in a form that valorises and romanticises the other, one should avoid the tendency of attributing a-political neutrality to epistemological assumptions.[70] Within the eclectic field of anthropological studies, territorial discontinuities have been tacitly considered as an index of the difference of a unitary culture (Appadurai 1986; Rosaldo 1988: 78-9). The presentation of other cultures is often guided by the organising principle of space (Ferguson and Gupta 1992). Spatial distance and geographic isolation, as in the case of a remote island or an inaccessible mountainous area, suggests an isomorphism between place and culture. This natural association is highly problematic, since the spatial meanings and the fantasies of escape embraced in the invocation of a parallel world are also instruments of the politics of space (Said 1993: 7). The metaphorical displacements and dream-images typical of the poetics of space are not innocent figures of speech; rather, they are connected to constellations of power and knowledge (Said 2003: 55; Musallam 1979: 19-20; Gregory 1995: 29). The processes of place-making are convenient and pervasive constructions that provide anthropology with a pre-text for spatially fixating a human group within a territorial grid.

The fabrication of the tapestry of human diversity establishes a sense of contrast that tends to strengthen subtle forms of exoticism: "beliefs and notions that are not different take on the appearance of difference through the process of apparent translation of culture" (Thomas 1991a: 310).[71] This is not to deny the interest of anthropologists in universal humanity and their merits in contrasting cultural stereotypes; however, a number of scholars have come to the conclusion that "difference" is what anthropology is expected to produce (Nichols 1994: 63; Sax 1998: 292;

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[70] The idea that there is no such a thing as "pure scholarship" is influenced by the notion of power/knowledge developed by Foucault (1977) and by the theory of hegemony elaborated by Gramsci (1971).

[71] Writing on Said's *Orientalism*, Abu-Lughod asks: "Should anthropologists treat with similar suspicion 'culture' and 'cultures' as the key terms of a discourse in which otherness and difference have come to have, as Said points out, 'Talismanic qualities'?" (1991: 147).

Thomas 1991a: 308). A more detailed discussion and examination of the problematic connotations of the essentialist concept of "culture" has been provided in Appendix 2, which surveys the literature on the troubled connotations of the old concept of "culture" and deepens the the anti-essentialist position endorsed in this research.

2 The Illustrative Versus the Revelatory

Nichols writes that anthropology "takes up the challenge of representing the actions of others meaningfully. Representation is, therefore, a dominant characteristic of anthropology, as it is of documentary" (1993: 224, n7). Mutual imbrications of power and knowledge are at the core of documentary film theory (Nichols 1993: 175). Representation is not a neutral epistemic concept related to verisimilitude. The ethical standards of documentary filmmaking concern the question of what amount of simulation of reality is acceptable, but also the relationship between filmmakers and the subjects (Pryluck 2005; Feitosa 1991). A documentary film can distort and change the life of the people in it; the images one creates about "others can easily diminish or accentuate certain aspects of their lives, sometimes so extremely that a given quality of experience is erased while another is exaggerated to absurdity" (Kuehnast 1992: 191). For this reason, important broadcasting institutions have set their own standards to define what constitutes a deceptive practice. If ethnographic filmmakers wish to make a film, they need an agreement with the subjects based on consent. Furthermore, filmmakers do not have complete control over their films once they have made them: films are variously distributed and can be used for all kinds of purposes (Brigard 2003: 30).

The following is an attempt to address the issue of how, in technical terms, a documentary/ethnographic film can allow the expression of individuals and their relation to their space without transforming them into the litmus test of pre-texts and pre-judgments (Tomaselli 1992). There are many possibilities around which a documentary can be organised, depending on its aims and functions.[72] The traditions of the illustrative and revelatory film (MacDougall 1978) are central to the concerns of this thesis, for they provide a heuristic tool to individuate and evaluate the mechanisms through which exoticising tendencies are conveyed in documentaries. Within the loosely defined realm of ethnographic film, the distinction between the illustrative and the

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[72] A documentary can follow different modalities of desire: to record, reveal or preserve; to persuade or promote; to analyse or interrogate; or to express (Renov 1993). The most frequent method of organisation of the documentary is the narrative structure (Bordwell and Thompson 2004: 132-46).

revelatory film shows how the interaction of images and soundtrack shapes the "voice" of a given documentary.[73] For MacDougall, illustrative films

> make use of images either as data to be elucidated by means of a spoken commentary or as a visual support for verbal statements. The form has often lent itself to misuse, since a plausible narration script can often impart authority to the most fragmentary images. That possibility has encouraged the gathering of attractive but disconnected material and the creation of "films" out of material which does little to substantiate the assertions of the commentary (1998: 184).

There are two observations to be made concerning the illustrative film. First of all, the "voice" of the illustrative film is often formal: it presents a high degree of epistemic authority that imparts knowledge to the viewer from a position of hierarchical superiority. The solemn tone of the formal voice is therefore highly communicative and hard-headed. This confident detachment is transmitted to the audience through an omniscient voice-over narrator. Secondly, the illustrative film shows a close affinity with the expository mode defined by Nichols (1991: 34-8).[74] The expository mode addresses the viewer directly through the professionally confident voice, usually male, of an unseen speaker. It guides the spectator to an order of meaning which is higher than the accompanying images. Structured as a public presentation, the illustrative film is closer to written anthropology. It presents a verbal argument with the same sense of competence as a lecture. The subordination of the visual material to the exegetic assistance of the commentary reduces the perceptual noise of culture by condensing a myriad of details. These details are related to the corporeal presence of the subjects, whose nuances of movement and social interaction are suppressed through a battery of analytical procedures inscribed in the orthodoxy of words of the expository text. Examples of illustrative film in the Sardinian context include Diego Carpitella's *Cinesica culturale: Barbagia* (1974), Raul Crilissi's *Sardegna isola misteriosa* (1954), Marcello Serra's *Sardegna quasi un continente* (1961), Silvio Torchiani's *Sardegna terra di contrasti* (1956) and *Risveglio di un'isola* (1956).[75] In these films, voice-over commentary tries to control content by leaping from abstraction to abstraction.

On the other hand, revelatory films:

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[73] The "voice" indicates the way of conveying a perspective or point of view by giving tangible expression to the creative vision and personality of the filmmaker (Nichols 2005). The concept of "voice" is also based on the degree of epistemic authority incorporated in the documentary (Plantinga 1997: 106). Since the language of documentary is not the same thing as the language of speech, the concept of "voice" must not be interpreted literally.

[74] Nichols writes that "expository texts take shape around commentary directed toward the viewer; images serve as illustration or counterpoint. Nonsynchronous sound prevails" (1991: 34-5).

[75] Carpitella's *Cinesica 2: Barbagia* (1975) is a study of the bodily dispositions and postures in the community of Barbagia. The film offers a sort of "candid-camera nobilitata da intenti scientifici," while the camera style is based on a "tipo di ripresa diverso da quello della moderna antropologia visuale, in cui il soggetto è consapevole e spesso collabora alla ricostruzione degli eventi" (Pinna 2010: 74).

require the viewer to make a continuous interpretation of both the visual and verbal material articulated by the filmmaker. Voice-over narration need not make images wholly illustrative in character provided the voice is an integral part of the subject matter […] Revelatory films very often follow the chronological structures perceived in the events (MacDougall 1998: 184-5).

As should be clear from the above citation, the "voice" of the revelatory film is more open and hesitant than that of the illustrative film. Its epistemic attitude is more reticent and cautious. It rarely draws overarching generalisations; its function is to explore or provoke rather than teaching. Given its prudent attempts to provide definitive answers, the revelatory film allows more interpretive freedom to the spectator. This epistemological scepticism and humility is more prone to sidestep the true/false dichotomy.[76] David MacDougall's *Tempus de Baristas* (1992) [Figures 9 and 10], examined in Chapter 4, is an example of revelatory film. The film patiently explores the open lives of the protagonists, whose complex personalities interact with the filmmaker in the creation of a kind of lived knowledge that is both perceptual and situated.

Figures 9-10. Pietro and Franchiscu Balisai Soddu during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

A major contribution to the development of revelatory films can be traced in the observational conventions motivated by a critical reaction against the Olympic omniscience of the expert's commentary. Another contribution to the revelatory film has been the development of participatory

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[76] One of the differences between illustrative and revelatory films is that the former present the viewer with a take-it-or-leave-it option, whereas the latter do not interfere with events and allow the viewers to make their own analysis – i.e. John Marshall's *Bitter Melons* (1971) and David and Judith MacDougall's *To Live with Herds* (1972) (Young 2003: 103-4).

practices and their production of an embodied anthropology through film. The participatory style stresses the corporeal interaction of the filmmaker among the subjects. The main innovation of the participatory style lies in the focus on the ethnographic encounter itself. The notion of "participatory style" is significant because it indicates the active role of the camera in anthropological inquiry, but is also significant in stressing the collaborative role of the film subjects in the production of a shared anthropology.[77]

So far the differences in voice and attitude between the illustrative and the revelatory film have been examined. The distinction between the illustrative and revelatory film was perhaps more important to stress in the 1960s and 1970s than today, because many nonfiction films have been made since then that are *not* in an illustrative or didactic mode (with the exception of most television journalism).[78] Illustrative films are especially suitable for conveying transparent and disembodied knowledge, whereas revelatory films lean towards the intimacies of sociality and interpersonal behaviour. If the illustrative film emphasises the uncomplicated purity of the general at the expense of the tiny scraps of informal behaviour, the revelatory film brings the viewer closer to the events with discretion and patience (MacDougall 1978). The revelatory film pierces through the fabric of human existence without sacrificing the specificity irreducibly embodied in the sensual, transient events of personal life. Rather than "talking about," it speaks nearby (Ruby 1991). The notion of "speaking nearby" expresses a willingness to create a poetic attitude and a refusal to consider word, image and sound as mere instruments of thought. This is a speaking that "does not objectify, does not point to an object as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place," namely, a speaking that "reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing or claiming it" (Chen and Minh-ha 1994: 443). By this, Minh-ha means that the instrument of the camera should not be subservient to certain forms of writing and ways of knowing.[79] A similar preoccupation could be said to be congruent with MacDougall's definition of "knowledge as being," defined as a kind of knowledge that "has no propositional status (of generality, of explanation) except the proposition of its own existence. […] Only in the will to declare it do we detect the stirrings of thought" (MacDougall 2006: 5).[80] The images of revelatory

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[77] The bodily presence of the filmmaker as a social actor is what marks the subtle difference between observational and participatory cinema. The former is hinged on the discreetness of "being here;" whereas the latter accentuates the "being there," the personal involvement in the actual flow of cultural life (Nichols 2001: 116).

[78] Audiences are now more sophisticated about nonfiction cinema, and there is a growing understanding of the difference between "information" and other kinds of knowledge that documentaries can produce. MacDougall D. C., personal communication (email) 20 April 2010.

[79] Trinh Minh-ha is a critic and filmmaker. Her works, i.e. *Reassemblage* (1982) and *Naked Spaces: Living is Round* (1989), are examples of a kind of postmodern film practice that challenges the objectivist language of anthropological studies (Moore 1994: 117). As instances of reflexivity, her films question the "power of film to capture a reality 'out there' for us 'in here'" (Minh-ha 1993: 95; Renov 1993: 7).

[80] Heidegger's meditations on the work of art as an event of disclosure that generates truth by effecting something unprecedented are especially interesting in understanding the revelatory function of film in generating "knowledge as

films are not mere instruments of knowledge; rather, they create a special kind of knowledge. In a sense, the revelatory film offers a refreshingly new methodology that changes the relation to people as an object of study and attention. The exploratory, observational spaces of revelatory films represent an opportunity to call into question the illustrative approach towards human diversity. This implies, at the very least, that film can be an autonomous way to further anthropological knowledge. These statements are quite subtle, or even vague, but the idea is clear enough. Revelatory visual methods do not simply ask us to be sharers of information; they also ask us to become intimate knowers.

2.1 A Difference of "Another Order"

The aim of this section is to explore how the role of images in revelatory films challenges the notion of cultural difference within the social sciences. To give a clearer sense of this, and of the direction being taken, it would be best to repeat the suggestion that representations do not exist as authentic "natural depictions" in the realm of language. Nonetheless, it can be maintained that "natural depictions," as representations that cannot be constructed outright, can be expressed visually. The fairly concrete epistemological distinction between "reality" and its representation should be taken seriously: images and film, mediated as they are, are not just "representations *as representations*" (that is to say, mere representations) (Said 2003: 22), but preserve many qualities of experience.

One of the merits of film is that it affirms the corporeal dimension of experience. Film can be a way to further anthropological knowledge differently, the materialisation of an "ethnotopia" of the senses (Nichols 1994: 74-5). To borrow the words of Merleau-Ponty (1964), the process of filmmaking reveals the rich phenomenology of the "flesh of the world" through a complex and performative event. Hockings writes:

> Filming is phenomenology, and this method is neither the deductive method of logic nor the empirical method of natural science. As Edmund Husserl said, the object of the phenomenological method is the immediate seizure, in an act of vision, of the ideal intelligible content of a phenomenon (2003: 526).

For Hockings, film is a way of looking at culture phenomenologically. The emplaced ethnography offered by revelatory films uses visual media to research the materiality of cultural environments, and to evoke the sensory perceptions of experiencing bodies. Although film, of

being" as something unaccountable or even incalculable with the technologies of abstract thought (Chan and Chan 2011).

necessity, always conveys experiential knowledge in a vicarious manner, it also gives a phenomenological grounding to the direct experience of things. The application of the principles of phenomenological observation is the result of a renewed interest in the propositions of the French philosophical movement known as phenomenology. As Pink notes, "Merleau-Ponty's ideas are relevant to the formulation of a sensory ethnography because he placed sensation at the centre of human perception" (2009: 26). This quotation is indicative of a renewed ethnographic interpretation of the senses as interconnected and inseparable from one another.[81] The underlying epistemological assumption is that observation is a form of visual perception but also a form of experiential knowledge. In a technical sense, the physical specificity of images exceeds the meaning and validation of anthropology as a science. The truth of the body exceeds the measure of intellectual understanding. Nichols writes:

> By being beheld at a distance strangeness eludes full comprehension but supports an imaginary coherence, what Said would call Orientalism, what we might generally call the self that constitutes itself through an imaginary geography. Ethnography affords knowledge passed from mind to mind, but not the knowledge that is (only) represented, which is their knowledge, embodied knowledge located *there*, in other bodies (Nichols 1994: 68).

Nichols shares with Minh-ha a suspicion of knowledge that travels from mind to mind, thereby conveying a disembodied, depersonalised knowledge. The risk associated with this kind of knowledge is that it abolishes the historical situatedness of the body. Voice-over commentary, for example, transforms the first-hand experience of the knowledge "from the belly" into third person experience, moving away from bodily experience. On the other hand, the series of loosely linked events registered within the circle described by the frame of revelatory films invites us to rethink the ephemeral notion of cultural boundaries. In rethinking the uncertain notion of cultural boundaries, pictures are able to correct the exoticism that demarks and, at times, creates cultural difference. For MacDougall (1998: 245), there are two ways in which pictures can be said to be "transcultural." On the one hand, the perceptive continuities emerging from pictures are "transcultural" because they mediate the strangeness of culturally different people. On the other hand, pictures minimise cultural difference: they are "transcultural" in so far as they create the conditions of sensorial affinity that transcend the sense of cultural difference conveyed by certain forms of travel literature and anthropological writing (MacDougall 1998: 247). Pictures emphasise

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[81] Merleau-Ponty's approach has been "influential among both social and visual anthropologists concerned with the body" (Pink 2009: 26). His ideas about the phenomenology of perception have been developed in social and visual anthropology by MacDougall (1998: 51), but also by Csordas (1990) Ingold (2000: 268), Geurts (2002) and Desjarlais (2003).

the pre-anthropological complementarities across the lines of cultural demarcation in lieu of the division of the world in human patchworks of strangeness (Taylor 1998: 21). In doing so, they counterbalance the prescriptive, divisive character of cultural typologies by directly addressing the senses in the representation of people as individuals.[82] This is why the revelatory film, more often than the illustrative film, resists the attraction to little tags and the gravitation around the stereotype. Film is an embodied and constructed practice involving an awareness of movement and posture, as well as the more visceral aspects of bodily experience.

Viewers engage with films with all their senses. This does not mean that images do not have limitations; rather, it means that many qualities that are perceived as the shortcomings of images are also part of their strength. MacDougall's attempts in filmmaking have been interpreted as efforts to "move away from attempts to speak from mind to mind, in the discourse of scientific sobriety, and toward a politics and epistemology of experience spoken from body to body," namely, an effort towards a "more fully personal, participatory encounter" (Nichols 1994: 73).[83] The role of the body as a site of contradiction that calls into question voice-over commentary must be stressed. The presence of the body is an indicator of "excess" that liberates thinking from the ostensibly authoritative discourse of voice-over commentary.[84] The materiality of the body can be understood as an index of tangible "creatureliness" that subverts self/other dichotomies; the tactile beingness of its pure existence dissolves and threatens cultural boundaries. The presence of the body on the screen, by "establishing crucial connections across ethnicity, and other barriers, breaks down the subject/object, the self/other division" (Barker 1995: 70; Sobchack 1992: 7). The irruptions of the physical body work at the level of shared beingness. The embeddedness of the body in the world addresses the viewers directly, and this is why the idea of the body involves the breaking down of voice-over authority, presenting the viewers with an opaqueness that escapes narrative constraints.

Perhaps most importantly, pictures are capable of rendering an overabundance of details immediately recognisable. Their detailed descriptions tend to make familiar many of the strange aspects of unfamiliar cultures. It is a deep mistake to treat pictures and film as mere textual entities. Historically, the over-identification of image and language in visual anthropology has been partly the consequence of the paradigm of semiotics at the heart of the theory of filmic communication developed by Worth (1969; 1981). Worth's approach tended to conceive filmic and anthropological communication as forms of textual representation (MacDougall 1998: 74-5). Within this mode

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[82] MacDougall writes that the portrayal of others as individuals is "imposed at some level by the very nature of film. It lies in the inherent specificity of film images" (2006: 55).

[83] MacDougall does not object in principle to the self/other dichotomy. In an email message to the author on April 20, 2010, MacDougall writes: "After all, at our birth we immediately become something "other" to our mothers. Separation and difference are a fundamental aspect of experience, and of the technologies of thought."

[84] The undomesticated excess of the body image cannot be contained within a unified cinematic representation: it invites us "to seek out a visibility we feel" (Barthes 1975: 56).

influenced by communication theory, films were supposed to transmit messages (Taylor 1996: 84). Today the tendency to stress the denotative aspects of images and film has been replaced by a more nuanced consideration of their regimes of connotation, and of their ability to explore complex relations. Given the extra-grammatical features of the visual, the assimilation of film and written language neglects some of the constructive ways of studying the visual medium. The discursive metaphor indicates a sort of indifference toward the specificity of film as an object (MacDougall 1998: 248). There are problems of translatability between film images and the words written on a page as is easily seen in the difference between the actions of reading and viewing. Writing, for example, typically reproduces the features of a face through the linear ordering of words (MacDougall 2006: 49). The images in a film, on the other hand, can lead to the inadvertent disclosure of details whose peculiarity resides less in their informative content than in their simultaneous availability for inspection.[85] In other words, the "language" of pictures makes the transmission of univalent communication difficult. At the same time, however, despite its fluctuating resonance, a picture is somehow self-sufficient, fixed to the reproduced thing. An image has a paradoxical nature because it is discursively insufficient and, at the same time, it provides an excess of visual details: it remains "annoyingly mute" by telling a great deal (MacDougall 2006: 214; Griffiths 2002: 129).

Attention must be drawn to the fact that revelatory films provide new ways of looking at what people actually do in the contingencies of their social interaction, i.e. the particulars of posture, bodily disposition and bearing. One of the most important forms of learning among human beings is the so-called haptic learning, i.e. learning by bodily identification. Furthermore, the sight of physical behaviour triggers physiological responses that stimulate our enactive mode of thought. For MacDougall, the enactive

> is neither image nor word, but gesture – experience recalled, one might say, in the muscles. We imagine an action through the feel of it – for example, the sense of moving a hand in a familiar motion, such as stirring coffee. One might call this the kinaesthetic dimension of thought, familiar to ourselves but only observable in others when it is translated into actual physical movement (MacDougall 1994b: 265).

Not only is the enactive crucial in the transmission of emotion, it also has precedence over sensory and lexical thought in the realm of film. Images of habitual behaviour are able to convey a

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[85] MacDougall writes that film "exploits the co-presentation of objects and sensory patterns that writing tends to present in a more selective and linear fashion" (2006: 43).

residue of physicality that resists verbal translation (Marks 2000: 71).[86] Building on this, it can be argued that the visible circumstances of human conduct cannot be translated into the symbolic knowledge of the written form. The visibility of embodied social practices should be neither subordinated nor sacrificed to the written form. The consideration of social interaction as raw material for analytic descriptions suppresses many particulars of behaviour as if they were secondary properties. This is not to say that films and pictures cannot be used to create stereotypes or that writing is intrinsically reductive. The camera does see selectively: filmic "discourse," especially in the realm of ethnographic documentary, faces the inevitable impossibility of objective representation (Bettetini 1978: 178-82).

This discussion reveals that images and words lead one's attention towards human experience by engaging one's thinking and perception in different ways. In a revealing passage, MacDougall writes that the "difference between a film and a written text is ultimately far greater than that between a photograph and an x-ray, or a scientific book and a poem," for it is "of another order, more nearly like the difference between Magritte's pipe and his picture of it, or my hand as I hold it before me and as I see it in memory" (MacDougall 1998: 249). Although the analogy might sound somehow inadequate, it is as if images and words were comparable to measurement instruments which exert an inescapable influence on the content and quality of their respective representations.

2.2 "Showing" and "Telling"

An understanding of the controversy between telling and showing is beneficial in the context of this discussion. Crucial to the argument in this thesis is the difference "between TELLING a story and SHOWING us something" (Young 2003: 103).

A film that "tells" is a film that promotes the didactic oral pronouncements of a narrator. It provides guidance concerning what the viewers should think and what conclusions they should draw. It is easy to point to the didactic functions of the disembodied word in these films. Their tendency is to voice the authority and ideological agenda of an oral commentary. Because voice-over commentary is often uniquely informative, it tends to reduce meaning to a sign without advancing the understanding of the image-track. This does not mean that an extradiegetic commentary always restricts the world pictured on the screen; however, it is true that it does not put the audience into a life experience, for it does not penetrate deeply into the visible world.[87] On the

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[86] What motivates this concern with the tactility of vision is the acknowledgment of the role of the mimetic faculty (Taussig 1993), and the senses more in general, in creating a distinctive kind of embodied knowledge.
[87] Voice-over exegesis tends to produce a filmed essay that directs the viewer's attention towards the cohesion of the world of discourse at the expense of the visual layer (Kracauer 1960: 104; Metz 1974: 74).

other hand, a film that "shows" explores events and visual phenomena by making the audience cooperative. It concerns itself with the fluidity and ambiguity of actions presented without commentary. This lack of overt mediation of ambiguous meanings allows the spectators to think and draw their own conclusions and interpretations. The viewers are assumed to have direct access to a visual, embodied experience. This does not mean that "showing" cannot be a covert form of authorial manipulation and intrusion (Doane 1980: 46); the avoidance of literary techniques in the narration is neither unadulterated nor intrinsically egalitarian.[88] "Showing" is by no means transparent, and yet this type of narration allows the viewers a closer relation to the significance of the visuals.

For MacDougall (1998: 77-8), there are interesting parallels between telling and showing in film on the one hand, and Russell's distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description (Russell 1912: 46-59), a distinction that should be considered as indicative rather than definitive. Whereas telling permits knowledge at a distance, i.e. abstractly coded knowledge acquired from the generality of language, showing allows the viewers to insert themselves experientially into the "environment of a way of acting" (to borrow Wittgenstein's terms) by a form of acquaintance.[89] Knowledge by acquaintance is not derived from a description acquired from language; instead, it derives from the experiential qualities of an environment, and it is less influenced by what one already knows. Knowledge by acquaintance should be understood primarily as something closer to the visualisation of an action, e.g. nuances of movement, colours, and facial expressions, than to the verbalization of the same action. An action captured by the camera and that same action described through voice-over commentary exist on two different plains: images and expository information do not share the same responsibilities.

The ambiguity of images limits the epistemological power of voice-over commentary: images have reasons of their own. That words and images occupy quite different domains will not be disputed (Marazzi 1994: 88). The disparities between images and words are perhaps most evident in the phenomenon known as double-telling (Kozloff 1988: 20-1), i.e. instances of overlapping of images and commentary. When the commentary corresponds closely to the picture track there is a sense of twice-told things that works against simplicity. In this duplication, images present a vision of what the commentary already states. Ethnographic filmmakers are familiar with this sense of redundancy, and try to avoid it. However, even when verbal commentary redoubles the mood of the

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[88] "Telling" is similar to the superimposition of an oral mode of narration on another kind of narration that is not immune from moral and political criticism: "all filmmaking is a form of discourse fabricating its effects, impressions, and point of view" (Nichols 2005: 19).

[89] A similar point has been made by Hockings (2003: 515), when he points out that "film can capture an external reality for future analysis in many contexts" while a "written ethnographic account can only capture KNOWLEDGE ABOUT that reality, whether it is the ethnographer's own knowledge or that of his native informants too."

images, it is unable to tie back to all the visual aspects onscreen. There are significant relationships between verbal expression and image, but the expressive functions of words and images, understood as different sign systems, are often in tension. Words, for example, add a certain slant to images. The information provided through words imposes a certain bias on film images and influences the ways in which filmmakers construct the relation images/voice-over. Voice-over commentary alters, or even distorts, the tone and content of the images in a documentary film. For Barthes, words "anchor" the meaning possible within the image. The free signifiers in the image can be oppressed or, rather, repressed by the verbal text. The linguistic text that captions a picture resolves many of the ambiguities of the image. This mechanism is known as the anchorage, the caption that "anchors" the interpretation of a picture and helps to "choose the *correct level of perception*" (Barthes 1977: 38-41).[90] Thus images are connoted by words in powerful ways, but it is also possible that words can lose their innocence or ambiguity when placed close to images.

In film, images and words engage in a combat or complex combination. Voice-over commentary describes the scenes in a given documentary film and, on a more profound level, prescribes the forms of its presentation. It provides a great deal of information but it also turns the image into an illustration of the soundtrack. It may deepen or explain the visuals, but it also serves to "drown" them. When voice-over takes the lead, the documentary acquires a certain abstract orientation that overwhelms the images, which appear in a position of dependency. Overinvested with meaning, the visible is kept in a lower position. The words overseeing the visuals often do not provide an argument based on inductive reasoning; the information remains inaccessible to the images. Words know more than the images but also, and this is the crucial point, often they know more than they should. A kind of chastisement of the image by the word underscores the autonomy of visual experience, which is not, however clouded by speech, a manifestation of *logos*. This does not mean that the linguistic text is the only factor that tries to control the significance of the images. The reactions of the viewer are influenced by many elements that participate in the film construction, i.e. editing, camera angle, soundtrack, lighting and so forth. Editing, for instance, lends itself to manipulating and governing the interpretation of visual content.

The observational approach redresses the traditional hierarchies that characterise exegetic documentaries. The break with the conventions of speech-driven films does not mean the marginalisation of the verbal or the privileging of the nonverbal over language. On the contrary, it means that films include language without being entirely defined by it. The contextualisation of language and its reinsertion in the matrix of cultural life gives a new emphasis to the verbal. This is

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[90] Barthes also individuates a mechanism, which he christens "relay" that exceeds the image in film. In this case the verbal text "does advance the action by setting out, in sequences of messages, meanings that are not to be found in the image itself" (Barthes 1977: 38-41).

possible only when the filmmaker attends closely to the processes of the subjects' lives, i.e. informal conversations, moments of domestic life and the routines of the everyday, so that ethnographic film effectively becomes a "conceptual space within a triangle formed by the subject, film-maker, and audience and represents an encounter of all three" (MacDougall 1998: 193).[91] The inarticulacy of the image is at the same time a disadvantage and a sign of unique power. The same image can be used at the same time to show an object and to represent an idea; it re-presents literal aspects of objects but it also carries more symbolic and connotative meanings. This difficulty of separating the actual from the ideal are related to the "particularly powerful and troubling role of the image in cinematic narrative" (Mermin 1997: 41). A film that "shows" produces a web of signification that exceeds the filmmaker's intention. The idea that narrative exceeds authorial intention derives from an essentially Barthian reading of cinematic narratives. The image challenges and resists the power of voice-over commentary, and this resistance has to do with the fact that images do not construct measureable and unambiguous meanings. The nature of images is potentially chaotic and spontaneous: "all images are polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a 'floating chain' of signifieds" (Barthes 1977: 39). Many of the elements of the image are unreliable and unaccountable. They can be defined as the "excess" in visual narratives.[92] Building on this, it can be argued that the opaqueness of images resists the level of containment established by voice-over narration: visual appearances remain only unsatisfactorily explained.[93]

An acknowledgment of the anti-narrative frame of reference produced by images is fundamental in understanding their subversive powers. The visible signifiers of a film resist verbal appropriation and, because they remain somewhat unexplained, show that the explanatory and descriptive orders of voice-over are not always in charge.

3 Nature and Nurture: Pictures and Language

The naturalness of visual experience has the capacity to transcend the insistence on the discursive determinations and textualizations of film and photography. In MacDougall's words a "complex construction such as film or photograph has an animal origin" (2006: 3). The understanding of

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[91] MacDougall suggests that ethnographic films should be assessed as "sites of meaning potential" that can be read at a variety of different levels and in a variety of different contexts (1998: 77).

[92] Nichols observes that in film and photography what "becomes vivid is the excess that remains after evidence and argument, rhetoric and conviction have had their say" (1991: 234). A number of tactile and physical elements, for example, depend exclusively on the materiality of film and "do not participate in the creation of narrative or symbolic meaning" (Thompson 1986: 131).

[93] This kind of "excess" is defined by Barthes as figuration; film "will always be *figurative* (which is why films are still worth making) – even if it represents nothing" (1975: 56; quoted in MacDougall 1998: 73). Heath writes that "narrative can never exhaust the image," since it "can never contain the whole film which exceeds its fictions" (Heath 1986: 130-1).

pictures is very likely to rest on a non-linguistic and cultural – possibly biological – basis. As Debray writes, the "image as corporeality takes us back and short-circuits our humanities, interrupts courtesies, approaches making perceptible for us the idea of animality" (1996: 53). In other words, film and photography seem to be more situated in the world of nature than embedded in language. The particular investigation offered in this section has more to do with conceptual analysis than with a general empirical hypothesis. Thus the character of the argument is largely philosophical, somehow bordering on the old nature/nurture dichotomy.

What follows is a search for a defence of the divergences between pictures and language that suggests a theoretical reorientation from linguistic models emphasising the analogy between film and discourse towards accounts of the pictorial value of images. Firstly, the relation between the world and its cinematic representation often has an isomorphic nature rather than a purely historical, conventional one. There is no doubt that an image and its referent have a structural similarity; thus the understanding of film and images is a matter of recognition more than the product of cultural conditioning (Prince 1993: 17). Secondly, one of the most important forms of human communication is action itself. The language of action, showing the psychological and social constitution of human beings, is the language of their actual presence. Following Pasolini (1972), one can at least suggest that the audiovisual language of cinema mirrors the "native language" of reality.[94] Pasolini thought that cinema is the technical reproduction of the first human language, namely, the autonomous language of action as it manifests itself in real life. In films, as in ordinary life, viewers draw their own conclusions and are left to judge from what they see and hear. Against this, Eco (1983: 112, 150) argued that Pasolini was semiologically naïve in claiming that the semiology of reality can be understood as a natural fact. Human action, Eco argued, is a signifying gesture which is primarily cultural, i.e. the result of convention (Lapsley and Westlake 2006: 43-5).[95] Although the idea that the elementary units of cinema are not a matter of convention may be questioned, film *can* be understood as something more than a linguistic technique. To put the point more precisely, Stam (2000: 113) observes that a number of contemporary film theorists think that Pasolini, in showing the rigidity of Saussurean categories, was more prophetic than naïve (Lauretis 1984: 48-9; Rumble and Testa 1994; Bruno 1994). Here there is the suggestion that, unlike the language of discourse, the "language" of film and images is, and always will be, something other than an activity entirely instantiated by culture. The semiotic assumption that every phenomenon

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[94] In *I segni viventi e i poeti morti* (1967), in relation to Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934), one of the classics of ethnographic cinema, Pasolini observed that the viewers recognise the subjects in the film because cinema activates the codes and ways of knowing of reality itself. Piault stresses the relevance of Pasolini's ideas about cinema for visual anthropology: "Pasolini described cinema as a language which expresses reality with reality and this should equally be the case for anthropology, as the two procedures are intimately related" (2007c: 23).

[95] See, for example, Eco (1982: 34) for learning more about his insistence on the discursive and textual constitution of images.

can be explained as a cultural determination is controversial and has been charged of radical culturalism (Jay 2002: 272). This can be explained further. In his complex theory of signs, Peirce (1931) distinguished the icon, the index and the symbol. The icon has a relationship of similarity with its object (a relationship of likeness or resemblance); the index is linked by an existential relation to its object (a causal relationship); the symbol has a purely arbitrary relation to its object (a symbolic relationship). For Wollen (1998), film language includes all the elements of the triadic model, although the indexical and iconic features of the sign are more prominent than the symbolic. If visual "language" and symbolic language are very different, this diversity makes the application of models based on symbolic language to cinematographic "language" inadequate (Gaggi 1978). A cogent demonstration of the iconic characteristic of filmic language is that, unlike symbolic language, it is not learned. The lexicon included in a dictionary is, in principle, finite. If one were to learn the meaning of an image as the meaning of a word is learned, films would be unintelligible because film creates new images and, thus, new "words." In short, the lexicon of language is used and, to a certain extent, given. Conversely, film language is not "spoken" by using a code; rather, it is invented by the filmmaker. Pasolini writes:

> A dictionary of images does not exist. There are no images classified and ready for use. If by chance we want to imagine a dictionary of images, we would have to imagine an infinite dictionary, just as the dictionary of *possible words* remains infinite. The cinema author has no dictionary but infinite possibilities (1976: 545).

In other words, film does not possess, *strictu sensu*, the permanent and general structure of a language system. Together with photography, it differs from the unmotivated signs of language in a fundamental sense. Film is a matter of expression regulated by ordering procedures; as such, it has "neither a wholly predetermined structure nor a precise, delimited vocabulary" (Vaughan 1999b: 81).[96] The notion of grammaticality applied to film theory is highly problematic, since important elements of the moving image are left unanswered by the analogy between the shot and the arbitrary linguistic sign.[97] The objectivist position that pictures are seen (perceptual act) as opposed to the conventionalist claim that pictures are read (interpretive act) deserves some attention. Following Blinder (1986), it can be argued that, in a sense, the optical information carried by light is not in the mind of the viewer, as sign theory maintains, but in the world. Hockings writes that instead of the "abstract and generalised symbols made with words, film provides us with concrete and specific

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[96] In Crawford's terms, "words constitute an articulation of reality, whereas images are an expression of reality" (1992: 70).

[97] A picture, for example, lacks tense. Moreover, Worth makes the convincing point that pictures cannot express negatives: "pictures can't say ain't" (Worth 1981; quoted in Eitzen 1995: 89).

images created not so much by a human mind as by the reflection of light from the world in front of the camera" (2003: 524). In this account it is the *eye* which sees, and not the mind: one could say that vision is a natural capacity allied to perspective geometry.

To pursue this line of thought further, it can be mentioned that cognitive film theory suggests that the massive use of point-of-view editing might be due to its immediate comprehension (Carroll 1993: 125). The point/glance shot and the point/target shot represent the two extremes of a highly adaptive human behaviour. This behaviour consists in observing the direction of the gaze of the interlocutor in order to locate the object of his or her attention. The idea is that point-of-view editing imitates our communicative practices of perception and that this may explain why it is particularly suitable for transmitting information about emotions. Studies on facial expressions have shown that a basic set of emotional states are cross-culturally recognizable (Ekman 1973). Carroll mentions that, for Izard (1971: 61), the fact that

> blind children evince certain emotional states by means of facial expressions that are very similar to those emitted by sighted people worldwide strongly suggests that said expressions are innate, and, in consequence, that would explain their cross-cultural intelligibility (Carroll 1993: 138).

To put the matter crudely, the perception of pictures might be largely innate. Facial expressions may function as pan-cultural sings of emotion. A basic range of emotions can be universally communicated through images without a previous period of instruction or the application of cultural grids of intelligibility. Point-of-view editing, camera movement and subjective shot do not pose cognitive problems to naïve viewers. It appears that semi-nomadic and pastoral tribes without visual literacy or interpretive mastery in deciphering moving images are able to understand the fragmentation of a scene by point-of-view editing.[98] In general the interpretation of a film is driven by the narrative context. The viewer does not need to learn, or read, the basic cinematic structures, and it does not seem necessary to decode formal devices in order to understand a film. This is not to say that all cinematic devices deployed in cinema correspond or imitate innate mechanisms of perception. The nature of parallel editing, for instance, is purely symbolic.

The analogy between natural language and moving image seems inadequate, since scientific experiments have shown that primates, birds and reptiles are able to recognise images even if they do not possess language, the defining characteristic of human beings (Mitchell 1986: 79). In Sontag's words, images "peel back language, allowing things themselves to speak" (1969: 25). The symbolic activity underlined in the definition of man as *animal symbolicum* (symbolic animal)

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[98] Carroll writes that this point "fits neatly with empirical findings about the ease of comprehension of edited arrays by first-time viewers, such as members of the Potok tribe of Kenya" (1993: 131).

provided by Cassirer (1944), and this is the crucial point, is not a necessary requirement in the recognition of pictures. It might well be that with regard to viewing and recognising pictures, as E. O. Wilson would put it, at the most fundamental level "genes hold culture on a leash" (1978: 167).

Conclusion

In this chapter an attempt has been made to open a sufficiently broad vista in the panorama of the problematic synergies between film and the visual representation of cultural experience. Aspects of the theoretical debates in the fields of film theory, visual anthropology and documentary, have been mapped out and discussed, placing the thesis in the context of relevant literature and existing work. An attempt to understand further the links between epistemological questions related to the dichotomy of self and other in visual anthropology and documentary film has been made.

As the thesis progresses the overall structure becomes more focussed, moving from the general to the particular. Starting with broad philosophical questions around the formal strategies and epistemological assumptions of documentary and ethnographic filmmaking, the thesis then grounds the discussion of theoretical issues and concerns in the specifics of single films. In the following chapters, single films are discussed and analysed in relation to their formal strategies and the theories of knowledge embodied in their style.

CHAPTER 2   Illustrative Documentaries: a Dominant Way of Seeing

This chapter is divided in two parts. The first part begins by looking at the context of production of newsreels and documentaries under fascism, and offers a discussion of the most important documentaries of the fascist period devoted to the *città di fondazione* (New Towns) in Sardinia: Carbonia, Mussolinia and Fertilia. Attention is given to the ways in which the fascist celebration of progress constructs Sardinia as a virginal land through a Promethean narrative that grants positional superiority to the projects of the regime. The argument made in the first part of the chapter is that these films present Sardinia as a nude territory on which the demiurge-like project of fascist modernisation inscribes its own history. The films should be interpreted as examples of colonial narratives of penetration into new-found-lands in order to revivify their population and wasted soils.

The second part of the chapter deals with the representation of Sardinia within an archaic horizon in two important documentaries of the 1950s, Fiorenzo Serra's *Il regno del silenzio* (1954-62) and Ubaldo Magnaghi's *Viaggio in Sardegna* (1953). The question of the visual representation of foreign cultures within a picturesque mise-en-scène is the pertinent context of the discussion. It is maintained that these documentaries create a romantic image of Sardinia influenced by the nostalgia for traditional and uncontaminated cultures. As explained in the Introduction, after the parenthesis of the fascist period the thematic trace of picturesque customs that dominated the documentaries in the first two decades of the twentieth century returns in the 1950s, a decade that offers a precise codification of Sardinian "culture."

The excursus of documentary films examined in this chapter will be inevitably incomplete, and it is important to stress that documentary films about Sardinia sustain a measure of intellectual contradiction and incoherence. Their complex articulations of self and other cannot be reduced to structured oppositions between Sardinian and foreign, just as the paradigms of interpretation offered in this chapter do not exhaust the meaning of these documentaries and their appeal to audiences. The interrelations of text, history and society in cinematic works are always complicated. At the same time, however, the chapter invites the scholar in film studies to recognise that documentary films have sometimes seductively limited the perception and understanding of Sardinian "culture."

1 Sardinia in Fascist Documentary Films (1922-45)

Despite the intense research on fascist culture and propaganda machinery, the study of fascist newsreels and their importance in promoting the aesthetically inflected ideology of the regime has

been neglected in the Italian studies literature (Caprotti and Kaïka 2008: 615). The first part of this chapter is an attempt to contribute to filling this lacuna by examining the most important Sardinian documentaries of the fascist period. It characterises fascist ideology as presenting a sudden transformation of Sardinia from old to new, from archaic to modern, with no gradual transition in between. The point to be made is that the most important fascist documentary films about Sardinia establish a perspective that portrays the island as an empty land that is ripe for transformation and rule under the new fascist order. The "old" Sardinia is characterised in terms of its strangeness and its antithetical relation to modernity as an elsewhere ready to be redeemed. This representation tends to lock the island into a peculiar articulation of power, a regime of knowledge imbued with a colonial, or quasi-colonial, narrative. The sense of the expression "colonial narrative" must be clarified. The expression "colonial narrative" is used to indicate a web of discursively complex exercises. In the context of this discussion a "colonial narrative" is a way of reinforcing a sense of epistemic superiority through various accounts of backwardness and lack of order. In this sense, the fascist documentary films about Sardinia can be seen as "colonial films," although there is no implication here that Sardinia was an Italian colony.[99]

Figures 11-12. Stills from the incipit of Fernando Cerchio's *Carbonia*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

1.1 Fascism and Documentary Film

The end of the First World War marks an increase in the number of documentary films about Sardinia. With the advent of fascism, Italian documentary films served the propagandistic and

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[99] The point being made is based on the assumption that "colonialism" is a fractured and contradictory cultural process. It is neither a form of pure material oppression nor a unitary cultural system that clearly divides the interests of self and other (Thomas 1994: 1-10). The critique of the films examined in this chapter is not intended to condemn all documentaries made in the fascist period, as many of them seem to transcend the limitations of the form with real artistry.

institutional interests of the regime. Newsreels and documentaries established themselves as autonomous genres, providing visual expression to the transformative impulse of a modernist ideology. This ideology is especially apparent in the films produced by the *Unione Cinematografica Educativa* (The Educational Cinematographic Union) a public institution driven by pedagogic aims, subsequently transformed into the *Istituto Nazionale Luce* in 1925 (Giusto 2011: 289). The documentaries of the Luce Institute are characterised by a didacticism that stems directly from the idea that the populace must be informed and educated. Olla writes:

> Proprio perché il cinema era "l'arma più forte" i cinegiornali potevano fornire forme più duttili e più accattivanti di propaganda che non le semplici parate e marce. Gli operatori del Luce giravano così in ogni regione d'Italia, ma non più o non solo per cercare le curiosità, i costumi, gli esotismi più facili, ma per documentare i progressi del regime (1995: 27).

The head of the Luce Institute was a man personally chosen by Mussolini. Caprotti and Kaïka write that nearly "3,000 newsreels and many documentaries were produced from the late 1920s until the fall of the fascist regime" (2008: 615). In the *ventennio* Sardinian documentary cinema "fa riferimento, soprattutto, alla produzione dell'Istituto Luce" (Figus 2005: 29); the Luce Institute produced at least thirty documentaries on Sardinia. If one compares the catalogue of documentary films produced in this period with the documentary films made in the first two decades of the twentieth century, an interesting fact emerges: the image of the archaic customs of Sardinia is almost absent in the documentaries produced under fascism.[100] Documentary films under the *ventennio* have often disregarded the exotic representations of the island filtered through the writings of Maria Grazia Deledda (Olla 2001). In the 1920s and 1930s a group of Sardinian intellectuals denounced the fatalism and determinism in Deledda's work; her literary production was criticised for its pastness and anti-modernism (Pirodda 1998). The editor of the Sardinian journal *Il Nuraghe*, for example, ignored the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Literature to the Italian writer born in Nuoro; similarly, fascist documentaries have censured negative and barbaric aspects of the Sardinian tradition such as the recrudescence of banditry. At that time banditry was still a serious social issue in Sardinia's interior, and yet the films produced by the Luce Institute ignored the criminal question in the territory of Nuoro. In fascist documentaries the "spazio regionale" of Sardinia is "ancora una volta ridotto al pittoresco (solita panoramica sui costumi sardi) o alla retorica del passato (e dunque la fierezza dei sardi con l'immancabile nuraghe sullo sfondo)" (Olla

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[100] As Olla points out, "nessun accenno di zone arretrate, di banditi […] nella politica di unificazione "antiregionalistica", lo spazio del documentario deve essere eminentemente "urbano;" è questo, infatti, il luogo della "civiltà" italica (1988: 171).

1988: 171). The national press in the same period reflected a similar attitude towards Sardinia's social issues. Whatever their omissions, the documentaries and newsreels of the Luce Institute are important historical documents; these audiovisual materials, however propagandist, offer interesting historical insights that help us understand the social reality of Sardinia in a period in which Italian documentary cinema was subordinated to a totalising political vision and "*fascistizzato*" by the regime (Micciché 1979; Savio 1975). The documentaries of the Luce Institute also represent an interesting dimension in the understanding of the Italian national history; despite its propagandist nature, the Luce Institute contributed to the circulation and exchange of images and data between Sardinia and the Italian mainland.[101]

The documentaries of the Luce Institute, which will become part of the *Studi di Cinecittà* (City of Cinema Studios) in 1937, present Sardinia through the lens of a modernist ideology; dozens of films are based on the triumph of progress and the redemption of the spiritual and material condition of the island.[102] These documentaries and newsreels highlight the cultural and political action of fascism, emphasising how the historical and geographical dynamism of the regime was able to connect Sardinia to the Italian peninsula. Their aim is to illustrate the *riscatto* of the island and its integration within a national project of modernisation. Celebrative images of public and political ceremonies attempt to exorcise the historical marginality of Sardinia, absorbed by the *pensée unique* of fascism. Among these images one can mention the inauguration of the dike in the Tirso basin in 1924, the official visits of government representatives and the building of palaces, cities and railways.

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[101] This is especially true if one considers that in Italy since 1926 all cinematographic screenings were preceded by the projection of a film produced by the Luce Institute (Caprotti 2005: 182).

[102] In her discussion of Italian fascist films, Ruth Ben-Ghiat writes that although fascism "appears as an agent of modernisation in these films, modernization is understood as a disciplining process that would normalize Italian thoughts, vision, and behaviour" (1996: 111). Ben-Ghiat's comment also applies to fascist documentary films on Sardinia.
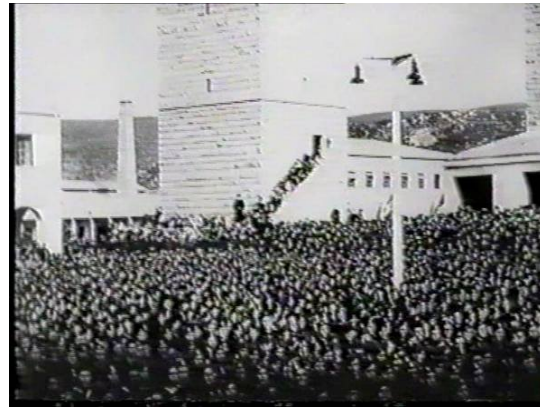
Figures 13-14. Church tower of Carbonia during Mussolini's visit in Fernando Cerchio's *Carbonia*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

1.2 The Illustrative Mode of Fascism

In the wider context of Italian cinema, documentary film represented a secondary sector, or even an area of training for young directors. In the post-war period, public economic support of the documentary encouraged the creation of a number of films in which artistic value is very modest, not least because of their repetitious themes (i.e. poetic landscape portraits) and the heavy deployment of voice-over commentary. The Italian fascist documentary was easy to produce and simple in its form. The connection between the formal model and the propagandist scheme accounts for the lack of a direct engagement with the pro-filmic scene; more precisely, the absence of a direct exploration is due to the deployment of a textual commentary that explains and illustrates the images.[103] The illustrative texts were often produced without seeing the image-track (Olla 1988: 172). In order to meet economic targets and to shorten the time of production, the images were shot by a camera operator or a small crew (camera operator and director) and edited in a selective way as an afterthought to the elucidations of a verbal accompaniment. The images, subservient to the words of the script, were reused in different documentaries. The result is the illustrative film, a film in which the images are subordinated to, or even overwhelmed by, an illustrative commentary (MacDougall 1998: 184). The main shortcoming of this model is that the exegetic assistance provided through voice-over commentary not only works as an elucidation of the visuals, it also tends to eliminate potential visual interjections and dissonances that challenge expository discourse.

Historically, the fascist illustrative film had been functional to the agenda of the sponsors and purchasers of documentaries. In Sardinia documentaries were almost exclusively financed, directly or indirectly, through public and government bodies; the production of documentary films in

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[103] This choice derived from the "riluttanza a usare il suono in presa diretta che caratterizza il cinema italiano dai primi anni '40 ai primi anni '80" (Aprà 1986: 44).

Sardinia, including the films produced in the 1950s, was heavily influenced by politics (Olla 1995). This might partly explain the homogeneous vision of a number of films dealing with the radical and traumatic transformation of the island. The standard model of the documentaries commissioned by ETFAS (Ente Regionale di Trasformazione Agraria), for instance, is based on the dichotomy of archaic versus modern (Olla 2007: 89-92). Even some of Fiorenzo Serra's documentaries fall within the same polarity conditioned by a precise political will.[104] The visuals in Serra's *Acque sulla pianura* (1950), produced by the Luce Institute and the *Ministero dell'Agricoltura e Foreste*, are subordinated to exegetic commentaries similar to the ones accompanying the films that celebrate the modernising projects of fascism.

An examination of the fascist documentary films includes the Luce Institute newsreels produced in the period 1925-42. These newsreels, rich in political and cultural notations, deal with various, heterogeneous issues. At the formal level they are compilations of black and white images accompanied by a musical score. Among the events that mark the civilising commitment of the regime in Sardinia, the newsreels celebrate the visits of political authorities. The Italian Royal Family is virtually omnipresent; its members are usually filmed during official public inaugurations and folkloric events such as the feast of Sant' Efisio in Cagliari. A number of newsreels are devoted to the *città di fondazione* (New Towns).[105]

From 1931 onwards, the films produced by the Luce Institute were accompanied by a soundtrack that enhanced the didactic effectiveness of numerous educational documentaries. Although the majority of these films are largely unknown to many of the general public, they represent an impressive documentation of scenes of cultural and social life.[106] Most do not have an identifiable director, and tend to dwell on picturesque elements of a far away island, orchestrated by means of scenes similar to travel notes and sketches: glimpses of ruins, shepherds and cattle, hunting parties and mountains of granite in the background; women dressed in the traditional costume, forests of cork oaks and wedding ceremonies, *launeddas'* players and stone towers going back to the Bronze Age. These evocative views were undoubtedly created with romantic intent. Their main theme is the myth of timelessness – the Sardinian Arcadia. The theme of the Sardinian

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[104] Fiorenzo Serra's films also include *L'invasione delle cavallette* (1946), *Costumi della Sardegna* (1952), *Alba sulla Nurra* (1953), *Assalto alla boscaglia* (1953), *Cingoli sulla terra* (1953), *Fame di pietre* (1954), *Strade nuove* (1954), *Nei paesi dell'argilla* (1955), *Pescatori di corallo* (1955), *San Costantino* (1955), *Feste della Barbagia* (1955), *Realtà del costume* (1956), *Artigiani della creta* (1956), *Desulo* (1957), *Artigianato e vita* (1959), *L'ultimo pugno di terra* (1965), *La transumanza* (1967), *Ai margini della Storia* (1967).

[105] In the *decennio di fondazione* (1928-38), which begins and ends in the scarcely populated land of Sardinia (Marrocu 1998: 84-7), the fascist regime founded the cities of Fertilia, Carbonia and Mussolinia, subsequently named Arborea after 1945 (Di Felice 1998: 98-119).

[106] Examples include *Paesi e costumi sardi* (1920-5), *La diga del Tirso* (1924)**,** *Quadri di Sardegna* (1920-5), *Costumi sardi* (1920-5), *Granicoltura in Sardegna* (1941) and *La coltura dell'olivo in Sardegna* (1939). The repertoire of the Luce Institute also includes fragments such as *Oristano, Sardegna, il paesaggio* (1932), *La produzione di sughero nella regione della Gallura* (1936), and *Usi e costumi della vecchia Sardegna* (1932).

Arcadia, one of the recurrent motives in nineteenth-century travel literature, is also the narrative framework of films dominated by a poetic vision that has often led to the creation of a superficial, easily recognisable image of the island, an image that communicates a strong sense of cultural difference. Relevant exceptions are the films made by the musicologist Gavino Gabriel. In *Visioni di Sardegna* (1932) and *Nei paesi dell'orbace* (1932) Gabriel goes beyond the exoticism of the Sardinian Arcadia in a way that evokes the richness of the material culture of the island. In most cases, however, the literary quality of technical and poetic comments has led to the creation of impressionistic films that overwhelm the level of ethnographic documentation.

1.3 The Città di Fondazione (New Towns): Mussolinia di Sardegna, Carbonia and Fertilia di Sardegna.

The construction of New Towns in Sardinia can be situated within a broader national context of land reclamation and ruralisation policies. It was part of a demographic project that included the construction of new fascist urban areas in Friuli, Emilia-Romagna (Ferrara), in Tuscany (Maremma), Trentino Alto-Adige (near Bolzano), Istria, and perhaps most important, the building of New Towns in the Pontine Marshes (Littoria, Pontinia, Sabaudia, Aprilia, Pomezia). The official fascist ideology of modernisation centred on the concept of *bonifica integrale* (integral reclamation), a transformative enterprise which included the reclamation of new men and women.[107] The programme was *integrale* because it aimed at "redeeming" land and citizens alike; it included agricultural policies of reclamation but also the actuation of institutional innovations in the areas of health and education and a closer interaction between local administration and national government.

The categories of "old" and "new" in Raffaello Matarrazzo's *Mussolinia di Sardegna* (1933), Fernando Cerchio's *Carbonia* (1941) and Gino Rovesti's *Fertilia di Sardegna* (1936) – the most important *mediometraggi* on Sardinia made in the *ventennio* – will now be analysed.[108] The explicative apparatus deployed by the aforementioned films portrays an ideal and de-historicised Sardinia, i.e. an island as the fascist regime wants it to be. The films are expressive of a point of view that absorbs and subordinates Sardinia to the ideological apparatus of state propaganda. The historical and cultural space of the island is emptied and purified in order to reduce "la diversità di

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[107] The materialisation of the national project of integral reclamation was introduced with the *Lex Serpieri 8.5.1924*, a law named after agronomist Arrigo Serpieri (Caprotti 2007b: 654).

[108] Raffaello Matarrazzo was an Italian documentary filmmaker and the founder of *La gazzetta del cinema*, a journal specialized in film criticism. His *Mussolinia* (1933) will be integrated in a longer documentary entitled *Mussolinia. Documentario storico-illustrato sulla bonifica di Mussolinia in Sardegna, realizzato per iniziativa del Ministero dell'Agricoltura e Foreste con la collaborazione della Società Bonifiche Sarde* (1937).

storia e cultura a puro folclore" (Olla 1995: 26-7). The image of fascism illustrates the reclamation of the Sardinian territory through settlement projects (*bonifiche*) and the attempt to homologate Sardinia to the other regions of Italy. The films are largely devoid of credibility because they conform to an idea of familiar and readymade otherness conveyed through a voice-over commentary that controls the images and prioritises the seen over the visible.

Figures 15-16. Vistas of Sardinia before fascist intervention in Fernando Cerchio's *Carbonia*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

1.3.1 Fernando Cerchio's *Carbonia*

In *Carbonia* there is a high level of rhetoric, for the narrator describes the island of Sardinia almost as a grotesque and empty Italian colony. The film shows images of the inauguration of the city, while Mussolini reminds the crowd that the Sardinian territory before the foundation of Carbonia was a "landa quasi deserta, non un uomo, non una casa, non una goccia d'acqua: solitudine e malaria." At the beginning of the film [Figures 15 and 16] the camera pans right to left, showing images of a prehistoric scene that conveys an extreme sense of mystery: the remains of a *nuraghe*, a shepherd and a few sheep under a thunderstorm. Then, suddenly, the viewer is introduced to the new city, defined as "il più giovane comune d'Italia" and inaugurated by the gestures and words of Mussolini [Figure 18]. Clearly the visual material aims at making a great impact on the Italian public by presenting a forceful contraposition between an aura of backward obscurity and the lyrical transfiguration of the island's identity. The titanic, providential intervention of fascism is declared through voice-over: "l'inospitale landa infestata dalla malaria va ridestandosi alla vita." The material transformation from death to life is neither smooth nor sweet. The passage from prehistory to history is abrupt; there is a complete split between the two. Not only is this split clear-cut, but it also reinforces the necessity of modernity: Sardinia must enter Italian modernity.

Carbonia appears as built *ex nihilo* in sharp contrast to a crystallised scenario – the "old" – which defines the culture of Sardinia as a fossil surviving outside modernity. The creative moment of the construction of streets, wells, and industrial complexes is marked by the extraordinary oration of *Il Duce*, whose theatrical gestures establish a secular rituality of power (Calvino 1995). In many newsreels Mussolini himself embodied the example of "fascist" reclaimed life. In 1935, a newsreel produced by the Luce Institute showed Mussolini working in the land together with farmers. The footage focused on a bare-chested Mussolini as he was threshing wheat. Mussolini also appeared in a number of other newsreels, visiting colonial houses or overseeing the construction projects of regeneration of the Italian rural fields. Fascist documentaries often superimposed illustrative maps on shots of landscapes in order to emphasise the quasi-divine praxis of revivification of wasted soils. The achievements in the process of rehabilitation of land and people were illustrated through maps and animation delivering information about the aims and results of the projects [Figures 21-24].

Figures 17-18. Mussolini's speech in Fernando Cerchio's *Carbonia*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

1.3.2 Raffaello Matarrazzo's *Mussolinia di Sardegna*

Compared to *Carbonia*, *Mussolinia di Sardegna* presents a milder contrast suggesting that the archaic Sardinian communities will have to abandon their past to adapt to the new situation created by the fascist agrarian civilisation.[109] Murru writes that while the beginning of the film presents the "identità mitologica e geografica di un lembo di terra dimenticato e inospitale," the final scene potrays a local town with women dressed in the traditional custom, "in procinto di recarsi a vedere

[109] It is important to mention that not all the New Towns were agricultural villages. As suggested by its name (the Italian word "*carbone*" means "coal"), Carbonia is an example of industrial modernization. The mining upon which Carbonia was based was devoted to coal extraction. Another example of non-agricultural New Town is the foundation of the city of Guidonia, near Rome.

il miracolo realizzato a pochi passi dalla loro miseria secolare" (Murru 2000: 99). The transformation of the human and geographic landscape of the island is less clear-cut than in *Carbonia*, and yet the verbal introduction describes the sad and primitive desolation of a geologically remote area: a few huts, marshes, ponds, and windy dunes. The voice-over narrator describes "sterminate distese sabbiose percorse da venti infidi, acquitrini in cui la malaria tesseva quotidianamente i suoi percorsi di morte spettrali, cavalcate di dune, qua e là spezzate dall'arida uniformità della steppa." Then, with severity, the narrator continues describing the landscape trapped within the "inesorabile condanna della natura. Qualche capanna di paglia secca, una dozzina di predestinati dediti alla pesca e alla pastorizia e sulla loro rassegnazione l'ombra di un destino, triste patrimonio di generazioni e generazioni." A few shepherds and fishermen live out like a mythological and geographical destiny the tradition of their ancient material culture. The Sardinian condition, portrayed through conventional and reductive images, can be attributed to nature rather than to history. The Sardinian "wilderness," fixed in a pose of timelessness, is emphasised by the melody of a traditional and monotonous tune. The poetics of this melody creates a negative sense of identity. The soundtrack accentuates the sense of a lack of history associated with extreme poverty and centuries-old resignation, while a stentorian voice-over provides a technical explanation of the miracle carried out by the regime: nursery schools, churches, irrigation canals, farmhouses and power stations. Mussolinia is presented as a thriving microcosm, a self-sufficient oasis. In this *città giardino* (garden city) hospitals and schools promote stability and the creation of new family units.

One serious limitation of this documentary, which can be interpreted as a deliberate misconstruing of the truth as part of the fascist propaganda machine, is that although the families in the film are presented as happy, active participants in the fascist project of redemption of people and land, the fascist programme of relocation in the New Towns was part of a larger demographic project of internal migration. The fascist transformation of the Sardinian marshlands into a productive area was the consequence of legislative actions adopted to regulate a process of demographic colonisation to be implemented through coercive means. Many of the human beings that appear in the film as enthusiastic collaborators in the realisation of "healthy" urban areas were transplanted onto the New Towns in a traumatic way, often coerced to leave behind their former relationships and occupations. The theme of migration of families to the New Town outlined an overtly positive condition and projected it in the future without dealing with the problems of an often difficult present.

Figures 19-20. Stills from *Mussolinia di Sardegna* by Raffaello Mararazzo. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

1.3.3 The "Old" and the "New"

The most interesting aspect of *Mussolinia* and *Carbonia* is their formal similarity; both are pervaded with a hyper-modernist, monumental aura. This mythical aura refers to the epochal transformation of the relationship between man and nature through the creation of New Towns. It also gives a sense of the internal colonisation of backward and forgotten areas by means of engineering and social projects. *Carbonia* and *Mussolinia* extol the idea of modernity in a way that accords with the artistic and intellectual tendencies of futurism.[110] The contraposition between the beauty of the machine and the antiquity of the past is a central concept of futurism. Pellegrini writes:

> Alla desolazione di lande incolte e malariche succede l'impetuosa salvazione ad opera di ingranaggi mirabili, sforzo congiunto di braccia umane e congegni prodigiosi, filmati al ritmo incalzante dell'ottimo montaggio. Alla redenzione meccanica delle terre, segue quella agricola, sempre assistita dall'acciaio di cingoli e motori, per arrivare infine alla costruzione delle città, nelle forme avveniristiche e pure dell'ordine, anche qui, razionalista (2000: 104).

In *Mussolinia* the rigid propaganda that disregards the recent history of Sardinia is influenced by the aesthetic suggestions of the *macchinismo* and the palingenetic illusions of Marinettian Futurism: "slancio di fervori edilizi e rettilinea ortogonalità delle architetture, messi spesso in bella evidenza dall'utilizzo sapiente della verticalità dinamica dell'inquadratura costruttivista – e futurista

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[110] Pellegrini writes: "Esaltazione del nuovo contrapposto al vecchio, santificazione della macchina come motore della rivoluzione, come congegno del futuro, nemico del passato e indispensabile per il raggiungimento dell'utopia: lo spirito del cosiddetto montaggio oppositivo del cinema sovietico, deriva intero dalle tumultuose poetiche di quel futurismo russo e sovietico che discendono a loro volta dal manifesto di Marinetti" (2000: 103).

– 'picchiata' e 'contropicchiata'" (Pellegrini 2000: 104). The immediate effectiveness of the iconographic repertory of *Mussolinia* – and the same applies to *Carbonia* – rests on a radical ideological contrast. The film is centred on the redemption of the Sardinian swamps by means of *bonifiche*. In Matarazzo's film "è la verità dell'impresa titanica della bonifica a stagliarsi, quasi irreale nelle sue geometrie metafisiche dell'ordine e dell'abbondanza, anche sopra le inevitabili ingenuità della retorica di regime" (Pellegrini 2000: 104). The propagandist material is abstract, easily understandable, and firmly dominated by stark oppositions. It focuses on the renewal created by modern tractors and ploughs in the marshes of Sardinia [Figure 20].

Mussolinia and *Carbonia* play a part in providing a synthesis of the modern redemption of a land paralysed in a way of life with medieval working conditions. The mirage of modernity is contrasted to the state of Sardinia before the advent of the fascist revolution. In the symbolic images of reclaimed land the national state emerges as the guarantor of modernity. A straightforward iconographic apparatus presents a filmic documentation that highlights the propagandist concepts of the "new" and the "modern" (Pellegrini 2001). The past of Sardinia diverges from the legendary Roman origins that fascism was invoking and recuperating as the basis of its civilisation. The ideology of fascism concerns the future as much as the recuperation of the heroism of an ancient Roman past. In the abovementioned documentaries the past of Sardinia emerges as the "wrong" past. The visuals align Sardinia with the disgusting connotations of swamp and marshes, wetness and lack of backbone, portraying a particular version of the island that exposes the dual mythology of past and future of the fascist regime. The rationalist architecture of the new fascist buildings functions symbolically and ideologically as a monumental representation that "testifies to fascism's embrace of modernity" (Caprotti and Kaïka 2008: 624). The architecture of the New Towns was an attempt to develop a distinctive fascist style that combines modernist and classical/neoclassical styles. This architectural style was the politicised product of the intellectual elite of the regime. It corresponds to the attempt of creating a recognisably fascist style that, as the Soviet style, was defined in national terms. The fascist symbol of power that dominates the cityscape of the New Towns is the *torre littoria* – the tower of the municipal building or party headquarters. The prominent, overbearing presence of these towers is emphasised by Mussolini himself in a 1938 newsreel, when he compares the "imposing mass of the civic tower" of Carbonia to the "slim outline of the church tower" (Caprotti and Kaïka 2008: 625).

Matarazzo's *Mussolinia* shows many similarities with the Soviet model developed by Ejzenstein. The film reveals a "precisa evocazione di modelli, desunti dal coevo cinema sovietico, che si rileva nella produzione cinematografica, specie quella relativa alle grandi opere di bonifica, datata ai primi anni trenta" (Pellegrini 2000: 103). The futurist soul of fascism proposes an

evocative, openly contrastive formal pattern offering a clear and simple message: the fascist regime is able to create what had been impossible for centuries, i.e. the transformation of the malarial marshes into the modern New Town. The commentary illustrates the achievements of the revolutionary and radical transformation with figures and data. A contrastive approach divides the archaic Sardinia from the modern Sardinia.[111] The shift from the scenario of ponds, huts, stone quarries, deserts, wild woods and bogs to the vision of houses, churches, dikes, hydroelectric plants, roads and canals is traumatic. The result is an overly optimistic view characterised by omissions. Not only do these documentaries draw upon and participate in the vision that fascism sought to propagate, they also lean towards categorising the region of Sardinia as inferior. The rhetorical strategies and expressive forms deployed by these documentaries attempt to capture the downright weirdness of a land unwilling to change.[112]

The formal structure of *Mussolinia* and *Carbonia* are typical of the Italian documentary in the same period. The dichotomy of old and new amplified by a pompous, pedantic voice-over follows a self-referential model which is typical of the Italian propagandist documentary. Unlike the United States (Flaherty), Great Britain (Grierson), or Russia (Vertov) in the same period, Italy did not develop a school or tradition.[113] Bertozzi writes:

> Rispetto alla forma poetica di Flaherty, all'impegno internazionale di Ivens, alle scuole del documentarismo sociale di Grierson e del *New Deal* la storiografia critica sul documentario italiano ha sempre lamentato la mancanza di un maestro o di una scuola unificante, la scarsità di opere o di autori (2008: 83-4)

The point is that the fascist documentary film was not only characterised by modest aesthetic results, but also by a propagandist organisation that was often conceited. The aesthetic and communicative shortcomings of fascist documentaries were related to the banality of a formal scheme that produced a kind of censorship that marginalised innovation.

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[111] Caprotti and Kaïka write that in the newsreels and documentaries produced by the LUCE Institute the "New Towns are often juxtaposed to the marshes that used to exist in their place" (2008: 624).

[112] This does not mean that the necessity and need of a deep transformation of Sardinia was invented by fascism because at that time modernisation in Sardinia was unnecessary.

[113] Pinna writes: "Sull'incapacità del documentario italiano di sfruttare le sue enormi potenzialità estetiche e linguistiche, pesa la mancanza di una tradizione documentaristica come quella anglosassone e, soprattutto, di motivazioni educative e in genere sociali capaci di muovere all'interesse per la sperimentazione tecnica e metodologica" (2002: 175). The Italian documentary also lacks the formal and stylistic qualities of the celebrative reconstructions in Riefenshahl's *The Triumph of the Will* (1935).

1.3.4 Gino Rovesti's *Fertilia di Sardegna*

The analysis of the dominant themes in fascist documentaries in *Carbonia* and *Mussolinia* can be extended to Gino Rovesti's *Fertilia di Sardegna*. In this film the prevalence of a wordy commentary makes the images subservient to the poetic phrases of the exegetic soundtrack. At the beginning of the film, the narrator recites the litany of the sad desolation of Sardinia:

> Dal golfo di Alghero alle montagne si stende nella forte e austera terra di Sardegna la regione triste e paludosa della Nurra. D'una bellezza impetuosa e sterile, la natura non ha qui che richiami di carattere coloristico e ambientale: poeti e pittori potrebbero trarne feconda materia d'ispirazione, ma solo per opere di natura contemplativa dalle quali fosse bandito ogni accento di vita.

As the narrator comments on the solitary state of the *Nurra*, the musical accompaniment highlights without an ironic distance (that is, with uncritical emphasis) the situation of Sardinia before fascism. The main topic of the documentary is openly and immediately declared. It finds its most organic expression in the direct rhetoric of the voice-over, in which negative notations concentrate on the territory near the city of Alghero. The narrator explains:

> Il quadro è quello della più autentica desolazione: scarsissimi gli abitanti e tutti dediti all'allevamento del bestiame e alla pastorizia, alle sole attività che la regione consenta. Tutt'intorno, nell'inerzia che corrode gli spiriti, nell'eguale scorrere del tempo che fiacca ogni energia, sono unici compagni dell'uomo gli sterminati palmeti selvatici e la palude dal respiro avvelenato.

The island is othered through images of disgusting smells – the "bad air" of malaria. Long shots dwell on the despair of a marshy environment where a flock of sheep are grazing close to a stone hut, not far from a shepherd eating a crust of bread. The visuals support the exceptional loquacity of the words. The images seem to serve the specific cause and perspective of the ruling class of the island; that is, the vision of those Sardinian officials and intellectuals who wished for a radical improvement of the land. This change is conveniently celebrated with images of bulldozers that remove with their caterpillars the stones of arid soils. A tumultuous soundtrack reflects the dimension and rhythm of the tension towards modernity, the insistent and vigorous noise of the solemn gait of machines and tractors. Music and images are well connected; their relationship and interaction is without confusion or displacement. The voice-over enunciates the crucial theme of the land reclamation works, while rhetorical sequences confirm the visual conflict between past and modern times. Clearly the visuals aim to provide visual proof of the creation of the third New Town in Sardinia. As the narrator puts it:

Siamo alla vigilia della grande opera di risanamento e di bonifica intrapresa dal governo fascista con la sovrintendenza dell'ente ferrarese di colonizzazione. Le mine che dissodano il terreno liberandolo dai tenacissimi palmizi che disperatamente vi si abbarbicano fanno risuonare le prime voci di vita. E subito i lavori hanno inizio: si arginano i torrenti, si aprono i canali che andranno ad irrigare la terra risanata e fecondata. Di giorno in giorno nuove zone vengono strappate all'abbandono e allo squallore: la bonifica si spinge sempre più lontano, verso le ultime plaghe infeconde.

The city of Fertilia (the name was chosen by Mussolini himself) is described through poignant and well-edited images of the engineering works of water canalisation that will guarantee the development of more efficient irrigation for the cultivable land. Then the camera reveals the pioneering work and the building of new streets, as the narrator observes:

La regione diviene praticabile. Ponti scavalcano fiumi e torrenti, laddove prima non esistevano, quando esistevano, che rudimentali traghetti. E strade si aprono in ogni direzione recando fin nei punti più lontani la certezza di un'esistenza nuova e migliore: da squallida, malarica e inospitale, la regione è divenuta salubre, accogliente, abitabile.

These political and aesthetic preoccupations are the leitmotiv of a number of documentaries of the same period. The narrator emphasises with sobriety and optimism the refrain of the miraculous redemption of the land:

Ma quanto è stato fatto sino ad ora non è che la parte preliminare della grande impresa. Ora che il terreno – prosciugato, dissodato, liberato dai parassiti vegetali che lo contendevano alla conquista del lavoro – è stato reso fertile e redditizio, l'aratro compie l'opera definitiva: assicurare i mezzi di sussistenza ai coloni e agli isolani che dovranno popolare le varie zone […] dove all'uomo era negata ogni possibilità di lavoro e di vita, dove la malaria esalava i suoi miasmi mortali e l'acquitrino lambiva la terra sterile e bruciata, si stendono oramai e si susseguono a perdita d'occhio coltivazioni fertilissime, dense di tutti i doni della terra italiana.

An attentive viewer may realise that the functional architecture of the public buildings in Fertilia is rationalist. Images of farmhouses suggest that Sardinia has achieved civilisation and urbanisation, despite the fact that the city of Fertilia is still unfinished and will never be completed. With the outbreak of the war, Fertilia became a deserted city, colonised and occupied again only afterwards by the refugees of Venezia Giulia, as documented in Enrico Moretti's *Giuliani in Sardegna* (1949) and Fiorenzo Serra's *Attorno alla città morta* (1953). This means that at the time

of *Fertilia* modernity was not established as a palpable reality; rather, it was a political and ideological project, a utopian metaphor structured by the tension created through the combination of musical accompaniment and images of impetuous transformation. The heart of *Fertilia*, as that of *Mussolinia* and *Carbonia*, is the contrast between static nature and dynamic movement, tradition and modernity, or even between a silent world of hard work and the enemy of past orders and values. These opposites mark the beginning and the end of the documentary. They are the central themes of the uncritical magniloquence of Rovesti's film.
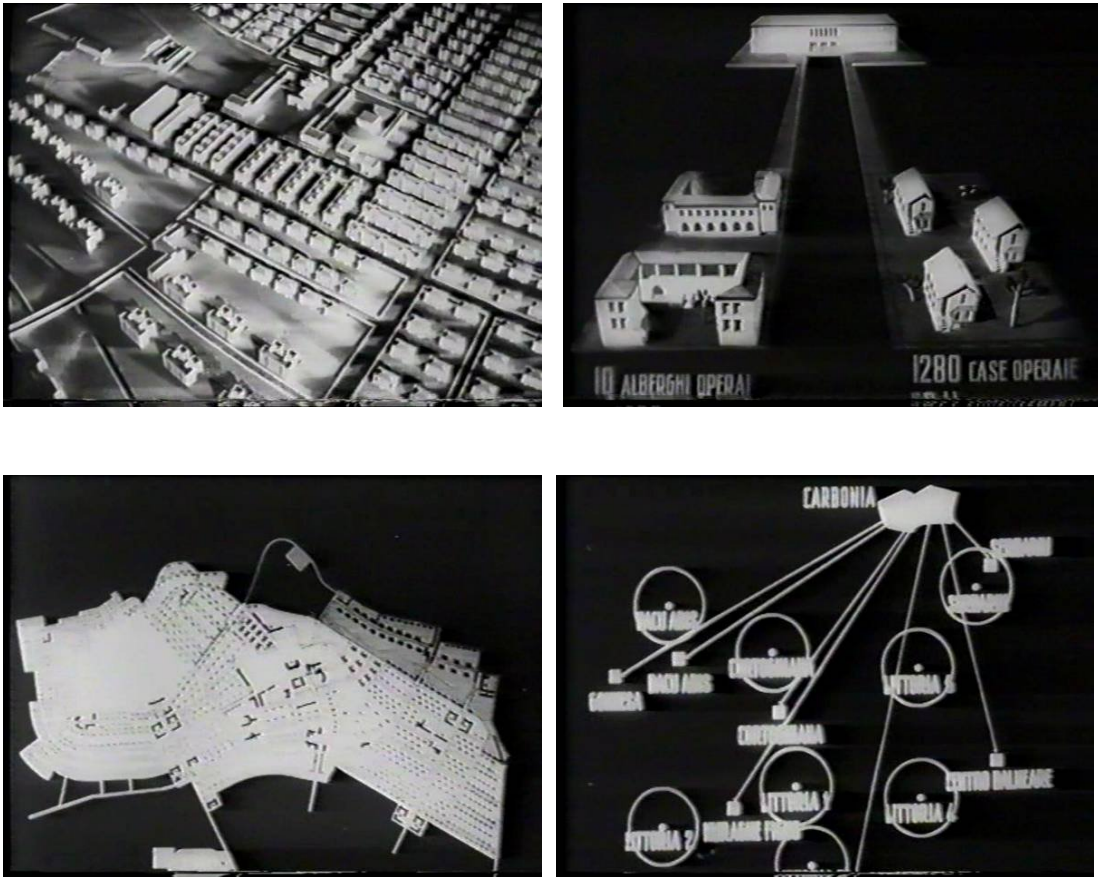
Figures 21-24. Animated maps showing the areas near Carbonia where "colonists" will be moved and supported in Fernando Cerchio's *Carbonia*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

1.4 Fascist Documentary: a "Colonial" Gaze

The previous sections have explored the documentaries that portray Mussolinia, Carbonia and Fertilia as the building sites where the future of Sardinia was made during the *ventennio*. Mussolinia, Carbonia and Fertilia emerge as important stages in the process of the modernisation of

Sardinia. In relation to the discourse of modernisation, it is important to mention that this was an international preoccupation at the time. In the period 1920-40, governments sponsored the production of socially-oriented documentaries dealing with the disciplining of nature to win consent for their programs and to publicise their remedies. The films described in this chapter as showing a great deal of agricultural and industrial modernisation need to be put into this context: it was an accepted truth of the times. Cinematography was an instrument of propaganda adopted by government agencies to fashion the modern enterprises of the state. Documentaries were employed to disseminate information about the redemptive strategies of government policies, but also to communicate their activities and successes in a form that contributed to shaping government programs. In many countries, industry and progress were seen as heroic – i.e films about land reclamation in the Netherlands, or the electrification of rural America in Pare Lorentz's *Power and the Land* (1940).[114] The documentaries dealing with the programme of reclamation of the marshes in Italy have parallels and connections with the filming of the reclamation efforts and the building of the *Zuider Zee* dike in the Netherlands, or with the films sponsored by the New Deal agencies in the period between the World Wars. In the documentaries about the Sardinian New Towns the camera praises and magnifies the excavators that, like mechanical monsters, turn the uncultivated land into modern agricultural settlements. The technologies of modernity erase the scene of Sardinian backwardness, attributed to the scarcity of population and the bad conditions of the countryside. This propagandist attitude was almost an inescapable obligation under fascism. After 1945, however, the contrast between tradition and modernity is milder. Although documentaries continue to be conditioned by propagandist aims, they do not eliminate the cultural background of the old Sardinia; instead, they try to integrate the "old" within the "new" (Pinna 2010).

In the *ventennio*, documentary film was primarily an instrument of power. The representation of the island as a static space was dialectically linked to the construction of the historical role of fascism. Brought within the horizons of a "colonial" visual narrative, Sardinia was portrayed as a kind of *tabula rasa* on which the modernising impulses of the regime could be confidently inscribed. The island was presented in its deficient immobility and subsumed within an overwhelming vision. The tradition of Sardinia was presented as timeless and, situated in a disquieting position, measured by the modern standards of fascism. Within this scenario, Sardinia was elaborated and explained as the dark side of Italy's modernity, an area of wilderness in need of intervention. The potential for transformation and autonomy of the island, it would seem, was repressed and mystified both ideologically and imaginatively. Portrayed as the mummified zone of an ancient civilisation, Sardinia could only benefit from the fascist power of possession; only

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[114] Mention of relevant non-Italian films of this kind includes Pare Lorentz's *The Plough that Broke the Plains* (1936), *The River* (1937) and Joris Ivens' *Zuiderzee* (1930).

fascism could rescue Sardinia from the eternal present of its ancient past. The illustrative commentary imposed a condition of muteness over the observed Sardinian subjects. In *Carbonia*, for example, the Sardinian was characterised as an aesthetic creation, an exotic creature living among the ruins of a mysterious civilisation. The shepherd dressed in animal skins works as a metaphor of the unmoved object that had to be represented. Like the swamps in *Mussolinia*, it is an allegory of a remote region that sustains ideologically the role of the regime as liberator. Not only is this visual logic propagandist, it also follows, or seems to follow, a narrative of denigration. The Sardinian was not encountered, but rather *made* by the verbal statements proffered by the commentary. The fascist power of naming – a power expressed by means of the word – is revealed in the fact that Mussolini christened the new city *Mussolinia* and, in so doing, he gave his name to the city as a mark of possession, almost as a coloniser marking a property previously unclaimed. The commentary at the incipit of *Mussolinia*, as well as the images at the beginning of *Carbonia*, seems to recount the narration of Genesis and creation of the world of nature. Fascist documentaries in Sardinia celebrate a kind of demiurgic progress in a nude territory. The narratives of these documentaries establish a sense of hierarchy granting superiority to the regime's undertakings, which appear not only as progressive, but also as necessary and civilising. A Promethean voice-over narrative evokes the passage from absence to plenitude, from submissiveness to redemption. A message, clear and straightforward, is given to the viewers: new life is brought to Sardinia *ex nihilo*. The heroic settlers are portrayed as bringing modernity to the available, untouched nature of Sardinia. Settlers and pioneers are integral to the rescue fantasy of fascism: these idealised figures are the bearers of knowledge, the expression of the virile stature of the regime. The image of the pioneer bringing order to chaos, penetrating and domesticating barren lands, is a common trope of the colonial ethos.

Another feature of fascist documentaries is that they describe the land of Sardinia as subliminally gendered (Shohat 1997). The fascist treatment of the feminine has a double-edged aspect, which can be seen as a reflection of nineteenth-century ideologies (Gibson 1995: 190). On the one hand, women were idealised by fascism as mothers and homemakers, active participants to its ideals within conservative, traditional roles. Mussolini's social programmes depicted them within a utopian idealisation that celebrated domesticity and homely life. The rhetoric of fascist ideology insisted on the belief that ruralisation required the participation of women as guarantors of family values. It was a rural image of femininity closely tied to demographic concerns. On the other, the feminine was presented as having a more troubled nature, reinforced through negative images. The fascist programme of ruralisation gave repeatedly the marshy land to be tamed

feminine attributes (Caprotti 2009: 386).[115] The role of fascist programmes was similar to the activity of the sexually active conqueror belonging to the sphere of the masculine, whereas the wilderness of nature was symbolically identified with female characteristics that need to be contained and restricted (Caprotti 2006: 149). This gendered level of fascist discourse tended to split the spheres of masculine and feminine. Fascist conceptualisations of gender provided a metaphorical identification of women with nature and unruly behaviour, whereas men were associated with culture, control and rational intervention (Caprotti 2007a: 68; Villanueva Gardner 1998: 193).[116] The wilderness of Sardinia, portrayed as female in antiquity, was tamed and fecundated by the muscular, masculine ethos of the fascist modernisers.

In conclusion, the documentaries examined above allowed the fascist imagination to play out its own fantasies of penetration and it can be argued that these fantasies of rescue are characteristic of a quasi-colonial narrative.

Figures 25-26. Stills from *Il regno del silenzio*. Credit: Ilisso.

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[115] Caprotti writes: "hostile nature was represented through negative, supposedly feminine attributes, such as infertility (then, as regrettably in many cases even now seen as a predominantly female characteristic) as opposed to manly and virile rurality. A justification was therefore elaborated as to the mastering of womanly, feminine, anti-fascist nature (2007a: 25).

[116] Another example of negative feminine stereotypes is the analogy between women and the masses, which implies that crowds, because of their supposedly feminine instinctual nature, can only be tamed and subjugated by means of virile, authoritarian action (Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 25). The negative status of the masses was selectively associated to ideas of feminine emotionality that reinforced the image of potentially uncontrollable forces that need to be seduced and cloistered.

2 Voice-over and Picturesque: Il Regno del Silenzio and Viaggio in Sardegna

Historically, the majority of documentaries about Sardinia verge, or seem to verge, on exoticism (Rugu 1977).[117] Their function in creating a flavour of cultural identity satisfies the need for myth and superficial sociological understanding (Pinna 2010: 43). The pastoral imagery contained in a number of films is particularly efficient at romanticising the reality of the settings, fulfilling a certain kind of expectation and preoccupation with issues of otherness; indeed, the "bisogno di arcaicità" is the "materia prima di molti documentari sardi di ogni tipo" (Pinna 2010: 75). The subject matter presented in a number of documentary films is picturesque by any standards.[118] The readily available folklore of the island is punctuated by images of isolation, poverty and social amenities that often characterise ethnic films about timeless cultures.[119] The formal elements running through the body of documentary films made in Sardinia reveal that most films, especially before the 1960s, are almost exclusively concerned with the discursive. The Italian documentaries produced in the period 1950-79, which include those made in Sardinia, are characterised by the pre-eminence of the technique of voice-over, which is crucially dependent upon conventional practices that reduce images to illustrations of the words in the script (Bernagozzi 1979: 91). The real measure of the limitation of this model is the global system of explanations that, to borrow Taylor's expression, "linguify" the film (Taylor 1996).

The second part of this chapter reads the documentaries *Il regno del silenzio* (1954-62) by Fiorenzo Serra and *Viaggio in Sardegna* (1953) by Ubaldo Magnaghi as instances of the power of voice-over in conveying a picturesque atmosphere. Drawing on Doane, Bonitzer, Kozloff, Chion and others, it suggests that Sardinia has been visually represented in these documentaries produced in the 1950s through an arsenal of primitivist ideologies. Special attention will be paid to the formal structure of the films and the content of the scripts. Although the power of voice-over is not necessarily preaching and authoritarian (Kozloff 1984: 48), the picturesque scheme informing the aforementioned documentaries is deeply problematic. The chapter concludes that these documentary films on Sardinia reflect an over-determined picturesque discourse.

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[117] In *I documentari sardi*, Mario G. Rugu writes: "Il sardo in vetrina da consumare e usare per il turista, è sempre in costume (o quasi), mentre arrostisce la squisita carne dorata al fuoco, mentre esercita il suo mestiere di pastore appresso al gregge: è sempre in costume la tessitrice, la filatrice, l'artigiano. Il popolo sardo, poi, è un popolo di cavalieri abilissimi, se ne vedono tanti, ma anche questi, nelle feste, in costume; gli altri giorni no, usano l'asino […] La sua casa è il nuraghe, la domu de jana, i suoi ninnoli i bronzetti nuragici o le antiche ancorette. I sardi sono dei grandi festaioli: ogni documentarista vuole imporre la sua sfilata o la sua processione; interminabili sfilate di giovani "fieri" e di fanciulle floride, naturalmente in costume, e banchetti, con arrosti dorati di porchetti, agnelli, muggini e anguille. In Sardegna, grazie a Dio, non c'è miseria." *Tutto Quotidiano*, December 24, 1977.

[118] This is partly the result of the fact that "until very recently most ethnographic films were the byproducts of other endeavours: the chronicles of travellers, the works of documentary filmmakers, and the occasional forays into film of anthropologists whose major commitment was to writing" (MacDougall 1998: 125).

[119] In MacDougall's words, the majority of these documentaries "announced their own inadequacies. When they did not, neither were they wholly persuasive. One often wondered what had been concealed or created by the editing, the framing or the narrator's commentary" (1998: 126).

The examination of the cinematic structure of the visual narratives in *Il regno del silenzio* and *Viaggio in Sardegna* will be especially concerned with identifying several and interrelated aspects of voice-over in nonfiction films: its strategies of presentation and structural role in constructing the diegesis, the characteristics of the speaker, the authority of the script and the function of the spoken word in containing the visuals.[120] These concerns can be formulated in the form of a series of questions: what is the compositional role of the voice-over in the organisation of film space? What kind of representations does the speaker put into play? What combination of factors allows voice-over narration to give form to the author? Voice-over in nonfiction film has a key role to play in the amalgamation of location footage from different places and times and in the transmission of ideas that are difficult to convey visually – e.g. facts, figures and historical data. Voice-over is a code of documentary address (Piault 2007a, 2007b), the *modus operandi* used to elucidate and evaluate something. It leads the spectator, educates the spectator and constitutes the spectator as a space to be addressed.[121] These functions highlight the dialectics of film and viewer, and the ways in which voice-over narration tries to involve, persuade or instruct the spectator more or less directly. To include the spectator is to construct the viewer by means of an ongoing dialectic of inside and outside similar to a process of initiation.

In what follows, the representation of cultural otherness constituting the leitmotiv of *Il regno del silenzio* and *Viaggio in Sardegna* will be examined for its tendency to represent Sardinians as the members of an ethnic group. The reliance on superficial generalisations and the search for cultural authenticity present a particular version of the social reality of Sardinia. An analysis of the elaborate imbrications of landscape, narrative and culture in these documentaries reveals representational infelicities marked by the sins of the disciplinary past of anthropology, reviewed in Appendix 2.[122] The exaggeration of an abstract otherness reflects anthropology's past epistemology. The historical construct of anthropology – that is, the old notion of "culture," – has been criticised for its strategies of disfigurement and for widening the distance between "here" and "there" (Appadurai 1986; Appadurai 1988; Brightman 1995; Ferguson and Gupta 1992; Chen and Minh-ha 1994). Similarly, the cinematic representation of otherness that marginalises (and silences) the Sardinians in the abovementioned films can be criticised for creating an arbitrary separation of subject and object, self and other. While one can always find (very rare) exceptions here and there,

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[120] Voice-over is commonly used in radio, newsreels, commercials and teaching films. Critical attention to the relationship between power and vocal soundtrack can be found in Chion *La voix au cinema* (1999), which offers an analysis that continues to be influential among film theorists. Another study that attends to the role of the vocal soundtrack in film is, for example, Altman (1992).

[121] Shohat and Stam write that "questions of address are as crucial as questions of representation. Who is speaking through a film? Who is actually listening? Who is looking? And what social desires are mobilized by the film?" (1994: 205; quoted in Duncan 2008).

[122] In her study of landscape images in Italian cinema, Galt writes that "landscape as a mode of spectacle provokes questions of national identity, the material space of the profilmic, and the historicity of the image" (2006: 27).

the documentaries under interrogation follow a well-known formula. The anthropological overtones of the idealised forms of portraiture passed off as typical of Sardinia do not reveal a genuine interest in the people encountered, a point addressed earlier in relation to fascist documentaries. The conceptual organisation of the material presents us with identifiable specimens and native types rather than persons. This is because the documentaries disseminate representations that further entrench the category of otherness instead of focussing on a single family or small group. The reification of the Sardinians as indigenous raises the question of the creation of the other as primitive (Thomas 1994: 171-85). The theoretical strand of primitivism is relevant to this analysis in so far as the ethos of primitivism is, at least in part, a prescriptive form of "othering." Not only is primitivism a seductive discourse that might be used to justify forms of oppression, it is also a patronising ideology that reinforces fantasies of forgotten people and elemental life. In the films under investigation, the coded expressions of strangeness and harmony, rural isolation and small town life, are sustained to appeal to the viewer's desire for exoticism; the reassuring romanticism of picturesque sights occupies the uncomfortable space between information and entertainment.

Much can be learned from the mechanisms of pleasure, power and nostalgia that contribute to describe Sardinia as a world apart. The shots in *Viaggio in Sardegna* and *Il regno del silenzio* are saturated with a romantic aura that treats Sardinia as anthropologically strange. The promise of an ex-centric view on Sardinia is crucial to the overall effect. It is not accidental that the choice of vocabulary in the scripts repeats motives often found in the epic journeys of travel writers. Travel tropes offer a means whereby a set of quaint images and ideas, which are more than metaphors, enforce the distance between the familiar and the foreign, producing differences at the expense of substance. The illusion of travel renders otherness desirable within the space of an imaginative journey. The result is a preconceived discourse that valorises difference as the primary aspect of a distant scene. Before starting a close analysis of the films, it is worth emphasising that the fascination with the image of a separate civilisation – the Nuragic civilisation of Sardinia – is a theme that places the island within the perimeter of an ancient civilisation. This leitmotiv tends to validate the idea of a closed cultural system as static, affirming a narrative of the past that constantly overwhelms the present. The image of an island portrayed as a site of ruins and traditional values receives emblematic expression in the presentation of depopulated landscapes accompanied by a melancholic, nostalgic soundtrack that naturalises the world of simplicity of local inhabitants.

Figures 27-28. Stills from *Il regno del silenzio*. Credit: Ilisso.

2.1 Il Regno del Silenzio

The aim of this section is to analyse and demonstrate that *Il regno del silenzio* (1954-62) is a social documentary that paints a distorted picture of Sardinia and its way of life. In the opening of the film, the narrator constructs Sardinia as a geographical entity: "un pugno di terra in mezzo al mediterraneo, dove il sole sembra riscoprire ogni giorno, contro il cielo dell'aurora, i profili di un paesaggio primordiale." The weight of evidence lies in the spoken word, accompanied by panoramic views of ranges of mountains and limitless spaces. The narrator observes that the Sardinian landscape "ha conservato intatto il disegno della creazione, dove emergono dalle brume di un tempo quasi immemorabile i segni e le testimonianze di una vicenda preistorica ancora indecifrata e misteriosa." This cultured male voice, speaking in mainland Italian, does not have the inflections of Sardinian dialect.[123] In this particular case the sound of the voice, with its depth and timbre, suggests the presence of an earthly storyteller, and yet the quality of the voice in this tour guide is tinged with an authoritative tone. Not only is the tone similar to that of a lecturer, but it also lacks irony.[124] In the incipit of *Il regno del silenzio* the narrator is drawn to what he thinks of as a mysterious region living a separate life of temporal remoteness: the film is introducing Sardinia within a mythical dimension. The images present scenes of natural desolation that reinforce impressions of a primordial space. The narrator continues: "Un'isola. Eppure il mare è stato sempre

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[123] The volume and rhythm of the voice of the narrator plays an important role in defining a paternalistic attitude. Nichols writes that, in general, the "unidentified male voice-over that speaks on behalf of unrestricted ethnographic knowledge has no body" (1994: 70). Many voice-over documentaries address the viewer directly through the professional confident voice of a male speaker. The voice is defined not only by the contents it bears but also by its aural elements, namely, the distinction between the voice as a vehicle of the significations of language (speech) and the materiality of the voice (Chion 1999). Reference here is to the physicality and "grain" of the voice (Barthes 1977: 179-89). It is not within the scope of this chapter to undertake an analysis of gender bias in relation to the voice-over.
[124] An example of ironic voice-over can also be found in Bunuel's *Las Hurdes* (1932), where the disjunction between the impersonal voice and the crude images of the Hurdanos creates a parody of the colonialist desires implicit in the mode (Rothman 1997: 37).

una presenza esterna, ignorata da un popolo che ha vissuto per secoli fra le montagne dell'interno." This is a very strong claim that sets out to explore the human geography of Sardinia based on the fact that Sardinians happen to live on an island, and that this is a fact that influences their way of life. Hearing the narrator speak, the viewer is reminded of a widespread cliché according to which the dwellers of Sardinia's interior have always seen the Tyrrhenian Sea as a source of troubles associated with the colonising presence of foreign invaders (Fois 2008), a view which suggests that Sardinia has curiously preserved the insularity of its ancient, distinct civilisation (Levi 1943). What makes this passage so puzzling is that Sardinia appears as isolated both geographically and spiritually.

It is no accident that the statement is uttered at the beginning of the film. The viewers are called upon to accept the geographic solitude of Sardinia as a premise of what follows.[125] The film opens with a short lecture about Sardinia's history, the function being to provide an abstract of the content that follows. The opening is the moment in which the authoritative voice of the narrator imparts expository information, programs the content, anticipates the content, and stresses indirectly the role of the person responsible for the documentary. This is congruous with the idea that "human listening is naturally vococentrist, and so is the talking cinema by and large" (Chion 1999: 6).[126] For this reason, the viewers find it easy to assume that the narrator is automatically responsible for the film. Christian Metz writes:

> The impression that someone is speaking is bound not to the empirical presence of a definite, known, or knowable speaker but to the listener's spontaneous perception of the linguistic nature of the object to which he is listening: because it is speech, someone must be speaking (1974: 21).

The narrator becomes the teller of the whole film. In other words, the audience identifies the narrative stance of the voice-over as someone in the act of recounting a story. Metz continues:

> The spectator perceives images which have obviously been selected (their order could be different). In a sense, he is leafing through an album of predetermined pictures, and it is not he who is turning the pages but some 'master of ceremonies,' some 'grand image-maker' (1974: 21).

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[125] Also the incipit of Serra's *L'arte di un popolo* (1953-8) revolves around the theme of a marginal culture. The narrator of this film observes: "Il secolare isolamento in cui è vissuta la Sardegna, i suoi scarsi contatti con il resto del mondo sono i caratteri che più hanno inciso sulla sua fisionomia."

[126] Chion writes that the "ear always attempts to analyse the sound in order to extract meaning from it – as one peels and squeezes a fruit – and always tries to localize and if possible identify the voice" (1995: 5). Because he speaks at the very beginning, the narrator gives authorial perspective to what is shown, and is likely to be framed as the source of the projected world of the film.

This narrative stance suggests an "implied author," i.e. someone in the act of communicating a series of events. An unseen presence mediates almost every moment of the story, holding the hand of the viewer.[127] The narrator observes that Sardinia is an island that "ha sentito soltanto l'eco della Storia," in spite of the strategic geographical position and involvement of the island in all the events and conquests in the history of the Mediterranean.[128] The narrator continues:

> Se dalle coste, dove la bellezza e lo splendore del mare offrono a chi viene il più immediato richiamo, ci avviamo verso l'interno dell'isola, scopriremmo subito la verità dell'affermazione di un geografo francese: "In Sardegna c'è la montagna, essa è responsabile quanto e più del mare dell'isolamento delle popolazioni."

This statement contributes further to the construction of Sardinia as a self-contained universe in which geography is the *causa causarum* of isolation. The Sardinians exist within nature: human beings and natural order, mountains and society, are closely intertwined. The vision of the narrator is echoing the influential theory of the *costante resistenziale sarda*, a theory bearing no weight today. For Lilliu (1951) a constant feature in the history of Sardinia has been the constant polarisation between the dwellers of the inland, the heroic and archetypal Sardinian resisters, and the inhabitants of the coast. The former, unlike the inhabitants of the coast, have allegedly retained their age-old, internally homogeneous culture. In a similar vein, Le Lannou (1979), referred to in the voice-over as the "*geografo francese*," explained deterministically the cultural homogeneity of the Sardinian highlands as the consequence of environmental isolation. The narrator also states that "il destino delle isole è la solitudine," and that Sardinia "risente ancora oggi di questa difficoltà di inserirsi nel circolo più vasto della storia e della civiltà europea." In this view, the Sardinian highlands are a fence separating Sardinia from the rest of Europe. For the narrator, the solitude of the island is the consequence of geographical impedimenta in which nature and culture are paired together. Thus the position of the narrator is clearly meant as an attempt to look at the reality depicted with the eyes of the "Continental" onlooker.[129] The film is consistently narrated by an anonymous voice-over, but the section in the film in which there is a cut to a view of the sea is not mediated by the narrator. For a long moment the camera holds on the image of the sea and then follows a boat of fishermen [Figure 32]: for the first time the film shows signs of human presence.

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[127] The anonymous voice-over that keeps track of what is happening represents the "voice of knowledge which in any film the voice-over pre-eminently is, since that voice reverberates outside the field of the film itself, in other words, the field of the Other" (Bonitzer 1975: 24).

[128] Throughout its history of infiltrations of new peoples and cultures, Sardinia has been a focal interest of all the great hegemonic powers in the Mediterranean Sea (Levi 1943: 631).

[129] Sardinia is often depicted as an exceptional and marginal European place. On the problematic status of Sardinia as fully European see, for example, Angioni (2003: 293).

In a shot of fishermen in the sea, at least rhetorically, there is an indirect confirmation of the inhospitable landscape of Sardinia's interior: the reign of the silent mountain. The following series of shots presents various images of the Sardinian coast and, finally, scenes of rural life. The camera tries to penetrate deeper into the wilderness of the island. Later, the narrator says: "E' gente questa, rimasta ai margini della storia contemporanea." This is clearly another attempt to address the issue of movement and stability in a way that marginalises Sardinia in a local, self-absorbed dimension. Such a position tends to interpret the historical processes of socialisation of the Sardinians in a context-bound way. In this context, the mountains are the geographical markers of a negative exclusion (Sibley 1999). This "exclusion" establishes a line of separation between the people within the island and the people outside the island, or even between the Italians of the island and the Italians of the Continent. The view of the narrator is an example of the "denial of coevalness" defined by Fabian (1983: 32) as "allochronism." Heatherington describes "allochronism" in relation to Sardinia when she writes:

> Claims to legitimate knowledge were accomplished by rendering contrasts between the dynamic, present time of the researcher's own culture and the timeless past in which the other cultures were situated as objects of the ethnographic gaze. Cultural alterity was 'mapped' on to passive history. Taken in broader perspective, allochronism is not a technique unique to colonial anthropology, but has inflected many kinds of western discourses on modernisation, development and political transformation. It can work in two ways to naturalise the authority of the text as a cultural distance between the author and the object of discourse, creating not only 'primitive' others from indigenous peoples, but also 'backward' others from the inhabitants of local peripheries. As a result, some people and places in Sardinia are today perceived as only part-way 'here' to the European, globally savvy present/future (2001a: 290-1).

The tensions between movement and stability in the creation of the spatial reality of Sardinia are typical of a process of anthropological confinement. The discourse of the narrator operates in Abu-Lughod's words, "to enforce separations that inevitably carry a sense of hierarchy" (1991: 137-8). In the anthropological construction of locality the "people with culture, in the anthropological sense, have either remained on or been forced onto marginal lands" (Rosaldo 1988: 80). In the narrator's view, the Sardinians are defined in spatial terms as inhabiting a black hole of marginalisation and exclusion, and that is why they are portrayed as natural and timeless in the film. They are depicted as "people with culture" whose "cultural distinctiveness derives from the inherited remnants of indigenous civilisations" and whose "quaint customs signal isolation, insulation, and subordination within the nation-state" (Rosaldo 1988: 80). Consider, for example,

the way in which the narrator describes the gestures of the Sardinians as "antichi, autentici, con un'inconsapevole gentilezza." These words, combined with the fact that the subjects in the documentary do not seem to be aware that their lives are being captured by the camera, contribute to embalm the Sardinians as simple folk. Not only are the Sardinians masterfully presented as unconscious of their condition, they are also portrayed as people without history merely following the resilient rhythm of ageless life-cycles. As the narrator observes, "in questo ritmo lento ma preciso il mondo dei pastori matura il suo destino." Here the narrator tends toward a deliberately nostalgic tone – a rhythmically quiet style. The choice and use of the present tense throughout the film suggests a sort of dreamtime (Fabian 1983; Piazza 2004). This choice of verb tense has a specific purpose; its use has a special theoretical interest for it provides crucial clues as to the communication between narrator and audience. It suggests the enduring continuation of a set of learned routines that obviates the vexing question of historical mutation by denying temporal variation. The tempo of life of Sardinia is described by the narrator as the "traduzione geologica di un'esistenza fissa, cristallizzata come il paesaggio, senza cambiamenti, senza svolte." This statement operates in the film to suggest a sense of internal homogeneity and undifferentiated coherence: Sardinia is conceived as a neatly bounded unit.

More can be said on the question of the point of view of the narrator. The way of thinking of the narrator is characterised by a synchronic orientation that is blind to the significance of time and historical change, and this presents a real difficulty of the script. Critics have pointed out the historical amnesia of the old concept of "culture." The "culture" construct, "tied as it is to assumptions about natural growth and life, does not tolerate radical breaks in historical continuity" (Clifford 1988: 338). The exotic state attached to Sardinia in the film is not only defined in essentialist terms, but also empirically unfounded, for Sardinia has never been spatially and temporally isolated. The narrator defines the localism of Sardinia by its absolute historical depth. This immunity to change is one of the problematic connotations of the old notion of culture: "denied the same capacity for movement, travel and geographic interaction that Westerners take for granted, the cultures studied by anthropologists have tended to be denied history as well" (Abu-Lughod 1991: 146).[130] Manifestly, the narrator more than once reminds the viewer of the prolonged self-reproduction of an archaic existence impervious to change. The narrator says that in Sardinia "sopravvive una civiltà arcaica, pastorale, regolata su leggi antiche e quasi immutabili." This description of Sardinia as an island that remained unchanged for centuries, or even millennia, seems to attach unprovable causal (or quasi-causal) properties to social heritage.

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[130] See also, for example, Fabian (1983: xi). Johannes Fabian made a "substantial contribution to anthropological theory when he remarked upon the atemporality of ethnography by referring to ethnography's subjects as 'the other outside time'" (Mermin 1997: 50).

The condition of Sardinia is systematically constructed as bound to a natural order, as when the narrator observes that "qui il contatto con gli aspetti più vivi della natura è più forte e diretto, e la sua voce domina assoluta: il grande silenzio." Accompanied by shots of landscape, this passage is stating that the Sardinians are close to nature and silence. Not only is the persistence of their way of life influenced by environmental constraints, they are also imprisoned within a particular ecological adaptation. In the eyes of the narrator the Sardinians are "people with culture." This view is nicely expressed in Rosaldo's statement that "degrees of mobility differentiate people 'with and 'without' culture. 'People with culture' appear sedentary and rooted in their particular niches" (1988: 80).[131] The Sardinians are shown in moments of uncultivated spontaneity. The verbal commentary places the viewer at a distance from the world of the subjects, preventing the viewers from knowing them. Fixed in the distance, the Sardinians endure a monotonous life of silent acceptance: their names remain unknown. A sense of resignation is stated as an anthropological fact: "sono abituati a questa vita, ne accettano la vicenda come un normale fenomeno della loro esistenza." Here the narrator is expressing his patronising sympathy for the local inhabitants through the stereotype of the good peasant. Striving for a lyrical tenor, the narrator says: "Ma i loro volti, non si spianano al sorriso che raramente, e tutta la loro attenzione è assorbita dalla fatica del cammino." The voice of the narrator becomes softer and more nostalgic than at the beginning of the film. It is also the music in the film that prompts nostalgia. Voice-over and music work in the service of the film construction. Film, unlike literature, can narrate via musical score. The field of music in *Il regno del silenzio* is used to give thematic support to the narrative but also to give formal support to the organisation of the film (Corner 2005: 242). It operates without diegetic mediation, creating a sense of bittersweet nostalgia, while the Sardinians are presented as stolid in their fight against nature. Their mute faces are almost inscrutable and never filmed frontally. The subjects in the film seem to perform parts without lines, like walk-ons in the hands of a narrator who is both screenwriter and protagonist. The film neither reveals their interests outside a regional world nor does it mention the lives of those who live outside the island. Instead, it locates the Sardinians in the harsh and unforgiving landscape of their land. One is left with the impression that the Sardinian subjects are not involved in the process of filmmaking. Their inner states are merely verbalised by the voice-over: the viewer does not have direct insight into their inner reality. The narrator seems preoccupied with protecting an ethnocentric vision that speaks for others. He does not strive to gain familiarity with the voices of the subjects. In rejecting the interactive process of a shared anthropology, his voice effectively rejects the mind of the other, its sensibilities and its politics, subjectivity and interiority. In

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[131] In relation to the problematics of space in the representation of "culture," the "spatial incarceration of the native is conceived as a highly valued rooting of 'peoples' and 'cultures' – a rooting that is simultaneously moral and literally botanical, or ecological" (Malkki 1997: 60).

Bonitzer's words, the "power of the voice is a stolen power, a usurpation" (1975: 26). Indeed, the narrator articulates the subjects' feelings, which are held captive – that is, kept from the viewers. The subjects, for example, could have revealed their feelings through interior monologue. Instead, the narrating agency focuses the attention of the spectator away from the interior views of the subjects. The author projected by the script observes the ethnographic others but he does not reveal their thoughts and feelings from the inside, i.e. from a focalisation defined "from within."

In *Il regno del silenzio* the fashioning of Sardinia is also a form of self-fashioning. The author of the exegetical text, a Sardinian historian, fashioned a vision of the Sardinians that is programmatically distant and impressionistic: Manlio Brigaglia projected a sense of alienation onto the world of his own culture. Here the self-image of Sardinia presents the picture of a world elsewhere, for the script projects a sense of displacement, a separating line between the anomie of the Sardinians and the knowledge and authority of the narrator. The narrator of *Il regno del silenzio* is a *commentator acousmêtre*. This is a commentator "who never shows himself but who has no personal stake in the image" (Chion 1999: 18).[132] The narrator here excludes himself from the naturalistic world of the island, thereby legitimating his own position as safely distinct. This self-exclusion, by implication at least, tends to assert the superiority of his ethnocentric wisdom.[133] Its principal fault seems to be the reinforcement of the otherness of the social existence of the film subjects. Clearly the film is far from producing a human encounter based on participant observation. But more striking than the representation of the Sardinians as semi-civilised people is the fact that the film renders unthinkable the idea that the Sardinians may not share a sense of cultural belonging. One might suggest that *Il regno del silenzio* should be interpreted as a particular version of the discourse of the picturesque as defined by Dickie in his analysis of *L'Illustrazione Italiana* (Dickie 1999a; 1999b; 1997: 114-7). The film offers a crystallised vision which reveals dynamics that exaggerates difference by selective presentation. All this is perhaps evident in the point of view of the camera, which reflects the interests of the focaliser rather than those of the focalised. The literal position of the camera in space defines a focalisation premised upon exteriority and directed towards the ethnographic "other," producing a representation that entails an asymmetrical relationship between subject and object. The gaze offered in the documentary lacks reciprocity. Nothing seems to bridge the divide between subjects and filmmaker, for they do not stare at each other: the other is unable to reverse the gaze.

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[132] In Chion's terminology "a person you talk to on the phone, whom you've never seen, is an acousmêtre," whereas the adjectival form "acousmatic" is referred to a "sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen" (Chion 1999: 21).

[133] The weight of evidence in Serra's film lies in the spoken word of the heterodiegetic narrator. A narrative is "heterodiegetic" when the narrator is outside of the story, since he or she is heterogeneous with the diegesis (Genette 1980: 212-54). On the other hand, the narrator is "homodiegetic" when the narrative stance is of the same order with the world of the story – i.e. one of the characters of the story.

Figures 29-30. Stills from *Il regno del silenzio*. Credit: Ilisso.

2.2 Viaggio in Sardegna

This section explores *Viaggio in Sardegna* (1953), an exotic travelogue by Magnaghi Ubaldo. The protagonist of this film, again, is Sardinia and the documentary understands the island of Sardinia as part of the "other" Italy. The early parts of the film give context to the narrative by allusions to the remote past of the island. Making heavy use of poetic language, the narrator says: "Oltre i velari dell'alba, scopriamo l'isola dai colori incantati: la Sardegna. Una terra di civiltà millenaria che affonda le sue radici nella più remota preistoria." A cluster of associations contributes to the imaginative definition of Sardinia as primitive idyll. Such an explicit opening, intoned by Guido Notari, succeeds in creating a legendary atmosphere.[134] This introduction amounts to an abstract that anticipates the structure of the film to follow, informing the viewers at the outset that the narrator is the guide of the documentary. As in the film examined in the previous section, the viewer automatically makes the connection between the narrator and the images on the screen. Sardinia is "discovered" and constructed in antithesis to modernity within a series of contemplative statements. The loud narration in this film is accompanied by a sonorous envelope of dreamy music. Issued from outside the diegesis, the music-track addresses the viewer directly. Its temporal flow has an illustrative and rhetorical role which is dependent on the conditions expressed by the commentary. It serves a "rather limited, vulgar, and phatic function" (Percheron 1980: 23).

The incipit locates the past of the island between mythology and epic history, as the narrator is prey to the imagination: "Così appare l'isola al visitatore. Dapprima chiusa e austera la sua natura

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[134] The distinctive voice of Guido Notari, which was part of Italian everyday life, was not irrelevant in terms of providing authority, for his voice "accompanied the lives of Italians in the 1930s" and "continued in the 40s and early 50s" (Baratieri 2010: 117). In the 1950s Giorgio Prosperi wrote that Notari's "voice and his diction set the standard in terms of radio aesthetics" (1957: 64; quoted in Baratieri 2010: 117).

si svelerà pian piano fino a esprimere con la voce stessa della terra il mistero della sua indole." Of particular interest is the florid style of a prose that defines the quality of the voice giving form to the subject matter. The pathos of the aforementioned passage establishes a relationship between Sardinia and a certain imaginary based on exoticism. The narrator portrays Sardinian shepherds as remnants of primitive life: "E in questo mondo senza tempo, da millenni i pastori vivono tra le antiche pietre, in un concitato dedalo di ruderi, all'ombra dei nuraghi, misteriosi edifici preistorici." Notice the formulaic tone of this primitivist account: the narrator turns the shepherds into raw material for poetry. His descriptive virtuosity is accompanied by the pastoral imagery of an allegorical dimension. The film juxtaposes shots of sheep and shepherds in a way that invites a comment on the "bucolic" nature of the uncorrupted civilisation of Sardinia. This display of simplicity stimulates pastoral reverie, an appetite for images of country living. The narrator speaks of "testimonianze favolose, come il celebre elefante di *domus de janas*, e sulle rovine di questa civiltà singolare scorre, tacita e solenne, la vita quotidiana." Again, the use of poetry suggests the influence of literature on voice-over commentary. The deliberate reference to the conventions of highly convoluted writing blends the factual and the fictional, colouring the experience of the viewer and ennobling the aspects of everyday life in Sardinia. This process has been explained by Knight at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

> the spectator, having his mind enriched with embellishments of the painter and the poet, applies them, by the spontaneous association of ideas, to the natural objects presented to his eye, which thus acquire ideal and imaginary beauties; that is, beauties, which are not felt by the organic sense of vision; but by the intellect and imagination through that sense (1806: 147; quoted in Otter 1999: 176).

An exotic blend of documentary and fiction in the voice-over influences the visuals. Later in the film, the narrator observes that the village of Bosa has "l'aspetto pittoresco e festoso dei suoi merletti, i filét, che le donne ricamano da secoli." The women of Bosa are portrayed as living within a romanticised setting conjured by the imagination. The tone of perceptions is dominated by a picturesque aesthetics of safe and reassuring images. What strikes the narrator in Nuoro is the evocation of the "ricordo di Grazia Deledda, che fece della passione di Sardegna l'anima della propria arte." In this passage, the documentary seems to cite a passage from the works of Deledda, reconfirming the authority of literary expectations.[135] Instead of exploring what happens in the pro-filmic scene, it offers certain "visions" and exotic "textualisations." The primary interest of the film is to reinforce typified responses through the evocation of the costumes and customs of the

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[135] For an account of the relationships between Deledda and fictional cinema on Sardinia see Olla (2001).

islanders. When the narrator says that the "feste religiose, le sagre, le processioni" are "pagine aperte dei suoi celebri romanzi," the human encounter with Sardinia is subjugated to the dead book, a process described in Chapter 1. The passage evokes a stock of "characteristic" scenes; throughout the film the visuals are suppressed by a constant reservoir of imaginative tropes.[136] A well of stereotypical themes is what makes Sardinians seem "other" in the eyes of the narrator. These artistic charms are linked to the power of spectacle that transforms Sardinia into the privileged arena for the sentimental pleasure and delight of the onlooker. The island is comprehended through flowery evocations of gaily coloured moments. When the narrator describes the Sardinian houses, he remarks that they look onto "giardini di un gusto orientale." This pictorial taste for clichés is nothing but a variant of the picturesque. Another example is hunting, presented as one of the island's "passioni secolari," and lavishly reconstructed as a "passione virile e rischiosa, tra brughiere e campi selvaggi, tra boschi e radure." This kind of prose invites the viewer to admire the cultural difference of Sardinia as something curious, or even cute. The shots of Sardinian hunters remind the narrator of an "immagine vivente che sembra uscita da un'antica tappezzeria." Indeed, these are impressions of a quaint and generic *sardità*.

Later, when the camera discovers the staging of the Sassari festival, a series of shots follows the people gathering in the streets. As the camera displays fragments of folk life, the narrator observes: "Attorno, per le vie, nelle piazze, si muove la gente in costume. Carri infiorati e canti ci riportano ai vecchi cortei di tradizione medievale." What is noteworthy here is the festive spirit that animates the festival; and in fact, one realises here, the language rises to poetic levels, forging a kind of anthropology of the picturesque: "gli antichi vestiti tenuti gelosamente in serbo, preziosi di stoffe e di gioielli, tornano a vivere sotto il libero cielo." It bears emphasising that the "antichi vestiti" are a sign of group identity, and that the Sardinians are portrayed as the members of a culturally defined group. Throughout this scene, and indeed throughout the film, the Sardinians are not painted as full-fledged characters. As in *Il regno del silenzio*, the subjects do not acknowledge the presence of the camera; rather, the camera steals upon them, and they do not express their feelings. It is as if the camera were afraid of awakening them. For this reason, the documentary constantly suggests that the characters onscreen are created by and for the film.[137] The narrator further describes the Sassari festival: "Il profumo della carne arrostita all'aperto esalta i giovani, che intrecciano rustiche danze a catena, nei gesti che le ceramiche e i ricami hanno fermato nell'arte e che risalgono alle prime civiltà." This passage of ebullient imagination culminates with spectacular

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[136] Marchetti writes that the "picturesque-pursuing observer will not see the object as it is, but as it could be improved by conforming it to artistic and literary principles" (2009: 404).

[137] The account of the narrator resembles a picturesque conversation "full of unexpected turns" and "unthought-of agreements and contrasts" (Price 1796: 383). It constructs a picturesque effect based on the principle of *concordia discors* (Milani 1996: 53; Bertellini 2009: 33).

images of the parade. The Sardinians are framed together in picturesque poses within the space of an ecstatic celebration. This moment in the film is especially responsive to the symbols and artistic qualities of a scene of folkloric pomp. In the final shots of singing and dancing, when the music achieves its climax, the Sardinians are idealised as exuberant peasants, men and women dressed in colourful costumes. The scene conveys a strong sense that the Sardinians are made to be viewed as a multitude of folk people. The narrator addresses the viewer more explicitly: "Si balla, e nella danza prorompe tutta la chiusa anima di questo fiero popolo." This statement imputes to the viewer a belief that the character of the Sardinian people is "fiero," whereas its soul is "chiusa." As at the beginning, the film returns to the theme of the "misteriosa indole" of the Sardinians. In doing so, it insistently proclaims the power of the picturesque in embracing a human group within certain ethnocentric fantasies. The overall composition of the film is more concerned with an apparatus of cultural response than with referential existence. The ethnographic fantasies in the film do not exist because Sardinia exists. The image of an innocent, harmoniously picturesque island has less to do with empirical details than with the coexistence of a combination of received ideas, the aim of which is to procure pleasure. Perhaps the most important form of pleasure is that of complicity with ethnic stereotypes. Picturesque desires emphasise the "aspetto folkloristico e le scene insolite composte da tocchi bozzettistici e curiosità tipizzata di elementi idilliaci, agresti, paesani, e di ritratto sociale" (Milani 1996: 3). Throughout the film the narrator speaks as would a kind of amateur anthropologist establishing a safe distance from the location of local customs (Olsaretti 2007). His "anthropological" observations are based on a substratum of received insinuations, regional prejudices and projections. Particularly in this film Sardinia could not help but seem "typical" and "folkloristic" because of the interpretive models applied to it. It is worth stressing that the "anthropological" way of seeing implies a constant dialectics of familiarity and strangeness, membership and marginality, as if one were entering the world of another culture.

In *Viaggio in Sardegna*, as in *Il regno del silenzio*, the camera is the organ of the voice-over, and its function is similar to a God-like eye. The eye of the camera moves from village to village, bouncing along with Sardinian local life. Its elevation embraces the total surface of the island: it caresses mountains and churches, glides over remote villages and streets, and provides a kaleidoscopic view of vast expanses and natural beauties. Thus the field of the other is seen through a panorama mode of vision. This does not mean that the camera is simply the solar eye of God looking down, and yet the film construction serves a form of visual illusionism, i.e. bird's eye views of villages and mountains. Often the placement of the camera reveals an extra-worldly overview that maps the Sardinians within a neutral presentation. This perspective is overarching in so far as its interest is everywhere and its attention is guided by no one person's shots.
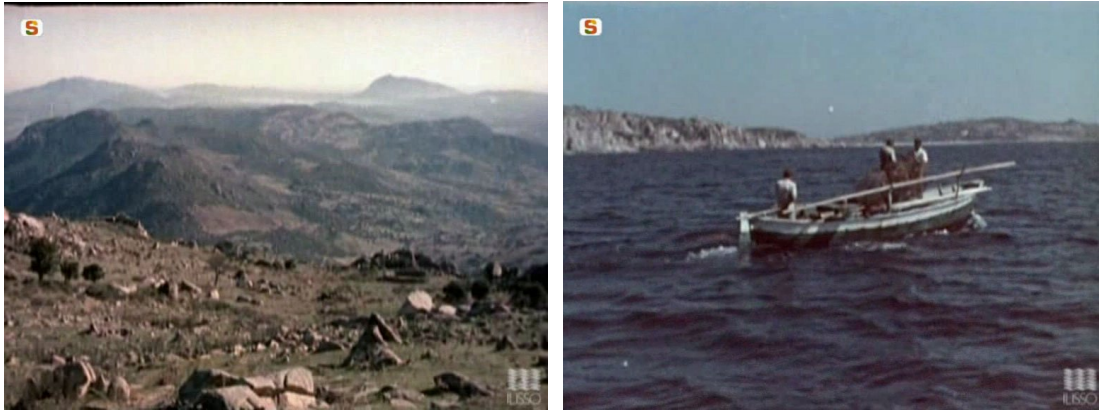
Figures 31-32. Stills from *Il regno del silenzio*. Credit: Ilisso.

Conclusion

The script in many documentaries about Sardinia conveys its own spin and values theoretical interpretation at the expense of a more observational and, perhaps, less distorting filmmaking stance. The term "distortion" in this context refers to the fact that illustrated films gain meaning in relation to a montage of moving images strung together like slides and to the freedom of the filmmaker in choosing whatever pictures sustain a preformed point of view. It is relatively easy to set familiar patterns of expectation and suppress fact by means of compilation films based on a discursive presentation; indeed, "compilation films keep recycling the same stock of archival images to support different arguments" (MacDougall 2006: 40). The subordination of people's experience to a written text sustaining the point of view of the narrator is uncomfortably based on an unimaginative use of the medium of film. In relation to the representation of Sardinian herders, for example, Marazzi writes that voice-over documentaries, "paradoxically, in the effort to appear ethnographic by simply being informative" betray the "fundamental principles of scientific thinking" (1994: 88).[138] This has less to do with technological and practical difficulties than with an attitude that is difficult to justify ethically. The kind of filmic *écriture* based on voice-over commentary, integral to authoritative narrated travelogues, is often imbricated in an ethos that involves the creation of a distance between the viewers and the subjects on the screen. Sound-image relationships are weighted towards a sense of moral superiority, which derives from the combination of the extradiegetic quality of the soundtrack with distant shots that portray the

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[138] In many commentary-led films about Sardinia, in MacDougall's words, "each of the discrete images in such documentaries was the bearer of a predetermined meaning. They were often articulated like the images of a poem, juxtaposed against an asynchronous sound track of music or commentary" (1998: 128).

subjects from far away. Filmed at a distance, the subjects seem more easily understandable; as a result, the spectators are essentially undisturbed by the films' visual content, which is clearly disrupted by the discursive complement of a soundtrack that speaks for it in a summary fashion.[139] Instead of providing verbal information that contextualizes visual obscurities and abstract meanings related to the filmed events, verbal scripts tend to assume an omniscient narrative stance imposing very strict limitations on the viewers' ability to learn from the thoughts and actions of people in the film. It seems strange at first sight that films about real people are more similar to the description of a "type" of society, i.e. Sardinian society, rather than the result of real engagement with the subjects involved. However, it is the case that in many documentaries the Sardinian subjects rarely emerge as individuals; more often, they are represented as specimens of social roles. In this chapter several examples of voice-over documentaries have been examined. Most documentaries produced in the period 1922-59 exemplify an illustrative mode that makes use of voice-over narration as a cheap short-cut, or even as a late addition. Often camera operators shot the exteriors in silence and added expositional information later. The choice of this method of filmmaking was related to at least three advantages.

First, shooting without sound and taping the soundtrack in the studio was the cheapest method of production. Recording sound on location was time-consuming and thus incompatible with low budgets. Secondly, the insertion of an after-the-fact voice reading an already written text is effective in conveying abstract information. Thirdly, voice-over commentary could be added at the last minute, since it is an afterthought (or forethought) to the visual material. The main shortcoming of the abovementioned documentaries is related to their unsophisticated cinematic form: the camera was used as a dumb instrument. Another limitation of these films has to do with the content of the scripts in relation to the visuals. The evidence that supports the arguments made by the narrator can be found almost exclusively in verbal statements and assertions that demand uncritical acceptance. The visuals do not provide evidence of the exegetic commentary and it is possible to imagine a number of ways in which the filmmakers could have orchestrated the subject matter differently, even when their choices were limited by technological and economic constraints. In pondering these matters, it has been suggested that the self-chosen role of the narrator as cultural interpreter is not innocuous. The podium from which the narrator speaks is a rhetorically privileged site for the production of otherness and the inscription of cultural marginality. It has the potential to privilege "colonial" and picturesque generalisations at the expense of individuality. This is not to say that

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[139] MacDougall writes that "films are not very good vehicles for summary statements, but they do nevertheless imply a typicality and encourage viewers to extrapolate from the specific case. The style of the film plays an important point in this. An image taken out of context, overlaid by music and commentary, more easily takes on exemplary power" (2006: 53).

voice-over narration is necessarily officious. Many documentaries made in Britain and the United Sates in the 1930s and 1940s used disembodied voices which are neither preachy nor authoritarian (Youdelman 1982: 9; Kozloff 1988: 82-99).[140] When it comes to the voice-over documentaries about Sardinia, however, one can agree with Boggs when he observes that generally "voice-over narration can be very effective if used with restraint" (Boggs 1985: 185).

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[140] In his discussion of Diane Kitchen's *Before We Knew Nothing* (1988) Nichols (1994: 88) observes that the "whispered" voice-over in this film "erases any sense of authoritativeness from the commentary."

CHAPTER 3 Vittorio De Seta's *Banditi a Orgosolo* (1961): an Anthropological Film or a Film about Anthropology?

Figure 33. The final scene of *Banditi*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

The Sardinian highlands have been traditionally regarded as more "authentic" than other parts of Sardinia. One does not need to read very far to have the impression that socio-cultural researchers have really preferred to study the Sardinian highlands more than the lowlands, and something similar may be argued in relation to films.

This chapter explores to what extent Vittorio De Seta's *Banditi a Orogosolo* (1961), a film made by a filmmaker lacking academic training in the discipline of anthropology, is an ethnographic film and what is meant by ethnographic in this regard. It will demonstrate that *Banditi* is an "anthropological film" rather than a "film about anthropology" (Ruby 1975: 109), a distinction clarified in the Introduction. The chapter maintains that *Banditi* is a film that produces understandings emerging "through the very grain of filmmaking" (MacDougall 1998: 76) rather than an illustrative device to popularise existing anthropological ideas. The film will be placed in the broad international cinematic context of ethnographic filmmaking, adding a different dimension to discussions of the film, and the features of the film that make it especially unique in the Sardinian context will be given. As seen in the Introduction, the use of visual methods in anthropological research reflects epistemological controversies surrounding the relationship between film and anthropology (Griffith 2002: 316; Houtman 1988: 20). This chapter suggests that any understanding of the distinctive qualities of film itself should take into account the ways in which this experimental artistic form produces knowledge in its own right, expanding the arena of postmodern

anthropology. Ethnographic/documentary film cannot be characterised as a subfield relevant only in certain limited quarters of film studies, or as as a form of narrowcasted filmmaking.[141]

Figure 34. The *Supramonte* in *Banditi*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

1 Banditi a Orgosolo

Banditi a Orgosolo is De Seta's first feature film. The film was presented at the Venice Film Festival, where it enjoyed great success, winning the award for Best Black and White Photography. In the same year, Pasolini's *Accattone* (1961) and Olmi's *Il Posto* (1961) were entered in the Venice Film Festival. Pasolini and Olmi were considered a sign of a renewed tendency for a rigorous and engaged account of Italy's social issues, and De Seta went on to maintain friendly relationships with both these directors.[142] De Seta has not attained the same international fame of other Italian filmmakers such as Pasolini, Fellini and Antonioni, and *Banditi* has has not received the same level of academic attention as Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962).[143] In an email message to the author on March 3, 2011, MacDougall observes that *Banditi* is an "extremely important film," and one that "deserves more attention;" it is a classic of Italian cinema and in a sense, it is "considered by many an under-recognised masterpiece." There is no work on *Banditi*

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[141] Hockings observes that "many teaching anthropologists, particularly those trained in an earlier generation, never show films to their classes and can conceive of no use for cinematography in ethnographic research. Some seem quite unaware that such a genre of documentary film exists" (2003: 513).

[142] Di Giammatteo writes that films like Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*, Olmi's *Il Posto*, Vittorio De Seta's *Banditi a Orgosolo*, Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Accattone* "tackle concrete themes and characters in close contact with life" and they "make a conscious attempt to penetrate the meaning of contemporary Italy" (1962-3: 22).

[143] The success of *Banditi* had been "una questione di prestigio culturale, di premi vinti nei festival, di diffusione internazionale mirata: università, circuiti alternativi, cineteche" and De Seta "continuò ad essere un autore non accettato dai produttori e finì per restare inattivo per oltre 15 anni" (Olla 2008: 95-6).

equivalent to Vaughan's analysis (1999c) of Rosi's masterpiece set in Sicily. Snyder and Curle write:

> Although […] Vittorio De Seta (*Banditi a Orgosolo /The Bandits of Orgosolo*) would inherit De Sica's humanist principles and quiet observational style, the more politically radical and stylistically disruptive films of Pier Paolo Pasolini (*Accatone* [sic], *Mama* [sic] *Roma*) and Francesco Rosi (*Salvatore Giuliano*) received more enthusiastic attention (2000: 218-9).

The visual style of *Banditi* resembles the artistic stance of Neorealist cinema. Stylistically, the film uses non-professional actors, actual locations and the conversational language of everyday life; the camerawork avoids the use of artifice in editing. The film was shot *in vivo* and emerged from a performative process of collaboration.[144] *Banditi* belongs to a phase of Italian cinema before the fragmentation of *impegno* in a wide range of political issues, a period that precedes the postmodern introversions associated to the political disenchantment known as *riflusso* (Burns 2001; Brook 2010: 32). Although De Seta's film shares many of its stylistic features with Italian political films emerging in the 1960s, it is not a political film, for its commitment is more ethical than political (Ciprì and Maresco 1995). The ethical dimension of *Banditi* means humble participation and religious evocation of a world in its twilight. It has to do with a poetic revelation full of mystery. In the period 1958-62, when Italian cinema was prolific (Antonioni, Rosi, Fellini, Pasolini), films tended to be interpreted according to political sensitivities.[145] Today, with a good degree of historical distance, critics might be in a better position to interpret and evaluate the importance of *Banditi* in light of more contemporary concerns. The relevance of *Banditi* for a twenty-first century viewer is that it represents a radical form of postmodern anthropological practice. De Seta can be seen as a postmodern anthropologist *ante litteram*, in a period in which the the paradigm of written anthropology was less self-critical of the connotations and representational shortcomings of the "culture" construct.[146] De Seta's filmmaking was informed by an ethical and epistemological approach that anticipates postmodern disciplinary paradigms that will become dominant in anthropology in the 1980s.

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[144] Despite the spontaneity on site typical of Neorealist working methods, Neorealist films were often heavily scripted. The screenplay of De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (1948) was written by De Sica and Zavattini with the collaboration of Suso Cecchi d'Amico, Gerardo Guerrieri, Oreste Biancoli, and Adolfo Franci. Roberto Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946) was written by Sergio Amidei, Klaus Mann, Federico Fellini, Marcello Pagliero, Alfred Hayes and Vasco Pratolini.

[145] Italian films released in the period 1958-62 include Dino Risi's *Il sorpasso* (1962), Roberto Rossellino's *India* (1958), Giuseppe de Santis *La garçonnière* (1960), Sergio Leone's *Il Colosso di Rodi* (1961), but also Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1961) and *L'Eclisse* (1962), Federico Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1959), Luchino Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960), Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana* (1961) and Mario Monicelli's *La Grande Guerra* (1959) (Bertellini 2004: 123-4).

[146] See Appendix 2.

Banditi is sometimes associated with the Taviani brothers' *Padre Padrone* (1977), a feature film set in Sardinia that has been shown as entertainment in theatres.[147] One might object that the inclusion of *Banditi a Orgosolo* in this work does not justify the exclusion of *Padre Padrone*, and that the exclusion of the most famous Sardinian film requires justification. One of the principal components of this work is that of ethnographic and documentary film. Although *Padre Padrone* encompasses some of the contradictions of the Sardinian shepherd society, it is neither a documentary nor an ethnographic film. It is a fictional film full of anthropological inaccuracies (Brigaglia 1978), and it is not an ethnographic film because it was neither made according to participatory methodologies nor intended to represent the way of life of the Sardinian pastoral society.[148]

Like *Padre Padrone*, *Banditi* has been received as a film that makes assertions about the real world. This is particularly evident when one considers the relationship between *Banditi* and the people living in Orgosolo. This relationship is very much alive, even today. Some of the people who appeared in the film are still working in Orgosolo. It is interesting that the people who played a fictional role in the film reveal a tendency to correlate the projected world of the film to a real condition.[149] As Sorge points out, *Banditi* is "much loved by Orgolesi as an evocative representation of their lives and predicaments" (2009: 6). The film implies a strong reference to extra-filmic relationships. As a film that engages with the historical world, *Banditi* is characterised by a remarkable *epistephilia*, a desire to know usually associated with documentary film. It is a film of edification or an "edifier."[150] *Banditi* is a "film of edification" because its aim is not to entertain. Documentary film was not born with the aim of entertaining; rather, it is often associated with the

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[147] Salzman P. C., personal communication (email) 13 April 2010. *Padre Padrone* (1977) is an adaptation of the story of Gavino Ledda's best-selling autobiographical novel about his passage from the world of silence as an ignorant herder to the world of language, symbolised by his academic education in linguistics after his emigration to Rome. The story of the Taviani brothers' film is even more famous than the book: it is the story of emancipation of an illiterate shepherd who is removed from school by his father and sent to take care of the sheep in a solitary, isolated place.

[148] The ethnographic and documentary value of this fictional film in relation to Sardinia has been discussed and assessed from a variety of perspectives. For a discussion on the Sardinian debate about the anthropological value of the Taviani brothers' film see Brigaglia (1978). The book contains a collection of Sardinian journal and newspaper articles on the film: Giovanni Campus, Che cosa penseranno della Sardegna gli spettatori di "Padre Padrone"?, *L'Unione Sarda*, 14.9.1977; Bachisio Bandinu, "Padre Padrone" tra gli emigrati, *L'Unione Sarda*, 11.11.1977; Aldo Brigaglia, Badre Badrone, in *La Grotta della Vipera*, year II, n. 8, Autumn 1977; Leonardo Sole, Una Sardegna ridotta in pillole, *L'Unione Sarda*, 9.11.1977; Michelangelo Pira, I sardi nella guerra delle immagini, *L'Unione Sarda*, 9.12.1977; Alberto Rodriguez, Il significato di una discussione, *L'Unione Sarda*, 9.12.1977; Massimo Mida, Si può raccontare la Sardegna in un film?, *L'Unione Sarda*, 2.11.1977; Umberto Cardia, Dietro il film c'è un libro importante, *L'Unione Sarda*, 6.11.1977; Bachisio Bandinu,Come leggere un film politico, *L'Unione Sarda*, 9.12.1977; Michelangelo Pira, Padre Padrone va in Taviania, *L'Unione Sarda*, 27.10.1977.

[149] This tendency is well illustrated in the series of television documentaries *Da Cenere a Padre Padrone* directed by Piero Livi and broadcasted by the Italian public television in the 1980s. The series explored the most representative fiction films about Sardinia through interviews and questions to the people who took part in them.

[150] The label "edifier" avoids the "classic truth claims of documentary and acknowledges the intention to persuade and to elevate – to elevate the audience to a more sophisticated or refined notion of what *is*" (Godmilow 1997: 81). This is another important aspect that divides *Banditi* from films like *Padre Padrone*.

rough notion of "think film" (Sussex and Grierson 1972: 26). The chief concern of documentary film was to represent the problem of managing social conflicts in a democratic industrial society by engaging directly with the world. This point is clear when one considers that De Seta criticises cinema as a cultural industry of entertainment, an institutional machine which undermines the dynamism and freedom of creativity. In this light, cinema is a pernicious system that cages artistic improvisation within the confines of the expected and the predictable.

Figure 35. Mario Batasi and Pepeddu in *Banditi*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

1.1 Banditi's Argument

Banditi a Orgosolo, as the title suggests, is a film about banditry in Sardinia. A film about banditry is always risky. It is difficult to determine to what extent reality shapes the legend and to what extent the legend influences reality when one considers the figure of the bandit (Heatherington 2001a: 299, n11). The reality of banditry is always intertwined with legend and distorted through fantastic links with the myth (Restivo 1995-6: 30-1). *Banditi* is significantly different from most Italian fiction films dealing with banditry in Sardinia.[151] The film explores the desperate and terrible condition of the shepherds in Orgosolo, a small highland town in Barbagia, through an acute

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[151] The film differs from Piero Livi's *Pelle di Bandito* (1968), Carlo Lizzani's *Barbagia. La società del malessere* (1969), inspired by Giuseppe Fiori's homonimous *inchiesta* (1968), and Marcello Fondato's *I protagonisti* (1968), for these films are variously inspired by the myth of Graziano Mesina, a Sardinian bandit whose cinematographic image is more prominent than that of other Sardinian figures such as Lussu or Gramsci (Olla 2008: 59). *Banditi* is also different from Gianfranco Mingozzi's *Sequestro di Persona* (1967), a film dealing with banditry in the more modern form of kidnappings, or Ansano Giannarelli's *Sierra Maestra* (1969), a film that portays the Sardinian bandit as a sort of guerrilla fighter, establishing an imaginative parallel between Latin America and Sardinia.

documentary sensitivity.[152] At the time of *Banditi*, the time of the Algerian war, Sardinia was entering a period of transition towards modernisation. Sardinia was one of the few places in Europe where banditry still existed. Despite relevant social and economic changes, Sardinia's interior maintained the appearance of an island within the island. The territory of Barbagia seemed to preserve a remarkable resistance to change (Maurandi 1998; Accardo 1998).[153]

In the period to which the film refers, Orgosolo was the epicentre of banditry in Sardinia (Pirastu 1973: 154). The village experienced a recrudescence of the phenomenon of banditry and an equally fierce repression carried out by the state authorities. The local population reacted with violence to the military presence of the Italian state. This conflicting dichotomy of "us" (the population in Barbagia) and "them" (the military presence of the Italian state) established a cultural incommensurability between the culture of the rural territory of Barbagia on the one hand, and the culture of the Italian society on the other.[154] A broad overview of the otherness of Barbagia's culture can be found in Pigliaru (1958), Marongiu (1981), Brigaglia (1971) and Ledda (1971) among other authors who have attempted to describe and explain its historical and anthropological dimension and the phenomenology of its criminality.[155] In the nineteenth century the criminality of the pastoral world of Barbagia had been the target of racist representations in the works of the Lombroso school, very fond of orientalising Sicily, Sardinia and the Italian South in general (Schneider 1998), in particular in Niceforo's (1895) and Orano's (1892) writings.[156] The Sicilian positivist anthropologist Alfredo Niceforo identified Orgosolo as the centre of the *zona delinquente* (criminal zone) in central Sardinia. Niceforo wrote that the society of Barbagia had a primitive morality and that the criminal acts of its residents were "proper to a primitive society, that is to say homicide, theft, robbery, violence, encroachment, vandalism, fire" (Niceforo 1895: 4; quoted in Heatherington 2001a: 295).

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[152] The mountainous region of Barbagia coincides roughly with the territory of the province of Nuoro. However, Martini (2005: 7) suggests that the plural form – Le Barbagie – would be more appropriate, since there are four Barbagie: the Barbagia of Nuoro, the Barbagia of Ollolai, the Barbagia of Belvì and the Barbagia of Seùlo.

[153] In his review of the film, Restivo writes: "Locked in an agrarian/feudal economy of shepherdry, with a dialect that some linguists consider a different language than Italian, the island remained untouched by the economic miracle that was so radically transforming the country north of Rome" (1995-6: 33).

[154] Heatherington writes: "The objectification of central Sardinia as a culture of resistance and criminality has a longstanding history in Italian scholarship and political–bureaucratic discourses. These in turn find roots in earlier romantic and colonialist discourses. The whole area of mountainous central Sardinia was historically notorious for its fierce resistance to the Romans and Carthaginians, earning the name 'Barbaria', and various characterisations of incivility in the records kept by Roman administrators" (2001a: 295).

[155] The second half of the twentieth century was "folgorata dall'idea della delinquenza pastorale come fenomeno antropologico, come epifenomeno del pastoralismo sardo, come aspetto solidale con le caratteristiche di un certo modo sardo di fare il mestiere del pastore" (Angioni 1990: 122). See also Angioni (1989).

[156] David Moss, personal communication (email) 21 April 2010.

A little known and isolated place, the village of Orgosolo acquired the mysterious and notorious reputation of being a place of criminals whose behaviour was blindly controlled by violence. Heatherington writes:

> There were government inquiries into 'banditry' in central Sardinia at the turn of the last century [nineteenth century], in the 1960s and again during the 1980s. Their reports associated phenomena of thefts, homicides, outlaws living in the Mediterranean *macchia*, forest fires, and political intimidation with a cultural system based in transhumant pastoralism (2006: 538-9).

The only solution against banditry seemed the deployment of military force, the coercive use of imprisonment and internal exile. The accusation of banditry, sometimes considered almost an intrinsic element of the way of life of the shepherds of Barbagia, was rejected in Orgosolo as defamatory. In this context, De Seta went to Orgosolo in order to dismantle an excessively negative image by giving the Orgolesi the opportunity to shape their own image thanks to the collaboration of an Italian documentary filmmaker. Thus the local population had an opportunity to redeem the image of the shepherds of Orgosolo from a slanderous and simplistic equivalence with the condition of the bandit and to show that the Orgolesi were honest, deeply human people. After he read the work of Italian anthropologist Franco Cagnetta, *Inchiesta a Orgosolo* (1954), De Seta went to Sardinia with a letter of reference written by Cagnetta himself, thanks to whom he was introduced to the milieu of the local communist party (Fofi and Volpi 1999: 26). In his controversial ethnography, Cagnetta represented Orgosolo as a site of violence, isolation and political resistance. He wrote:

> The town of Orgosolo has a singular destiny, unique, probably, among all the towns of Europe: for three thousand years it has been under permanent military and police siege. Facing its radical internal turbulence, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Spanish, Piedmontese, Italians, have never been able to conquer it decisively, to penetrate it: they have been limited from the first to attacking it, constrained to keep it at bay surrounded by troops; to contain it then, once occupied, with a continuous police regime (Cagnetta, 1954: 145).

Cagnetta's inchiesta framed the reality of Orgosolo in terms of pastoral experience, aggression and resistance (Heatherington 2006: 540). Cagnetta's influence on *Banditi* is most evident in the voice-over at the beginning of the film, which emphasises the bounded, primitive, and

isolated nature of cultural life in Orgosolo.[157] De Seta's filmmaking practice and the use of narration in *Banditi*, however, contradict the "theory of culture" expressed by the voice-over at the beginning of the film, a point developed later.

The first point to be made is that *Banditi* can be considered an ethnographic film because of its anthropological value and certain features of the method of its production. The film lacks the abstract categorisations and technical terms often used by anthropologists. This lack of didacticism and discursive abstractions gives a sense of the world of the shepherd-bandit living in Barbagia in the late 1950s. The film is often used as an ethnographic source in political anthropology courses on peasant societies (Flores Fratto 1972).[158] Much of the anthropological interest in the territory of *Barbagia* lies in understanding something of the nature of political power and its exercise in a geographically marginal area that has not been amenable to the establishment of state authority (Schweitzer 1988). Anthropologists have focused on the interactions between the state and local people, and the long antagonistic history which has conditioned those interactions. The attention of anthropological researchers on the highland region of Sardinia often derives from an "interest in the kinds of questions that academics deal with in the subfield of political anthropology. De Seta's film responds to this concern, and in so doing provides a glimpse into the human condition."[159] The film serves as a general lesson in the dynamics of political power in highland, traditionally dissident, regions where states have not effectively penetrated the society and whose agents – e.g. *Polizia Nazionale* (national police), army – are distrusted by the local population. In this regard, *Banditi* provides insights that go beyond the specific locality in which the film is set.

A second important point is that the main shortcoming of *Banditi* as an ethnographic film is the voice-over that introduces the visual material to the viewers:

> This story takes place in our day in Sardinia, in the Orgosolo country. These are the shepherds of Orgosolo. They measure the year in terms of seasonal migrations, in search of fields to graze, in search of water. Their universe is a primitive one, and their standards are not the standards of the modern world. For them, only the age-old bonds exist – the family, the community. The rest is incomprehensible and hostile. The unfriendly outside world is represented by the government, the

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[157] Heatherington writes: "Pastoralism is a recognized marker of 'tradition,' and this, in conjunction with 'traditional' clothing, hospitality, ritual practice, and the predominance of Sardinian language use, has fixed Orgosolo in the regional and national imagination as a place where Sardinian identity is authentic and virtually primordial, perhaps to a fault" (2006: 539-40).

[158] In his review of the film, Flores Fratto writes that although the film was "conceived as an "art" film and not as a teaching aid, an ethnographic document, or an ethnologic commentary, *Bandits* is all of these things, and invaluable as such. It is, as well, a superb work of art; direct, unselfconscious, unsentimental, compassionate, and terribly moving" (1972: 1575).

[159] Antonio Sorge, Personal communication (email), 6 May 2010. Antonio Sorge is a Canadian anthropologist who has spent thirteen months in Orgosolo in 2002 and 2003. He researched aspects of local social memory related to the history of state repression of banditry in the 1950s.

police, and the jail. Modern civilisation has given them the rifle: the rifle to hunt with, to defend oneself with, but also to attack. They can become bandits from one day to the next, almost without realizing it (Sorge 2009: 6).[160]

This introduction conveys a strong sense of insularity, a sense of isolation that expresses itself in the hostility towards the outside world. Although the herders' evasion of perceived dangers finds its explanation in the state authorities' heavy-handedness in the 1950s, the perspective conveyed through voice-over commentary not only contradicts the visual narrative of the film that follows, but it is also mistaken.[161] The Sardinian highland people are certainly not to be regarded as somehow untouched, or culturally pristine.[162] Rather than being unblemished by modernity, mountain people are not isolated people. Sardinian highland herders have extensive social networks of all kinds. These networks are vital to securing pasture for the sheep and "to obtain the best deals with the *caseifici* (creameries) operators and to retrieve stolen animals."[163]

The argument developed in *Banditi* is that the shepherd becomes a bandit because of the objective conditions in which he finds himself, i.e. a situation of endemic poverty, a precocious initiation to a life of hard work, a suffered injustice. The protagonist, Michele Jossu [Figure 36] (his real name was Michele Cossu) becomes a fugitive from justice to take care of his flock of sheep. He desperately tries to avoid the ineluctable death of the flock, and later he becomes a bandit in order to recover from the loss. The film describes visually the existential precariousness of the shepherd that becomes a *dogau* (fugitive from justice).The *dogau* (Pinna 2003: 48-9; Cagnetta 2002: 275; Levi 2003: 105) is the man who decides to leave his village, seemingly without a reason. Fearing persecution by *sa zustissia* ("the justice", that is, the authorities of the Italian state), he prefers to observe *dae fora* (watch it from outside). The ambiguous status of the *dogau* represents a grey area, for it is the unstable premise leading to the condition of the bandit. De Seta's film shows that in Sardinia the condition of nomadic sheep-rearing was such that there was a strong conjunction between the daily life of bandits and that of nomadic shepherds working for long periods far from their village. Similar circumstances of human solitude explain the solidarity that recognises the bandit as an unlucky shepherd and the *omertà* (conspiracy of silence) which surrounds the *dogau*. Thus for De Seta the solidarity between transhumant herders and bandits is almost a spontaneous

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[160] Among *Banditi*'s lapses and faults, it is also worth mentioning the stiffness that derives from a total lack of humour in the film. Because of this absence, the film fails to represent an important aspect of Sardinian life.

[161] The threat of armed attacks and hostility as a response to the agents of the national state are still alive in Sardinia's interior. See, for example, Salzman (1999: 51).

[162] It is worth bearing in mind James C. Scott's broad comparative examination of the dissident history of highland Southeast Asian minorities, a study which casts useful light into the kinds of questions that inevitably arise when considering the lives of mountain peoples (Scott 2009). He too makes the argument that highlanders are not somehow pristine or untouched, but rather quite the opposite.

[163] David Moss, personal communication (email) 21 April 2010.

condition. It is the condition in which it is necessary to rely on other people. This view shares very little with the idea of the bandit as a special kind of robber or with the rigidities of theories describing the "difference" of the herders' moral order. De Seta's film challenges both these views. Firstly, *Banditi* does not indulge in the stereotype of the bandit as a champion of the poor and the weak or as a man of honour inspiring fear and respect. Michele is not a *balente*. The tradition of male *balentia* indicates the "ability to protect oneself, one's family, and one's economic interests in the face of threats from other individuals or from the state" (Heatherington 2006: 535).[164] Michele is neither a man who "makes himself respected," according to an Italian expression, nor a rural avenger of social injustice glorified by peasants. The protagonist of the film does not become a bandit to fight against oppression or to voice popular discontent. Rather, Michele is a politically powerless man who becomes a bandit in his fight against the grim dimension of his actual life and its lack of organisational capacity. De Seta's film challenges the idealised picture of the Sardinian bandit as the hero of a primitive form of social protest (Hobsbawm 1969; 1959). For Hobsbawm, a British social historian, the young herdsman is a "characteristic bandit unit in a highland area" (1969: 28). Heatherington writes: "Translating an autobiographical letter sent to Cagnetta from one of Orgosolo's famous bandits of the early twentieth century, Hobsbawm used the Sardinian bandit as an example of 'pre-political' resistance" (2001a: 296). He interpreted social banditry as a mechanism of self-defence; his thesis was that the residual way of life of a violent culture reaches a phase of high tension under the pressure of economic modernisation and the penetration of a more advanced culture. It has been noted that Hobsbawm's banditry thesis does not account for the complexities of banditry (Blok 1972).[165] Bandits can of course be idealised as in the case of Robin Hood but each case is different and in Sardinia they do not represent a transitional category on the way to proper class consciousness.

Secondly, *Banditi* questions the idea that the behaviour of the villagers is constrained by the rules of a local code (Pigliaru 1959). This idea was one of the most important and authoritative explanations of the criminality in the community of *Barbagia* that had also a significant influence on the political negotiations and self-definitions of Sardinia's identity (Ruju 1998: 825). In *La vendetta barbaricina come ordinamento giuridico* (1959)

> as Pigliaru shows, the state's laws have never fully permeated this interior region, the code of the
> vendetta provides a legal-like framework for regulating certain relationships. Thus the traditional

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[164] See Berger (1986: 226-232).

[165] Hobsbawm's banditry thesis developed for Sardinia does not carry any weight today. However, in the 1970s his theory influenced Sardinian intellectuals of the left and the ethnonationalist movement, contributing to the romanticisation of the shepherds as the "carriers of a subaltern culture, a distinctive and 'pure' Sardinian culture attached to the past" (Heatherington 2001a: 296). For a critical approach towards Hobsbawm original framework and the application of the term "banditry" in Sardinia see Moss (1979).

antagonisms between the state and its agents on the one hand, and the villagers on the other, does not lead to anarchy, but instead the local code, the code of vendetta, provides a set of rules and expectations that *constrains* behaviour (Weingrod's 1972: 849, my emphasis).

Pigliaru's analysis was conducted "from within". It was a fundamental human experience of direct interest and participation. He was both an academic expert in common law and a member of the agro-pastoral society. Angioni (1998: 1144) suggests that Pigliaru tried to show that the Sardinian herders' way of life in *Barbagia* is governed by "different reasons" from those of the Italian legal culture. In his review of *Banditi* Pigliaru (1961: 10-2) argued that De Seta did not illustrate the true motive of Michele's actions. He criticised De Seta for being a "Continental" director, i.e. for thinking according to an ethical scheme which is alien to the culture of the Sardinian herders. The weakness of De Seta's film, Pigliaru argued, consists in the "European and romantic concept of innocence" attached to the main character. The strength of the film lies instead in its superb aesthetic qualities and in the representation of the gaze through which the shepherds see *sos carabbas* (Carabinieri), considered as the members of an alien universe. For Pigliaru, De Seta was unable to penetrate the complex sociological nature of the *innocenza barbaricina*, the innocence of a culture within which certain behaviours are not judged as reprehensible. In other words, Pigliaru argues that the culture of Barbagia *requires* certain behaviours such as livestock rustling as normal and permissible (Berria and Podda 2004: 168). Seen from this perspective, the ethnographic interest of *Banditi* lies in the narration of the "extreme story" in which the shepherd becomes a robber at the expense of another shepherd because of the initial interference of the Carabinieri. For Pigliaru the problem of banditry coincides with a "moral problem and therefore a problem that the police will never succeed in solving" (Weingrod 1972: 849). It is important to add that the case of Michele is an extreme case, whereas sheep-stealing has in fact been a much more low-key practice and can even be seen as one of the mechanisms that contributed to the cohesion of Barbagia society.[166]

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[166] A parallel argument made about the role of sheep theft in Crete can be found in Herzfeld (1985: 174-83). For Herzfeld, sheep theft is always compensated for through an intermediary and helps tie disparate villages together.

Figure 36. Michele Cossu in *Banditi*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

1.2 Italian in Place of Sardinian Speech

The human faces in *Banditi* were unfamiliar and unrecognisable to the Italian public, for the feelings and experiences of the shepherds were represented without the deployment of professional actors: the "actors" were taken from the street. The presence of professional actors within the filmic creation was not tolerated and, therefore, rejected. The characters in *Banditi* were closer to the role they had in ordinary life than to the role of theatrical performers, and this was a factor that played a crucial role in conveying an aura of truthfulness and authenticity to the projected world of the film. The role of the state authorities, for example, was interpreted by ordinary folk, among which there was Mario Batasi [Figure 35], a workman who played the part of the Carabiniere, that is, a member of the Italian paramilitary force (Barone and Di Francisca 1990).

The language of the film is Italian. The protagonist was dubbed in the *Studi di Cinecittà* in Rome by well-known Italian actor Gian Maria Volontè, and this has affected the filmic product.[167] The use of Italian announces the fictional character of *Banditi*, and it has often been seen as one of the film's shortcomings, since the "natural" language of the shepherds is Sardinian. The soundtrack – spoken in standard Italian – undermines the authenticity of the non-professionals. The use of Italian conceals an element of authenticity to the regional reality of the film, impoverishing the image on the screen (Cabiddu 2008). The inflexion, accent and timbre of the voice of the shepherd and the sound of the Sardinian language are irretrievably lost in the manipulations of dubbing. The shepherds lend their presence and body, but their thoughts and words, once translated, are emptied of their consistency, delicacy and depth. Words and speech are deprived of their sonorous aura, an

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[167] In general, Italian cinema, alongside that of India and Japan, has been "heavily marked by dubbing until recently; in Italy, widespread use of direct sound was made only after the release of Nanni Moretti's *Ecce bombo* (*Ecce bombo*) in 1978" (Brook 2010: 8; De Bernardinis 1998: 33).

aura which would be preserved in the original language. The native language of the shepherd originates from within with its form and pronunciation; its fluidity and spontaneity originate from the intimate fabric of the speaker – from its most internal roots.[168] Sound, both verbal and nonverbal, shapes the space and structure of the film. The interpretation introduced through the process of dubbing removes, in part, the authenticity of the images of the real shepherds, even if these men show a remarkable familiarity and self-confidence in their environment. For MacDougall the Italian dubbing of the film is the major defect of *Banditi*. In an email message to the author on March 3, 2011, MacDougall writes: "It seems to me that to use Italian in place of Sardinian speech not only loses much of the qualities of Sardinian culture but is also extremely disrespectful. It always surprised me that De Seta would do that, given his respect for his subjects." In fact, many years before *Banditi*, Visconti's *La terra trema* (1948), adapted from Giovanni Verga's novel *I Malavoglia* (1881) had used authentic Sicilian dialect. The choice of Italian seems clearly in contradiction with De Seta's attempt to provide an authentic representation of the life of the shepherds; however, this contradiction is not insurmountable, for two reasons. First, ethnographic documentary films are not necessarily popular in terms of audience share. The reason behind dubbing lies in commercial motives and in the desire to communicate with a large number of viewers. It has more to do with practical considerations than with rhetorical purposes. This also explains De Seta's choice to index *Banditi* as a fiction film despite its documentary elements. In considering a filmic product, it is always important to keep the commercial motives in view. Both the choice of Italian and the decision to index the film as fiction are *escamotages* to reach more viewers, to show them the terrible situation surrounding Orgosolo and its shepherds. Second, in the 1960s subtitling was very rare, both in Italy and outside it.[169] *Banditi* was released in 1961, whereas the first subtitled ethnographic films appeared in the 1970s.

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[168] Words, resonances and noises of the soundtrack are able to enrich or impoverish the space and time of the diegesis – that is, the fictional domain in which the events of the film occur – playing a fundamental role in constructing the musical rhythm of the film (Percheron and Butzel 1980).

[169] MacDougall writes that although a "number of ethnographic filmmakers of the 1950s and 1960s were concerned with the speech of their subjects, almost none of them had attempted to use subtitles" (1998: 165).

Figure 37. A scene from *Banditi*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

2 De Seta's Working Practice

In his comments on De Seta`s activity as a filmmaker, Hollywood director Martin Scorsese observes that there is "value in his work that makes us think about what we should be concerned about as human beings."[170] Scorsese writes:

> Neorealism had been taken to another level, where the director's participation in his narrative was so total that the line between form and content was obliterated and the events dictated the form. De Seta's sense of rhythm, his use of the camera, his extraordinary ability to merge his characters to their environment was a complete revelation. It was *as if De Seta were an anthropologist who spoke with the voice of a poet* (my emphasis).[171]

De Seta is, first and foremost, a documentary filmmaker whose filmmaking methods bring him close to the tradition of ethnographic film. Prior to *Banditi*, De Seta had made two documentaries in Sardinia, *Pastori a Orgosolo* (1958) and *Un giorno in Barbagia* (1958) as preparations to the making of *Banditi* (Olla 1995: 33; Figus 1995: 31), eight documentaries in Sicily, an island he knew very well, and one in Calabria, *I dimenticati* (1959).[172] In the 1950s and early 1960s he was close to a group of ethnographic filmmakers known as "*demartiniani*" (Michele Gandin, Luigi di Gianni, Lino del Fra, Gianfranco Mingozzi) (Berti 2009: 13). De Seta conceived

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[170] *The Herald Sun*, (Durham NC), April 10, 2005.

[171] Martin Scorsese, Tribeca Film Festival 2005: http://www.cinemasud.com/martin.htm

[172] For Pinna, De Seta's documentaries made in Sardinia "si muovono fuori dal frastuono delle parole, delle promesse e dei miraggi politici che caratterizzano il documentarismo di questi anni" (2010: 41). De Seta's Sicilian documentaries are *Lu tempu di li pisci spata* (1954), *Isole di Fuoco* (1954), *Surfarara* (1955), *Pasqua in Sicilia* (1955), *Contadini del mare* (1955), *Parabola d'oro* (1955), *Pescherecci* (1958). These films represent a form of documentation of traditional realities that have ceased to exist.

his own activity in stark contrast with mainstream media. His distance from the intricate relationship of the cinema apparatus and industrial models of production facilitated the creation of a more personal and independent cinema. This is congruous with the fact that, throughout its short history, documentary cinema, as ethnographic film, has often been the activity of individuals working at the margins of mainstream productions (Aufderheide 2007: 6). As De Seta says:

> Il cinema è un'arte molto complessa, sincretistica, composita, perché è composta di almeno quattro o cinque arti. Succede che un autore non le può controllare tutte, e quindi deve avere lo sceneggiatore, il direttore della fotografia, lo scenografo, il montatore, e questo porta però a una sorta di spersonalizzazione […] queste forme espressive che sono del cinema, se sono controllate da una sola persona, l'autore di cinema diventa come il pittore. Si esprime al cento per cento, anche se non ne sa molto: com'ero io.[173]

De Seta's filmmaking practices need to be considered in order to understand their many relationships with anthropological cinema. De Seta's method of filmmaking was the method of a craftsman. He combined in himself the roles of director, scriptwriter and producer. Whereas a standard film crew in the 1960s was composed of about twenty elements, De Seta worked with a group of three people. The advantage of this way of working is that there was no need to subject the film to the filter of producers, who usually ask to modify the content and form of the filmic product. The division of responsibilities was an obstacle to a style of filmmaking that required freedom of choice before the people in the film.[174] De Seta was not excessively concerned with visual aesthetics and professional gimmicks. For him, the subjects could be out of focus, if the film required so; that the subjects should not be out of focus is a convention, as was the avoidance of black in painting before Caravaggio. De Seta reduced expenses by avoiding re-enacting what he could film in real life. As many ethnographic filmmakers, De Seta was the representative of a minority of cineastes, the advocate of a solitary kind of authorial cinema often judged from outside as the activity of a few romantic and eccentric poets devoted to lyric improvisation and contemplation. De Seta shared with ethnographic and documentary filmmakers the typical difficulties and risks associated with their activity. His work was not without risks and responsibilities, fears and threats. The mountainous landscape of the territory around Orgosolo, the Supramonte, is rugged and rocky, accessible only by impassable, winding and dusty paths. De Seta

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[173] See Vittorio De Seta presenta "Il Mondo Perduto." I cortometraggi di Vittorio De Seta. 13 Febbrario 2009, Roma, Feltrinelli: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbhTegy4kko
[174] A film crew represented a thick filter between audience and the Sardinian shepherds in *Banditi*. For this reason, De Seta decided to interrupt his collaboration with Nanni Gatti, a camera operator who worked with Gillo Pontecorvo in the making of *La battaglia di Algeri* (1966) (Fofi and Volpi 1999: 19).

had to deal with this difficulty related to the hostility and irregularity of the natural environment, driving by jeep and pitching his tent with his film crew when necessary. *Banditi* can be included in the documentary tradition inaugurated by Robert Flaherty.[175] As Pinna remarks, De Seta created an "avvicinamento antropologico che fu di Flaherty e che sarà di Rouch" (2010: 42). De Seta himself said that Flaherty's films, "con il loro senso della natura, con il loro interesse per la realtà delle persone e per i modi di vivere, mi avevano interessato notevolmente" and that "*Isole di fuoco* si richiama a *L'uomo di Aran*" (Fofi and Volpi 1999: 17). Although Flaherty had no interest in anthropology as an academic discipline, he is widely considered one of the totemic ancestors of ethnographic filmmaking (Prins 2010: 280; Rouch 2003b). In his masterpiece *Nanook of the North* (1922), Flaherty romantically emphasised the aesthetic virtues of reality by deliberately portraying the purity of the Inuit lifestyle as archaic and primitive (Karcher 1989; Tobing Rony 1996: 101-4). Ruby writes:

> Flaherty elevated the nonfiction film from the often superficial dreariness of the travelogue and the adventurer film to the documentary through the imposition of a narrative in order to cinematically tell dramatic stories of real people (1981: 434).

Nanook, whose real name was Allakariallak, was the prototype of the noble savage, a well-established figure in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophical thought (Rousseau 1762). In his celebration of the untouched beauty and innocence of simple life, Flaherty offered an ennobling form of entertainment, but also the opportunity to observe the diversity of the life of a "native" culture. The choice of a realist mode gave the viewer the impression of a genuine and direct experience. It is erroneous to think that the level of manipulation in *Banditi* is such that the film should not be considered an ethnographic/documentary film. The objection of manipulation is not a valid one because in the realm of documentary cinema the

> problem to decide how much to manipulate is as old as the form. *Nanook of the North* is considered one of the first great documentaries, but its subjects, the Inuit, assumed roles at filmmaker Robert Flaherty's direction, much like actors in a fiction film. Flaherty asked them to do things they no longer did, such as hunt for walrus with a spear, and he showed them as ignorant about things they understood (Aufderheide 2007: 2).

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[175] In the tradition of documentary filmmaking it is possible to isolate three mythical figures who influenced generations of documentary filmmakers: Robert Flaherty, John Grierson and Dziga Vertov (Aufderheide 2007: 44). Flaherty and Grierson are the founding fathers of realism in documentary, whereas the tradition of formalism was inspired by Vertov. Formalism, unlike realism, is a way of filmmaking which emphasises the formal elements of a work, avoiding the illusion of naturalism.

In this passage, Aufderheide suggests that *Nanook* is one of the most famous documentaries of the classic period despite all the scenes in it having been staged encounters with the camera. The events in the film existed only for the purpose of being filmed, and yet *Nanook* is unanimously considered a documentary film classic.[176] The "recognition of Flaherty's use of narrative in no way diminishes the film's value as a documentary" (Ruby 1981: 433).[177]

The similarities between De Seta's and Flaherty's filmmaking praxes are numerous. First of all, De Seta threw himself into a field situation in order to familiarise with the lifestyle of the subjects, trying to understand the characteristics of their *modus vivendi* (way of life), as Flaherty did.[178] De Seta engaged so directly with the world during the making of *Banditi* that he decided to live in Orgosolo with his family: his wife, Vera Gherarducci, and a young daughter looked after by a nursemaid from the Sardinian town of Santulussurgiu named Antonietta Marras (Barone and Di Francisca 1990). Secondly, one may draw a parallel between the nature of De Seta's experience in Orgosolo and the collaborative experience of anthropologists in the conditions of fieldwork. De Seta tried to win local collaboration in order to know the Orgolesi. There are methodological commonalities between the practices of mediation adopted by De Seta and the mutual endeavours involved in the collaborative art of anthropology. De Seta adopted techniques that can be described as a form of participant observation using film. These include mutual understandings germane to anthropological interests, but also the attempt to replicate a kind of "field immersion." De Seta's intentions were similar to those of the ethnographer trying to grasp the natives' point of view and their relation to their world.[179] He discussed his own ideas with the people of Orgosolo, assembling with them in the evening and choosing with them the appropriate places to shoot. De Seta developed the themes and contents of his film in direct contact with reality, according to the suggestions of the subjects during the making of the scenes. Likewise, Flaherty "built his story from his own experience of years living with the Inuit, who happily participated in his project and gave him plenty of ideas for the plot" (Aufderheide 2007: 2).[180] This is where *Nanook* and *Banditi* are

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[176] See Rothman's essay (1997: 1-20).

[177] In stressing the revelatory powers of ethnographic film, Brigard notes that "Flaherty's gift was not that of a reporter or recorder, but rather that of a revealer" (2003: 23).

[178] Significantly, "know your subjects" is one of the ethical guidelines, or steps, deemed to be essential to making a good ethnographic film (Asch 1992: 197).

[179] In *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific* Malinowski writes: "the final goal, of which the Ethnographer should never lose sight… is, briefly, to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise *his* vision of *his* world" (1922: 25).

[180] Flaherty remarked: "I wanted to show the Inuit. And I wanted to show them, not from the civilized point of view, but as they saw themselves" (Griffith 1953: 25). In relation to De Seta's relationship with his subjects, it is worth mentioning that the child in the film, Giuseppe Cuccu, alias *Pepeddu*, went to Rome for the first time with De Seta in order to dub himself. On the day of the première of *Banditi* in Rome, Giuseppe was working as a shepherd in the territory of Orotelli, a town located about 20 km west of Nuoro.

similar, and follow the *modus operandi* of anthropological cinema.[181] As Ruby writes, ethnographic cinema is close to the filmmaking approach of Flaherty

> every time a filmmaker shows his rushes to the subjects of his film and asks for their comments and approval; every time a filmmaker asks people to self-consciously portray themselves and the events of their lives in front of the camera; every time a filmmaker tries to mesh his interpretations with those of his subjects (Ruby 1981: 452).

During the making of *Banditi*, the decisions over the screenplay were made under the constant supervision of the local residents: the Orgolesi confirmed or denied the verisimilitude of the directorial choices. The active involvement of the subjects derived from the rejection of the irremovable fixity of overly detailed scenarios, and from the urgent need to adhere and maintain a close contact with the real (Columbu 2003). In terms of practice, the patterns of reciprocity that arise through open discussion in the process of making a film constitute a form of collaborative anthropology.[182] Visual anthropologist Timothy Asch writes that the subjects' feedback "serves as an accuracy check and it solicits additional information from your subjects that might not come out in any other situation" (1992: 200). Collaboration with the subjects in the process of production is part of the research tactics used by French ethnologist Jean Rouch.[183] Inspired by Flaherty's example, Rouch defined his collaborative techniques as *anthropologie partagée* (shared anthropology). Rouch knew his subjects and associates, he "spent a great deal of time in the field getting to know them and letting them know what he was trying to accomplish" (Asch 1992: 197). The subjects were both participants and confidants. Rouch's films are "collaborative endeavours that enriched the lives and understanding of all their participants" (Stoller 2009: 128). He regularly screened his footage for the subjects he filmed, asked them questions and incorporated their comments and answers (Morgan 2009: 139; Rothman 2009: 197).

De Seta's approach, like Rouch's filmmaking praxis, negotiates the boundaries between fact and fiction.[184] That ethnographic filmmaking can embrace fiction has already been established

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[181] This does not mean that *Nanook* and *Banditi* do not present important differences. An important difference between these two films is the continuation in *Nanook* of the written form conveyed through intertitles.

[182] De Seta described the screening of *Banditi* for the Orgolesi as a process that raised their awareness of their being the bearers of their own way of life. The film, for De Seta, had the power to bring to self-consciousness the lives of men and women who, in Gramsci's words, "non sospettano neanche che la loro storia possa avere una qualsiasi importanza e che abbia un qualsiasi valore lasciarne tracce documentarie" (1978: 36).

[183] Henley writes: "By any measure, Jean Rouch is a major figure, probably the greatest, among ethnographic filmmakers both past and present" (2009: 338). Critical to Rouch's thinking is an imaginative conception of the world in which the camera can be a catalyst for the creation of a new reality (Loizos 1993: 46-7; Loizos 1992: 59).

[184] The most important difference between Rouch and De Seta is that while the former initiated and provoked the action of his subjects, De Seta's provocations tended to follow the actions of the subjects. The similarities between De Seta and Rouch emerge more clearly in *Diario di un maestro* (1972). Marc Henry Piault writes that this "film essay in social experimentation has an affinity with the films of Jean Rouch in Africa and France, where the narrative dynamic

(Stoller 1992; Stoller 2009: 125; Piault 2007c: 16). Rouch, for example, described his films as "ethno-fictions," or "science-fictions," in which personal, poetic and, indeed, ethnographic elements are inseparable.[185] In relation to Rouch's filmmaking praxis, Henley writes:

> Rouch anticipated by a matter of almost twenty years the rejection in Anglo-Saxon anthropology of a natural sciences paradigm based on dispassionate objective observation and the associated rise of the so-called "literary turn" to which ideas of authorship, representation, and relationship between anthropologists and their subjects were of central importance (Henley 2009).

To an extent, the same applies to De Seta's filmmaking approach in *Banditi*, a seminal film that was significantly ahead of its time. Not only did De Seta follow a filmmaking method that is especially appropriate to ethnographic filmmakers, he also produced an example of anthropological reflexivity *ante litteram*. *Banditi* went further than any previous work of cinema dealing with Sardinia in seeking to draw the Sardinian subjects more fully into the filming process as participants. De Seta and the Sardinian shepherds were physically implicated in the fabric of the film. Thus *Banditi* should be treated as an instance of a peculiar form of sensuous scholarship that generates understandings and explorations of embodied cultural practices.

A third point to be made is that De Seta shares with Flaherty a solitary curiosity hinged on the belief that the modern civilisation had a polluting and corrupting effect over the ancient bond between man and nature. De Seta believed that the peasant world of tradition was permanently disappearing under the irreversible transformations of the contemporary world. In De Seta's cinema the urge to let the places and their people speak gushed from the lyric fascination for the myth of the incommunicability of the brigand, for the world without heroes of the South of Italy – an idealised world of real situations, archaic places and intact ways of life (Fofi and Volpi 1999). Thus De Seta's filmmaking reflected a kind of engaged cinema attentive to the reality of peasants. The parallels between Flaherty's *Nanook* and De Seta's *Banditi* as instances of documentary films are even more interesting when one considers the interpretations of these films. After Flaherty's death, two camps of interpretation emerged: "Flaherty the myth" and "Flaherty the romantic fraud" (Aufderheide 2007: 31). The former saw Flaherty as a genius and a visionary filmmaker, whereas the latter considered him a poet of a man-versus-nature theme that deepened unhelpful assumptions about natives (the film was accused of portraying indigenous people as pet-like innocents and child-like victims before civilisation in order to provide a mental vacation for the audience). Similar

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emerges by throwing together the characters playing each other in order ultimately to talk about themselves" (2007c: 20).

[185] Rouch's films are demonstration of "what becomes of the science of ethnography, and what becomes of the art of cinema, when they provoke each other to acknowledge that there are no fences that separate them" (Rothman 2009: 9).

camps of interpretation also apply to De Seta's work. On the one hand, "De Seta the myth" was the documentary filmmaker who tried to portray, as bluntly and realistically as possible, an anthropological world in the process of disappearing at the time of the economic boom in Italy. This anthropological world was the rural world, a world of millenary sincerity that clashed against the homologation produced by mass culture (Guerra 2010). In Italy, Pasolini (1983; 1990) denounced the radical transformation that consumerism was bringing to the traditional forms of life during the period of the economic miracle (De Palma 2009: 32-52; De Berti 2009: 11-6; La Porta 2002).[186] In *Banditi*, the traditional world of the rural areas was implicitly opposed to the urban environment of the city. This tacit contrast, which revealed a deep interest in some of the local realities of the South of Italy, was the result of a desire of humility related to a form of antibourgeois protest. In *Banditi* the real becomes the condition of the poor and the humble as opposed to the *benpensanti* (the society of the conformists). It is relevant, perhaps, that De Seta was introduced to life in Orgosolo through the filter of the members of the local communist party (PCI); the antibourgeois character of De Seta's work is evident even at the practical level of the interactions within the community of Orgosolo.

On the other hand, "De Seta the romantic fraud" was the documentary filmmaker who offered an overly bucolic representation that did not correspond to the reality of Orgosolo. The world of the film, as testified by some Orgolesi, was excessively pastoral and rural. For the most part, the film offered a schematic vision, an excessively archaic and rough one – a miserable and backward picture. There were many things that *Banditi* did not show about Orgosolo and its inhabitants. Among the omissions there was a lack of historical background and contextualisation. At the time of *Banditi*, life in Orgosolo had already entered modernity. The television set was a source of information and since 1953 basic education had been possible thanks to the presence of a *scuola media* (middle school). It is correct to say that *Banditi* did not offer an exhaustive picture of the situation in Orgosolo. The female characters, for example, were radically de-emphasised or crucially absent. Virtually nothing was shown about the educational role of the women of Orgosolo within the family and their position within community life.[187] Thus *Banditi* was criticised for having produced a partial and unbalanced portrait because of the implications of what was not shown in the

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[186] Restivo writes: "by 1960s Pasolini was calling for a revival of a rigorous, socially engaged neorealism that would address the new problems of the urban underclass. It is in this aesthetic context that De Seta, in Banditi a Orgosolo, explores the problem of the Mezzogiorno – and particularly, the problem of Sardinia" (1995-6: 33). It is important to mention Pasolini's third world documentaries, such as *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964), *Appunti per un film sull'India* (1967-8), *Appunti per un Orestiade Africana* (1969), and *Le mura di Sana'a* (1970) (Caminati 2010).

[187] Community bonds and family ties in Orgosolo were very strong. For a discussion of women's practices of hospitality in Orgosolo see Heatherington (2001b); see also Heatherington (2006) for a discussion of the role of women and their distance from the "culture of violence" in the articulation of gendered political and religious discourses in the community of Orgosolo.

film. An international audience with little knowledge about the life in Orgosolo experienced an overly traditional and exotic picture of how the Orgolesi lived.

Figure 38. Vittorio De Seta. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

2.1 The Copernican Camera

De Seta shared with Flaherty the participatory epistemological attitude of his filmmaking style. Epistemology is the study of how knowledge which is *true* is acquired; however, in the context of this discussion, the expression "epistemological attitude" refers to the way knowledge emerges from the interaction between filmmaker and subjects. Thus the term "epistemology" acquires a relational valence that is symptomatic of the filmmaker's involvement in a shared anthropology. At the centre of De Seta's filmmaking style is the *camera copernicana* (Copernican camera). This is a camera which produces a paradigmatic shift, a radical change in the camera style. It is not the subjects at the service of the camera but rather the camera at the service of the subjects.[188] The Copernican camera turns around the non-professional actors, adapting itself to the freedom of their relaxed behaviour; the camera is mobile to adapt the vision of the cameraperson to ongoing behaviours and events without forcing them. In this way, framing acquires its pertinent meaning from the pro-filmic scene, i.e. from a situation as it unfolds before the camera, and from the instinctive sensitivity of the filmmaker. This shows itself also in the fact that the characters are always filmed within a participatory framework which guarantees flexibility to their spontaneous initiative. The lightness of their natural presence does not show the effects of the intrusion of an

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[188] In relation to observational films, Young writes that the "whole reason for transforming the filmmaker's approach is the hope that new information about people of a novel and exciting kind will come into the cinema if the subject directs the film maker, rather than the other way around" (2003: 107-8).

invasive camera. In order to describe the negative effects of ready-made scripts, De Seta compared the actor's performances before the camera to butterflies. As De Seta observed: "faccio sempre l'esempio delle farfalle. Le farfalle si vedono meglio se sono inchiodate su una bacheca, però per ottenere questo bisogna ucciderle" (Columbu 2003). De Seta's remark about butterflies is not only original, but it is also pertinent to scripted films. Perhaps Robert Bresson meant something similar when he wrote: "my movie is born first in my head, dies on paper, is resuscitated by the living persons and real objects I use, which are killed on film but, placed in a certain order and projected onto a screen, come to life again like flowers in water" (1977: 7). The subjects in *Banditi* were not rigidly instructed according to an interventionist and artificial scheme. This lack of a reassuring scheme explains the naturalistic quality of the film, as well as the patience and vitality of De Seta's camera style. This camera style impetuously expressed a will to show the real in the plenitude of its own autonomy and to record as faithfully as possible the life of the shepherds. As De Seta said: "è la realtà locale che parla; tu ti limiti quasi a organizzarla, a portare i mezzi per riprendere, e così viene meno la figura del regista come demiurgo che controlla ogni particolare" (Antermite and Capani 2008).[189] Despite De Seta's authorial intervention was inescapable, the permanent trace of his artistic subjectivity imprinted itself with stylistic prudence. By aspiring to poetic description, the result was a work of art rooted almost at the threshold between description and narration. In order to exemplify the philosophy behind his camera style, De Seta often quoted the example of the scene of the *caccia al muflone* (wild sheep hunting, mouflon hunting).[190] In this scene, the initial paralysis of the shepherds before the camera was broken by the ability of the filmmaker to engage the subjects' collaboration, by asking them to repeat the same scenes of habitual actions (e.g. lighting a fire, cooking, eating) as they would have taken place in everyday life, without the presence of the camera. De Seta observed:

> Ho detto ai pastori di andare a caccia, che io avrei ripreso quello che succedeva. Hanno veramente ucciso un muflone. Allora ho chiesto dove sarebbero andati a cuocerlo. Loro risposero: lì vicino, sulla riva di un ruscello. Non ho pensato che nel bosco ci sarebbe stata una luce più bella, ho preferito privilegiare la loro scelta, perché era naturale (Fofi and Volpi 1999: 19).

Thanks to the patience of the camera movements, the subjects, initially frozen in front of the camera, entered a new atmosphere, a dimension of fresh spontaneity. One might object that the

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[189] This attitude towards filmmaking is part of the intellectual agenda of observational films. Young writes that in the observational style of documentary there is a "desire to make films without any of the controls a director usually assumed were indispensable. If the filmmaker missed something because he was not ready, he tried to improve his skill but at that moment he let it go by on the assumption that his subject was the people or the events themselves (the process of their lives, in David Hancock's phrase)" (2003: 105).

[190] The *muflone*, or mouflon, is an "endengered species indigenous to Sardinia" (Heatherington 2006: 534).

camera *per se*, including the Copernican camera, exercises a strong influence on the behaviour of the subjects, having a potentially detrimental effect on their performances – i.e. an effect which undermines objectivity. However, the fact that the camera brings distortions to the subjects' performances in the pro-filmic scene and that the finished film often does not meet the intentions of the director, does not necessarily have a negative influence on the non-professionals being filmed. These are not sufficient reasons to reject the epistemological approach behind De Seta's filmmaking method.[191] It is a serious mistake to equate the analysis of De Seta's filmmaking methods developed in this chapter to a romantic and naïve lauding of the non-professional actors as the "voice of truth." While it is true that even non-professionals act when put in front of a camera, De Seta had been able to establish a kind of film relationship with his subjects which is quite difficult to achieve, but very important for good ethnographic filmmaking. The shepherds were not worried by intrusive filmmaking; rather, they developed a particular relationship with the filmmaker, one that allowed an immediate and involved shooting style. This relationship was based on mutual trust.[192] The camera is not always perceived as a threatening presence, for "people get used to seeing it and relax any fear as to its function" (McCarty 2003: 71).[193] De Seta demonstrated a sufficient level of self-awareness and self-reflexivity in recognising the risks and ambiguities implicit in the theory of knowledge embodied in his camera style. He was critical in acknowledging the existence of demanding and difficult scenes in *Banditi*. An example of these scenes was one in which a young girl, Vittorina Pisanu, played the role of a delicate adolescent involved in a tender love story. Soon De Seta discovered that Vittorina's behaviour before the camera was inhibited by the presence of her fellow citizens gathered as witnesses around the scene and he tried to solve this problem.

De Seta was committed to the idea that subjects and events are there for the camera rather than the camera being there for them. The significance of De Seta's attitude resides in the intention to free the gaze of the camera from preconceived ideas within a relational and collaborative epistemology. The Copernican camera aims at structuring and organising the real in order to preserve much of the integrity of the pro-filmic scene. It respects the conventions of space and time

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[191] Vaughan writes that it is "in the nature of public events to *change* their nature according to expectations of public response" (1999b: 56).

[192] Hockings writes that "honesty – or better yet, authenticity – is a more scientifically valuable quality in an ethnographic film than objectivity or indeed subjectivity" (2003: 518).

[193] Speaking about the documentary of 1974 about his parents in New York, Scorsese says: "When I made *Italianamerican* I left the slate and the sync-tone at the beginning of the first scene of the film. I wanted you to know that these people knew they were on camera, so you could see that they were making the adjustment, that very human adjustment people make when they're in front of a camera. And then I let the scene play out in real time as it happened. You were getting the tone of a real relationship, for better or for worse. Ultimately, they felt like they were in control – at least my mom did. The 'wall' simply vanished […] after a few minutes of warming up, they became less conscious of the camera – visibly. They began to feel so comfortable that their everyday personalities started to appear, and you started to get a feel for the life they lived and the way they thought. So yes, the camera is a stimulant, but you have to get past the point where the people on-camera feel self-conscious" (Scorsese and Donato 2007: 203).

in the presentation of the context of the subjects' lives. Through the Copernican camera, the process of filmmaking becomes an instrument to discover the real, a methodology to reveal the life of the subjects by creating an artefact that leaves ample space to the interpretation of the viewer. De Seta's filmmaking methods anticipate by thirty years similar participatory approaches in the visual treatment of Sardinian culture. Although it is always difficult to trace the long term impact of a film, *Banditi* can be said to be the quintessential forerunner in the Sardinian context of the observational and participatory modalities of filmmaking exemplified by David MacDougall's *Tempus de Baristas* (1992). A detailed look at this film will be provided in the next chapter. De Seta and MacDougall share some important features of their respective working methods: the opposition to crews and formal scripts; the use of non-actors as a mark of their commitment to the real; the pensive receptivity of the camera coupled with a contemplative and participatory attitude; a degree of improvisation and shared discovery; and, related to these, a production history highlighting similar approaches in the creation of an authored, aesthetic practice.

De Seta's film is radically different from most Italian social documentaries in the same period. The textual hegemony of Sardinian documentaries made in the 1950s continually strived to control content, giving precedence to a single level of cognition.[194] Marazzi writes:

> The technical artifice adopted by films oriented toward social representations has commonly been that of running images of one or more members of an ethnic group, along with an audio commentary which generally characterizes the whole group – offering such abstractions as kinship rules and structure, dominant ideology, and so on. In this way, the people on the screen cease to be individuals and become stereotyped representatives of the whole group (1994: 88).

The commentary of a number of films made before (and after) *Banditi*, in a sense, speaks *ex cathedra*. Instead of getting close to the subjects, it is distant from them. As Marazzi observes, having to "follow the fast and linear rhythm of the images, the commentary often ends up being involuntarily directive and authoritarian, not allowing for doubt, verification and reconsideration" (1994: 88). On the other hand, De Seta did not construct the narrative as a verbal process of judgement. In a period of conventional voice-over documentaries that kept the spectators from relating directly with the visuals, De Seta removed many of the obstacles to the participation of the viewers (and the filmmaker) in the lives of the Sardinian subjects. De Seta made a film that "si

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[194] Pinna writes: "Il carattere etnografico della maggior parte dei documentari degli anni Cinquanta è niente più che un'aura, una marca "realizzante," un richiamo mitizzante, gradito alla committenza e allo spettatore potenziale. L'attributo antropologico serve alla propaganda ed è allo stesso tempo un buon soggetto per la filmabilità. Tecnicamente questo documentarismo è nient'affatto etnografico. Disdegna i tempi lenti, l'osservazione in profondità" (2010: 42).

consegna alla memoria e all'intelligenza scabro" because it gives visual and aural prominence to the very *existence* of the shepherds of the Supramonte (Pinna 2010: 41).[195] As Piault observes:

> The film captures people through the actions they undertake in the attempt to overcome or transform their living conditions. Rather than trying to persuade the viewer to adopt a particular standpoint, the film confronts its audience with the complexity of a situation that quizzes the viewer without providing a definitive response or solution. Vittorio de Seta's filming of peasant life is not determined by pre-manufactured and all-encompassing knowledge. It attempts to follow events with empathy, a strategy in which the movement toward the other demands the difficult opening up of the self (2007c: 19).

De Seta did not make a film *about* the Sardinian shepherds: he made a film *with* the Sardinian shepherds. Because of De Seta's conscious rejection of shooting from a prepared script and his preference for an unostentatious style, what the people in *Banditi* actually do in the drama of their daily lives finds more prominence than the narrator's voice-over introduction – arguably the fundamental flaw of the film. Unlike voice-over documentaries shaped by conventional lecturing practices and the tradition of the illustrated lecture, *Banditi* focusses far more on experiential qualities and indeterminate possibilities than on forms of thought based on words.

One of the dominant elements in the life of the shepherd is silence. The calmness and quietness of this life also pervades *Banditi*. The written form of a novel, unlike the visual form of *Banditi*, would not be able to give voice to the unspoken contortions of the face, the silent gestures of the shepherds, the wordless and tacit moments in which facial play requires attention and comprehension. As Maresco writes, *Banditi a Orgosolo* "è un bellissimo film perché è un film di silenzi" (Fofi and Volpi 1999: 6). It can therefore be argued that film, and especially this film, has an immense advantage in retaining the delicious stillness of the relationship between the shepherds and their environment, and in portraying the remote peace and inner serenity of the Sardinian mountains. Thus *Banditi a Orgosolo* is both sociological and naturalistic, sensitive observation and poetic statement of the relationship between man and nature, and a document that slips into the ethnographic.

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[195] Maresco writes: "L'assenza di una analisi e di una proposta è il pregio vero del film, è ciò che lo distingue da quasi tutto il cinema "impegnato", sempre così rumoroso, e dall'euforia che era tipica di quegli anni, che furono anni di commedia" (Fofi and Volpi 1999: 6).

Figure 39. Michele Cossu in *Banditi*. Credit: Cineteca Sarda.

Conclusion

Banditi is an anthropological film rather than a film about anthropology, since it can neither be simplistically categorised as an illustration of ideas available in prose nor reduced to a sort of visual transposition of anthropological texts. The film brings the value of visual narrative to the fore, conveying understandings that explore the "what" but also the "how" of more familiar terrains of textual scholarship. It adds to anthropology in visual terms, challenging anthropological theories developed through the discursive approaches of language; its visual narrative contradicts book-based modes of knowing and studying banditry in Sardinia, an island in which anthropological studies, i.e. Pigliaru's *La vendetta barbaricina*, Lilliu's *La costante resistenziale sarda*, "hanno avuto, all'interno dei discorsi sociali, un impatto altamente volgarizzato e stereotipato" (Olla 2008: 56). In one of the few publications devoted to documentary films in Sardinia, documentary filmmaker Ignazio Figus writes that

> dopo *Banditi a Orgosolo* nulla rimane uguale: cambiano le prospettive narrative e simboliche e, sebbene permangano alcuni aspetti riconducibili all'ambito mitologico, crolla il castello di stereotipi e luoghi comuni su cui poggiava, fino ad allora, la rappresentazione cinematografica della Sardegna e ancor più della Barbagia, influenzando sia gli autori di fiction che i documentaristi che, ancora oggi, guardano al film di De Seta come ad una imprescindibile opera di riferimento (1995: 31).

One of the merits of ethnographic film is that it provides a "view of a culture that contrasts with somewhat subjective written accounts of another ethnographer or explorer" (Hockings 2003: 514). In this respect, *Banditi* represents an experimental anthropological practice, or even a method

to create understandings that touch on fundamental issues of film as a transcultural medium of knowledge production.

CHAPTER 4 Visual Anthropology and Sensory Ethnography in Contemporary Sardinia: a Film of a Different Kind

Figure 40. Miminu with goats during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

During the last thirty years many documentary films about Sardinia, especially the ones produced by the Ethnographic Institute in Nuoro (ISRE), have been characterised by an avoidance of orthodox voice-over commentary. This change is indicative of a wish to produce intellectually subtle and complex film compositions – e.g. Lutzu Marco and Manconi Valentina's *In viaggio per la musica* (2004), Michele Mossa and Michele Trentini's *Furriadroxus* (2005), Ignazio Figus' *Castelsardo: Lunissanti* (2006). Many of the considerations and theoretical implications drawn in this chapter apply to these commentary-free films, for they share many stylistic features with David MacDougall's *Tempus de Baristas* (1992), the main focus here. The chapter reads the film as an instance of the rejection of didactic, word-driven documentary films. It examines the film as a form of sensory ethnography and autobiographical self-inscription that foregrounds the interplay of visual and bodily ways of understanding, and suggests that this film made in Sardinia plays an important role in consolidating a way of seeing and knowing the Sardinian herders that is distant from the generalising and patronising style of a number of documentaries about the island. The film marks a departure from the transmission of written sociological knowledge typical of the expository documentaries. The chapter concludes that MacDougall's film produces a kind of embodied and emplaced knowledge that counterbalances the abstract vision of documentaries that have exoticised the Sardinian herders through the transmission of highly informative expertise.

Figure 41. Still life in *baracca* during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

1 Tempus de Baristas

Tempus de Baristas is an ethnographic film that represents a landmark in the visual representation of Sardinian "culture." The film can be interpreted as one of the films that afford the Sardinian-speaking subjects a space and a far more prominent role in the total cinematic construction than had usually been the case. The film provides the occasion to address the enduring question of voice, which lies at the centre of both anthropology and ethnographic film. Who is speaking for whom? Who does the voice-over speak for? Does the film represent the range of equally valid voices encountered in the experience of fieldwork/filmmaking? These questions have to do with the fundamental difference between those who organise, rationalise and survey as opposed to those who are mapped out, namely those who are the subjects of the film's visual surveillance (Chen and Minh-ha 1994).

Tempus is a film about the life of three herders in Urzulei, a small highland town in the Sardinian territory known as Ogliastra. The Sardinian goat-herders are Franchiscu, his son Pietro, and their friend Miminu. The film follows the herders' lives with sheer curiosity. This observational spontaneity is one of the strengths of the film, which "depicts the sympathy and rapport among three Sardinian mountain shepherds" (Taylor 1998: 10). *Tempus* is an "inquiry into male gender identity and the construction of the emotions among Sardinian shepherds" (Taylor 1998: 14). Female characters in the film are not fully developed, for stock-raising in Sardinia is a masculine activity (Marazzi 1994: 90).[196] The film represents a fascinating case study for understanding the

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[196] Lopasic writes: "The traditional Sard shepherd society is bilateral, and males and females performed well-defined functions and activities (e.g, sheep and goat-herding is an exclusively male job) and loyalties and inheritance include a number of relatives on both sides. It is a system where cousins on both sides become close friends and business partners, together tending larger flocks of sheep, goats or cattle" (Pink and Lopasic 1999: 91-2).

social status of the herders in Urzulei.[197] Their position within the community, in effect, attests to the marginality of the herder. Miminu, for example, feels the burden of his solitude, which partly derives from his position as an unmarried herder. He is one of the herders who has not found a wife. In this way the film reveals that the societal model prescribed by the community is based on marital status and that changes in economic status have altered the opportunities for herders to marry. The film shows a condition that is common enough in Sardinia's interior – the fate of unmarried herders. When women were taking advantage of higher education in the 1970s and 1980s, so that they could find employment as teachers and office workers, the young men of the same age did not take advantage of the same opportunities, partly because being a herder then was bringing in an adequate profit. But later, these better-educated women did not want to marry uneducated men, and this is one of the reasons for unmarried herders: their life style might be another. Thus one may infer that one of the main themes of the film is the herder's solitude, a condition which emerges with special emphasis in the separation between pastoral life and urban sociality.[198] The relationship between urban and pastoral life is developed from the point of view of three different generations of shepherds (Blakely 1993: 21). Franchiscu, Pietro, and Miminu (a bachelor in his forties) evoke different values and future prospects. One of the recurrent themes in MacDougall's films, often co-directed with his wife Judith, is the intergenerational transmission of culture, especially the role of formal education and schooling in displacing other forms of knowledge (Grimshaw 2002: 85).

Tempus is also the story of the relationship between a father and a son. On the one hand, the film makes the viewers share the experience of Franchiscu, a goat-herder worried about his son's future and about the future of the *cuile* (goat camp), that, as he says, is considered unauthorised by the *legge Galasso*. Franchiscu would "like his son to stay in the mountains but knows he will probably have to leave to further his education" (Williams 1997: 102). On the other, Pietro helps his father at the pastoral camp: "raduna le capre, le munge, prepara il formaggio, ma non è un 'forzato' della pastorizia, né un sequestrato alla *Padre Padrone*" (Olla 2008: 332). This young man appears uncertain whether he will pursue a different career from that of his father. MacDougall presents Pietro's dilemma as a "choice between higher education and herding with his father in the mountains as a profound one. For it is about fundamentally different ways of knowing, different

[197] Salzman writes that Urzulei is one of the "smallest and poorest highland towns of the Ogliastra region, in part because it has no lowland agricultural land and must rely totally on its mountain land" (1999: 631). In his review of the film, Lopasic points out that "Urzulei and the neighbouring village of Tallana are considered to be among the most isolated villages of Sardinia" (Pink and Lopasic 1999: 91).

[198] Olla writes that Miminu is "sempre solo in campagna, in mezzo alle sue capre, che chiama per nome […] si sente spaesato e non solo perché il formaggio si vende sempre meno e il mestiere di pastore sembra in crisi dappertutto, ma soprattutto a causa delle profonde mutazioni sociali che lo escludono" (2008: 332).

ways of being in the world" (Grimshaw 2002: 85).[199] One of the key features of *Tempus* is that it slowly explores the protagonists' lives, which are neither constrained by the space of the film nor mere reflections of predictable economic processes. As Marazzi (1994: 88) notes in his review of the film, the herders are not sociological, statistical generalisations; rather, they embody personal attitudes towards general issues and concerns. Because there was no planned script for *Tempus*, as it is clear from the discussion of the filming and pre-production process below, this knowledge emerges in a way that has very little in common with the sorts of planned scripts that dominate the visuals in many social documentary films about Sardinia. The main aim of the film is to communicate the subjects' experiences; "il racconto viene affidato ai protagonisti" and this "contribuisce in modo decisivo a sovvertire in ambito sardo il consueto e logoro schema 'immagini-voce fuori campo'" (Figus 1995: 32). This is especially true when one considers that the subjects in the film, shown in all their stubborn concreteness, appear as human beings with an intellectual life that is interesting in itself.[200] *Tempus* is an important film because it refuses the intermediation of written academic work about the goat-herders. The film does not allow written academic work about the Sardinian goat-herders to interfere with its depiction of them. This refusal of pre-existing knowledge foregrounds the phenomenological significance of the emotional affinities developed during a transcultural encounter at the expense of pedagogic illustrations.[201]

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[199] For Grimshaw, *Tempus* is about the "struggle between tradition and modernity in Sardinia as mediated through the character of the seventeen-year-old Pietro Balisai […] On the one hand there is the "time of the barmen" and the cold, angular bureaucratic spaces of school; and on the other hand, there is the time of the mountains and the skilled craftsmanship of the cheesemaker (2002: 85).

[200] In his comments about *Tempus*, MacDougall writes: "I wanted to show the three protagonists as I saw them through the camera and as I felt them to be, richly and uniquely, in themselves – perhaps through the qualities of film, as no one had seen them before" (MacDougall 1998: 46).

[201] For example, *Tempus* differs from Felice Tiragallo and Gabriella Da Re's *Tre Caprili. Insediamento e allevamento caprino ad Armungia* (1993), a "film about anthropology" that explores the condition of Sardinian goat-herders in the south-western village of Armungia through an overly descriptive voice-over commentary (Pinna 2010: 115). For more details about the visual exploration of the material culture in Armungia see Tiragallo (2007).
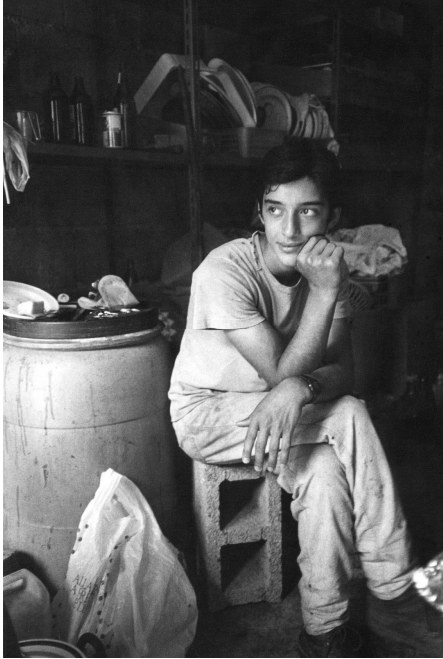
Figure 42. Pietro Balisai Soddu during the making of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

1.1 Between Observational and Participatory Cinema

Tempus was made by David MacDougall without the partnership of his wife Judith (Grimshaw 2001: 121).[202] It is worth stressing that throughout his career MacDougall has produced extensive writings and essays to explain his methods of exploring the nature of cinematic vision. He is both an anthropologist and a film artist who has been engaged with visual anthropology as a maker and as a theoretician.[203] He has been, among other things, a pioneer of observational cinema. In a period characterised by an "end of ideology" political climate, the MacDougalls contributed to developing a more self-conscious filmmaking style that took advantage of the availability of portable technology and sync sound recording engineered by people like Pennebaker (Stubbs 2002: 2). With *To Live with Herds* (1972), they decided to modify the practices of anthropological cinema.[204] The

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[202] The MacDougalls began working in the 1960s, when they received M.F.A. degrees in filmmaking from UCLA. At that time, they were not professional anthropologists. The films that MacDougall has made alone, or without Judith's participation, include: *Kenya Boran* (1974), *Goodbye Old Man* (1977), *Link-Up Diary* (1987), *Doon School Chronicles* (2000), *With Morning Hearts* (2001), *Karam in Jaipur* (2003), *The New Boys* (2003), *The Age of Reason* (2004), *Some Alien Creatures* (2005), *Schoolscapes* (2007) and *Gandhi's Children* (2008).

[203] Ruby writes that generally "Western creative and intellectual life has not produced many people who are both makers and thinkers, Umberto Eco aside […] David MacDougall is one of the few ethnographic filmmakers who writes thoughtfully about his own work" (Ruby 2000: xi). MacDougall's contribution as writer has to do with the development of theoretical insights that derive, first and foremost, from his experience as ethnographic filmmaker.

[204] *To Live with Herds* (1972), a classic of observational cinema, won the *Grand Prix Venezia Genti* at the Venice Film Festival. The film contributed to the rethinking of the principles and practices of ethnographic filmmaking. Although Judith recorded the sound, David was credited as director. See, for example, Loizos' (1993: 91-114) analysis of the Eastern African films made by the MacDougalls in the 1970s and Grimshaw's (2001: 121-48) discussion of the anthropological cinema created by the MacDougalls.

move was motivated by a desire to transcend the ascetic distance and objectivity of observational films in favour of a more intimate, participatory style (MacDougall 1975: 118). The new approach introduced a different conception of vision. MacDougall's essay *Beyond Observational Cinema* (1975) marks this point of departure from the orthodoxy of observational practices.[205] In his seminal paper, MacDougall writes that beyond observational cinema

> lies the possibility of a participatory cinema, bearing witness to the "event" of the film and making strengths of what most films are at pains to conceal. Here the filmmaker acknowledges his entry upon the world of his subjects and yet asks them to imprint directly upon the film their own culture (1975: 119).

The participatory approach*,* developed especially by fieldwork researchers in the social sciences, evolved out of the observational style, with which it shares many features. The difference between participatory filmmaking and observational cinema is a matter of degree, for the former was more an opening up of what was already inherent in the latter – i.e. the central role of authorship and of the filmmaker's eye. Observational filmmaking, contrary to much critical opinion, was always quite personal. In observational films the "camera is not used randomly but in fact the opposite – very purposefully and self-consciously" (Young 2003: 108).

In relation to the evolution of the stylistic approach in MacDougall's opus, Grimshaw rightly points out that his "Sardinian film, *Tempus de Baristas* (1992), announced the beginning of a new phase in MacDougall's project of anthropological cinema' (2002: 81), a phase marked by a more self-consciously authored observational style (Loizos 1997: 101). The film is, to a great extent, an observational film *and* subtly participatory film. Despite its observational quality, there is no thought of claiming to be a "fly-on-the-wall" film: its intense realism seems to follow a relatively undirected actuality. The fusion of the techniques of observational style and those of anthropological fieldwork provides some sense of a direct encounter with another world, the world of the Sardinian herders. One can see that *Tempus* is indeed subtly participatory, but it is never picaresque or rambling. Clearly, MacDougall's observational and, at the same time, participatory camera style is distant from the dominant trend in documentary film, and from the conventions of contemporary fiction filmmaking, a point developed later.[206] With regard to subject matter and

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[205] The essay was presented at the International Conference on Visual Anthropology held in Chicago in 1973 as part of the IX International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences and published in Hockings (1975). The essay has been followed by a postscript (MacDougall 2003: 128-130).

[206] In an email message to the author on February 16, 2011, David MacDougall revealed: "it is interesting that much of current television documentary 'personalizes' the film through an on-screen presenter/traveller, but the presence of the film crew following him around is never acknowledged. This erasure is perhaps the truest expression of the fly-on-the-wall style."

style, MacDougall has exerted great authorial freedom over his work; *Tempus* is entirely the result of his personal and stylistic choices.
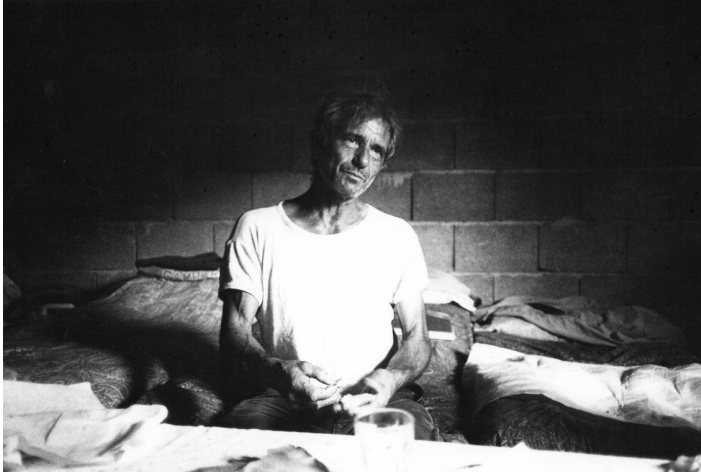

Figure 43. Franchiscu Balisai Soddu, during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

2 Epistemology and Open-endedness

One of the key areas of documentary film theory concerns how the documentary form legitimates its truth claims. Different documentary modes have different effects on cultural representation.[207] MacDougall's cinema is animated by epistemological concerns and questions of knowledge: "*Tempus de Baristas* is a film about knowledge" (Grimshaw 2001: 147). As an ethnographer-filmmaker, MacDougall can be understood as a radical empiricist, for his films recreate the elusive and problematic experience of fieldwork. Through its emphasis on three shepherds immersed in the bustle of life, *Tempus* is animated by implicit theoretical considerations that place value on empirical descriptions and feelings without privileging knowledge in the form of abstractions. It is a film about research and the assembly of conversations and impressions in the process of acquiring knowledge. In *Tempus* MacDougall tends to dwell on uncertain and inconsequential aspects of life, without being sensational. Instead of distilling written anthropological knowledge, the film appears as a phenomenological device to register the informal aspects of a "culture," i.e. the fleeting scraps and fragments of ordinary experience. This kind of empiricism, in its attempts to convey the themes of cultural life, goes beyond the encyclopaedic commentaries and explanations of voice-over commentary. It is an attempt to use film as an intoning, poetic device rather than an instrument for a

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[207] As MacDougall argued in an influential article, "implicit in a camera style is a theory of knowledge" (MacDougall 1998: 202). The sense of the phrase is that a film conveys an attitude – a theory of knowledge or epistemic stance – towards its subjects.

dryly analytic accompaniment. An anti-positivistic attitude is revealed in the evocative texture of the visuals. Such a position tends to recreate the atmosphere of fieldwork experience and the normal activities of anthropologists when they try to grasp another way of life. It is a perspective that rests on the belief that knowledge and understanding are always partial and provisional.

Tempus is expressive of a more general theoretical mood that acknowledges film as an experimental means of exploring and knowing a social reality. This mood is exploratory and inquiring rather than declaratory and authoritative. The film opens an area of inquiry in the full complexity of cultural encounters, without trying to provide an analysis of an entire society or capturing an unambiguous actuality. All this is perhaps evident in the fact that the film makes its more general points by showing, rather than communicating cultural ideas in the form of analytic arguments. The narrative does not rely on logic and conceptual arguments, and it is largely undeclared.[208] But nevertheless, the film has a definite and rather conventional chronological narrative form that moves toward the fate of the characters: what will happen to Franchiscu's *cuile*? What will Pietro do? As an expression of shifting social relationships developed during a series of encounters, the film does not "explain." It explores a reality instead of illustrating a theory. However, there is such a thing as explanation by demonstration.[209] One comes to understand why certain characters do certain things: the film "explains" the actions of the characters through its structure, i.e. through the logic of its creation. *Tempus* "creates the conditions in which knowledge can take us by surprise" (MacDougall 1998: 163). It does so by revealing the subtle changes in the relationships embodied in the ethnographic encounter itself. In this manner the film becomes an interactive process in which social exchanges develop progressively in the interstices of filmmaking. This process creates a complex network of relationships between subjects, filmmaker and audience. In effect, the film becomes the focal site of insights and polyphonic voices.

One of the most significant aspects in MacDougall's intellectual agenda is that *Tempus* does not offer a resolution of the doubts and questions raised by the story. Since the story is both incomplete and sketchy, the viewers are not offered closure but glimpses of possible outcomes through the fragments of social situations. Many of the insights and questions emerging from a series of interconnected events brought together in the film are not resolved but, rather, initiated. In *Tempus* one participates in the "caesuras that mark life's flow and in the uncertainties and fears that accompany decisions likely to influence the future lives of the characters" (Marazzi 1994: 89). This

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[208] The flow of narrative is conducted by poetic juxtapositions that invite memories of the research encounter. It establishes a "set of hypotheses which the viewer will need to verify or refute as he watches the rest of the film" (Hockings 2003: 523). One of these hypotheses concerns kinship relations in the film. The film does not tell at the beginning that Pietro is Franchiscu's son. This relationship becomes evident only later, as events in the film gradually unfold.

[209] Young writes that ethnographic films that take on an exploratory function, instead of "being arguments for a point of view they become demonstrations" (1988: 14).

open-endedness of meaning raises new issues, leading inevitably to further questions stimulated by what is unsaid in the film. Rather than closing issues off, the matter in the film places the spectators in the pastoral camp, among the shepherds and goats. The film is notable for a lack of contextualisation and historical information, which is virtually intrinsic to the style of filmmaking developed by the MacDougalls (Barbash et al. 2000-1: 2-14).[210] MacDougall does not give informational context to the film; this is partly a calculated move that becomes evident when one considers that MacDougall's verbal expression remains unuttered in the film. An example will serve to illustrate how the open-endedness in *Tempus* works. When the film ends, the viewers do not know whether Pietro will continue his studies in an *istituto alberghiero* (a secondary school specialising in tourism and hospitality) or whether he will work at the goat camp.[211] This uncertainty depends on Pietro's choice, which is projected beyond the space of the film. This technique questions the normative powers of the herders' social identity. One can only fantasise about what will happen in the uncertain and ambiguous territory of Pietro's future.[212]

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[210] The overall effect of the lack of contextualisation is a flavour of life as it is lived. However, one should always keep in mind that film "is about something, whereas reality is not" (Vaughan 1999a: 21). Similarly, Nichols writes: "whatever else we may say about the constructed, mediated, semiotic nature of the world in which we live, we must also say it exceeds all representations" (1991: 110). See also Nichols (1981: 111).

[211] For Pietro the lives of his father and Miminu "provide reference points against which to measure himself and consider his future in a changing world" (Williams 1997: 102). Pietro's search of his "personal identity and social life is full of doubts and unexpressed internal conflicts. But, unlike the romantic heroes he may recall, he is not the offspring of the privileged class, and thus his anxieties seem to come from the more concrete choices he must take" (Marazzi 1994: 87).

[212] A curious reader may wish to know what happened to the characters in their real lives, after the film's release in 1993. Miminu went on herding his goats, although he found it increasingly difficult because of the creation of the Gennargentu Park and the closure of grazing lands. He never married. Pietro went to the hotel training school after a little more than a year and returned to help his father. After his father Franchiscu died, he helped his uncle Costantinu herding the goats. But gradually he began doing construction jobs in and around Urzulei: today he divides his time between goat-herding and this kind of paid work. He also has not married – or at least was unmarried in 2009, when the filmmaker last visited the family. MacDougall D. C., personal communication (email) 18 March 2011.

Figure 44. David MacDougall and Pietro Balisai Soddu, during the making of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

2.1 Filmmaker, Subjects, and Ethics

One of the central features of MacDougall's approach to cinematic realities is that it involves a set of encounters. The process of filmmaking is understood as an instrument to communicate fieldwork experience.[213] Before starting the film, MacDougall had lived with the Sardinian herders for several months (he spent five months in Sardinia), walking around with his camera and getting to know his subjects. He followed the same people in different situations and activities. The film is constructed from fragments of the herders' real lives, recorded after a period of interaction with them. The benefit of this technique is that the subjects become familiar with the presence of the camera and with the filmmaker as a person, not just as a filmmaker.[214] Ultimately, the subjects become uninterested in, or accustomed to, the presence of the ethnographer-filmmaker, who is not seen as a guest to be entertained and shown around. Working in this way, the subjects are not always aware of the moments in which the camera is switched on.

In this process, the filmmaker should be responsive and open to changes, ready to make very quick decisions before the randomness of life unfolding before the camera. *Tempus* does not suppress trivial incidents as interruptions. The intimate work of the camera opens an arena of inquiry in which unexpected, serendipitous intrusions are acceptable. In ethnographic film, it is "quite common to include in a shot additional action – the passing herd of goats, an old motorcar in

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[213] Chiozzi writes that "l'osservazione filmica è l'effetto e il prodotto di un''incontro'" (1993: 93).
[214] McCarty writes that the presence of the ethnographic filmmaker becomes "natural" because "you are no longer a stranger doing something mysterious, but an acquaintance whom they trust, are interested in, and accept as their equal though you seem always to have that gadget on your shoulder" (2003: 73).

the background, and so on – which seem to be incidental to the subject matter of the shot (Hockings 2003: 522).[215] MacDougall's filmmaking method is based on improvisation and unexpected discoveries dependent on circumstance. At one level, it is possible to interpret the residue of chance in *Tempus* as the natural expression of the filmmaker's decisions and ability. At another level, however, uncertainty is intrinsic to films shot at first attempts, with little pre-arrangements. When the unexpected takes place, it is because the film is planned with minimum preparation. MacDougall's action reflects moment-to-moment judgement in the arena of risk encountered by a particular situation.[216] Much of MacDougall's attention is focused on a cinematographic performance that oscillates between the potential and the actual. This way of working is not constrained by the requirements of producers, writers and the various technicians involved in mainstream documentary film production. No one would contest that MacDougall's filmmaking in *Tempus* departs from most documentaries produced in a contemporary media environment dominated by the informational bias of journalism and talking heads.[217]

Perhaps equally important in MacDougall's method is the consolidation of the role of the filmmaker as a witness engaged in an open interaction with the persons being filmed. The researcher/filmmaker operates as an intermediary between the people in the film and the spectators. In *Tempus*, MacDougall's subjectivity is the central conduit for the messages of the highland herders and their conversations with the people who engage with them as viewers. Given these premises, one may add that the film suggests a respect for individuality premised upon humility, an attitude which is not found in many previous documentaries in which the Sardinian highland herder figures prominently. This distinctive feature of the film is influenced by the observational theories of the relationship between filmmaker and living people, according to which the anonymity of the Voice-of-God should be judged not only as a reductive simplification, but also as an unethical imposition. Hockings explains this quality of observational documentaries as follows:

> Unlike previous attempts at commercial films on primitive peoples, these documentaries have
> avoided an imposed story-line that is alien to the culture being filmed, and have invested quite long
> periods of time in the filming enterprise. The result has been an intimate portrayal of daily life in a

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[215] Hockings continues: "one of the delights or the necessities in watching ethnographic film is that one does see such additional bits of information in the background of a shot; and one cannot dismiss them as accidental or unimportant. In a sense everything visible and audible in a shot is of equal importance in our understanding of the filmed culture: it is the evidence on which we the viewers base our connections" (2003: 522).
[216] In observational films "much depends on luck, accident, and intuition" (McCarty 2003: 72). Risk assigns importance to improvisation and spontaneity, forcing the filmmaker to stay focused on what is going on in front of the camera.
[217] MacDougall's filmmaking method requires a "form of immediate decision-making which could not be achieved within the industrial model of documentary production, where films are scripted and responsibilities are divided among the director, camera operator, and other technicians" (MacDougall 2002: 83).

sympathetic manner that was largely missing from the early efforts. The subjects were allowed to talk for themselves (2003: 510).

As described in the Introduction, the advocates of observational cinema denigrate re-enacting and the sterility of exegetic films. The poetic humanism of *Tempus*, which the film shares with De Seta's work and the sensitivity of Flaherty, derives from a fundamentally moral orientation. MacDougall expresses his personal concerns when he writes:

> Recently, I've felt increasingly that the most important audience for a film is the people in it. A film like *Tempus de Baristas* is for me a way of communicating with them. But of course, you make a film for other people too. And you make it for itself, to bring it into being (Barbash et al. 1996: 12).

In parallel with the principle of respecting the integrity of the herders, the sensitivity towards the subjects can also be seen as an assumption of responsibility on the part of the filmmaker in preserving the "native" structure of events.[218] The commitment to preserve the integrity of the subjects' lives is also apparent in the use of subtitles. Subtitles signal that images in *Tempus* are interwoven with text. They render the Sardinian language in simultaneous translation, thus allowing one to learn much from the herders themselves, and from their conversations.[219] The use of subtitles to render the subjects' language is one of the features that make MacDougall's film unique in the Sardinian context.[220] Deias writes:

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[218] Here is how MacDougall describes his first encounter with two of the protagonists, which he has selected on the basis of a very personal understanding: "One evening I was taken to a deep canyon outside Urzulei by a young veterinarian who had grown up in the village, and he introduced me to Franchiscu Soddu, a goatherd. I was immediately struck by this person's manner. When he spoke, he chose his words carefully, and there was intelligence in the way he listened, in his gestures, in the quality he radiated of reserve and acute observation. He gave an impression of competence and honesty. […] As Franchiscu talked, I noticed that Pietro was listening intently to everything his father said, and that this was registered with extraordinary clarity on his face. I realised at the moment that if I did nothing else, I wanted to make a film about this father and son" (Barbash et al. 1996: 384).

[219] Figus writes: "Come per l'intera produzione di MacDougall, anche in *Tempus de Baristas* i dialoghi sono in lingua originale (sardo di Urzulei)" (1995: 32). Sardinian is one of the most conservative of the Romance languages. Some constructions of the linguistic varieties of the Sardinian dialect seem to derive from Latin grammar. The Sardinian dialect is one of the minority languages spoken in southern Europe – e.g. Corsican, Maltese, and Basque. Spoken by the majority of the Sardinian population, Italian is powerfully present as the main language of the island.

[220] It seems necessary to provide more evidence of the importance that subtitling and the preservation of the nuances of the original language has in MacDougall's work. He writes: "In a recent film of mine, *Tempus de Baristas*, there is a scene in which the son, Pietro, becomes angry with his father, Franchiscu, after Franchiscu has given him orders in a rather hectoring tone. The tension soon passes, and in talking about the future, Franchiscu says, "You'll be starting a new life, then?" Pietro replies, "Certainly." He uses the Italian word "*Certo*." This could have been translated several ways: "Of course," "Certainly," or simply, "Yes." Although "Certainly" at first seems correct, "Of course" is perhaps a closer translation, in its self-assurance and brevity. "Certainly," by contrast, is softer and more measured in English. (For that, Italians and Sards might even use "*Naturalmente*." However, in the end, I decided on "Certainly." Of the choices, "Yes" was too neutral and too far from the original. "Of course" struck me as too abrupt and therefore suggesting an aggressive stance between father and son which I didn't think accurately reflected what I knew of their relationship. "Certainly" carried an edge of irony which expressed Pietro's good will and softened, without entirely extinguishing, the slight tone of arrogance which I sensed in his reply" (MacDougall 1995: 89).

Fu David MacDougall, in *Tempus de Baristas*, a proporre, per primo, la lingua sarda come riferimento costitutivo e caratterizzante fra quanto si vuol filmare del mondo sardo. Rendere la propria lingua ai soggetti che si raccontavano nel film costituì uno spartiacque: da allora le esperienze cinematografiche più rappresentative della e sulla Sardegna […] assunsero la lingua sarda come identificazione e rappresentazione dell'essere in quell'isola e di quell'isola (2004: 36).

Because MacDougall does not speak Sardinian, he was helped by Dante Olianas, an ethnomusicologist who had the role of translator, acknowledged in the film's titles (Marazzi 1994: 89). In many of the film's sequences Olianas' voice "s'intromette discretamente nei dialoghi dei protagonisti, li stimola senza mai assumere il ruolo dell'intervistatore, ma semmai quello dell'associato alla comunità" (Olla 2008: 332). Although subtitles have been technically available for a long time, the translation of the subjects' speech in subtitles has become easier. The addition of subtitles forms a "better understanding of the nature of the inquiry, and therefore the quality of the material obtained" (Loizos 1992: 60). The importance of subtitling techniques is that they preserve the original texture of the human voice, respecting the tone of dialogues anchored in particular situations.

Figure 45. Franchiscu Balisai Soddu with his goats during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

2.3 Unprivileged Camera and Long Take

Early in his career, MacDougall often made unusual choices with regard to his use of the camera. In the 1960s, under the stimulus of the technological innovations that made it possible to record sound on location, he developed the notion of "unprivileged camera style" (MacDougall 1982). An unprivileged style may be regarded as a camera that recognises the physical rootedness of the filmmaker's body in space, i.e. a camera eye that speaks with a "human" voice. This camera eye acknowledges the limits and fallibility of the filmmaker, whose action is often governed by chance and by human, partial perception.[221] It is "close to the performers and inside the circle of onlookers," for it relinquishes the "position of a detached observer who sets up his camera on the top of a roof or on the front of a moving vehicle" (Griffiths 2002: 191). If the camera is "humanised," it is not because the camera is literally similar to a human eye, but because a simulation of eyesight calls into question the assumption of a neutral observer.[222] It is important to point out that an unprivileged camera style is defined in contrast to a privileged camera style. The latter, which is typical of Hollywood's cinema, does not have an acknowledged observer. One example is the shot taken from a vantage point that transcends the limitations of human vision. The privileged camera takes up a disembodied position anywhere in a scene. For this reason, it is considered to imply asymmetrical power relations. The privileged camera has been accused of surveillance and objectification of the subjects. These dehumanising tendencies essentially involve anonymity and a desire to spy on other human beings. The camera in *Tempus* recreates the subjective experience of the eye and mind behind the camera through long scenes that reproduce the single point of view of an actual observer. The most significant aspect of MacDougall's unprivileged approach is an embrace of authorship, associated to the acknowledgment of the presence of the filmmaker within the research setting. It is based on the presupposition that the "appearance of a film should be an artefact of the social and physical encounter between the filmmakers and the subject" (MacDougall 1982: 9). The emphasis on positionality is an act of authorial responsibility that maintains an awareness of the filmmaker's social situatedness. This reflexive stance is significant, for it acknowledges the act of filming and, at the same time, removes the impression of omnipotence from the observer. In *Tempus* the camera often appears as an eavesdropper, which creates a poetic vision of intimacy. Far from being a mere recording instrument, it adopts a perspective that suggests the filmmaker's focus and sensitivity towards the

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[221] MacDougall writes that the unprivileged camera style is "a negative notion, a corrective. It is an assertion of the obvious: that filmmakers are human, fallible, rooted in physical space and society, governed by chance, limited in perception" (1998: 205). It "uses long sequence shots" and restores to the "audience something of the continuity of perception of a human observer" (MacDougall 1998: 205).

[222] The eye of the camera differs from human perception. An important difference has to do with the "capacity of human beings to ignore most stimuli and to pay attention to specific things of immediate interest, a capacity recording tools do not have" (Asch and Asch 2003: 337).

herders. The intensity of the camera reminds one of the eye of the author quietly watching, or even presenting a vision, and certainly monitoring himself without a desire to intrude.

It is erroneous to assume that the camera is passive because the filmmaker's presence is radically de-emphasised and undeclared. The marks of MacDougall's subjectivity appear in the film in different ways; his films "betray no desire to conceal the filmmaker's presence" (Barbash et al. 2000-1: 4), which, in places, is felt in the occasional and explicit glimpses of the subjects towards the camera, or in the shifting positions and movements of the camera itself.[223] In the middle of a "heated discussion among family or friends," for example, a "flash of recognition in someone's eyes as they unexpectedly catch sight of the camera and are reminded of its intrusions, or a shift into direct address to the camera shows a subject to have been aware of it all along" (Barbash et al. 2000-1: 4).[224] This point can be illustrated with an example. Half way through the film, at the end of Franchiscu's comments, elicited by the unseen presence of Dante Olianas, MacDougall moves the camera towards Pietro, who seems absent-minded. He is perhaps immersed in his own thoughts, thinking about what his father just said, but when he sees the camera out of the corner of his eye, almost by chance, he becomes aware of it. From his reaction the viewer realises that he has been inattentive to the camera's presence, which was left running throughout the scene. This moment reinforces the impression in the viewers that Franchiscu and Pietro were so used to MacDougall's presence that they often forgot or ignored the camera.[225] Critics should recognise that reflexivity does not necessarily need to be overt (Taylor 1998: 18). Reflexive ethnographic films testify to their own creation, acknowledging the background assumptions and subjectivity of their cinematic construction. The impulse to show that films are constructions is related to the "reflexive turn" in the social sciences and more general discussions about the constructed nature of representation (Ruby 1980). This turn to reflexivity has had a profound impact on anthropology and documentary film. The important point here is that an effective and less obvious gesture of reflexivity may be conveyed through the author's reticence, and by trusting one's own subjects and the viewer's understanding of the constructed nature of cinematic realities (MacDougall 1998: 89-91).

The adoption of an unprivileged style results in the refusal of conventional film editing. It is noteworthy that MacDougall's films are all feature-length documentaries. Such a choice affects the content and internal narrative of *Tempus*. An analysis of MacDougall's defence of the long take

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[223] At the heart of MacDougall's filmmaking style there is an "appartenenza 'flahertiana' alla comunità che si decide di documentare" that "oscura il concetto di neutralità del lavoro dell'etnoregista, vagheggiata spesso dagli studiosi" (Olla 2008: 332).

[224] Figus writes that in *Tempus* the "cineasta-ricercatore si propone come parte attiva: non solo non tenta di celare la sua presenza, ma, al contrario, pone in essere tutti gli espedienti narrativi a sua disposizione per disvelare agli occhi dello spettatore la sua interazione con le persone filmate" (1995: 31).

[225] As McCarty points out, after a time, the filmmaker begins to "get material that is simple, natural and unaffected by the camera's presence. Or, rather, the camera is just another person" (2003: 74).

explains how one of the most influential ethnographic filmmakers in the English-speaking world today theorises the unprivileged style of his filmmaking practices. Although the long take was very much in the territory of auteur films in the 1970s and 1980s, in today's mainstream media and television documentary the long take is confined to marginality. The *terra incognita* of the long camera take is very often considered a hindrance, for its length leads to annoyance and impatience in the audience. This judgment, or even aversion, to the long take is relative to a specific set of cultural expectations. On another level, take duration plays a crucial role in altering the viewer's engagement in a fundamental way (MacDougall 1992a). When the rushes – the "raw material that comes out of the camera" known as ethnographic footage – are reduced in the process of editing, the cutting of the unmade (also known as "notional") film closes off the indeterminate plurality of meanings that the long take, as MacDougall suggests, seems to share with still photography (MacDougall 1992a: 38). The sense of historical contingency and openness to the uninterrupted unfolding of a scene captured by the camera is partly lost (Nichols 2001: 112). This is due to the montage phase of production, which dictates what is relevant. The editing, also known as the "putting it together" or montage, condenses the spaciousness of the encounter between the viewer and the material in the rushes, at the expense of the viewer's interpretation. Thus the directorial decisions to eliminate the "excess" meaning in the rushes narrow the interpretive participation of the spectator. No doubt the unmediated richness and the internal contextualisation of the shot depend also on its duration.

In relation to the editing phase and its processes of reduction, it is worth mentioning that the large corpus of material shot for *Tempus* was reduced to a running time of 100 minutes. A proportion of the footage was not included in the final cut. The film was edited at a cutting ratio of approximately 15: 1.[226] All the footage not used in *Tempus* is kept at the Ethnographic Institute in Nuoro (ISRE). One of the ethical responsibilities ethnographic filmmakers have is to deposit a copy, preferably the original, in a local museum or cultural institution of the people they have filmed. Some scenes have been edited but the filmmaker decided not to use them in the final film. All the interviews, for example, have been purposely left out of the finished film. Some of them reveal a lot, such as the one that captures the informal *tenores* (polyphonic folk singers) singing in a bar.

Tempus generates meaning through relationships of juxtaposition and correspondence that replace voice-over commentary. The use of long scenes structures and organises the untidy reality

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[226] MacDougall D. C., personal communication (email) 22 March 2011. This ratio is not high by present-day standards, when "documentaries shot on digital video are commonly cut at a ratio of 50: 1 or more, nor even by the standards of the Direct Cinema filmmakers working in North America […] in the 1960s, some of whom were cutting at ratios of up to 200: 1" (Henley 2009: 168).

before the camera, bringing the viewers close to the illusion of "being there." The structural elegance of the film is close to the raw data of the footage, i.e. the ethnographic equivalent of taking notes during the experience of fieldwork.[227] This minimalist style of film editing provides a sense of closeness and intimacy. The ordered simplicity of the assembled sequences preserves much of the integrity of the pro-filmic scene usually felt in the rushes. The result is an understated narrative structure created by the cumulative force of selected sequences edited into each other. From an examination of the use of montage, *Tempus* appears as a mosaic of long scenes from which a series of overlapping associations emerge to demand close attention. The long takes deal with concrete actions and settings, creating a sense of visual suspense that marks a departure from authoritative and didactic filmmaking. Thus the film's editing preserves much of the natural integrity and sequence of actions. A respect for the real duration of events highlights their continuity in time, reducing the distance between filmmaker and audience. The long-sequence shots give the impression of being within the microcosm of the herders' experience. The viewer perceives the continuity of temporal fragments in a way that mimics the perception of a real observer.

A good example of the long take in *Tempus* can be found at approximately thirty-five minutes, a third of the way into the film, in a scene of conversation at the lunch table in the *cuile*. This subjective shot of several minutes of duration speaks in the present tense: the time of the viewer coincides with the diegetic world of the film. Clearly the scene has been shot so as to make editing in the editing room redundant. The primary focus of this realistic shot seems to be the herders' joking relationships and commensal reciprocity. From a single point of view, MacDougall lets the viewers sense not only what the herders' say but also how they laugh, their facial expressions and the sounds they make. The duration of the shot creates a cumulative power that plays an important part in the subjective reproduction of a scene of practical living. The use of long scenes is also apparent in the need to allow the events to unfold. This need is related to the filmmaker's choice to complete an action within a single shot rather than fragmenting it, or to the kind of restraint that allows the individuals in the film to express their subjectivities. MacDougall's way of editing preserves much of the interpretive complexity of a scene by respecting the nuanced density of time and being. As MacDougall writes:

> The scene of Miminu making cheese in *Tempus de Baristas* would work only if it were kept long; otherwise it would be merely a technological process. But kept long, it begins to communicate a sense of Miminu's solitary life and his internalisation of the details of his work. For me, when the

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[227] Hockings writes that the use of the camera as a kind of fieldwork notes for gathering raw data "records visual images in a time-dimension, in a way that anthropologists cannot otherwise do" (2003: 524). Chiozzi (1989: 3) pushes the contrast between footage and fieldwork notes even further, arguing that ethnographic film as a form of taking visual notes can make written notes in anthropology outmoded and inadequate.

cheese appears it's like a moment of creation, the beginning of a new world (Barbash et al. 1996: 384).

MacDougall's theorisation of the long take is also reminiscent of Bazin's call for a cinema of duration. By this Bazin meant that long takes and depth of field should be privileged because they are somehow more respectful of the pro-filmic scene (Grimshaw 2001: 131; Bazin 2004; Zavattini 1966: 216-28). His emphasis on the integrity of time and space are part of a defence of an idea of realism grounded in narrative and stylistic features. As MacDougall (1998: 128) explains, his observational and subtly participatory style is the consequence of a development of the post-war Italian Neorealist projects envisaged by Cesare Zavattini (Young 2003: 105). Observational cinema can be contextualised in relation to its Italian cinematic antecedents. Italian Neorealism can be understood as the godfather of observational filmmaking as it emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (Nichols 1991: 42).[228]

Zavattini exhorted filmmakers to embrace a critical engagement with the banal occurrences of the everyday; he imagined a kind of cinema involving an intense observation of events and aspects of the world that seem without meaning, such as "buying a pair of shoes" (Zavattini 1966: 225). This emphasis on the ordinary is what Zavattini called "dailiness." He wrote that the content of Neorealist films

will become worthy of attention, it will even become spectacular not through its exceptional, but through its *normal* qualities; it will astonish us by showing so many things that happen every day under our eyes, things we never noticed before (1966: 221).

This concern with particularity was based on a conception of human subjectivity that does not deny individuality. It shaped a kind of cinema that used non-professional actors and expressed relationships between characters without reducing them to exemplifications that deny their unique personalities (Nichols 1991: 167). Facial expressions and gestures in Neorealist films were permeated by the physicality of body language, and by a resistance to rendering the subjects as abstract archetypes. This can be better understood if one considers the respect for the temporal duration of life at the heart of the Neorealist aesthetics. This distinctive feature of Neorealist films was intended to position the viewers in a way that stimulated reflection, eliciting empathy and affection (Young 2003: 105).[229] It was necessitated by a resistance to give form to materials

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[228] For a discussion of the Neorealist movement see, for example, Bondanella (1983) and Marcus (1986b).
[229] Young writes that Neorealist filmmakers "minimised their dependency on melodrama as a source of their structural conventions. Like all good fiction of the time, their films still had an overall dramatic form, and had a general metaphorical power. What was unusual was the low key of the drama, the attention to lifelike detail, and the willingness

according to melodramatic narrative conventions, but also by a refusal to convey abstractions and generalisations. This does not mean that Italian Neorealism was not deeply ideological, since one of its aims was the substitution of the hegemony of a fascist order with a more democratic semiotic field ideologically inflected by Gramsci's theories (Micciché 1999). The use of the terms "abstractions" and "generalisations" in this context refers to the epistemological qualities of film as a medium of knowledge production rather than to its ideological neutrality.

The reverberations of Zavattini's manifesto find a correspondence in observational cinema. Observational films draw on an epistemology anchored in the everyday. They shape found materials and events in a way that avoids melodramatic structure. Observational films share with their Italian counterparts the ability

> to create a special density within the framework of which they know how to portray an action without separating it from its material context and without loss of that uniquely human quality of which it is an integral part (Bazin 2004: 38; quoted in Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009: 75).

This essentially means a repudiation of rearrangements of experience according to an interpretive framework originating elsewhere.[230]

Figure 46. Miminu during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

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to have the dramatic development, in its details, verified by us against our own experience as the film progressed" (2003: 105).

[230] In relation to the observational filmmaking style developed at UCLA under Colin Young's tenure, MacDougall writes: "What we wanted to replace was not a narrative view of life, but the word-dominated structures of the illustrated lecture film and the all-knowing eye of Hollywood. This resulted in part from our having watched foreign feature films. The people in these films spoke other languages and came from other cultures, but they were still portrayed as individuals. There was no voice on the soundtrack telling you what to think about them. We read their conversations in subtitles and, guided by the filmmaker, we made an analysis of their motivations and actions. Many of these films were also made in unfamiliar ways, in longer takes, avoiding the synthesis typical of the scene construction of Hollywood films" (2002: 88). In this passage, MacDougall is referring to the films of late Italian Neorealism.

2.4 The Position of the Spectator

An understanding of the role of the spectator is central to an analysis of the de-exoticising tendencies of MacDougall's pastoral elegy.[231] The thoughtful, exploratory construction of *Tempus* impresses the viewers with a sense of progressive revelation. Its qualities of directness and intimacy create a space for careful observation that influences the audiences response. There is a feeling of freshness in this encouragement of intense reflection, as if the audience were called upon to embark on its own journey of discovery and share the exploratory attitude of the filmmaker. This attitude is distinct from the abstract knowledge communicated in a monograph: it requires a different way of grasping the materials of the film. The viewers are expected to reach their own conclusion without having full knowledge in advance. *Tempus* puts the viewers in a condition of uncertainty, creating a space for the exercise of their critical faculties. Not only are the spectators invited to observe intimately and directly into things, but they are also called to piece together the clues offered by the action itself. The materials and details to arrive at interpretation are provided by the highly structured experience of being there too, visiting the Sardinian herders and learning about their pastoral society. The illusion of "looking in" on the experience of others mediates the audience's access to the world of the Sardinian herders, encouraging autonomous judgment.

In viewing the film, the spectators may respond in various ways. Martinez (1990) addressed the issue of audience reception of ethnographic films.[232] Although Martinez's reception study is not entirely satisfactory because his assessment of the respondents' reactions was limited (and therefore the study may even be considered as seriously flawed), it is nevertheless important to discuss why certain ethnographic films produce certain responses in different kinds of viewers. What is it about the viewers? What is it (perhaps more importantly) in the way in which films like *Tempus* have been made? And how do they address their viewers? In order to answer these questions, it is important to keep in mind the distinction

> between 'closed' texts, which carry specific instructions as to how they should be read, thus limiting the scope of the reader's interpretations, and 'open' texts which explicitly invite the reader to carry out his or her own interpretations, thus being 'suggestive and susceptible to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings (Martinez 1992: 135).

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[231] *Tempus*' definition as a "pastoral elegy" has been taken from Jeffrey Ruoff. Berkeley Media LLC Catalogue: http://www.berkeleymedia.com/catalog/berkeleymedia/films/global_and_development_studies/tempus_de_baristas
[232] In the field of visual anthropology there is a "notable lack of studies on film spectatorship" (Martinez 1992: 131). This does not mean that visual anthropologists are not interested in viewers' responses, as it is clear from the controversial and, at times, acrimonious debates about the reception of ethnographic films among anthropologists (Chiozzi 1990; MacDougall 2001a).

Martinez's study on students' reactions to various ethnographic films suggests a "high correspondence between films using 'open' textual strategies and more elaborated and reflexive responses," whereas the "strongest pattern of aberrant readings and reactions of disinterest, alienation and shock correspond to more 'closed' strategies" (Martinez 1992: 135).[233] As Ruby points out,

> If a film is reflexively open, less authoritative, and multivocal, it may be that viewers will be more able to overcome their ethnocentric tendencies and gain some empathetic feelings for the people portrayed in the film. Based upon his research, Martinez advocates that ethnographic film-makers emulate the reflexive style of Jean Rouch, Barbara Myerhoff/Lynn Littman or David MacDougall (1995: 196).

The importance of distinguishing between films conveying materials open to interpretation and ethnographic films providing a ready-made content in the form of instructions is reflected also in Crawford's distinction between the perspicuous and the experiential mode of ethnographic film. Crawford explains:

> If the perspicuous mode of ethnographic film can be said to reach its audience by means of explanatory devices, the experiential mode invites the audience to understand and sense other cultures by emphasising analog forms of representation open to interpretation (1992: 77).

In other words, the perspicuous film stresses the explanatory power of the ethnographer's expertise, "used not only as an 'entry card' to the portrayed culture but also as an interpreter for an audience which is assumed to be unable, or to lack the time, to carry out this task on its own" (1992: 77), whereas the experiential film is more unwrapped and unedited, i.e. less codified.

Attention should now be paid to common audience responses to open-ended observational ethnographic films. On the one hand, a first response, one encountered before in the history of ethnographic films more generally, tends to be negative, i.e. the fierce controversy surrounding Robert Gardner's *Forest of Bliss* (1986) published in the *SVA Newsletter* (now *Visual Anthropology Review*) (Parry 1988; Moore 1988; Ruby 1989; Carpenter 1989; Chopra 1989; Oster 1989). Films such as Gardner's have been "criticised by anthropologists for being too sensuous, having too little

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[233] In other words, Martinez's results suggest that more "open films, those using narrative, experimental, or reflexive styles," because they create an *opera aperta*, that is, an open-ended work (Eco 2000), "empower viewers by allowing them space to negotiate meanings in a more dialogic, interactive way of reading, generally resulting in more complex interpretations" (Martinez 1992: 135-6).

explanation" (Crawford 1992: 70).[234] This is a response most commonly associated with those spectators who believe that facts should be explained in propositional statements or pointed out to the audience. At times it "appears that the critics demand for verbal explanation calls for an illustrated lecture that would end whatever ambiguity there is to the images" (Kapur 1997: 177). Perhaps because of the established cultural expectations and dramatic conventions of fiction and the omniscience of educational films

> Audiences are accustomed to having things "wrapped up" for them, as in virtually all travelogs. Consequently they must find it difficult to accept the contradictions that emerge within a film, and will resist our attempts at having them think through these contradictions to the point where they form their own conclusions about the subject matter (Hockings 2003: 522).

The issue raised in this passage concerns viewers in general, both anthropologists and non-anthropologists, for it has to do with the frustrations attached to the false expectation that ordinary people in ethnographic films should behave in a coherent way. Ethnographic films, however, show fragments of the lives of ordinary people rather than the more predictable reactions of drama characters. The point is that some viewers are threatened by a film that does not promote a political message (usually their own), and threatened even more by the possibility that audiences might misinterpret the cultural life explored in the film. These spectators may not understand *Tempus* for what it is trying to be, because they wait to be told something about what they should look for.[235] T

A different reaction to the film is the one of viewers who are able to follow a narrative that gives no guidance and eludes full comprehension. These spectators are possibly less likely to fall into the trap of wanting *Tempus* to be something other than what it is trying to be. After all, viewers are usually exposed to different points of view, interpretations and aspects of a subject, or ideas of their own: they take a great amount of "extradiegetic" information from outside the world of a film when they watch it.

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[234] *Forest of Bliss* is an ethnographic film that "uses no commentary, no translations of speech, and hardly any intertitles. The film is a radical challenge to see what we can learn from looking, and listening" (Loizos 1992: 57). The formal strategy in Gardner's film is "its reliance on visuals and ambient sound rather than verbal explanations" (Kapur 1997: 169). This is perhaps why Ruby claimed that *Forest of Bliss* is "an 'impressionist' documentary of exotic cultures made by filmmakers who know little about the people whom they depict" (1989: 9). In his review of the film, Jonathan Parry commented: "if this genre is all we can expect from the marriage between anthropologist and filmmaker, then I would personally wish for a speedy divorce" (1988: 7).

[235] In an email message to the author on April 20, 2010, David MacDougall observed: "Although most Sardinian audiences responded positively to the film [*Tempus*], there were some negative responses by bureaucrats who were worried that it wasn't good publicity for Sardinia's image of progress and modernity. But that is a common response to many films – wanting them to be something other than what they are."

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Figure 47. Miminu's *cuile* during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

3 A Different Kind of Knowledge

The issue concerning parity among modes of expression is crucial to understanding the relationship between *Tempus* and other films informed by socio-anthropological knowledge. The purpose in looking closely at the complex relationship MacDougall posits between image and word is to point out that the undirected potential of images opens new avenues for a conception of film that tries to de-exoticise Sardinian "culture." *Tempus* deviates from the conventional documentary films about Sardinia because it attempts to view Sardinian "culture" from a perspective which is inherently phenomenological.[236] This phenomenological dimension erodes and counterbalances the strangeness and distance of many representations of the highland herders living on the island, not least because the film concerns itself with the complex and fluid lives of three individuals. Marazzi defines this quality of *Tempus* the "bypassing of generalisations."[237] This aspect of MacDougall's approach is also reflected in the production history of the film. When he was interviewed by Alan MacFarlane, MacDougall revealed that he was asked to make a film in Sardinia by the

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[236] *Tempus* is based on a phenomenological approach because, as Olla writes: "Il film mette in campo problemi non secondari della Sardegna: la crisi economica derivante non solo dalle difficoltà del mercato ma da metodi produttivi antiquati (difatti, appena un decennio dopo le riprese, il latte di capra ha trovato un mercato in piena espansione); il lentissimo tramonto dell'economia agro-pastorale che è stata anche un sistema di valori, una condizione esistenziale, persino una mitologia; la nascita di nuove realtà (il turismo, il commercio, le risorse ambientali, etc.) che non sempre vengono sfruttate nella maniera giusta e con sufficiente preparazione imprenditoriale. *Ma questa è, appunto, una lettura che sovrappone alle immagini dati aggiuntivi*, che scava nelle piaghe del racconto – magari legittimamente – per fornire ulteriori significati ai suoni, alle parole, ai volti dei protagonisti" (Olla 2008: 332, my emphasis). In a similar vein, Nichols writes that in *Tempus* "that which impinges or threatens traditional values figures largely as structuring absence […] we sense the pressure of something like an invisible force" (1997: 812).

[237] For Marazzi, MacDougall is not "trying to give us an idea of what Sardinian culture is all about;" instead, he is an "author who wants to understand his subjects and their ideas, and does so by recording their everyday actions in order to share his experience with the audience" (1994: 88). In *Tempus* the filmmaker has established a profound interaction with the Sardinian subjects. The film represents a more intimate form of filmmaking also because MacDougall shared his film with the subjects: he showed the Sardinian herders the images that involved them in the filmmaking process.

Ethnographic Institute of Nuoro (ISRE), presumably because they wanted a film made about mountain shepherds by a complete outsider, a film that would bring a different perspective to the subject. As MacDougall observed, "the director of the institute believed that most of the films that had been made about shepherds stereotyped them and he wanted a fresh approach."[238] In many films and documentaries about Sardinia's interior, made by both insiders and outsiders, the highland herder is mostly associated with the history of Sardinian *disamistades* (enmity) and *vendetta* (vengeance). Among the examples of these films are Massimo Pupillo's *Gente di Barbagia* (1960), Piero Livi's *I 60 di Berchiddeddu* (1964) and *Il cerchio del silenzio* (1965), Libero Bizzarri's *La disamistade* (1967), Romolo Marcellini's *Civiltà dei pastori* (1967), Fiorenzo Serra's *La legge della vendetta* (1967), Giuseppe Ferrara's *Banditi in Barbagia* (1969) and Antonio Bertini's *Tre disamistade* (1969). These documentaries usually deal analytically with the forms of social control exerted by the pastoral community and with illegal activities among Sardinian herders such as the *abigeato* (the stealing of beasts of pasture). Conversely, in *Tempus* there is neither a suggestion of the past of tensions between the herders and the Italian military presence nor a discussion of the genealogical role of the herders in the formation of the Sardinian cultural identity (Salzman 1999: 632).

Tempus is the result of a kind of double remove; MacDougall is not Sardinian, but he is not Italian either. MacDougall's role as an outsider needs to be acknowledged but it should not be overstated either. Although *Tempus* is a film made by an outsider, the critical analysis of the film offered in this chapter aims at highlighting the transcultural potential of filmmaking. In many ways, the film seems an ingenious response to documentaries that celebrate the pseudo-sociological authority of an expert over the life of others. It suggests that social change can be explored without the imposition of an exegetic commentary speaking for the subjects in a patronising way. The film is neither narrated by way of exoticism nor participates in the creation of human types; rather, it displays three individuals and gives visual prominence to their actions. *Tempus* shows the "humanity of highland Sardinians through introducing us to particular individuals and their specific lives" (Salzman 1999: 634). This has important implications for the deconstruction of the primitivism and exoticism of Sardinian "culture." The "decolonisation" of our thinking allowed by *Tempus* is a relative one: it involves a filmmaking style that de-emphasises the position of an observer whose presence is de-centralised, not eliminated. Ultimately, it involves focusing on social forms of intimacy and emplacement.[239] As described in the previous chapter, De Seta's work in

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[238] David MacDougall interviewed by Alan MacFarlane, 29th and 30th June 2007: http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/DO/filmshow/macdougall1_fast.htm

[239] This is one of the key features of observational films. Young writes that the observational approach "must be based on an intimate, sympathetic relationship between the filmmaker and the subject" (2003: 110).

Sardinia represented an exception that, in many respects, anticipated the making of *Tempus*.[240] An important similarity between De Seta's documentaries and *Tempus* is the rejection of voice-over commentary, considered by De Seta as the "ossatura ideologica del documentario" (Fofi and Volpi 1999: 11). However, a closer comparison reveals also important differences.[241] Unlike De Seta's *Pastori di Orgosolo* (1958), *Tempus* does not indulge in "pictorial representations of grandiose panoramas" (Marazzi 1994: 87). MacDougall has created a more intimate, slow film "from real events in the ongoing lives of traditional peoples" (MacDougall 1975: 113).

In seeking to expose the distinctive features of the visual as against the written, an attempt is made to show the many ways in which *Tempus* creates a kind of lived knowledge that contrasts with the exoticising tendencies implicit in the abstract schematisations of many documentaries about Sardinia. The aural and visual details of film convey a kind of knowledge that differs fundamentally from the self-validation of interviews designed for the extraction of textual information and from the declaratory omniscience of voice-over commentary (Nichols 1991). Images can assume a communicative role, but perhaps, above all, they work in a more symbolic and diffuse way. In *Tempus* images work primarily through a series of associations and resonances evoked by the juxtaposition of extended scenes. In most anthropological fieldwork things happen when they take place. During the experience of fieldwork, as in everyday life, ethnographers witness events and actions that are too rapid, and certainly too complex to be recorded in writing. For example, in the scene of Pietro and his friends playing *morra* (a hand game played by two or more people), which is seen at twenty-three minutes into the film, as the players are throwing fingers at each other Pietro bursts out laughing. This moment is given special emphasis by MacDougall's startling cut into the next scene. The rapidity of Pietro's reaction followed by a straight cut, as captured by the camera, is just too complex and sudden to be recorded in writing.

Unlike writing, film renders and establishes the cultural style in which people act, move, speak and perform. The rich visual texture of film draws attention to the nuances of a particular situation. This visual richness is, in some embodied way, literal. MacDougall's conception of people in the world is "predicated on a notion of presence, that there is something 'out there'" (Grimshaw 2001: 132). This is related to the intrinsic "presence" of film, established by the image's insistence on "being there" (Crawford 1992: 70), but it is also evident in a number of revealing

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[240] Olla writes that MacDougall "si è, per così dire, mimetizzato per cinque mesi tra la popolazione, un po' come aveva fatto trent'anni prima De Seta a Orgosolo, ma, in questo caso, con maggiore capacità di esplorare in profondità il profilmico" (2008: 331).
[241] The most evident difference between *Tempus* and *Banditi* is that the former is shot with synchronous sound techniques, whereas in the latter sound was fudged later in the editing room. With regard to the importance of sound in the structure of his documentaries, De Seta commented: "tutta la struttura deve essere essere fondata sul ritmo. Sulla base del sonoro, che non era un suono "sinc" ma ricostruito, mi componevo in testa la struttura del documentario, prima di poter finalmente vedere le immagini" (Fofi and Volpi 1999: 11).

passages such as the ones of the herders' hands. Film brings together meanings, emotions, and sensations, but it also makes the real manifest. This point, which MacDougall makes explicit in his writings, must be stressed. In *Tempus*, the cinematic medium is used to show rather than to say. The spectator "encounters" the highland herders in the reality of filmmaking. The most easily identifiable feature of this conception of film is that *Tempus* does not talk about the Sardinian herders; rather, it shows their movements within the Sardinian landscape and the uses of it. Given this filmmaking agenda, the film seeks to render not only accidental events and dynamics between subjects, but also relationships expressed non-verbally. This agenda is apparent in MacDougall's observations about the use of subtitles in *Tempus*. He writes:

> Perhaps the most serious limitation is that subtitled dialogue tends to make us conceive of films more in terms of what they *say* than in what they *show*. This can pose a problem if the filmmaker wishes to emphasise nonverbal elements in the film, particularly in scenes of conversations. I faced this problem towards the end of *Tempus de Baristas*, in a scene between two of the main protagonists, Pietro and Miminu. To me their manner toward each other was far more important than what they actually said, and I took the chance that by this time the viewers would care enough about them, and understand them well enough, to respond to them substantially on a nonverbal level (MacDougall 1998: 175).

At one level, it is possible to interpret *Tempus* as an expression of visual experience and its uncaptioned virtues. The film exhorts us to consider images not so much as vehicles of messages or explanations of theories, but as data of recorded behaviours-in-context that can serve for the development of new theories. At another level, *Tempus* represents a call for an elevation of visual anthropology from a subfield position to a more critical role in cultural inquiry. In advocating such visual practice, it is worth bearing in mind that MacDougall's films are works "in which small events – the tiny and yet compelling patterns of everyday life – were given the kind of attention that Virginia Woolf or some such novelist has given them" (Young 1982: 7). Writing about *Tempus*, Taylor observes that in "its texture and structure, it is perhaps the most novelistic of the MacDougalls' films" (1998: 10) or, as Olla points out, Miminu is a "personaggio da romanzo contemporaneo o da grande film di finzione, ammesso che qualcuno sia in grado di ricostruirlo con la stessa forza drammatica con cui lo ha costruito MacDougall" (2008: 332).[242] The anthropological interest of MacDougall's filmmaking style in this particular film lies in its "capacity to capture the

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[242] This view is also expressed in the film's promotional leaflet: *Tempus* has "qualcosa del romanzo contemporaneo – una qualità raramente presente nei documentari di oggi" (Figus 1995: 32). In this respect, it is worth bearing in mind that, in Mead's words: "We do not demand that a field ethnologist write with the skill of a novelist or a poet, although we do indeed accord disproportionate attention to those who do" (2003: 5).

living, internal time of the people he is filming, thus giving meaning to their actions and decisions" (Marazzi 1994: 90).[243] By interpreting *Tempus* in this light, attention can be drawn to the central role accorded to images in the description of particular social and cultural systems.

MacDougall's film also seeks to give focus to the verisimilitude of moving images and their evocative power as a form of sensory memory. For MacDougall, images are "inherently reflexive," since they always refer implicitly to the scene of their creation (2006: 3).[244] Although images do not speak for themselves in the guise of a discourse, they invoke an antecedent event. To a large extent, *Tempus* does not say: it shows, and, in showing, it does convey a different kind of knowledge. One particular interpretation can be built upon the idea that there is a meaningful way, however difficult to grasp, in which one can say that films and images "speak for themselves," not least because films and images, like memory, involve the senses (MacDougall 1994b; Seremetakis 1994).
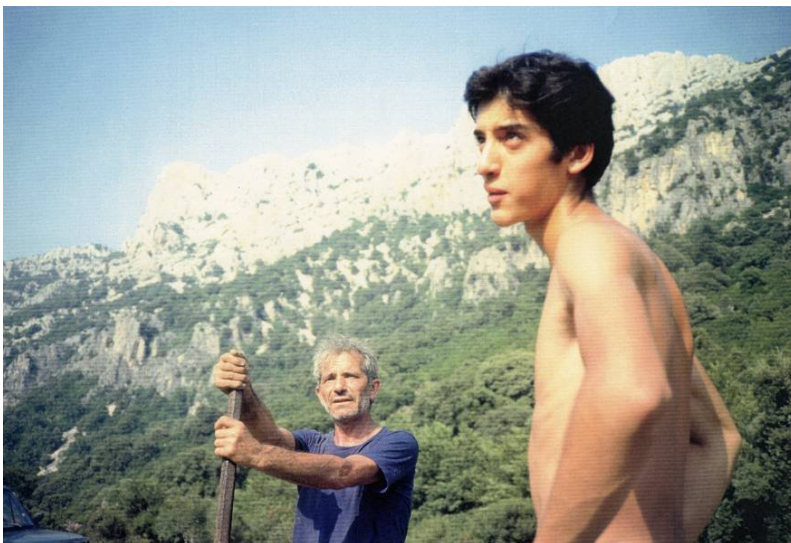

Figure 48. Franchiscu and Pietro Balisai Soddu during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

3.1 Body and Senses: Corporeal Images

It is thought by authors such as Schneider and Wright (2006: 13; quoted in Pink 2009: 135) that "sensual experiences involved in fieldwork normally disappear from anthropological writing." In *Tempus*, the dimensions of the local, the personal and the experiential are particularly prominent.

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[243] The film is the result of an "osservazione minuziosa che si traduce in personaggi forti, comunicativi, emblematici, capaci di raccontarsi ad un pubblico non necessariamente specialistico. Il fatto più sorprendente di *Tempus de Baristas*, insomma, è proprio questa umanizzazione del documentario etnografico" (Olla 2008: 332).
[244] Asch and Asch write that "film images are often thought of as reflections of physical reality: the image of a house, tree, or person, reflects its referent on a point-to-point basis" (2003: 337).

The film is structured according to a phenomenological approach informed by the developments of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. It emerges from the unfolding of a narrative whose rhythm resembles the sensory awareness of social experience.[245] As MacDougall claims, film creates "spaces analogous to those we experience in everyday life" (MacDougall 2006: 25). This suggestion may offer new understandings of the role of the body and the senses in ethnographic filmmaking, for corporeal images "are not just the images of other bodies; they are also images of the body behind the camera and its relations with the world" (MacDougall 2006: 3). Reading this statement by MacDougall evokes the importance of the use of audiovisual media in ethnographic research.[246] Significantly, as *Tempus* reveals, the experiences of the herders are shown corporeally, i.e. by linking the filmmaker's body to that of the subjects. The film bears the traces of MacDougall's body. For MacDougall "we see through our whole bodies, and any image we make carries the imprint of our bodies; that is to say of our being as well as the meanings we intend to convey" (MacDougall 2006: 3). This phrase, again, is suggestive of the attempts to combine cultural meanings and forms of metaphoric expression in a visual fashion that mirrors the complexity of embodied social experience. Critics frequently refer to this renewed interest in the multi-sensorial, embodied engagements of emplaced bodies as the "sensory turn" in the social sciences. MacDougall writes that the "senses and agency of the body should be taken as seriously as thought and symbolization, healing forever the old Cartesian rift between them." Anthropologists, he writes, "should extend their practices of analysis and cultural translation into the realm of bodily experience" (1998: 265). This discussion of the sensoriality of filmmaking also provides a route into a renewed interpretation of the senses as interconnected: the senses are inseparable from one another.[247] The development of visual methods to reveal a phenomenological reality that elicits embodied understandings is predicated upon the claim that film is not a disembodied product "about something." More generally, MacDougall understands the production of ethnographic knowledge in terms of "social aesthetics," namely the "creation of an aesthetic space or sensory structure"

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[245] MacDougall observes that the shared experience in the world from which anthropological knowledge is derived is "as much sensory as cognitive. Consciousness does not separate the experiencing of ideas and mental images from touch, vision, sound, and smell. Nor does it clearly separate the experiencing of others from the experiencing of self" (1998: 273).

[246] Asch and Asch write: "Discussion of ethnographic research film has usually focused on the product – either film for archive or film for commercial distribution – rather than emphasising the anthropological research process and the place film might have in such a process" (2003: 335).

[247] Specifically, in MacDougall's films, as in his writings, there is an interest in the notion of seeing as a form of touching. He writes that "although seeing and touching are not the same, they originate in the same body and their objects overlap", for "touch and vision do not become interchangeable but share an experiential field" (MacDougall 1998: 51). The relationship between touching and seeing is particularly relevant to filmic representation. The approach MacDougall fosters is one in which the visual is interconnected among other senses. He observes that "we may need a language closer to the multidimensionality of the subject itself" (MacDougall 2006: 116).

(MacDougall 2006: 105).[248] For although written anthropology often seeks the opposite of this, ethnographic films like *Tempus* re-present the tactile and physical qualities of the experiential domain of the subjects' life, achieving a heightened impression of presence (Wahlberg 2008: 10). The metaphorical forms and poetic devices used in *Tempus* reveal the sense of geography of the herders by disclosing the fleeting, ephemeral moments of their mobile interpersonal relationships. This is very important, because it is difficult to render the movements and material interactions of the herders in fine detail by means of a written monograph. One may say that filmmaking makes possible the representation of the multi-sensory relationships and interactions between knowing bodies. It functions as a source of knowledge and agency that confronts the inadequacy of written language not just in the representation of sensory experience, but also in researching it (Pink 2009). The use of visual media in recording somatic traces and actively participated experiences changing over time is, and should be, an important part of social research. An emplaced ethnography uses visual media to research the materiality of cultural environments, and to evoke the sensory perceptions of experiencing bodies. The involvement of the spectator, in turn, lies in the visual exposure to the space of the research, which seeks to lend the audiences a corporeal and psychological engagement.[249]

The innovative features of MacDougall's anthropology find full expression in the notion of situatedness. *Tempus* represents a new engagement with the question of the situatedness of "culture." The insights in the film are relevant to understanding relationships that exist in time and place, rather than in disembodied and anonymous social contexts. The film draws attention to important aspects of existences anchored in a visible space dominated by the sensory, embodied experiences of a group of herders. This is nicely put by MacDougall, when he writes that filmmaking "requires interactions of the body with the world in registering qualities of texture and shape, which do not exist independently of such encounters" (MacDougall 1998: 50). A highly specific context situates the spatial and temporal existence of objects and persons in their local, actual use.

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[248] The notion of social aesthetics as a "culturally patterned social experience" (MacDougall 1999: 5) echoes notions of anthropological knowledge centred on evocation (Tyler 1986), resonance (Wikan 1992) and the nonverbal (Stoller 1997). For MacDougall, the "aesthetic dimension of social experience remains a relatively undeveloped area in the human sciences. It is an area particularly open to investigation in the visual media" (2006: 59). The term "aesthetics" should not be "limited exclusively to beauty but should be seen as much broader field of sensory experience that runs through all our lives" (MacDougall and Grimshaw 2002: 97).

[249] Also the words on a page engage the reader's body, for the images of words that trigger one's thoughts when one scans a page are translated into physical behaviour. MacDougall mentions that throat surgery patients are forbidden to read because they tend to evoke absent sounds in the muscles (MacDougall 1994b: 265; Carpenter 1980: 74).

Figure 49. Miminu during the making of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

4 Sensory Ethnography as a Form of Self-Inscription

Tempus was not intended to be an autobiographical account and does not announce itself as such; however, the film can be interpreted as an implicit autobiography.[250] This section addresses a set of interrelated questions. What are the consequences of the substitution of the "eye" for the "I" in MacDougall's film? What can we observe and know about MacDougall's self through his film? And how does the film, as a form of cinematic life narrative, perform an autobiographical function? The section provides an analysis of the specificities of working with the medium of film in the attempt to show, rather than tell, something about oneself.

The unruly, undefined status of autobiography within literature has been recognised, and "any attempt to define the autobiographical project becomes even more misguided once autobiography is removed from its literary medium and is translated into film" (Elbaz 1988: 23, n38). Elisabeth Bruss claims that "there is no real cinematic equivalent for autobiography" (1980: 296).[251] This presumption is partly based on the insight that "the world seen cinematically" is "the world seen without a self" (McConnell 1975: 113). It is a position that favours the "peculiar fitness" of literary techniques for autobiographic expression over the medium of film. Bruss' critique of cinematic autobiography is based on a limited number of test cases, such as Truffaut's *The Four Hundred Blows* (1959) and Federico Fellini's *8 ½* (1963) (Renov 2004: 116), and excludes filmic autobiographies produced by single-person filmmakers. Many films allow almost no autobiography,

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[250] Brook writes: "autobiographical features of cinema can be divided into two types, implicit and explicit. Those films that announce themselves as autobiographical are explicit, and those which do not, but from which autobiographical material can nevertheless be gleaned, are implicit autobiographies" (2005: 29).

[251] See Lang (1982). Bruss also writes that film "appears to lack the same capacity for self-observation and self-analysis that we associate with language and literature" (1980: 298). The idea that the autobiographical act becomes extinct in the translation from text to the alternative mode of expression of film has been expressed also by Lejeune (1975; 1986).

and yet autobiographical documentary films do exist (Lane 2002).[252] Ethnographic film opens particular questions in the area of autobiography.[253] In contrasting these two modes, however, one should not overstate the similarities; while most autobiographies focus on the self, ethnographic film attempts to put the "other" at the centre. The difference between ethnographic film and autobiography is a matter of focus, which is in fact largely independent of the medium. The writer of autobiography and the ethnographic filmmaker that understands his/her subjects through an act of autobiographical recording do not achieve the same results: images and words structure the autobiographer's consciousness in different ways.[254] MacDougall touches directly on this subject when he explains:

> Although films may not construct narratives in the strict sense – that is, as storytelling – they do construct narratives of the eye. For films are not simply dramatizations of life; they preserve the traces of a process of seeing and showing. They guide the audience, but they also register (especially in "first-person" non-fiction films) the filmmaker's perception and physical presence (2006: 54).

Tempus' narrative is different from the retrospective prose of traditional autobiography because of its visual form, but it is also similar to it, not least because it is the inscription of the personal development of a real person by the person concerned.[255] *Tempus* appears as a progression of cinematic acts of life-writing that reflects the vicissitudes of narrative discourse. The result is a series of micro-narratives of the quotidian in which interpretation and presentation are always in tension. This struggle actively expresses the filmmaker's ethics and aesthetics, organised through the devices of skilled narration. It creates a cinematic frame allied to the realms of description and acute observation, but also to the spaces of the fictional and the interpretive. This is coherent with the idea that "autobiography is not just reconstruction of the past, but interpretation" (Pascal 1960: 19). In general, there's no dividing line between fiction and ethnographic film, which often includes fictional elements; similarly, autobiographies, even the most accurate ones, present themselves as

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[252] Film does offer an "inherent opportunity to explore new models of selfhood and autobiographical narrative" (Rugg 2006: viii). Autobiography is a "transmedial genre," and its translation from writing and printing to film is "less problematic than frequently suggested" (Gernalzick 2006: 3).

[253] Sardan suggests that autobiography and ethnographic cinema are based on similar pacts: the *autobiographical pact* (Lejeune 1975) is the promise made to the reader that "this is really an autobiography" and should be read as such, whereas the *realist pact* in ethnographic film is the tacit contract with which the director guarantees to the viewer that "the images which I show you are the products of reality and not the effects of a fiction" (1999: 15-16).

[254] In his book on autobiography, Elbaz writes: "With the transition from one medium to another, additional variables must be taken into consideration and new strategies of interpretation introduced" (1988: 23, n38).

[255] This observation reminds us of Lejeune's definition of autobiography as a "retrospective account in prose that a real person makes of his own existence stressing his individual life and especially the history of his personality" (Olney 1982: 18).

interpretive, rather than factual, self-accounts (Shapiro 1968: 421; Elbaz 1988: 6).[256] This point can be developed with reference to the "grammatical" perspective of the film. *Tempus* was shot with one camera used as an extension of the filmmaker's observations.[257] The choice of using one camera guarantees a measure of unity to MacDougall's subjectivity, and offers an example of how first-person narration can express itself cinematically. The most important elements of filmic autobiography are first-person filmic narrative and subjective camera (Gernalzick 2006: 3). This suggests that the translation of the autobiographical subjectivity in cinematic terms (*pace* Bruss) is not untenable.

4.1 The "Eye" and the "I"

MacDougall's body, as corporeal substance, is never actually seen, but this does not mean that it is not inscribed and included in the film. How can the film be autobiographical if the filmmaker seems to be physically displaced? In order for a film to be an autobiography, the filmmaker does not have to play an onscreen role, for the body behind the camera can reveal its presence in more subtle ways. The most compact development of this idea is in MacDougall's observation that the

> presence of the filmmaker is evident in the nuances of camera movement, in the framing, in what the filmmaker selects at any given moment, in the pace of the film, its themes and ideas, and how people behave before the camera. It lies in many things that the film-maker would often be unable to identify precisely (Barbash et al. 1996: 385).

The point is that the filmmaker's self is encoded in the materials of film in the form of a gaze physically inscribed in the "very *flesh* of the film" (Taylor 1998: 13).[258] *Tempus* is the result of a process through which the person behind the camera understands his own personal identity in a way that differs from the modernist texts of traditional autobiographies. MacDougall writes:

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[256] Elbaz writes that "autobiography can only be a fiction. Indeed, autobiography is fiction and fiction is autobiography: both are narrative arrangements of reality" (1988: 81). Because *Tempus* does not use actors, the film should be classed as a filmic autobiography rather than an autobiographical fiction film (Gernalzick 2006: 2).

[257] The film rejects the use of two or three cameras, which would perpetuate the style of the so-called "continuity cutting" in which "actions in fiction appear to be continuous because of the illusion created when the camera angle is changed or someone goes through a door out of sight only to reappear in another shot" (Young 2003: 106).

[258] MacDougall's film challenges the "eternal separation" between seer and seen in film observed by Bruss (1980: 308). The main difficulty in Bruss' argument is that it overemphasises a schism between the person filmed and the person filming. The latter is constructed as entirely hidden, whereas the former is defined as entirely visible (Bruss 1980: 297). This sharp distinction is highly problematic (Gabara 2005: 70), for the person behind the camera eye in *Tempus* is invisible but not entirely hidden.

It can be said that the filmmaker's body is inscribed in the camera's vision at the same corporeal level as the bodies of the film subjects themselves. Thus, while in a modernist text we have the transcription of an inner speaking voice, in film we have something ontologically different – direct evidence of the filmmaker's body behind the camera. In viewing a film, we respond in various ways to the bodies of the people we see on the screen, but we also respond to the filmmaker's body as we experience it through the decisions that guide the movements of the camera, how it frames events, and in matters of proximity and positioning in relation to the subjects (2006: 54).

It is interesting to view this aspect of filmmaking in terms of autobiography, for the film marks a departure from representations of the self that presuppose a stable subjectivity. It represents a form of exploration of the fragments of day-to-day life that constitute the dialectic of self and other and their reciprocal relations in space. This is nicely put by MacDougall, when he writes that the

ethnographic filmmaker involved in fieldwork is not conscious of possessing a single, continuous personal identity. Our sense of self is constantly ebbing and flowing – sometimes quite apart and autonomous, at other times merging with the experience of others. Filming can reflect this. I think it is often through physical objects and through our proximity to the physicality of others, that we have an intimation of a different sense of self. (Barbash et al. 1996: 378)

The position of MacDougall's self displays itself by means of shifts in his visual attention. The self of the author, as a way of seeing, is extended and generalised into the selves of the subjects being filmed.[259] When the filmmaker looks through the viewfinder, his concentration on the processes of filming the Sardinian herders and their personal reflections exceeds the bounds of his own subjectivity.[260] The sense of self that emerges in the process of filmmaking is in constant flux and emphasises inter-subjectivity as a key function of the self: "as MacDougall emphasizes, individual experience presupposes a plurality of subjectivities, in ourselves and others, and *these do not detract from our selfhood so much as they actively contribute to it*" (Taylor 1998: 13). The boundaries of the subjective depend on the physical existence of others within a shared field of consciousness in which self and other are mutually constitutive.[261] The self discussed here diverges

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[259] For MacDougall, we "assume that the things we see have the properties of being, but our grasp of this depends upon extending our own feeling of being into our seeing. In the process, something quintessential of what we are becomes generalised in the world" (2006: 1).

[260] Autobiography in documentary film can construct "subjectivity as a site of instability – flux, drift, perpetual revision – rather than coherence" (Renov 1989: 5).

[261] This is because film creates the possibility to "define and represent subjectivity not as singular or solipsistic but as multiple and as revealed in relationship (Egan 1994: 593). It offers an "I" that "does not exist in conventional ways but requires participation, imagination, and interrelatedness" (Codell 2006: 109).

from the Cartesian notion of the timeless, unitary self of traditional autobiographies (Gunn 1982a: 7; Gunn 1982b). MacDougall's self is a displayed self that abandons the privileged position of classical autobiographical theory, blurring the artificial dichotomies between the private and the public. All this suggests that film can be a form of exteriorisation of knowledge that does not alienate self from other (Barbash et al. 1996: 382). In MacDougall's films, as Taylor comments:

> Self and Other, fragmentary and partial as they are, are mutually constitutive, coexisting in a shared, if shifting, field of consciousness. Neither (*pace* Lacan) is the subject wholly split in itself, nor (*pace* Sartre) is there any complete rupture between Self and Other (1998: 13).

Filmmaker and subjects are inextricably bound to each other rather than being separate and autonomous entities.

In *Tempus* MacDougall explored his identity in temporal structures that differ from the writing of autobiographical memories. While filming, under the excitement of transforming the experienced world into images, the filmmaker has a sense of things happening on the spot and of living unique historical moments; there is no separation between past and present which are typically associated with autobiographical writing. The most interesting aspect of this is the synchrony between what the filmmaker records and what he is seeing. The film's temporality is the result of a direct transcription. Furthermore, unlike written autobiographies, film is not based on the linguistic transcription of recalled events: the camera is a tool of framing the present. In *Tempus* MacDougall and the herders exist in the *hic et nunc* – the here and now of a shared historical continuum. Whereas the writer of autobiography has always a retrospective attitude that looks back on his or her life events, the ethnographic filmmaker records the actual imprint of the subjects' lives as they unfold before the camera. The time of the subjects' experience and the time of cinema coincide with the filmmaker's time of living. The cinematic autobiographical act becomes a posterior intervention only in the process of editing.[262] In this process, the cinematic act of life writing, after its kinaesthetic inscription on film, provides a more reliable source of retrospective evidence than writing. The writer of an autobiography orders the past by relying on memory and is therefore more prone to distortion than the autobiographical filmmaker, for the latter can verify the aspects of the past by looking at the ethnographic footage.[263] This visual support allows MacDougall to view his own experiences as they were recorded at the time they took place.

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[262] Gusdorf writes that autobiography is a "second reading of experience, and is truer than the first because it adds to experience itself consciousness of it" (1980: 38).
[263] It is important to stress that writers of autobiographies rely on memory but also on more concrete evidence such as photos, diaries, letters and accounts by others.

Moreover, the autobiographer working with film engages with the production of an artefact in a way that differs from the fluidity of the processes of writing. Once the filmmaker "has returned home, the neglected or forgotten shot can never be realized, and the completed shots will always remain what they are; they can be altered and reflected upon but not remade" (Barbash et al. 1996: 374). The changes that occur in writing and the phase of production consisting in the editing of footage require different approaches and different methodologies.

Tempus represents a non-traditional mode of autobiographic practice, and its peculiarity lies in the fact that MacDougall's way of seeing becomes fully conscious only after the event of filming, in a process of reflection that resembles sensory memory.[264] This does not mean that he only becomes conscious of the process of filming after making the film, for this is only partly true. The filmmaker does realise many things later, but there is also a strong feeling of embodied connection when shooting an ethnographic film. In an email message to the author on April 19, 2011, MacDougall comments that this feeling of embodied connection is

> part of the pleasure – one might almost say, the bliss – of filming. I would compare it to the feelings
> musicians must have when playing an instrument, especially during improvisation, as in jazz; or the
> feelings of athletes when playing certain sports. It is also very much part of one's response to one's
> subjects – the joy of conveying them through one's own actions to the viewer.

Film carries the imprint of the filmmaker's self and its relationships with the complexities of an open interaction. This happens in many films, although perhaps chiefly in ones in which the filmmaker holds the camera. It is also perhaps most evident when the filmmaker works alone, as it is the case in the work of such filmmakers as Jean Rouch and Chris Marker, in whose films one can also sense an embodied gaze.[265] *Tempus* is the product of a solo camera operator; as such, it meets the criterion according to which "autobiography is predicated on sole authorship," (Bruss 1980: 304) and demonstrates that authored cinema *can* achieve "sole authorship." Also, the argument that the self cannot be adequately represented through the physical performance of an alter ego does not apply to *Tempus*, since the film rejects the presence of a surrogate self, or actor, mediating between "MacDougall the author" and "MacDougall the protagonist." The "productive mode of

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[264] Asch and Asch write: "What the camera describes is in large measure determined by the filmmaker – but not entirely. One can film things one did not intend to film, particularly when filming spontaneously occurring social interaction. Furthermore, the eye may be focussing on one aspect of an image, and not realize that other things are within the frame" (2003: 338).

[265] This point undermines Bruss' contention that the film medium for autobiography is less adequate than the literary one because films are the product of the collaboration of many individuals: cameramen, scriptwriters, sound technicians and so forth. In Bruss' words, "[w]here the rules of language designate a single source, film has instead a disparate group of distinct roles and separate stages of production." (1980: 304). This idea is not entirely satisfactory, since also the process of writing autobiographical texts involves editors, proofreaders, and so on. Indeed, the "image of literary production as an entirely solitary occupation needs some correction" (Barefoot 2006: 18).

independently produced autobiographical film and video works necessitates neither the delegation of subjectivity to actors nor authorial collaboration with producer, editor, or, for that matter, crew" (Renov 2004: 116). The camera eye indicates at the same time the filmmaker in the act of filming and designates the subject of the vision that is presented, contradicting the claim that the "unity of subjectivity and subject matter – the implied identity of author, narrator and protagonist on which classical autobiography depends – seems to be shattered by film" (Bruss 1980: 297).

The opportunity for filmmakers to work as solo camera operators has been greatly increased with the video revolution in the late 1980s. The new film technology allows combining in the same person the roles of producer, assistant producer and the talent, i.e. the person who does the speaking in the film. In the early days working alone was less possible, and the filmmaker was often a member of a larger team. Perhaps the most significant change that came with video is that it makes the camera operator independent of the sound recordist. The cameraperson has become a solo camera operator, and it "seems unlikely that it will ever again become the general practice in ethnographic filmmaking that there should be an independent sound recordist" (Henley 2007: 57).[266] However, it is misleading to suggest that the solo camera operator can easily make films with good sound. Good synchronous sound remains very difficult, and it is the weakest part of most video productions made by one person. It requires the use of very high quality microphones and closeness to the subjects.

One-person filmmaking has "brought the ethnographic filmmaker's situation closer to that of the classical anthropological fieldworker, engaged in participant observation" (MacDougall 2001b: 16). Some filmmakers working alone spend some time with the people they have decided to film; however, many documentarians still direct people to perform certain actions for the camera. Best practice is not necessarily the widespread practice, and most documentary today is still largely based on the journalistic device of interviews because it is much easier than actually following the spontaneous events in people's lives.[267] The general point is that many of the skills involved in ethnographic films made in the observational manner are the same as those needed by ethnographic fieldwork researchers.[268] For this reason, knowing the production history in the analysis of ethnographic and documentary films is as important as examining what is happening on the screen.

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[266] Whereas in the past the dual collaboration and coordination between camera operator and sound recordist, the cine eye-ear team (Rouch 2003a), was a requirement, today the sound-man has become a superfluous component of the craft of ethnographic filmmaking.

[267] In an email message to the author on June 22, 2011, David MacDougall commented: "It is worth noting too that in a sense the use of interviews has become a replacement for the use of voice-over commentary. All the filmmaker has to do is string together people saying what he would otherwise have said as an illustrated lecture. Thus the reliance on words in commentary is still there in films based heavily on interviewing the subjects, and this is still the dominant form of documentary (and television journalism) today."

[268] McCarty writes that ethnographic filmmakers "must deal with the same problems that face the conventional ethnographer" (2003: 70).

Related to the question of autobiography is the issue of authorship. In this respect, it is essential to bear in mind the distinction between evidence of a personal style and autobiography. Many films express the filmmaker's authorship because a personal style is evident, but this does not mean that the films are autobiographical. It would seem that the point at which a film becomes autobiographical rather than merely revealing authorship is in the identification of the filmmaker as a subject or "character" in the film. The expression of a personal vision in cinematic practice has been addressed in debates on auteurism since the 1950s (Braudy and Cohen 2009). Despite the proclamation of the author's death, "filmmakers and filmgoers persist in discussing films in terms of their authors" (Rugg 2006: viii). MacDougall's function as an author in his films cannot be expelled altogether: the person filming matters and claims the status of authorial voice. This has to do with the role of the body behind the camera. Instead of defining the autobiographer in abstract terms (Man 1984; cited in Brook 2010: 27), it is important to observe that there is a "certain link – however hard it might be to pinpoint and define – between the body of the director and the body of his films" (Brook 2010: 27). Following Sturrock (1993), Brook writes:

> Although postmodern theories of the author dismiss the real person, rendering him or her absent or abstract, they overestimate the fact that the author of the work has not only a set of culturally determined experiences but also a body, and that this body, along with its experiences, is reflected in the work (2010: 27).

The author is not a creation that allows the reader to extract meaning from a text. MacDougall's film reflects the concreteness of the filmmaker's physical and material presence. In *Tempus*, MacDougall's corporeal modes of expression in the world are objectified in a way that points to MacDougall's extra-filmic relationships with the Sardinian shepherds. The images of the pro-filmic reality are thus linked to the body and autobiographical life of the filmmaker.

4.2 Speech and Existence

MacDougall is the advocate of a phenomenological approach to cinema, based on the relationships between his experience of life and his experience of images in film. This approach is especially relevant in conveying an autobiographical impulse. As Gunn writes

> The autobiographical impulse exhibits the most basic level at which we live as human agents, in a certain situation and always in relation to certain assumed meanings which we know as culture. As a

dimension of depth or latency, this level has been addressed in a variety of ways by those whose interests, broadly speaking, are phenomenological (1982a: 13).

Because of its phenomenological sensibility, *Tempus* restores "culture" to the category of life; its phenomenological significance lies in the fact that it transposes the modes of perception that exist in time and place during the experience of fieldwork before they are subsequently lost in the abstractions of writing up (MacDougall 2006: 5; MacDougall 1998: 62). *Tempus*, to borrow Gunn's expression, allows the "reinstatement of autobiography to the country of vital experience" (1982a: 12), just as in the anthropological realm it makes explicit the level of the "more intimate structure of culture" (Sapir 1949: 594). It provides a more inclusive context for autobiography and in stresses what Gunn calls the "*first* questions of autobiography, which are questions of an anthropological, not literary nature" (1982a: 11, n16). *Tempus* reminds the viewer that the autobiographical situation concerns itself with the human and cultural dimensions of the lived world. The Sardinian herders recognise that the camera is "there," recording an alien environment in a deeply personal way. The agency of the camera is acknowledged, and yet the camera is capable of concentrating on extraordinary moments of unselfconsciousness and revelation in the herders' lives. Scenes and sequences do not privilege knowledge conveyed in propositional statements over the phenomenological incompleteness and irresolution of human existence. The stylistic register preserves the complexity of experience rather than providing a definitive portrait of the Sardinian subjects. MacDougall's camera can be seen as a receptive tool, an organ of reaction to being in its entirety. As Simmel's philosopher, it sets itself to explore "nothing less than the totality of being" (Frisby 2002: 96). It seems to me the case that what marks unequivocally the distinction between written autobiography and MacDougall's autobiographical enterprise in *Tempus* is the way in which the latter evokes existence. It is important to recognise that the "I" behind the camera is always understood in terms of relational experience. There is no account of MacDougall's self that is independent from, or devoid of, the experiential components of his own existence. The canvas of MacDougall's experience is neither shielded nor sealed off from the multidimensionality of the herders' contingent world and lived experiences. If one attempts to define MacDougall's self as a way of looking – as that which becomes generalised in the film – one immediately has an intimation of relational experience, a suggestion of simultaneous cohabitation in which the self of the filmmaker cannot be separated from his own being and from his relationships of mutual affection with the subjects.

Unlike writing, filming creates a relational account of experiences and attitudes in a way that, more often than not, is not spoken by the filmmaker through language; in *Tempus* the filmmaker evokes the way in which the subjects stand in existence without communicating in the form of

linguistic speech acts. Instead, he uses the medium of film to "speak" through acts of experience that are, simultaneously, acts of his being that transcend knowledge defined in terms of meaning. When it does not bring itself to language, MacDougall's self inhabits unstated dimensions of lived experience, the tacit and ambiguous multidimensionality of the more-than-we-can-say of what we know (Polany 1966). This recreation of a realm of existence is inherently relational, and difficult to convey through written communication. In a sense, film is a means through which the filmmaker "speaks" with his whole being, a device to offer his existence and experience as a perceiver in the world. This kind of "speech" transcends language, affirming the realm of existence as such. It is an affirmation grounded in a process of becoming that explores the conditions for the possibility of speech before it emerges from the matrix of life. It is also ineffable, because it is part of epistemological investigations and connections in the world that breathe beneath the level of speech. Many of the lived and ambiguous aspects that constitute the depth of the *bios* of autobiography, in fact, are not within reach of language. Thus the problem of film autobiography is not that cinematic autobiography fails because the "powers of the perceiving subject are fewer and weaker than those of the speaking subject" (Bruss 1980: 307). It may be more correct to observe that the perceiving subject, because of the engagement with the formal possibilities offered by film, develops different powers related to different media and different organising assumptions. The passage from one medium to another does not result in a loss, but in the exploration of distinctive and alternative ways of organising experience. The methodological process through which *Tempus* arrives at the manifestation of MacDougall's existence is not irrespective of perceptual variations and differences in the things that we observe in daily life. The particular brand of epistemology expressed in the film does not rest on abstract foundational claims; rather, it trusts the senses and the body in the exploration of the multidimensionality of lived experience. It uses film as a tool to access the relationships between the perceiver and that which is perceived (patterns of colour and shapes, sounds and voices, postures and gestures, faces and thoughtful expressions) by means of a process of contemplation and interaction that "speaks" in the mode of the filmmaker's existence. *Tempus* manifests the hermeneutic universe of the filmmaker's existence in a way that does not reduce the properties of the world to generalisations. The way in which MacDougall exists in the film preserves much of the unintelligibility and ambiguousness of what he sees in the external world. At the same time, sensations, visual and aural details, objects and the images that are generated from the properties of those objects are recorded in a manner which is subjective and relative to the filmmaker. By looking at the shepherds and the environment around them one has an indication of MacDougall's position and sense of himself as a perceiver in the world. In being presented with the shepherds one recognises in them part of MacDougall's inner self. One can attain

a glimpse into what the filmmaker internally is by looking at the things and persons that are present to him. This is possible because the filmed world of *Tempus* is, in a loose sense, an external manifestation of MacDougall's existence – of what is externally him. The social behaviours and concatenations of bodies and objects that one sees in the film permit themselves to be experienced because they have been perceived by the filmmaker; and, as such, they are instantiations of the filmmaker's being and its connection with the world. The viewer's perception of them evolves with changes in MacDougall's perceptions and, most crucially, with changes in their significance for him. This is congruous with the idea that *Tempus* does not entertain the notion of disembodied consciousness, and with an interpretation of the film as autobiographic. What defines MacDougall's autobiographical consciousness in the film is the necessarily relational dialectic of friendship with the Sardinian herders, and a desire to make this mutual relationship into a work of art.
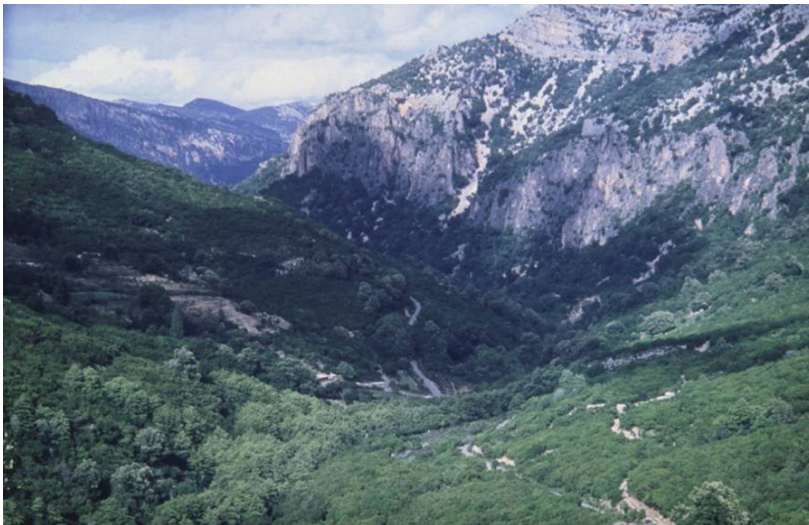

Figure 50. Codula landscape during the making of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.

5 Silence and Beyond: Emotions and Transcendence

It is in the very nature of MacDougall's work to invite sympathy and admiration for the Sardinian rural subjects. *Tempus* suggests a desire to evoke feelings of intimacy that allow the viewer to get emotionally close to the subjects. This sense of acquaintanceship and communion is built through affectionate evocations which tend to create empathy in the audience, especially feelings of respect. Most notably, the texture of the film, by its very nature, attempts to develop an almost wordless intimacy that leads the spectator to feelings of commonality with the value-rich emotions activated in a real encounter (Figus 1995: 31). A kind of empathetic framing creates strong associations and

connections, filtered by the filmmaker's point of view. Central to this sense of virtual intimacy developed by means of a visual methodology is the power of video recordings in reaffirming the centrality of the body as a site for the expression of deep emotions. *Tempus* succeeds in providing a tactile tour of characteristic moments in the life of the Sardinian herders. In achieving this, it reduces an element of bias that would otherwise distort the viewers' perception or, perhaps, lead their attention towards matters that are not salient in the herders' lives. In this regard, *Tempus* opens a communication channel whose conceptual space is given to the subjects. Portraits of the inner life of the subjects, which are clearly conceived as part of the film's texture, are conveyed in a variety of ways. As an example of the verbal reflections of the subjects, it is worth giving a sense of Miminu's voice:

> Conviene vendere tutto e cercare un altro lavoro. Nel mondo attuale… nulla va in nostro favore. Questo è tempo di baristi e ristoranti... sulla spiaggia. A parte il lavoro, qui non abbiamo niente. Ti piacerebbe fare il pastore? Ne dubito. Se Pietro lascia Franchiscu, non so cosa può succedere.

In this scene Miminu's speech verges on private monologue – almost a confession of his inner self. The camera is very near to him: Miminu is a man who is very self-conscious of his own subjectivity. In this long scene the viewer sees a flesh-and-blood man speaking for himself. His private and biographical voice, the voice of day-to-day existence, is a concrete commixture of silent pauses and Sardinian dialect. One learns what matters to him, what he believes, and his preoccupations about the shepherd's fragile grip on an economically unrewarding job out of step with the times.[269] It is significant that the title of the film is metonymically taken from the passage in which Miminu reflects on the condition of the herder in the contemporary world: we live in the *Time of the Barmen* in restaurants and beach resorts (a Sardinian viewer may think that Miminu is implicitly referring to the beach resorts of Costa Smeralda in northern Sardinia).

In *Tempus* there is "an explicit concern with experience, embodiment, subjectivity, intuition, "the quick" – indeed with the transcendent" (Grimshaw 2001: 145). The film often verges, or appears to verge, on the representation of the transcendence of everyday life. This results partly from the contemplation of nature and the beauty of the everyday shown through silent watching. The vision which animates the film opens a space that encourages the audience to focus attention on images, nonverbal sounds, and the persistence of the visual frame. These, in turn, can be seen as vehicles for the expression of truths that transcend the immediate moment or situation and more

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[269] In this respect, *Tempus* is an "indispensable complement to the story of global economics and its radical transformation of the market in Sardinian goat cheese" (Nichols 1997: 812). The herders in the film inform the viewer that they "work very hard – around the clock and every day through the year – and gain little income, for they cannot sell their cheese and surplus meat, or at least they cannot get a price that gives them a profit" (Salzman 1999: 631).

general truths about the human condition.[270] *Tempus* does not present a realistic vision of everyday life, but rather opens up the everyday to provide a space for the disclosure of knowledge that is located beyond the limits of written anthropology. Therefore the use of images in *Tempus* does not exclude the metaphysical; rather, it permits the revelation of the transcendent by recreating the ineffable textures of actual life. The emphasis on the "imponderabilia" of social behaviour and on the intangibles of everyday life is bound by codes of reticence, reserve, and forms of wonder. In this way, images become the bearers of knowledge unexpressed in academic writing. Not only have images been used to allow background details step forward, visually and aurally, but they also evoke the metaphysical, namely a kind of knowledge which depends upon an intuitive grasp.

Tempus is a film that offers an inspiring model that challenges the adequacy of established methods and genres of ethnographic representation. It is characterised by an emphasis on the deep bonds between the herders and the Sardinian landscape. The hesitation and reticence in *Tempus*, often associated with silence, invite the spectator to find the unsaid in the scenes. The film suggests a natural link between the gentleness and innocence of the Sardinian herders on the one hand, and the unsaid and the inexpressible on the other. Thus *Tempus* implicitly posits that images possess transcendent qualities that express a kind of knowledge that lies beyond language. The nonverbal elements and the visual imagery suggest obliquely that a kind of knowledge expressed in the concrete case requires an acknowledgement of domains of experience that often elude written expression.

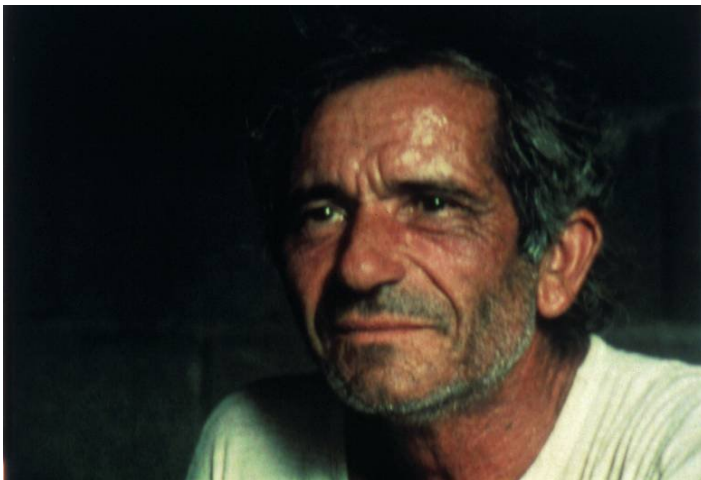**Figure 51. Franchiscu Balisai Soddu during the filming of *Tempus de Baristas*. Credit: David MacDougall.**

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[270] To speak of video as a sensory research method that expresses a knowledge which might be neither visual nor verbal is to speak of a visual method providing a vocabulary for the unspeakable. As MacDougall explains, "showing becomes a way of saying the unsayable" (MacDougall 2006: 5).

Conclusion

MacDougall is the major figure among ethnographic filmmakers who have filmed in Sardinia. His films are the outcome of the fusion of the roles of anthropologist and filmmaker.[271] The fusion of these roles results in the emergence of a kind of filmmaking that contrasts with the hierarchical collaborations between anthropologists and film technicians. *Tempus* marks the moment in which visual anthropology in Sardinia can properly take place as cinema. The film is a synthesis of humanistic poetry and cinematic sensibility that combines "pratica di scrittura audiovisuale come atto di creazione autoriale e rigore scientifico" (Pinna 2010: 117). For MacDougall, ethnographic cinema might properly take place as a creative combination of aesthetic values and social significance; his work reveals a continuous effort to raise ethnographic cinema from a subfield position – the poor cousin of mainstream anthropology – to the status of cinematographic work. The film challenges the tense separation between anthropological films with no commentary at all, whose content is often selected on aesthetic grounds, and films that reveal their relationship with anthropology because their content is shaped by mainstream methodological preoccupations. The filmic result is a highly structured instance of formal beauty and anthropological interest, put together artistically. One might ask, somewhat rhetorically: "is that ethnography? Yes, by all means" (Marazzi 1994: 88).

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[271] Like Rouch, MacDougall is an anthropologist filmmaker. Mead writes that the best work in visual anthropology is "done when filmmaker and ethnographer are combined in the same person" (2003: 7).

CONCLUSION

As stated in the Introduction, Italian language studies of Sardinian ethnographic/documentary films appear to be limited, and there are no substantial studies of Sardinian anthropological cinema in the international literature. Given this paucity of academic material on the topic, and the unrecognised status of the relationships between anthropology and cinema within film studies, this project has attempted to fill a gap in scholarship, with the aim of establishing a theoretically more refined understanding of visual anthropology and documentary film in Sardinia.

This thesis provides the first academic introduction to the development of documentary and ethnographic cinema in Sardinia. The tendency to present the evolution of ethnographic/documentary film in Sardinia in a triumphalist and simplistic way has been avoided by focusing on the analysis of key films, despite the loss of epistemological naiveté of earlier approaches, the change in subject matter, and the technological innovations that have occurred in the last thirty years. This is not to suggest that most documentary films in Sardinia fit the mould of ethnographic filmmaking or follow the strategies of the observational approach. Many documentaries do continue to use voice-over commentary, as is the case in a number of strikingly unoriginal clips that try to sell Sardinia as a place of touristic interest.[272] However, over the decades it is possible to identify a change in the way documentary films provide a contribution to ethnographic documentation, addressing the individual rather than the group in their engagement with Sardinian culture. Past approaches tended to favour the model of the heavily scripted documentary, and this explains a certain sameness and predictability about many Sardinian films. In the last three decades, a fertile period of innovations, documentary and ethnographic films have progressively taken the form of a predominantly empirical practice in which the relationship between film and narrative is almost a natural one. The embrace of visual narrative marks a self-consciously authored collaboration between individual filmmaker and Sardinian subjects. The departure from explanatory voice-overs and written narratives has created a different form of engagement with social experience. The viewers are expected to fill the space of the film with their own understandings and judgements – as often happens in everyday life. Evidence is presented in the form of narration without a soundtrack telling them how to interpret the film, i.e. what to think about it. The reluctance to use voice-over commentary is also one of the ways of respecting the continuity and ambiguity of the connection between the Sardinian subjects and their experiential world. In the more recent Sardinian documentary films the subjects know that they are being filmed

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[272] See Carta's (2010a) review of *Sardegna Isola dei Tesori* (2006).

without being directed as they get on with their lives. Because they are not told what to say, they engage in open-ended interactions that create a sense of being in the midst of a complex web of ongoing relationships. In a planned film, this is rarely the case. This approach is coherent with postmodern anthropological trends and visual epistemologies that allow forms of evidence based on careful observation (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009).[273] A change of depth in subject matter – a change of mindset and theoretical sensitivity – is revealed in the fact that new ethnographic/documentary films have abandoned an approach in which the human presence is merely ornamental. Observational ethnographic films in Sardinia show that film can make anthropological ideas manifest in the constant reformulation of practice, adding to observation and to the kind of speculation that leads to further discoveries. They offer a renewed space of engagement to experiment with new anthropological techniques, and with the ambitions of visual anthropology.

Contemporary academic practices are less hostile to the anthropological import of film as a medium in social research, despite the traditional suspicion of non-visual anthropologists towards film as an epistemological instrument and the ways in which film projects can contribute to social science discourses (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009: 77; Piault 2007c: 16; Griffiths 2002: 316). The central theme of this thesis, as illustrated in previous chapters, has been to explore the terrain of ethnographic/documentary film in a critical way, and to advocate a more collaborative relationship between ethnographic film and mainstream academic prose in the social sciences. In general, there is a danger that film is treated as a mere subsidiary of written forms of ethnography. The exclusive dependence on words may overlook what MacDougall calls the "potential incommensurability of sensory experience and anthropological writing" (MacDougall 2006: 60). In fact, there are contradictions and fundamental "discontinuities between what one can do in writing and in film or video" (Barbash et al. 1996: 374). This study suggests that scholars should look for a more balanced fusion between film as a multisensory medium and forms of ethnographic enquiry conducted through language. They should seek to open new avenues to give expression to anthropological understanding by turning to the "visual, auditory and textual modes of expression found in film" (MacDougall 2006: 60).[274] The passage from conventional literary forms to an image-and-sequence approach represents a potentially subversive perspective. It means "conceiving of an image-and-sequence-based anthropological thought as distinct from a word-and-sentence-based anthropological thought" (MacDougall 1998: 63). An image-centred approach is a bold attempt to

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[273] Recent advances in methods of approach to human experience suggest a fundamental correspondence between anthropology and filmmaking, for epistemological shifts in anthropology correspond to shifts in ethnographic filmmaking (MacDougall 1994a: 27; Grimshaw 2002: 82; Henley 2000: 209).

[274] In this context the expression "anthropological understanding" in lieu of "anthropological knowledge" seems more appropriate; from a hermeneutic perspective, one "could say that film tends to communicate an understanding, whereas the written text procures some sort of explanation" (Crawford 1992: 70).

draw attention to the material quality of images, but also a challenge to a discipline driven by words. Following Kuhn (1962), MacDougall (2006) suggests that the visual is contained by current disciplinary paradigms oriented towards the discursive. These paradigms are consistent with Kuhn's definition of "normal science," which "does not easily open itself to elements that interrupt its discourse" (MacDougall 1998: 64).[275] MacDougall's central claim is that film as a medium challenges anthropological modes of knowing because filmic representations deal with lived experiences and subjectivity in ways that are sometimes unavailable in text. Film, he suggests, is a sensory medium in a way that text is not. The argument seems to be largely mounted against anthropologists' prejudices about visual anthropology, in particular their tendency to see the visual as merely supplementary, i.e. as an aid (to research, teaching, communication) but never on par with text. This does not mean that film will replace the analytical work of anthropological texts. Filmic and written ethnographic accounts can be used in conjunction with each other. The shift from written to visual in anthropology, however, marks out new conceptual possibilities, which can be characterised as a potential threat to traditional disciplinary assumptions: Can all knowledge be represented by and conveyed through words? In what sense does the knowledge produced through writing differ from the evocative and emotional power of imagery? Can image-making be a method of disclosure of cultural knowledge rather than a set of technical skills subordinated to academic discourses? These questions are somewhat rhetorical but they raise several important issues, such as the problem of the integration of a visual perspective into ethnographic enquiry. Among the most notable of these issues is the idea that the exploratory function of image-making can be invoked to question writing as a method of cultural inquiry. If one follows this train of thought, one cannot escape an acknowledgment that seeing is a form of knowledge but also more specifically that images are in themselves important bearers of knowledge. This begs the question as to the differences between the knowledge produced through scholarly communication and the knowledge produced through visual media. This question draws attention to the specificities of working with visual media, and to the tensions between these specificities and the knowledge produced through the keyhole of the written word.

In ethnographic films one has "words, plus intonations, plus pauses, plus facial expressions, and even a suggestion of the elusive quality of the relationship between anthropologists and informants, matters which an anthropologist alone might have difficulty writing about" (Loizos

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[275] The problem of the foundation of new paradigms in anthropology has been discussed within visual anthropology since the 1970s. In a paper of 1982, Ruby refers to Kuhn's recognition that "scientific knowledge is the product of a particular paradigm, and that science changes through the process of discovery of the inadequacy of the old paradigm and the subsequent construction of a new one" (1982: 126).

1992: 60-1).[276] Filmmaking is therefore especially useful in socio-anthropological research, for at least three reasons. Firstly, it allows the recording of the micro-details of a society and the many things that happen too fast (i.e. in the study of rituals and dancing), but it also suspends time, allowing the researcher to see in a different way. Film can be used by anthropologists as a "note-taking tool for events which are too complex, too rapid, or too small to be grasped with the naked eye or recorded in writing" (Brigard 2003: 31).[277] Another important difference between observational films and traditional note-taking is methodological: the difference between observational films and "simple note-taking is that the final film CAN represent the original event or situation directly" (Young 2003: 101). Because of its mechanical reproducibility, film can be shown and watched a number of times; it can be speeded up at will, or even stopped and analysed frame by frame. More radically, it helps anthropologists see the society itself from a visual angle, that is, from a different angle that frames and magnifies what often has not great significance when simply seen with human eyes.

Secondly, the great potential of film for anthropology consists in its ability to take the spectator through the fieldwork endeavour and its methods. Film contributes to anthropology because it can improve "descriptive ethnographies, by increasing the quality and quantity of basic observations" (Hockings 2003: 514). The experience of the subjects can be represented with respect for the "distinctive spatial and temporal configurations" of their world (MacDougall 1998: 156). Ethnographic film produces fine-grained accounts that correspond to the "thick descriptions" to which postmodern ethnographers aspire (Geertz 1973; Marshall 1993: 107-9; Loizos 1992: 60). Film can be used to explain students what anthropological fieldwork involves, namely what an anthropologist actually does when he applies field methods, how to live in difficult circumstances and so forth. A monograph may give some sense of this, but watching a video seems more complete than reading a book.

Thirdly, ethnographic films have an immense archival value for posterity (Hockings 2003: 508), since they are an attempt to preserve something tangible, in the form of visual record, from a culture that is being radically transformed and changed by larger economic processes. The value of making films for archival purposes is relevant to anthropology, since one of the aims of the discipline has always been the rescue and the preservation of vanishing cultures (McCarthy 2003:

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[276] Hockings writes that filming creates a "reality in which movement, color, and sound come together in a two-dimensional moving image which has the special characteristic of lasting for the duration of the original action at the time it was recorded. Neither museums nor photographs can give a researcher those kinds of data" (2003: 512).

[277] Hockings observes that the "eye and the notebook of most anthropologists (even reputedly great note-takers like Mead and Boas) would combine only to give us a sketchy and incomplete account of what went on, whereas the cameraman would record more impartially and fully whatever he could see" (2003: 525).

70).[278] Lajoux explains that "due to the permanence of data recorded on film which can be repeated at leisure at any time, all filmed ethnographic documents will become in time documents of incomparable value for history" (2003: 166). Therefore, as Lajoux would put it, in the Sardinian context "filmed documents will remain to serve history" (2003: 163).

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[278] Brigard writes that film can be used by anthropologists as a "means of salvaging data for future generations of researchers, either because the behaviour is about to disappear, or because the theoretical equipment to deal with it does not yet exist; and for comparisons" (2003: 31).

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APPENDIX 1

This appendix provides a list of ethnographic film festivals, documentary film festivals, Visual Anthropology institutions and universities offering programmes in Visual Anthropology.

Ethnographic Film Festivals

- Festival International Jean Rouch – Bilan du Film Ethnographique (France).
- RAI International Festival of Ethnographic Film – Royal Anthropological Institute (Great Britain).
- Cinéma du Réel – Festival International De Films Documentaires (France).
- Margaret Mead Film &Video Festival (USA).
- The Robert Flaherty Film Seminar (USA).
- Göttingen International Ethnographic Film Festival (Germany).
- Freiburger Film Forum (Germany).
- NAFA – Nordic Anthropological Film Festival (Nordic Countries).
- ASTRA Film Festival – Sibiu International Festival for Documentary Film (Romania).
- SIEFF – Sardinian International Ethnographic Film Festival (Italy).
- Festival dei Popoli (Italy).
- Festival of Visual Anthropology ASPEKTY (Poland).
- Beeld voor Beeld Festival for Visual Anthropology (The Netherlands).
- Moscow International Visual Anthropology Festival (Russia).
- International Festival of Ethnological Film (Serbia).
- ETHNOCINECA Ethnographic and Documentary Filmfest (Austria).
- International Festival of Visual Culture (Finland).
- Tartu Festival of Visual Culture (Estonia).
- Pärnu International Documentary and Anthropology Festival (Estonia).
- Dialektus (Hungary).
- Days of Ethnographic film in Slovenia (Slovenia).
- FIFEQ – Festival International du Film Ethnographique du Québec (Canada).
- PRÊMIO PIERRE VERGER JUNHO (Brasil).
- I FESTIVAL DO FILME ETNOGRÁFICO DO RECIFE (Brasil).

- MOSTRA AMAZÔNICA DO FILME ETNIGRÁFICO (Brasil).

- Mostra Internacional do Filme Etnográfico (Brasil).

- Belo Horizonte Documentary and Ethnographic Film Festival (Brasil).

- European Documentary and Anthropological Film Festival (Hungary).

- Flahertiana International Documentary Film Festival (Russia).

- Moscow International Visual Anthropology Festival (Russia).

- TIEFF – Taiwan International Ethnographic Film Festival (Taiwan).

- DOC'S KINGDOM – International Seminar on Documentary Film (Portugal).

- MAV – Materiali di Antropologia Visiva. Museo Nazionale di Arti e Tradizioni popolari (Italy).

Documentary Film Festivals

The list includes purely documentary film festivals and festivals that show both documentary and fiction films.

- Tirana International Film Festival (Albania).

- European Media Art Festival (Germany).

- International Film Festival Berlin (Germany).

- International Human Rights Film Festival (Germany).

- International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animation Film (Germany).

- International Documentary Film Festival Munich (Germany).

- International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg (Germany).

- Kasseler Dokumentarfilm und VideoFest (Germany).

- Oberhausen Short Film Festival (Germany).

- Australia International Documentary Conference (Australia).

- Melbourne International Film Festival (Australia).

- Sydney Film Festival (Australia).

- Cape Town World Cinema Festival (South Africa).

- Encounters - South African International Documentary Festival (South Africa).

- Diagonale (Austria).

- Vienna International Film Festival (Austria).

- Docville (Belgium).

- Festival International du Film Indépendant (Belgium).

- Filmer a Tout Prix (Belgium).

- Sarajevo International Film Festival (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

- É Tudo Verdade (Brasil).

- CINEDOCUMENTA - Mostra de Cinema Documentário de Ipatinga (Brasil).

- IN-EDIT Festival Internacional do Documentário Musical (Brasil).

- RECINE - Festival Internacional de Cinema de Arquivo (Brasil).

- FESTIVAL LATINO AMERICANO DE CURTA METRAGEM DE CANOA (Brasil).

- QUEBRADA (Brasil).

- FESTNATAL OUTUBRO (Brasil).

- Sofia International Film Festival (Bulgaria).

- Banff Television Festival (Canada).

- Hot Docs - Canadian International Documentary Festival (Canada).

- Rencontres Internationales du Documentaire de Montréal (Canada).

- Toronto International Film Festival (Canada).

- United Nations Association Film Festival (Canada).

- Vancouver International Film Festival (Canada).

- Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival (China).

- Hong Kong International Film Festival (China).

- International Documentary Film Encounter (Colombia).

- Pusan International Film Festival (South Korea).

- Human Rights Film Festival Zagreb (Croatia).

- ZagrebDox International Documentary Film Festival (Croatia).

- Havana Film Festival (Cuba).

- Aarhus Film Festival (Denmark).

- Cph:Dox (Denmark).

- NatFilmFestival (Denmark).

- Odense Film Festival (Denmark).

- Edinburgh International Film Festival (UK).

- LIDF – London International Documentary Festival (UK).

- YAMAGATA – International Documentary Film Festival (Japan).

- EkotopFilm (Slovakia).

- Alternativa - International Independent Film Festival of Barcelona (Spain).

- Bilbao International Festival of Documentary and Short Films (Spain).

- Cinema Jove Valencia (Spain).

- Docsbarcelona (Spain).

- Documenta Madrid (Spain).

- Docupolis - Festival Internacional Documental de Barcelona (Spain).

- Donostia: San Sebastian International Film Festival (Spain).

- Extrema´doc -Festival de Cine Documental de Extremadura (Spain).

- Festival de Málaga (Spain).

- Festival de Sevilla (Spain).

- Huesca Film Festival (Spain).

- Play-Doc, Tui International Documentary Festival (Spain).

- Punto de Vista Documentary Film Festival (Spain).

- Semana Internacional de Cine de Valladolid (Spain).

- AFI Fest (USA).

- Aspen Shortfest (USA).

- Atlanta Film Festival (USA).

- Carolina Film & Video Festival (USA).

- Full Frame Documentary Film Festival (USA).

- Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival (USA).

- Iowa City International Documentary Festival (USA).

- Los Angeles Film Festival (USA).

- Louis Vuitton Hawaii International Film Festival (USA).

- Ojai Film festival (USA).

- San Francisco International Film Festival (USA).

- Silverdocs (USA).

- South by Southwest Film Festival (USA).

- Sundance Film Festival (USA).

- Telluride Film Festival (USA).

- Tiburon International Film festival (USA).

- Tribeca Film Festival (USA).

- United Nations Association Film Festival (USA).

- Nordisk Panorama Film Festival (Finland).

- Tampere International Short Film Festival (Finland).

- Entre Vues - Belfort International Film Festival (France).

- Festival International de Films de Femmes (France).

- Festival International du Cinéma Méditerranéen de Montpellier (France).

- FIPA (France).

- International Documentary Festival of Marseille (France).

- Les Etats Généraux du Film Documentaire (France).

- International Thessaloniki Film Festival (Greece).

- Amnesty International Film Festival (Netherlands).

- IDFA - International Filmfestival Amsterdam (Netherlands).

- Impakt Festival for Audiovisual Arts (Netherlands).

- International Film Festival Rotterdam (Netherlands).

- International Film Festival of Fine Arts (Hungary).

- International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival (Hungary).

- Birds Eye View (UK).

- Britdoc Festival (UK).

- Filmstock (UK).

- Oxdox International Film Festival (UK).

- Sheffield International Film Festival (UK).

- Cork Film Festival (Ireland).

- DocAviv International Documentary Film Festival (Israel).

- Alba International Film Festival (Italy).

- Filmmaker Doc Film Festival (Italy).

- Lucania Film Festival (Italy).

- Milano Film Festival (Italy).

- SondrioFestival - International Documentary Film Festival (Italy).

- Turin International Film Festival (Italy).

- Venice International Film Festival (Italy).

- Mumbai International Film Festival (India).

- Con-Can Movie Festival (Japan).

- Skip City International D-Cinema Festival (Japan).

- Docudays Beirut International Documentary Festival (Lebanon).

- DOCSDF, International Documentary Film Festival of Mexico City (Mexico).

- Norwegian Documentary Film Festival (Norway).

- New Zealand Film Festival (New Zealand).

- Cracow Film Festival (Poland).

- Jewish Motifs International Film Festival (Poland).

- Planete Doc Review (Poland).

- Avanca International Meeting of Cinema, TV, Video and Multimedia (Portugal).

- Curtas Vila do Conde (Portugal).

- Doclisboa Festival Internacional de Cinema Documental (Portugal).

- Festival Internacional de Cinema do Algarve (Portugal).

- Festroia (Portugal).

- International Documentary Film Festival Jihlava (Czech Republic).

- International Festival of Popular-Scientific and Documentary Films (Czech Republic).

- Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (Czech Republic).

- One World International Human Rights Film festival (Czech Republic).

- Message to Man, St. Petersburg Int. Film Festival (Russia).

- Belgrade Documentary & Short Film Festival (Serbia and Montenegro).

- Asia Media Festival (Singapore).

- SIDF - Singapore Indie Doc Fest (Singapore).

- Buff International Children and Young People's Film Festival (Sweden).

- Göteborg Film Festival (Sweden).

- Uppsala International Short Film Festival (Sweden).

- International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights (Switzerland).

- International North South Media Festival (Switzerland).

- Locarno International Film Festival (Switzerland).

- Visions du Réel (Switzerland).

- Golden Lion Film Festival (Swaziland).

- Human Rights Documentary Film Days (Ukraine).

Visual Anthropology Institutions
- Commission on Visual Anthropology.

- Society for Visual Anthropology.

- Nordic Anthropological Film Association.

- Comité du Film Ethnographique (it runs the Jean Rouch International Film Festival).

- Societé Francaise d'Antrhopologie Visuelle (non-profit distribution system).

- CAFFE – Coordinating Anthropological Film Festivals in Europe (consortium of ethnographic film festivals).

- VANEASA – Visual Anthropology Newtwork of the European Association of Social Anthropologists.

- Comité pour la difusion du film ethnographique en Afrique.

- GAVA – Graduate Association of Visual Anthropology.

- International Visual Sociology Association.

- GTAV-ABA – Grupo de Trabalho de Antropologia Visual da Associação Brasileira de Antropologia.

- LISA – Laboratorio de imagem e som em antropologia (Universidade de São Paulo).

- OADF – Oxford Academy of Documentary Film (it is not an institution; however, it offers a series of independent courses).

Universities Offering Programmes in Visual Anthropology

- Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, University of Manchester (United Kingdom): it offers MA, MPhil and PhD courses that combine practical film training, editing and production, photography, sound recording. The MA has two pathways: Ethnographic Documentary with Film; and Ethnographic Documentary with Sensory Media. Established in 1987, the Granada Centre's postgraduate programme has produced over 200 documentary films, and its students have made films for BBC, Channel 4 and many other international broadcasters.

- University of Kent (United Kingdom): the Department of Anthropology offers a MA in Visual Anthropology that explores traditional and experimental means of using visual images to produce/represent anthropological knowledge.

- Goldsmiths College, University of London (United Kingdom): the Anthropology Department offers a one-year (two-year part-time) MA in Visual Anthropology as well as Research Degrees in Visual Anthropology (MRes/MPhil/PhD). The MA is practice-based in conjunction with formal lecture/seminar courses.

- London School of Economics (United Kingdom): it offers a Film History and Theory programme (no filmmaking).

- Oxford University (United Kingdom): The Institute of Social & Cultural Anthropology offers a one-year MSc in Visual Anthropology (no filmmaking).

- SOAS (United Kingdom): it offers an historical and theoretical programme rather than a filmmaking programme.

- University College London (United Kingdom): it offers an MA in Material and Visual Culture. The programme provides a broad based training in social science approaches to the analysis of material and visual media; ranging from art, photography, film and media within visual anthropology; to consumption, museum anthropology and cultural heritage, landscape and genres (such as clothing and the built environment), within material culture.

- Australian National University (Australia): ANU offers a variety of courses in Visual Anthropology at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. PhD students can include visual productions in their anthropological dissertations. The Master of Liberal Arts (Visual Culture Research) is a one-year MA degree emphasizing practice led research utilising visual methods and critical visual studies. From within the programme a variety of thematic interests may be pursued. The Centre for Visual Anthropology fosters a dynamic arena of scholarly interaction among staff and postgraduate students.

- Harvard University (USA): In addition to a Secondary Field in Film & Visual Studies, the Department of Anthropology offers a PhD in Social Anthropology (with Media) in conjunction with its Sensory Ethnography Lab. for students who wish to undertake practice-based research, and make substantial ethnographic use of audiovisual media in their doctoral work. This track is open to all Social Anthropology doctoral students. Media anthropology students are regular members of the graduate programme in social anthropology, and all requirements for the PhD in anthropology pertain to those specializing in media anthropology.

- New York University (USA): it offers the Programme in Culture and Media, which focuses on anthropological training and media production. The Departments of Anthropology and Cinema Studies offer a specialized joint course of study leading to a New York State Certification in Culture and Media for NYU graduate students who are also pursuing their MA or PhD degrees in Anthropology or Cinema Studies.

- San Francisco State University (USA): it offers a one-year production course in ethnographic film (often with an applied emphasis in Visual Anthropology), courses in Final Cut Pro editing (with an emphasis on Culture Jamming) and a course about narrative and applied anthropological interventions using film.

- Temple University (USA): it offers an undergraduate and a PhD programme in Visual anthropology with a focus on both theory and practice – no MA programme. Temple University's Department of Anthropology has long been known, both nationally and

internationally, for its specialization in the anthropology of visual communication. It offers this specialization to undergraduate majors and minors as well as to graduate students in anthropology at the MA and PhD levels. Specialisations include an undergraduate track in Visual Communication and a graduate specialisation in Visual Communication.

- University of Southern California (USA): it focuses on ethnographic training and media production. The USC Centre for Visual Anthropology offered the MAVA (Master of Arts in Visual Anthropology), a 2-3 year terminal MA from 1984–2001, which produced over sixty ethnographic documentaries. In 2001, it was merged into a Certificate in Visual Anthropology given alongside the PhD in Anthropology. A new digitally based programme was created in the Fall of 2009 as a new one year MA programme in Visual Anthropology. USC also offers a Certificate in Visual Anthropology. The certificate is an interdisciplinary programme, with training in digital video production provided by the USC School of Cinema-Television. Professional skills in video production are designed to help students present their research results to a wider audience and to use visual media effectively in communicating ideas about anthropology.

- University of South Carolina (USA): the Department of Anthropology offers the Visual Anthropology Graduate Certificate. It is an interdisciplinary programme offering courses through Anthropology, Media Arts, and Film and Media Studies to graduate students interested in strengthening both the conceptual and technical aspects of incorporating visual analysis into their research.

- University of California at Los Angeles (USA): once very influential, it offers a programme in VA.

- APCCS – Americo Paredes Center for Cultural Studies (USA): it has a long history of fostering interdisciplinary approaches to the study of varied cultural forms. Located in UT Austin's Department of Anthropology, it is the only anthropology programme in the US that offers MA and PhD degrees with a graduate concentration in Folklore and Public Culture. Graduates leave the programme with a degree in Anthropology and a doctoral portfolio in Cultural Studies.

- California State University, Chico (USA): The Department of Anthropology at CSU has an Advanced Laboratory for Visual Anthropology built around the Red One 4k Digital Cinema system. It offers a four-fields MA in anthropology.

- University of British Columbia (Canada)**:** the department of anthropology has an Ethnographic Film Unit. The Film Unit draws upon the combined strengths of anthropologists, filmmakers, students, and community members.

- Concordia University (Canada): the Department of Sociology and Anthropology (Prof. Maximilian Forte) offers courses in Visual Anthropology and Media Ethnographies.

- CTMP – The Centre for Transcultural Research and Media Practice (Ireland): in collaboration with the Department of Culture and Communication, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development, New York University, USA, it offers a three-week annual programme in practice-led media research.

- Universitat de Barcelona (Spain): it offers postgraduate programmes in Visual Anthropology.

- Leiden University (The Netherlands): it offers a Bachelor programme in Ethnographic Film; Theory and Practice, and the possibility of performing ethnographic fieldwork with audio visual media within the broader MA.

- SIC – Sound Image Culture (Belgium): the laboratory helps visual anthropologists, anthropologists and artists to develop their art or film projects which are inspired by either anthropological methods or subjects. The SIC programme involves nine months of coaching through collective seminars, individual advising, group critiques, and inter-artist dialogue. The workshops take place in the art centres Netwerk (Aalst) and Les Brigittines (Brussels) in Belgium.

- Heidelberg University (Germany): it offers BA and MA courses in the field of Visual and Media Anthropology.

- Freie Universität in Berlin (Germany): the Department of Political and Social Science (Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology) offers a two-year, full-time MA in Visual and Media Anthropology. It is an advanced graduate degree programme educating both researchers and media professionals. It is a web-based distance learning course.

- University of Munich (Germany): the Institut for Anthropology offers courses with a Visual Anthropology emphasis.

- Koblenz University (Germany): it offers courses in Visual Anthropology.

- Trömso University (Norway): one of the most active centres; it offers a programme in ethnographic filmmaking and Visual Cultural Studies.

- FLACSO – Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Ecuador): it offers an MA in Visual Anthropology.

- PUCP – Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (Peru): The Social Sciences Department at PUCP offers a two-year MA programme in Visual Anthropology, which seeks to generate research on issues related to visual, material, and sound practices in Peru and around the Andean region. The MA programme provides the students with an education in visual

research, production and applied visual methodologies that are based on an intercultural perspective and ethnographic research.

- EAIVA – East Asia Institute of Visual Anthropology (China): it offers a postgraduate programme for 12 students (ethnic minority and Han-Chinese) and a course for prospective teachers of VA (graduates of the first MA Course). In offering a three semester MA course in VA (International Certificate of Visual Anthropology), the EAIVA has developed a course module covering theoretical issues of Western Anthropology, the history of film and ethnographic film (Chinese and international), film language, visual representation, filmic construction, film aesthetics as well as camera supported fieldwork/research methods.

- National Dong Hwa University (Taiwan): it offers an MA course in ethnographic filmmaking.

- University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa): it offers the Culture, Commuication and Media Studies (CCMS), the Southern African region's premier graduate research and educational unit in media studies. The unit consists of both graduate and undergraduate components.

Italian universities offering programmes and courses in Visual Anthropology
- Università degli Studi di Torino.
- Università degli Studi di Messina.
- Università degli Studi di Firenze.
- Università degli Studi di Siena.
- Università degli Studi della Basilicata.
- Sapienza Università di Roma.
- Università degli Studi di Cagliari.
- Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II.
- Università degli Studi di Venezia.
- Università Ca Foscari Venezia.
- Scuola di Etnografia Visiva – Istituto Superiore di Fotografia e Comunicazione Integrata, Roma.

APPENDIX 2   Defects of the "Culture" Construct

This study reflects on the need to rethink the contribution that "culture" and cultural difference make to one's everyday life. This Appendix focuses on the critique of some of the essential connotations that must be accepted when one is committed to the construct of "culture:" localism, coherence, homogeneity, discreetness and so forth. The overview of the defects of the "culture" construct offered here is necessarily a partial one. Its aim is to offer a discussion that underpins the analyses offered in the thesis. The intent is not to belittle or deny the brute fact that difference exists: this is not in dispute. Human difference is not merely a figment of the anthropological imagination; however, important as it is, cultural difference is continuously overridden. This is not an easy subject to treat systematically. The main aim is not so much to negate human variation but to defend the idea that "wherever cultural boundaries are drawn up, they may still be overridden by similarities between individuals that are of greater social significance than any of their professed cultural differences" (MacDougall 1998: 20).[279]

1 Cultural Anthropology

Cultural anthropology is a discipline within the social sciences and humanities that concerns itself with the study of human beings. Cultural anthropologists tend to reject the idea of an inherent human nature which is relatively fixed and irremovable. Anthropologists such as Franz Boas contributed to establish the tradition of autonomy of the social sciences, expunging biological explanations as inadequate to understand social facts (Kuper 1994). And yet all humans share with the animal kingdom some mainsprings of their action and the general impulse to fulfil basic biological requirements. It would be a serious mistake to deny that some notable similarities among human beings, i.e. the invariant needs for food and shelter, are constant and seem to result from the underlying, non-specific characteristics of the species.

One does not find uniformity of values, meanings and intentions among the people of the world: people are fundamentally alike, and yet differ from each other in the amazingly diverse ways of speaking, looking and living. Given this unquestionable reality, anthropology attempts to make sense of the richness of human variation in time and space. "Culture" comprises everything from material artefacts, e.g. religious paraphernalia, objects of personal adornment, to the more

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[279] In an email message to the author on April 20, 2010, David MacDougall writes: "My own experience continually undermines the idea of otherness. I find many of my neighbours and relatives far more strange and "other" to me than people I have come to know in foreign societies and cultures".

intangible features of human life, e.g. symbols, myths, proverbs, concepts and metaphors. Tylor has provided one of the most famous standard definitions of "culture:"

> Culture or civilisation, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society (1871; quoted in Asad 1986: 140).

In presenting this definition of "culture" there is no assumption that Tylor's definition is universally accepted. This Appendix is not the place for a detailed documentation and discussion of specific formulations of "culture," nor is there any point here in introducing the multitude of specific definitions of "culture" that exist. The interest lies in the connotations invariably attached to the "culture" construct.

1.2 The Fieldwork Science

The idea that "culture" is spatially localised is a commonsensical, often unremarked assumption of anthropological practice. As Appadurai observed:

> place is so much in the foreground of the anthropological consciousness that its importance has been taken for granted and its implications have not been systematically explored. Whatever else might be in dispute, the idea that culture is a local dimension of human behaviour is a tenacious and widespread assumption (1986: 356).

The anthropological worldview has persistently divided the map of the world into fragmented spots on the basis of an informal professional view. Moreover, anthropological knowledge is based on the rhetoric of "I was there". The "distinction between "field" and "home" rests on their spatial separation" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a: 12). Ethnographic knowledge is "heavily dependent on the presence and experience of the fieldworker. More than any other discipline, the truths of anthropology are grounded in the experience of the participant observer" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a: 15). The field technique known as participant observation is not only a standard methodological tool, but also an almost constant component of the imperfect art of anthropological practice. It is assumed that one cannot understand a "culture" without the understandings and emotional affinities developed during an immersion in the living space of its particular members. According to Timothy and Patsy Asch:

Participation is believed to lead to greater access to people's thoughts, behaviour, dreams, and beliefs because through one's attempts to gain linguistic, social and technical competence one has greater and more varied contact with people and experiences what it feels like to live in a particular social universe (2003: 340).

The anthropologist is the producer of a science of interpersonal relations. The unique activities of another culture are learned in operation by watching people in the context of fieldwork (Firth 1944: 20). In the intuitive and demanding circumstances of fieldwork, the task of the anthropologist is to talk to people, ask them what they think, listen systematically to their comments and stories, take notes about different versions of their oral narratives, and engage in various activities with them. A crucial role in the intercourse between the social researcher and the locals is played by key informants – locals with a knowledge and perspective on their own society.[280] Informants add useful subjective experience to the first-hand experience of the ethnographer, who acts as a conduit – a sort of broker – between the subjects and the anthropological audience (Strathern 1987: 261).

2 The Taint of Essentialism

In their monumental review of the anthropological definitions of "culture," Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952: 149) have isolated 164 definitions of this ambiguous concept. One of the most contested words in the social sciences, "culture" is also one of the most complicated words in the English language (Williams 1976: 87). The intractable nature of the culture concept is undoubtedly one of the sources of its seductive power.

In the 1980s and 1990s cultural anthropology has undergone a radical process of conceptual transition (Brightman 1995). The concept of "culture" is increasingly seen as unhelpful or in need of reconfiguration (Fox 1985; Rabinow 1988; Goody 1994: 255; Barnard and Spencer 1996: 142) The taint of essentialism seems to be rooted in the "culture" construct once and for all (Keesing 1994: 301-3; Friedman 1994: 206-7; Borofsky 1994: 245).

Drawing on Said, Abu-Lughod (1991) calls for abandoning the concept of "culture." Viable substitutes to "culture" are, she argues, the loose structure of *habitus*, a notion derived from Bourdieu, and Foucault's notion of discursive formation. Abu-Lughod's criticism arises in various forms, but one of the most common is that anthropologists, by tradition, "commonly generalize

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[280] Bourdieu writes that anthropologists are "always ready to listen to the lesson-givers and rule-givers that informants become when they speak to the ethnologist, that is, to someone who knows nothing and to whom they must speak as one speaks to a child" (Lamaison and Bourdieu 1986: 114).

about communities by saying that they are characterized by certain institutions, rules, or ways of doing things" (Abu-Lughod 1991: 153). If Abu-Lughod is right, perhaps "culture" is a chimera; either in plural or singular form, the concept is wrongly applied. A less radical position has been expressed by Clifford, according to whom "culture" is a "deeply compromised idea I cannot yet do without" (1988: 10).

2.1 The False Discreteness of Culture

Old formulations of the "culture" concept tend to demark the stability and uniformity of distinctive populations. This is a disastrous error, and an error that continues to this day (Wright 1998: 14). Cultures can no longer be thought of simply in terms of literal and static entities, homogeneous blocks in which cultural difference negates the mobile, blurred relations between human beings (Kahn 1989). Criteria of cultural delimitation are always overlapping and ultimately arbitrary; put simply, they are purely differential: is there such a thing as the *sine qua non* of culture? Cultural borders are invented rather than discovered. The segmentation of the cultural world is based on *a priori* perceptions that derive from the available knowledge about spoken languages, geographical locations, degrees of mobility and so forth. Thus the taxonomies of cultural forms produced in anthropology are contingent and accidental. The individuation of a cultural group is a fiction that tends to elide a plurality of intercultural resemblances.

2.2 A Homogenising Force

In its application, the old idea of "culture" undervalues the finer and less-appreciated nature of the unmerged distributions of cultural life (Friedman 1994: 207). A rethinking of "culture" reveals a number of oblique correlations and cultural patches between individuals that go beyond an abstract, objective notion of their way of life (Rodseth 1998: 55-8). This point can be further illustrated with a question. The question is, in its broad and naïve form: how much "difference" lies between two particular individuals within the same local culture and how much of it lies between cultures? The answer, or at least part of the answer, is that the immense variation between any two individuals within a "culture" might suggest that most human variation lies within the same cultural group. This seems a simple, rough-and-ready test for understanding whether or not the construct of "culture" obscures the internal contradictions within a human group (Barth 1994: 358).

3 An Ecological Imprisonment

The cultural forms and activities of a human group have often been understood as a total body in the dimension of their local context: to "pursue a culture is to seek out its differences, and then to show how it makes sense, as they say, in its own terms" (Rosaldo 1988: 78). In this view cultural practices are, over and above, a multitude of solutions and adaptations that persist over time in a social system. This image seems very convincing, and one with which many would agree. However, the metaphor of adaptation is seriously misleading. Contrary to ethnographic assumptions rooted in studies of material culture, human variability does not arise for adaptive reasons. Humans do not adapt to primordial bioregions in the sense that they simply become apt to the immediacy of an ecological niche whose shape is organised around them in advance. Instead, they construct and re-construct, create and dismantle their cultural environment. The relationship between humans and their ecosystem is neither passive nor defined by mere propinquity. The metaphor of "construction" seems more appropriate than the metaphor of "adaptation" in describing the relationships between humans and the territories in which they happen to lead their lives.

3.1 The Contested Field of Culture

Clifford writes that since the "mid-nineteenth century, ideas of culture have gathered up those elements which seem to give continuity and depth to collective existence, seeing it whole rather than disputed, torn, intertextual, or syncretic" (1988: 232). The "culture" construct generates deterministic interpretations of cultural "facts" (Clifford 1988: 235). Gupta and Ferguson write that people have "undoubtedly always been more mobile and identities less fixed than the static and typologizing approaches of cultural anthropology would suggest" (1997b: 37). This is a view that seems worthy of defence. People have always been implicated in others, and this directly contradicts the proclamations of a presumably pure and unadulterated cultural environment. Globalisation processes "expose the inadequacies of the concept of culture and the elusiveness of the entities designated by the term *cultures*" (Abu-Lughod 1991: 149). On a similar note, Marcus asks: "what is holism once the line between the local worlds of subjects and the global worlds of systems becomes radically blurred?" (1986a: 171). "Culture" is not unequivocally characterised by general agreement or acquiescence: "what is to count as "cultural consensus" on the meaning or explanation of a given act? How many individuals in interaction constitute a community, a culture, or a form of life?" (Dixon 1977: 86).

The concept of "culture" has been reconceptualised as a politically negotiated ground, a contested field traversed by dissents, tensions and misrecognitions. In the ongoing war of position

within the cultural battlefield, competing claims and perspectives are constructed and reconstructed in a variety of ways. As Clifford writes:

> If "Culture" is not an object to be described, neither it is a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitively interpreted. Culture is contested, temporal and emergent. Representation and explanation, both by insiders and outsiders, is implicated in this emergence (1986: 19).

The cultural is forged in the teeth of struggles and conflicts, and variously situated in the positional orders of political economy.

3.2 Culture as Inventiveness

One of the most important features of the reconfigurations of "culture" is that the ferments and meanings of cultural life are increasingly interpreted as variably internalised and embodied by unique subjectivities according to the transformative tendencies of their inventiveness and criticism (Sen 1998: 14; Appiah 1996: 103-4). The heterogeneous interests of individuals call into question the essentialist theoretical armature on which the classic anthropological tradition rested. Cultural practices are not simply enacted. As British cultural studies have made clear (Morley and Chen 1996), instead of accepting a singular cultural identity as an ascribed feature, one can always scrutinize, at least in potential, a symphony of diverse identities: cultural identity is a non-intrinsic property. "Culture" induces a kind of obliviousness to the multiplicity of individual conducts exceeding the predictability of the responses of the specimen typified by cultural forms (Sen 2007). The depiction of individuals as the unreflective exemplars of the execution of codified rules prescribed by collective consciousness has been rejected as a form of cultural legalism (Ortner 1984: 150). The "culture" construct might tacitly deny rational ends to the action of human beings; its historical usages might negate the individuality of autonomous moral agents living under some degree of social or geographical constraint. Cultural manipulations pullulate with self-doubts, and it is not "absurd to claim that being able to doubt is one of the things that make us human beings, rather than unquestioning animals" (Sen 1998: 24).

4 No Euclidean Boundaries

The old notion of "culture" might be a way of magnifying separation by clinical means (Ingold 1993: 230). The "culture" construct "could barely describe, let alone analyze, flux, improvisation, and heterogeneity" (Rosaldo 1988: 77). The "idea of culture as order – standing like a Hobbesian

Leviathan, against the ever present threat of chaos and anomie – is, of course, a very well established one in Western thought" (Ferguson and Gupta 1997b: 4). The "culture" construct betrays a misunderstanding of the unpredictability of cultural responses within the social field. Cultural reality is an open knowledge system which is inherently unstable and certainly incomplete. This is perhaps what Appadurai alludes to, in an oft-cited passage, when he writes that the configuration of cultural forms should be interpreted as

> fundamentally fractal, that is, as possessing no Euclidean boundaries, structures, or regularities. Second, I would suggest that these cultural forms, which we should strive to represent as fully fractal, are also overlapping, in ways that have been discussed only in pure mathematics (in set theory for example) and in biology (in the language of polythetic classifications) (1990: 20).

Here Appadurai offers a useful heuristic comment, an impressionistic image of fractal configurations that illustrates the dispersed, polymorphic nature of cultural practices. Even in a relatively homogeneous cultural environment, there is a casual variation that cannot be ascribed with precision to cultural parameters (Sen 1998: 19). The metaphor of indeterminate shapes and dissipation defying subjection to acknowledged standards of measurement represents a corrective to the unity of "culture" as a closed system. It provides a non-essentialist analogy that decentralises the fixity of "culture" conceptualised in an orderly manner. The construct of "culture" should be considered as a hybrid notion that presupposes the mutual entanglement of complex individuals and the erosion of rigid demarcations instead of their construction and reinforcement.

5 The Future of Culture: A Rear-view Mirror

Among the criticisms of the "culture" construct, the question of its future is perhaps the most concerning. Cultural anthropologists have tended to privilege explanations of human behaviour based on constraints, whereas economists seem to give more emphasis to the arena of individualistic preferences, ascribing causal qualities to unsubjugated volition and conscious choice. The point to be understood here is that "culture" is

> substantially, by however sophisticated a definition, seen as a kind of rearview mirror, habit, tradition, norm, etc., but always looking back. The question of the future – of people's wishes, choices, projects, visions, etc., - has been more or less handed over to the domain of economics, of individuals' choices and preferences, and so on (Appadurai 2003: 52).

Most anthropologists have ignored the warnings implicit in these passages, and here is where the conceptual inadequacy of the culture construct comes out most obviously.[281] Anthropologists need to "recognise that there is a whole way in which the future itself is culturally formed as much as the past is" (Appadurai 2003: 52). Appadurai continues:

> We in anthropology by and large, with tiny exceptions here and there, have totally failed to catch this, and we end up therefore in this standoff with economists, saying, "You don't understand how people operate," and "You are too individualistic." That is all fine, but what have we done about it? Very little (2003: 52).

Anthropologists should give higher priority to the explanatory interest of agency, intentionality and the capacity to aspire – the map of aspirations of individuals with complex lives that go beyond the acknowledgment of the exigencies of "culture."

Conclusion

The "coloration that culture provides to experience rarely rises explicitly to the fore in its own right," for the "commonalities of consciousness between individuals may be more salient than their cultural differences" (Taylor 1998: 21). Although there is no point in denying cultural difference *per se*, it is important to call into question the idea that "culture" plays a masterful role in guiding the real life of real people in favour of a more nuanced consideration of the contingency of cultural difference.

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[281] In a similar vein, Hastrup writes: "In anthropology (in contrast to folklore research) I would have thought that we had actually come to terms with the fact that the world changes all the time and what was yesterday, is not necessarily more interesting than what will be, tomorrow" (1992: 15).

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