

**ANNIE GOLDSON AS HISTORIAN AND FILMMAKER:
A CASE STUDY OF DOCUMENTARY FILM AS
HISTORIOGRAPHY**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in History
at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, 2016 This thesis is for examination purposes
only and is confidential to the examination process

ABSTRACT

There has been an ever-growing body of scholarship, particularly since the late 1980s, that looks at how the medium of film is used as a legitimate technique for relaying the dimensions of history. The issue has been divisive and controversial in academic circles, but it is fair to say that the acceptance of what Hayden White refers to as 'historiophoty' has indeed risen, and has attained a more respected standing in the discipline of history. Despite this, the scholarship on specific case studies still lacks in certain areas. There is a diverse body of literature on this topic, but the most famous studies predominantly still look at Hollywood drama films. Studies of documentaries, particularly from outside of the USA, are underrepresented, even as the genre itself has undergone a renaissance of sorts in the twenty-first century.

This thesis adds a fresh perspective to this field by looking at a series of documentaries by New Zealand filmmaker and academic, Annie Goldson. Goldson is a prolific documentary feature filmmaker, and the three documentaries examined here, all contribute uniquely to the historical debates that have arisen in the countries in which they are set. Other scholars have studied these films, but nobody has looked at them from a purely historical perspective. By tackling the films from this angle then, we not only get a multi-faceted view of the way that historiophoty can address the past, but we also get another perspective to add to the current literature on Goldson's excellent portfolio of work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are lots of people to thank for their help over the course of this project, so I am just going to thank a few individuals here and thank the rest when I see them.

Firstly, massive thanks to my supervisor Associate Professor Jennifer Frost. It was a paper of yours about ten years ago that made me feel like continuing in history was what I wanted to do with my life. Your help at honours was immense, and then when I returned to do this two years ago, the fact that you took me on as a student is appreciated beyond words. Your help has been invaluable, so thank you again. Thanks also to the rest of the lovely History people at the University of Auckland that I have taught with, and studied alongside. I've learned a lot from everyone, and I am constantly in awe at the amazing work you all produce.

Enormous thanks also must go to my family. You've been inexplicably encouraging of me for so long now, and if you didn't provide me with the support that you have over the past couple of years, then I don't think I could have done this. It is really that simple. Without you guys I have no idea what I would be doing, but I know I wouldn't be as happy as I am now. And thanks of course also to my partner Gemma. How you've put up with me while I've done this is nothing short of amazing. Your help, support, and encouragement has made me feel incredibly lucky, and you've helped keep me sane, particularly at the end of this project.

Finally, thanks also must go to Annie Goldson. I remember being in a lecture in the first year, where you showed us *Punitive Damage*, and I couldn't believe how lucky I was to be sitting in a lecture being conducted by a real documentary director. I was a fan from that day, and I still am now. It has been a privilege to study your work over these past two years, and I can not wait to see what you produce next.

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INTRODUCTION

Hayden White has been a figure of both profound influence, and equally great derision within the discipline of history. While his work has no doubt been controversial, it has also been ground-breaking, and it has challenged the way that many historians view the dimensions of history. His 1973 publication *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19th Century Europe*, was a 'daring, ingenious, and sometimes bewildering tour-de-force', in which he postulated the notion that history was 'first, last and always a literary act', as opposed to an objective compilation of facts.¹ The response from fellow historical theorists was initially mixed when the work was released because it appeared to undermine some of the core tenets of academic history. The more traditional historians influenced by modernist conceptions of the social 'sciences' dismissed the work as exemplifying the worst excesses of postmodernism. One historian, Phyllis Grosskurth, even referred to *Metahistory* as 'the most damaging undertaking ever performed by a historian on his profession'.² Others, however, felt that the book's methodical dismantling of how historiography is constructed would change the discipline forever. Louis Mink, for example, argued a few weeks after the book was released that White's work was the 'book around which all reflective historians must reorganize their thoughts on history'.³

It is appropriate then that a figure as influential as Hayden White would help articulate an effective taxonomy for theorists to use when looking at the dimensions of the historical film. A decade and a half after *Metahistory* was released, White published another profoundly influential (albeit much smaller) piece of scholarship titled, 'Historiography and Historiophoty'. White's article was published in December 1988 when the discipline of history's 'oldest and most august professional journal, *The American Historical Review*, devoted more than half of the space in its quarterly issue to a forum on film and history'.⁴ This unique moment was not the birth of the discussion amongst historians regarding the interrelationship between film and history (the journal *Film and History* had been running for 17 years at this point, for example).⁵ But it was, without a doubt, a decisive turning point in how historians viewed the role of film in depicting history. While Robert Rosenstone's enormously influential essay 'History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History on Film' was the centrepiece of the discussion, four notable historians, including Hayden White, responded to Rosenstone.⁶ 'Historiography and Historiophoty' was Hayden White's call to action.

¹ Alan Munslow, 'Rethinking Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe', in *Rethinking History*, Volume 19, Issue 3, 2015, pp.326-327.

² Richard T Vann, 'The Reception of Hayden White', in *History and Theory*, Volume 37, Issue 2, 1998, p.146.

³ *Ibid.*, p.143.

⁴ Robert Rosenstone and Constantin Parvulescu (eds.), *A Companion to the Historical Film*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p.3.

⁵ Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film*, Abington, Routledge, 2007, p.4.

⁶ *Ibid.*

In the article, White boldly asserted that film should not only be considered a legitimate medium in which to produce history, but it also should have its own particular branch of the discipline called 'historiophoty'. To White, historiophoty was the 'representation of history and our thoughts about it in visual images and filmic discourse', and given its visual nature, it needed to be looked at in a new way.⁷ To justify this relatively radical notion, White argued that 'no history, visual or verbal, "mirrors" all or even the greater part of the events or scenes of which it purports to be an account'. White added that because 'every written history is a product of processes of condensation, displacement, symbolisation, and qualification exactly like those used in the production of a filmed representation', it was counterproductive to hold historiography on a pedestal.⁸ White felt that just as written history could be respectfully classified as historiography, filmed history could be viewed with equal respect as historiophoty.

Since White proposed this concept of historiophoty, there has been an abundance of original studies that have examined the various ways in which films can, in the words of Robert Rosenstone, help us (re)vision the past.⁹ However, while there has been a significant expansion, the field remains relatively understudied. This lack of study is partially due to the sheer magnitude of films from all over the world that tackle historical themes. Historical films may only be a small proportion of films produced, but when you consider that it has been over 100 years since *Birth of a Nation* was released, this means that there is a considerable back catalogue of potentially enlightening historical movies that have been overlooked.¹⁰ New approaches and new case studies need to be undertaken so that we can keep gauging just how many different types of historiophoty there are, and how they contribute to the overall discourse surrounding the dimensions of history.

With this study, I look at historiophoty from a more local perspective. The vast majority of research in the discipline has dealt with films from Hollywood since these are the largest and most influential films. But the size of a movie does not necessarily indicate anything of its historical worth. There are plenty of films from all over the world, of all different scopes that contribute to the discourse on historiophoty in valuable ways, as I will demonstrate. Using three documentaries by acclaimed documentary filmmaker Annie Goldson - *Punitive Damage* (1999), *An Island Calling* (2008), and *Brother Number One* (2012), I examine her particular practice of producing historiophoty—analysing how and why she crafts her histories on film—and the subsequent reception by national and international audiences. According to Goldson, these three films are seen as constituting an 'unplanned trilogy', due to their repeated narrative

⁷ Hayden White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty', in *The American Historical Review*, Volume 93, Number 5, 1988, p.1193.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1194.

⁹ Rosenstone describes 'Revising history' as being when films move beyond realism to embrace innovative modes of representation such as surrealism, collage, expressionism, mythic rumination, and post modernism. For more, see Robert A Rosenstone, 'Introduction', in Robert A Rosenstone (ed.) *Revising History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, p.11.

¹⁰ Robert Brent Toplin, *Reel History: In Defence of Hollywood*, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2002, p.5.

elements, and thematic similarities.¹¹ This formation of a trilogy, unplanned as it may be, is beneficial for our purposes because it allows us to look at consistent elements across three films that deal with entirely different places and people. Structurally speaking, a trilogy also gives an excellent framework in which we can gain a larger understanding of Goldson's practice. Because there are three films, my thesis is comprised of three main chapters focusing on one film each, with each chapter/film having a different focus related to the practice of history: [historical] interpretation, [historical] representation, and [contemporary] reception.

The first chapter will be on *Punitive Damage*, released in 1999. The film is one of Goldson's most well-known, and in her words 'follows the story of Helen Todd, a New Zealand woman who "successfully" sued an Indonesian general in a Boston court after her son Kamal Bamadhaj, was killed in the Dili massacre in East Timor in 1991'.¹² My focus with the film, as a historian, is to look at how, as a piece of Historiophoty, *Punitive Damage* interprets historical events from decades ago, using a single massacre fortuitously caught on tape in 1991. Specifically, the chapter examines how Goldson interprets the history of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor through a 'human rights' lens. This perspective stands in opposition to the more conventional 'state-sanctioned interpretation' favoured by the aggressors who were responsible for genocide in the region. Goldson's human rights interpretation is part of a legacy of other similarly focused works, and the subsequent conclusions the film draws are shaped inherently by this interpretation of events.

The second chapter will look at Goldson's 2008 film, *An Island Calling*. The film continues Goldson's trend of looking at the murder of a New Zealand citizen in a foreign land, and how this event is demonstrative of wider patterns in regional history. Goldson has written that the film 'traces the context of the murder of a gay couple in Suva, Fiji. John Scott, the head of the Fiji Red Cross, and his Kiwi partner Greg Scrivener were killed with a machete by a young Fijian man Apete Kaisau, who had, reputedly, been the men's lover. Apete killed them in the name of God in a country that has imported an increasingly fundamentalist brand of Christianity, and is also marked by a history of instability, coups, and complex racially charged politics'.¹³ Shifting away from the issue of how historiophoty interprets events of this past, this chapter looks at how *An Island Calling* uses the language of film to revision history at a textual level. By carefully examining the text of *An Island Calling* in detail, I have focused on how Goldson uses film techniques to construct two intertwining narratives based on the idea of 'circularity'. This structure, in turn, provides a fresh perspective of Fijian history that is unencumbered by colonial metanarratives. The first narrative looks at the history of Fiji as a whole, and the second looks at the history of the Scott family who heavily involved themselves in colonial and post-colonial Fiji over the course of the twentieth century. Subsequently, these two narratives

¹¹ Annie Goldson, 'Journalism Plus? The Resurgence of Creative Documentary', in *Pacific Journalism Review*, Volume 21, Issue 1, 2015, p.89.

¹² Annie Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, University of Auckland PhD Thesis, 2004, p.174.

¹³ Goldson, 'Journalism Plus? The Resurgence of Creative Documentary', p.90.

intertwine with each other, and as the film progresses, it becomes apparent that the second, microhistorical narrative of the Scott family mirrors circular patterns Goldson discusses in her larger historical narrative about Fiji itself.

Because there is such an emphasis on textual analysis in the first two chapters, the third will then look at *Brother Number One* and its overall reception, particularly in New Zealand. The film, as Goldson describes it, 'follows Kiwi Rob Hamill to Cambodia where he attends the war crimes tribunal, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), which is currently underway in Phnom Penh trying former Khmer Rouge leaders for the genocidal policies of the mid to late 1970s'.¹⁴ By utilising an analytical framework postulated by Tessa Morris-Suzuki, I look at how critics engaged with the dimensions of history both emotionally and analytically. Because the history of the Khmer Rouge atrocities has been so thoroughly under-examined in New Zealand curricula and media, my analysis is primarily concerned with looking at how the film has affected views of international involvement in Asia during the Cold War. Specifically, I question whether or not the film had any significant impact on viewers in understanding this historical legacy, as Goldson hoped it would.

In pursuing this line of investigation, I look to reinforce the aforementioned argument that historiophoty is a legitimate form of historical production. More importantly, though, I argue that these particular films by Annie Goldson are well structured and inherently valuable works of historiophoty that contribute to the wider discourse on the areas which they examine. It is my assertion that with these particular projects, Goldson deserves to be considered not just a filmmaker, but a historian as well. This statement is not entirely unprecedented, and I am not the only one to have noticed that Goldson's work is valuable for exploring historical concepts either. Belinda Smaill also argues that Goldson 'consistently produces documentaries' that 'succeed in giving definition to an event or history in ways that evoke a sense of urgency and contemporaneity'.¹⁵ Similarly, Geoff Leland and Helen Martin have seen the historical value of other work crafted by Goldson and, in fact, referred to her 2001 documentary *Georgie Girl* as an example of 'social history documentary'.¹⁶ Detailed analysis of the historiographical worth of Goldson's work though is lacking, though, and it is my intention to remedy this.

The theoretical foundations of this study cement themselves in a distinctly postmodern school of thought about film and history that has arisen over the past four decades. As such, it is important to acknowledge the influence of this school of thought, and the wider body of literature that constitutes it, in shaping my work. As mentioned earlier, the publication of Robert Rosenstone's article in the December 1988 edition of the *American Historical Review*

¹⁴ Annie Goldson, 'Testimony and Translation: Tracing the Past in *Brother Number One*', in *Studies in Documentary Film*, Volume 8, Issue 1, 2014, p.2.

¹⁵ Belinda Smaill, 'A Death in the Asia Pacific: Three Documentaries by Annie Goldson', in *Studies in Documentary Film*, Volume 8, Issue 1, 2014, p.1.

¹⁶ Geoff Leland and Helen Martin, '4 – New Zealand: Aotearoa/New Zealand', in *Australian Screen Education*, Volume 39, Summer 2005, p.8.

represented a distinct turning point in how the analysis of historiophoty is framed. Rosenstone pondered why it was the default setting of historians to assume the worst from filmed history. The crux of his answer was that while some criticisms levelled at filmic history were occasionally valid, these same criticisms also had to be applied to historiography. To give an example of the criticisms, Rosenstone summarises arguments from Ian Jarvie, who claims that because of its 'poor information load' filmic history could never be meaningful.¹⁷ In response to Jarvie's assertions, Rosenstone convincingly points out that what historians too easily ignore is the extent to which written history 'is also shaped by conventions of genre and language', and also that it is language that 'creates and structures history' and 'imbues it with meaning.'¹⁸ To Rosenstone, the two methods of history are both constructions, and thus, the crimes that Jarvie accuses historical films of committing, are incidentally engaged when constructing historiography.

Since 1988, Rosenstone has undoubtedly been the most influential scholar in this field. He has penned a variety of volumes since that initial essay where he examines the theoretical strengths and weaknesses of producing historiophoty, and he has become one of the most resolute defenders of the medium. He has given many reasons for this ongoing support. Aside from his belief that the common criticisms tend to be shallow, Rosenstone understands that historiophoty is the way that most people consume history. He writes that 'today the chief source of historical knowledge for the majority of the population...must surely be the visual media, a set of institutions that lie almost wholly outside the control of those of us who devote our lives to history.'¹⁹ And he is right. One need only look at the sales figures for historical books, compared to the box office receipts of a famous historically focused film to get a sense of the vast discrepancies between the two formats.

It is not just from the scale of consumption that legitimacy arises, though. There are factors unique to historiophoty that make it a more valuable method for constructing a history that is an 'experience'.²⁰ Rosenstone elucidates these ideas, appealing to the less tangible notions of what constitutes the dimensions of history, such as sensory experience. Rosenstone argues 'if short on traditional data, film does quickly capture elements of life that we might wish to designate as another kind of data'. He elaborates on the specific data he is referring to, stating that 'film lets us see landscapes, hear sounds, witness strong emotions as they are expressed with body and face, or view physical conflict between individuals and groups'. To Rosenstone, it is 'no exaggeration to insist that for a mass audience (and an academic audience as well) film can most directly render the look and feel of all sorts of historical particulars and situations'.²¹

¹⁷ Hayden White, 'Historiophoty and Historiography', p.1195.

¹⁸ Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge, MA, 1995, p.35.

¹⁹ Robert Rosenstone, 'History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film History in Images', in *American Historical Review*, Volume 93, Issue 5, 1988, p.1174.

²⁰ When I mention 'legitimacy', I do not mean that there is a consensus across the entire historical community. As much as some theorists might think these ideas are legitimate, others still do not. For this purposes of this discussion, though, I am discussing the ideas why those who do believe that it is legitimate, believe this.

²¹ Rosenstone, 'History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film History in Images', p.1179.

Rosenstone does find it ironic that critics tend to be more accepting of traditional documentary films, even though the techniques of selection and alterations used for these productions are the very same techniques that academics have criticised dramatic features for using. Because documentary 'appears' more 'neutral' it has a higher acceptance amongst modernist historians, even if this acceptance is somewhat begrudging. To Rosenstone, this acceptance is reflective of the same inability to gaze inward, which he feels is common amongst historians who automatically assume the superiority of historiography to historiophoty. Rosenstone personally does not find this more traditional form of documentary film to be as powerful as other academics do and concludes that the very strengths that modernist historians see can also be the 'chief danger' of these films.²² The major problem with this analysis, though, is that it is very generalising about what constitutes a 'documentary'. The films of Goldson examined in this thesis are not representative of the kinds of documentaries that have their roots in television. As she points out herself, the influences on the genre today have changed, and the focus on producing within a film environment (as opposed to a television one) has allowed for more risky and original filmmaking.²³ These innovative and deconstructive cinematic documentaries have more in common with what Rosenstone describes as the 'new' historical film, rather than the traditional documentary form he criticises.²⁴ Therefore, while he certainly makes an interesting point, it does not hold up particularly well in today's strongly cinematic documentary environment.

Aside from Rosenstone, other theorists have emerged as leaders in this field of analysis over the past thirty years and have added to these ongoing discussion with their insights, analyses, and case studies. Robert Brent Toplin is an academic contributed much to the study of filmed history, and his book *Reel History: In Defence of Hollywood*, for example, is a thorough and engaging series of counterarguments levelled at the common criticisms which dog filmmakers who try to recreate the past on film. Channelling the ideas of Rosenstone, he goes on to criticise the criticisms themselves, claiming they are 'unrealistic and irrelevant' for the discussion.²⁵ Marnie Hughes-Warrington has also contributed valuable scholarship, particularly because she tends to adopt a slightly different analytical methodology to most of her historian counterparts. Instead of focusing on a few films in detail, she often concentrates on a broad canvas of works. She uses the analogy of maps to explain her methodology. Because there are maps available for 'more than one scale' that 'serve different purposes', Hughes-Warrington argues that her methodology in which multiple films are examined is 'like taking a step backwards and being rewarded with a new perspective on familiar terrain'.²⁶ Additionally, her work on reception studies is of particular importance and enlightening. She argues convincingly that historians and theorists often ignore reception studies and opt to look at the response in the sphere of the

²² Ibid, p.1180.

²³ Goldson, 'Journalism Plus? The Resurgence of Creative Documentary', pp.87-88.

²⁴ Rosenstone, *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, pp.4-5.

²⁵ Toplin, *Reel History: In Defence of Hollywood*, p.2.

²⁶ Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film*, p.8.

imaginary. She writes that the 'construction of hypothetical spectators confirms a preference for text-centred analysis in historical film studies'. To Hughes-Warrington, this ironically 'means that historical films are analysed as if they were not consumed in particular times and places'.²⁷ These insights have been invaluable to my analysis in the third chapter particularly.

Robert Burgoyne, Constantin Parvulescu, Marcia Landy, and Tessa Morris-Suzuki also have made significant contributions to the discussion around how historiophoty is produced.²⁸ The unifying idea that connects all these scholars is that historiophoty is a legitimate method for depicting the dimensions of history, and it needs to be seriously examined instead of ignored. This legitimacy comes from the methodologies and techniques of filmmaking that give it the opportunity to engage with the past in such a productive manner. They all work in the same philosophical camp as Robert Rosenstone and Hayden White, but they do so in their way and come up with their own conclusions and alterations when needed.

Having established the scholarly context in which this thesis sits, it needs to be clarified just why Goldson is a good filmmaker to classify as a historian. There are a variety of reasons, the most obvious simply being that she is successful in her chosen field. Belinda Smaill points out that Goldson has 'been working in documentary film and media since the late 1980s', and while working in different countries, she has managed to produce over twenty titles.²⁹ This output is prolific for any filmmaker, let alone one from a complicated production market like New Zealand. Goldson's work has also earned her considerable acclaim both in New Zealand and abroad. During her career, she has been awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit and has won numerous awards for her films in New Zealand, Spain, France, the Philippines, and the USA.³⁰

Another important reason Goldson is such an excellent filmmaker to analyse as a producer of historiophoty is that her well-crafted films often have a focus on history at their core. Ian Aitkin's *Encyclopedia of Documentary Film* highlights how, after formerly working in activist video in the United States, she returned to New Zealand and abandoned direct activism in her films, opting instead to assume a critically reflexive attitude toward personal and public history.³¹ Part of this critical reflexivity manifests itself in her tendency to often use the distinctly postmodern historical technique of 'microhistory' to explore complex dimensions of history in her films. The use of this particular technique warrants further discussion.

²⁷ Ibid, p.88.

²⁸ Burgoyne has written considerably on this topic, but two particularly rich texts are Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film*, Malden, Blackwell Publishing, 2008, and Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at US History Revised Edition*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2010. For the other writers, see Robert A Rosenstone and Constantin Parvulescu (eds.), *A Companion to the Historical Film*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013; Marcia Landy, *Cinematic Uses of the Past*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996; Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History*, New York, Verso, 2005.

²⁹ Smaill, p.21.

³⁰ Editor, 'Annie Goldson: Director', at *NZOnScreen*, available online at <http://www.nzonscreen.com/person/annie-goldson>, date accessed 12 February 2016.

³¹ Ian Aitken, *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film*, New York, Routledge, 2006, p.493.

Like most epistemological concepts, microhistory is not that easy to define as there has been considerable debate about how to succinctly summarise what constitutes its methodology. Jill Lepore has written that 'the recent microhistory conference's call for papers defined microhistory, in part, as the history of "hitherto obscure people" that "concentrates on the intensive studies of particular lives" to reveal the fundamental experiences and mentalities of "ordinary people".³² However, at the same time, she admits that she has struggled greatly to come up with a succinct definition as there is no real school of microhistory in America.³³ Despite this epistemological murkiness, there are still classifications that are useful, however. New Zealand historian Peter Gibbons has provided an especially clarifying definition of the concept. Gibbons argues that 'Microhistories usually focus upon relatively obscure or "ordinary" people and their often extraordinary experiences, teasing out from shreds of evidence what their tribulations indicate about the attitudes, beliefs, mentality, and values of communities or classes or local institutions'.³⁴ When we subsequently look at Goldson's work as adhering to these ideas, the effectiveness of such techniques becomes apparent almost immediately. The adoption of microhistorical techniques by Goldson is not accidental either. She argues that 'all documentary tends to take singular stories as emblematic of broader social realities with the experience of one standing in for that of the many'.³⁵ In other words, Goldson is very aware that her films work as a form of microhistorical analysis of the past because she believes this kind of historical construction naturally lends itself to documentary production.

In addition to being a prolific filmmaker who effectively examines these dimensions of history, Goldson is also an auteur filmmaker. Specifically, in fact, she is a 'political auteur'. What I mean by this is that she is a filmmaker who can justifiably be considered the authorial voice of her politically focused work. These ideas also warrant discussion as the concepts of political filmmaking and auteurship are often just assumed in studies of historiophoty, without historians actually debating them substantially.

There is no real controversy over the contention that Goldson is a political filmmaker. She has written considerably about this major thematic element herself. In fact, charting her productions within the wider history of what she refers to as the 'political documentary' was the subject of her 2004 Doctoral thesis. Goldson concluded that piece of scholarship by writing that 'in this thesis I have located and traced my work as "political documentary". I have argued that the five documentaries, produced over a decade from 1990 to 2000, were formed through a grid of influences...In addition, I have located each within a history of political documentary, one I have devised that traces a chronology from Dziga Vertov to the present day, and attempts, albeit

³² Jill Lepore, 'Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography', *Journal of American History*, Volume 88, Issue 1, 2001, p.131.

³³ *Ibid*, p.130.

³⁴ Peter Gibbons, 'The Far Side of the Search for Identity: Reconsidering New Zealand History', *New Zealand Journal of History*, Volume 37, Issue 1, 2003, p.7.

³⁵ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.189.

schematically, to insert documentary practice into its broader context'.³⁶ When writing about the tradition of documentary and dissent in New Zealand film history, she also points out that her work has continued a traditional legacy of political documentary making, and adds to it in her own significant way:

Filmmakers such as...Annie Goldson...have produced works that continue a vital and sustaining style of documentary that articulates real social critique, that experiments with aesthetic convention, and emphasises disruption, dissension, and difference. These filmmakers reveal the nation as a contested construct, made up of peoples and viewpoints that often resist and confront prevailing and orthodox views of New Zealand society.³⁷

To Goldson, the political aspect of her work is something that is significantly important to its overall narrative, but also its place within the wider spectrum of New Zealand filmmaking. Subsequently, like a lot of academics with a politically focussed bent, her work veers into the realm of history, as history provides invaluable context for the personal narratives she tells in her movies. This cross-disciplinary intermingling is, of course, not a one-way relationship. As much as history provides context for her more intimate narratives, these same individual stories provide specificity that illuminates her historical narratives. Goldson repeatedly chooses to focus on politics because she is an auteur filmmaker, and she gets to stamp her vision directly onto her films. It is important to acknowledge her role as an auteur because historians— (even those who celebrate historiophoty) — often fail to interrogate the collaborative nature of filmmaking. Usually the sole authors of their works, they assume that any given filmmaker/historian is responsible for the output of the text that a particular audience will receive. Understanding the role of the auteur in this collaborative process is thus necessary.

The 'auteur theory' is another controversial and widely debated epistemological concept that academics have rigorously discussed since the first usage of the term in Germany in the 1920s.³⁸ What French filmmakers/theorists such as Andre Bazin, Francois Truffaut, and Jean-Luc Goddard initially argued in the 1940s and 1950s was an idea that the director of a film could be an auteur, depending on how much personal influence was placed upon the production and final product of the text.³⁹ According to John Caughie, auterism shares certain basic assumptions. These assumptions are that 'a film, though produced collectively, is most likely to be valuable when it is essentially the product of its director; that in the presence of a director who is genuinely an artist (an auteur) a film is more than likely to be the expression of his individual personality; and that this personality can be traced in a thematic and/or stylistic consistency over all (or almost all) the director's films.'⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid, p.208.

³⁷ Annie Goldson and Jo Smith, 'The Contested Nation: Documentary and Dissent', in Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray (eds.) *Contemporary New Zealand Cinema: From New Wave to Blockbuster*, London, 2008, p155.

³⁸ Lynette Read, *Vincent Ward: The Emergence of an Aesthetic*, PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2004. p9.

³⁹ Ibid, pp.9-10.

⁴⁰ John Caughie, 'Introduction', in John Caughie, *Theories of Auteurship: A Reader*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul in Association with the British Film Institute, 1981, p.9.

When Andrew Sarris coined a famous essay on the topic in 1962, he essentially argued that the concept could be transferred from the expressive film artist in the headier regions of art cinema to the jostling, compromised world of Hollywood.⁴¹ To Sarris, the works of Hitchcock, Ford, and Welles deserved to be categorised as genuine works of individual authorial vision, in the same way that the more artistically liberated French counterparts were considered. Sarris argued that there were three 'concentric circles' on filmmaking technique that indicated whether or not a filmmaker was an auteur. These were technique, personal style, and inherent meaning, and if you could examine a filmmaker's work and find repetitive patterns amongst these areas, it was safe to assume that their authorial vision was highly influential.⁴²

While film theorists often debate the concept of authorship in the context of feature film productions, the notion of the filmmaker as an auteur has often been assumed with documentary directors - particularly those who produce documentaries with a political bent. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson argue that this tendency for auteurism to be influential in documentary studies goes back to the end of the second World War, where in the UK and France a true personalisation of documentaries began to emerge.⁴³ Since this time, the auteur theory in regards to documentary only seems to have become more ingrained. Goldson has noticed this herself, and when examining the literature on documentary theory, she found that the majority of 'studies examine documentary through a focus on the filmmaker as an auteur, or author. Even (Bill) Nichols' modal analyses tend to be canonical; it list works by recognized directors within his taxonomic categories.'⁴⁴ This means that even in the most authoritative theoretical accounts of the documentary film, the auteur influence is still assumed.⁴⁵

Despite the fact that the influence of a director can sometimes be overstated and unfairly applied, it is appropriate to categorise Goldson as an auteur. Her authorial presence is very evident on her films, particularly with the three examined here. Smail superbly composes a succinct summary of why the works are distinctly reflective of Goldson's authorial voice and technique. She writes that the three films 'present thematic and stylistic consistencies that easily constitute them as a trilogy of works.' Firstly, they are 'all are feature length films that consider the murder of a New Zealand citizen in another nation in the Asia Pacific (East Timor, Fiji, and Cambodia respectively)'. Additionally, there is a particularly 'explicit commonality' which is the use of a 'perspective and narrative voice provided by a close family member'. To Smail, '*Punitive Damage, An Island Calling, and Brother Number One* marry the biographical

⁴¹ David Bordwell, 'Observations on Film Art', available online at *David Bordwell's Website on Cinema*, <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2012/06/24/octaves-hop-andrew-sarris/>, date accessed 28 January 2016.

⁴² Andrew Sarris, 'Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962', in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.) *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (7th Ed.), New York, Oxford University Press, 2004, p.453.

⁴³ Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (2nd Ed.), New York, McGraw-Hill, 2003, pp.80-81.

⁴⁴ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.8.

⁴⁵ Bill Nichols has been one of the most influential theoretical voices examining documentary film. In her doctoral thesis Goldson describes his work as being 'highly significant and influential'. In particular he was one of the first theorists to publish and 'influential taxonomy' of the genre. See Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, pp.5-11.

and testimonial mode with the social documentary that investigates historical, political events'.⁴⁶ The originality of this technique, combined with its repeated use, implies that there is a distinct perspective being supplied by Goldson that can be reasonably described as authorial.

The most significant criticism levelled at the concept of the director as auteur is the scepticism some theorists feel toward the idea that any one individual can be seen as an author in a medium as collaborative as a film.⁴⁷ This criticism is fair and is not without merit. But when looking at the film specifically as a purveyor of the dimensions of history, the question comes back (as it often does) to the appropriateness of comparing historiophoty to historiography.⁴⁸ Both historiophoty and historiography are usually collaborative constructs. If someone who influences the work as profoundly as Goldson can not be viewed as an auteur because they collaborate with a technical practitioner (such as a cinematographer for example), then it is not unreasonable to remove authorship from a historical writer for using a proof-reader, or hiring research assistants. If the latter assumption feels absurd, then similarly the removal of authorship because of collaborative efforts in historiophoty production should feel equally so.

Another aim of this study is to add to the scholarship surrounding Goldson's work in an original way. There are presently no historically focused studies of her work, despite their rich historical content. Most of the academic articles and texts written about Goldson focus on film issues individually, which makes sense. Given the fact that her documentaries are generally locally produced on a relatively small budget, their ability to pierce through the noise that permeates historical academia is, admittedly, limited. Perhaps more significantly, though, Goldson is also a professor of film studies, so as part of her day job, she contributes to the academic discussions about her work from a film studies perspective. Regardless of how the discipline of her scholarship is defined, though, Goldson's considerable output of written work is invaluable when looking at her film work, as it is incredibly detailed and comes with an insider's perspective nobody else could provide.

Initially, it seems counterintuitive for a filmmaker to analyse their own work, and in her doctoral thesis, Goldson acknowledges this. In the thesis, she actually elaborates on the possible philosophical reasoning behind why she has produced so much writing about her films. She ponders the notion that 'the urge to write and theorise could well stem from the "claim to truth" embedded in the genre, a claim that we, as makers, along with our audiences, are always scrutinizing as we pit documentary against some notion of truth, reality or history "out there."⁴⁹ What she means by this, is that in the pursuit of creating the 'truest' text as possible, there is constant introspection and self-analysis which ultimately morphs into written analysis.

⁴⁶ Smaill, 'A Death in the Asia Pacific: Three Documentaries by Annie Goldson', p.2.

⁴⁷ David Bordwell, 'Observations on Film Art', available online at *David Bordwell's Website on Cinema*, <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2012/06/24/octaves-hop-andrew-sarris/>, date accessed 28 January 2016.

⁴⁸ Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, p.36.

⁴⁹ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.4.

On a more practical level, though, Goldson rightly points out that 'writing about and "doing" documentary has been evident from the early days of the development of the genre. Pioneers such as John Grierson and Dziga Vertov wrote copiously about their work and its meaning and purposes', and this trend was seen again from many filmmakers internationally during the 1990s.⁵⁰ Goldson also points out that, because she does not simply look to write an autobiographical account of her films' production, she can give her work an extra layer of academic analysis better suited to the written form. She states that as 'a working documentary filmmaker and an academic, I have had the opportunity to step back and critically analyse my practice in a detached manner, approaching my film as I would any other text'.⁵¹ Given her training and expertise, she can critique and examine her work in a meaningful way that contributes to the academic discussion of documentary films generally. Hopefully, this thesis will add to the literature on Goldson's work, and provide a fresh perspective that does justice to the high standard of debate that surrounds her film output.

Regarding the historiography of the three different national events and developments I examine in this thesis through Goldson's documentaries, it is impractical to synthesise a comprehensive summary that gauges overall patterns here. However, there are still notable trends that emerge. With East Timor, given the official invisibility of the region in the West, many of the historical accounts have originated with activists, journalists, and other humanitarians. Activists such as Maire Leadbeater have been strongly influential in exposing the historical complicity of the West in allowing the Indonesians to commit genocide in Timor.⁵² Similarly, journalists on the ground in Timor, such as Irena Cristalis, Allan Nairn, and Amy Goodman, have situated their experiences in Timor against the historical backdrop of the region to produce influential and powerful pieces of journalism in the area.⁵³ Academics from multiple disciplines have looked at the East Timorese occupation because the politics and brutality involved in such a dark chapter of the past create powerful implications for these fields. Sociologists, historians, and political scientists are amongst the academics that have all contributed in their own way to the overall historical interpretation of the past.

The way that Fijian history has been constructed is both strikingly different and similar to that of Timor. Unlike with Timorese history, Fijian history has been predominantly composed in the mainstream. Much of the historical literature is influenced by colonial metanarratives and frames Fiji as the ultimate colonial success story. The most influential of these has probably been Kerr and Donnelly's *Fiji in the Pacific: A History and Geography of Fiji*, which Robert E Nicole argues was the 'core textbook from which generations of Fijian citizens acquire their

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Goldson, 'Journalism Plus? The Resurgence of Creative Documentary', p.86.

⁵² See, Maire Leadbeater, *Negligent Neighbour: New Zealand's Complicity in the Invasion and Occupation of Timor-Leste*, Nelson, Craig Potton Publishing, 2006.

⁵³ For example, Irena Cristalis, *Bitter Dawn: East Timor – A People's Story*, London, Zed Books, 2002. Additionally, Alan Nairn and Amy Goodman have both done extensive journalistic coverage of East Timor and have received awards such as the Robert F Kennedy Memorial Prize for International Radio. A relatively recent discussion between the two of them can be found in Goodman's radio and television show *Democracy Now*, available online at http://www.democracynow.org/2008/1/28/massacre_the_story_of_east_timor, date accessed 12 February 2016.

formal knowledge of Fijian history'.⁵⁴ However, much like with Timor, this older historiography has been built around enforcing power structures and has a politically driven bent that establishes colonialism as a gift of sorts for Fiji. As Nicole further points out, 'the process of historical production in Fiji has made certain people and events invisible and significant, and others invisible and forgettable'.⁵⁵ This reinforcement of the idea that occupation was positive, and the favouring of western power structures at the expense of the indigenous experience, mimics what has happened with East Timorese history.

The history of the Khmer Rouge dates is notable because of its overall invisibility both in the West and in Cambodia itself – albeit for entirely different reasons. Noam Chomsky points out that when the Khmer Rouge were massacring Cambodian civilians, there was quite a lot of interest from Western media, and he postulates this was because there was political capital to accrue from looking at atrocities under communist regimes. Because the Khmer Rouge was a communist regime, the Cambodians were, politically speaking, 'worthy victims' of attention in the American press.⁵⁶ However, since the dissipation of the Khmer Rouge, there has been an overwhelming silence in places like New Zealand regarding Cambodia. More worryingly, though, this silence has permeated discourse within Cambodia itself, as Khmer Rouge officials still hold immense power today, and wish to stonewall any attempt to bring light to their barbarism. Historical literature on Cambodia might be improving, but as Rob Hamill points out, it faces enormous obstacles from a powerful elite that still have disproportionate influence over the everyday affairs of Cambodians.⁵⁷

This literature is important to acknowledge as it gives us context. However, even though I will make reference to the wider historiographical literature of these regions, these references are not included as a means of evaluating the quality of Goldson's historiophoty. By looking at written history as well as the films, I am not comparing what Goldson says in her historiophoty to what a writer has said about a similar time and place. Using the historiographical works as a kind of 'correct' source in which to compare Goldson's historiophoty is inherently contradictory to the entire idea of this study.⁵⁸ Thus, it needs to be emphasised that these historiographical references are used so that I can situate her work within a larger debate about the dimensions of history and to demonstrate how Goldson engages with these questions. In all cases, Goldson does not try to translate what is in a written discourse into an imagistic one.⁵⁹ Instead, as I will demonstrate, she utilises her skill as a filmmaker to produce remarkably useful pieces of historiophoty that (re)vision history in her own way.

⁵⁴ See G. J. A Kerr and T. A Donnelly, *Fiji in the Pacific: A History and Geography of Fiji*, Queensland, 1969; and Robert E Nicole, *Disturbing History: Resistance in Early Colonial Fiji*, University of Canterbury PhD Thesis, 2006, p.1.

⁵⁵ Nicole, p.3.

⁵⁶ Edward S Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1988, p.302.

⁵⁷ Lindy Burns, 'Terror in Cambodia: Brother Number One', audio via 774 ABC Melbourne, available online at <http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2011/07/27/3279380.htm>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

⁵⁸ Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, p.36.

⁵⁹ Rosenstone, 'History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film History in Images', p.1175.

CHAPTER ONE: GENOCIDE OR LIBERATION? *PUNITIVE DAMAGE* (1999) AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

*'This title, as is the case with many, exceeds a single descriptive meaning, and was intended to relay how "punitive" and "damaging" the military occupation of East Timor had been – to families, populations, and many in the world.'*¹

Annie Goldson

If we wish to look at how film can interpret historical events and subsequently create a valuable product of historiophoty, *Punitive Damage* (1999) is an excellent feature to examine carefully. By adding to an already existing legacy of texts that re-examine East Timorese history from a 'human rights' perspective, Goldson successfully constructs an alternative historical interpretation that is useful for engaging viewers in complex historical stories, ideas, and concepts. The film is designed to reach as many people as possible and thus is particularly useful for engaging viewers who are not usually involved in history or are unfamiliar with what happened in East Timor.

Punitive Damage, like all of Goldson's documentaries in this thesis, is the story of a New Zealand citizen murdered in a foreign country. The subject in this instance is Kamal Bamadhaj, who was a young man born in Malaysia to New Zealander, Helen Todd, and who then subsequently undertook most of his secondary schooling at Auckland Grammar. Bamadhaj became an influential and passionate activist while living in Sydney, and had a high level of involvement with East Timorese independence movements. While helping to organise anti-Indonesian support in East Timor on November 12, 1991, Bamadhaj was brutally slain by Indonesian forces. The murder occurred during the armed suppression of a demonstration held at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, in response to the killing of a young activist named Sebastiao Gomes, two weeks prior. Gomes was killed because along with others, he had been working for nearly a year on an elaborate programme of activities to coincide with the expected visit of a Portuguese delegation, which at the last moment was cancelled.² Subsequently, the absence of the European delegates meant that Indonesian military did not feel they had to deal with protestors peacefully, and Gomes was killed in a violent exchange between activists and the army when the military stormed the Motael church.

Until Bamadhaj's murder, massacres by the Indonesian military in Timor were not particularly newsworthy in the West. Massacres had been going on for decades without really a hint of opposition from Western governments. This silence in opposition was shared by the governments of New Zealand and Australia – even when the Indonesian military massacred citizens from these countries. For example, in 1975, a group of five journalists, all Australian and New Zealand citizens (later referred to as the 'Balibo Five') were butchered by Indonesian authorities, and rather than responding with outrage, Australia announced the second of a

¹ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.180.

² Cristalis, p.43.

three-year military aid programme to Indonesia amounting to AUD\$25 million.³ Unlike with the majority of previous massacres, though, there were Western journalists in Dili that day in 1991, who were also able to get out alive with film footage of the events. Most notably, British journalist Max Stahl managed in the face of gunfire and extreme violence, to film a significant part of the massacre in secret, and then sneak his contraband tapes home. Stahl described the attack as a 'cold-blooded and pre-meditated massacre' and the footage he captured reflects this reality.⁴ The footage was a sensation when it was released to Western media because the brutality was no longer possible to hide. It was shown by television stations worldwide, often several times a day and was later crafted into a documentary.⁵ Because of this, the massacre is often described as the death knell for the Indonesian occupation.⁶ Additionally, Stahl is today considered a hero in East Timor because the attention his visual evidence brought to the atrocities in the region, helped illuminate the very real and horrific situation the East Timorese were facing under illegal occupation.⁷

INTERPRETING HISTORY

Goldson's *Punitive Damage* uses this single massacre that occurred during a decades-long occupation, to re-interpret the historical events of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, in a way that challenges the 'state sanctioned' interpretation of what happened. This state-sanctioned interpretation frequently examines the invasion and occupation through the lens of western anti-communism. It frames East Timor as a backwards Portuguese colony which savage Communist radicals (FRETILIN) had divided after the colonial Portuguese departed in the 1970s. Indonesia and western allies that were complicit in allowing the occupation presented this interpretation to the general public if they even acknowledged the events at all.

The term 'state-sanctioned interpretation' is not a hyperbolic term either. At an official state level, the Indonesian government wrote the history of the region so that this was the standard interpretation of events. The Indonesian Department of Foreign Affairs even released a document called *Decolonization in East Timor* in March 1977, and this insightful piece of political propaganda is a valuable insight into how Indonesia would present the events of 1975 for decades to come. There are four main reasons that Indonesia gives in the report for their invasion and subsequent occupation of East Timor.

Firstly, in the report, East Timor is characterised as a nation on the brink of collapse owing to a colossal Civil War. The report states that 'the outbreak of the civil war and the indiscriminate

³ See, James Dunn, *Timor: A People Betrayed*, Sydney, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1996, pp.233-234; and Paul Hainsworth and Stephen McClosky, *The East Timor Question: The Struggle for Independence from Indonesia*, London, Tauris, 2000, p.139.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.16.

⁵ *Ibid*, p.36.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ Michael Coggan, 'Dili Massacre Images Makes Journalist a Hero to East Timor (Transcript)', *ABC News*, Originally broadcast 18 June 2004, transcript available online at <http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/nt/content/2003/s1135817.htm>, date accessed 15 September 2015.

plundering to which the FRETILIN troops were engaged caused tens of thousands of East Timorese to flee for safety to Indonesian territory'. According to the Indonesian government, the 'housing, clothing, and feeding of such large numbers of people created grave difficulties for the local administration of Indonesian Timor, unprepared for such a massive influx of people, and threatened to disrupt social and economic conditions in the province.' The report then adds that 'this was naturally a cause of great concern to the Indonesian government' as if Indonesia was simply a concerned neighbour that was only apprehensive about the precarious situation of the Timorese people.⁸

Secondly, the Indonesians characterised FRETILIN⁹ as a blood lusting group of dangerous Communist radicals maniacally bent on enforcing their will on the nation, against the wishes of the population. They emphasised the apparent brutality of FRETILIN by claiming that an Indonesian Red Cross team found evidence of mass murder at the hands of the political movement. The report describes how 'on February 15, 1976, a Red Cross team arrived at Ailieu, which was the former site of the headquarters of the FRETILIN forces' and 'in the immediate area of Ailieu three mass graves containing scores of bodies were discovered'. The report further states that 'at another town, Same, a fourth grave was discovered on February 17.' The report goes on to imply that these murders were barbaric and torturous because 'many of the victims could no longer be identified.' This section closes by claiming that 'other reports of wide-spread FRETILIN atrocities were recounted by the villagers', leaving the impression that these particular cases highlighted, may have only been the tip of the proverbial iceberg, when it came to FRETILIN murder.¹⁰

Thirdly, the Indonesians presented the invasion and occupation as merely a stop-gap measure on the path to ensuring East Timorese self-determination. The report boldly claims that 'from the outset of the Timor problem the government of Indonesia made it clear that it firmly supported the free and democratic exercise of the right to self-determination by the people of East Timor in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions 151 (XV) and 1541 (XV) of the General Assembly.' Incredibly, the report then goes on to state that 'in conformity with its historic support for decolonization throughout the world in consonance with the language of the Charter, the Indonesian Government recognized the importance of "the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these (non-self-governing) territories are paramount".¹¹ The idea that Indonesia could possibly occupy another country while claiming to support decolonization gives an idea into just how transparently fraudulent the majority of their justifications for the occupation really were.

⁸ Indonesian Department of Information, *Decolonisation in East Timor*, Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia Department of Information, 1977, p.28.

⁹ FRETILIN is the leftist political party 'Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor'.

¹⁰ Indonesian Department of Information, *Decolonisation in East Timor*, p.41.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.42.

Finally, the report presented the invasion as not only the best thing to have ever happened in East Timor but also as an enormously popular development amongst the occupied Timorese. One of the passages reads that 'In order to accelerate the process of reconstruction, and to ensure that the people of East Timor enjoy the full exercise of their rights as citizens of Indonesia, the Indonesian government has launched a series of measures aimed at promoting the recovery of the territory from the ravages of the period of civil strife, and providing the people with the infrastructure necessary to supply those essential services long denied them by colonialism.'¹² In other words, rather than being a brutal occupation, the invasion was actually a gift of modernisation to the Timorese, who could now enjoy all the benefits of being an Indonesian citizen.

Indonesian news media helped frame this perspective with news stories that encouraged misleading interpretations of what the Indonesians had undertaken. Newspapers from the time reveal the pervasiveness of the anti-communist world view. Journalist Franz Harahap, writing for the Indonesian newspaper *Sinar Harapan*, wrote a three-part chronicle of life in East Timor a year on from the initial Indonesian invasion. His assessment was glowing in its summary of the Indonesian effect while being equally damning of the Portuguese and FRETILIN legacies. Some of Harahap's most notable observations include the claim the Timorese proudly celebrated their absorption by their significantly larger neighbour on the anniversary of the violent invasion. He wrote that 'on 17, July 1977, celebrations marking the one-year integration with Indonesia were held all over East Timor. In the city of Dili, tens of thousands of people carrying banners and red and white flags flooded the square in front of the East Timor Governor's Office to express their determination to remain under the Republic of Indonesia and be one part of the Indonesian territory.'¹³ Additionally, Harahap claimed that the occupation had been so successful that the population of Dili had ballooned in response. Harahap cites 'unofficial data' provided by the Staff of the Regional Coordinator of East Timor, to claim that the population of Dili had 'increased by an estimate of 15,000 people.' In case his implications were not explicit enough, Harahap concludes his observations by pointing out that 'population increase coupled with employment clearly invites better economic activities.'¹⁴

Other writers at the time also used anecdotal observations in their articles to re-assert this view. A journalist who went by the single moniker, Rumhardjono, used conversations with people on the street as the basis for more sweeping assertions about the positive effects of occupation. Writing for *Kompas*, Rumhardjono wrote that 'in talks with most ordinary people, it is probably the most interesting to ask what is nicer: before or after the integration? The answer is uniform – it's nicer now.'¹⁵ Additionally, Machmudi Romli, reporting for *Buana*, championed the changes in Dili asserting that since the integration the city 'is now beautifying itself, the shops are starting

¹² Ibid, p.47.

¹³ Indonesian Department of Information, Newspaper Articles on East Timor, Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia Department of Information, 1977, p.7.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.12.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.17.

to open their doors widely, with goods that are sufficiently miscellaneous and piled up in the show windows'.¹⁶ To Romli, the occupation had modernised the capital of East Timor and brought a western lifestyle the citizens assumedly could never have imagined.

This idea that Indonesia was benevolently enforcing the will of the East Timorese is untrue, however. Allies of Indonesia, most notably the USA, continuously trumpeted their anti-Communist rhetoric so that if any American citizen happened actually to hear about the occupation, they would draw conclusions ideologically in line with the state. This spreading of incorrect information was undertaken despite the fact that both President Ford and Henry Kissinger knew that the anti-Communist rhetoric was exaggerated and that the invasion was simply a territorial grab. Using declassified US Embassy telegrams, Ben Kiernan demonstrates that when Suharto informed Ford and Kissinger that Indonesia would be expanding into East Timor, Ford assured him that the USA would 'understand' and would 'not press' Suharto on the issue.¹⁷ Even more brazenly, though, Kiernan highlights how Kissinger noted that they would have to be careful in how the occupation was presented because the USA was supplying Indonesia with the weaponry for the invasion. Kissinger stated 'you appreciate that the use of US-made arms could create problems...It depends on how we construe it; whether it is in self-defense or is a foreign operation. It is important that whatever you do succeeds quickly'. He acknowledged that by presenting the action as a move against communism, they 'would be able to influence the reaction in America' and that 'there would be less chance of people talking in an unauthorized way'.¹⁸

It is important to acknowledge how Goldson challenges this interpretation, and comes up with her own, as it demonstrates what an excellent filmmaker/historian she is. Criticisms of how historiophoty goes about interpreting history are almost as old as Hollywood itself.¹⁹ What is particularly striking, though, is that a lot of the familiar criticisms have not changed that much, even in the past three decades. In 1978, Ian Jarvie produced one of the most well-known critiques of filmic history, and in it, he argued that the information load of films is just too poor, and the discursive weaknesses just too great, for any piece of historiophoty to be anything more than a 'visual aid' to written history.²⁰ Jarvie felt that interpreting the past could not be achieved in any meaningful or significantly analytical way on film.

While Jarvie may be the most well-known critic of historiophoty, he is hardly the only person to hold such an opinion. Toplin points out that when historical films are released, they are often met with derision from wider audiences because they can interpret history with condensed

¹⁶ Ibid, p.29.

¹⁷ Ben Kiernan, *Genocide and resistance in Southeast Asia: Documentation, Denial and Justice in Cambodia and East Timor*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 2008, p.109.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Toplin, *History by Hollywood (2nd Ed.)*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2009, p.9.

²⁰ Richard Maltby, 'New Cinema Histories', in Richard Maltby, Daniel Billtereyest, Phillippe Meers (eds.), *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, Hoboken, John Wiley and Sons, 2011, p.4.

information and the exercise of artistic license.²¹ In fact, according to Toplin, the view that Hollywood films interpret history poorly is so prevalent that it has actually become a favourite story for journalists in the national media. Toplin argues that every time a major film that deals with history is released, there is a flood of articles in which writers decry how films only offer unsophisticated commentaries.²² What is so ironic about this is that these critics often lambast films for their generalising approach to historical interpretation, while they simultaneously generalise about the worth of historiography.²³

To Toplin, it is unfair to assume the worst as there is not the appropriate level of scholarship to back up this pessimism. As he points out, much of the criticism about how films interpret history is unfounded, because the field 'remains relatively neglected'.²⁴ This double-standard is problematic because sweeping generalisations about the quality of interpretation in historiography ignore how films like *Punitive Damage* can have their interpretation shaped by their context, and explicit desire to present an idea that runs counter to the mainstream. *Punitive Damage* might be designed to reach as many people as possible, but this does not mean that there were only financial interests behind its production. As we will see, Goldson produced the film with the intent to challenge official state-sanctioned interpretations of violent and catastrophic events. If it is the assertion of critics like Jarvie that interpreting the past is an activity comprised of debates between historians about 'just what exactly did happen, why it happened', and an 'adequate account of its significance', then Goldson's methodical dismantling of the state-sanctioned interpretation is historical scholarship that should be commended by historians everywhere.²⁵

To Goldson, East Timor was not a communist threat, but instead a victim of a wider 'cold war mentality, which saw Western economic and military interests collaborating with local oligarchies to violently crush movements towards independence and self-determination through the 1970s and 1980s'.²⁶ Thus, Goldson's film dismisses the first state-sanctioned interpretation of events and instead frames the occupation through the lens of a 'human rights' perspective. Rather than focusing on the geopolitical and economic factors behind the occupation, Goldson uses the story of Bamadhaj's murder to emphasise 'the historical experience of the Timorese living under occupation: a society terrorized by torture, disappearances, and lack of basic freedoms'.²⁷

One of the significant reasons for utilising a human rights perspective for the film was because the international geopolitical climate changed so radically with the fall of the Berlin wall.

²¹ Toplin, *History by Hollywood (2nd Ed.)*, p.9.

²² *Ibid.*, p.10.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Toplin, *History by Hollywood: The Use and Abuse of the American Past (1st ed.)*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1996, p.viii.

²⁵ White, 'Historiography and Historiography', p.1195.

²⁶ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.194.

²⁷ Annie Goldson, 'A Critical Examination of *Punitive Damage*' in *Spectator*, Volume 24, Issue 2, 2004, p.58.

Goldson believes that 'the end of the cold war stripped away any certainties that had framed international relations and journalistic and documentary practices, whatever their slant, for over four decades'.²⁸ 'Human rights', Goldson argued, 'became one of the only political visions remaining'.²⁹ For documentary filmmakers and journalists, the cold war dichotomy of the prior four decades was irrelevant in the face of global concerns that were increasingly borderless. This change provided filmmakers with an opportunity to re-examine events previously framed through the 'prism of superpower conflicts' under a broader 'human rights umbrella'.³⁰ She goes on to state that like other works under this new umbrella, the film is aimed at 'larger, even mainstream audiences', and had not only appeared with the aim of 'raising the consciousness of small target' audiences.³¹ She elaborated on this in more depth, stating:

To be effective as a human rights documentary, I believed *Punitive Damage* needed to reach a wide international audience. Many nations, with an eye on Indonesia's trade potential, were complicit with the atrocity that was East Timor, unwilling to rock the boat. Few of their citizens were aware of the history of the region, and, if they were, were often apathetic, willing to believe the 'trade' argument. But I hoped that the strength of the story behind *Punitive Damage*, within its almost mythic resonance, would force audiences to pay attention.³²

Goldson has not been alone in adopting this counter-interpretation of historical events. Alternative human rights interpretations have emerged in multiple historical and investigative presentations of the invasion, particularly with the use of documentary film. *Punitive Damage* is, in fact, part of a remarkable legacy of documentaries that present an alternative historical interpretation of events in East Timor.³³ Significantly, the interpretation of history presented in these films has been influential and long lasting. Goldson acknowledges the influence of these films and the people behind them in allowing her work to be viable in the late 1990s. She writes that East Timor had 'fallen from the headlines and was not considered an important story within mainstream news and current affairs units. Only the efforts of a handful of activist organisations...and a few prominent individuals (linguist and social critic Noam Chomsky, the historian Peter Carey, and documentary maker John Pilger) ensured the horror that was East Timor retained some visibility'.³⁴

This legacy is all the more striking because the deeply politicised nature of the issues has meant that bringing documentaries which reinterpret East Timorese history has often been a challenging affair for filmmakers. Mary DeBrett points out how filmmaker Tom Zubrycki had considerable difficulty sparking interest when he pitched the concept of what would become his 2000 East Timor focused documentary *The Diplomat* to the 1998 Australian International Documentary Conference. During the pitch, one of the panels from the United Kingdom curtly

²⁸ Goldson, 'Journalism Plus? The Resurgence of Creative Documentary', p.90.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.206.

³² Ibid.

³³ These films include *Cold Blood: The Massacre of East Timor* (Max Stahl, 1992); *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* (Peter Wintonick and Mark Achbar, 1993); *Death of a Nation: The Timor Conspiracy*, (David Munro, 1994); *The Diplomat* (Tom Zubrycki, 2000); *Mavis Goes to Timor* (Steve Westh, 2000); and *Children of the Crocodile* (Marsha Emerman, 2002). This list comes from Mary DeBrett, 'Reclaiming the Personal as Political: Three Documentaries on East Timor', in *Metro Magazine*, Issue 138, 2003, p.76.

³⁴ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.177.

informed him that they weren't interested because 'we've already done Timor' - a reference to John Pilger's *Death of a Nation: The Timor Conspiracy* (1994).³⁵ DeBrett elaborates on this open dismissal, arguing that this attitude was not an aberration but rather the norm in media circles. She states that 'because of its situation of "extreme public horror," the East Timorese struggle for independence is a topic the media would generally prefer to avoid, being deemed more likely to evoke compassion fatigue, rather than viewer gratification.³⁶ Unfortunately for advocates of the East Timorese, the combination of official silence on the matter, with the delicate nature of the subject matter, has meant that these filmmakers have had to be resourceful and committed because help was always difficult to find.

Fortunately, for Goldson 'Todd and Bamadhaj's involvement in East Timor had a practical use' in getting film funding, as their experiences lent a 'New Zealand angle to what otherwise would be seen as an international story'.³⁷ Giving this local dimension to the story was advantageous for the production of the film, as *New Zealand on Air* would only fund documentaries that fulfilled their strict 'local content' requirement.³⁸ Additionally, Goldson successfully applied for 'development funding from the *Soros Documentary Fund*, which was committed to providing seed monies for documentaries on human rights, civil rights, and social issues'.³⁹ The unlikely combination of funding strictly reserved for New Zealand focused content, and financing explicitly given to projects looking at civil and human rights demonstrates how resourceful Goldson had to be in making the film a reality.

WESTERN COMPLICITY

The first example of how Goldson re-interprets history from a 'human rights' perspective is by using the massacre as a microhistorical framing device to examine the complex role of the West during the initial invasion and subsequent occupation. When looking at the occupation through the state-sanctioned lens of western anticommunism, the role of western governments is noticeably absent, despite their significant assistance in making the invasion happen. Because of this, resituating the role of the western governments in the history of the occupation is Goldson's initial focus in the film. Goldson's writing confirms this intention, as she pointedly states that '*Punitive Damage* consistently reminds the audience that it was US and Western support – our support – that made the occupation possible.'⁴⁰ The most obvious way that the West was widely complicit in the horrors of the East Timorese occupation was in giving Indonesia the power and weaponry to undertake decades of murder. This complicity took the form of governments tacitly endorsing the Indonesian occupation of East Timor by ignoring it

³⁵ Mary DeBrett, 'Reclaiming the Personal as Political: Three Documentaries on East Timor, in *Metro Magazine*, Issue 138, 2003, p.76.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.176.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.178.

⁴⁰ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.198.

(New Zealand, for example) or in the form of governments actively supporting the occupation by funding the Indonesian army and supplying them with weaponry.

Goldson initially establishes this idea of complicity by delivering testimony about the greater historical context in which Bamadhaj's murder occurred, via recreated courtroom sequences. Goldson argues that these courtroom sequences are crucial in interpreting history because through them she was able to not only present 'a thumbnail history of East Timor', but also 'examine how complicit the West had been in the country's occupation.'⁴¹ During these sequences, it is Allan Nairn that provides the bulk of the testimony. Nairn is a well-known expert on both Indonesia and East Timor, and his credentials are strong enough in this regard that he has fronted up in this capacity before the US Congress.⁴²

Nairn's testimony is introduced by a loud gavel blow on the film's soundtrack. These sequences of testimony are composed of black and white photographs, talking heads against a black backdrop, and a recreation of court transcripts. Nairn gives a contextual background to the invasion and occupation in the following exchange:

Lawyer - What country currently controls East Timor?

Nairn - It's occupied by the armed forces of Indonesia.

Lawyer - Can you explain briefly how the occupation came about?

Nairn - For about 400 years East Timor was a colony of Portugal. Then in 1974 after the democratic revolution in Portugal, Portugal began pulling out of its colonies. Timor began moving towards independence. The Suharto regime and the army decided they couldn't tolerate freedom in a neighbouring nation like Timor. They asked permission from the US to invade, they got it, and they invaded on December 7, 1975, and have been occupying it ever since in defiance of the UN Security Council. Parachutists came out US C130 transport planes; landing craft came ashore. They swept into the city; they dragged people out of their homes, they brought them down to the harbour and the beach, executed them with newly supplied US machine guns and M16s, and then they set fire to the houses of the city. They later swept into the interior massacring village after village as they went, and the Indonesian army has been occupying Timor ever since. They have killed about 200,000 people – about 1/3 of the original population.

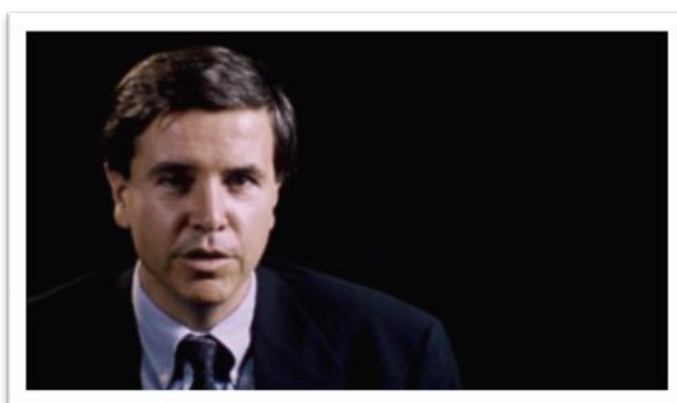


Figure 1.1 – Nairn being interviewed in recreated court transcripts

⁴¹ Ibid, p.195.

⁴² Amy West, 'Punitive Damage Study Guide', available online at *Ronin Films*, www.roninfilms.com.au/get/files/938.pdf, date accessed 10 October 2014, p.6.

These sequences of exposition efficiently transmit a lot of information through a human rights perspective, and the use of testimony from someone like Nairn is a point of difference when compared to the information that has traditionally been supplied by the state. Nairn is not only an 'expert' and a 'witness', but he was also an actual victim of the Indonesian violence himself. After initially disguising himself as Indonesian militia with success (to the point where a young East Timorese girl spat at him in disgust), he was later captured during the massacre and arrested with fellow journalist Amy Goodman.⁴³ Nairn was then beaten severely to the point where he was 'drenched in blood' and his skull was fractured.⁴⁴ He stayed behind and was led away by the Indonesian soldiers, and ended up in a prison in Kupang, before finally being deported.⁴⁵ Goldson has elaborated on why Nairn provides the majority of the context, stating that she 'decided to dispense with the more expositional technique of interviewing *traditional* experts' because the cast of "characters" that surrounded Kamal were all highly informed about the politics of East Timor'.⁴⁶

The film language and techniques that Goldson used in these sequences were deliberately decided upon so that the scenes had special authority and weight. Goldson writes that 'the sense of testimony or witnessing granted through the "court" footage is heightened not only by the legal quality of the footage but because, in this instance, the social actors look directly at the camera/viewer. Unlike the "common interview" where the gaze is slightly off camera, suturing the viewer through the presence of the filmmaker, the look here at camera/viewer is direct, thereby granting the words of the social actors with a sense of immediacy and communicative power... Given our social actors were not professional performers, this aided their "performance" as well as intensifying the power of their address'.⁴⁷

This interplay between modernist conceptions of history (expert's dispassionately discussing events) and postmodern conceptions of history (with more emphasis on social history and personal experience) is one of the unique strengths of not only this film, but of historiophoty in general. Rosenstone believes that one of the critical dimensions (and key strengths) of any postmodern history is the ability to incorporate a multiplicity of views, rather than merely supplying a lone authoritative voice.⁴⁸ While, because of the nature of the film she is making, Goldson provides a lot of different interviewees that all brings different perspectives anyway (a technique, it should be emphasised, that is substantially useful), the use of Nairn's testimony is particularly demonstrative of the value of historiophoty in framing this kind of postmodern history. By using Nairn as the audience's information guide, we get three different perspectives (expert, witness, and victim), while also getting an immersive experience of the trial, all in the

⁴³ John Martinkus, *A Dirty Little War*, Sydney, Random House, 2001, p.323.

⁴⁴ Clinton Fernandes, *The Independence of East Timor: Multi-Dimensional Perspectives - Occupation, Resistance, and International Political Activism*, Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2011, p.91.

⁴⁵ Cristalis, p.248.

⁴⁶ Goldson, 'A Critical Examination of *Punitive Damage*', p.52.

⁴⁷ Goldson, 'A Critical Examination of *Punitive Damage*', p.54.

⁴⁸ Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, pp.206-207.

space of a few minutes. Given the specificity of Nairn's testimony and the nature of his experiences, we also are able to draw significant assertions and observations, that illustrate wider issues concerning the occupation. His statement in such a sterile environment, for example, implicitly alludes to the bureaucratic banality of genocide, in a way that is not easily translated into text. The vision of a man dressed in business attire, having to sit patiently and describe the horrors he has seen in such a straightforward and neutral manner is horrifying in its own way, because of this banality.

It is not just the filmmaking techniques used to frame the testimony itself that are effective, though. By utilising the multi-sensory immersive nature of the film medium, Goldson additionally splices dialogue with primary footage that is meant to emphasise the very real consequences of what Nairn is saying. Goldson has described this herself stating that 'Nairn's testimony is sparsely illustrated by archival material, the little that there is, that survived the invasion of 1975. I supplemented this with Max Stahl's footage from 1991, particularly that which indicated the consequences, rather than the actuality, of the invasion and occupation such as the large family gravesites that dot East Timor'.⁴⁹ The combination of this raw footage with the narration presents a visceral information load that leaves the viewer in no doubt as to how Goldson interprets the past.

Between Nairn's testimony and the selected archival footage, the film explicitly denounces the role of the US and the West in aiding Indonesia. Goldson confirms this in writing, stating that '*Punitive Damage* is highly critical of the American military backing of the occupation of East Timor', and the film does not shy away from emphasising this connection.⁵⁰ While Goldson certainly interprets the past in her own way, this perspective concerning the role of the USA is certainly not unprecedented. As alluded to earlier, Goldson's human rights interpretation is similar to those seen in the other activist driven documentaries that view East Timorese history through a similar lens. For example, in *Manufacturing Consent* famed MIT professor Noam Chomsky (who has written at length about East Timor) offers an interpretation of the events that stands in direct contrast to the state-sanctioned version, and he too is highly critical of the USA.⁵¹ He states that 'East Timor was a Portuguese colony. Indonesia had no claim to it and, in fact, said that they had no claim to it. During the period of colonisation, there was a good deal of politicisation. Different groups developed. A civil war broke out in August 1975. It ended up in a victory for FRETILIN which was one of the groupings described as populist Catholic in character with some typical leftist rhetoric.' To Chomsky, FRETILIN was not the brutal communist antagonist that Indonesia implied, but merely another left wing movement in a developing country. He continues contradicting the state-sanctioned version of the event, claiming that 'Indonesia at once started intervening...Ford and Kissinger visited Jakarta; I think

⁴⁹ Goldson, 'A Critical Examination of *Punitive Damage*', p.53.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ East Timor featured heavily in Chomsky's 'Propaganda Model' of news that he formulated with Edward S Herman. For further reference, their analysis can be seen in Edward S Herman and Noam Chomsky *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media*, New York, 1988.

it was December 5th. We know that they had requested that Indonesia delays the invasion until after they left because they knew it would be too embarrassing and within hours I think after they left, the invasion took place on December 7th.’ He concludes by supplying numbers to round off his argument much like Harahap did. However, they are wildly different. According to Chomsky, ‘by 1978, it was approaching really genocidal levels. The church and other sources estimated about 200,000 people killed.’⁵²

The 1994 documentary *Death of a Nation* offers a similar summary again. At the very beginning of the film, the audience gets to see information succinctly presented and elaborated on by a solemn and frustrated John Pilger. Pilger echoes the sentiments of Nairn and Chomsky regarding the background to the occupation, by stating that ‘East Timor is a tiny country just 400 miles to the north of Australia. A Portuguese colony for more than 400 years East Timor was invaded in 1975 by Indonesia, the fifth largest nation in the world, led by a military dictatorship. Indonesia has no historical or legal claim to East Timor, yet its brutal occupation has met with mostly silence from the world’s leading governments and international agencies.’ Pilger draws the same conclusions about the number of people butchered as well, claiming that ‘as a result, of the Indonesian invasion and occupation, some 200,000 people died here. That’s a third of the population or proportionately more than were killed in Cambodia under Pol Pot. They were killed resisting the invasion, they were murdered without reason, they died in concentration camps, and they starved. Perhaps genocide is used too often these days, but by any standards, that’s what’s happened here. And it happened mostly beyond the reach of the TV camera, and the satellite dish, and with the connivance and complicity of Western governments.’⁵³

Along with Nairn’s testimony, these two pieces of expository background, outline three main points: how close East Timor is to ‘our world’, the damage caused by invasion, and the complicity of the West in allowing it to happen. Other academics and experts outside of film have also framed their analysis through a similar ‘human rights’ perspective, and they draw the same conclusions. Maire Leadbeater is one of New Zealand’s most notable human rights campaigners and has written a comprehensive history of New Zealand’s negligence regarding the East Timor issue.⁵⁴ She supports Nairn’s summary of events arguing that ‘Indonesia was emboldened by the acquiescence of its western allies...the deciding factor was almost certainly the assurance given to President Suharto that America would allow him to use their weapons. Indonesia was utterly reliant on its friends to keep it supplied with weapons and equipment. Ninety percent of the weapons used by Indonesia in the invasion came from the United States’.⁵⁵ Additionally, by using declassified Australian documents, Clinton Fernandes

⁵² Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media (Film)*, Necessary Illusions, National Film Board of Canada, 1992.

⁵³ John Pilger, *Death of a Nation: The Timor Conspiracy (Film)*, Carlton Television, UK, 1994.

⁵⁴ See, Maire Leadbeater, *Negligent Neighbour: New Zealand’s Complicity in the Invasion and Occupation of Timor-Leste*, Nelson, Craig Potton Publishing, 2006.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.45.

is able to give some financial figures to back up these assertions from Leadbeater and others. From his research, Fernandes found that 'the US military aid programme provided equipment through three major channels: direct grants, which also include the cost of training programmes; credit sales under the Foreign Military Sales Act; and transfers from excess stocks. In 1967-78 military aid totalled \$104 million'.⁵⁶

Other academics and writers that have traditionally toed the counter-interpretation line concur. Irena Cristalis is a journalist and broadcaster who refused evacuate during the 1999 Indonesian withdrawal and is arguably the most respected journalist who has written about East Timor. Cristalis stated that 'for some months, Australia, Europe, and the USA had pretended to be ignorant about developments in East Timor. All valued their relationship with Indonesia more than they cared about the fate of the tiny half-island'.⁵⁷ Additionally, Charles Scheiner, the co-founder of the American East Timorese Action Network adds that 'For 23 years, through six Republican and Democratic presidents, the US Government steadfastly provided weapons, military training, and diplomatic support for the Indonesian invasion and occupation of East Timor'.⁵⁸ Resituating the role of the USA and the west is critical to establishing an interpretation that runs counter to that which is sanctioned by the state.

WESTERN ACTIVISM

However, while it is clear that Western governments supported Indonesian genocide, the film does not interpret the relationship of Westerners to the Timorese as simple or homogeneous. In addition to focusing on why Western governments were complicit in the occupation, Goldson uses Bamadhaj's earlier experiences as a framing device to look at how Western activists tried to battle their elected representatives on this issue. By focusing on Bamadhaj's experiences before his murder, the film reveals that there was passionate and diverse opposition at the grassroots in these same Western countries. Goldson demonstrates through the film, that in nations like New Zealand and Australia, there was, in fact, a duality between cynical actions from governments and principled actions from large groups of activists who for decades worked to bring about awareness of the complicity of their governments to fellow compatriots.

Goldson does this by firstly depicting the life of Bamadhaj and his girlfriend Bibi Langker in Sydney as they actively work towards drawing attention to the issues in East Timor and South East Asia. Goldson reconstructs courtroom footage of Helen Todd, and in these scenes, Todd describes to the audience, as she did the courtroom, how Bamadhaj became 'increasingly politically active' as he embarked on tertiary study. In his first year at University, Bamadhaj joined the Asian Students Collective, and Todd describes how this allowed him to 'channel his energy into various causes'. Todd also notes that a real change in Bamadhaj occurred when

⁵⁶ Fernandes, pp.20-21.

⁵⁷ Cristalis, p.38.

⁵⁸ Hainsworth and McClosky, pp.117-118.

he visited East Timor in his second year of University. To her, the trip further cemented his opposition to the actions of the Indonesians and pushed him to take his activism more seriously. Bamadhaj became a founding member of a group called AKSI, that Todd describes as being 'a support group set up to lobby for pro-democracy student movements in Indonesia.'⁵⁹ Kamal's sister Nadia also reveals that he was trying to recruit as many people as possible to the cause, and was heavily involved in studying Indonesian politics. According to Nadia, he was making plans to do further research on the student-led movements for democracy, just before his murder.

Both Bamadhaj and Langker were members of AKSI and were in her words 'fervently involved in the cause'. Their group was one of many, though, and in fact, Langker referred to the group as being part of the wider South East Asia political activists 'scene'. Interviews, archival footage, and the use of traditional folk songs acting as the soundtrack, present this grassroots movement to the audience. Throughout the sequences that revisit these years, there are photos of protestors organising actions for example. In the photos they are painting signs that call for a cessation of Indonesian brutality, and have slogans such as 'holiday in Indonesia, leave your freedom at home', and 'stop the rampage, stop the killing, free East Timor now'. Langker then goes on to describe how in this 'scene' they often set up cultural festivals so that all groups suffering from human rights abuses could bring their causes forward and the wider group could be educated and fight for their cause. Goldson splices this testimony with photos of people in Sydney re-enacting atrocities from Timor to reflect Langker's words in an explicitly visual form. Actors in these pictures are bound up and forced to their knees while other performers dressed in army fatigues hold automatic weapons over their heads. The images are hauntingly effective because the large crowds in the backgrounds of the photos help emphasise the message that Westerners were doing nothing while these atrocities were taking place - which was an idea the activists were constantly trying to relay.

Critically these moments are spliced with more intimate and romantic shots of Bamadhaj and Langker, which keeps the depiction very humanised, affectionate, and personal. Goldson elaborates on this, writing that 'to enhance Bamadhaj's presence she used 'a number of personal archive resources' that his family and friends had given her. These were 'not just photographs, but also letters and a diary he wrote in the last weeks before his death. He was a prolific, funny, and elegant writer and his work reflected both his political commitment and his personal development'. She adds that 'his letters to Bibi Langker, for example, written from East Timor and Indonesia, depict an affectionate young man, outraged by the political conditions of East Timor, but who retains his sense of humour. When presented in close up his words, some misspelt, some crossed-out, exude the visceral, living quality of handwriting.'⁶⁰

⁵⁹ According to June HL Wong and Ong Ju Lin, AKSI was a group that was formed off another organisation that Kamal had been a part of - the Network of Overseas Student Collectives (NOSCA). More information can be found in their great article 'Kamal's Final Moments', available online at *The Sun, the Moon, and the Truth*, <http://sangsuria.blogspot.com/2000/05/kamals-final-moments.html>, date accessed 19 February 2016.

⁶⁰ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth*, p.183.



Figure 1.2 – Bamadhaj, Langker, and another friend painting protest banners

This thoughtful presentation of Bamadhaj as a decisive, but caring, activist was critical to securing his mother Helen's involvement with the project. Helen Todd felt it was important to highlight that Bamadhaj and his friends were not unaware of what they were doing and that they were actively trying to create change from where they stood. In an interview with Goldson, Todd says that 'I took part in the film because I trusted Annie Goldson to show Kamal, not as an innocent caught in the crossfire but as he was – a political activist...That struggle was his life his last two years, and this film honours that. Independence for East Timor seemed a long shot when Kamal was killed for it, but it is not now'.⁶¹

Goldson's writing on the role of volunteers supports the assertions that her film makes. She has described how non-government organisations and volunteers were the main fighters for East Timor in the West. In one piece, Goldson states that a 'plethora of organizations, dominated by UN peacekeepers and prominent NGOs, such as the Red Cross, Medicins sans Frontieres, and development and aid agencies' have intervened where governments have felt unable to act (rightly or wrongly).⁶² She adds to this observation, stating that 'what they do is hard graft, undertaken, as their death toll indicates, at some considerable risk. Given the diminished role many powerful states play in existing world conflicts, it is the human rights activists alone that foreground a connection between Ignatieff's two worlds, the "zones of safety" and the "zones of war". It is they who attempt to alleviate the misery of strangers'.^{63 64}

⁶¹ Ibid, p.175.

⁶² Annie Goldson, 'After the Fact: Truth, Testimony, and the Law in Human Rights Documentaries', in *Screening the Past*, 6 November 2002, available online at <http://tweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr0902/agfr14b.html>, date accessed 2 December 2015.

⁶³ Michael Ignatieff is a Canadian historian and former politician who has written extensively on human rights issue. Goldson uses a framework provided by Ignatieff in her article 'After the Fact: Truth, Testimony, and the Law in Human Rights Documentaries'. According to Goldson, Ignatieff argues that in the globalised world there are affluent countries who do not experience domestic war called 'zones of safety'; and there are 'zones of war' which are regions of chaos that have been left in a state of almost perpetual violence as they drift out of the global economy. For more information see Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and Social Conscience*, London, 1998.

⁶⁴ Goldson, 'After the Fact: Truth, Testimony, and the Law in Human Rights Documentaries'.

Goldson's particular focus on Sydney in the early 1990s is a compelling example of microhistory, as in this case Sydney acts as an example of the larger international activism scene. The depiction presented in the film emulates Maire Leadbeater's description of a broad, democratic activist movement in New Zealand under the banner of New Zealand Coalition for an Independent East Timor (NZCIET), for example. The NZCIET was a broad range of activist groups with ties to trade unions, universities, and other activist groups formed in solidarity, and to try and force the hand of the New Zealand government to condemn the occupation officially, and revoke its tacit support for Indonesia. Leadbeater writes that 'at its height the campaign had as many as twelve branches including campus groups...Peter Hopkins, NZCIET's first national co-ordinator, took up the cause with exceptional dedication. Wellington based, he spoke at meetings up and down the country while lobbying parliamentarians and working persistently and with considerable success to get mainstream media coverage of the campaign'. At one point he even influenced a National Party MP, Aussie Malcolm, to take their concerns about New Zealand's negligence to the National Party caucus. However, Malcolm was dismissed immediately by Robert Muldoon, who wanted to ignore the situation.⁶⁵ James Cotton, whose expertise is in matters of diplomatic history and international security, additionally has described the innovative radicalism of the Australian equivalent, the Australian Coalition for an Independent East Timor (ACIET). In a notable example of Australian activist vigilance (among many it should be emphasised), Cotton describes how in 1976 the ACIET leader Denis Freney built an illegal radio link with the East Timorese independence movement in Darwin. The radio link was the sole means by which FRETILIN could communicate and spread its message outside of East Timor, and was thus critical in linking FRETILIN to the international activists whose leaders wanted to ignore Timor.⁶⁶

The ACIET was just one part of the lively Australian East Timorese solidarity movement, however. Helen Hill, an Australian Sociologist, has highlighted the contributions of the Australian Society for Intercountry Aid Timor (ASIAT) in working with FRETILIN. Dr Hill produced the first history of the FRETILIN movement. This history stood as an affront to the state-sanctioned propaganda that described FRETILIN as bloodthirsty communists. According to Hill, ASIAT provided the backbone for the medical services of the whole colony. They set up a maternal and child welfare clinic and a nursing training scheme. They even managed to set up blood transfusions for FRETILIN hospitals using FRETILIN soldiers, while also setting up a tracing bureau so that people could trace relatives who had fled.⁶⁷ Additionally, Fernandes makes note of the sacrifices made by independent activists and in one particularly interesting example, he describes the arrests of four activists in 1976 while trying to sail to East Timor with medical supplies, food, radio equipment, and crucially six firearms.

⁶⁵ Leadbeater, pp.85-88.

⁶⁶ James Cotton, *East Timor, Australia, and Regional Order: Intervention and its Aftermath in Southeast Asia*, New York, Routledge, 2004, p.12.

⁶⁷ Helen M Hill, *Stirrings of Nationalism in East Timor: FRETILIN 1974-1978: The Origins, Ideologies and Strategies of a Nationalist Movement*, NSW, 2002, p.148.

The group had to face charges of attempting to smuggle drugs and guns, and while their convictions were eventually overturned the appeals cost one of the four everything he had.⁶⁸

Goldson's film thus effectively allows viewers to partake in an immersive experience of Bamadhaj's political activism scene. The viewers get to gain a sense of how broad this movement was, and how many risks and personal sacrifices were made by every day Western people who cared about what was happening and actively battled for change. As the activists did in the decades preceding him, Bamadhaj gave his time, his finances, and, unfortunately, his life, to try and change the (in)actions of the governments that represented him. In contrasting the humanity of the solidarity movements, with this disregard of humanity from governments in the West, Goldson uses filmmaking skills to come up with a unique and dense visual interpretation of a divisive and controversial time in history. From examining Bamadhaj's grassroots campaigning in detail, and contrasting this with the bureaucratic enabling of genocide at the highest levels of government, Goldson offers a multi-layered perspective on the role of the West that differs to the 'state sanctioned' interpretation of events, which tends to ignore the west altogether.

THE EAST TIMORESE

The film's challenges to the state-sanctioned interpretation do not end there, however. Goldson also challenges perceptions of the role of the Timorese during the occupation. When viewed through the prism of state-sanctioned anticommunism, the Timorese were either Communist radicals that needed to be wiped out or, in contrast, were innocent victims being butchered by the communists. When the information is interpreted through a 'human rights' lens, though, the East Timorese are seen instead as victims of Indonesian capitalist interests, while also being passionate Democrats fighting for self-determination.

Establishing the idea that the East Timorese were victims of Indonesian and western aggression is a focus of Goldson's work, as it has been with most historical accounts that advance a human rights interpretation. In the film, Bamadhaj's mother Helen Todd recalls his earlier sojourns around East Timor and she emphasises the atmosphere of victimisation and the feeling of helplessness that Bamadhaj felt tinged the air in East Timor. She recalls that 'at the end of his first year, he travelled through Indonesia beginning with East Timor. He was quite shaken by what he saw in East Timor and by the feeling he got from people of his own age there, particularly of the fear that they lived with there, and the arbitrariness of military rule there.' Todd describes how he repeatedly 'mentioned this in his letters, that they had no resource. There was just nothing they could appeal to outside of the dictats of the current army post or military commander'.

⁶⁸ Fernandes, p.48.

As she does in establishing a historical context for the invasion, Goldson uses testimony from a character who is both an expert and a witness, to draw out the idea that Timorese were victims of Indonesians and the west, as opposed to communists. The first testimony for this comes from Constancio Pinto. Pinto is currently the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of East Timor, and he has served as Ambassador of East Timor to the United States of America (Nov. 2009 - August 2012) and to Mexico and Canada from (2011-2012).⁶⁹ However, of equal importance, Pinto was also a key East Timorese resistance leader during the occupation. He was a young boy when the forces invaded in 1975, and he and his ten siblings escaped from Dili to the hills around the city.⁷⁰ Three years later he was arrested and interned in a concentration camp where he was brutally tortured.⁷¹ His leadership role came after his release from Indonesian incarceration, and he was one of the organisers of the Santa Cruz protest the Indonesians liquidated. After the massacre, Pinto was the one responsible for coming up with a detailed list of the 271 verifiable deaths that occurred at the hands of the Indonesian military.⁷²



Figure 1.3 – Constancio Pinto being interviewed in recreated court transcripts

Goldson initially uses Pinto's personal testimony to expand on and buffer Nairn's contextual information and to illustrate how brutal the Indonesian military was in victimising the Timorese. While Pinto presents facts in an exchange with the legal counsel like Nairn does, his account is based on his personal experiences with the invasion, as opposed to being formed by academic research.

Lawyer – And how did the invasion affect you and your family?

Pinto – As a result of the invasion I joined my parents in an escape to the mountains where we lived for three years.

Lawyer – And why did you have to leave the village?

⁶⁹ This information comes from Pinto's own blog *Ambassador Pinto: News, Facts, Culture on Timor-Leste and More*, available online at <http://ambassador-pinto.blogspot.co.nz/>, accessed 9 November 2014.

⁷⁰ West, p.6.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Don Greenlees and Robert Garran, *Deliverance: The Inside Story of East Timor's Fight for Freedom*, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 2002, p.22.

Pinto – The reason why we had to leave the village was because of the massacre the Indonesian army inflicted on the East Timorese. On the first day of the invasion, many Timorese were massacred including children and old people.

Lawyer – And what happened at the end of the three years?

Pinto – At the end of three years we were arrested in the jungle. They took us to the village – it's called Remeshi village and then they kept us in the village for about three months. It was actually a concentration camp. In the village people were not allowed to leave their homes even to socialise. People were entitled to have only three cups of rice for a whole week. As a result, people died of hunger and disease. Also, many other things happened in the concentration camp. Things such as persecutions, arbitrary arrests, torture, and rape.

Lawyer – Perhaps you could tell us about when you were arrested the second time after General Panjaitan was in power?

Pinto – The torture was beyond human understanding. Even though they saw that blood was running out of my nose and my mouth they continued to torture. They continued to beat my face, my eyes and continued to kick my stomach, my legs, until two in the morning.

Lawyer – Did you think you would die during the torture?

Pinto – Well the torture was so intense that at one point I asked them to kill me inside the room where I was interrogated, and they replied that they would kill me anyway.

In addition to this testimony, Goldson skillfully takes advantage of the visual component of film to add to this notion of victimhood. Her use of Stahl's chilling footage is most important in this regard. The soundtrack consists primarily of sirens, gunfire crackle, screams, and panicked running creating an audio cocktail of anarchy. The visual component then emphasises the terror and fear and articulates the horror of the situation in a way that words cannot do justice. Goldson selects a shot that focuses on a fence in the cemetery, and suddenly East Timorese civilians start piling over it running, for their lives, spilling over the wall like too much water poured into a too small glass. It is chaos, and over this scene is the voice of Gabriela da Cruz-Pinto, Constancio Pinto's Wife, trembling as she recalls her experience running for her life:

When the shooting starts, I fell down, and I lied on the floor, my stomach down. And the other demonstrators, they pushed, running and some fell on me. And I start...I start...I...And I start to saw the blood. It's bleeding on the ground...I was seven and a half months pregnant at the time...and...when the shooting stopped, I stand up, and I saw my dress all blood. And I still call some of my friends, and they went with me. And we run into the cemetery, and I saw a drum or something close to us, so I jumped on the drum, and I jumped over the cemetery. I didn't even notice that I lost my shoes, and we run, and they still shooting after we jump and there was like...when I look back, I saw dying people on the street...like blood, people scream, children scream.

Between moving testimony from survivors and journalists, Goldson showcases more footage of the brutality that was being imposed by the Indonesian authorities. She cuts to a scene where Stahl, fearfully hiding, films bodies piling over each other to climb a fence and escape the maniacal gunfire. The footage cuts to shots of military officers in riot gear mercilessly beating protestors with police batons and then cuts again to footage that shows one demonstrator feebly trying to pick up a fellow victim whose limp body and blood stained clothes indicate they are either severely injured or dead. However, the most horrifying, and possibly most well-known section of Stahl's footage is showcased next by Goldson. In this oft-repeated clip, we see two young East Timorese men. One has a torso completely soaked in blood, and the other is cradling the victim's head. Goldson briefly shows photos of other victims and scenes surrounding the men, before cutting back to a close up of the two. Both are in

immense pain. The man on the ground is in harrowing physical pain, and the man holding him is in agonizing emotional pain. A few scene cuts later, the audience sees that the man in physical pain has now died, and the man supporting him is laying his head down to rest.



Figure 1.4 – East Timorese under fire in the Santa Cruz cemetery



Figure 1.5 – An East Timorese victim of gunfire is cradled by another man as he dies

Again, by framing her film this way, Goldson is using a particular focus on one event to establish a microhistorical examination of wider trends. The massacre footage that she selects is representative of historiographical accounts of the greater brutality that the Indonesians put on the East Timorese. There are countless examples of testimony that reflect and entrench this view. Michele Turner's book *Telling East Timor: Personal Testimonies 1942-1992*, is filled with horrifying recollections that detail the viciousness of life under occupation for Timorese victims. One particularly harrowing passage from a man who called himself 'Justino' outlines a scene that he recalled seeing as a child:

Two of my Timorese brothers were hanging from their feet tied with rope, upside down from the top of that wall. Three Indonesian soldiers started to throw stones at their heads. There were about twenty children...there weren't many adults there, it wasn't safe for adults, but once I started watching I couldn't leave...

After a while, they checked the men were still breathing from the mouth...then with the butts of their rifles they started to hit them in the stomach, then with the knife to cut down their mouth, like a clown smile at the corners, and then they cut their genitals. The men were dead then I think. They were just hanging. The children just kept watching, witnessing. They kept

silent and some walked away...You couldn't call the children away, no, that would be dangerous; for the Indonesians that would mean you are opposing them.⁷³

Stories like this are tragically common in historiographical form. Matthew Jardine quotes the former Catholic bishop of Dili, who described the helplessness of the situation once the invasion started - 'the soldiers who landed started killing everyone they could find. There were many dead bodies in the streets – all we could see were the soldiers killing, killing, and killing'.⁷⁴ In East Timor, the violence was so pervasive, that even those in positions of power were helpless to stop the slaughter.

However, again it needs to be pointed out that Goldson's interpretation does not concern itself with linear and homogeneous perspectives. While aspects of her film do reflect the wider idea that the East Timorese were victims, there is one specific piece of footage she selects that demonstrates the complexity and nuance of her human rights interpretation. While it is only a brief second, it alludes to the power of agency amidst situations of horror, and it is a testament to the self-determinism of East Timorese activists. While the chaos in the cemetery is unfolding, and while hundreds of Timorese are butchered, Goldson uses footage from Stahl that follows a young girl as she crouches behind a headstone, and runs to join other protestors who are hiding for cover behind a crypt. When two of the activists spot Stahl's gaze, they make sure, amidst all the chaos and slaughter happening around them, to defiantly raise their fists in a demonstration of unity and protest against the events happening around them.



Figure 1.6 – East Timorese activists under fire throw arms up in resistance

It is in this fully immersive moment, amidst horrifying violence and gruesome scenes of inhumanity, that the viewer gets the opportunity to appreciate just how committed and driven the East Timorese could be in crafting their path of self-determinism. Just as a human rights interpretation allows us to see a complex relationship between complicity and opposition in the West, it also demonstrates the complex nature of how people react to oppression. The East Timorese may have been victims of Indonesian aggression, but they were not *only* victims. It

⁷³ Michele Turner, *Telling: East Timor Personal Testimonies 1942 – 1992*, NSW, NSW University Press, 1992, p.177.

⁷⁴ Matthew Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide in Paradise*, Tucson, Odonian Press, 1995, pp.31-32.

is perhaps easy to forget, after all, that amidst the images of brutality, murder, and oppression, the Santa Cruz Massacre occurred in response to organised resistance from the East Timorese. Showing these figures defiantly saluting in the face of extreme violence relays this point in a very straightforward way.

Throughout *Punitive Damage* Goldson also uses interviews and testimony to discuss the rebellion and the on-going resistance to the Indonesians. This resistance was large, organised, and aligned with the Catholic Church. As much as Goldson's interpretation of the Santa Cruz massacre (and thus Timorese history as a whole) tells us about the brutality and the victimisation of the East Timorese, it also informs us equally of their incredible defiance against them. A good example of this is Nairn's testimony above. Nairn's statement provides a backdrop to the bloodshed experienced in Santa Cruz that day, which implicitly highlights a strong spirit of resistance amongst the East Timorese:

The Timorese planned a memorial for Sebastio two weeks after his death. And the idea was that they would have a mass and then a procession across town to the Santa Cruz Catholic cemetery, where they would go in to lay flowers on Sebastio's grave... As they came out onto the seaside road, the young people reached under their shirts and blouses and pulled out bed sheets which they had turned into banners with magic markers and embroidery. And as they unfurled these on the seaside road it just sent an electric current through the crowd, because these were protest banners. They talked about the 200,000 murdered; they called for freedom, and they defended the Church. There was a mass military mobilisation through the town. The officers were riding around speaking in their walkie talkies and here were the Timorese openly protesting. We were talking to an old man in the road, and suddenly he reached up and pointed and said "the Gestapo". And we turned and saw that the army had arrived...

This kind of rebellion, though incredibly dangerous, was nothing new, and the matter of fact delivery from Nairn implies that this type of action was standard practice. Timorese resistance was, in fact, not a small by-product of the occupation. Resistance had been organised for as long as there was brutality against which rebellion worked. Even when the Indonesians tried to coerce cooperation out of the East Timorese with the promise of development, this did little to discourage resistance.⁷⁵ The Timorese felt that this was not real political freedom, and thus was not genuine liberation.⁷⁶ East Timorese activism, in more succinct terms, was as much a part of the occupation, as was their victimisation.

By focusing on this particular action, *Punitive Damage* also emphasises how important the Catholic Church was to resistance movements, and how important the church was in shaping the identity of the movement. When examined from the state-sanctioned interpretation, the relationship between the Church and the Timorese is overlooked. This invisibility is perhaps because attacking church parishioners are the kind of barbarism that the West purported to stand against during the Cold War. The Catholic Church, though, historically had an extraordinarily prominent role in the lives of East Timorese people. The church acted as the defender of ordinary citizens against abusive demands from the colonial government, and then

⁷⁵ Greenlees and Garran, p.16.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

against human rights abuses under the Indonesians.⁷⁷ Goldson clearly understood the value of this relationship. When discussing the film, she notes that the church may have been a 'legacy of colonial rule', but it was also 'central in all of these struggles' because it was the 'only institution powerful enough to survive'.⁷⁸ She is not the only one either to have emphasised the importance of this connection either. According to Don Greenlees and Robert Garran, organised resistance blessed by the Catholic Church started immediately at the onset of occupation under FRETILIN. They write that:

In the face of overwhelming force applied against them, the FRETILIN leadership refused to buckle, electing to fight a 'people's war' and ruling out any compromise with the Indonesians. FRETILIN ideology focused on 'emancipating the rural inhabitants of Timor from the thrall of servitude and debt bondage to the traditional chiefs, and from tribalism, superstition, and illiteracy'. Its goals were reinforced by changes in the Catholic Church in East Timor...The Indonesian invasion made the Church much more responsive to the needs of Timorese Catholics.⁷⁹

Generally speaking, Goldson's use of footage links the resistance efforts to the Catholic Church, like her choice of testimony does. It does this by showing that the Catholic Santa Cruz cemetery was the location for the organised resistance that particular day. The fact that the Timorese took shelter in the cemetery is coincidentally a visual representation of how the Church tried to protect the Timorese with sanctuary.

However, in more concrete terms, the film also highlights this relationship by looking at the backdrop to the massacre, and how it came about after an attack on protestors that were organising within the confines of the Motael Catholic Church. Two weeks before the Santa Cruz Massacre, protestors had been organising so that they could draw attention to the horrors of the occupation as a planned delegation from Portugal was being shown around. Before the attack on the church, Bamadhaj's sister Nadia describes how the Indonesian military was trying to intimidate those who were looking to protest by digging mass graves and informing the Timorese this is where they would end up by undertaking the demonstration. Regardless of this attempt to 'intimidate the locals into silence' planning within the church went ahead.

Unlike with a historiographical account of this moment, the viewer gets to see inside the church and gauge the sense of community and importance to the resistance struggle that the church held. This immersion can only happen because *Punitive Damage* is historiophoty. Within these scenes in the church, we see young Timorese activists organising, painting banners, singing, and working together in planning resistance to the Indonesian overlords, all as the Church protects them. These are clearly not Communist agitators looking to murder their people. They are Christians peacefully looking for self-determinism in their country.

⁷⁷ Center for Southeast Asian Studies Northern Illinois University, *Political Activism and Role of the Catholic Church in East Timor*, available online at <http://www.seasite.niu.edu/easttimor/activism.htm>, accessed 13 August 2014.

⁷⁸ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth*, p.174.

⁷⁹ Greenlees and Garran, pp.16-17.



Figure 1.7 – East Timorese activists constructing banners in the Motael Church

Because of the resources available to Goldson, the viewers also can get an insight into what it was like inside the church when it was attacked from the perspective of Bamadhaj, even though he has passed. The film features Nadia reading letters from her brother that relate the experience of being in the Church when the Indonesians attacked. She describes how 'Sebastio was one of the many youths staying overnight at the Motael church in Dili when it was attacked by Indonesian forces yesterday', and then gives a succinct first-hand account of how Sebastio was killed. She relays that 'the attack began at midnight when plainclothes soldiers began stoning the church. The church grounds were surrounded by armed troops who finally invaded the church at about 2.30am. It was in the midst of this attack that Sebastio was shot dead with three bullets. Again this is a rich information load challenges the notion that only historiography alone can provide a strong discursive engagement.

The significance of the regime murdering an activist within the walls of the church is difficult to overstate. The film elaborates on this point by Nairn stating that the brutal murder was a shock for the Timorese, who felt that their 'last place of sanctuary' had been violated by the Indonesians. As the film has already demonstrated (by focusing on the Santa Cruz massacre in detail), this violation did not defeat the East Timorese. In fact, it only encouraged fresh protest, and would eventually lead to the escalation in Santa Cruz, which resulted in Bamadhaj's death. The fact that the East Timorese kept organising and fighting is an incredibly revealing insight into the nature of resistance in East Timor under occupation.

By illustrating the union between the Church and activists, and how the two groups were inextricably linked in the build-up to the Santa Cruz massacre, viewers should hopefully understand that the East Timorese were not *only* victims of Indonesian aggression. They were also proactive fighters, campaigning for change, with the church, and bravely standing up for their freedom in the face of some of the most extreme brutality imaginable. The East Timorese and the church both fought the Indonesians from the outset of occupation and were resolute in fighting the Indonesians until Indonesia gave up East Timor in 1999. When discussing her

son's role in the independence movement, and the eventual victory of the Timorese, Helen Todd concluded that 'a just cause can never be a lost cause; Kamal taught me that.'⁸⁰ This sentiment summarises the underpinning ideology of the East Timorese activists. It is highly likely that while Bamadhaj might have taught his mother this, he, in turn, would have learned it from the East Timorese.

Robert Rosenstone argues that the measurement of how successful a historical film 'has little to do with how the screen conveys data and everything to do with how well films create and interpret a meaningful and useful history, how adequately they embody its ongoing issues and insert themselves into the ideas and debates surrounding a historical topic.'⁸¹ It is not difficult to conclude from this set of criteria then, that Goldson's work has immense value as historiophoty because she has interpreted and created a meaningful history with *Punitive Damage*. The personalisation of the film, the detail that it goes into, and the perspective that the film is told from, gives the film a unique view of history, that stands as part of a larger legacy but still speaks loudly for itself. In addition to this, by combining her interpretation with intelligent filmmaking and microhistorical techniques, Goldson's vision of East Timor is a meaningful piece of scholarship, and it situates itself clearly within a highly politicised debate. This is the measure of good history, by even the most conservative estimations of theorists like Ian Jarvie.

⁸⁰ Goldson, 'A Claim to Truth', p.175.

⁸¹ Rosenstone, *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, p.7.

CHAPTER TWO: 'CHILLING CIRCULARITY' - AN ISLAND CALLING (2008) AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

'Historical documentary narratives get their strength through their ability to make connections between the personal and the social, between the individual and the collective, and between the factual and emotional'.¹

Ib Bondebjerg

An Island Calling, Goldson's 2008 documentary about the murder of the fourth generation European-Fijian John Scott and his partner Greg Scrivener, is a fascinating glimpse into Fijian life both during and after colonisation. In this excellent piece of historiophoty Goldson utilises the techniques of filmmaking and microhistory to construct a complex and multi-faceted historical narrative that gives viewers a unique experience of Fijian history. Additionally, the narrative she constructs situates itself outside of the colonialist 'grand narratives' (or 'metanarratives') that have been influential in Fijian historiography, and thus the film offers a vision of Fijian history unencumbered by traditional power structures.

The film uses as its narrative driver, the 2001 murders of Scott and Scrivener at their home in Tamavua, Fiji. Scott was a member of the long-standing European-Fijian family and was highly respected and hugely popular with officials.² Scrivener was originally from the Bay of Plenty, and after falling for John, the two moved to Fiji following the coup of 1987 to take over the Scott family home. On July 1, 2001, 23-year-old Apete Kaisau, broke into the home of the two men with a large cane knife and proceeded to hack them brutally to death.

When initially reported, the murders were controversial, devastating, and provoked mass speculation in both Fiji and New Zealand. A week after the killings Scrivener's family was adamant that the murders had to be politically motivated because 'Scott had witnessed horrendous acts' during the 2000 coup³, and because the 'pair had feared for their lives as death threats were sent to Scott days before the killing'.⁴ Just a week after the *Sunday Star-Times* reported on these claims, though, the paper then began giving oxygen to the hysterical narratives coming out of Fiji relating to the perceived double lives of the men. An article entitled 'Double Lives and Double Deaths', featured an interview with John-John Ahkee, a drug dealer who allegedly supplied narcotics to the couple, and who was brought in for questioning about the murder. The article reported that Ahkee claimed to have seen 'adult and child pornographic magazines at the house' and that he occasionally 'saw young boys and Fijian men in their early 20s hanging around there'.⁵ This idea that there was a secret element to the lives of John Scott and Greg Scrivener that stood in contrast to the cultural and religious morality ingrained into

¹ Ib Bondebjerg, 'Documentary and Cognitive Theory: Narrative, Emotion, and Memory', in *Media and Communication*, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2014, p.17.

² Naomi Larkin, 'Shadow of Gay Phobia over Angel of Light', in *New Zealand Herald*, 7 July 2001.

³ Kim Purdy, 'Family Wants Dead Man's Name Cleared', in *Sunday Star-Times*, 8 July 2001, p.A3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kim Purdy, 'Double Lives and Double Deaths', in *Sunday Star-Times*, 15 July 2001, p.A5.

the Fijian psyche would prove influential in both how reporters and investigators examined the crime.

The murders themselves, though, are merely an initial event that sets into action an efficient examination of the historical legacies of colonisation on the still divided Pacific nation. In a 2008 profile of the film in the *Sunday Star Times*, a passage notes that as well as being about the murders, the film is 'also the 'story of the profound influence on Fiji of four generations of the Scott family.' In this passage, there is a powerful observation from Owen Scott who notes that the influence of his family on Fiji makes *An Island Calling* 'a story of chilling circularity'. After all, Owen and John's 'great-grandfather was one of the missionaries who brought the Bible to Fijians in the 1870s' and in a perverse twist of fate 'more than a century later, Kaisau would invoke the Bible to justify the murders of the men with whom it is believed he once had a sexual relationship.'⁶

This passage is an excellent summary of how the film goes about constructing history because the idea of 'circularity' is key to how Goldson constructs her narrative. There are two main patterns of circularity that Goldson specifically highlights in *An Island Calling*. The first of these patterns relates to the impact that colonisation would have in sewing the seeds of future conflict in Fiji. Goldson effectively uses film language and historical information to illustrate a direct link between the rise of clashes in the post-colonial era, and the social and political actions of colonialists in the preceding decades. The second circular idea that Goldson looks at in depth is the rise of homophobia in Fiji due to Christian fundamentalism. Goldson asserts that the actions taken in bringing fundamentalist Christianity to Fiji would ultimately lead to a rise in ultraconservative Christian fundamentalism, that would also help contribute to overall social destabilisation in the future. To represent these ideas Goldson constructs her film using a microhistorical narrative about the Scott family, and a nationally focused narrative about Fiji, that work together to illustrate the manifestation of these circular patterns in Fijian history.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Before examining how Goldson constructs her historical narrative in depth, though, it is important to look at why Goldson's use of the narrative structure is actually beneficial to her historiography. Primarily, at a basic scientific level, narratives are, according to cognitive theorists, 'part of our mental toolbox and a way of making sense of what we see and experience'.⁷ George Lakoff elaborates on this idea, arguing that 'complex narratives – the kind we find in anyone's life story, as well as in fairy tales, novels, and drama – are made up of smaller narratives with very simple structures. Those structures are called "frames" or "scripts". Frames are among the cognitive structures we think with...the neural circuitry need to create

⁶ Donna Christholm, 'In the Name of God', in *Sunday Star Times*, 16 March 2008, p.C3.

⁷ Bondebjerg, p.15.

frame structures is pretty simple, and so frames tend to structure a huge amount of our thoughts...dramatic event structures are carried out by brain circuitry'. Subsequently, Lakoff points out that 'the same event structure circuitry can be used to live out an action or narrative, or to understand the actions of others or the structure of the story. In addition, neural binding can create emotional experiences ...narratives and frames are not just brain structures with intellectual content, but rather with integrated intellectual-emotional content'.⁸ Therefore, since *An Island Calling* is meant to be an experience of Fijian history, narrative structure greatly benefits the viewer's ability to engage with the information and ideas presented at a basic cognitive level.

Scholars who are philosophically in line with the ideas postulated by Ian Jarvie would disagree with this idea that Goldson's use of narrative is beneficial, despite this scientific grounding. One of Jarvie's major complaints with historiophoty was that narratives were often the primary organising function of historical films. To Jarvie, the act of condensing events into a linear narrative was the antithesis of what history was.⁹ Simply comprehending events was not enough for Jarvie. Historians had to debate why the events had happened, and what the significance was.¹⁰ While this observation is in many ways correct, there are significant holes that scholars have observed with this line of argument. Aside from ignoring that most historiography favours the use of a narrative structure as well, Jarvie's criticism also ignores the fact that, thanks to historians like Hayden White, historians have been conscious of narrative structures and their shortcomings for a long time.¹¹ It is only when the constructed nature of narrative is not understood or ignored, that narratives can be imbued with disproportionate significance and enforce prevailing power structures. The pattern of imbuing narratives with excessive power is somewhat inevitable in the construction of 'metanarratives' – and indeed, these narrative structures are problematic. Goldson does not construct a 'metanarrative' to examine Fijian history, though. *An Island Calling* is, in fact, historiophoty that debates the past on film by using its original narrative structure to undermine existing historical metanarratives of Fiji.

According to John Stephens, the idea of 'a metanarrative is a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience'.¹² The post-modern critic Jean-François Lyotard originally coined the term in his highly influential 1979 work *The Postmodern Condition*.¹³ In this work Lyotard was scathing towards the concept of metanarrative arguing that the concept was a by-product of modernity that re-enforced existing

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty', p.1195.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See, Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1987.

¹² John J Stephens and Robyn McCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature*, New York, Garland, 1998, p.6.

¹³ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Translation into English by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, available online at <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Lyotard-PostModernCondition1-5.html>, date accessed, 20 August 2015.

social power dynamics and needed to be disposed of. Lyotard stated, 'to the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, and its great goal'. What this means is that despite being obsolete, the metanarrative was still needed by those who held power as it legitimised their status. He also added that because the concept itself was being 'dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements – narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on' those with the power would always 'attempt to manage these clouds of sociality according to input/output matrices, following a logic which implies that their elements are commensurable and that the whole is determinable. They allocate our lives for the growth of power'.¹⁴ What he is saying in this instance, is that as new methods engaging with the past supersede metanarratives, those with power would work to undermine them, so that their legitimacy continues to be enshrined.

Fijian historiography is a good example of a history implicitly shaped into a metanarrative form that tells a story from the perspective of 'good colonisers'. In his 2006 Ph.D. thesis *Disturbing History: Aspects of Resistance in Early Colonial Fiji, 1874 – 1914*, Robert E. Nicole summarises what kind of issues have arisen in the construction of Fijian history because of colonialism. Nicole admits that originally his 'conceptual image of Fiji's past was of a country which had excelled under British tutelage, where indifferent villagers obey the wise rule and exemplary leadership of their chiefs, and where Indian labourers toiled endlessly on the sugar plantations to build the colony's economic prosperity'.¹⁵ Such a view is common and is a by-product Fijian history from the Colonial period. Nicole writes that 'during Fiji's colonial era, histories tended to follow the process of nation-building or political evolution and depicted the lives and careers of "great men" as the engines of history. They are essentially 'top-down' histories of administrative ordering, disciplining and pacifying, not 'bottom-up' social histories of ordinary people'.¹⁶ In other words, those with the power had successfully managed to legitimise their role in exploiting Fiji, by presenting a metanarrative in which they were heroes.

This has not just been a pattern in written texts. Visual media has also helped entrench this historical metanarrative. Alexander Mawyer considers the 'early period' of significant interest in film-making in the Pacific (from 1898 to 1926 in his account) as demonstrating 'a strong colonial interest in circulating and perhaps controlling representations of Islanders by the most technologically sophisticated means available'.¹⁷ Sarina Pearson agrees with this perspective additionally writing that 'historically, Pacific peoples have been represented primarily by non-Pacific Island filmmakers. While documentary filmmakers working in the Pacific have not been culpable of the excesses of Hollywood – which overwhelmingly tends to portray the Pacific as

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Nicole, p. 1.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp.7-8.

¹⁷ Jane Landman and Chris Ballard, 'An Ocean of Images', in *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol 45, Number 1, June 2010, p.12.

an ersatz, exotic, erotic, prelapsarian Eden – the trends in Pacific documentaries have tended to reinforce cultural stereotypes, often because of their ethnographic or developmental focus'.¹⁸

Nicole does point out, however, in regards to Fijian history, that this trend has changed in more recent years. He claims that 'with more recent scholarship, one finds a group of postcolonial cultural historians who have helped to enlarge the scope of reading and writing colonial Fiji'. According to Nicole, this new scholarship 'grounded in the theoretical development of poststructuralist and postcolonial theory' has led to a new generation of scholars that 'are more attuned to the fragmented and contradictory nature of colonialism and have helped to unsettle and challenge notions of linear histories of colonialism's authority and power'.¹⁹ It is my assertion that *An Island Calling* is a contributor to the recent independent scholarship that has arisen in Fijian history.

All this does not mean that *An Island Calling* is a fully realised portrait of Fijian history, however. In fact, it is not even the most in-depth narrative constructed around this particular story. Owen Scott, who narrates the film as he journeys through Fiji, also wrote the 2004 biographical book *Deep Beyond the Reef* upon which the film itself took inspiration. The book, coming in at over 400 pages is naturally more detailed than this 75-minute documentary and provides more thorough information about the murders, and more scope regarding the family's history in Fiji. As Rosenstone says though 'history on film must be held accountable to certain standards, these standards must be consonant with the possibilities of the medium'.²⁰ Goldson's construction needs to be seen for what it is. It is neither a direct adaptation of the written word nor is it a biopic. Rather it is an experience that can engage viewers with a narrative about Fiji that challenges traditional colonial metanarratives. By this measurement, it is undoubtedly strong historiophoty.

Goldson's double narrative of circularity is divided into two acts. The first act is set in the Fijian colonial period that lasted around one hundred years from the mid-nineteenth century, through the mid-twentieth century. Goldson's examination of this period shows seeds of future instability being planted but ultimately ignored because of colonial arrogance, greed, and racism. These seeds of instability manifested themselves in the form of the introduction of Christianity and fundamentalist Christian values from European missionaries to Fiji; an introduction of indentured servants from India to work sugar plantations at low cost; and the establishment of unsustainable and divisive political systems that could never work in the long term. This overarching narrative is brought into focus through Goldson's construction of a microhistorical examination of the Scott family that highlights how these seeds of instability bloomed on a personal and intimate scale. This microhistorical narrative specifically looks at

¹⁸ Sarina Pearson, 'Darkness and Light: Dusky Maidens and Velvet Dreams', in *Camera Obscura* 58, Volume 20, Number 1, 2005, p.185.

¹⁹ Nicole, p.11.

²⁰ Rosenstone, 'History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film History in Images', p.1180.

the history of John Scott's family in Fiji and puts great emphasis on the role of family patriarch Maurice Scott, who in many ways was the epitome of British colonialism. Goldson interrogates and critiques the image and reputation that the Scott family held in colonial Fiji, and in doing so can provide a vivid example to back up the assertions her film makes in regards to general Fijian history.

Having set the first part of her film in the colonial period of Fiji, the second act offers the viewer a close examination of Fiji in the post-colonial period where the seeds of instability bloomed into trees of destabilisation. Ultimately this instability led to political tensions and outbreaks of violence, culminating in two tense coups d'état, each of which has devastating socio-political outcomes. Much like she does in the first act of the film, Goldson brings this narrative into focus with an examination of the Scott family amidst the growing chaos. Goldson again combines the techniques of microhistory and filmmaking to articulate her ideas and to give her overall narrative about post-colonial Fiji some life. Rather than focusing on Maurice Scott though, this microhistorical examination is focused on John, as he is the 'Scott Family' in Fiji during this tumultuous period. John's narrative in the second part of the film is the culmination of past actions and decisions made by the colonialists.

THE COLONIAL ERA

Right from the very first frame of the film, Goldson is deliberate with how she constructs her narrative through the use of film language. The very start of the film is a 'thesis statement' where Goldson establishes her ideas about Fijian history through film semiotics. In this thesis statement Goldson essentially hypothesises three points; firstly, the legacies of Colonialism still shape modern Fiji; secondly, the legacies of colonialism shaped the lives of the Scott family; and thirdly the two tales are inherently linked and analogous to each other. Early twentieth-century decisions, to Goldson, are what are responsible for the anarchy that Fiji has experienced from the 1980s onwards.

Despite the fact that this sequence only lasts around ninety seconds, it has the dual effect of both articulating Goldson's argument, and demonstrating the patterns in her narrative structure. The sequence opens with a richly symbolic panning camera shot that immediately establishes a Fiji where many remnants and legacies of colonisation remain entrenched. Belinda Smaill summarises the significance of the opening shot very well, writing that 'the opening title sequence of *An Island Calling* begins with a frame of Fiji's misty island Mountains before cutting to a lone figure in a canoe moving through the water in what is presumably Suva Harbour. A large cruise liner comes into shot, set against the fog. Traditional choral music features in the soundtrack. The sequence immediately offers a portrait that references the iconography of island beauty and tradition, melding it with a neo-colonial symbol of global tourism'.²¹ Smaill

²¹ Smaill, p.4.

adds that this opening shot sets the platform for the ideas that the film will deal with, add that 'as the documentary progresses, it becomes clear that key to the story is the historical and personal impact of a complex mix of race, religion, sexuality, colonialism, and privilege.'²²



Figure 2.1 – The Opening Shot of *An Island Calling*

Following the opening shot is a tightly constructed sequence built through the use of a mixture of photos, narration, news footage, and contemporary footage of Fiji. The way that Goldson uses pictures during this thesis sequence links the colonial past explicitly to the twenty-first century. Goldson shows three black and white photos of a young John and Owen Scott in Fiji as boys, playing in their boat, and lounging on the beach. She then cuts to video footage of John when media outlets are interviewing him in the days of the 2000 coup. This footage starts in black and white, but then slowly fades into colour, and the transformation is what makes the link so explicit. The use of black and white in colour films is a commonly used technique to age the image and to makes it 'feel' like the past. As Maarten Pereboom points out, 'colour alone has emotional associations...occasionally today films still use black and white, primarily because of its historical and nostalgic associations.'²³ Cognitively then, the audience hopefully associate the lack of colour with a distant time. Changing the image from black and white to colour implies that the 2000 John, broken and fatigued (by the conflict that bloomed because of colonial actions) is linked inherently to a happier past before the violence. John Scott is not just a random actor – he is entrenched in Fiji, and Fiji is entrenched in him.

Following these shots of John, Goldson cuts to news images of the 2000 coup in which he was involved as messenger and negotiator. She shows a makeshift barrier built out of shipping containers, with three heavily armed soldiers in army fatigues patrolling the area; a close-up of a soldier, his camouflage and powerful automatic weapons a contrast against the lush gardens in the background; and finally the lone figure of John Scott making a solitary walk up the driveway leading to the Fijian parliament, past tyre spikes, and another makeshift barrier, all

²² Ibid.

²³ Maarten Pereboom, *History and Film – Moving Pictures and the Study of the Past*, Boston, Prentice Hall, 2011, p.47.

while the red cross on his vest remains in the centre of the frame. Over the top of this sequence, Goldson uses the traditional choral music that Smail refers to, but she additionally uses narration from Owen Scott. While the music might add to the sense of place, Owen's description makes the message of her historical analysis explicit. In this dialogue, Owen states reflectively that 'this is a story of two brothers. Two fourth-generation white Fiji Islanders. For much of their lives, they lived away from Fiji. Yet one brother always had a longing to return. It was like a call. But Fiji had changed, and that longing was to lead to tragedy'. As the music fades out, Goldson constructs one final poetic image, which is a still shot of a Suva Street, where the sound of a gun firing shatters the tranquillity. The shot coincides with a flock of birds flying away, startled. Having set out her thesis, Goldson goes on to establish the first act of her narrative looking at Fiji under colonialism. The chronological focus of this segment starts with the arrivals of the first generation of the Scotts in Fiji as Methodist missionaries and concludes in 1977 when colonial figurehead Maurice passed away after drinking himself to death.²⁴ Goldson combines two useful techniques – testimony and archival materials - to construct her narrative, and in doing so, she looks at multiple ideas regarding social and political patterns shaped by the colonialists in Fiji.

In the beginning, Owen is not only the narrator of the film, but he is also literally the audience's guide to the physical locations of his family history. He is shown travelling down a river in a boat to the burial spot of his father and great-grandfather in the village of Daku. The route is the same one that Owen's great grandfather and other missionaries would have taken from Suva 120 years prior. Because Owen is following the path of his forebears (literally), both he and the audience gain an element of experience that could not be undertaken as efficiently in the written form. The viewer does not have to imagine – they can see the same water, flora, fauna, and skies that William Scott would have seen at the end of the 19th century. When they arrive at Daku Owen has to seek permission for the visit in the traditional local manner, which involves a Kava ceremony and speeches. During this, the village elder Chief Roko Dakala speaks and reminisces on the village seventy years' prior, saying 'I remember our village in 1937. The legal advisor at Daku was Maurice Scott. When there was a problem, he would take it on. We formed a deep relationship with him. As if we had the same father and same mother. The Scott family line was continued by his son John...we are deeply saddened by his death. John, ay? We feel deep heartfelt grief'.

The speech establishes the idea that the relationship between the Scott's and Daku leaders was strong, and both parties benefitted. Following this tribute, Goldson draws the focus of the film back to the first generations of Scott's who came to spread the word of God – an activity that would be of influence to the lives of John Scott in a way they could never have comprehended. Owen provides a brief biography via narration, stating 'my great grandfather,

²⁴ Owen Scott, *Deep Beyond the Reef: A True Story of Madness and Murder in the South Pacific*, Auckland, Penguin, 2004, p.154.

the William Weir Lindsay arrived in Fiji in 1871, and he's buried on the site of the missionary training institute he once headed. Eventually, he became the chairman of all the Methodist missions in Fiji. In those early colonial days, this was a good Christian man in the midst of buccaneers and pioneers.' This passage of narration is illuminating because as much as the twentieth-century colonial history of Fiji tells a story of harmony, Owen manages to draw attention to the fact that like a lot of Colonial outposts, Fiji was 'equal parts Christianity and equal parts hedonism', when Europeans first arrived.²⁵ As Owen narrates this, the funeral plot and enormous memorial headstone where his father and great grandfather are buried are shown. Goldson films a close-up shot of the statue and pans up its face. When the shot reaches the top of the monument, it fades into an old black and white photograph of the same spot, and pans back down, linking Owen in 2008 to that past. At the bottom, people are paying their respects, and they are all dressed in a Victorian manner, dating the photo immediately. Goldson closes this sequence by using more old pictures of people in boats to give the viewer more ideas of what the area looked like in those heady early days, and the photos give strong visual cues as to what life would have been like for the Scott's and their peers. Additionally, these pictures bookend the start of this whole sequence as at the beginning of it Owen was on a boat on the same river in 2008.



Figure 2.2 – Owen and guides on the river in 2008



Figure 2.3 – The same river a century prior

²⁵ Ibid, p.45.

From here the film moves to the Scott family home in Tamavua, where Owen is shown looking at old family photographs. This sequence is the first time that viewers see the house. The first photo shown is of the house and gardens from a low angle where it looks particularly strong and imposing. Coincidentally this is reflective of how it would have seemed to a young child. Goldson then slowly pans across some other photos including a photo of one of the boys and their mother at the beach; the parents and young child on the home's veranda; one of the babies with three Fijian workers (in uniform); and finally a colour photograph of the terrace looking out over the harbour with a marble statue quite prominent in the foreground, and a large island noticeable in the background. Owen infuses the home with personal recollections, reminiscing that 'the house that John and I grew up in was built by my father in the 1950s with a large open veranda looking at over the whole of Suva Harbour. My earliest memories are of parties by the pool, dogs, parrots, and extensive tropical gardens, and the Fijian staff who I was very close to. I remember my father always saying this is the best view in the world.' The film then cuts to a point of view shot from Owen's perspective as he looks at scattered photos, and from here the earlier picture we saw of the two boys at the start of the film is shown again.

The focus is shifted onto a photo of a young Maurice, looking regal in a barrister outfit, including the traditional powdered wig, and this is where the film starts to examine Maurice in more depth. Maurice appears here to be the epitome of the colonial British expat. However, any notion that he may have been an alien in his adopted homeland is immediately put to rest. The traditional music that has been scoring the sequence comes to a close, and the primary audio becomes Goldson asking Owen if he feels the Scott's belonged in Fiji. Owen's answer is emphatic - 'oh very much so. John and I were brought up to feel very responsible about our connection with Fiji; the fact that we were born here. And our father Maurice put us under quite a lot of pressure to continue the so-called Scott Legacy.' While Owen is stating this, the camera zooms in on a 1945 photo of Maurice, in an RAF outfit emblazoned with 'Fiji' on the side, beaming a smile assumedly with pride and happiness.



Figure 2.4 – Maurice Scott amidst family photos

The film continues to assert just how comfortable Maurice was in his surroundings by supplying testimony from those who knew him. The first interviewee is a man named Daryl Tarte who not only worked with John Scott at the Red Cross but also knew Maurice. Tarte is also a writer who has penned novels about Fiji, and articles about Fijian history.²⁶ He is forthright about how Maurice appeared to younger European men recalling that ‘as far as a young fellow like myself was concerned, he had a kind of heroic image. He had gone away to the Second World War and joined the RAF and had got a DFC. So we held him on a bit of a pedestal.’ Tarte reveals how he and his friends knew that Maurice ‘loved’ and ‘had a lot of time with the girls’ and even ‘heard of a few illegitimate children that he had’. Tarte emphasises that this was not seen as something negative, though. He tells Goldson that Maurice ‘wasn’t disparaged for that. He was held as one of the lads’ and he ‘was held in high esteem for his ability to do that and get away with it.

As Tarte reveals the more sexually shady side of Maurice, Goldson shows another dashing picture of the elder Scott in his RAF uniform, and follows this with a shot of Scott by his Spitfire named ‘Suva Sal’.²⁷ The plane has a kitsch picture of a Pacific lady emblazoned on its tail, reminiscent of the ‘dusky maiden’ image that was a favorite sexualised fantasy for colonial men in the Pacific.²⁸ The family pictures then become a lot more intimate, and they appear to be personal slides. The slides start with a beautiful woman of Pacific ethnicity in shorts and a bikini top smiling and lounging on the grass, again resembling a European fantasy of what Pacific women were.²⁹ Maurice is also featured shirtless and smiling, and while the pictures may be entirely innocent, Tarte’s description of Maurice’s philandering loads these photos with sexual implications and innuendo.



Figure 2.5 – A local young lady in the family photo collection

²⁶ See Daryl Tarte, *Fiji*, Victoria, Pascoe Publishing, 1988; and Daryl Tarte and Stewart Firth (eds.), *20th Century Fiji: People Who Shaped this Nation*, Suva, USP Solutions, 2001.

²⁷ Scott, p.87.

²⁸ Pearson, p.189.

²⁹ Ibid.

It is then revealed through interviews with John and Owen's mother, Pam Nevins, that Maurice was a bully who trapped Nevins into a 'crowded' three-way marriage, with Maurice's mistress Fenna Gatty. When this became too much for Nevins she knew she had to 'get away somehow' and she fled to New Zealand with the boys. This information is particularly interesting because it is the first time that the audience gets to see just how differently people in Fiji reacted to the different generations of Scott's personal lives. William prided himself on being 'a good Christian', and as a missionary would not have supported anyone who would not commit to monogamy and modesty.³⁰ Maurice though took quite a radical path away from his forebears, and he was not only unpunished but admired. Conversely again, John's later lifestyle was certainly in conflict with the (revived) Christian fundamentalism of his great grandfather. But unlike Maurice, who could do what he wanted, John had to live a restricted public lifestyle, and then tragically paid the ultimate price for the way in which he lived his life. For Maurice Scott's generation, Fiji was a land of unparalleled exploitation and freedom for white men.

Having painted a picture of the Scott's life before and during the colonial period, Goldson segues into a brief analogous examination of Fiji itself. In the same way, that she has constructed her review of the Scott's around testimony and photographic footage, Goldson builds her analogous survey of Fiji. The first interviewee Goldson features is a Fijian lawyer Jon Apted, who describes the lifestyle that encompassed colonial Suva in the mid-twentieth century. Apted, a Harvard-educated lawyer, was directly involved in drawing up the Fiji Constitution abrogated after the Australian judges on Fiji's Court of Appeal ruled the Frank Bainimarama regime illegal.³¹ Apted states that 'John left here in the sixties. We were still British. We were still colonial. Suva was a European town it was a white place'. As Apted speaks, Goldson uses some old newsreel footage that resembles the opening shot of the film, featuring the cruise ship. The footage shows a Fijian marching band playing while groups of white tourists walk past after disembarking from a large cruise ship. While the specifics of the opening shot and this footage may differ slightly, the similar implications are notable. Fijian life under colonialism was more about serving colonial interests and becoming more European. Apted continues 'not only was it run by Europeans, but there were also whole suburbs of Europeans running the government...Fijians were not allowed to come in freely until 1966. So you know it was a white place.' The footage shown while Apted is emphasising the whiteness of Suva is also illustrative. There is a shot of a young woman with a mini skirt and a union jack shopping bag like she was in Piccadilly Circus, and following this, there is an enormous swimming pool at a tourist resort where Fijians in uniform serve white customers cocktails.

³⁰ Berthold Seemann, *Viti: An Account of a Government Mission to the Vitian or Fijian Islands 1860-1861 (2nd Ed.)*, London, Macmillan, 1973, p.32.

³¹ Chris Merritt, 'Military Regime in Fiji Detains Leading Lawyers', in *Australian Business Review*, 22 May 2009. Available online at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/legal-affairs/military-regime-in-fiji-detains-leading-lawyers/story-e6frg97x-1225714351746>, date accessed 19 August 2015.



Figure 2.6 – European tourists being served by Fijians

Goldson then brings the viewer back to Daryl Tarte, who gives his perspective on what life was like during this period. 'Well, of course, the European families during the colonial days led a very privileged life. They had privileges that the indigenous people and the Indians did not have. They formed, of course, part of the commercial life of Fiji particularly in Suva, and also the professional life, the lawyers such as the Scott's'. As Tarte speaks, Goldson uses photos to emphasise this colonial privilege. In the pictures, the Europeans are all dressed immaculately, they are drinking, and they are even meeting with the queen. One particular photo highlights the privilege more than others, though, and that is the picture of a young white girl being carried by two Fijian men out of the ocean so that her feet do not get wet. The three Fijian men are standing in the water while taking one lone white woman through the shallow water, demonstrates an inherent subservience that heightens Tarte's testimony which is playing over the top.



Figure 2.7 European Woman Being Carried From the Water

From here Goldson moves on to a more particular examination of how this power and this inequality established itself in political ways, most notably regarding race relations. Goldson intersperses the film with some dialogue from Daryl Tarte again who states (about Europeans) 'we were at the top of the pile. The Fijian people were considered lazy buggers. They didn't have any prospects at all, and the Indians were considered mere labourers.' The film cuts to

old black and white footage of Indian farm workers while Owen Scott narrates to illustrate this point. Owen states that 'after Fiji became a British colony in 1874 sugar cane was planted as a cash crop. A workforce was needed, so the colonial administration brought in indentured labour from one of Britain's other colonies, India.' The footage that Goldson selects begins with Indians cutting cane while singing in Hindi. This clip leads into a longer shot to give a sense of scale to the size of the work the labourers undertook. These are large, robust plants, and they are seemingly endless. The film then cuts to a close-up of a man hacking laboriously at one of the plants with his large machete, and then there is another shot that pans around and shows them using cattle to assist. The idea that Indians were seen were faceless workers becomes further enhanced by Goldson as she selects for her closing image, a shot of a man working from inside the crops. The shot slows down on the face of the worker so that for the first time distinguishable facial features are seen. As this happens, Owen states that 'the Indian population rapidly grew, and so too did its voice. Before long Indians began to question colonial rule.' Before the slow motion effect, the Indians had been faceless in the footage, and Goldson used high contrasted long shots that focused on land and labour. But by merely slowing down this shot and making the man's face the focus, Goldson cleverly illustrates the transition of decades of Indo-Fijian history (as Indians became viewed politically as people, rather than property) in just a few seconds.

Having established that Indians came to serve colonial interests, and then began to seek political representation, Goldson begins to establish why indigenous Fijians and Fijian-Indians would come into conflict. The shot of the Indian man that the film pauses on dissolves into footage of indigenous Fijians singing and doing a traditional tribal dance. The effect of this footage is that it contrasts the two groups. As Owen Scott states, 'Indigenous Fijians, for the most part, did not work on the plantations. They continued to live a community-based way of life centred on the village'. By dissolving the shots together, there is an inherent connection made between the two groups, while simultaneously showing the contrast in how the two groups lived.

The narrative that Goldson threads, and the argument that she makes is that the colonialists set these two groups against each other, as it benefitted their short-term political interests. Because the colonial British were so happy with their privilege and power (as evidenced by Maurice), and because the indigenous Fijians' village life did not impede with their exploitation, the two sides came to be natural allies against rising Indian political interest. As Padmini Gaunder argues, it was for good reasons that the Fijian chiefly establishment sided with the colonial rulers. It was an 'acknowledgement that colonialism was far from oppressive to the Fijians. They had been left with more than enough land for their needs and their culture had been respected and honoured'.³²

³² Padmini Gaunder, *An Elusive Dream: Multiracial Harmony in Fiji, 1970 - 2000*, Saabrücken, VDM, 2008, p.22.



Figure 2.8 – Shot of an Indian man working on sugar plantation



Figure 2.9 – Dissolve shot into Fijians doing tribal song and dance

The British may not have respected the indigenous Fijians (as evidenced by Daryl Tarte's reference to them as being 'lazy buggers') but what Goldson implies, is that in the eyes of the colonialists that very 'laziness' they assumed, made the Fijians an easy partner for co-operation. The British may have introduced the Indians to Fiji to make money for themselves, but they did not want them getting any semblance of power that threatened their ersatz Eden. Daryl Tarte's daughter Sandra, who is a political scientist, is interviewed and gives a bit of a background on the relationship between the two groups.³³ Tarte states that 'in the colonial times the Europeans certainly aligned themselves with the Fijians. Partly because Indians were agitating for democracy for equality and that was seen as a threat and seen as unacceptable to the European elite. But they could deal with the Fijian majority.' As she says this, Goldson once again constructs montages of footage that gives visual cues to the information. Goldson starts with footage of Queen Elizabeth II visiting Fiji in 1963 while Fijians proudly wave Union Jack flags. Over the top, there is a traditional Fijian chorus providing the score, which gives the viewer an aural and visual cue that the groups are inherently connected.

³³ Sandra Tarte is the Director of Politics and International Affairs Program at the University of the South Pacific, in Suva.

Goldson is deliberate again in linking the larger issue of colonial-indigenous unity to the Scott family. Owen states that 'my father became involved in the Fijian nationalist movements of the 1950s and 60s, very much on the Fijian side of things'. During this dialogue, Goldson showcases some remarkable photos of Maurice meeting with Fijian representatives in a variety of settings. There is a picture of Maurice staunchly postured with his war medals, walking side by side with a Fijian man dressed in a suit, and there are a few more that showcase Maurice with other influential Fijians. The most striking image Goldson finds though is one of Maurice and a Fijian chief walking side by side, each leading a respective line of their people. The symmetry is undeniable, and the photo encapsulates Maurice's view, and the view of the colonialists in a single snapshot - the whites and the Fijians were side by side in how they saw the future of the country, and they would walk together for Fiji. The arrangement was a natural fit for a colonialist figure like Maurice, as the rise of Indian sovereignty potentially threatened his own.

Having established how the Colonialists and the Indigenous Fijians would work together, Goldson goes on to show the short term results of this union, through more montages and testimony. What the audience sees is a Suva of 1970 that is a lively, fun, and peaceful European city in the South Pacific. A montage begins with a shot of a bustling street in Suva, with traffic humming along a busy road, and businesses flourishing. Goldson then selects a piece of footage of a still street that mirrors the earlier shot she framed, where birds scatter after a gunshot. However, this time, there is no bang like in the earlier sequence, and the difference in the audio is an effective indicator of the differing moods of the eras. There is also a shot of a middle-aged white man in a business suit and a young Fijian walking next to him, and in the background, you can see that there is a Holden dealership, that ties Suva to its Colonial neighbour Australia. Following these various illustrative pieces of footage, there is another symbolic series of shots that showcase two Fijian rugby teams playing each other. The meaning accrued from these shots is hard to avoid. Here in a Pacific outpost miles away from the town of Rugby, are two Fijian teams feverishly competing in one of the most aristocratic of English sports, in the mud, as if they are in a London winter. The Fijians in the crowd are all dressed very fashionably and are loving the spectacle like they too are in Twickenham.

Goldson establishes that in working together in an alliance, Suva became like Europe, to the benefit of both groups by 1970. Owen indicates a significant shift in the peace though when he states that 'in 1970 Fiji became independent, although most indigenous Fijians wanted the country to remain a colony'. This is interesting because when compared to other narratives of colonialism, filled with violence and terror, this idea that Fijians wanted to stay colonised can initially seem counterintuitive. Generally colonies fight for independence, however in Fiji's case, decolonisation was forced on them rather than demanded. The process was smooth, according to Daryl Tarte at least. He reflects on the period positively stating that 'there was a great feeling of euphoria at the time and for the early years, we progressed very well. And I think that Fiji

was one of the few countries in the world that had gained their independence without any war or any revolution. It was done in a very amicable way.’ However, Goldson is careful not to use any testimony that overstates the success of decolonisation. While the film explains how Fiji came to be independent, she also actively uses testimony to highlight how in the rush to independence, several decisions were made without considering the long term effects.³⁴ When Owen is narrating that Fijians were happy to remain a colony, he adds that this was because the Fijian and Indian population numbers were roughly the same. And a few moments before her father extols the successes of the decolonisation process, Sandra Tarte gives some direct meaning to Owen’s vaguer words. She states that ‘I think that there has always been an implicit belief or understanding on the part of Fijians that while Indians can live and work in Fiji and prosper, that Fijian political control should always remain in their hands.’

To round off this period in Fijian history, where the colonialists would leave, and Fiji would be left to organise itself, Goldson makes sure the audience is familiar with the Scott family’s whereabouts, as once again they seem to mirror the wider colonial pattern in many ways. Goldson starts a new sequence which again Owen narrates: ‘During this period of change in Fiji John and I were still living in New Zealand. I was studying law and John was in business. Our father had died in Fiji seven years after independence. And John and I probably saw ourselves as being settled in New Zealand.’ The photos that Goldson uses while Owen is narrating reflect the idea that the Scott’s had moved on from Fiji as the British government had. The sequence starts by showing a photograph of ski fields, and then John with his car at the snow. These images are antithetical to the Fiji they knew on vacation. There are then more intimate family portraits such as a smiling John holding a beer; the boys and Pam squeezed in tightly on a couch; John and his son Piers when he was a little boy; and finally John and his family on a boat all smiling and having fun, in New Zealand instead of Fiji. There is then a picture of John and Greg sunbathing on the beach as Owen describes how the family were surprised when the two men met, and eventually became lovers in Auckland. Maurice died in 1977, and his death would mark the first time in generations that there were no Scotts in Fiji. The boys had left, and Maurice had vacated permanently. Fiji was independent of the Scott’s just as it was independent of Colonial Britain as a whole.

THE POST-COLONIAL ERA

To signal that the era has changed from the colonial to the post-colonial there is an ominous change in music. During the sequences showcasing how well Fiji was working around 1970, there is some nightclub footage mixed in with everything else. For the first time, the film doesn’t use Fijian music in the score. Instead live funk music being played by a band in the footage is used. This music is not only indicative of how encompassing the western encroachment of Suva has been - it is also used to set the mood. The music is light-hearted, fun, and has a

³⁴ T.A. Donnelly, M. Quanchi, and G.J.A. Kerr, *Fiji in the Pacific 4th Ed*, Milton, Jacaranda Press, 1994, p.60.

rhythmic groove that lends itself to dancing. The shift to sombre instrumental strings in its place viscerally signifies that something is about to change. This quick tonal shift in audio is our introduction to the Fiji that exists in the shadow of colonialism and independence when extreme parochialism and violence would split Fiji.

Following this change in music, Goldson cuts to some slowed down news footage of an army jeep on an overcast and dismal looking day. Because the shot is news footage, it is not mediated to present the ersatz Eden seen in a lot of the earlier old newsreel footage. Subsequently, it has a raw and bleak quality. Two men in army fatigues get out of the jeep as a crowd looks on. Owen narrates over the top that ‘in Fiji tensions between Fijians and Indians once more began to escalate. And in 1987 Lieutenant Col Sitiveni Rabuka launched Fiji’s first coup.’ The two men in the slowed down footage walk past a photographer and into a building. From the menacing feel of the footage, it is clear that this is no ordinary soldier.

The shift from scenes of sun, prosperity, and capitalism is a swift one, and this sudden transition emphasises just how quickly things turned sour in Fiji. From here Goldson begins to explore specifically why this blossoming chaos was the result of seeds being planted by earlier generations of colonialists. To start, Goldson interviews Imrana Jalal – a human rights lawyer from Fiji of Indian descent who, along with her husband, has been the subject of corrupt and discriminatory attacks by the Bainimarama government in recent years.³⁵ As Goldson shows a muted shot of a press conference being held by Rabuka, and then a close-up of his face, Jalal extrapolates on why 1987 was such a significant and unique moment in Fijian history. She states that ‘1987 was a turning point because an Indian-backed party won government. Rabuka believed that there was a risk that Fiji would be taken over by the Indian community because they had dominance in the economic sector, and now they had dominance in government. And so Rabuka was able to ferment that belief into the coup.’

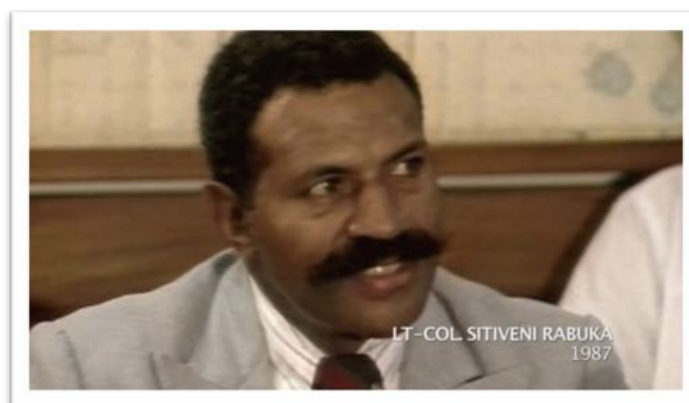


Figure 2.10 – Rabuka in 1987

³⁵ Rory Gibson, ‘Australian Tourists Turn a Blind Eye as Fiji’s Best People Persecuted’, in *The Courier Mail*, 22 August 2010, available online at <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/australian-tourists-turn-a-blind-eye-as-fijis-best-people-persecuted/story-fn5hj8hz-1225908505761>, accessed 19 August 2015.

As colonialists kept bringing in indentured servants from India to exploit in the early 20th century, this group inevitably grew in numbers and influence. They understandably then wanted representation and rights to reflect their growing contributions and connections to Fiji. When Indentured Servitude ended in 1920, Indians may have ceased their unquestioning submission to the concept of 'white superiority', but they were still incredibly disadvantaged and discriminated against for the rest of the colonial period.³⁶ Equally, the indigenous Fijians who had never had to worry about the threat of Indian dominance while they were allied with the Colonialists saw their lifestyle, which incorporated the best of the new and the old, under threat. It was really only a matter of time until something gave way. Rabuka's coup represents this fissure in Fiji.

After establishing what was happening at the national level, Goldson again is deliberate in making sure that she focuses this change through the eyes of the Scott family, who had been out of Fiji for a number of years before tensions hit a breaking point. Goldson cuts to a photo of John and Greg at the house in Tamavua. Over the top Owen narrates, stating 'John and Greg were actually in Fiji when the 1987 coup occurred, renovating the house that John and I had inherited from our father. It was empty and had fallen into disrepair. John feared that it might be taken over by the military. So John and Greg decided to sell up in NZ and begin a new life in Fiji.' This demonstrates that John was very aware of what was going on in his birth country and was anxious about the changes happening. But what is interesting is that it seems that protecting their long-abandoned family house was of greatest interest to them initially. The worry for the family home isn't a surprise nor is it a bad thing. Just because nobody was there did not mean that the Scott's did not still have a financial and emotional stake in the property. But it is notable nevertheless that John Scott left New Zealand for Fiji to take back a piece of property that was so emblematic of the colonial era when that period had ceased to exist for well over a decade. John might not have explicitly tried to be a traditional colonialist, but in a way, because he was a Scott, he could not avoid being so. To emphasise the idea that the home is a product of a bygone era and emblematic of colonialism, Goldson gets Owen Scott to take the audience on a guided tour around the house, and his descriptions of the past add to the idea that it was symbolic of the colonial era. Owen points out where there used to be 'a lot of drinks parties' and 'lots of fun', and he subsequently adds that the whole atmosphere was 'very colonial' and these were 'white mischief days'.

Following some interviews with a friend of John and Greg's, Goldson again interviews Jon Apted, who emphasises just how different Fiji was in the post-colonial era, to how it had been, stating 'John saw himself as an insider. I always got the feeling that he believed he'd come home. But a lot had changed. It was a completely different country. All of the people that lived here had no memory of the Scott's'. In other words, the colonial power that once was so pervasive had vanished as Fiji strained under the grip of ethnic tensions. Multiple photos are

³⁶ Gaunder, p.14.

then shown of John and Greg on the beach, swimming, frolicking, and walking along the sand. The pictures are very reminiscent of the earlier family photos that have been shown, and recall the images of the colonial era. However, these colonial memories do not belong in the Fiji of the 1980s, because as stated by Apted, that era was no more. To emphasise this disparity, Goldson juxtaposes the photos with post-colonial footage to show how much of an outsider Scott really was. In place of the newsreel-style footage featured earlier, Goldson now uses footage that is much bleaker. Firstly, she highlights the ugly aesthetics of industrialisation, showing heavily mechanised infrastructure protruding into the natural harbour. There are then people shown fossicking in the mud on the beach, followed by a young boy pushing a piece of waste polystyrene packaging across the mud. The idea is to paint the image in the viewer's mind that Fiji has struggled economically in the post-colonial period, and that the 'Eden' of the past was being crushed under the weight of poverty. Research supports this assertion as well. According to University of South Pacific academics Anas and Riad Khan, 'Fiji has experienced increasing levels of hardship amongst all the communities since the first military coup in 1987', and its position in the United Nations Development Index (HDI) ranking has declined from 45 in 1994 to 90 in 2004'.³⁷



Figure 2.11 – The legacy of poverty in Fiji

Owen goes on to explain how his brother would go on to become involved in tackling the problems of poverty so directly. He states that 'since Rabuka's 1987 coup, poverty had worsened in Fiji. My brother had always had a humanitarian streak. So when the opportunity to work in an aid organisation arose, he was happy to leave the corporate world behind.' This sequence is another moment where the narrative construction emphasises the idea of circularity. The actions of the previous generations of Scott's before John partially had contributed to the conflict that had arisen in Post-Colonial Fiji, which in turn accelerated the expansion of poverty. Without the conflict and poverty, it is hard to imagine the Red Cross being of such influence within the region, or that it would need someone with John's acumen to be involved. Additionally, though, the Christianity that John's missionary grandfather brought

³⁷ Anas Khan, Riad Khan, and Desmond Uelese Aмоса, 'Poverty and the Role of the Media in Fiji', in *TMC Academic Journal*, Volume 5, Issue 2, 2011, p.99.

to Fiji with him also meant that John became a very controversial and divisive appointment at the Red Cross. Daryl Tarte extrapolates on recalling how he when he was president of the Red Cross they were faced with finding a new director general. According to Tarte, there were 'some on the board of Red Cross at the time who didn't believe that John would be an appropriate choice because he was known to be gay'. He describes that the board 'had a little bit of a tussle' over the issue within the board over the issue but eventually 'our view prevailed, and John was duly appointed director general.'

This new position presented a notable change in John. Despite returning to reclaim the property built by his colonial father who helped sow the seeds of conflict and poverty, John became someone actively trying to alleviate these issues. John may not have arrived at the Island looking to adopt this humanitarian role, but it appealed to him regardless, and by necessity he became the opposite of his father. Goldson then showcases some of his work with the Red Cross and features discussions with three Fijian gay rights activists; Marlene Dutta, Luisa Tora, and Peter Sipeli. Sipeli, in particular, discusses how people wanted to meet them precisely because they were so different, and because many in the gay community felt that John and Greg were role models.

Having established that the fates of Fiji and the Scott family became inherently intertwined and that Fiji had fallen into significant social and economic trouble with the 1987 coup, the film then moves on May 19, 2000, when the George Speight led a coup against the Fijian government began. Again Goldson opens this sequence by using contrasts in her shot selection. She selects a shot of peaceful harbour, but ominous music plays in the background, and the sound of yelling comes in over the top. This shot then cuts to news footage of people running in a panic while Owen states 'in May 2000 there was another coup, once again in the name of Fijian nationalism and once again in response to the threat of rising Indian economic and political power.' Goldson highlights footage of Fijian nationalists marching through the streets, and a banner that reads 'every inch of land in Fiji has an owner' is put in focus. Following this a preacher with a bullhorn is shown yelling loudly 'the bible says just leave them (the Indians), separate yourselves from them, don't do anything unclean and God will accept you, read your bible'. The idea that Christian fundamentalism was significant and influential on this conflict and the rise of these radical right wing ideas will be something that is explored in more depth as the film progresses.

Goldson looks at the 2000 coup in more depth than the 1987 one, and in doing this shows how far things had deteriorated in Fiji because of the foundations that the colonialists had laid down. Owen continues his narration stating that 'this coup was much more violent than the one in 1987; the one that had brought John and Greg indirectly to Fiji in the first place'. Reflecting this statement is the news footage that Goldson shows the audience. There is more footage of people running in a panic; a young boy with an armful of pilfered consumer goods; a building

in the city on fire; people ransacking a storefront and taking goods away; a young boy beaming with elation at the haul of goods he has been able to procure in the chaos; a young man climbing into a window of business from the footpath; an overwhelmed police officer exhaling a sigh amidst the anarchy; and finally a scrap metal Ute driving through the scenes with a grinning boy holding an enormous television on the back. The imagery is powerful and reminiscent of revolutionary scenes seen all over the world. The film then moves to shots of John walking alone up to the gates of the parliamentary complex, and this marks another point where the audience gets to absorb the 'circularity' of events in Fijian history. John's role with the Red Cross meant that he found himself having to negotiate with fundamentalists inspired by ideas that were planted and encouraged by his father and his father's peers.

The soundtrack again changes in a striking manner. Whereas the film had previously featured a lot of second-hand testimony from experts and eyewitnesses, Goldson now introduces testimony from John Scott himself. Scott fortuitously made an audio diary detailing his experiences, and this gives the audience a literal 'voice from the dead' that provides critical insights into how the circularity of history was affecting John at the moment. The first entry starts with John describing his experiences on the first day where he confesses that 'I arrived at the gates in a nervous state, to say the least', because 'the guards were standing there with their machine guns.' Despite his intense fear, John describes how he 'approached them and explained that I was from the Fiji Red Cross Society, and I needed to have access to the hostages.' He is remarkably composed considering that when he was recording this diary entry, this confrontation was still relatively fresh.

When combined with footage of John walking up to the gate alone, and the images of the guards with their powerful machine guns, the chance for the viewer to experience what this moment was like for John is unparalleled. Goldson constructs a multi-sensory examination of what the coup looked, felt, and sounded like in a way that the written page can not mimic. No writer, after all, can comparatively relay the exact pitch and patterns of someone suffering the kind of stress that John was going through. Goldson's use of testimony further emphasises the intensity of the situation. Fijian radio journalist Malakai Veisamasama states that he believes anyone would have to be 'crazy' to walk into the situation that John did, where untrained civilians were wielding heavy artillery. Peter Ridgway, Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions between 2001 and 2005 then adds more detail to Veisamasama's description. He claims that 'large numbers' of these civilians 'had come down from the hills...drunk on alcohol or kava' and thus, they were not just wielding machine guns but were doing so at the height of intoxication. Amateur footage showing these armed civilians doing group training inside the compound then brings a visual dimension to the overall sense of imminent danger and fear that would have been enveloping John at this time.



Figure 2.12 – Footage of John combined with audio diary

After a brief sequence, in which George Speight defends his cause, Goldson builds another sequence based on John's audio diary. Rather than continuing to look at what was happening behind the compound fence, though, the testimony brings life to John's experiences with what was generally going on in Suva. John says:

I made an endeavour to go to the hospital to pick up medicines that were required because you have to remember that Suva had been looted, and burned that day. Driving around the streets was a nightmare, to put it mildly. The streets were full of drunken young people with supermarket trollies full of liquor. These people were irrational – lying on the road, trying to get in the way, trying to get rides, from vehicles such as mine. So it was very awkward.

The combination of amateur and news footage that Goldson plays over the top of John's diary is again very telling. There is a shot of fire enveloping buildings along the Suva streets; an Indian vegetarian restaurant burning down; firefighters trying to stop another fire in another business somewhere in the city; a crowd gathered at the front of a pub or hotel; slow motion footage of young people silhouetted against the smoke; a long shot of the street again that we have seen a few times with people spread everywhere; a truck reversing up an empty road as people are running around getting out of its way; and fire sprinklers in a burnt out and ransacked building pointlessly drizzling over burnt out ruins.

Despite the fact that the coup ended without any deaths, Owen emphasises that the whole fiasco traumatised John, and he felt John probably had Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. John earned immense respect for his work in the coup, though, and interviews with various figures in Fiji emphasise this regard. Ratu Mosese Volavola, a captured parliamentarian, referred to John as an 'angel of light'. Veisamasama also refers to John as being sent by God, since no ordinary person could do what he did. However, Goldson is deliberate in making sure that people do not assume that this was the end of the conflict in Fiji, especially in 2008 (when the film was released). Just like John was traumatised by the events the country was too. She articulates this by including a sequence that she filmed at Suva's Grand Pacific Hotel. The Hotel was formerly the 'epitome of colonial elegance'. However, when she and Owen went to film there, it had been taken over by the military. Goldson sets up a brief montage of still photos

to show what the Hotel was once like. There is yet another picture of the Queen; there is another shot that features black workers serving white guests, and there is additionally a photo of a banquet featuring Maurice Scott. Goldson and Owen are allowed to roam the hotel, but there are soldiers with guns all over the building. They see a stateroom that once held dignitaries with a pup tent erected in it having fallen into disrepair. The whole atmosphere is surreal. There is a brief reference to the 2006 coup that would also grip Fiji (and has shaped the Fijian government in power today) and the sequence closes with Owen somewhat understatedly stating 'Fiji has changed hugely since my father's day'.

The film switches gear at this point, and Goldson undertakes a microhistorical examination of John's murder. Goldson offers an argument that the religious fundamentalism present in Fiji combined with the actions of colonialists in pitting ethnicities against each other for economic gain created Apete Kaisau the murderer and John Scott, the victim. Apete was poor, Christian, and angry. And as Goldson alludes to, it is also quite likely that he had some homosexual inclinations which stood in conflict with the ideas of masculinity espoused by the Fijian nationalists. John and Greg were out with their sexuality and inevitably this meant they would get caught up in the complex nature of sexual politics in Fiji.

This examination starts with Owen Scott nervously going to visit Kaisau's family. Kaisau's sister, mother and father are in a church service in their village singing hymns. Owen gets out to meet them in the church, and Owen and Kaisau's mother embrace, and briefly mention what a terrible time both families were going through when they last met. The Kaisau's then invite Owen and the audience into their home where all the relatives are waiting to listen and discuss the crime of their relative. Goldson then segues into a discussion with various family members about Christianity. Apete's father is vehement that what is most important to the Kaisau family is their faith. Even though his son has murdered in the name of God, he describes how 'our true forte as a family is our deep religious conviction. That was tested during that time, and we came through. So you can imagine how influential the church is in our lives'. Apete's mother then gives a bit of a historical background about how their Christian faith was always the most important facet of their lives, stating that 'I can remember when I was a child that's the thing that we do every day. Even if it means missing the school bus, we were made to sit down and do our prayers before school. In our upbringing, it was very important...that was a driving force.' Despite the trauma, the violence, and tragedy of everything done by their son to John and Greg, in the name of the God that was introduced by John's great-grandfather, they remain steadfast in their devotion. This testimony paints a sharp picture of just how influential the ideas brought in by those early missionaries, became. However, the other more notable point that Goldson attempts to make in interviewing them, though, is that there is nothing unusual about the Kaisau family. In a country where 99% of indigenous Fijians ascribe to a Christian belief, and where 2/3 of those are Methodists, they are a banal Fijian family, reflective of their wider

community and friends.³⁸ The Kaisau's religious worldview is a historically constructed perspective that John Scott's grandfather helped create.

Goldson then moves to look at the inherent conflict between Apete's faith, and his possible homosexual tendencies. The testimony provided implies that Apete knew John and Greg quite well, and was possibly in a sexually intimate relationship with them. Dutta claims assertively that Apete was a 'very strong part of their household - Greg and John's. There was a lot of interaction and everything, weekends away and all sorts of things. He moved freely in and out of the house and on the property. He was involved everywhere; he had full access to everything'. Jon Apted also draws the viewer's attention to the complex interplay of sexuality and social politics in a country like Fiji, after being questioned about the suspected relationship between John, Greg, and Apete. He states that 'the white man and the younger local present a dilemma for the average person here. They immediately perceive that it's the power of the money the material comforts that attracts the local person to do something they otherwise would not'. While Apted says this there are lush shots of the house and the estate, which when compared to the Kaisau family's humble home a few minutes earlier, creates a distinct contrast.

Having highlighted Apete's possibly confused sexual identity, Goldson then starts to look at the historical reasons why sexuality was such a political issue in Fiji. Goldson features more testimony from Imrana Jalal, who explicitly links a rise in homophobia and bigotry to the political climate in post-colonial Fiji. She adamantly states that 'there has been a definitive move to right wing Christian fundamentalism from the 1987 coup' because Rabuka's 'constituency was the Methodist Church.' According to Jalal, 'the Methodist church has slowly and surely moved towards fundamentalist Christianity. So even if there was a degree of tolerance at one stage, but more like turning a blind eye than tolerance per se, like social tolerance in the wider sense of the word, they've become less and less tolerant because of Christianity.'

The film features news footage of Christian protesters marching in the streets against homosexuals in Fiji to support this assertion. The signs they have are the same as those seen worldwide in places where gay rights have come under attack. They have catchphrases such as 'man + man = wrong', and the infamous 'God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve' catch cry. To give extra credence to just how pervasive this homophobia was/is Dutta, Tora, and Sipeli discusses the absurd accusations made against them for their lifestyle. One of them says that 'we cause hurricanes and poverty, that's my favourite quote. Two different presidents of the Methodist church said that. One said God would look down on Fiji and see this deviant behaviour going on and would cause the country to become impoverished. And the other one said we would bring bad weather.' Goldson herself has expanded on the rise of homophobia in an interview with the *Sunday Star-Times*. In the article, she argues that the rise of

³⁸ Geir Henning Presterudstuen, *Ghosts, Spirits, and Christian Fundamentalism: The Case of Fiji*, available online at <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/at-the-interface/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Presterudstuen-Draft-Paper.pdf>, accessed 19 August 2015.

fundamentalism is inseparable from the 'effect of successive coups, which appeared to condone and legitimise violent solutions.'³⁹ In other words, as poverty and tension rose, fundamentalism provided legitimacy to fears that people were feeling.



Figure 2.13 – News footage of Christians protesting against homosexuality

Goldson returns to examining this complexity of sexuality on a micro level by profiling Apete's descent into anger and murderous rage while living with his host family in Kumeu, New Zealand. Goldson uses interviews to describe how Apete's anger bubbled to the surface, and a violent homophobia gripped him when he learned of John Scott's role as facilitator between parties during the Speight led coup. He even told his host family at one point that 'gays should be dissolved off the earth'. Following this emotional breakdown, Apete returned home in 2001, and according to his mother, he was so distant and so changed she legitimately could not tell if it was actually him, or 'just a ghost'. The film shows how Apete's religious fervour and rage continued in Fiji by interviewing his cousin who spoke with Apete before the murders, but could not actually believe that his cousin could be capable of such rage. His cousin recalls how Apete would go on long walks to see him, and the two would discuss various elements of Christianity, and what biblical passages meant. Goldson has mentioned how important these late night discussions between the two were on her perceptions of Fiji. What struck her from these anecdotes 'is how literally Fijians can take the Bible' The image of the 'two young men having a theological debate in the middle of the night in a misty valley' made her believe as an outsider that in Fiji 'almost everything is done in the name of God.'⁴⁰ The inclusion of these details into the narrative, helps re-enforce the idea that John's great-grandfather's religious beliefs would impact him in ways he probably didn't believe was possible.

The murder of John and Greg itself is less relevant to the narrative of the film, than is the exploration of how the event itself came to be, and what this says about Fijian history. Goldson instead focuses on the fallout from the murder, to help conclude her narrative. She shows how in the wake of the killing there was a lot of speculation and hysteria about what the motive for

³⁹ Chrisholm, p.C3.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the murders was, and who had committed the crime. Theories ranged from ‘something to do with the coup’ to a ‘fuck buddy gone wrong’. Homosexual rights activist Peter Sipeli elaborated on how he and his friends felt like it was explicitly a hate crime against the gay community: ‘In a repressive space that’s the most extreme form of punishment for being gay here. That stayed with me for a long time. It was scary for all of us. Keep on behaving like that, this is what happens to you.’ Amongst news footage of the murder scene and weapon, Goldson takes the film back to Tamavua, where she speaks to Apete’s family about how they found out. The recollections of both belief and disbelief from different members of the family illustrate how people can be seen so differently by those closest to them. Apete himself apparently remained remorseless, as his cousin claimed he told him ‘what I did, I did for the good of the nation’.

The idea that this historically sown Christian fundamentalism is what drove Apete to madness is emphasised again in an interview with Apete’s lawyer, Barry Hart. Hart describes how, as Apete became more and more isolated, he became more obsessed with his bible and was underlining passages. Goldson then shows a Bible with the infamous Leviticus 18:22 passage marked with a pen. This Bible passage reads ‘do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.’ While the debate about the actual meaning of this passage has been argued fiercely by different groups, there is no doubt that it has one particularly influential and popular interpretation, and this has led to it being a critical piece of biblical writing to support anti-gay politics worldwide. Goldson then cuts to another Bible passage, this time, with the words ‘this is for the youth of Cold-I-Suva and Fiji’ written next to it in the column. The passage is Genesis 19:24 which reads ‘Then the Lord rained down burning sulphur on Sodom and Gomorrah – from the Lord out of the heavens’. Owen additionally describes how another bible also had Apete underlining the reference to the commandment regarding the worship of false idols, and as he describes this Goldson shows news footage of John walking alone towards the prison gates that we have seen before. But it is not the primary footage itself. Rather a television playing the footage is being recorded, giving the viewer Apete’s point of view as he broke down in the house of his host family in Kumeu.

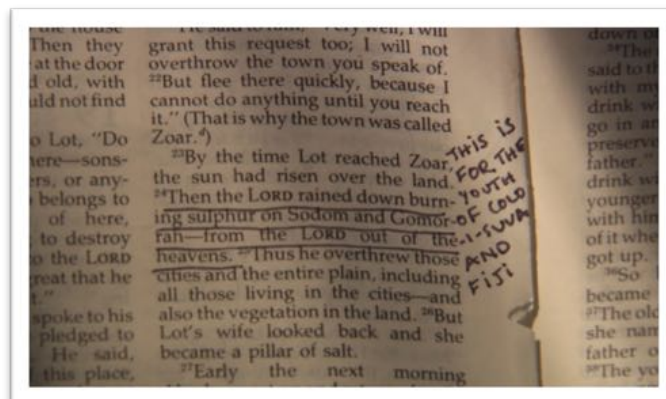


Figure 2.14 – An underlined passage in Apete’s bible

The murder of John and Greg at the hands of Apete is the second instance of circularity in this piece of history. Apete's devotion and obsession with his bible came from his family upbringing as we learn from the discussion with his family earlier in the film. This devotion to the Bible that the Kaisau family prided itself on was only able to manifest itself with the introduction of Christianity brought by the earlier generations of Scott's when they came to Fiji. Given the fact that Fijian nationalist movements supported by Maurice Scott used the bible to promote homophobia and traditional masculinity, there is a clear link between what helped fuel Apete's rage against John Scott, and the earlier actions of the Scott family. It is literally spelt out in black and white on the page, both in the form of the biblical verses themselves and in Apete Kaisau's pen lines around them.

This revelation does not mean that this fundamentalist point of view is all consuming and that religions in Fiji merely teaches hate and bigotry. Towards the very end of the film, Goldson features more interview footage with the family's local church leader. In this discussion, he points out that Apete had a 'preoccupation with God's words. He said it was the voice of God. Apete was not able to discern which voice. And he took the theological aspect from the Old Testament. But that is not what Christ came to do.' What this implies is that the spiritual side of Christianity would not be a problem by itself, because there are religious leaders in Fiji looking to teach the lessons of the New Testament as opposed to the old. But because of Fiji's political climate, where fundamentalism got mixed up with fearful nationalism, there have been perversions of this Christianity that have been responsible for the ruin of many lives – and ultimately the brutal massacre of two.

What Fiji became in the post-colonial era, and how many parts of it remain to this day is a divided, violent, and brutally religious society. None of this happened in a vacuum. These patterns, this conflict, and this chaos ultimately emerged because of the decisions made during colonialism, and in the early days of European expansion into the Fiji islands. The circularity of history in the case of Fiji is very clear in many ways, and it is this narrative that Annie Goldson successfully attempts to construct in *An Island Calling*. As a political auteur, Goldson's work has an ability to go against the grain and critique the status quo when it comes to perceptions and ideas.⁴¹ However by even by the most conservative estimates of what history is, the kind of construction found in *An Island Calling* is also inherently historical by nature. After all, Goldson uses her narrative and techniques of microhistory to deconstruct and critique the metanarratives that shape Fijian history. Or to put it another way - she again engages in a debate about what exactly happened, why it happened, and what would be an adequate account of its significance.⁴² Ian Jarvie and Hayden White would both be proud of this.

⁴¹ Goldson, *A Claim to Truth: Documentary, Politics, Production*, p.39.

⁴² White, 'Historiography and Historiophoty', p.1195.

CHAPTER THREE: BRINGING CAMBODIA TO NEW ZEALAND – THE RECEPTION OF *BROTHER NUMBER ONE* (2011)

What I think is important...is the understanding that is formed...between the film-makers and the audience: for both, something real and unquestionable exists, something which definitely happened and which is history.¹

Pierre Sorlin

Brother Number One, released in 2011, is a natural fit when looking to discuss the reception of Annie Goldson's historiophoty. The synopsis of the film, as supplied by its international distributor Cargo Film, gives a great insight into the variety of historical themes and perspectives the film attempts to bring to life:

The film follows Kerry's youngest brother Rob Hamill in the present day, as he is given an exceptional opportunity to confront his brother's torturer and gain some measure of justice and peace...We follow Rob on his journey as he attempts to uncover the most probable scenario surrounding the capture, incarceration, and murders of his brother and sailing companions. He meets with native Cambodians who also share their story in parallel. Together they explore the devastating impact of Pol Pot's maniacal ideology on Rob's family and the Cambodian people — which saw 2 million killed through execution, starvation and overwork. The film interweaves the recent history of Cambodia with their journey: how the former French colony was sucked into the Cold War; bombed illegally by Nixon and Kissinger; was invaded by the Vietnamese; then in a twist of realpolitik, saw the greatest war criminals since the Third Reich aided and abetted by China, the US and the Western powers.²

Because it is the most recent film of the three examined in this study, *Brother Number One* has the largest volume of well documented and available feedback. This feedback is additionally quite strong and emotive, demonstrating a level of engagement from viewers that is richer in abundance than in some of the resources available for Goldson's other works.

Most significantly, though, with *Brother Number One*, Goldson had clearly stated intentions regarding how she wanted viewers to engage with the historical information the film provides. While the film might superficially appear to be simply about a single Western individual's emotional trials during the bereavement of a brother, this is not the case. Goldson had clear intentions to construct a piece of historiophoty in which viewers would not only share in her subjects traumatic experiences but in doing so, would also gain an emotional comprehension of the wider inhuman horrors of the Khmer Rouge.³ In more philosophical terms, Goldson crafted *Brother Number One* to be a film that would balance elements of history as 'identification', with elements of 'history as interpretation' to produce an interactive examination of Cambodia in the 1970s.⁴

¹ Pierre Sorlin, 'The Film in History', in Marnie Hughes-Warrington (ed.) *The History on Film Reader*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2009, p.16.

² Cargo Film and Releasing, *Brother Number One*, available online at <http://www.cargofilm-releasing.com/brother.html>, date accessed 13 November 2015.

³ For the purposes of this study, it should be emphasised that 'intention' is not a reference simply to textual language or techniques that are presumed to be consumed by imagined audiences. As Hughes-Warrington argues, traditional 'studies of histories have been author- and auteurs(director) oriented'(Hughes-Warrington, p.88). However in more recent years 'intentionalist' studies have been 'questioned by literary theorists and historiographers, who have called for greater attention to audiences' (Hughes-Warrington, p.181). When this study refers to intention then, it is a reference to the demonstrable aims that Goldson had in making the film, that we can back up with primary evidence.

⁴ Morris-Suzuki, pp.22-23.

The terms 'history as identity' and 'history as interpretation' were coined by historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki in her analytical overview of how the dimensions of history have changed during the twentieth and twenty-first century, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, and History*. In the book, Morris-Suzuki sets out to explore the form and texture of historical knowledge found in new forms of media and popular culture that challenge the traditional vessels of historical knowledge.⁵ To help establish a theoretical framework to undertake her analysis in, she argues that there are in essence two types of history. The first is the more conservative approach found in historiography which she refers to as 'history as interpretation'. Suzuki describes 'history as interpretation' as being 'a search for knowledge which will enable us to understand the causal relationships between events, the genealogy of ideas and institutions, and the forces which produce a change in human societies.'⁶

In contrast, she then talks about a form of history that while not new, has undoubtedly increased in influence in more recent decades. This notion is the aforementioned 'history as identity'. Morris-Suzuki describes this branch of history as mainly involving 'imagination and empathy', and argues that it is the most immersive forms of history, such as historiophoty, that encourage this kind of relationship to the past. To Morris-Suzuki, this 'identification with others in the past, in turn, becomes the basis for rethinking or reaffirming our own identity in the present'. She believes that 'by remembering a particular piece of the past, by making it our own, we create our sense of belonging to a certain group of people – whether a nation, local society, ethnic minority, or religious group. In this way, we also define our place in a complicated and changing world. Indeed, it is the very act of historical commemoration that calls group identity into being. As Jos Perry puts it "we recollect. Therefore, we are."⁷

Morris-Suzuki's taxonomy is useful for our purposes because Goldson's film ascribes to the principles of both these ideas in its endeavour to create effective historiophoty. We know this is the case because Goldson has offered perspectives on the film that demonstrate an engagement with both of these notions. In one interview Goldson argued that '*Brother Number One* was both 'a New Zealand story and a Cambodia story', meaning that she wished for western audiences (particularly New Zealanders) to see the horrors in Cambodia as their own.⁸ This assertion is demonstrative of an intention for the film to be seen as history as identification. Conversely, though, she has also stated her desire to have the film join 'with other audio-visual texts in the broader tasks of representing atrocity, recovering memory, and addressing history'.⁹ This more modernist desire to chronicle the events of the past specifically is much more indicative of an intention for the film to act as a piece of history as interpretation. Clearly

⁵ Peter Fritzsche, 'The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History (Book Review)', in *American Historical Review*, 2006, Volume 11, Number 5, p.1467.

⁶ Morris-Suzuki, p.22.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Anna Husted, 'Interview with Annie Goldson: *Brother Number One*', in *Film Society Lincoln Center*, 19 June 2012, available online at <http://www.filmlinc.org/daily/interview-with-annie-goldson-brother-number-one/>, date accessed 8 November 2015.

⁹ Goldson, 'Testimony and Translation: Tracing the Past in *Brother Number One*', p.3.

Goldson saw the strengths of both approaches then and planned to utilise these philosophical ideas to engage with the dimensions of Cambodian history in her own way. Understanding the idea that the film is meant to have interplay between both ideas is critical in gauging how the reception of the film, and in helping to analyse the complex relationship between the text and the viewers that consumed it.

RECEPTION STUDIES AND HISTORIOPHOTY

Before examining whether or not critics engaged with these methods, though, it is imperative to craft an understanding of what 'reception' means in the context of historiophoty, and why as historians it is so important to conceptualise. Looking at the reception of films is a vital endeavour to undertake because it can help us to create an overall richer vision of any given piece of historiophoty as a whole. The construction of a text itself is, after all, only part of the life force of any useful piece of historiophoty. Analysing how these texts interrelate with the audiences that consume them encourages historians to consider all of the possible implications of a given historical film, outside of the text itself. It is a form of holistic history that removes the habit of assumption.

This concept is not new. In the introduction to *Hollywood Spectatorship*, the book's editor Melvyn Stokes writes that 'theoretical definitions of cinema spectatorship have been at the heart of film studies for much of the last three decades.'¹⁰ Stokes additionally provides readers with a succinct but illuminating insight into the study of reception that has been undertaken by film theorists and historians over the past four decades. Examining the early theoretical foundations of reception studies, he writes that 'reflecting the dominant intellectual currents of the time in France, writers dedicated to this objective began with the assumption that the best – indeed the only – means of examining the cinema's ideological operations was to focus attention on film texts and the ways in which those texts constructed spectators'.¹¹ What this means is that the theories surrounding any idea of an 'audience' initially accepted as a given that reactions could be homogenous and shaped solely by the text. Given what we know about the differing opinions of films from our everyday experiences, though, this concept is problematic.

According to Stokes there was an abrupt change in the late 1970s when 'French historians of the Annales school and British social and cultural historians such as E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams attempted to construct a new version of the past in which previously marginalised groups...were not only foregrounded, but presented as active agents in the struggle to win control over their own lives and circumstances'.¹² This rise of 'social history' created a division of sorts between historians who 'sought to draw a picture...of how "real"

¹⁰ Melvyn Stokes 'Introduction', in Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (eds.), *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of American Audiences*, London, 2001, p.1.

¹¹ Ibid, p.2.

¹² Ibid.

people had once lived and fought to acquire agency' and film theorists who 'set about explaining how highly theoretical spectators were ideologically positioned (for the most part passively) by the cinematic apparatus'.¹³ In the decades following the 1970s, there have been various theorists from across disciplines that have influenced and tweaked these initial ideas, and the dichotomy between real and imagined spectators is not as entrenched as it once was. By combining the theoretical notions postulated over the past forty years, with analyses of written film reviews from both New Zealand and abroad, we can gain valuable insights into *Brother Number One's* reception upon release, and how audiences engaged with it as a piece of historiophoty.¹⁴

The idea of using published accounts of a film's reception like reviews to measure engagement is not perfect, but neither is it unprecedented. Stokes argues that 'a press reviewer is not especially different from any ordinary cinema-goer who tells a partner, friends, whoever what they thought of a film. And in their retellings, they reveal much about how they watched the film'.¹⁵ Additionally, Marnie Hughes-Warrington argues that published reviews are significant because they are part of a broad tapestry of external factors that shape the audience reception of a given film. She writes 'viewers do not respond only to modes of narration or film techniques...they also respond to print and online reviews and information about 'stars', the physical environment in which they see a film, merchandise, and the friends they share their film watching experiences with. Any one of these things may be more important than editing, say, in shaping their understanding of a film, yet none of these activities is captured in that viewed film'.¹⁶ This perspective is not only of value to us as historians. Cultural economists have also noticed the importance of the relationship between reviewers and regular audience

¹³ Ibid, p.3.

¹⁴ Canvassing reviews was not entirely challenging, but it is also fair to say that traditional film sources that offer opportunities to examine engagement were not very helpful. Currently, there are no reviews available for viewing at the popular aggregate site *Rotten Tomatoes*, and the *Internet Movie Database (IMDB)* was not much assistance either. The New Zealand based online film guide *Flicks* proved to be the most helpful in supplying a starting point, but the engagement here was very limited also. Public contributors had given the film four reviews, three of which were rated five stars, and one of which as rated four. There were additionally 34 brief comments on the film, all of which were very positive. Overall though from all these sources, there were less than 1000 words to go off which left conclusions from this material hard to come by.

Despite this, there was still a good amount of discussion about the film from reviewers to be discovered, once search parameters were expanded. After scouring for reviews from all over the world, I settled on 24 that offered some sort of evidence of engagement and organised them so that there were twelve from New Zealand and twelve that were international. The reviews all came from Western countries: there were twelve from New Zealand, six from the United States, four from the UK, one from Australia, and one from Canada. I do not claim to have covered every review out there (not even close in fact) but there are still interesting trends that can be discovered, and answers to questions regarding Goldson's intentions that can be discovered.

Of the 24 reviews I examined, 12 came from traditional 'old media' outlets such as newspapers, television, and radio. In addition to these more traditional review platforms what I found was there were four from blogs, two from University newspapers, three from events guides, one from a NGO, one from an American film society, one from a lifestyle magazine, one from a website that offered New Zealand news to New Zealanders living in the UK, one from an industry publication, one from an academic journal, and one from an online writer's collective. It should be pointed out that these classifications though are not necessarily mutually exclusive and there can be some overlap. For example two of the 'old media' reviewers, radio journalist Tim Roxborough, and TV journalist Darren Bevan did their reviews on their own personal blog sites which made classification a bit difficult. In this instance, given their training and influence outside of the normal blogosphere, however, I have classified them as being 'old media' reviews.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.189.

¹⁶ Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film*, p.189.

members. Multiple studies have been undertaken by academics in this field to determine what exactly the financial outcomes of this relationship are – albeit with mixed results.¹⁷

Stokes also highlights how ‘a small number of studies have used reviews and other published responses to films as a resource for considering the reception of films. These have made a significant contribution to what has become known as reception studies.¹⁸ One of the influential scholars that he references as having done insightful work in this field is Janet Staiger. Over the past three decades, Staiger has been one of the most influential theorists in the area of reception studies and has utilised reviews to construct multiple case studies and analyses. Some of Staiger's most famous accounts of cinematic reception (such as her account of D.W Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*) have by necessity utilised film reviews predominantly as a proxy for viewer reactions.¹⁹ Staiger describes her reasoning for this by stating that, ‘my presumption is that film reviewers are functioning as surrogate consumers, following up on the promotion and publicity generated by the studios and affirming or denying the proposed reading strategies to counsel viewers about what they will see.’²⁰

There are some theoretical shortcomings to this approach, however. For example, Mark Jancovich writes that ‘in practice historical reception studies has relied on the analysis of published materials such as reviews, on the grounds that additional evidence is often unavailable while acknowledging that the public status of these artefacts makes them suspect’.²¹ And Hughes-Warrington, while recognizing the value of reviews, has also stated that in conflating views of contemporary reviewers as being the primary source of historical context can be problematic. She writes that Staiger’s studies (like that of *Birth of a Nation*) stop short of offering scholars an account of the “non-authoritative” audiences that reception scholars have tried to reclaim.²² These shortcomings arise because, despite what Stokes might imply, a published reviewer is slightly different to a ‘regular’ viewer. They are a proxy consumer that ultimately bridges the gap between producers and the wider public. The reviewer's job is to frame the agenda of any given film and to help manage expectations for a mass audience, rather than to immerse themselves solely in the text. Understandably then, given their complex role(s), their relationship to the screen is often more professional and less emotive than with ‘regular’ viewers. While this study will be naturally limited because of this,

¹⁷ Two examples I found were – Peter Boatwright, Susan Basuroy, and Wanger Kamakura ‘Reviewing the Reviewers: The Impact of Individual Film Critics on Box Office Performance’, in *Quantitative Marketing and Economics*, Volume 5, Issue 4, 2007, pp.401-425; and Thorsten Hennig-Thurau, Andre Marchand, and Barbara Hiller ‘The Relationship Between Reviewer Judgments and Motion Picture Success: Re-analysis and Extension’, in *Journal of Cultural Economics*, Volume 36, pp.249-283. Both of these studies came to conclusions that were complex and were unable to conclusively demonstrate a definitive relationship between reviews and box office, because of a number of variables. There were relationships in some instances, but the studies do not sufficiently help my cause in this study.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992, pp.139-154.

²⁰ Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*, New York, New York University Press, 2000, p.68.

²¹ Mark Jancovich, ‘Genre and the Audience: Genre Classifications and Cultural Distinctions in the Mediation of The Silence of the Lambs’, in Stokes and Maltby (eds.), *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of American Audiences*, p.36.

²² Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film*, p.88.

the analysis is legitimate and educational as long as we do not overstate the conclusions and oversell the implications.

It does need to be emphasised that studying reviews is also an acceptable technique to adopt because review analysis is only one part of the process of undertaking a 'reception study'. Examining the context of the film's production is as vital to building a truly holistic perspective on the reception of a film, as are the reviews themselves. The importance of establishing context is a point on which Janet Staiger is particularly adamant. In undertaking the process of contextualization, Staiger focuses on drawing out ideas about wider societal trends of the time. So for example, when she examined *Birth of a Nation*, she placed a lot of emphasis on what was happening in the USA in 1915 to give the critical reaction a historical base of what life in the USA was like during production.

While there have been some broad-scale changes in New Zealand since *Brother Number One* was released, contextualising the production of the film in such wide scale terms is not the only approach we can take, and in fact, it is not even the most fruitful. Instead, what we can do is narrow our perspective so that we look at very specific contextual factors instead of the wider social context – specifically, Goldson's earlier stated intentions to craft a film that plays the concepts of 'history as identity' and 'history as interpretation' against each other to illuminate viewers to historical horrors of which they likely knew little. In an interview with *Listener* magazine, Goldson gave some great insights into her views of Cambodian history, and how this shaped the production of *Brother Number One*. She stated that 'it seems to me that the world community was culpable in helping create the violence that engulfed Cambodia. During the Vietnam War, Cambodia was sandwiched between Vietnam (which I think did have expansionist desires for a Communist Indochina) and Thailand, which was effectively an American airbase. Vietnam was the centre of the Cold War, and the US, China, Russia all played their significant parts either through their proxies or by directly supporting side's expedient to their own interests. And of course, most countries, including New Zealand, trotted after their more powerful allies.²³ Because of this, Goldson believes that it is our responsibility to engage with what happened in Cambodia, as citizens of a global community that made the Khmer Rouge genocide possible. By studying reviews in depth, we can gauge whether or not audiences engaged with the film in the way that Goldson intended, and whether or not critics feel that the film is a valuable piece of historiophoty.

Those involved with the film's production have felt that the film has been received well, particularly in New Zealand. In an interview with the *Lincoln Film Centre*, Goldson modestly summarised how the films reception to that point: 'It's done very well in New Zealand. We had a theatrical release there. It won some awards at our national awards ceremony.

²³ David Larsen, 'Brother Number One: Annie Goldson Interview', in *New Zealand Listener*, 8 July 2011, available online at <http://www.listener.co.nz/entertainment/film/brother-number-one-annie-goldson-interview/>, date accessed 8 November 2015.

Internationally we're optimistic. The film is ...you just have to remind yourself why you did the film and not get too caught up in the machine. It's important just to get the film seen. When people see the film, they're very blown away by it.'²⁴ These awards that Goldson rather casually refers to include a Best Documentary Director award at the Aotearoa Film and Television Awards, which is a lot more prestigious than her offhand remark would imply.

The film's subject, Rob Hamill, also felt that the film had been embraced wonderfully, not only in New Zealand but abroad also. He stated in the *New Zealand Herald* that 'the response has been very emotional, and it's been amazing. It really is compelling...You can feel it in the audience, and often they're left angry and demanding to know how as a species we could have allowed this to happen to one another.'²⁵ Additionally, Hamill wrote a letter to Nelson newspaper, the *Leader* after a screening in the region. In the public letter he wrote that 'the feedback from individuals has been so touching and heartfelt that the financial aspect proved irrelevant; the film has served its purpose of not only paying tribute to my brother's strength and dignity in his darkest hour, but it has also informed and educated people of the terrifying crimes the people of Cambodia endured.'²⁶

The collected reviews support the assertions from Goldson and Hamill that the film was well received. For example, multiple reviewers claimed that the film was one of the best of the year when they saw it. Graham Tuckett from the *Dominion Post* wrote that 'it moves, it speaks, and at its best, it entrances. You won't see many documentaries better than this, from any country, in any year.'²⁷ In the *Listener* magazine the film made the magazine's top ten films for 2011, and reviewer David Larsen made the unconventional promise that if there was a better documentary at the 2011 New Zealand International Film Festival, that he would 'eat the program booklet.'^{28 29} Angela Cumin from the *Waikato Times* assured viewers that they would be so transformed by the film, they would become insufferable to their friends and family: 'you know that sometimes slightly annoying person in your circle of friends who always, always insists that you absolutely must see that film because you will just love it so much? After *Brother Number One*, that is going to be you.'³⁰ And, in the United Kingdom, Anna Blair, writing news for New Zealanders living in the motherland, also hyped the importance of the film

²⁴ Anna Husted, 'Interview with Annie Goldson: *Brother Number One*'.

²⁵ Jamie Morton, 'NZ Execution Movie Stuns Festival Goers', in *New Zealand Herald*, 22 June 2012, available online at http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=10814634, date accessed 2 November 2015.

²⁶ Editor, 'Nelson Reaction to Film Delights Producer', in *The Leader Nelson*, 3 May 2012, p.2.

²⁷ Graham Tuckett, 'Film Review: *Brother Number One*', in *Dominion Post*, available online at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/film/film-reviews/6551872/Film-Review-Brother-Number-One>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

²⁸ Helene Wong, 'Now Showing March 8, 2012', in *New Zealand Listener*, 8 March 2012, available online at <http://www.listener.co.nz/culture/now-showing/now-showing-march-8-2012/>, date accessed 20 November 2015.

²⁹ David Larsen, 'Tantalising Docs at the NZ Film Festival', in *New Zealand Listener*, 16 July 2011, available online at <http://www.listener.co.nz/entertainment/film/tantalizing-docos-at-the-nz-film-festival/>, date accessed 20 November 2015.

³⁰ Angela Cuming, 'Rob Hamill's Struggle for his Brother', in *Waikato Times*, available online at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/waikato-times/life-style/arts/6535594/Rob-Hamills-struggle-for-his-brother>, date accessed 19 October 2015.

claiming that 'there are film festivals in London almost constantly, but it's rare that there's a film as important to see as Annie Goldson's *Brother Number One*'.³¹

HISTORY AS IDENTITY

While these comments immediately tell us that audiences 'liked the film', they do not necessarily inform us on whether audiences related to the film as a piece of history as identity in which they empathised with the characters. Goldson has written about how the use of emotion in the film was critical to getting audiences to engage, arguing that 'emotion itself within the film becomes a form of testimony, its visceral quality capturing the impact of loss and evoking the constant return of the past'.³² She added to this that 'the actual testimony within the film provides viewers with the information', but it is 'the emotion that accompanies testifying engages viewers empathetically'.³³ With that empathy it was intended that the audience would formulate 'an understanding of Cambodia, how hard it is for us to forgive, the horrors of genocide, a desire to learn more, an acceptance of how culpable we can all be'.³⁴

If Goldson were successful in creating emotional and empathetic engagement in their writings, it would be expected that the reviewers would reference their emotional engagement in their writings – and they do. Multiple reviewers from New Zealand, in particular, described an intense level of emotional engagement in their subsequent reviews of *Brother Number One*. The most entertaining account of high emotional engagement came from Angela Cuming in the *Waikato Times*. Cuming was considerably more emphatic than even these other reviewers urging viewers to pack a couple of items to take with them to the cinema. She stated that viewers should 'take a piece of paper and on one side write the word "Blink" and on the other side "Breathe"' so that viewers were 'better prepared' for what they would experience. The second item she urged viewers (perhaps more seriously than the first) were tissues: 'take the tissues, and I mean that. You are going to get more tears from this than the director's cut of *E.T.*' She also claimed that the film is 'something that grabs you by the throat and engages you right from the opening seconds', demonstrating a hyperbolic emotional engagement that profoundly impacted her.³⁵

There were, of course, more restrained references to emotional engagement, even when the discussion was about similar feelings. Darren Bevan from *TVNZ* wrote in his review that 'historical footage adds much more emotional weight to the tale, and it can be difficult to flinch in the face of such horrors; but ultimately a message of hope emerges, and you'd be hard

³¹ Anna Blair, 'NZ Documentary at London Film Festival', in *NZNewsUK*, available online at <http://www.nznewsuk.co.uk/columns/?id=28296&story=NZ-documentary-at-London-Film-Festival>, date accessed 19 October 2015.

³² Goldson, 'Testimony and Translation: Tracing the Past in *Brother Number One*', p.5.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Peter Calder, 'O Brother Art Thou? The Story of Rob Hamill', in *New Zealand Herald*, 3 March 2012, available online at http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=10789385, date accessed 15 October 2015.

³⁵ Cuming, 'Rob Hamill's Struggle for his Brother'.

pressed not to be riveted and thoroughly moved by this heartbreakingly honest and compelling watch.³⁶ Radio personality Tim Roxborough additionally stated that 'it's a sad film' and recounted that he 'heard people in the cinema openly sobbing.' Like Bevan though, he was sure to note that he felt the film was 'also uplifting in an understated way.'³⁷

Multiple reviewers also made sure to demonstrate the sincerity and honesty they felt their emotional engagement in which the film centred itself. They evidently felt that the engagement was not overwrought or manipulated, and thus, their emotional empathy came from the material in a truthful manner. Given the criticisms often lobbed at historical films for being guilty of overindulging in emotional manipulation, this is a valuable observation to consider. Sarah Watt from the *Sunday Star-Times* wrote that 'Goldson's documentary manages the remarkable feat of being intense, powerful, and desperately sad, without needing to manipulate those feelings in its audience.'³⁸ Peter Calder from the *New Zealand Herald* echoed her sentiment writing that the film was an 'unsensational and heart-wrenching documentary about Hamill's 2009 journey to Cambodia on the trails of his murdered brother Kerry'. Calder was lavish in his praise claiming that the film was 'devoid of shrill polemic', and that 'rage may impel the story being told but the storytelling exquisitely, even excruciatingly restrained.'³⁹ Even Angela Cuming, who was so moved as to suggest facetiously writing down instructions about how to breathe on a piece of paper before watching the film, felt that her intense emotional journey was the product of the information presented, as opposed to cinematic trickery. Cuming wrote that the film successfully 'takes what could be an infuriatingly political or just too sentimental subject' and presents it without being weighed down in polemic,' and is grateful for the restrained tone of the film.⁴⁰

As earlier stated, *Brother Number One* was not only released to a local audience - it also made its way across the world, because it continued a trend whereby Goldson took a story with deep roots in New Zealand and made it compelling enough fodder for international audiences to also embrace.⁴¹ Reviews from the USA and the UK indicate that the film was successful in getting the audience in those countries to emotionally engage in the history of Cambodia – albeit in probably less powerful ways than their New Zealand counterparts proclaimed.

A great American review that reflects this engagement came from David Incauskis, who was writing for the student newspaper *Old Gold and Black*. This publication was the student paper

³⁶ Darren Bevan, 'Brother Number One: Movie Review', in *Darren's World of Entertainment*, 7 March 2012, available online at <http://darrens-world-of-entertainment.blogspot.co.nz/2012/03/brother-number-one-movie-review.html>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

³⁷ Tim Roxborough, 'Brother Number One - Rob Hamill's Search to Find Truth & Justice for His Brother', in *The Roxborough Report*, available online at <http://darrens-world-of-entertainment.blogspot.co.nz/2012/03/brother-number-one-movie-review.html>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

³⁸ Sarah Watt, 'Film Review: *Brother Number One*', in *Sunday Star-Times*, 4 March 2012, available online at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/whats-on/film/6518798/Film-review-Brother-Number-One>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

³⁹ Calder, 'O Brother, Art Thou? The Story of Rob Hamill'.

⁴⁰ Cuming, 'Rob Hamill's Struggle for his Brother'.

⁴¹ Small, p.26.

for Wake Forest University – which was at the time hosting the film’s Director of Photography Peter Gilbert as a visiting professor. What is illuminating from the review is that Inczauskis does not only canvas his thoughts but acknowledges how strongly the film emotionally affected his peers:

Constantly working to give himself closure while still struggling with the details of his brother’s violent torture and murder, Hamill dedicated his life to increasing awareness about the Cambodian genocide and to giving his brother dignity through retelling the tale of his death. The documentary deeply moved many university students. “I just find it sad that we let this happen,” junior Mojeeb Nazeri said. “The world was silent while all of Cambodia was screaming in pain for help.”⁴²

The most significant international review came from Richard Kuipers for the highly influential film industry magazine *Variety*. Demonstrating the importance of the review, the film’s marketing collateral often prominently features quotes from this positive assessment of the film (see Figure 3.1). Given that *Variety* is more focused on the film business itself as opposed to academia, this review can give a great insight into the possible reception of an audience that wouldn’t specifically seek out a documentary that contains such deep rooted theoretical questions relating to engagement. Kuipers mentions that the film is ‘deeply moving’ and that it will ‘move many to tears with details of what befell Kerry and millions of others at the hands of the genocidal regime’, which he further describes as ‘unimaginable horror’.⁴³ He adds that he felt that ‘fests and pubcasters should snap it up’ indicating that the film has the potential to be a substantial business acquisition for film festivals.

⁴² David Inczauskis, ‘*Brother Number One* Gives Voice to Genocide Victims’, in *Old, Gold, and Black*, 29 October 2011, available online at <http://oldgoldandblack.com/?p=15990>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

⁴³ Richard Kuipers, ‘Review: *Brother Number One*’, in *Variety*, 10 August 2011, available online at <http://variety.com/2011/film/reviews/brother-number-one-1117945789/>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

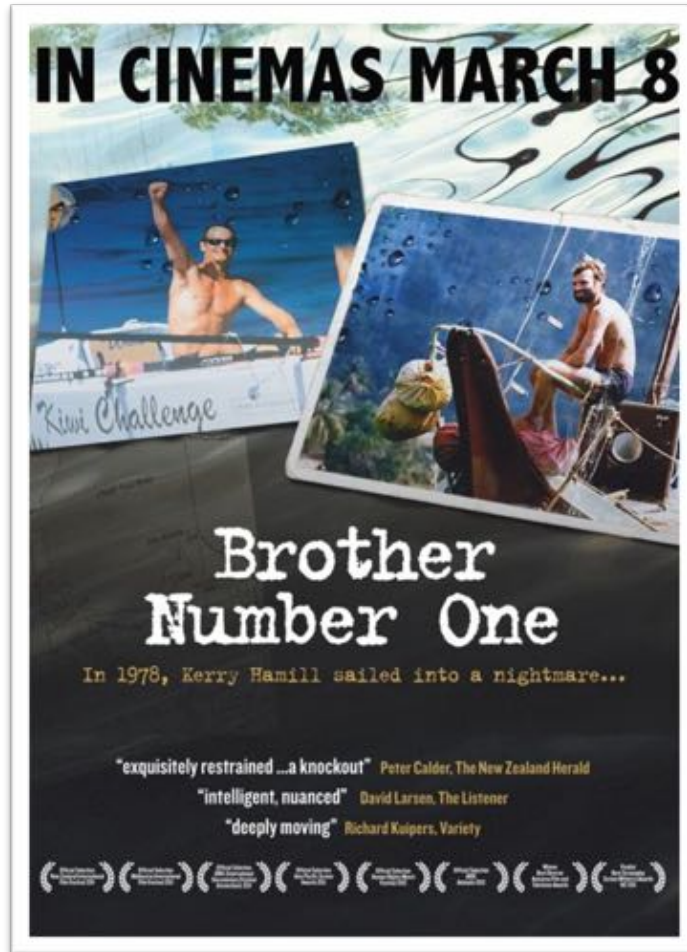


Figure 3.1 – A Poster For The Film Featuring A Quote From Kuiper

Across the Atlantic in London, Zoe Liv of the community website *Brixton Blog*, also described an adamant emotional engagement which made her stand out a bit from other reviewers in her country. Liv wrote that ‘this is a rare film. It not only opens your eyes to his family’s pain and suffering, but also to that of the Cambodian people.’⁴⁴

The crux of the emotional engagement highlighted by reviewers came from an empathetic identification with Rob Hamill and his quest for justice.⁴⁵ However, it was very noticeable that this empathetic identification came with an enormous geographical bias. Being that Hamill is such a well respected New Zealander, the New Zealand-based reviewers understandably felt a stronger empathetic link to his story. In fairness, this is something that Goldson herself expected. Commenting on the relatability of Hamill, Goldson referred to him as her ‘secret weapon’, and she elaborated on why she knew Hamill would relate to New Zealand audiences particularly: ‘In New Zealand like most countries, there’s a lot of nationalism so the fact that

⁴⁴ Zoe Liv, ‘Film Review: *Brother Number One*’, in *Brixton Blog*, 28 March 2012, available online at <http://www.brixtonblog.com/film-review-brother-number-one/3891>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

⁴⁵ Of course having a Westerner like Hamill as the main point of identification was also the cause of a lot of discussions and this will be covered shortly.

there's never been any justice for a Kiwi (Rob's brother Kerry), this film documents that for New Zealanders...It's a great way of looking at our broader history and point of identification for many people.'^{46 47}

The reviews prove this assumption to be true in many cases. Helene Wong from the *Listener* who 'highly recommended' the film writes that 'Rob Hamill is a quintessential Kiwi, who could easily be your brother, husband, son or best friend, and through this medium not only do the politics become very personal; we also feel a powerful sense of being with him, step by step, on his quest.'⁴⁸ Graham Tuckett echoed Wong's sentiment stating that his sincere engagement with the text came in many ways from the film's subject Hamill: 'He is a genuine presence, honest, open, and incapable of manipulation. We trust Hamill, we want him to find some peace, and we watch and listen avidly as he leads us through tragic and appalling events with real dignity.'⁴⁹

Laura Weaser from *Sun Live* and Sarah Watt from the *Sunday Star-Times* appeared to be the most influenced by their emotional engagement. Weaser highlighted the complexity of emotions that she felt upon seeing the film writing 'what really affected me was the idea of uncertainty. Despite bringing Duch, one of the many in charge of Khmer Rouge war crimes, to some kind of justice, there is no real certainty for Rob just what took place in the events leading up to Kerry's death...I hope Rob's journey wasn't in vain, and he found some kind of solace in his own journey.'⁵⁰ Meanwhile in her review, Watt zeroed in on in the scale of the atrocities, in a tone of restrained outrage. Shaping her engagement with the magnitude of the genocide, was her explicit engagement with the story of Rob, specifically. Watt writes that 'the country carries scars from a tragic past that happened within most of our lifetimes, as a quarter of the population of eight million were killed, whether by starvation, overwork or literal 'smashing' by their leader Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime...what brings the story close to home for us in New Zealand is that it tracks the murder of Hamill's brother Kerry'. In concluding her review, she even includes a wish for further action from other viewers – '*Brother Number One* is a necessarily hard watch, but has so much compassion and grace that the audience is not left feeling desolate by the end. Optimistically one hopes that as people see this film and appreciate the depths of horror inflicted on the Cambodian people, we will be mobilized into a better way of being.'⁵¹

⁴⁶ Calder, 'O Brother Art Thou? The Story of Rob Hamill'.

⁴⁷ Husted, 'Interview with Annie Goldson: *Brother Number One*'.

⁴⁸ Wong, 'Now Showing March 8, 2012'.

⁴⁹ Tuckett, 'Film Review: *Brother Number One*'.

⁵⁰ Laura Weaser, 'Personal Journey an Anecdote for Greater Loss', in *Sun Live*, available online at <http://www.sunlive.co.nz/blogs/2717-personal-journey-an-anecdote-greater-loss.html>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

⁵¹ Watt, 'Film Review: *Brother Number One*'.

HISTORY AS INTERPRETATION

As mentioned earlier, though, getting audiences to engage with history as identity was only one of Goldson's intentions with *Brother Number One*. In another interview, with the *New Zealand Herald*, Goldson stated that she hoped to 'raise issues and have people think about history and where we are'. To Goldson, the film was meant to be 'like going behind the headlines' so that viewers could consider what the 'perfect storm' was that created the Khmer Rouge. Goldson wanted the audience to understand that 'it was a complex history that involved China and the Cold War and a peasantry that had been oppressed', that a young hippie from New Zealand sailed right into the middle of. Goldson then implies that the emotional engagement (or history as identity) would hopefully allow the audiences to look at the history of the genocide, more analytically overall, since they were engaged with this 'young hippie'. To her, 'the Hamill family's loss, which was huge' became 'a way of looking into this perfect storm.'⁵²

It was not just Goldson that harboured the intention to have audiences engage with the events in an analytical way, though. The film's subject, Rob Hamill, also wanted to use his experiences to challenge the interpretation (or lack thereof) of Cambodian history in New Zealand and other countries that have shown the film. Hamill's position was born partially out of frustration and disbelief towards the wider cover-up of history in Cambodia, and at the broader ignorance towards the history of the Khmer Rouge genocides in the 1970s in places like New Zealand. When describing modern day Cambodia in an interview with *ABC Radio Melbourne*, Hamill outlined why he wanted the film to be seen, stating that the political situation there was not good. According to Hamill, 'it's all Khmer Rouge led, or former Khmer Rouge led, all high up in the rankings. And they're very paranoid as a result of that too'. Because the Khmer Rouge had been able to get away with so much and hold so much sway, Hamill felt that the story needed 'to be told on their behalf', and he hoped that 'the Cambodian community embrace it as well in Australia as they have in Cambodia.'⁵³

In an interview with *Sun Live* from the Bay of Plenty, Hamill further elaborated on his frustrations with the lack of interpretation amongst New Zealanders explicitly. He stated that 'when I began this project back in 2006, many New Zealanders didn't know about Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, yet those same people would have told you plenty about Hitler and the Nazis'.⁵⁴ So adamant was Hamill about this, he informed the interviewer that it was his hope that 'schools and the public take up the opportunity to see the film'.⁵⁵ This particular reference to the Nazis is interesting to note as well because historical films have been hugely significant

⁵² Calder, 'O Brother Art Thou? The Story of Rob Hamill',

⁵³ Lindy Burns, 'Terror in Cambodia: *Brother Number One*', audio via 774 ABC Melbourne, available online at <http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2011/07/27/3279380.htm>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

⁵⁴ Laura Weaser, 'Personal Journey an Anecdote for Greater Loss'.

⁵⁵ To that end, a study guide for High School students produced by the filmmakers has been added as an option to the New Zealand curriculum for Social Studies, History, Media Studies, and English. These guides are available from the website of the film's production company Occasional Productions at <http://op.co.nz/shop/study-guides-brother-number-one/>, date accessed 27 November 2015. Unfortunately, there is no available data on how widely this option has been adopted nationwide.

in helping to shape the abundance of visual media on this topic. As Hughes-Warrington states, 'the choice of topics in historical films appears to be quite conservative, with a small number of historical agents, events, and phenomena dominating representations. The online movie database *IMDB*, for instance, lists over a hundred film productions of the life of Adolf Hitler alone...Indeed so strong is the perception of visual history as being dominated by representations of the Second World War that it is blamed for high school graduates' lack of knowledge and interest in other historical phenomena'.⁵⁶ Thus, by involving himself in the production of this film, Hamill was explicitly attempting to use the medium to challenge knowledge trends for which the medium has been partially responsible for enshrining.

The question arises then as to whether or not the emotion and empathy that is such an important part of 'history as identity', overpowered the audience's ability to analyse the history of Cambodia as a whole. If the reviews were solely about how the reviewers felt while watching the film, the case could be made that the film fails in making its audience experience both history as identity, and history as interpretation. This idea that no information about Cambodian history was imparted onto viewers does not appear to be the case, however. For example, every one of the twelve reviews from New Zealand makes reference to the wider issue of the Khmer Rouge genocides in the 1970s and some of them even talk about in a relatively broad manner considering the brevity of their reviews. This knowledge indicates that these viewers came away having either learned something about an oft-overlooked era of history or were so impacted by the information regarding Cambodia in the film, that they felt the information about the genocides was as important to provide in their reviews, as discussions around Hamill's particular story. Steve Newall's review from the lifestyle magazine *NO* demonstrates how the exploration of Hamill's narrative and the subsequent emotional engagement from this leads to a productive exploration of Cambodia itself. In Newall's view, 'the scale and atrocities under Pol Pot's regime in Cambodia is still impossible to fathom' but 'by following Hamill's story in such detail, Goldson ends up speaking for all victims of the regime in a way by sharing an experience barely acknowledged by its perpetrators.'

Reviewers who seemed unfamiliar with Cambodian history were sure to make note of how watching the film reshaped their perspective. Laura Weaser provides a wonderfully open and frank admission of her ignorance to the events that happened in Cambodia forty years ago: 'Rob's journey is really a bookend, an anecdote for the thousands of Cambodians who were affected by the Khmer Rouge but are unable to speak. Recollections of Cambodian residents who were lucky enough to survive the Toul Sleng...paint a vivid picture of a time in Cambodian history often overlooked. I will confess it was an incredibly eye-opening experience for me.' Weaser even expresses a desire for a call to action writing 'like many Kiwis, I feel safe and secure, tucked away at the bottom of the world. *Brother* is enlightening, and I hope many

⁵⁶ Hughes-Warrington, *History Goes to the Movies: Studying History on Film*, p.23.

others watch the film to learn something of a violent and dangerous part of history'.⁵⁷ Similarly, Darren Bevan admits to a particular form of initial historical blindness on his behalf. Bevan states that 'needless to say, it's an emotionally wrenching and heart breaking piece as Rob opens up every step of the way in the process – and you can't help but feel appalled at what some have gone through at the hands of Pol Pot's regime.'⁵⁸

In much the same way, reviewers that were familiar with the territory still felt compelled to provide elaboration on the horrors of the Khmer Rouge in addition to their discussion of the film. Tim Roxborough, who admits to being someone who already had a high affinity for Cambodia, wrote how he was grateful for the film's efforts in making the audience cry when he was watching the film. Roxborough states that 'crucially, *Brother Number One* isn't just the story of Kerry Hamill and his death. The Khmer Rouge murdered as many as 1.7 million Cambodians with a further 1.3 million dying from poverty and starvation and the film, largely through Hamill's local interpreter, has a strong telling of the Cambodian side of the genocide and its ramifications more than 30 years on...For someone like me with a deep bond to Cambodia as a country of...compelling history (both tragic and triumphant) ...it is essential viewing.'

Like Roxborough, Anna Blair demonstrated a deep knowledge of the contemporary ramifications of what happened in the past, and with the film's subject matter. Blair summarized her view of the importance of what the film deals with by writing that 'the trial explored by Goldson's film, that of Comrade Duch, the man who oversaw Tuol Sleng and the deaths of over 15,000 individuals, is the only one to have been concluded thus far. *Brother Number One* is timely, shining a spotlight on an important legal process that has been beset with problems, delayed and interrupted. Taking place thirty years after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge, some party leaders have not been trialed due to health problems associated with their now advanced age. Victims have been unable to tell their stories and see perpetrators brought to justice, damaging to the country's ability to move forward...The huge impact of the Khmer Rouge on Cambodia is felt, with locals sharing their experiences alongside Hamill. Kulikar Sotho, a translator central to the making of the film, is a particular parallel for Hamill's story.'

Given that there was such a strong geographic bias towards identifying with Hamill, it makes sense that references to the most analytical aspects of the film were present in the overseas-based reviews. Julia Boccagno from the American NGO *United to End Genocide* indicated a high appreciation of the analytical questions raised by the films, without delving as much into the emotional engagement with either the film or Hamill himself. Boccagno succinctly summarized the film's success in illuminating Cambodian history writing that 'from 1975 to 1979, the Khmer Rouge led a campaign to destroy intentionally all political opposition. In four

⁵⁷ Weaser, 'Personal Journey an Anecdote for Greater Loss'.

⁵⁸ Bevan, 'Brother Number One: Movie Review'.

short years, they starved, overworked, and systemically executed over two million innocent people... This powerful documentary allows audience members to visit a reality largely ignored by the international community.⁵⁹ Aside from the possibility of geographic bias shaping Boccagno's perception, it is safe to assume that the 'history as interpretation' element of the film was perhaps more important to her since she is part of an organization focused on the increased awareness and eradication of genocide.

The *Film Society Lincoln Center* supplied readers with a very brief review that acted almost more as a plot synopsis (they do however also have an extensive interview with Goldson, which as a companion piece is far more informative and analytical).⁶⁰ The review itself indicates how crucial they perceive the 'history as interpretation' element is to the film writing simply, 'Rob retraces his brother's final days, he meets survivors who tell the story of the S-21 prison and of what countless families across Cambodia experienced at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. In this spirit, *Brother Number One* grapples with the trauma that grips all Cambodia: the struggle to forgive in the face of immeasurable anger.'⁶¹ A review was written in Canada that also gave a demonstration of engagement and education. Written by Teghan Beaudette for *CBC News*, the economically written review mentions both emotional engagement – 'It's really heavy, so it's definitely good to know what you're getting into' – and a wider engagement with the history of Cambodia – 'the documentary also touches on why nearly 2 million Cambodians were killed under the regime.'⁶²

Writing in the United Kingdom, Connie Viney, from the website *The Upcoming* placed a strong emphasis on how the film highlighted the general mainstream historical apathy towards the Khmer Rouge, implying the information presented had quite an effect on her understanding of the atrocities. Viney described the film overall as a 'gripping documentary about a catastrophic regime that has never been fully examined',⁶³ and it is clear that both Hamill's experiences in the film, and Hamill as a person had quite an effect on how she perceived the wider historical narrative of the Khmer Rouge genocides. She writes of how Hamill 'made the interesting point that if you ask a random person on the street about Adolf Hitler's regime, they're likely to respond with a lengthy and informed description of the events that took place under his dictatorship. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about the mass genocide that Cambodia experienced just over 30 years ago; that saw almost two million civilians killed between the period of 1975 and 1979'. To Viney, the film and the analogy to the holocaust helped her to

⁵⁹ Julia Boccagno, 'Brother Number One: Fighting Fire with Forgiveness', in United to End Genocide, 17 April 2013, available online at <http://endgenocide.org/brother-number-one-fighting-fire-with-forgiveness/>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

⁶⁰ Husted, 'Interview with Annie Goldson: *Brother Number One*'.

⁶¹ Editor, 'Brother Number One', in Film Society Lincoln Center, available online at <http://www.filmlinc.org/films/brother-number-one/>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

⁶² Teghan Beaudette, 'Top 5 Things to do in Winnipeg this Weekend', in CBC News Manitoba, 4 April 2014, available online at <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/top-5-things-to-do-in-winnipeg-this-weekend-1.2598608>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

⁶³ Connie Viney, 'Human Rights Film Festival: *Brother Number One*', in The Upcoming, 28 March 2012, available online at <http://www.theupcoming.co.uk/2012/03/28/human-rights-film-festival-brother-number-one/>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

understand the scope of what happened, and efficiently situated the genocide into her wider understanding of twentieth-century history. Interestingly, she does also add that part of this ability to interpret the past came from identifying with the film's subject as well, writing that 'Rob Hamill makes it clear from the beginning that this is only one story, out of many thousands that need to be told. In the film, he talks at length about his upbringing and the disastrous effects his brother's death has had on his family. We gain insight into his unusually tenacious personality.'⁶⁴

Zoe Liv repeated a similar sentiment to that of Viney, neatly stating that '*Brother Number One* is an important step towards increasing awareness of the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge all those years ago. Ask people what they know about Hitler and World War Two and most people can relay the details. If you ask the same question about the genocide in Cambodia, it's a very different response, but over 3 million people were executed during the reign of the Khmer Rouge.'⁶⁵ Given the enormous impact that World War Two had in the European history, the repeated analogy gives indicates that the film was able to successfully have these reviewers interpret the events that happened in Cambodia in a way that was relatable to them as citizens of the continent. Getting people to understand history where they have not before, is powerfully indicative of a successful piece of history, in even the most conservative theoretical estimations.

THE ISSUE OF A WESTERN PROTAGONIST

While there were clearly some critics who perceived the film to be 'history as identity' combined with 'history as interpretation,' this does not mean that there were no tough questions raised, regarding the film's structure. The most notable issue that arose from reviewers related to the appropriateness of a westerner, like Hamill, acting as the focal point and conduit for a piece of historiography that is ostensibly about Cambodia. In producing *Brother Number One*, Goldson openly stated that she felt Hamill would act as an excellent conduit for Western audiences to relate to history through, without sacrificing wider Cambodian historical experiences. Goldson writes that when 'Rob interacts with survivors on screen, the empathetic flow between the two parties engages Western viewers, bringing them into greater proximity to Cambodian subjects from whom they otherwise would feel more distant'.⁶⁶ Additionally, she hoped that 'the differing modalities of testimony in *Brother Number One* would collectively weave 'a historical account of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, thus satisfying the documentary spectator's desire for knowledge, providing a kind of epistemic pleasure despite the painful nature of that history.'⁶⁷ Belinda Smail supports this assertion and emphasizes the value of the technique in her way, arguing that 'by presenting the death of a Western subject as the overriding narrative driver of

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Liv, 'Film Review: *Brother Number One*'.

⁶⁶ Goldson, 'Testimony and Translation: Tracing the Past in *Brother Number One*', p.2.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.3.

the documentaries, they seek to cement a place in a western imaginary in a way that recognizes the vicissitudes of the global mediascape.⁶⁸

Despite the precise planning and consideration on behalf of Goldson, the choice to frame a story of Cambodian history primarily from the perspective of Hamill meant that inevitably some reception to the film would be negative. Given her vast experience in producing films, Goldson understood this, and she felt this criticism come to the fore in some instances. She stated that 'there were two big issues facing me as a film-maker, call them conceptual, ethical or what you will. The first was the balance of the Western story against a backdrop of such tragic and brutal dimensions'. She adds that 'there were always going to be allegations of Eurocentrism from some (why to explore a "white" story when so many Cambodians died?), and there were, particularly from certain sectors of the industry.⁶⁹ Since Goldson felt the need to defend this point and feels that she has been criticised in some circles for the narrative techniques she used, it must have been a point of contention within some wider circles. Interestingly, though, Goldson felt that it did not seem to be an issue from a Cambodian perspective. She continues, nothing that 'there was no breath of this from Cambodia itself' because 'Cambodians embraced Rob as a fellow victim'. Goldson describes how Youk Chhang, the Director of DC-Cam (a genocide research centre) 'reassured Rob about precisely this issue — as of course he had anxieties about his privilege in being selected to present testimony in court'. According to Goldson, Chhang was empathetic and understanding, telling Rob that 'when you've lost a loved one, you all suffer in the same way'. She adds that Chhang 'lost his father, his grandparents, all of his aunts and uncles and most of his brothers and sisters, and thus he appreciated that Rob had 'travelled so far' to seek justice.⁷⁰

Goldson also makes it clear that at the film was never meant to bury the Cambodian experience under the weight of Rob's own story. She describes how even at the scripting stage of the movie, she 'decided to follow the truism that every Cambodian has a story' and she made it her mission to 'explore the stories of Cambodians that were naturally part of the film' such as 'translators, local line producers, and drivers'. Given the scale of the horrors of Cambodia, all of them had stories, so including them as they filmed together 'seemed the most seamless way of attempting to address the cultural context of the film, as well as Rob's story.' Goldson has particularly made mention of Kulikar Sotho, in several instances. Sotho was a line producer on the film, and Goldson recalls that she was 'incredible, not just a great organizer and line producer and multi-lingual, guiding us safely through various sticky situations, but a woman with a real empathy for Rob, a strong screen presence, and dramatic personal story.'⁷¹ Given this attention to the stories outside of Rob's own experience, it makes

⁶⁸ Smaill, p.28.

⁶⁹ Larsen, 'Brother Number One: Annie Goldson Interview'.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

sense that complaints about how the film was framed would be minimal in the published reviews, and this seems to be the case.

Perhaps understandably, New Zealand based reviewers did not make much mention of this criticism at all. The sentiment felt by New Zealand critics was general that the identification with Hamill did not detract from the story of Cambodia and in fact only helped to frame a distant tragedy in more relatable terms. *Listener* colleagues Helene Wong and Fiona Rae shared similar views on this issue. Wong stated in her glowing review 'anxieties that this might be a piece of grisly voyeurism should be laid aside; its accessible blend of history, politics and personal experiences of villains and victims alike tells a much bigger story than that and one which draws you into close engagement.'⁷² Rae also highlighted the success of the film in using the emotional engagement of Hamill's story as a conduit for looking at Cambodia as a whole. Rae states that 'as well as Hamill's story, Goldson deftly juggles several other strands of this complicated story, including the history of the Khmer Rouge, the murderous regime led by "*Brother Number One*" Pol Pot that killed two million Cambodians'.⁷³ Given the specificity of her information, it is clear that she did not just ignore the Cambodian element to focus on Rob. Her engagement struck a chord with the history of the entire region.

While this structural question seemed to be of minimal importance amongst New Zealand reviewers, it did spark more discussion outside of New Zealand. However, what is fascinating is that in the reviews examined for this study, there is a consensus across the board that Rob's narrative is neither damaging or inappropriate when the question comes up. Laura Reed, a candidate for an M.A. in Human Rights Studies at Columbia University in New York, published a strong review for the site *Rights Views* - which describes itself as 'Opinion and research from the human rights community at Columbia University'.⁷⁴ Reed described the film early on as being 'powerful', yet as is typical of most of the international reviews in this study, she does not focus on the overall emotional engagement like the New Zealand reviewers. Instead, she quickly raises this question about Rob's role as a central figure in a Cambodian story, which immediately makes the review feel like it's going to be one of the more critical reviews that Goldson had referenced. Reed writes that 'a film about this period in Cambodian history, relayed through the story of a New Zealand family's experience, is bound to raise some eyebrows from the human rights community. Why focus on a Western man's personal story, rather than a story from the millions of Cambodians who experienced tragic loss and suffering at the hands of the Khmer Rouge?'⁷⁵

⁷² Wong, 'Now Showing March 8, 2012'.

⁷³ Rae, 'July 14-20: Including *Brother Number One* and the Newsroom'.

⁷⁴ Laura Reed, 'Film Review: *Brother Number One*', in *RightsViews*, available online at <http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/rightsviews/2012/07/08/film-review-brother-number-one/>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

However, as quick as she is to note this point, she is equally rapid in pointing out that these criticisms are unfounded, and that the narrative delivers on its ambition to use Rob's story as a vessel to get average viewers to engage with questions about Cambodian history. Reed writes that 'every once in a while, though, a film comes along that deftly strikes a balance of voices, making the film both relatable to outside audiences and true to its subject. Such is the case with *Brother Number One*...Interviews with scholars who are familiar with this history; and interviews with Cambodian victims, survivors, and former complicit Khmer Rouge workers who relay their personal accounts'. What this demonstrates is that Reed was able to see how the two worlds interacted with each other, without one narrative conquering the other. Reed also picks up on how important the film crew were in fulfilling the historiographical aims that Goldson had with the film. She notes that 'one of the most striking ways in which Goldson achieves this balance is by weaving in the stories of those directly involved in the filmmaking process. In one scene, Rob is interviewing Meas Muth, the man he suspects is responsible for sending his brother to the Tuol Sleng prison. The translator, Kulikar Sotho, breaks from translating to interrogate the interviewee with her own questions, highlighting how the contested history of this time period still emotionally resonates with Cambodians today'. This personal exploration resonated with Reed, and she concludes by writing that the 'result of this thoughtful direction is a powerful film that uses personal narrative to explore the broader themes of forgiveness, justice, and the struggle to reconcile with the past.'⁷⁶

In a 2013 edition of *Human Rights Quarterly*, Mark Gibney wrote a review that was raised similar points to Reed's. Specifically, Gibney quickly raised the potential pitfalls of framing a history of Cambodia through the experiences of a New Zealand rower in his review. He points out that 'given the Cambodians' incredible suffering, one could be critical of all the attention paid to one of the few Western victims of the Khmer Rouge.' He also observes that during the film 'Hamill often seems to feel this way, and he is forever grateful and apologetic for the many efforts of others to assist him.' Much like Reed, though, he also concludes that his initial worries were unfounded. He states that 'there is a wonderful line in the film about the "cry of all humanity" and the point is that Rob's suffering is no greater – but also no less – than that of the Cambodian people...This gentle Olympic rower is content in understanding that he now knows his brother better than he had before and that he has played an integral role in exposing the horrors of the other *Brother Number One* and his genocidal cohorts.'⁷⁷ Because the film goes to such great lengths to give Cambodians a voice in the film, while also emphasizing that Rob's story is but one of the millions, reviewers generally felt that the framing of the film was respectful and successful.

Outside of American academia, Richard Kuiper also makes reference to this question in his *Variety* review. Kuipers review stands out though in that he notices that the film focuses on a

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Mark Gibney, 'Human Rights Watch Traveling Film Festival 2012-13', in *Human Rights Quarterly*, Volume 35, Number 3, 2013, p.808.

westerner but raises no possible questions or objections to it. In fact, Kuipers highlights the decision from Goldson to frame the history through Hamill's experience as a strength and a point of difference. He says that 'though it covers some of the same ground as 2003's "*S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*" and this year's "*Duch, Master of the Forges of Hell*," both by Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh, "*Brother*" differs significantly by focusing on one of the few Westerners taken to S-21 (Tuol Sleng Prison), commanded by Duch during the April 1975-January 1979 reign of Democratic Kampuchea.⁷⁸ To Kuipers, the western accessibility is what makes the film a strong portrayal of Cambodian history, not a weakness.

When UK reviewers acknowledge this question, we see the same thing happen again. In his review for the writer's collective *The Platform*, for example, Ahmed W Khan gives a comprehensive summary of the film's historiographical focus, indicating that the framing device is not problematic or disrespectful. Khan writes that 'although Rob's quest for answers concerning his brother's death forms the central concern of the movie, it is also a wider meditation on the trauma of genocide, as viewed through the tribulations of one particular individual and his family'. Like the other reviewers, Khan is clearly moved by the film's incorporation of Cambodian voices and claims that 'the film deserves credit for never losing sight of the Cambodians who suffered at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. In his own meditations upon his brother's fate, Rob is confronted by equally harrowing stories from other victims and survivors. These contrast powerfully in Rob's encounters with individuals intimately connected with his brother's story'. He concludes the review by summarising that 'ultimately the documentary achieves in posing unsettling questions. As Comrade Duch attempts to convince us of his genuine remorse and forgiveness, Rob's story culminates in asking deep questions about the nature of humanity. Is it possible to forgive in the face of incalculable anger?'⁷⁹

Despite the emergence of these structural questions, it is clear that overall the narrative technique did not significantly alter the ability of audiences to engage with the dimensions of history presented by the film. It is clear from looking at these reviews that audiences were able to engage empathetically with Rob Hamill and his story, and then subsequently engage with Cambodian victims, as Goldson hoped they would. It does appear that the level of emotional engagement was influenced by the geographical region in which the critics were watching the film. However, this is neither surprising, nor was it entirely unintended, given the fact that the film was produced in New Zealand, and featured a New Zealand lead. In addition to engaging with the film on an emotional level, audiences were able to interpret the events of the past in an efficient way, particularly if they were unfamiliar with what happened in the region. The ability to have audiences engage with the text in both these ways is impressive,

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ahmed W Khan, 'Human Rights Watch Film Festival: *Brother Number One*', in *The Platform*, 5 April 2012, available online at <http://www.the-platform.org.uk/2012/04/05/human-rights-watch-film-festival-brother-number-one/>, date accessed 22 September 2015.

and Goldson deserves considerable credit for her ability to produce another piece of historiophoty that presents the dimensions of the past in such a compelling and original way.

CONCLUSION

When reviewing the work of Robert Rosenstone, Steven Mintz made the critical observation that 'historians are not the only custodians of the collective past'.¹ To Mintz, it could not be ignored there were scholars outside the discipline increasingly challenging the prevailing orthodoxy that 'historians had an exclusive claim on the past' due to their relationship with the archive.² This observation can be potentially troubling for us as historians. There have been countless examples of poor history produced by people who have ignored the archive, and looked to construct history that fits a particular political focus. Studying the past ethically is a responsibility, and those who flout their obligations to the past, damage both the past itself and people's relationship to it.

There is no denying, however, that this can be done in newer, and more technologically innovative ways. Rosenstone argued that there 'may be more than one sort of historical truth' and that truths that are 'conveyed in the visual media may be different from, but not necessarily in conflict with, truths conveyed in words'.³ What this means is that there are not inherent weaknesses in the ability of other disciplines and mediums to engage with history. To Rosenstone, the production of bad history arises not from the form or the delivery, but rather from the given historian themselves. There will of course always be some bad history done outside of the discipline. But there will also unfortunately be bad history done *inside* the discipline at some point.

What we can see by studying the output of a filmmaker like Annie Goldson is that scholars who respect these ideas can produce great history, even if their primary training is another field. When we examine Goldson's films, we can see an example of just how nuanced, complex, and argumentative alternative forms of historical discourse can be in relaying information about the past to different audiences. Goldson's films do not only demonstrate the wider, more intangible benefits of historiophoty, such as immersion and multi-sensory experiences from audiences. They also engage with the past in a rich and meaningful way that any historian who writes their history would appreciate. This thesis has sought to demonstrate this point by looking at three of her films in detail and examining each of these films with attention to different dimensions of history.

While this thesis has looked at each film in isolation, and how each film deals with a particular aspect of history in its own way, this does not mean that there is no crossover. Structurally it was useful to look at how *Punitive Damage* looked at the issue of historical interpretation, as

¹ Steven Mintz, 'Review of Rosenstone, *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, March, 1996, available online at H-Film, H-Net Reviews, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=310>, date accessed 12 January 2016.

² Ibid.

³ Rosenstone, 'History in Images/History in Words', pp.1184-85.

an example. But we could have taken the same three dimensions of history (interpretation, structure, and reception) and looked at any of these three films. For example, as powerful and original as Goldson's interpretation of the past was when looking at East Timor, there was equally challenging and bold interpretations represented in regards to what has happened in Fiji and Cambodia. *An Island Calling* interpreted the Fijian story from a distinctly post-colonial perspective, and this interpretation undermined decades of authoritative historical information. Given that Fijian history was, for decades, so steeped in colonial metanarratives told from the top-down, Goldson's interpretation of the past is strikingly new and original. Additionally, *Brother Number One* looked at the Khmer Rouge genocide from an angle that was free of the politics that traditionally weighed down any study looking at the region during the cold war. Rather than having to view directly the events as a communist atrocity, Goldson was able to look at the genocides as an international failing, and human tragedy. The role that the entire world community played in Cambodia is opened up for discussion, which is appropriate given how recent the events were, and how much power many Khmer Rouge leaders still have.

Similarly, as insightful as Goldson's narrative structure examining Fiji was, the way she built her studies of East Timor and Cambodia was equally so. *Punitive Damage* was only able to present such a complex and multi-faceted interpretation of the past because of the strong narrative techniques that Goldson brought to the film's structure. By building the narrative in sections that all looked at different aspects of the story, and then altering the timeline so that viewers were going back and forth between these sections, continuity was established that linked what happened to Kamal to the wider East Timorese past. The links between generations were explicit in the film because of Goldson's mastery of the documentary film format itself. Likewise, in *Brother Number One*, Goldson was able to link microhistorical narratives from both Rob Hamill and Cambodians themselves to the wider history of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. Goldson uses Rob's own experiences in Cambodia to not only relay multiple stories to the audience but to give audiences some of the experience of Cambodia itself. All of the places that Rob visits immerse him in Cambodia's past, and by framing these experiences as part of her narrative structure, Goldson's audience get to at least partially immerse themselves in these elements of history as well.

Likewise, an audience study of either *Punitive Damage* or *An Island Calling* would be of great interest for any scholar also, particularly if they are based in New Zealand. *Punitive Damage* came in the same year that there was a referendum on the future of East Timor. In fact that announcement of the vote occurred just as the crew went into the editing phase of the film.⁴ The film was thus 'fortuitously' released at what was probably the most significant moment in the history of East Timor.⁵ Given the increased coverage, and the contemporary importance of the film, a case study looking at reception and how audiences engaged the film could be

⁴ Goldson, Annie, 'A Critical Examination of Punitive Damage', p.51.

⁵ Ibid, p.52.

very illuminating. *An Island Calling*, while not quite being released at the exact moment of significant change, was still released at a time of massive unrest in Fiji. Frank Bainimarama led yet another coup in 2006, that while successful, put major strain on the already struggling country. This coup put major pressure on the small nation's dealings with Pacific neighbours as well, particularly in New Zealand and Australia. Given the tense political climate, an examination of audiences two years after the coup, would no doubt reveal some important insights into how Fiji was being viewed by her neighbours.

History might be a study of the past, but it is a living discipline, and constantly in flux. Rosenstone points out that as historians, 'we would do well to recall Plato's assertion that when the mode of the muse changes, the walls of the city shake.'⁶ What Rosenstone precisely means by this is that historians need to ponder the question of what will shake in history if the mode of representation is changed, because these modes are only going to change more and more.⁷ Technological advancements in communication will inevitably continue to alter how people interact with the dimensions of history. Just as film has challenged the written word, the internet has impacted profoundly on how history is produced, and who produces it. It is also safe to assume that in a few decades, some new form of communication will tackle history in its own way, and millions will engage with the past through that medium. Rather than only highlighting the weaknesses that arise from these new forms, we do better to find the strengths, so that the new forms can be used and history can thus evolve with technology as a whole.

What Goldson's work proves is that there are valid approaches to history outside of the discipline and that her works of historiophoty deserve to be considered valid historical scholarship. Discussing her work not only allows us to engage with the philosophical dimensions of history, but it enables us to think about the wider issues of how the discipline itself is changing as communication rapidly evolves. By focusing on events and regions in her well-crafted films, we as spectators not only get to engage with arguments about the past, but we get to engage with arguments about how history is tackled in the future.

⁶ Ibid, p.1185.

⁷ Ibid.

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