

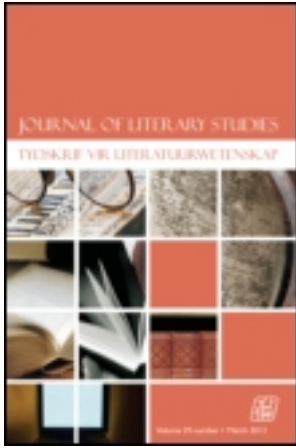
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Rethinking Marikana: Warm and Cold Lenses in Plea for Humanity

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Rethinking Marikana: Warm and Cold Lenses in Plea for Humanity

Lesibana Rafapa

Summary

This article examines a rethinking of the historic Marikana tragedy of 16 August 2012, as encoded in the eNCA documentary film *The Marikana Massacre: Through the Lens*. My approach is in the form of commentary on the act, scene, actor, agent and agency pertaining to the way the Marikana massacre is selectively revived in the documentary film. I make these comments in order to scaffold discussions of the documentary producers' *poïésis* and *praxis* giving shape to their narrative. The presencing and absencing of the documentary are discussed in making the case for a need to analyse carefully the background of the Marikana shootings and the situation in which they occurred, in much the same way as it is necessary to explore the producers' purpose and narrative in selecting to produce the documentary as they did. The study argues that the producers of the documentary film chose to narrate the small-person plight of the killed Marikana miners, security guards and police officers by silencing issues around other main actors one may categorise as symbolic of big-person state power, only to enrich the supposed bigger meaning contingent upon the audience's pre-existing knowledge of the context of the incidents. In this way the illusory objectivity of the narration is strengthened towards a more cogent correlation with what obtains in the real world of nearly two decades of post-apartheid South Africa.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel deurdink opnuut die historiese Marikana-tragedie van 16 Augustus 2012, soos gekodeer in die eNCA se dokumentêre film, *The Marikana Massacre: Through the Lens*. My benadering neem die vorm aan van kommentaar op die maniere waarop die bedryf, toneel, akteur, agent en agentskap met betrekking tot die Marikana-slagting selektief herleef word in die dokumentêre film. Ek maak hierdie opmerkings ten einde 'n stel besprekings op te bou van hoe die *poïésis* en *praxis* van die vervaardigers hulle narratiewe vorm gee. Teenwoordigheid en afwesigheid in die dokumentêr word bespreek ten einde te argumenteer dat dit nodig is om nougeset die agtergrond van die Marikana-skieterij en die situasie waarin dit plaasgevind het, te analiseer. Op dieselfde manier is dit nodig om die vervaardigers se doel en narratiewe vorm in die wyse waarop hulle die dokumentêr vervaardig het, te verken. Hierdie artikel voer aan dat die vervaardigers van die dokumentêre film gekies het om die "klein-persoon" benarde toestand van die vermoorde Marikana-

myners, sekuriteitswagte en polisie-offisiere te vertel deur sake rakende die ander hoofakteurs, wat mens kan kategoriseer as simbolies van die “groot-persoon” staatsmag, stil te maak. Hierdeur word die veronderstelde groter betekenis, wat afhang van die gehoor se voorafbestaande kennis van die gebeure se konteks, verryk. Op hierdie wyse word die skynbare objektiwiteit van die vertelling versterk na ’n meer oortuigende korrelasie met die realiteit van bykans twee dekades se post-apartheid Suid-Afrika.

Introduction: Crafting of the Documentary *Marikana Massacre*

The enterprise of this article is to make sense of the 2013 documentary *The Marikana Massacre: Through the Lens*. Documentary film-making is about “making sense of the world” (Breitrose 2012: 16). Such a world from which documentary film draws its subject matter is of both physical and imaginative reality, from the points of view of both the documentary film-maker and the audience. While the imaginary aspect of such a world subjectively represents what the film-maker and audience make of the final product of film-making independently of each other, the physical reality has to be commonly viewed as an honest representation of the events across the two poles of creator and consumer of any documentary film. That is if, like Breitrose, we understand documentary film-making as “the non-fiction enterprise” (2012:16). Yet, documentary film-making has of necessity to be more complex than as relatively simple an aspect of the real world as plain facts. This should be the reason for Breitrose (2012) asserting that documentary film-making should not only be honest or clear in its factuality. Documentary film-making should furthermore achieve requisite complexity, instructiveness and edification by “engaging the audience” and being “elegantly crafted” (Breitrose 2012: 16, 17). In this article, I undertake to make sense of the documentary film by examining both the physical and the imaginative reality of the 16 August 2012 Marikana massacre. I do so through a scrutiny of the sounds and images of the documentary, and the manner in which such spectacle was forged by the film-makers.

The non-fictional aspect of the documentary *Marikana Massacre* consists of statements such as its being about the events of 16 August 2012 in the North West Province, South Africa, during which police shot to death 34 striking Lonmin miners fighting for a minimum wage of R12 500, the purpose of which shooting was related immediately to disbanding and disarming the strikers (Basso 2013; Boswell 2013; Dana 2013; Gevisser 2012; Leon 2013; MacGregor 2012; MacShane 2012; Maema 2013; Maluleke 2013; Ndebele 2013; Alexander, Legkowa, Mmope, Sinwell & Xezwi 2012). This non-fiction layer of the documentary film is contained as much outside the documentary in the way the cited sources attest, as it is inside the texture of its narrative. Within the texture of the film, the actual events are recounted

in a sequential series of subtitles attributable to the producers Xoli Moloji and Bavani Naidoo, together with braided images of news reporters drawn from print and digital media firms such as eNCA and Reuters, offering oral testimony in front of the camera. These news people include Imandra Patty, Xoli Mngambi, Debra Patta, Joe Komane, Dinky Mkhize and Lucas Ledwaba. The subtitles and testimonies strive to report events of the Marikana shootings in their threadbare sense, shorn of potentially problematic dimensions like interpretation, perceived implications, perceived motives, possible portent for the future of the South African mining industry, etc. Such “objective” representations of the Marikana events of 16 August 2012 can safely be said to transcend the boundary between the site of the documentary and other sites from which the audience of the documentary are likely to come.

The test of the truthfulness of the reportage carried out in the documentary in the manner I describe above includes recognition by viewers, of the reliving of the events as true. That is why a film critic like Breitrose sees “presenting the really true story” (2012: 28) as a fundamental quality of documentary film-making. This aspect of documentary film-making functions to make the documentary film “clear”, in the sense of sticking to fact and not necessarily, at this level, striving for what Breitrose (2012) describes as complexity both resulting from and giving rise to the other documentary film functions of instructing, edifying, and crafting elegantly. Of course it is for convenience that I deliberately suspend the overlap between the simpler and more complex function of documentary film-making, for there is relative complexity in reporting the facts of any event, or relative simplicity in the more complex function, considering that such a complexity should not result in opacity for the audience.

In this article I discuss this factuality aspect of the documentary *Marikana Massacre* through a critical consideration of the historical fact of the Marikana shootings as contained not only in the documentary film itself, but also in commentaries outside of it. Such a discussion is a means to the end of plumbing the more delightful aspects of *Marikana Massacre*, achieved through the *poiésis* and *praxis* of the producers. The kind of delight I am talking about is the Aristotelian one in which one derives pleasure from a work of art because the complexity of such an artefact resolves through an absorbing and edifying denouement (in Maxwell-Mahon 1979: 34). As long as the film subgenre under discussion is the documentary, it is only by departing from the “true” facts forming part of the documentary *Marikana Massacre* that a sensible analysis can proceed to its aspects having to do with *poiésis* and *praxis*.

Poiésis and *praxis* are the aspects of documentary film-making that perfect the effect on the audience of not only being clear with truthful material forming the spectacle of the documentary film, but also deriving pleasure as a result of the documentary film-maker’s elegant craftsmanship. Invoking

congruous features of Aristotle and Heidegger's philosophical contemplation, Catriona Hanley (in Breitrose 2012: 14) remarks that actual production of the documentary film consists of *praxis* and *poiésis* that rely on "contingent objects", unlike Theoria which requires for contemplation only the documentary as a finished product or its cinematic contingencies like "rawstock, laboratories, cameras, lenses". In documentary film-making, *poiésis* "aims at a goal, as distinct from the process of achieving the goal ... while *praxis* is the process of attaining the goal" (Hanley in Breitrose 2012: 14). From such a definition, it is clear that the function of *poiésis* and *praxis* is the narrative of a documentary film. The necessary complexity of the narrative in order for it to delight the audience edifyingly is evident in its amenability to refraction by the audience. It is by means of the narrative of a documentary that the film-maker satisfies the requirement Breitrose (2012) highlights, of structuring the documentary in such a way that it "mediate[s] between the content and the presumed audience" (2012:17). Invoking cognitive theory, Breitrose (2012) helpfully indicates that not only the documentary film-maker, but also the audience "share a strong tendency to analyse by inventing narrative in order to make sense of things that might otherwise be random objects and events" (2012: 17). This is the case because, as Cohn (1999: 12) observes, narrative is "a series of statements that deal with a causally related sequence of events that concern human (or human-like) beings".

The narrative the documentary film-maker weaves together and the narrative the audience viewing it arrive at, need not necessarily be the same. Therein lies the complexity from which the delight of the audience engaging with the documentary emanates. This is why the culmination of my discussion of the *poiésis* and *praxis* of the documentary *Marikana Massacre* is a decoding of its differential narratives from the vantage points of the film-maker and the audience. My focus is on the convergences and divergences of the warm lenses of the eyes of the film-maker, and of the film viewer, commonly mediated by the cold lens of the camera, within the complex labour of making sense of both the documentary film and the universe of the Marikana massacre.

True to the nature of documentary film-making, the producers of *Marikana Massacre* selectively include or exclude some statements in the narrative of the work. Statements are the propositional content of commentary on the historical events of Marikana, distinguishable from the actual events per se. The variegated statements contained in the documentary *Marikana Massacre* form the fabric of its narrative, whether through presencing or absencing. I will first start with statements that are presenced in the narrative of the documentary.

Crafting of *Marikana Massacre*: Its Narrative

Tactful interspersing and braiding of oral testimony by journalists, footage of the Marikana shootings of 16 August 2012, images of interviews of the police, mineworkers, next of kin of the 44 people killed in the build-up to and during the massacre, all collude to lend the narrative of the documentary a ring of verity as well as preselect the kind of statements the producers seek to make with the narrative about the shootings.

The documentary film *Marikana Massacre* opens with subtitles rolling down the screen simultaneously with a studio anchor-like image of the eNCA journalist Imandra Patty. Such a newsroom mood endorses the synopsis of tragic events leading up to 16 August 2012, in which ten people were killed, including six miners, and the killing of 34 miners on the day, as verifiable facts rather than opinion. An audience coming to the encounter of the events through the medium of documentary film should recognise the truth, considering that other commentary on Marikana the viewers are exposed to through print and digital media contains the same facts. That these facts endure even outside the narrative of *Marikana Massacre* and are thus recognisable to the viewers is attested to by statements from outside the film, for instance, “34 miners killed in a confrontation with police” (MacShane 2012: 13); “Thirty-four men shot dead” (Boswell 2013: 26); “In one week – 10th to 16th August – 44 South Africans were killed” (Maluleke 2013: 49); “August 2012 mine workers downed tools and headed for the hill holding machetes to discuss and formulate wage demands” (Maema 2013: 69). Television news, prior to the creation of the documentary, also covered the unrest and shootings, stating the same facts now historicised through the narrative of the documentary *Marikana Massacre*, such as eNCA, Mail & Guardian Online, BBC and Reuters footage (on YouTube).

The *poiésis* and *praxis* determining the narrative consciously created by producers Xoli Moloï and Bavani Naidoo come through as they pan the camera in the opening scene of *Marikana Massacre* to splash on the screen the expansive rocks of Wonderkop deep-range images of striking miners carpeting the koppie and the valley below it, as well as another slight rise over the valley. Against this backdrop of skilfully projected multitudes of “faceless” strikers representing more the fact of their plight plaguing the whole South African mining industry rather than just Lonmin management, the camera then flashes the close-up image of a faceless striker shown from the loins down, with a sharpened, broad-blade machete in the foreground. As the camera moves vertically to expose the striker’s face, the lens fades to multitudes of raised weapons including spears poised ready for action, accompanied by the sound of some of the weapons clanging.

The statement coming from such a selection of images plus incessant framing of deployed police and striking miners is that the might of the overwhelming numbers of black exploited miners is in a stand-off with the

securocracy of a government whose policies have failed to transform the underprivileged state of the worker. In these images, the striking miners, estimated to be around 3 000 in number, are divided from ready-for-action armed police by a road symbolising the divisive expansionism of “civilising” forces like foreign-owned Anglo American Platinum of which Marikana’s Lonmin mine is a part. The statement of camera framing in a part of the sequence of opening images of the Wonderkop mountain to the right and Lonmin mine quarters to the left separated by a deserted gate, and repeated framing of a police helicopter hovering above the killing fields of Marikana with mounted police filing to the direction indicated in earlier framing as the location of Lonmin offices, together with an aloof-looking silhouette of towering Lonmin offices shot side by side with the forlorn informal settlement of some of the striking miners, is that the powerful mine and government represented by the images of the police are callously colluding against the powerless striking mineworkers. The images in such framing are sequenced with those of the testimonies of the eNCA reporters Xoli Mngambi and Phakamile Hlubi, former eNCA news anchor Debra Patta, cameramen Joe Komane and Dinky Mkhize, of how the Marikana violence of 16 August 2012 unfolded, corroborated in flashback with graphic images of chanting miners. These miners are later seen lying dead, covered in crusts of curdled blood, when the sequence of sound and images resumes forward temporal movement. As sound and images steer the narrative of the documentary film forward, viewers are shown another frame containing police vehicles and the miners’ informal settlement of Nkaneng. Police nyalas and vans meander on a dirt road dividing the shabby abodes of the mineworkers from a sprawling, unsanitised dumping field traversed by scavenging dogs and casually strolling wives and children of some of the striking mineworkers. The statement these make is that the striking miners and their families are treated inhumanly and heavy-handedly by both the government symbolised by the demonstrated might of the police, and the inadequate economic system of which their employer Lonmin is a quint-essence.

Among images of the miner corpses is that of the man in the green blanket, Mgcineni Noki, nicknamed Mambush. Outside the narrative of the documentary film, this is the Mambush famous to viewers for his battlefield antics meant to boost the morale of the striking miners in their fight for a living wage and better living conditions. The haunting image of shot miner Bhayi Mtenetya from eDutywa jerking and then collapsing in front of the camera as he dies, watched by millions of television viewers, is not so close up as to suggest a singling out of his case as more pathetic than those of the rest. The photography suggests his dying thus as just a case in point. In this way, when the viewer confronts images of Bhayi’s friend Xolile Madikane explaining the former’s kindness and amiability during his lifetime, the

narrative is such that it portrays the latter as just an example of the trauma and loss of those close to the killed miners.

In the continuing series of sounds and the images taking the storyline of the narrative forward, there are testimonies of a friend of the policeman from Rustenburg killed days before 16 August 2012 by striking Lonmin miners; of his widow Petunia Lepaaku; and of the widow of Bhayi Mtenetya. Images of the widows' interviews include their households in Rustenburg and eDutywa where the interviews are conducted. Images of the eDutywa interview are even inset within those of a traditional cleansing ceremony in progress, performed on the many young orphans of the slain miners. The statement this mode of image selection elicits is that the dead miners leave behind young widows and orphans needing a father to love and support them, so that it cannot be right to downplay the humanity of the victims of Marikana police violence, their friends and next of kin, and see them as mere statistics.

There is another significant statement the narrative of the documentary film *Marikana Massacre* makes regarding images showing an impassioned speech by Lonmin spokesperson Bernard Mokwena at a press conference; and Police Commissioner Zukiswa Mbombo's interview with eNCA's Xoli Mngambi regarding the exact motive of police tactical deployment hours before the 16 August 2012 shootings; General Mbembe's conversation with the striking miners on 13 August 2012 just hours before things went out of control, leading to striking miners shooting and hacking to death two policemen as they were being escorted peacefully to the top of the Wonderkop koppie; as well as captured images of the testimonies of Alisha and Hussein Fundi, widow and son of the Lonmin security officer hacked to death and burnt beyond recognition along with a colleague.

The footage of Lonmin spokesperson Bernard Mokwena emphasising that two "human beings" have been burnt beyond recognition in the conflict needing urgent resolution, forming part of the selected images of the documentary film under scrutiny, exposes a human streak in the man working for a supposedly heartless capitalist machinery. This is in much the same way that the footage transmits the narrative's statement that, like the slain miners, the murdered security men are human, too, deserving to have their lives treated as sacred. Images of the widow Alisha Fundi engage the viewer dialectically by means of her description of the way her husband would never leave for work before praying. The interview gives the picture of the departed security officer not as someone ready to kill at the slightest provocation (a possible misconstruing of the meaning of the bulletproof vest his son testifies he asked for the last time the family saw him alive) but rather a pious person bound to respect human life and love peace and order. The narrative's portrayal of the slain security officer as deserving of humane treatment is enhanced when the camera shifts to capturing the images of his youthful son shedding tears and lamenting that when he saw the body of his

father burnt beyond recognition he could not believe that a human being could do that to another human being.

The narrative of the documentary film sustains the motif of canvassing for humanity in the way human beings treat each other notwithstanding whether one happens to be on the side of the miners, government or the mining industry. Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town Thabo Makgoba, in his newspaper article entitled “Marikana a wake-up call to do more”, makes a similar statement in observing that “[p]eople’s lives and their basic needs must be put first – before profits, before politics, before power, before inter-union rivalries” (Makgoba 2013: 8). Leon (2013: 183) throws into relief the need to attend to the humanity of the victims of the shootings, in his assertion that in addition to appointing the Farlam judicial commission of enquiry “to investigate the event” of 16 August 2012, more must be done “to address the tragedy’s underlying causes”, requiring “an examination of how the working and living conditions of mineworkers and mine communities can be improved”. Raphael d’Abdon’s (2013: 110) statement in the poem “Walking to school” is similarly an invocation of humanity needed so that the schoolchildren of Marikana no longer walk back to school to inhuman conditions where “their fathers’ corpses were still there./ just a little colder”.

In the narrative of the documentary, the producers make use of the images of testimony to highlight how the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the affiliated National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) president was heckled when he tried to address the striking miners in pursuit of a peaceful resolution, and how only the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) president Joseph Mathunjwa was welcomed to address the gathering during the build-up to the 16 August 2012 shootings. The fact that images of the NUM president actually being snubbed are absented from the narrative of the documentary film under discussion should be seen as the producers’ way of not diverting attention from centralising the small-man plight of the powerless striking miners, and detractingly turn power epitomised in the tragedy of Marikana by trade unions, government officials, mining management and the police into the protagonist and object of empathy. The narrative of the documentary film is consistent in hoisting the plight of the powerless miners by sensitising the viewers to their unjustly obscured humanity.

Alexander et al. (2012: 11) observe that the working-class miners were led during the strike by ordinary “*madoda* [men]” elected from the bottom for their proven humanity in social interaction. Such a workers’ agency born of the very criterion of humanity is made by means of the bias of the narrative to outshine big-man “obscure radical rhetoric” or what Alexander et al. (2012: 11) also call “theory of ivory tower academics” that has failed to come up with ideas and solutions since the dawn of democracy that would have nullified the need for industrial action such as that embarked upon presently by Lonmin miners. The role played at one level by traditional

black cultures, and at another by working-class culture, in the ability of the striking miners to organise themselves ably without the help of extraneous cultural modes of social organisation to some extent characterising the election of leadership in trade union structures at various levels, is signified in the metonymy of words like “*madoda*”. It is these “*madoda*” who, in the narrative of the documentary *Marikana Massacre*, are captured by the camera chanting in front of the rest, albeit in a framing that diminishes their would-be protrusion within the context of strikers whose multitudinous portrayal is magnified even more by the effect of deep-range camera.

The producers’ inclusion of footage indicative of the empowering cultural difference of the striking miners, gels with similar trends in national documentary writing. One example is the way in which documentary film producers in Japan managed to rid themselves of the influences of European New Wave film-making. This feat has led to the film-making scholar Hegarty crediting this category of Japanese documentary film-makers for delving “into the experiences of the marginalised”, thus offering “artistic and humanistic tributes to the diversity of human cultures and the possibility of creative expression, encompassing diverse experiences to both document and act against exploitation (2012: 83, 93)”. By affirming African cultural practices by the downtrodden miners of Marikana, the producers in no way advocate an atavistic attitude towards indigenous culture, for African cultures do benefit from technological and socio-economic advancement by their nature of being adaptable (Mphahlele 2002). This is a different implementation of African traditional culture, from the application of customary law in the narratives of the Zimbabwean short films *Asylum* (2004) and *Akakodzera Ndiani* (2008) (see Rwafa 2010: 41-42). In these two documentaries, present-day practitioners of African cultures suffer because they are unfortunately insulated from the influence of other cultures such as what Rwafa (2010: 41-42) describes as “European modernism”.

Marikana Massacre producers’ manipulation of visual choice to demonstrate the sufficiency of moulting cultural practices in dealing with quotidian demands is clear also in the footage showing General Mbembe addressing the striking miners humbly, using the African language he hopes will be understood by many, reassuring them that the police do not intend to arrest anyone but appeal to the miners to respect the law and disarm. When the images of several miners responding in a manner showing connection with General Mbembe’s humane approach are shown, it is not surprising that humaneness is reciprocated when the miners reiterate that they are not fighting the police or anyone they want to have dialogue with. Such a choice of footage material makes a statement similar to that of commentator Karen MacGregor (2012: 32), in her remark that “[t]he police ... had tried to negotiate a peaceful end to the strike, and had begun to take crowd control measures when they were attacked”. Indeed, 30 August 2013 police testimony in the Farlam commission laments the fact that when the police

seemed to be at peace with the striking miners as they escorted the latter to the koppie, one undisciplined police officer fired teargas without being commanded to do so (YouTube: 19h30 eTV News, 30 August 2013).

If by any chance the viewer who has earlier witnessed images of Commissioner Zukiswa Mbombo's interview in which she firmly asserts that for the sake of stemming lawlessness 16 August 2012 is the day the miners have to disarm and disband might construe her gesture as heartless, after images of the conversation between General Mbembe and the striking miners such a viewer is bound to soften. Chances are that the organisation of the narrative will cumulatively impel such a viewer of the documentary rather to admire Commissioner Mbombo's firmness for the sake of stemming "lawlessness" threatening the hard-won democracy every South African in his or her right mind should pride himself or herself on. Such a statement derived from the narrative of *Marikana Massacre* resonates with Rabbi Goldstein's exhortation following the 16 August 2012 Marikana "national tragedy", that "the country at this time needed to stand together in a spirit of unity, upholding the principles of peaceful dialogue and the sanctity of human life" (Saks 2012: 3). Such a manipulation of footage foregrounds the humanity of the police commissioner and general, in the same way it does that of the slain miners, security officers and policemen, effectively satirising the inhumanity of those whose warm lenses fail to delve deeper than costume.

There is a sense in which the police leadership and their subordinates solicit pity due to being mistaken for the enemy while they are mere cogs in the big wheel of government and the economically powerful people running global economy. This is one statement of the narrative, attained through the inclusion of images of the two slain, uniformed policemen, their mangled bodies inhumanly sprawled on the ground. They are in a similar situation as the white journalist who is threatened with violence for being a white man and thus seen ipso facto as one with capitalism's cheap labour economy benefitting a few neo-liberal multinational bosses and black BEE beneficiaries at the cost of the toiling masses. Inclusion in the narrative of the images of the testimony of evidently traumatised journalist Phakamile Hlumi who happened to travel with a white journalist on 14 August 2012 while covering the Marikana strike, does highlight the unfortunate crossroads the police and white man face, while the economic baggage inherited since colonial times is bigger than their immediate role.

The plight of the police and the white man, no less than that of the dehumanised striking miners and their families, evokes the viewers' pathos. Producers of the documentary film *Marikana Massacre* include gunfire and yells of ceasefire played on a blank screen in the sequence of subtitles, audio, images, many flashbacks and flashforwards tying together the four parts of the narrative. Such a horrific stimulus to the sense of hearing is intensified when producers play loud to the blank screen the ringing of bullets and a senior policeman's screams to colleagues to cease fire, for

some seconds before the visuals accompany the audio. The statement emanating from this aspect of the narrative is that things go wrong because police are ill-equipped to handle strikes of this nature, depth and magnitude, and not in the least because they are bloodthirsty. This is the same effect the voice-over of a colleague of one of the policemen killed by striking miners on 13 August 2012 produces when he says in the vernacular, “He’s gone, he’s no more”, with the English subtitles on the screen screaming that same pathetic message with the visual magic and potency of their own, too. Overall, the narrative manipulates the sounds and images to evoke pity for the police, rather than hatred.

Not only the visuals, but also the sounds of the opening and closure of the documentary film deserve a comment. The producers choose to open the documentary film with images of the striking mineworkers chanting on the Wonderkop mountain environs, with intense bellowing of the freedom song bearing the lyrics *Malibuye izwelethu* [May our land return] alternating with the other freedom song *Senzenina?/ Senzeni Na?* [What have we done?/ What have we done?] punctuated by the rallying cry of “*Amandla, Awethu* [Power is ours]” (my translation). In this opening scene setting the tone for the narrative, AMCU president Joseph Mathunjwa is depicted by means of news footage heroically greeting the approving, chanting strikers in a rallying speech containing refrains of the striking miners’ praise names and totems – a gesture displaying the humility and respect of the miners. It is within the atmosphere of a feeling of approbation elicited by the audio of Mathunjwa’s mode of address as he reports back on mine bosses’ present response in the negative to the strikers’ demands that the quick-tempo visuals are flashed across the screen, preluding events that follow by means of images of shot miners, hacked police officers, memorial crosses in honour of the massacred miners dotting the foot of the koppie, the thirty-four twitching and dead miners scattered over the Marikana tract, footage of mourning relatives acting out their trauma in various ways during the Farlam commission hearings, etc.

In this way, the selected sounds accompanying the images of the narrative perform a function other than facilitating what Nichols (2001: 591) describes as “the representation of historical time”. Such a directed choice goes further to provide “techniques by which to introduce the moralizing perspective or social belief of an author and a structure of closure whereby initiating disturbances can receive satisfactory resolution” (Nichols 2001: 591). The initiating disturbance is the social issue of letting the workers earn below the living wage and subjecting them to squalid abodes and generally inhuman personal conditions. The rapid synoptic images flung by the camera within reach of the halo of the revolutionary songs from Mathunjwa and the miners hint at the documentary film’s “structure of closure”, giving the viewers an idea of the fabricated storyline of the documentary. The statement coming with the armed strikers singing the freedom songs is that

the Marikana demonstrations are comparable squarely to those that took place during apartheid, implying that even in the post-1994 democratic South Africa, the workers have not attained any freedom. This is akin to MacShane's 2012 statement that "the ANC will have to decide if its second century will be marked by an advance towards or a retreat from democracy".

Going by Nichols's (2001) theory, "the structure of closure" including the initiating disturbances hinging on the human plight of the striking miners should find closure in the culmination of the narrative at the point when the documentary closes. The narrative fades out against the silhouette of striking miners chanting and pointing their weapons skyward, in an ominous gesture portending the infinity of the "initiating disturbances". The narrative thus closes pessimistically, issuing the statement that more Marikanas are to follow. Outside of the documentary film, a commentator like Leon (2013: 203) offers his own sanguine resolution of the Marikana problematic, as the building of "a better, more inclusive and sustainable mining industry" because South Africa has "weathered many more challenging situations" as a result of the "ability to respond collectively as much as creatively to adversity".

Commentators whose untying of the Marikana knot is as despondent as the narrative of *Marikana Massacre* include Basso (2013: 128-129), who sees the "battle of the Marikana miners" as a mere segment in the continuum that started "in Latin America in the 1980s during the first debt crises, culminating in 2001 with the Argentinazo ... [and has been] since the 1990s [in] Asia, including some Asian Tigers (South Korea, for example), sparking a long series of worker strikes and struggles of poor peasants in China, India, the Philippines, Vietman, Bangladesh, to then reach its tumultuous peak in the Arab countries, in Egypt in particular ... against the power elites of international financial capital". After noting that, the response of those with financial power has been reinforcement of police power in preparation for worse repressive brutality. Basso (2013: 129) ominously pronounces that "against messages" like the Marikana miners' revolts, "bullets are not enough". In a similar resonating of the statement derivable from the desperate note on which the documentary film *Marikana Massacre* ends, leader of the Democratic Left Front of South Africa Mazibuko Jara warns in an interview with Gerson (2013: 45) of a "rising tempo of workers' struggles that have taken place since the massacre at Marikana".

It is through the documentary impulse of the narrative of *Marikana Massacre* that the statements sampled above have provided what Smith (2007: 83) perceives as "local structures that viewers use to understand a documentary", manifested in "the distinctive ways the documentary spectator assembles nonfiction pieces into a coherent whole". The documentary impulse is the documentary film's tradition of casting the familiar in a new light, as well as its "stress of social impact" rather than only the modernist tradition's "stress on the effects of form itself" (Nichols 2001:

583, 591). By assembling the sounds and images of the documentary film as they did, producers Xoli Moloi and Bavani Naidoo have enabled both themselves and the viewers to make the kinds of statements hinted at above.

Crafting of *Marikana Massacre*: Its Silences

YouTube footage of eNCA news pursues sensitive questions like who shot first between the striking miners and the police. Journalist Ben Said provides some coherence to the 16 August 2012 shootings, using voice-over superimposed on meaningfully combined footage from three cameras. The cameras are manipulated by means of flashbacks as well as panning and alternation of deep- and shallow-range shots so that they may help the newsman give the opinion he wants to give or the facts he is trying to uncover or prove about the shootings. A careful combination of slow-motion and still images reveals a miner among those in the front line shooting at the police with a shotgun, as a group of miners rush forward towards police seconds before the massacre of 16 August 2012, with the feeble sound of shots from the shotgun clearly distinguishable from that of more powerful police fire in accompanying audio. Footage flighted a few seconds later shows a shotgun recovered from the dead bodies of miners, alongside the many sorts of “traditional” weapons collected after the shootings. This combination of sound and images makes the statement that the miners shot first, probably triggering the massive killings by panicking police, but even so what some people see as overreaction by police remains unwarranted. *Marikana Massacre* silences such a statement, congruously to the *poiésis* and *praxis* of the narrative not intending and not employing means for blame fixing. Otherwise the narrative’s evident goal of foregrounding the humanity of all the small people forming part of the action, including the striking miners themselves, would be marred.

In yet another YouTube television news piece dated 16 August 2012, this time belonging to Reuters, footage includes images of the Marikana massacre of 16 August 2012 juxtaposed with images of the 16 June 1976 Soweto uprising. In the sequence of images are also shots of the imposing edifice of Rissik Street NUM headquarters, juxtaposed with images of weapons clanging and striking miners chanting war songs in protest action, and with images of the poverty-stricken Nkaneng informal settlement where some of the miners live with their families or single.

The commentator Mark Gevisser (2012: 7) is aware of this statement among the many extractable from the historic events of Marikana, in his remark that “many in South Africa have labelled Marikana the Sharpeville of our times, all the more devastating because the fingers pulling those triggers were controlled by a government voted into power to realise the aspirations of the majority rather than to shoot them down”. Probably in a

consistent mood of not apportioning blame, this time on the inadequately transformed government policy after 1994, the producers of *Marikana Massacre* silence such an *aggressive* likening of the Marikana shootings with shootings of blacks by forces of the former white apartheid government. On the other side of the equation, producers silence the statement that “miners ran down the hill towards the officers” made by Phakamile Hlubi in yet another eNCA newscast on YouTube. This is not surprising, after the sounds and images purporting the strikers-shot-first statement have been cleansed from the *Marikana Massacre* narrative. The narrative of *Marikana Massacre* avoids transmitting such an accusatory statement, by divesting the selected footage of the specific shot from a miner and voice-over making such a statement. In clear pursuit of being true to the fact without attaching (radical) opinion, all the narrative of the documentary includes are frontal images of a group of miners advancing towards the wall of alert police deployed tactically for any unpredictable eventuality.

In another YouTube news footage by eNCA, the narrative is meaningfully forged in its graphic wide-angle capturing of the jostling and blocking between police and then-expelled ANC youth league leader Julius Malema and his mullahs, in which Julius Malema, framed together with the crowds and landscape of Marikana shootings of a few days earlier, is ordered to leave Marikana amid accusations by police chiefs threatening to arrest him for inciting violence. The documentary film *Marikana Massacre* absences the statement made by such an inclusion and technological assembling of footage, that Malema, in opportunistically self-centred fashion, exploits the Marikana tragedy to indulge in disgruntlement with Zuma and his ruling party elite. This is the same statement, absenced from the documentary film, made by MacShane (2012: 14), in his observation that “[a] demagogic populist, Malema is ready to stir any of the many grievances that poor black South Africans have into a denunciation of current power holders”.

Images in a Journeyman.tv documentary titled *Marikana Brutal Massacre*, on YouTube, include the interview with an eyewitness named Shadrack Mashamba in which he testifies to police killing hiding strikers execution style. Images of the testimony are interspersed with those of police shown hunting down miners scattered hiding among Wonderkop crevices and caves soon after the massacre, but of course there is no footage of the injured being finished off as the witness alleges. In the testimony, images of three more survivors of the massacre interviewed at the informal settlement and on the koppie, detail how they lost friends and relatives on the day of the shootings and how they were manhandled by police soon after scattering from the fireline and later when some of them were detained.

In order to strengthen the narrative’s statement that police displayed unbridled brutality and highhandedness on the day of the massacre, the warm lens of the Journeyman.tv camera frames together the dead and injured strewn lower down in a valley, with police triumphantly combing the

area higher up on a hill. The alternation of shallow- and deep-range images of the koppie alongside close-up images of testifying subjects is effective in blurring the distinction between past massacres under apartheid and the present one under democratic rule as well as indelibility of the Marikana tragedy in the long-term historical memory of the nation. Such a simulated merging of past, present and future memory is true to the Journeyman.tv documentary's statement that the Marikana massacre resembles past ones and is a foretaste of future ones under an authoritarian government transcending time. This kind of statement is absented from the narrative of *Marikana Massacre*.

Images of Journeyman.tv testimonies transmit a message contrasting with that pervading the narrative of *Marikana Massacre*, in which, to cite one example, images of a dead miner's friend named Xolile Madikane contain his mourning the loss of a humane person, thus redirecting the focus of the narrative to a need to return to humanity in dealing with fellow human beings. In the same way the power in murdered security guards and police is emasculated for a purpose, the producers of *Marikana Massacre* silence from the narrative of the documentary film the projection of miners' leaders as powerful and confrontational. Images of their leadership role consistently make the statement that they continue to be small persons in a manner communal with the worker collective that sends them to act. It is for this reason that, unlike BBC news footage on YouTube, footage of the strikers' leader, nicknamed Mambush pacing and waving at the forefront of attentive strikers during the many crisis meetings, is silenced out of the narrative of the documentary film *Marikana Massacre*. The only time images of the man in the green blanket are shown in the narrative of *Marikana Massacre* is as he lies dead among many other fatally shot miners, level on the ground with the rest of the people he was leading, his and their bodies equal in the stillness and stiffness of death.

The deliberate exclusion of footage that would otherwise foreground the above average gallantry of the man in the green blanket is made evident by statements of commentators outside the documentary film. Saba (2013: 29-42) for example, reveals that "Mgcineni ... led thousands of miners during the strike at Marikana" (p. 31), during which "he could address all 3 000 striking miners without using a loudhailer" (p. 34), "with the same fire he had displayed when addressing the soccer teams he had captained" (p. 39), because the miners "had chosen him to lead the strike" (p. 39), and trusted him "to stand up for them and tell the truth" (p. 33). On the day the strikers marched from the mountain to the mine to stop dissenting workers from continuing with drilling work, "Mambush was carrying two assegais, one in each hand" (p. 40), and on the following day he asked the police to leave after the latter had not lived up to the promise they had made the previous day, later telling NUM's Senzeni Zokwana dismissively that "the strikers would not return to work" (p. 41). For someone not aware of the purpose-

directed selectiveness of the narrative in documentary film-making, omission of the images of the stalwart Mgcineni Noki, bar his prostrate remains among the dead, deforms the documentary *Marikana Massacre*. It is only with awareness of intentional silencing that the diminution of colossal Mambush is rendered meaningful.

Silencing continues in the narrative with the way the striking miners' performance of a traditional healer's rituals on Wonderkop is handled. In spite of the existence of news footage captured by a lot of media workers attesting to miners being made to perform rituals supposed, among others, to make them invincible against police bullets during the anticipated violent clash, not once does *Marikana Massacre* show any such images. The outstandingly sophisticated world-renowned and much respected black academic Njabulo Ndebele (2013: 106) declares his oneness with the striking Marikana miners in the latter's African cultural practice of having the medicine man use a razor blade on them, "making small incisions on their foreheads before smearing a black, gel-like potion on them". Such a statement made by Ndebele exposes how unlowly such a practice by the strikers is, notwithstanding most local and Western media's reference to this practice often as a symptom of the miners' naivety. The producers of *Marikana Massacre* avoid the inclusion of sounds and images from which could ensue this kind of statement about the striking miners, as it is not part of their *poiésis* and *praxis* to ascribe the protesters' action to any kind of naivety, including blankness on pertinent issues such as plummeting mineral prices on world markets and rising production costs contextualising the situation faced by capitalist multinationals like Anglo Platinum's Lonmin mine. Consistent with their valuing of indigenous cultures as a means towards lasting solutions in addressing the trampling on of the subaltern by the Centre, producers of *Marikana Massacre* negate the lampooning of the miners' embracement of traditional medicinal practices as barbaric. Within such a trajectory, one of the many statements the documentary film wants to make is that the miners are as completely human as everyone else and deserve to have their humanity respected.

Conclusion

The statements made by the actions and events unfolding, as the producers purposefully selected them, on the temporal axis introduced by the narrative of the Marikana documentary, for me, imbues the historical moment of the Marikana massacre with what Nichols (2001: 589) describes as "historical meaning". It is this quality of the documentary *Marikana Massacre* that sets it apart from on-the-spot or mere breaking news reportage otherwise contained in what I have described as the factual layer of the documentary, relatively devoid of interpretation or opinion. The narrative of the docu-

mentary film *Marikana Massacre* succeeds in achieving what it achieves, in keeping with Nichols's (2001: 589) description of the narrative of a documentary film as its vehicle for transforming it from the "fetishizing lure of spectacle" and the "factual conclusiveness" of scientific indexing of objects and phenomena.

The spectacle of the documentary film *Marikana Massacre* is achieved by the pinpointed techniques of subtitling, use of relatively cold camera lens to capture testimonies of subjects lending a human dimension to what would otherwise be mere statistics, and similar employment of the "cold" camera in interviewing the police leadership strictly in pursuit of facts about the miners' strike and killings without deliberately allowing judgement to creep in.

Yet the narrative of the documentary is about more than the "cold" facts of the strike and shootings. It is for this reason that I include in my discussion the producers' use of subjectively driven elements of film-making such as framing, range, optics, sequencing, flashback and flashforward. It is by the exploration of this that I could extract the warm camera lens statements derivable from the otherwise indexical documentary spectacle produced by means of the cold camera lens. It is the "set of sounds and images" constituting the spectacle of a documentary film that Searl (in Breitrose 2012) is referring to in his view of the documentary film-maker's function of imposing "a narrative structure". It is the narrative bias that is the animus behind the narrative of *Marikana Massacre* making possible the producers' and viewers' statements on the historical events of Marikana. The many narratives are possible through an intersection of the spectacle of the narrative with the problem of mineworkers' deplorable working conditions culminating in a violently defiant strike, and the web of social issues within the psychic and social ambience of the historical moment of the Marikana shootings of 16 August 2012.

According to the theory of documentary film-making applied to this article, whatever requisite narrative bias shapes and directs the narrative, it should not sink below correspondence with the bare facts of the spectacle. Subjective narrative and convergence with verifiable events constituting spectacle equally perfect the documentary film. *Marikana Massacre* passes such a test, as seen through the resonance of statements identifiable with its narrative with extra-documentary commentary coming from commentators on the Marikana shootings other than its producers.

The delightfully engaging statements emanating from the interplay of narrative bias and spectacle highlighted above in the case of *Marikana Massacre* include those such as, Marikana is reminiscent of, though not similar to, police brutality of the apartheid era; problems in the mining industry of post-apartheid South Africa are bigger and more profound than the immediate causes of the Marikana miners' strike that led to the 16 August 2012 mass shootings; police, security officers, Lonmin management

and striking miners are commonly small people that are mere pawns of the big people at the helm of cheap labour dependent capitalist multinationals and government policy failing to keep the excesses of such an economy in check, from the point of view of sensitivity to cultural difference and the humanity of the role players; unless the underlying regime of inhuman living and working conditions of Marikana and other miners across South Africa is addressed adequately, other Marikanas will continue to blemish the face of the democratic South Africa everyone should be proud of; etc.

There are silences the documentary film *Marikana Massacre* uses in its absencing of some statements, including those like fighting for turf between the two trade union rivals is responsible for the Marikana massacre; the miners were the first to shoot on 16 August 2012; the leaders of striking miners elected along traditional lines and from below to compensate for trade union betrayal of their loyalty, were so provocatively violent as to deserve blame for the mass shootings they prompted; political opportunists exploited the genuine grievances of the miners and their families to feed an ignobly personal agenda having nothing to do with the plight of the miners; etc. What the documentary elects to presence or absence depends on the producers' *poiésis* and *praxis* distinctively forging the narrative of *Marikana Massacre*.

Closure of the narrative of *Marikana Massacre* with the song containing the lyrics *thula, thula*, meaning condolences, seals once and for all the overriding statement of the narrative that we are all human beings irrespective of social, political or economic status, and deserve to be treated with humanity at all times equally by those at our small-person level and the big-person stakeholders controlling economic means and political policy impacting on our humanity.

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