

## **Beyond Ethnographic Film: John Marshall and the Marshall Family Kalahari Project**

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American filmmaker John Marshall was a major figure in ethnographic film throughout the second half of the twentieth century; his influence continues into the twentieth-first. Marshall's career trajectory anticipated and paralleled major shifts in documentary and ethnographic film and challenged notions of the links between the observer and the observed. The mythic narrative style he embraced at the beginning of his career in the early 1950s was soon abandoned for the observational clarity of direct cinema. Recording social interactions in Africa and the United States, Marshall pioneered short "sequence films" in the 1960s, concentrating on long takes, without directorial or editorial modifications. Provoked by the crisis in representation that enveloped anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking, beginning in the late 1970s, his films took a reflexive turn in which the interventions and effects of filming were made explicit. Throughout the last decades of his life, Marshall concentrated on forms of participatory cinema, focusing on collaborative productions driven by the economic and political needs of his subjects. Marshall's determination to grow as a filmmaker and a world citizen shaped his impact on ethnographic film.

When asked the ubiquitous questions of how his filmmaking career began, John Marshall responded, "Well, I started by default" and then told a story that he loved to tell about his father and the family expeditions to Africa.<sup>1</sup> It is a remarkable story of the beginnings of what became a remarkable career.

John's father, Laurence Kennedy Marshall, and his mother, Lorna McLean Marshall, both had an interest in anthropology, although neither was a trained anthropologist. Laurence had a degree in physics and had worked as an engineer; Lorna had earned degrees in English Literature and had taught at Mount Holyoke College. Anthropologist Margaret Mead, a pioneer in the use of film in anthropological research, had been a guest at the family home at the edge of the Harvard University campus in Cambridge, MA, and

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall, as quoted in Carolyn Anderson and Thomas W. Benson, "Put Down the Camera and Pick Up the Shovel: An Interview with John Marshall," Jay Ruby, (ed.), *The Cinema of John Marshall*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Chur, Switzerland 1993, p. 135. This interview is a compilation of interviews conducted at the Marshall home in Peterborough, NH on December 27, 1986 and on December 28, 1989 at the Marshall home in Cambridge. An earlier version of the Anderson-Benson interview appeared in German as "'Setz die Kamera ab und greif zur Schafel' Ein Interview Mit John Marshall," R. Kapfer, W. Petermann, and R. Thomas (eds.), *Jäger und Gejagte: John Marshall und seine Filme*, Trickster Verlag, Munich 1991, p.135-165. I first interviewed John Marshall on April 13, 1984 at the Marshall family home in Cambridge; my last visit with him was in the spring of 2004 at his home in Belmont, MA.

“proffered advice on doing field work.”<sup>2</sup> The relationship between Mead and the Marshall family would continue for decades.

Laurence had co-founded the American Appliance Company in 1922; it was renamed the Raytheon Manufacturing Company in 1925 and Marshall served as president of what became a very successful company from 1928 to 1948.<sup>3</sup> In 1949 Laurence and Lorna Marshall traveled to South Africa as part of a ‘round-the-world business trip. Raytheon had become a leader in radar development during World War II and Laurence was interested in selling a harbor guidance radar system to the Cape Town Port Authority. While in Cape Town, Laurence purchased US Air Force maps of South Africa and became intrigued about the possibility of finding a lost city in the Kalahari Desert.<sup>4</sup>

A year later Laurence retired from Raytheon and was eager to spend time with his son, John, then 17 years old.<sup>5</sup> (John’s sister Elizabeth has disputed the oft-repeated origin story of the Marshall expeditions: “[Laurence] didn’t need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, commandeer years of everybody’s life, and take us to into one of the world’s largest unexplored wild places, hundreds of miles from rescue if anything went wrong . . . I’m sure we didn’t go merely so Dad could know us better. We went because he liked wild places.”)<sup>6</sup> Whatever the motivation, Laurence Marshall wasn’t interested in a vacation; he wanted a mission. The head of the Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, J.O. Brew, told Laurence that there were rumors and conjectures that people who still lived by hunting and gathering could be found deep in the Kalahari Desert. The possibility of contacting people who would provide a “window on the Pleistocene that nobody had ever dreamed of” fascinated father and son.<sup>7</sup> To secure the necessary visas and permissions, Laurence obtained a letter of introduction from the greatly admired Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. This

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<sup>2</sup> Nancie L. Gonzalez, “A Film Argument,” *The Cinema of John Marshall*, p. 192, n 5. Gonzalez considers Mead’s views on film as a research tool “very much in line with what I have come to think of as the Marshall film purpose.”

<sup>3</sup> By 1950 Laurence Marshall had become a wealthy man, in contrast to his childhood in Somerville, MA as “the only child of parents who were desperately poor.” Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *Dreaming of Lions: My Life in the Wild Places*, Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, VT 2013, 2016, p. 26. Lorna McLean was born in pre-statehood Arizona. Her father was a mining engineer who died when Lorna was seven years old. As a young adult, she abandoned a career in ballet to travel around the world with her twice-widowed mother. Douglas Martin, “Lorna Marshall, 103, Early Scholar on Africa’s Bushmen,” *New York Times*, July 30, 2002. Lorna would later find the night sky in South West Africa comforting because it reminded her of her childhood in the American Southwest. (Private conversation with author.)

<sup>4</sup> A Cape Town surgeon, E. van Zyl (or F.D. du Toit van Zyl), was planning such an expedition which Laurence asked to join, Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 135-136.

<sup>5</sup> J. Marshall, Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> E.M. Thomas, 2013, 2016, p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 136.

crucial endorsement stated that Laurence and his son John would be traveling in the Union of South Africa, South West Africa, and Bechuanaland [present-day Botswana]

for the purpose of studying and photographing the rock carvings of bushmen . . . they wish also to obtain pictures of native tribes engaged in their present forms of artistic expression . . . Mr. Marshall [Laurence] has developed special techniques in photography which, it is believed, will permit more careful studies of these interesting subjects than has been possible previously. . . The work planned, which is under the sanction of the Smithsonian Institution, is purely scientific in nature. Any assistance . . . will be appreciated by the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>8</sup>

Laurence was not a trained photographer. The claim of “special techniques in photography” might have referenced the fact that the elder Marshall brought one of the first Polaroid Land cameras on the 1950 expedition. This revolutionary camera had recently been invented by Laurence’s friend Edwin Land (in 1948) and was yet to be introduced to most parts of the world. From the outset, photography played a prominent role, as Laurence and John were equipped with both moving picture and still cameras in 1950. They took hundreds of photographs.<sup>9</sup> John also shot some moving picture footage film and later recalled, “I can’t think of a single foot of film I shot that was worth using.”<sup>10</sup>

From June to September, 1950, Laurence and John travelled through unmapped territory in the Kaoko Veld of South West Africa as part of van Zyl’s expedition, a trip John

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<sup>8</sup> In 2003 John and Elizabeth gifted their parents’ diaries, record books, and laboratory notebooks documenting their 1951-1961 expeditions to Africa (Peabody Museum 2003.36, Lorna and Laurence Marshall Expeditionary Notebooks and Journals, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University). The letter from the Smithsonian is signed by A. Wetmore, Secretary, and dated May 10, 1950. (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.20, np) Laurence also obtained letters of introduction and endorsement from J.O. Brew, Director, Peabody Museum, Harvard University, and Leonard Carmichael, President, Tufts College (Laurence’s alma mater).

<sup>9</sup> See Ilisa Barbash, *Where the Roads All End: Photography and Anthropology in the Kalahari*, Peabody Museum Press, Harvard University, Cambridge 2016, Appendix A, p. 201-206 for membership in expeditions from 1950-1961. Barbash’s book draws on 40,000 still photographs in the Peabody archives to consider the crucial role of still photography in the Marshalls’ decades-long project and in the creation of a Bushman imaginary. Over 300 images are handsomely reproduced in *Where the Roads All End*. Professional photographers Merl La Voy and Emil Paul Friede were on the 1950 expedition; their photographs, and those taken by F.D. van Zyl, are included in the Peabody collection, along with the photographs of other professional photographers shot on subsequent expeditions. (Barbash, p. 73) How much these professionals shared their expertise with the Marshall family is unknown.

<sup>10</sup> J. Marshall, “Filming and Learning,” *The Cinema of John Marshall*, 1993, p. 25. This 133-page essay is the most comprehensive published account written by John Marshall about the Marshall family project and about his filmmaking career. In his 1950 notebook Laurence listed addresses for Kodak labs in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Cairo and Alexandria. (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.20, np) There are indications elsewhere in the notebooks that most film was sent to the US for processing.

would later describe as “wonderous.”<sup>11</sup> The Marshalls didn’t locate Bushmen settlements, but, toward the end of the trip, the Marshalls met two Ju’hoansi (//Ao and /Qui) and formed a plan for a return expedition the following year, at which time the families of the Bushmen and the Marshalls would meet.<sup>12</sup>

### **The 1951 Expedition**

The importance of understanding the encounters between the Marshalls and the Bushmen as *family* events cannot be over-emphasized. In the summer of 1951 the entire Marshall family, Laurence, Lorna, and John, along with John’s sister Elizabeth (at 19, a year older than John), journeyed to South West Africa. The six-week expedition (funded by Laurence) was sponsored by the prestigious Peabody Museum, yet, amazingly, no cultural anthropologist or graduate student in cultural anthropology from Harvard or elsewhere accepted the offer of full financial support to accompany them.<sup>13</sup> However, a physical anthropologist from South Africa, and entomologists from SA and Angola joined the group. The Marshalls were required to include a government official, Claude McIntyre, in the party of twenty-four (which included staff). McIntyre (who would later become Commissioner of Busman Affairs, SWA), “steered them toward what was to become their major research site in Nyae Nyae and determined the parameters of their activities.”<sup>14</sup> With the aid of interpreters in varying combinations, the party was able to communicate in fifteen languages.

The Marshalls’ first Bushman contact in the Nyae Nyae region of South West Africa was ≠Toma, an “uncommonly intelligent, able man, much esteemed by his people.” He would become the Marshalls’ most trusted friend for decades. After three days of observation and (interpreted) conversation with the Marshalls, ≠Toma, the headman of

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<sup>11</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Lorna Marshall, *The !Kung of Nyae Nyae*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1976, p. 3; Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 136.

See Mathias Guenther, “‘San’ or Bushmen’?” Megan Biesele, Robert Gordon and Richard Lee (eds.), *The Past and Future of !Kung Ethnography: Critical Reflections and Symbolic Perspectives, Essays in Honour of Lorna Marshall*, Helmut Buske Verlag, Hamburg 1986, p. 27-51 for a lucid historical tracking (from the 17<sup>th</sup> century) of the use of these descriptors. “Bushmen” is the older term and considered derogatory by some. The term “San” was adopted by what was known as “the Harvard Group” in 1973, but it, too, has derogatory connotations. Guenther argues (tentatively) for the retention of, or return to, the older term. The indigenous people with whom the Marshall family lived do not understand themselves as being a single, integrated unit, nor do they call themselves by a single name, so the concept of Bushmen or San may be a white or settler notion. The Marshalls usually refer to these people as the Naye Naye !Kung or Ju/wasi (Ju’hoansi). The essays in *The Past and Future of !Kung Ethnography* were delivered at a 1986 *Festschrift* in honor of Lorna Marshall.

<sup>13</sup> L. Marshall, 1976, p. xiv. A Harvard graduate student in archaeology, Robert Dyson, accompanied them on the 1951 expedition. L. Marshall, 1976, p. 1. Dyson would later become Director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology (1982-1994).

<sup>14</sup> Barbash, 2016, p. 36.

Band 1 of the !Kung people, decided that he would support the Marshalls' stated purpose: "that it was good for people with different ways of life to learn to understand each other as best they could." Lorna succinctly summarized their six weeks stay: "Good fortune attended us then and after."<sup>15</sup>

≠Toma agreed to let the Marshalls live with his family and, in a gesture of deep generosity, he bestowed family names on the Marshalls: Lorna received ≠Toma's mother's name (Di/ /khao N!a (Old Di/ /khao); Laurence his father's (Tsamgao N!a); Elizabeth was named for his wife's sister (Di!ai); ≠Toma gave John his own name.<sup>16</sup> These names established kinship relationships between the Ju/'hoansi and the Marshalls; however, the expression "live with" did not mean "live as." Elizabeth recalled, that in addition to multiple vehicles,

We had tents, cots, sleeping bags, folding chairs and tables, maps, a compass, cameras, film, recording equipment, reference books, pens, ink, pencils, disinfectants, antivenin kit for snakebites, brandy, cases of canned food, boxes of dry food, dishes, cooking pots, frying pans, knives, forks, spoons, cigarettes, matches, spare tires, auto parts, inner tubes, tire patches, jacks, toolboxes, winches, motor oil, drums of gasoline, drums of water, bars of yellow soap, towels, washcloths, toothpaste, toothbrushes, coats, sweaters, pants, boots, sneakers, shirts, underwear, socks, reading glasses, safety pins, scissors, a sewing kit, binoculars, bullets, a rifle.

The Ju/'wasi had sticks, skins, eggshells, grass.<sup>17</sup>

Laurence wanted a "complete record" of the !Kung people they hoped to know and, since they had no trained ethnographers or filmmakers in their party, the patriarch assigned family members to various roles: Lorna was designated the ethnographer; Elizabeth was to write a book; John was handed a camera and told "Shoot the films."<sup>18</sup> John would later recall, "One reason Laurence wanted a film record made was because he thought no one would believe us or our studies without the proof of film."<sup>19</sup> Laurence handled all logistics; he also took still photographs, which would eventually form a collection of tens

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<sup>15</sup> All quotations in this paragraph are from L. Marshall, 1976, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> L. Marshall, 1976, p. 204, n 3. These names established kinship relationships between the Ju/'hoansi and the Marshalls. "[T]o be a blood relative was unnecessary . . . Your place in the system can depend on whom you're named for. . . ." E.M. Marshall, 2013, 2016, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Old Way: A Story of the First People*, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York 2006, p. 62. A decade later, Elizabeth returned to the topic of material culture and estimated each Ju/'hoan person typically had 19 or 20 personal possessions, *Dreaming of Lions*, 2013,2016, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 136.

<sup>19</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 48.

of thousands of color slides and black-and-white stills and extend the visible evidence.<sup>20</sup> When the elder Marshalls took Polaroid pictures and shared the results, !Kung were “surprised but not mystified when they saw themselves and each other.”<sup>21</sup> Sometimes the polaroid prints became gifts, received in delight, or rejection, as Lorna noted in her diary:

The Land portraits were received with crows—that high “oooo!” that is so amusing, with smile, chatter, excitement. Each family has one. There were no negative emotion expressed. But one man, /Qui, said when he was told he could keep the picture “what should I do with it?”<sup>22</sup>

Being filmed was soon naturalized as part of daily life for the !Kung people with whom the Marshalls lived.

In 1951 John knew nothing about filmmaking. Not only did he lack any professional training, he had no knowledge of ethnographic film history.<sup>23</sup> Initially the teenager tried following the *How to Make a Movie* instructions on the 100-foot rolls of Eastman Kodak film his father had purchased for him: first a distance shot, then a middle shot, followed by a close-up. He used a tripod for his small Bell and Howell camera. Because John was not able to see the rushes, he had to rely on the lab to which the film had been sent to comment on the focus and exposures, but there was no feedback as to the content or

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<sup>20</sup> Megan Biesele, puts the number at 20,000, in “A Tribute to Lorna Marshall,” in *The Past and Future of !Kung Ethnography*, p. 14. The full photographic collection currently archived at the Peabody Museum numbers 40,000, but this number includes the work of many other photographers. Following Mead’s procedures, a detailed catalogue lists every individual photograph or slide taken (Barbash, 2016, p. 39). But not the identity of the photographer. Laurence used a Stereo Realist, a 35mm Leica, and a Polaroid Land camera, (Ibid, p. xxix and p. 70).

<sup>21</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 32. Across expeditions, polaroid images helped the Marshalls gauge exposures, experiment with photographic composition, track identities, and create gifts (Barbash, 2016, p. 70). Early on, the Marshalls took a series of anthropometric photographs, but soon moved away from that type of image-making. (Ibid, p. 55-57). Entries in Lorna’s 1951 journal indicate her involvement in filming. She mentions a “stereo lesson”; she includes notes on filming, guides for various film stocks, depth-of-field charts, exposure tables and so forth; she wonders about the “best way to make portraits of brown faces.” On August 21, she wrote “I took movie” in her comments regarding what she (mistakenly) labels “a war dance.” (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.2, np)

<sup>22</sup> L. Marshall, diary entry of July 24, 1951, as quoted in Barbash, 2016, p. 70-71.

<sup>23</sup> In Laurence’s notebook of April-May, 1951, he lists three books related to film: *Film Technique* by V.I. Pudovkin; *Basic Film Techniques* by Raymond Spottiswoode; and *Film Strip Guide*, by Katherine M. Holden, in addition to a 16 mm manual for professionals and amateurs. It is not known if these sources, which range from the theoretical to the practical, were consulted by either Laurence or John or both before or during the 1951 expedition (which began in September). Laurence also listed the number of 16mm sound projectors (100,000) in schools (and elsewhere in the US: 250,000), plus the address of and a contact name at the Educational Film Library Association in New York City. He seemed to have had an educational market in mind from the very beginning of the filmmaking efforts (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.6,np)

rhythm of the footage. When he finally saw the footage he “saw right away that there were lots of things wrong, making films that looked like moving slide lectures.”<sup>24</sup>

Despite Laurence Marshall ‘s vague directions to his son to “shoot the films,” the elder Marshall seems to have been clear in what he considered their purpose. His wife outlined Laurence’s thinking in her journal:

Laurence’s ideal for this expedition as I see it is that we should bring back film that can be an example of source material in anthropology. He thinks that the discipline cannot develop till one does not have to take the statement of one person about the material. He thinks that materials cannot be brought to heel—truth cannot emerge—till many minds work on it . . . He wants pictures to be the main medium and contribution we make in order to 1) spike things down and 2) provide material that can be used to question conclusions we might come to. He projects his lifetime of experience in industrial development upon this problem.<sup>25</sup>

Laurence and Lorna Marshall both realized that there were disciplinary problems to confront and methods to be learned. They were aware of the possibilities of film to record cultural change. In 1927 Laurence and Lorna had visited the Technological Institute in Leningrad to investigate research into condensers. There they learned about a governmental project “to film daily life and development in villages throughout Russia.” Decades later, their son speculated that Laurence’s interest in a cultural record might have been sparked on this trip.<sup>26</sup> Laurence had been prescient in his belief in the educational and informative possibilities of television. While president of Raytheon, he pioneered a nationwide network of microwave and short-wave relay and broadcasting stations in 1944 and Raytheon’s decision to acquire the license of Channel 2 (WGBH), the educational channel in the Boston area.<sup>27</sup>

### ***First Film***

The first movie produced from footage shot in Nyae Nyae was a family affair, shot by John and edited by Laurence, Lorna, and filmmaker Jerry Ballantine after they returned to New England in 1951. It was originally titled *!Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari* (1951).<sup>28</sup> This important film, unavailable to the public for decades, is not listed in the

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<sup>24</sup> Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 136-137.

<sup>25</sup> L. Marshall, diary entry of June 19, 1952, as quoted in Nancie L. Gonzalez, “A Film Argument,” *The Cinema of John Marshall*, p. 182.

<sup>26</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22. The license for Channel 2 was relinquished within the decade (p. 25).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30. John lists the film (as *!Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari*) among the “Film References” at the end of his essay on “Filming and Learning.” In the Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 137, John says his mother edited this film. Ballantine was a Boston-based filmmaker who made television commercials and documentaries. On the current DVD distributed by Documentary Educational Resources (DER), the

!Kung series filmography in *The Cinema of John Marshall* (1993), nor in many other Marshall filmographies. Now known (somewhat self-consciously) as *First Film* (1951, 1995) and available since 1995 through DER, this early documentary usually (and understandably) has gone unmentioned in published discussions of Marshall's films.<sup>29</sup>

*First Film* begins in a traditional way: with a map of the geographical area to be discussed, some indigenous music, and the disembodied voice of a narrator. Yet two unusual features immediately assert themselves: the film is in color (an expensive rarity in 1951 for a documentary) and the narrating voice is not the rich baritone of an authoritative male (the "voice of God"), but a woman's voice, speaking in a conversational, friendly register.<sup>30</sup>

Lorna Marshall starts her narration with general comments about the "200 waterless, roadless miles into the Kalahari" and the thirty-eight people who comprise a band of Bushmen of /Gautscha, "a remnant of an ancient race," but soon she personalizes her descriptions, naming individuals and offering details about them. She seems to know these people and seems to want her audience to know them, too. The frequent use of personal pronouns (we/I/us; they/them; you) creates a sense of intimacy and a transparency that may seem naïve or amateurish, but actually anticipates a sophisticated attitude toward ethnographic reflexivity that would become an ethical imperative to some visual anthropologists decades later. There are acknowledgments of the active participation of the !Kung in the filming project ("they show us how. . ."; "the hunters show how. . ."); the presence of the filmmakers ("we observed. . ."; "In the time we were there. . ."; "we think. . ."; "I counted. . ."); the audience as subject ("You can see. . ."; "As you see. . ."; "Notice. . ."; "Watch. . ."); the act of filming ("The camera with its four-inch lens. . .") and the marriage of narration to image in post-production ("that July morning. . .").

In the opening of *First Film* we see band members building shelters; the film ends with their departure for their next temporary home. In between, we witness the recording of more than a dozen different activities, usually shot in medium range, with frequent close-ups of faces or busy hands. Some activities are differentiated and explained by gender or

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only credits for *First Film* are: Narrated and Edited by Lorna Marshall. There is no credit for the cinematography on the film itself; however, John is credited with "camera" on DER promotional materials. Although listed as 60 minutes, the currently distributed DVD runs 45 minutes, which suggests that the original 1951 16mm film was edited before release in 1995.

<sup>29</sup> A crucial exception is Scott MacDonald's *American Ethnographic Film and Personal Documentary: The Cambridge Turn*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2013. In an outstanding chapter which he tellingly entitles "Lorna and John Marshall," MacDonald includes a cogent discussion of *First Film*, p. 20-23. MacDonald's insights throughout his book have greatly enriched this essay. Barbash, 2016, briefly mentions *First Film*.

<sup>30</sup> Bill Nichols has influentially labeled the mode of non-synchronized audio address in documentary film the "voice of God." *Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1981, p. 183. See also Nichols, *Representing the Real: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, 1991, p. 34-38.

age-boys setting snares; men hunting for game; a medicine man constructing a bow; women gathering food and making beads; children playing games—all of which are presumed typical.<sup>31</sup> Laurence had directed his son to “record the technology,” and there are many examples of how various tools are made and used.<sup>32</sup>

We see evidence of harmonious living (the cooking and sharing of food; singing and dancing; smoking and talking) and are told that the Marshalls “observed no theft or aggression; we observed impressive honesty, cooperation and integration among this far away and independent group.” Singing and dancing are presented as “arts”: “dignified, intense, and highly formalized.” With a nod to an assumed audience, Lorna notes that “such precise, swift, tiny steps require coordination, like ballet.” The tone of admiration and empathy extends to the children, who are described as “enchanting” and “well-behaved.” (“In the time we were there we saw no child punished.”) Difference is accommodated—for example, a man who falls into a trance becomes the center of attention for just a moment, then he recovers to return to the group—and noted. A dancing little girl, N!ai—who would play an increasingly large role in subsequent Marshall films—is singled out and introduced as “a blithe child.” Later, N!ai is described as “clever,” when she finds a great, grey root, eats some herself, and follows the !Kung pattern of sharing. Others are named and characterized: Ekai is “a good hunter, craftsman, and filled with self-confidence”; Unka, a widow, “sometimes looks lonely”; Gao seems “honest, humble and assuming”; Gao’s wife is “a lively woman, not easily imposed upon.” We see grandfathers who “adore” their grandchildren; husbands who are “kind and considerate.” Descriptions of recognizable and admirable attributes (potentially) lessen the distance between the assumed First World viewer and a group of people who hunt with poisoned arrows and for whom blood is a great delicacy.

The fact that the Bushmen make a 200-mile trek every year or two to trade is mentioned (when the pots and axes that have come from trade are shown), but these “small, but strong people” are presented as isolated and self-sufficient, following long-standing customs “that develop cohesion instead of stress.” After a successful hunt, when the meat has been distributed according to traditional rights which Lorna elaborates, we see a lone figure eating. She comments, “This must be an age-old sight: a brown man crouching as he chops on his marrow bone.” The film leaves one with the impression of having glimpsed a very ancient past. Whether this film and those that followed provide a glimpse of an authentic present would be debated in future years, along with the contention that, perhaps to counter the prevailing mid-century attitude about wild and violent Bushmen, the Marshalls had idealized the Ju/’hoansi.

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<sup>31</sup> While this film, with its over-view of the life of the !Kung, seems intended for a general audience, many of the activities shown will return in Marshall’s later short “sequence” films focused on a single activity and geared toward a specialized audience.

<sup>32</sup> John recalled that George P. Murdock had given the Marshalls a “shopping list for anthropologists in the field” and the “list started with technology.” Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 137.

It is unknown how often and for whom *Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari* was screened, but in her diary Lorna mentions that the film was shown on the family voyage aboard the steamship *African Crescent* the following year:

We were asked to show our picture in the evening. I wish it were perfect. I am ashamed of the faults in timing, the parts which show (by the quality of voice) that I was scared . . . I'll do better next time—work harder over it. But it isn't impossibly bad.<sup>33</sup>

Whatever Lorna's apprehensions, there was interest in the Marshall film, for when the family docked at Walor's Bay, "others came on board to see our film."<sup>34</sup> The documentary was later shown to government officials and influential townspeople in Windhoek (the capital of South West Africa) and "was judged by them to be 'charming' and reflective of 'native life.'"<sup>35</sup>

### The 1952-53 Expedition

On June 15, 1952, Laurence, Lorna, John and Elizabeth Marshall had boarded the *African Crescent* in New York City for the two-and-a-half weeks voyage to South West Africa. The Farrell Lines steamship was both a passenger and a cargo line. The Marshalls filled the hold with their personal cargo: "Literally tons of equipment and supplies, ranging from a jeep and a truck to cases of Scotch, Czechoslovakian beads, canned meat, and massive amounts of camera equipment and film. . . ."<sup>36</sup> In a June 18<sup>th</sup> entry in her diary, Lorna notes that "we have begun to discuss our angle of approach and our jobs."<sup>37</sup> She

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<sup>33</sup> L. Marshall diary, June 21, 1952, as quoted in Gonzalez, 1993, p. 183. In the Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, John recalls a scene of a thousand Tshumkwe people that does not appear in the currently distributed version of the film (p. 137); there is other evidence that the film has been shortened. Lorna's mention of "next time" implies that she plans to be involved as a narrator in future film projects, which would not be the case, until many decades later when her voice-over becomes part of the sound track in *A Kalahari Family* (2002). In Lorna's 1951 notes, she lists "Color slides for lectures," among other topics related to filming (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.2 np).

Also uncertain is when the narration was joined to the image track, with a suggestion (by the director of DER) that it was not until the 1970s; John M. Bishop, who was hired to manage the transfer of the Marshall film collection in 1984, has speculated that the comments that later became the voice-over narration might have been delivered orally by Lorna in the 1950s to accompany lectures (MacDonald, 2013 p. 22). Lorna's diary entry that mentions her "quality of voice" establishes that her narration was present in the film in 1952. See Bishop, "Hot Footage/Cold Storage," *The Cinema of John Marshall*, p. 221. "Expeditions I and II used a Kodak camera (50-foot magazine loads) and Bell and Howell Filmo 70D cameras (100-foot spool loads), neither of which have through-the-lens viewing and focusing. And their wind-up motors support only thirty-second bursts of filming," (p. 221) Such restraints, and John's inexperience, account for the somewhat static imagery in *First Film*.

<sup>34</sup> L. Marshall diary entry (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.4, July 2, 1952, p. 22).

<sup>35</sup> Gonzalez, 1993, p. 184.

<sup>36</sup> Gonzalez, p. 180.

<sup>37</sup> L. Marshall diary entry (Peabody Museum 2003.36.4, June 18-19, 1952, p. 10-14)

notes that she has been reading Margaret Mead's three books and has sent a wireless to Jo [Brew] to ask Mead what she said in the field to explain her presence. Lorna notes her wish that the seasoned anthropologist had explained "what she said, what they said. How she got going." Just as John would be figuring out how to be a filmmaker, so, too, would Lorna and Elizabeth be learning as they went along. Lorna realizes, "This is all an immense gamble." The next day, after a family discussion about film, Lorna fears "We have bitten off more than anyone could chew—but that does not matter. If we fail—so what?"

The third Marshall expedition was the longest sojourn to Africa (thirteen months) for Laurence, Lorna and Elizabeth and, according to Lorna, would be the most significant for their work. This expedition was co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the Harvard Peabody Museum. These well-respected American institutions lent gravitas and expertise to the Marshall expeditions; the fact that all expeditions were financed by Laurence Marshall gave Marshall administrative control. The party of thirty-four included Charles O. Handley, Jr., a mammologist associated with the Smithsonian Institution, a botanist from the National Botanic Gardens in Kirstenbosch (SA), and a linguist from the University of London, sound recorders and a photographer. But still no anthropologist. J.O. Brew, director of the Peabody, soon joined them and stayed for six weeks.<sup>38</sup>

The Marshalls would return to Massachusetts a year later with 80 rolls of film (three black-and-white, the rest Kodachrome). In addition to the Bell and Howell and small Kodak cameras taken on Expeditions I and II, a Bolex and a Kodak C2 (both taking 100-foot-spool rolls) had been added to the equipment.<sup>39</sup> Footage shot on the 1952-53 expedition would make the films *!Kung Bushman Hunting Equipment*, *The Hunters*, and *Wildebeest* (later shortened to *A Rite of Passage* in 1972).<sup>40</sup> But all that came later. For over a year in the field, they couldn't see the rushes and the lab provided very little feedback, so John would just "shoot and shoot and shoot."<sup>41</sup>

During their fourteen months in South West Africa, Lorna "rarely left the bush"; she devoted herself to broadening and deepening her understanding of !Kung customs and

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<sup>38</sup> Brew was himself an archeologist, but the Peabody Museum included significant ethnographic collections in 1952 and would later house the Marshall collections. Brew kept a journal which can be accessed at the Peabody. See Barbash, 2016, p. 203-204 for names, roles, and dates of inclusion for the 1952-53 expedition party.

<sup>39</sup>Bishop, 1993, p. 221. This third expedition is the first for which there are shot-by-shot logs.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> J. Marshall, Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 137. Having no technical feedback certainly accounted for part of this tendency, along with the fact that John's parents encouraged him to shoot as much as he wished. Throughout his career, John was always far more a shooter than a cutter.

beliefs and creating careful ethnographic field notes.<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth, on leave after a first year at Smith College, logged her impressions and experiences in journals and became immersed in the social life of their hosts. Laurence over-saw the expedition and continued his still photography.<sup>43</sup> John began speaking Tshumkwe, spent much of his time hunting with the !Kung men and became enthralled with filming. Years later he would describe this period as “. . . the best years of my life, the happiest I’ve ever been, without any question. It was a pretty wonderful experience for a kid of that age in a place like that with people like Tshumkwe, damned decent, good-to-be-with people.”<sup>44</sup>

There is much evidence to support John’s recollection that living with the Ju/’hoansi was a “wonderful experience” overall for him and for the entire family, but Lorna’s diaries reveal times of (understandable) depression and disillusionment while in Nyae Nyae. For example, she writes that “Elizabeth is severely depressed. John feels miserable . . . Neither of them is happy. The strain is too great. We none of us are trained for what we are doing. We feel inadequate.”<sup>45</sup> They consider returning home months earlier than planned, but do not do so. All members of the Marshall family experienced physical difficulties while in Nyae Nyae: Laurence was bit by a baboon and, later, a scorpion; Lorna had intestinal problems; Elizabeth injured a foot; John (who was asthmatic) endured a persistent cough.

Despite discomforts of many kinds, the family soldiered on. Lorna’s diaries written during the 1952-53 expedition reveal a pattern of frequent family discussions about goals and procedures. For example, in an entry of October 27, 1952:

Laurence and John are talking . . . The problem being discussed is what dramatic element could be developed in the material for a picture like Flaherty’s? Bushmen do not live dramatically. Their dangers are not pictorial—hunger and thirst . . . John understands the elements of drama very well. None of us see how to develop these elements. They do not speak to the eye to be recorded. They will have to be put in by the creator of the film. Could it be done without people acting?<sup>46</sup>

John had not yet seen Robert Flaherty’s classic film *Nanook of the North* (1922), but it seems his parents had.<sup>47</sup> In reference to a possible film about the hunting of mangetti

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<sup>42</sup> Gonzalez, 1993, p. 180. In a 2001 interview with Cynthia Close on Cambridge Cable Television, Studio One, “Between Two Worlds: John Marshall,” John said he was in South West Africa for 18 months in 1952-53, returning to Massachusetts for a few weeks within that period.

<sup>43</sup> Laurence would later entertain friends and colleague with “stereo viewings” at the family home in Cambridge. (Barbash, 2016, p. 83)

<sup>44</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 137.

<sup>45</sup> Peabody Museum 2003.36.1.4, October 18, 1952, p. 273.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 284.

<sup>47</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 40.

nuts, Lorna writes, “How to make an audience glad that they [the Ju/’hoansi] arrive safely, get the nuts, get back safely?”<sup>48</sup>

Of course, it would not be a film about hunting for nuts, but one about hunting a giraffe that would satisfy the Marshalls’ desire to replicate the drama of a Flaherty film; that would locate pictorial dangers; that would please audiences for decades. Despite the fact that Lorna and Laurence had been “thrown into a dither” over the circumstances of the giraffe shoot, they were confident that the young filmmaker had acquired a great deal of dramatic footage that could be shaped into a film that would satisfy the family aspirations.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, Lorna’s diaries from this period reveal her (intermittent) distress that they are not accomplishing enough:

It would be so nice too if a record of some value was achieved in compensation for the immense effort, expense, dedication of time, absence from Nana [Laurence’s mother] and friends, sacrifice of John and Eliz of a year of their lives from college, jobs and getting on with the immediate next step of their lives. The expedition is an experience but Eliz said the other night – not in the direct line for either of them<sup>50</sup>

It would not be clear for a number of years that John’s filming in Nyae Nyae and Elizabeth’s writing about her experiences there would actually be “in the direct line” for both of them.

### **Editing *The Hunters***

After returning to New England in the late summer of 1953 John began his undergraduate studies in Anthropology at Harvard and set up an editing studio on the third floor of the family home in Cambridge.<sup>51</sup> There are differing accounts as to when Robert Gardner was brought into the editing project and as to how much he contributed to the cut of what would become an ethnographic film classic: *The Hunters*. Gardner was a member of a

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<sup>48</sup> Peabody Museum 2003.36.1.4, p. 285.

<sup>49</sup> Giraffe were considered Royal Game. Hunting giraffe was forbidden, although game laws were not usually enforced against the Bushmen. Because the Bushman arrow was shot from a Marshall jeep, there was fear that game laws had been violated. Laurence planned to tell administrators in Windhoek what had happened and accept the penalties if necessary. L. Marshall’s diary (Peabody Museum, 2003.3.36.1.4, September 8, 1952, p.180-181).

<sup>50</sup> L. Marshall, as quoted in Barbash, 2013, p. 72.

<sup>51</sup> John later described the editing as a solitary endeavor, 1993, p. 36; perhaps he was referring to the original 45-minute edit of the film.

distinguished Boston family.<sup>52</sup> Articulate, confident, well-traveled, and seven years older than John Marshall, Gardner had a bachelor's degree from Harvard and was a graduate student in anthropology in 1953. He had previously produced, directed, and edited three documentary films, two of which focused on indigenous people (the Kwakiutl tribe on Vancouver Island).<sup>53</sup> He had founded and run a small documentary film company named Orbit Films. In 1953 J.O. Brew of the Peabody Museum initiated a correspondence between Laurence Marshall and Gardner when he sent the elder Marshall a copy of a seminar talk that Gardner had delivered about the use of film in anthropology.<sup>54</sup> Marshall indicated his interest; Gardner responded with a seven-page letter outlining the experiential learning possibilities of cinema, noting that "the film that best achieves the 'experience' type learning effect must be left in the hands of creative artists."<sup>55</sup>

In the mid-1950s, John and Laurence Marshall, Robert Gardner and J.O. Brew established a Film Study Center (in the basement of) Harvard's Peabody Museum. According to Laurence, the "principle effort" of the center would be to use "motion picture's" . . . power to best represent a culture."<sup>56</sup> To John, the center was created for "the purpose of producing the films latent in the Bushman material and for the investigation of the relationship between film and the disciplines involved with the study of human behavior."<sup>57</sup> The guiding principles of the Center became a template for future work in visual anthropology:

The formulation of a methodology is perhaps the most important aspect of the center. The basics of this methodology are:

- 1) That a thorough anthropological investigation must precede or at least coincide with the film work.
- 2) That the action is not directed. There is no written script.
- 3) That in the filming of each sequence of action, the action should be covered from beginning to end.

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<sup>52</sup> Gardner was the grandson of art collector and philanthropist Isabella Stewart Gardner and the cousin of poet Robert Lowell.

<sup>53</sup> Gardner's previous films were *Blunder Harbour* (1951) about the Kwakiutl, *Dances of the Kwakiuti* (1951) and *Mark Tobey* (1952), a profile of the painter.

<sup>54</sup> See MacDonald (p. 65-74) for a discussion of the Gardner-Marshall connections. Figure 7, p. 67, in MacDonald displays a photograph of the twenty-two-year old John Marshall and the twenty-nine-year old Robert Gardner at work editing (while wearing ties) at the Peabody-Harvard Film Study Center.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 65-66. The role of "creativity" in ethnographic filmmaking would become a major fault line separating the intentions and practices of the Marshalls and Gardner in the years to come.

<sup>56</sup> L.K. Marshall, as quoted in Barbash, 2016, p. 104.

<sup>57</sup> J. Marshall, as quoted in Barbash, p. 104.

- 4) That the original film must be retained as a record . . . so that any part of it can be used many times.<sup>58</sup>

These rigorous methodological rules, in their call for observational purity, conflict with the desire for Flaherty-style drama indicated in Marshall family conferences while in Nyae Nyae. These cross-purposes may partially account for Laurence Marshall's dismissive first response to *The Hunters*, followed by his active promotion of the film.

In an expedition notebook, Laurence entered his "Plan for Financing the Film Study Center." He agreed to provide basic funds for three years, at an annual total of 18,000 US\$ (salaries for a director, assistant director, and a technician, plus expenses for film rentals, etc.) He would retain control of the original film material. Laurence also mentions the necessity of acquiring letters from universities stating their interest in using the materials and from a recognized distributor willing to handle the films. In return for space, office facilities and a secretary of its own, the Peabody "will enjoy: film consulting service, film facilities in its building, the answer prints of all films made at no charge for use at Harvard, prestige and side benefits."<sup>59</sup>

Gardner's recalled his collaboration with John Marshall at the Film Study Center:

At Brew's suggestion, I was asked in 1955 to help Marshall's son John, who was still an undergraduate, to review the available footage and develop a longer film from an existing 45-minute version of what would become *The Hunters*. Eventually the film grew to more than 70 minutes and, when it was released, quickly began to enjoy wider than usual attention as a nearly feature-length nonfiction account of a small, delicate, and vivid hunting-and-gathering society in the Kalahari Desert of southwest Africa.<sup>60</sup>

In 2007 Gardner described Marshall as "*The Hunters*' principal and talented young author."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> J. Marshall, *ibid*, p. 105.

<sup>59</sup> Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.12, September 1, 1958, p. 50.

<sup>60</sup> Gardner, "Introduction," *Making Dead Birds*, Peabody Museum, Cambridge 2007, p. 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6. The released film would contain only one credit line: "Directed by John Marshall, in collaboration with Robert Gardner." In the "Film References" following John's essay "Filming and Learning," 1993, the credits are "Filmmaker John Marshall. Collaborator: Robert Gardner," p. 132. In the filmography compiled by Sue Marshall Cabezas, 1993, John Marshall and Robert Gardner are listed as editors. The DVD (restored and remastered from the original 16mm film) currently distributed by DER lists the film as "by John Marshall."

The two young men were confronted with a massive amount of non-sync footage which they struggled to shape into a coherent film over a two-year period.<sup>62</sup> John has described his infatuation with hunting during his first trips to South West Africa, so it is not surprising that this exuberant young filmmaker would wish to celebrate the hunters that he so admired and use the drama of a hunt as the through-line of the documentary-in-progress.

### *The Hunters*

The 72-minute film begins with a four-minute prologue in which a sense of place is established. The first image is of a bush whose blossoms move in the wind, followed by a bird in a tree, then a vulture in a baobab tree, followed by a lizard sliding into a hole, and two antelope partially hidden in the bush. No sound accompanies these five shots. Indigenous music begins when two men, at some distance apart, appear, walking slowly toward the camera. Images alternate between insect and animal life (butterflies, a giraffe, a vulture flying, a trio of giraffes, etc.) and the two men. At one point the men stop, peer into a hole, and then resume walking. The sequence concludes with a close-up of a !Kung man. He seems to be searching for something.<sup>63</sup>

A title, *The Hunters*, appears, and with the title the pre-title sequence acquires new meaning: these men with hunting bows are tracking prey; they move among various forms of life with ease and are attuned to the rhythms of this place. After this artful opening, the film moves into standard ethnographic film tropes: a map of the region, images of illustration (a band of !Kung people moving through the landscape) and an off-screen male voice. The voice is John Marshall's; his voice will narrate all subsequent films in the !Kung series, bringing a personal dimension to the enterprise. He begins with general comments: "The northern Kalahari is hard, dry land. In this bitter land live a quiet people who call themselves !Kung or Jun/hoansi. Jun/hoansi could be translated "ourselves."

Much of the narration is straight-forward exposition about Bushmen life in general or the specific actions that are visible. The first section of the film describes the scarcity of water, the terrain ("A bitter land, indeed, where all the trees have thorns"), the crucial role of gathering by women which provides "most of the people's food" and takes a toll on their bodies and then—ten minutes into the film—hunting is introduced as "the work of men. . . their passion and the passion of boys." A cluster of scenes show boys playing, pretending to be hunters, and becoming hunters, acquiring "a sense of power in being a

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<sup>62</sup> Brian Winston claims the edit culled 250,000 feet "shot over a period of some years," *Claiming the Real: The Grierson Documentary and Its Legitimations*, BFI, London 1995, p. 172. I consider Bishop's report of 80 rolls assembled into 1000-foot units (80,000 feet) shot during Expedition III (1952-53) as the source material for *The Hunters* more reliable. (Bishop, 1993, p. 221). John recalled that a few shots were re-enacted to obtain close-ups during the 1955 expedition (J. Marshall, 1993, p. 36).

<sup>63</sup>See Karl G. Heider, "Gardner's First Shots: Vectored Landscapes," Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor (eds.), *The Cinema of Robert Gardner*, Berg, Oxford 2007, p. 79-92 for a contrast between the opening of *The Hunters* and the first shots of films by Gardner and Jean Rouch.

man.” The boys’ catch is only a mongoose, but we learn that after the killing of a larger animal, a boy will be scarified, indicating that he is a man and entitled to marry.

After this overview of the centrality of hunting in the construction of male !Kung identity, a particular time is marked, “One day in early winter when there had been no meat for a month . . . “ ≠Toma’s wife needed meat to keep her breasts full for her newborn and this necessity propels ≠Toma to decide to go hunting, which will be the focus of the rest of the film. Because of the way the film is edited, and because of most audience members’ expectations, it is easy to read the film as a record of a single, continuous hunt, a reading which the narration encourages. That reading is contradicted by close examination of the film, which has led some to criticize *The Hunters* for narrative manipulations in the synthetic construction of the giraffe hunt (through the use of multiple giraffes and hunters, employing footage shot at various times.) John later admitted that he “edited *The Hunters* to drive the story forward” and to create a linear narrative; he went so far as to speculate that he thought “the men tracked [the giraffe] mainly for [him] and the movie.”<sup>64</sup>

The film follows four hunters over what is presented as a thirteen-day period, five days of which they spend tracking and killing a giraffe, which they spot at almost exactly the half-way point in the film. Their hunt includes a series of disappointments, from a thorn in a foot to the discovery that a kudo they have hit has been eaten by jackals or hyenas; they must be content with meager catches such as small birds or porcupines. It is their stalking, wounding, and eventual confrontation with a magnificent giraffe that provide the most visually compelling moments in the film. After days of tracking, when the hunters could “see no tendency” in the movements of the injured giraffe, for her path “did not cause a yielding into simplicity,” they finally find the wounded giraffe. She is “at a point of exhaustion and the men near it.” The narrator tells us that ‘It will be a standing fight now’ and warns that her hoofs “could tear a man into half.” The climax of the film approaches: “She gained her endurance to stand. And they began.” Major sections of the final killing of the giraffe are accompanied by a deferential silence as we see the men hurl their spears at the proud animal from a variety of angles and distances. The men “spent their strength upon her and still she stood.” Finally, “she was more than tired. She was already dead.”

Throughout the film, there are moments when the narration has a literary, even florid, quality (which was not uncommon in documentaries of the 1930s and 1940s). The most noticeably poetic lines and line readings occur in the introductions to the first two hunters:

≠Toma, the leader,  
≠Toma, the vigorous and able,  
He was a man of many words and a lively mind,  
One who had traveled to the edges of his world.

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<sup>64</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 36. Many years later, in *A Kalahari Family* (2002), ≠Toma recalls that their hunting was provoked by a need for meat, not John’s desire to film.

And, somewhat later,

Kxao, the beautiful  
Kxao was a natural hunter,  
Taking great pleasure in the chase.  
His arrows were keen and each point was shaped in his own fashion . . .

We also learn particular qualities of the other two men: /Ui is a simple, optimistic young man who knew a great deal about animals and who was found amusing by the others; //Ao is forthright, the best craftsman in the band, who would go into long, deep trances and served as a medicine man with all his heart. These introductions share many similarities with how characters are typically introduced in novels.<sup>65</sup> We sometimes see close-ups of the men's faces, but more often they are pictured at mid- or long range, showing them as a unit, moving through the bush.

John has noted that the narration he crafted was influenced by the work of the American novelists Herman Melville and William Faulkner.<sup>66</sup> Again, like a novel, the omniscient narration includes interior monologues of what the hunters are thinking and even what the giraffe is thinking or feeling. At one point a superimposition, which might be considered a visual "interior monologue," appears; it shows a hunter's face lit by a fire with a beetle (mentioned on the sound track) superimposed.<sup>67</sup> Strikingly beautiful long shots of the landscape at sundown, with silhouettes of the hunters by the fire, add to grandeur of the situation. The narration emphasizes the intimate connection between hunters and their prey. The giraffe is not perceived as an object—the pronoun "it" is never used—but as a sentient being: "She joined the herd, seeking company in her misery" and, later, "She travelled with a singleness of mind. . . gradually, from her traces, they knew her." The pleasure in the meat the kill provides is balanced with a sense that the magnificent creature's death will leave "a hollow in the world . . . so much life could not be gone and unnoticed."

The hunters are shown talking and laughing as they make the first division of the meat, in long-observed patterns of equitable distribution. "And then they began to eat and they ate and ate and ate." One hunter returns home with some of their spoils; the others remain to dry other parts of the meat before transporting it. The hunters travel for two days to reach their homes. Nothing is wasted. By afternoon everyone is cooking and

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<sup>65</sup> Cultural historian William Irwin Thompson, *At the Edge of History*, Harper and Row, New York 1971, identifies the four hunters as the Headman, the Beautiful, the Shaman, and the Clown; he sees the four men as archetypes and the film as "a model of a universal form of conflict" (p. 75). For those who desire cultural specificity, such descriptions diminish the film; to others, the universality of *The Hunters* is a crucial value.

<sup>66</sup> John described "some of the leafy narration as "absorbed from Faulkner."

<sup>67</sup>This type of "energetically artistic" image would be avoided by Marshall and embraced by Gardner in their future films.

eating with relish, content that they have meat enough for nine days. The last sequence of the film shows the band by the fireside, with ≠Toma, “being the good talker that he was,” telling of the hunt and other stories in a moment of satisfaction and group solidarity. Details of the hunt and admissions of their doubts are shared; all agree “how good it was that men hunted.” *The Hunters* ends with the prediction that this hunt will enter into myth for these people (and for those who will see this film). “And old men remembered, young men listened, and the story of the hunt was told.”

The narration of *The Hunters* has received special attention, both positive and negative, over the years. To Jean Rouch, the leading French practitioner of ethnographic film, “The narration of *The Hunters* was truly wonderful”; others responded sarcastically: in a contemporaneous review John P. Demos wrote that “Marshall has given himself some wonderfully ridiculous lines—no matter how humorous or gruesome—he speaks in a doggedly deadpan tone” (*The Harvard Crimson*, March 29, 1958). Decades later, Eliot Weinberger mocked Marshall’s narration and its similarity to the writing of Hemingway.<sup>68</sup> Many film scholars have commented on the similarities in the narration between *The Hunters* and Gardner’s subsequent film *Dead Birds* (1963), shot among the Dani tribes in New Guinea, sometimes speculating that Gardner exerted great influence on the narration of *The Hunters*. Gardner dispelled that notion:

I started doing my own ‘voicing’ with *Dead Birds* which came fairly fast on the heels of *The Hunters* which I had helped John Marshall complete. He did the writing and the voicing as you know, and I always thought that made perfect sense in as much as the story was so much his personal odyssey. I thought he put tremendous feeling into that track despite what he might more recently be thinking.<sup>69</sup>

### **The 1955 Expedition and *Bitter Melons***

Before the release of *The Hunters* in 1957, the Marshall family returned to South West Africa in 1955 for a four-and-a-half month stay. The Transvaal Museum of Pretoria joined the Smithsonian and Peabody in sponsorship, an indication that interest in and respect for the Marshall project had reached South African educational institutions. This expedition—the last to include all four members of the Marshall family—numbered seventeen, including (European) South Africans (a botanist, a linguist, and a mechanic) and a staff of “African and colored men” (interpreters and a cook).<sup>70</sup> Daniel Blitz, an

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<sup>68</sup> Rouch, from an interview at the Margaret Mead Film Festival in New York in 1977; Demos in *The Harvard Crimson*, March 29, 1958; Weinberger in “The Camera People,” Charles Warren (ed.), *Beyond Document: Essays in Nonfiction Film*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, CT 1996, p. 144-146.

<sup>69</sup> “Out of Words: A Conversation with Robert Gardner,” Ilisa Barbash, *The Cinema of Robert Gardner*, p. 101.

<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Harmless People*, Vintage, New York 1959; revised, 1989, p. 25. Elizabeth includes her family in the designation “European” when she mentions the participants sent by universities of the Union of South Africa, England, and the United States. Elizabeth puts the number at

American electronics engineer (from Sanders Associates, Nashua, NH) had been hired as a photographer to join the group. A protégé of Raytheon and a friend of Laurence Marshall, Blitz was a “real high-tech genius.”<sup>71</sup> Despite extremely adverse conditions, the young engineer developed sync sound rigs that deepened opportunities for documenting !Kung culture.<sup>72</sup>

The first footage shot (mostly on a tripod) utilizing “Danny’s system” was filmed in the dry grasslands at /Ei hxa o in the Central Kalahari (in a region that is now part of Botswana). There the Marshalls found a group of ten Khwe people who survived through gathering bushfoods and drinking water from roots and the rumen of antelopes and the liquid found in the smashed pulp of the wild *tsama* melons.

John and his collaborators wanted to “celebrate the wealth of music, musical traditions and games which the people supported with their marginal economy.”<sup>73</sup> A blind musician named Oukwane is featured in the film and one of his many compositions about melons, “Bitter Melons,” (“probably Oukwane’s favorite composition”) became the film’s title.<sup>74</sup> A medium shot of Oukwane singing and playing a simple string instrument opens the film; reaction shots of seated, intent listeners circling him establish his importance within the group of ten who live together. John’s off-screen narration begins three minutes into the 30-minute film and returns intermittently throughout. The songs Oukwane sings describe the social life of the group (snaring nocturnal animals) and also incidents peculiar to him (being lost in the bush and receiving no assistance from others). Oukwane’s original compositions and the songs he has learned from others function as both foreground and background sound throughout the film. Some speech is audible (but not subtitled), along with the sounds of birds, animal hooves, etc. We see and hear children singing traditional songs that imitate the sounds of animals: giraffe, kudu, and hyena.

As in *First Film* and *The Hunters*, an off-screen voice provides an overview of the lives of these hunter-gatherer people, how they manage to subsist in such barren

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15; Barbash, 2016, p. 204 at 17. Members of the party would not necessarily complete the entire expedition.

<sup>71</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 138.

<sup>72</sup> Bishop provides a detailed technical description of the extraordinarily inventive system set up and operated by Blitz (1993, p. 223). In 1955 Laurence gave John a three-lens Arriflex camera with battery power and a 100-foot run. John would later describe it as “the best camera [he] ever used.” J. Marshall, 1993, p. 40.

<sup>73</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 56. The film, edited by Frank Galvin, with music supervised by ethnomusicologist Nicholas England, would not be released until 1971. England was not present on the 1955 expedition, but joined trips in 1958, 1959, and 1961 and developed an international reputation as an expert on Bushman music.

<sup>74</sup> The card that appears directly after the title on the film uses the spelling Ukyone for the musician and /Gwi for the people. Throughout, I follow the spellings John Marshall uses in his essay “Filming and Learning,” 1993.

circumstances, and the social rules that shape their lives.<sup>75</sup> We learn that it is through contact with Bantu people that the Khwe learned about planting melons. In the last section of the film, another man, !Gai, “the fulcrum of the small band,” leaves to search for relatives after he sees smoke which indicates their presence nearby. Gai returns, leading his relatives in typical Bushman single file, as they walk toward the Khwe camp (and the camera). There is an atmosphere of congeniality and joy between hosts and visitors. The male children play animal games, then join the men in performing the rhythmic “ostrich courting dance.” In a dynamic sequence, shot in mid-range with a stationary camera, we see the male dancers take turns demonstrating their grace and agility. Women seated nearby keep a steady rhythm with their clapping, matched by the foot-stopping of the dancers. One after another, a dancer flips a leg over the back of an adult participant, a considerable stretch for the boys in the group. The dance sequence runs for more than four minutes; it serves as a narrative climax, demonstrating the centrality of music in the lives of these people. After the dancers rest, the narration resumes, explaining that not only the visitors, but Gai and other members of the band are departing to join the Okwa group, as the *tsama* melons at /Ei hxa o have been exhausted. With Oukwane’s music playing in the background, the group walks into the tall grasses that wave in the wind. As the Bushmen disappear into the bush, we are told that Oukwane and his wife have decided that they are too “old and finished” to move on with the others. They would stay at /Ei hxa o.

Years later John would state that he originally thought *Bitter Melons* “conveyed more reality about Khwe people than *The Hunters* did about Ju/’hoansi because we illustrated Oukwane’s music with scenes showing the subject matter of his songs. I did not learn until 1972 how terribly mistaken I was about Oukwane’s reality.”<sup>76</sup> The reality was that not long after the filming ended, Oukwane died of thirst; another member of the band died of hunger; illness and rape befell others. John has been forthright in his admission as to how wrong he was in “trying for a poignant ending” to *Bitter Melons* and not acknowledging the severity of the situation the Ju/’hoansi faced.<sup>77</sup> While the Marshalls had been with Oukwane and his group in 1955, they gave the band and their visitors water from the Marshall drums; this supply of water made it possible for the Khwe band to stay in one area while the filming took place and for them to be able to dance in the sun. The resilience of these Bushmen—although extraordinary—had its limits.

When *Bitter Melons* was released and distributed in the early 1970s, audiences (although limited) responded favorably to the film’s beauty, its unique music, and its admiration for

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<sup>75</sup> In the credits at the end of the film, Lorna Marshall is listed as “ethnographer.” The other credits name Frank Galvin, Editor; Nicholas England, Ethnomusicologist, Musical Director; Daniel Blitz, Sound Recording, plus attribution for Sound Mix, Associate Editor, and five Production Assistants. The credits end with Photographed and Directed by John Marshall; Produced at the Center for Documentary Anthropology; Photographed on a 1955 expedition sponsored by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University and the Smithsonian Institution; copyright Laurence K. Marshall.

<sup>76</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 57.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

a distant, independent people. The film was not only reviewed in the *American Anthropologist* (Vol. 75, No. 4, 1972), but in the *New York Times* (June 10, 1972). *Bitter Melons* received a cluster of awards in the USA and internationally: The Flaherty, the CINE Golden Eagle, along with accolades from the Festival dei Popoli (Florence), the Athens International Film Festival, the Salerno International Festival of Small-Sized Films and the Philadelphia Festival of Short Films.

Following her father's directive to "write a book," Elizabeth Marshall kept diaries of her time in South West Africa. Her book *The Harmless People* (1959) was based on her participation in three family expeditions between 1951 and 1955, during which they visited four Bushman language groups, two of which they spent considerable time. Elizabeth defers to the !Kung for her title: "Kung Bushmen call themselves *zhu twa si*, the harmless people."<sup>78</sup> Written for a general readership assumed to be unfamiliar with this remote part of the world and the people who inhabit it, *The Harmless People* provides a great deal of general information on the lives and customs of the !Kung in an engaging style. Interwoven with cultural descriptions are many personal anecdotes, charmingly recounted, from a young American clearly open to new experiences. So determined was Elizabeth to take careful notes, that on one occasion, when she "found [she] had a pen but no paper, [she then] wrote everything that happened on [her] arms and legs."<sup>79</sup> None of the Bushmen they encountered had ever seen a European woman before they met Elizabeth and her mother. The deep friendships the Marshalls forged was testament to good will on both sides.

Among her descriptions of expedition activities, Elizabeth recounts circumstances associated with filming. Typically, !Kung were filmed involved in routine tasks, sometimes at the suggestion of the Marshalls: "We filmed Ukwane working the skins. . . we asked Gai to make an arrowhead out of [the shoulder blade of a gemsbok] so we could film that, too. . . [After a series of preparations] he called to us and we then filmed him making the arrow."<sup>80</sup> And another example: "While we were there with the camera set up and loaded we asked Gai to demonstrate for us the way he would shoot a bow, which he did."<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth, who had no training in ethnographic filming or anthropology, summarizes what she considers a fortuitous situation in dealing with the Bushmen as camera subjects: "Always, Bushmen were wonderful people to film. They were totally unselfconscious, never looked at the camera, and, furthermore, had infinite patience. They would stop what they were doing, wait, start again and repeat what they had done

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas, 1989, p. 23. Harmlessness seemed to foster friendship. Elizabeth recalled that, coming upon a previously unknown band of !Kung, one of the women "saw in a glance that we were harmless and, looking us over, sat down at once beside me" (p. 41).

<sup>79</sup> E. Marshall Thomas, 1959, p.84.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 90.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 96. These accounts of "demonstrations" parallel some of Lorna's narration in *First Film*.

before, making each repeated action seem miraculously as if it were being done for the first time.”<sup>82</sup>

In addition to what some ethnographic filmmakers would see as the ethical violation of requested repetitions of behaviors (an ethnographic taboo with which John’s sister would have been unfamiliar and which John would later follow), Elizabeth mentioned a situation when traditional events were explicitly modified to accommodate filming. For instance, she recalled,

Dances are usually held at night, but this time, out of consideration for us, they agreed to hold it during the day so that we could film it. We found a place which would be suitable for filming, helped gather sufficient wood because there would have to be a fire, no matter how hot the day was . . .<sup>83</sup>

Nevertheless, when danger was present, there were limits to !Kung accommodations to filming. Such a situation occurred after Short Kwi had jerked his spear free from a wildebeest bull. “Wanting a picture, John asked Short Kwi to do it again, but Short Kwi shook his head. ‘This time he [the animal] will remember.’”<sup>84</sup>

John’s expedition journals, composed between 1951 and 1955, provide a barometer of his thoughts about filming. Despite John’s self-appraisal in 1993 that he “just didn’t think. I just ran around with my camera,” the budding filmmaker seems to have been thinking seriously and self-critically about what he was doing, even as he was doing it without any instruction or professional feedback.<sup>85</sup> John was only 18 years old in 1951 when he began making notes; his comments often reflect the insecurity and emotional fluctuations

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 91. John has described natural redundancies as common and a benefit to documentary filmmakers: “We are all redundant in our conversations and behavior. Perhaps Ju/’hoansi repeat themselves more than most of us” (1993, p. 45).

Almost a half century later, after publishing a series of books, mostly focusing on animal behavior, Elizabeth released *The Old Way: A Story of the First People*, Farrar Straus Giroux, New York 2006. This book returns to a consideration of the Bushmen and their culture, but with a more scholarly approach. (In *The Old Way*, Elizabeth refers to *The Harmless People* as “a travel book.”) There is no mention of how filming was conducted by the Marshalls in the 1950s in *The Old Way*. Elizabeth makes a case for how readers of her book and the !Kung share a human lineage. She emphasizes that “the experience of visiting this place and these people was profoundly important” [to her] (p.6). In 1986 and 1987 Elizabeth revisited the people she had known and sadly found them “much changed.” The revised edition of *The Harmless People* (1989) contains a forty-page epilogue; the final two chapters (Return and The Present) in *The Old Way* address contemporary conditions which the !Kung face in Namibia and describe John’s advocacy work. Chapters Four and Five of Elizabeth’s memoir *Dreaming of Lions* (2013, 2016) recall her Kalahari expedition experiences.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid, p. 130. The dance referenced appears in *Bitter Melons*. Eventually, the Marshalls realized they could use vehicle headlights to illuminate night filming. Barbash, 2016, p. 128.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 199.

<sup>85</sup> J. Marshall, Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 140.

of a teenager. Presumably he was responding to rushes—and talking to himself—when he writes “one trouble. big trouble. too many full figure shots. Disgusting lousy rotten stinking full figure shots. use a goddam tripod goddammit”; the self-flagellation abates and hesitates when he mentions a “damn good reel,” a “useless (probably) reel” and “Some nice shots from Group IV.” In what seems to be an exercise in self-education John creates a list of 71 “General suggestions” (with drawings).<sup>86</sup> In a later journal, John wrestles with core issues related to visual representation and notions of “the real”:

It [film] has the most tremendous potential of any art form in existence to portray reality and yet it is so limited as to never be more than a facsimile of reality. Its two dimensions and the limited scope of the lenses are part of its limitations. Bits and pieces of reality—never wholes—but the bits and pieces are perfect in detail, the smell and feel are always missing. This is what is so hard about the damned thing. It is one thing to make a film that illustrates--that is what this one is so far. It's another thing to make a documentary that goes beyond illustration, a source film, an accurate picture of reality . . .<sup>87</sup>

John confronts questions that hound all documentary filmmakers, along with some problems peculiar to him:

The problem of illustrating an abstract quality, which enables a way of life to exist is a humdinger. Shots of looking—the quick turn of the head—the alert step—would be helpful but are hard to come by. These tripods are so clumsy but a picture not on a tripod is a risk. So many of mine are ruined by a jiggle and my cough doesn't help.<sup>88</sup>

After noting that it would be wise to shoot footage of various animals, since “game plays such an important part in a Bushman's life,” John bemoans the situation: “I would classify all this under one word IMPOSSIBLE. This ain't no art, it's just too much work. JEESUS. The pressing thing is what to do tomorrow . . . The worst thing is that we can't break into their affairs too much. Have to play along catch as catch can.”<sup>89</sup> Despite John's distress at various impossibilities, many of his 1955 entries reflect more self-assurance about what footage he has and what he will need. He includes shot lists for what will become *The Hunters* (517 shots) and *Bitter Melons* (502 shots), a tape recorder check-off list for the sync sound unit, and lists of what shots he wanted to get on a particular shooting day. John's comments indicate a growing recognition that his filming might be “breaking into their affairs.” How much disruption is too much seems to be a

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<sup>86</sup> Peabody Museum, 2008.21.1, John Marshall Journals, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Folder 1, np; p. 1; p. 9; p.19; p. 73-84.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, Folder 2, September 3, 1953, np.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. Folder 3, 1955, np.

question for him. The Film Study manifesto—soon to be formulated by John and colleagues—would dictate no intervention; as an emerging ethnographic filmmaker John had begun to struggle with the goal on non-intervention.

After the Marshalls returned to Massachusetts in 1955, they applied what they had learned about the hunter-gatherers in a variety of ways: Lorna and Laurence published their only co-authored piece, in the *South West Africa Annual*; Elizabeth published an article on the /Gikwe Bushmen; Lorna published her first articles in the journal *Africa*; John earned a bachelor's degree in Anthropology from Harvard, with a senior thesis entitled "Ecology of the !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari."<sup>90</sup> Most importantly, *The Hunters* was released in 1957.

*The Hunters* was the "first North American ethnographic film to gain worldwide attention in prestigious film festivals."<sup>91</sup> In the summer of 1956 Robert Gardner had attended the second Flaherty Film Seminar, which was held at the Flaherty farm in Dummerston, VT; he screened *The Hunters* and "also showed unedited rushes."<sup>92</sup> Early on and continually, as both praise and criticism, *The Hunters* has been compared to Flaherty's classic film *Nanook of the North* (1922) for its mythic and poetic elements and its focus on the struggle for survival in extreme circumstances. The following year, *The Hunters* returned, as it did in 1958, for a third screening. In 1958 John Marshall and Robert

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<sup>90</sup> "!"Kung Bushmen of South West Africa," 1956: 11-27; *Radcliffe Quarterly*, November 1956; "The Kin Terminology System of the !Kung Bushmen," *Africa* 27 (1): 1-25 and "N!ow," *Africa* 27 (3): 232-240 (1957). Laurence, unaccompanied by other family members, made a trip to South West Africa in 1956. (Two professional photographers were among his party.) In 1958 John published "Man the Hunter, Part I," *Natural History* 67 (June-July); 291-309 and "Man the Hunter, Part II," *Natural History* (August-September): 376-395.

<sup>91</sup> Jay Ruby, *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film & Anthropology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2000, p. 11. Ruby describes *The Hunters* as the pictorial equivalent of what James Clifford labeled the "ethnographic pastoral" in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2000. The 1958 World's Fair in Brussels was among the impressive venues in which *The Hunters* was screened.

<sup>92</sup> Robert Flaherty died in 1951. In 1955 his widow, Frances, inaugurated a seminar devoted to nonfiction film in general, and the work of Flaherty in particular. See Patricia Zimmermann and Scott MacDonald, *The Flaherty: Decades in Independent Cinema*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2017, for a thorough and lively history of the longest running seminar focused on independent film in the US; Zimmermann and MacDonald, p. 41.

*Anthropology-Reality-Cinema: The Films of Jean Rouch*, ed. Mick Eaton, BFI, London 1979, p. 11, states that Jean Rouch gave a lecture at the 1958 seminar and screened three of his films (*Les fils de l'eau*, *Les maitres fou*, and *Moi, un noir*). In their careful survey of the Flaherty, Zimmermann and MacDonald write that the only Rouch film screened in 1958 was *Les maitres fous* (1955); in 1959 Rouch was announced as a featured guest, but did not attend; instead, "his wife presented the films," p. 43-44. In the early 1960s, seminar attendees considered "the new ways of doing ethnography promoted by John Marshall and Jean Rouch that emphasized deeply considered participant observation," p. 62. In 1978 Jay Ruby brought Rouch as the featured filmmaker to the seminar, p. 103.

*The Hunters* also won a Blue Ribbon at the American Film Festival and the Grand Prize at the Florence Film Festival.

Gardner both attended the seminar.<sup>93</sup> Both filmmakers spoke at the seminar, with Gardner speaking first and doing most of the talking.<sup>94</sup> Gardner described the newly formed Film Study Center housed at the Harvard Peabody Museum; he mentioned the plan to pull 25 films out of “half a million feet” (from the Marshall expeditions); he asked “what film has to offer anthropology or. . . what anthropology has to offer film”; he admitted that he’d written his remarks without consulting John and hoped John would not take exception to them; he proposed that a “moral science of anthropology is more feasible using film”; he wondered “how free we are as anthropologists to use imagination in putting films together”; he argued for the importance of technical, academic, and psychological training, along with honesty, sensitivity, discernment, and sympathy. John spoke briefly about “what you can do with film that you can’t do with writing,” claiming that the immediacy of film lends itself to an important kind of anthropological understanding through direct contact with a viewer.

Gardner’s expansive comments could have led one to assume that he was the senior member of the filmmaking team responsible for *The Hunters*. He was older than John and had more experience as a filmmaker. Years later, John recalled, “. . . [W]e got an award. They gave Bob an award for it. It’s been sold all over the world, but I agree with Dad now, that it’s an art movie. It’s sort of an American-kid’s-eye-view of hunting and of the hunting and gathering culture.”<sup>95</sup> The fact that Laurence was “uneasy” with *The Hunters* and “thought [John] should have made more of an effort with the record” had an impact on the aspiring filmmaker.<sup>96</sup> The uneasiness on Laurence’s part seems unwarranted, considering the use of Flaherty’s films as a model in family discussions. The contradictions in Laurence’s reactions intensified when John’s father went to Los Angeles after the 1957-58 expedition. An entry in Laurence’s logbook indicates that he met someone at 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox who “thought script excellent; talk of syndicating it.”<sup>97</sup>

John’s emotional separation from *The Hunters* might be partially attributed to his father’s initial disappointment in the film and to the negative critiques from anthropologists and film scholars that accumulated over the years.<sup>98</sup> By the time John returned to Africa for

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<sup>93</sup> Zimmermann and MacDonald, 2017, p. 42-43.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. 46-50.

<sup>95</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 140. In “An Argument about a Film” (*The Cinema of John Marshall*, 1993, p. 179-193), Nancie L. Gonzalez has countered John’s dismissal of *The Hunters* as “energetically artful” and of little consequence.<sup>95</sup> She quotes from diaries of Lorna Marshall and J.O. Brew to challenge John’s assertion “that the hunt did not take place more or less as portrayed in the film”; Gonzalez considers *The Hunters* “a masterpiece.”

<sup>96</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 39.

<sup>97</sup> Laurence does not name his contact(s) at the Hollywood studio, but assesses the response (one assumes to *The Hunters*). (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.19, September 11, 1958, np) This surprising entry is the only indication that I have encountered that suggests the Marshalls might have solicited commercial (rather than educational) support or distribution for their films.

<sup>98</sup> For criticism of *The Hunters* from a respected anthropologist see Karl G. Heider, *Ethnographic Film*, University of Texas Press, Austin 1976, p. 31-33 and from an influential film theorist, see Nichols, 1981, p.

the 1957-58 expedition (which was prior to the first wave of reactions to *The Hunters*), he was convinced that he wanted to find new forms of filmmaking to record more accurately the lived experiences of the Bushmen.

Lorna and Elizabeth Marshall were not part of the expedition that Laurence and John undertook from November 1957 to June 1958. According to Lorna, “The emphasis of the 1957-58 expedition was upon film by John Marshall and the collection of music by Nicholas England.”<sup>99</sup> John immediately began filming after they arrived in Nyae Nyae. Laurence seemed pleased with his son’s new approach of filming events in daily Ju/’hoan life. In a December letter to SWA administrator Claude McIntyre Laurence wrote, “[John] is working hard and well at his task of expressing this culture on film, a tremendous task and he shouldn’t be asked to think about anything else.”<sup>100</sup> Robert Gardner joined the expedition in early February, 1958. Before leaving for Africa, Gardner had published an article on “Anthropology and Film” in the journal *Daedalus* in which he seems to be speaking on behalf of the newly formed Peabody Museum Film Study Center:

It is probable that the series of Bushmen films will provide a fairly broad summary view of !Kung culture, though this is not an objective that is foremost in the minds of the project members. We have chosen, instead, five dominant aspects of this culture with the intention of making each the subject of a relatively long work, each somewhere between sixty and one hundred minutes in length. Along with these five major films, we intend to make fifteen or twenty others that will be shorter and more narrowly conceived . . . The five major films will be concerned with the following themes: *The Hunters*, *The Gatherers*, *The Players*, *The Rhythms*, and *The Seasons* . . . The special skills and activities involved in the expression of hunting, gathering and playing in the culture will be given fuller treatment in the shorter films, while their significance and meaning will be explored

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237-284. The complaints address the editing of multiple hunts, giraffes, and hunters into a single narrative and also challenge the premises that the Bushmen were starving and largely dependent on hunting for subsistence.

*The Hunters* would continue to have its admirers, for example in “Ethnographic Cinema: Sources for Teaching Regional Courses,” Jack R. Rollwagen, (ed.) *Anthropological Films and Videos in the 1990s*, The Institute Press, Brockport NY 1993, anthropologist Peter S. Allen claims that *The Hunters* “is still the definitive film on hunting and gathering and a true classic of the ethnographic genre,” p. 403.

The current DVD edition of *The Hunters*, which features a close-up of #Toma on the cover and is distributed by DER, includes this caution on its back sleeve: “[*The Hunters*] should not be shown without providing a more contemporary perspective on the conditions surrounding the Ju/hoansi in more recent times.”

<sup>99</sup> L. Marshall, 1976, p. 10.

<sup>100</sup> Laurence’s Marshall’s laboratory notebook. (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.22, December 4, 1957, p. 22).

in the longer films . . . In the period since the Film Study Center was started, there has been time to produce only one, *The Hunters*.<sup>101</sup>

Gardner does not mention John Marshall's film work or the ongoing research projects of the Marshall family or the Marshalls as "project members." As Jay Ruby has observed, "Unless you knew otherwise, the article would lead you to believe that Robert Gardner made *The Hunters* by himself."<sup>102</sup>

John Marshall and Robert Gardner had received a grant from the Educational Division of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to produce films to add to the Nyae Nyae record. According to John, "Bob wanted to make a film called *The Gatherers*" with the NSF grant and shot a great deal of footage [in 1958 while on a Marshall expedition] of an old woman named /Gasa who was neglected and alone.<sup>103</sup> He planned "to follow the life of a typical Ju/'hoan woman beginning in her lissome youth, proceeding through her gathering maternity and ending with /Gasa in the dust."<sup>104</sup> In a letter sent to Marshall in 1959, Gardner expressed his intentions:

As I have told you, my interest is focused on the Bushmen in their decline, in their death struggles, which I see as a sign both of demise and, perhaps, rebirth . . . In my fascination, I seized, somewhat ghoulishly, upon our dear Old Lady. She gave me contact, if only in my mind's eye, with the peace and serenity these people may once have had. *The Gatherers* began in earnest as I sat by her side and tried so unsuccessfully to see into her with my camera's eye. The object (the Old Lady) which I grew to love, grew itself into the central figure of a film which would portray the life of a !Kung woman, this woman, *all gatherers*.<sup>105</sup>

John was unsupportive of this project for several reasons. First, he "opposed making another narrative film like *The Hunters* that used many women in a concocted story ending" and, second, he "simply did not want people [he] knew to be misrepresented."<sup>106</sup> Gardner's sense of obligation to "our dear Old Lady" did not match Marshall's. The result was a struggle over representation and also a struggle over property. Marshall's assessment was that Gardner "wanted to take the film over . . . [John later recalled that]

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<sup>101</sup> *Daedalus* 86 (October 1957), p. 350.

<sup>102</sup> *Picturing Culture*, p. 356. MacDonald comments on this situation: "Gardner describes what must have been *his* plan for the !Kung material as of 1957," p. 356, n 8.

<sup>103</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 71.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Gardner, in a letter to John Marshall, November 5, 1959, reprinted in Gardner, *Making Dead Birds*, Peabody Museum, Cambridge, 2007, p.14.

<sup>106</sup>J. Marshall, 1993, p. 71.

We had a sort of falling out, and finally the lawyers said the film did belong to my dad, not to Harvard. . . “<sup>107</sup>

Five decades later, in 2009, when Gardner was 84 years old, Bard College honored him with a retrospective of his long, admirable filmmaking career. For this special event, Gardner created a 50-minute compilation, which he titled *Nine Forsaken Fragments*.<sup>108</sup> “The Old Lady (AKA A Human Document)” (1958) was one of the fragments. It is a portrait of the aged Ju/’hoan woman, /Gasa, that Gardner filmed during his trip to the Kalahari with the Marshalls, a project that had provoked considerable disagreement between the two filmmakers because Marshall thought Gardner was misrepresenting !Kung life by picturing /Gasa as abandoned.

“The Old Lady (AKA A Human Document)” runs for less than four minutes. The fragment begins with an establishing shot of a group of huts, then moves to a series of extreme close-ups of various parts of an aged, emaciated body. A withered hand seems to be searching for something in the sand. Finally, the woman’s full body is pictured in several medium shots. The piece ends with the gaunt figure crawling through the sand to a hut. The sound track is composed of insect sounds and infrequent groans. Toward the end of the fragment, a voice is heard briefly, but no other person appears. Perhaps it is the woman, speaking to herself. Although empty pans and other household items indicate that the area is occupied, “the old lady” (never named as /Gasa) is pictured as completely alone. (A striking contrast to Marshall’s films that always show Ju/’hoansi in social relationships.) Gardner’s unflinching look at what he considered “a death struggle” is haunting in its sensual intimacy. The second title, “A Human Document,” encourages one to read the fragment as a comment on the universality of aging and death.

The year after the Bard retrospective and four years before his death, Gardner published *Just Representations* (2010). The book included a section, “Kalahari Journal,” recalling his experiences with the Marshalls in South West Africa. Gardner offered these withering comments:

Marshall senior is a man of such impetuosity and disregard for any but his own convictions that things go quickly to hell, only to be partially corrected after considerable damage and expense. Marshall junior is in such awe of his father he cannot exercise independent judgment, even if his mind is working in that direction. I watch quite stunned by the amount of wealth and energy expended with no clear purpose or goal in mind. Common sense is subordinate to whim and chance. We are in possession of an elaborate medical kit and there is no one to use it correctly. We have

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 139.

<sup>108</sup> MacDonald, 2013, p. 101-106. I do not know how Gardner obtained the footage, since John recalled a legal dispute over it, with ownership going to the Marshalls (J. Marshall, 1993, p. 139). In 2009, Laurence, Lorna and John Marshall were all deceased. DER is preparing a DVD version of Gardner fragments, which may expand to 13. (E-mail to author from Frank Aveni, DER Director of Design and Media, June 28, 2018).

five different and complex vehicles in which we fling ourselves about, and no one who can give them proper attention. Everything is conducted on the basis of trial and error and, unfortunately, error seems almost inescapable given the confusion of premises and intentions . . . <sup>109</sup>

It is impossible to know how much the absence of the careful, kindly spirit of Lorna Marshall affected this expedition for the worse. (She also administered medical attention on other expeditions.) Laurence Marshall was known as strong-willed, but the records he kept of the expeditions that are now archived in the Peabody Museum indicate far more planning than Gardner would lead us believe. Laurence's "laboratory notebooks" are packed with records of daily accounts, expenditures, travel planning information (packing lists, distance between intended stops and mileage, hand-drawn maps, etc.) and contact details for various associates, processing labs, and travel companies.<sup>110</sup> In her careful study of the expeditions, Ilisa Barbash writes of the early trips, "What expedition leader Laurence Marshall lacked in experience he made up for in brilliant organization."<sup>111</sup> The 1957-58 expedition included two mechanics.<sup>112</sup> There is no doubting that John Marshall greatly admired his father. In her diary entry of June 27, 1952 Lorna quotes her teenage son: "John says Laurence is the greatest man he ever knew or will ever know."<sup>113</sup>

### **John Marshall's Expulsion from South West Africa**

In 1958 government authorities located John Marshall in Nyae Nyae to inform him that his visa was no longer valid. He was expelled from South West Africa by the South West Colonial Administration, according to some accounts "for supporting the Ju/'hoansi in several border incidents."<sup>114</sup> Years later, John wrote,

From a functionary who issued my permit to visit Bushmanland [in 1978] I learned the official reason for my banishment. I was supposed to have fathered a child with a Ju/'hoan woman. The lie staggered me. Of course I had flirted with girls in Nyae Nyae in the fifties, but most

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<sup>109</sup> Gardner, in Charles Warren (ed.), Peabody Museum and Studio7Arts, Cambridge 2010, p. 17.

<sup>110</sup> See Barbash, 2016, p. 43 for a reproduction of a page from Laurence's notebooks which he labeled "South African Expenditures" July 1, 1957-March 21, 1958. The amounts are related in US\$; the list is so precise that it includes "discounts" of \$187.11. In Laurence's expeditionary notebooks and journals, scores of details demonstrate careful planning, from the petrol mileage expected for each vehicle, to salaries paid to staff members, to food supplies purchased, to records of film cans sent for processing, to copies of the texts of cables sent. (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1)

<sup>111</sup> Barbash, 2016, p. 40.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, Appendix A, p. 205.

<sup>113</sup> L.Marshall diary, (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.4, p. 20).

<sup>114</sup> Sue Marshall Cabezas, "Photographic Essay of the Early Expeditions (1951-1958) to Study the Ju/'hoansi of Nyae Nyae," in *The Cinema of John Marshall*, 1993, p. 169.

Ju/'hoasi our family knew were extremely strict about the reproductive lives of their daughters. Ju/'hoansi were accused of profligacy. I was accused of abandoning my child.<sup>115</sup>

Perhaps it was a staggering lie that John had fathered a child with a Ju/'hoan woman when sexual relations between blacks and whites were illegal in apartheid South West Africa, but, according to an ex-wife, John “went through a betrothal ceremony with a Ju/'hoansi girl (as a successful hunter, he must have been in great demand).”<sup>116</sup> In *The Old Way*, published in 2006 (soon after Lorna and John had both died), Liz Marshall Thomas writes that

When [John] was in his early twenties, he fell in love with and married a Ju/wa woman. Although they both married other people later, they remained friends for life, and although they had no children together, their relationship placed him forever in the social fabric, giving him obligations that he willingly accepted.<sup>117</sup>

For whatever reason, John does not mention a betrothal ceremony or a marriage to a Ju/'hoan woman when he speaks “on the record” of his dismissal from South West Africa. Whatever the reason, as a young man and throughout his life John Marshall seems to have been “placed forever in the social fabric” of the Ju/'hoansi.

At the time of John's departure from South West Africa in 1958, hundreds of thousands of 16mm color film had been shot in Nyae Nyae, mostly by him.<sup>118</sup> The daunting job of editing this footage into understandable films awaited the young filmmaker. In 1959 Elizabeth [now married to Steve Thomas] published her book *The Harmless People* and moved on to other projects.<sup>119</sup> Laurence and Lorna returned to South West Africa for a research expedition in 1959 for two months and for another expedition in 1961 for three months. The Marshalls took copies of *The Hunters* with them. Laurence's earlier equivocations about the film seem to have faded. In a letter to an administrator in Windhoek, Laurence wrote:

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<sup>115</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 74.

<sup>116</sup> N. Gonzalez, 1993, p. 189. Nancie Gonzalez and John Marshall were married from 1971-1973.

<sup>117</sup> E.M. Thomas, 2006, p. 286. John was married four times in the US; at the time of his death in 2005, he was married to Alexandra (Lexi) Eliot Marshall.

<sup>118</sup> Bishop, 1993, puts the number at 350,000 feet (165 hours), p. 214. Others have claimed much higher numbers.

<sup>119</sup> In 1961 Elizabeth journeyed to northeast Uganda, where she lived with the Dodoth people. She was accompanied by Timothy Asch, whose photographs illustrate her resulting book, *Warrior Herdsmen* (1965; 1981). Asch produced the film *Dodoth Morning* (1963) from footage shot on that expedition. Elizabeth would eventually publish twelve fiction and non-fiction books, mostly focusing on animal behavior.

We have been somewhat doubtful about sending this film to you before but as it has won so many world awards and is well-known in the U.S., we feel it would be a mistake to withhold it any longer from the public in S.W.A . . . we would of course have no objection to its loan to interested societies or persons . . .<sup>120</sup>

The Marshalls also sent a copy of *The Hunters* to Claude McIntyre, Bushman Affairs Commissioner, “as a mark of our appreciation of the assistance rendered us in various occasions since we started our B[ushman] work in 1950.”<sup>121</sup> One can only speculate on if and how copies of *The Hunters* were used by the recipients.

Ethnomusicologist Nicholas England accompanied the Marshalls on both the 1959 and 1961 expeditions and collected !Kung music. Deborah Marshall, an artist, who was married to John at the time, joined the 1959 expedition to draw “landscapes, people, and material culture.”<sup>122</sup> Throughout the 1960s the elder Marshalls moved between New England and Nyae Nyae, with their last trip to Africa coming at the end of the sixties when Laurence was 80 and Lorna 70.<sup>123</sup> In 1976 Lorna’s years of careful observation and engaged friendship with the !Kung came to fruition in the publication of *!Kung of Nyae Nyae*, a remarkably accomplished work of ethnography for an autodidact.<sup>124</sup>

### The Sequence Films

In Gardner’s essay published in *Daedalus* in 1957 he mentions a plan to produce fifteen or twenty short films about the !Kung. Gardner does not use the terms “event films” or “sequence films,” but he does predict that these anticipated films will be “narrowly conceived.” It is likely that John discussed the shifts he had made in his filmmaking goals as they prepared their NSF grant proposal. Years later, John would describe his rationale:

I had made the common observation that most of us arrange our social

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<sup>120</sup> L.K.Marshall journal (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.3, p. 50)

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Barbash, 2016, p. 141-142.

<sup>123</sup> E. M. Thomas, 2006, p. 286. In addition to the main family home in Cambridge, the Marshalls also had homes in Peterborough, NH and Nantucket (Island), MA. Laurence purchased a sheep farm in South West Africa in 1958.

<sup>124</sup> Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1976. See Table 1 for “Places and Periods of Work with !Kung in the Nyae Nyae Area, p. 10 and Table 2, for “Bushman Groups Visited outside the Nyae Nyae Region,” p. 11. Lorna earned a B.A. in English literature from the University of California, Berkeley in 1921, an M.A. from Radcliffe College in 1928, and had begun work on a doctorate. From the early 1950s Lorna read voraciously in anthropology and related areas, attended several classes in anthropology at Harvard after she returned from expeditions, and turned to many anthropologists, including her friend Margaret Mead, for advice.

life—or have it arranged for us—in events. Whether as participants or observers, we share a general idea of when one event stops and another begins . . . Events correspond to sequences in film, and the concept is useful in filmmaking. While reinventing the language of angle and distance, I could use the fact that activities in many events are organized by the participants like little dramas and are contained in time and space. I tried to film as a member of a group rather than shoot from outside as an observer.<sup>125</sup>

However ad hoc Gardner might have remembered the 1958 expedition, in 1957-58, John was intensely involved in shooting material that would eventually be edited into seventeen separate films: *A Group of Women*, *A Joking Relationship*, *An Argument about a Marriage*, *A Curing Ceremony*, *N/um Tchai: The Ceremonial Curing Dance of the !Kung Bushmen*, *Lion Game*, *The (N!owa T'ama) Melon Tossing Game*, *Debe's Tantrum*, *!Kung Bushmen Hunting Equipment*, *Playing with Scorpions*, *A Rite of Passage*, *The Wasp Nest*, *Men Bathing*, *Baobab Play*, *Children Throw Toy Assegais*, *The Meat Fight*, and *Bushmen Tug of War*.<sup>126</sup> John has camera and direction credit on all the films; Laurence Marshall, John Marshall, and DER are listed as producers; John and/or Frank Galvin edited most of the films. They run from between four and 37 minutes; most are in color; they either focus on a single activity or a series of events that are inherently progressive. These short event films represent a significant shift in attitude and approach for Marshall. In a sense, he was inventing direct cinema on his own, for his concentration was not on shooting footage that could later be shaped into a thematic drama constructed in the editing room, but on following naturally occurring events, as they happened, to reveal the intrinsic drama of daily life. Marshall and his camera moved in close to these events, so that he could bring an eventual viewer *into* the ongoing action, to better understand, and even experience, the social interactions of the participants.

In 1959 Robert Gardner and J.O. Brew asked Margaret Mead to recommend someone to assist John with editing the Bushmen material to satisfy the NSF grant that had been awarded for the film project. Mead recommended Timothy Ash who had been her teaching assistant at Columbia University, had recently completed his bachelor's degree and had begun graduate work in the Boston/Cambridge area.<sup>127</sup> According to Asch,

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<sup>125</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 40-41; 42. On her very first expedition, in a July 9, 1951 diary entry, Lorna lists 11 “sequences” (e.g., Drinking, Filling Ostrich Eggshell, Hunting, Cooking) which seem to be subject matter for filming, since the sequences are listed after and before information on lenses and film stock. (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.2) The Marshall family frequently held what Lorna called “councils” to discuss plans and objectives; a shared vocabulary would have been a likely result, so John’s concept of “sequence filming” might date back to 1951.

<sup>126</sup> These short films, utilizing footage shot in 1957-58, were released between 1961 and 1974. Footage John shot in 1957-58 (and earlier) would also be included in John’s later films and in the National Geographic Society Special *Bushmen of the Kalahari* (1974).

<sup>127</sup> Asch compiled a partial index by topic of the three-hundred hours of footage from the 1950s, annotating many of the rolls from Expedition IV (1955) and VI (1957-58) with shot-by-shot descriptions and written

. . . they were looking for an editor, particularly one that didn't have too much of their own will or mind of their own . . . to help edit their films . . . When I annotated all 500,000 feet of John's Bushman footage, I discovered these little sequences of social interaction that were shot in great detail because John's father said when you shoot something, shoot it in great detail. None of the rest of us ever had enough money to shoot this much film. . . I saw in ten of these little sequences great material for teaching . . . So we put all our energies into editing these short films. Gardner thought we were crazy. Joe Brew . . . thought we were out of our minds. Both Gardner and Brew were worried because they were responsible to NSF for meeting the conditions of the grant. But Brew supported us because I made such a strong case for it educationally.<sup>128</sup>

Tim Asch was the same age—27--as John Marshall. Asch brought to the project a trained eye (he had studied photography with Ansel Adams, Minor White and Edward Weston), a self-deprecating manner (in contrast to the sometimes combustible personalities of Marshall and Gardner), and a dedication to teaching (he would later found and direct the University of Southern California Center for Visual Anthropology). Asch was actively involved in developing John's conception of covering events in a sequential style and then editing those sequences in a direct, chronological pattern.<sup>129</sup> According to Jay Ruby, Asch helped edit many of the short films created from the 1957-58 footage.<sup>130</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, cameras had changed considerably. The battery-powered Arriflex that John used had a reflex viewfinder, so that he could frame and focus through the lens, making it possible to move with the camera and refocus while moving. Longer focal lenses were able to keep subjects in focus as they moved. Filming became a more intimate encounter due to new flexibility in movement. For John, "a moral bond between himself and his subjects eclipsed the rigors of filmmaking."<sup>131</sup> John was not only

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"details on time, place, actors and type of shot," Bishop, 1993, p. 224. ("Actors" seems an infelicitous choice of words.)

<sup>128</sup>Asch, from interviews with Jay Ruby, as quoted in *Picturing Culture*, 2000, p. 117.

<sup>129</sup>MacDonald (2013) quotes from "A Proposal for Making Ethnographic Film," the first paper that Timothy Asch wrote (September 1964) after he began his studies in the Anthropology Ph.D. Program at Harvard: "The following proposal is an outgrowth of my work with John Marshall on the Peabody Museum Bushman Film Project and my current anthropological studies; the term 'Film Sequence' as used here, was initiated by John Marshall," p. 116-117.

<sup>130</sup> Ruby, 2000, p. 117 and p. 285, n 6. But *A Rite of Passage* (1972) is the only film on which Asch has a co-editing credit (along with Frank Galvin and Joyce Chopra) in the filmography in *The Cinema of John Marshall*. Asch is listed in the credits as a "Production Assistant" on many of the sequence films.

<sup>131</sup> John Bishop, "Life by Myth: The Development of Ethnographic Filming in the Work of John Marshall, *Origins of Visual Anthropology: Putting the Past Together*, Rolf Husmann (ed.), Institut für den

becoming a more capable cinematographer, he was also developing a sense of obligation to accurately film the complications of Ju/'hoansi life from the perspective of his subjects.

*A Rite of Passage* was the first film in which John “really began to move [his] camera around within events and closely followed an actual story . . .”<sup>132</sup> This 14-minute film returns to the theme of hunting, while forming a bridge between the story structure of *The Hunters* and John’s concept of “event” filming from the perspective of a participant-observer. *A Rite of Passage* continues the practice of off-screen commentary for exposition, but the “leafy language” that John later regretted in *The Hunters* has been eliminated. The film progresses with a narrative logic, but (unlike *The Hunters*) the logic emerges from the events themselves as John recorded a series of sequential actions: the tracking and killing of a large animal, a wildebeest, by a boy of thirteen named /Ti!kay (aided by his father and the excellent tracker Crooked /Qui); the butchering of /Ti!kay’s first kill; and the “marking” ceremony at which the young man is scarified as a hunter. This ceremony marks his introduction into social maturity and his concomitant status as an acceptable son-in-law. Kan//a, /Ti!kay’s father, cuts the boy on his forearm, upper arm, chest, back, and face; the boy remains stoic throughout. The narration explains the meaning for each cut and then suggests that the cuts exist “so that when a man is sitting indolent at home he will suddenly think, ‘Why am I sitting here? Why am I not hunting the big game?’ Marshall’s camera work differs from the distant perspective of much of *The Hunters*, as the camera (or lens) frequently moves in close to the action (especially in the preparation and conduction of the scarification) and the editing rhythm is faster.

The first two films released based on the 1957-58 footage that “take their own time and follow their own content” were *A Group of Women* (1961) and *A Joking Relationship* (1962). Both films depart from seemingly obligatory patterns of off-screen commentary to embrace the emotive possibilities of visual storytelling and, equally importantly, to offer subtitles of the participants’ speech. Filmed with a sometimes startling closeness, these two films reveal moments of great intimacy. *A Group of Women* lasts only six minutes. It offers a fleeting glimpse of the daily life of a group of !Kung women lying under a baobab tree, talking, nursing, enjoying each other’s warmth and finally drifting off in sleep. One of the women complains that the men want to pick berries that are “far away.” She doesn’t want to go. She’s advised: “So then refuse it!” At one point their close bond is temporarily broken by a woman who intrudes—and is shot from below at a greater distance--indicating that John is on the ground with the group of women. She calls them “lazy creatures” and wants someone to fetch water with her, but she is ignored and leaves. Koa’s baby’s reluctance to suckle becomes a topic of conversation, which is matched by the attention of the camera in extreme close-ups of Koa’s breast (and the flies which seem not to bother her). The sound is not synchronized, but their comments to

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Wissenschaftlichen Film-Knowledge and Media, Göttingen 2001, p. 1-2. See Fadwa El Guindi, *Visual Anthropology: Essential Method and Theory*, AlataMira Press, Walnut Creek, CA 2004, p. 97-98.

<sup>132</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 40.

each other match the playfulness and the serenity of the images.<sup>133</sup> Their comfortableness with John's close presence in a situation of female bonding testifies to his acceptance by the !Kung women, just as this tender film demonstrates his respect for them.

*A Joking Relationship* is a longer (13 minutes) and more emotionally complex film, as it depicts a flirtatious encounter between a girl (N!ai) and an older man (her great-uncle /Ti!kay). [Although only 13 years old, N!ai is already the wife of /Gunda, but has refused to consummate her marriage; these are facts that one learns from sources outside the film itself.] In the film the man addresses the girl as "my little tsuma," which seems a form of endearment and he later says, "We're kinsmen who shouldn't fight," so some family relationship is established in the dialogue. The physical teasing is often sensual and the dialogue often provocative: the man tells the girl that her "desperate husband will leave his lazy wife" to which she replies, "I'm not a wife." The ambiguity surrounding their relationship creates a tension which is palpable.

Scott MacDonald responds with insight to the film's nuances:

What Marshall captures in *A Joking Relationship* is both the open affection of an uncle and a niece, a relationship rarely accorded attention in cinema of any kind, and the underlying sexual dimensions of this, and perhaps any, relationship between mature men and their young relatives. Here, this sexual pull, which seems to go both ways, is continually evident, even as the two parties are redirecting an urge that could cause them problems within the small community in which they live into good-humored banter and non-sexual (but sensual) physical interchange.<sup>134</sup>

N!ai, the "blithe child" pictured in *First Film*, returns as a compelling screen presence in *A Joking Relationship*. She seems comfortable with the ribald banter she conducts with her great-uncle as they wrestle in the shade of a baobab tree. Often one cannot tell whose flesh is shown, the hand-held camera is so close. At times /Ti!kay is the physical aggressor, as they struggle over a stick; later, N!ai jumps on his back and says "If I don't hold on you'll turn and spank me." He calls her a snake, an insect, and pretends that he will "kill this little insect." The joking threat of violence expands to include a sexual dimension when he says he "will nip a bud to eat" and the corresponding image is of N!ai's not fully developed breast. Mid-film they acknowledge an awareness that their intense interaction is being filmed. N!ai has climbed the tree and her great-uncle calls to her, "Can't you see he's waiting for you to come down? He wants to take your picture while I tumble you." N!ai seems unfazed and changes the subject: "He wants to take me gathering in the truck." Late in the encounter, as N!ai adjusts her skirt /Ti!kay, broaches

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<sup>133</sup> Many of the films in the !Kung series that employ subtitles are preceded by an explanation that the sound was not synchronized but "was recorded at the time of the filming and reconstructed during editing. Translations are from both tapes and notes."

<sup>134</sup> MacDonald (2013), p. 31. MacDonald quotes N!ai's comments from an unpublished interview in which she indicates that this filmed incident did become an issue for her (p. 352, note 22).

the subject of taboo, “That’s right, fix your clothes or you’ll expose yourself and ruin my luck!” He continues to tease her, urging her to perform the Eland dance for him (as she had begun to do while in the tree). The film ends with N!ai, seemingly in charge: she puts her beads back on and walks away, leaving /Ti!kay sitting alone.

MacDonald acknowledges that N!ai’s “comfort” during the filming may not be complete when he writes, “Marshall’s close-ups of N!ai’s and /Ti!kay’s faces, often seem to capture not just good-humored fun but subtle embarrassment, possibly a function of the girl’s and man’s unspoken recognition of their attraction being witnessed, and in the case of /Ti!kay, some bemusement at Marshall’s fascination with what might seem to /Ti!kay this nonevent.”<sup>135</sup> This “nonevent” ranks high among the most fascinating sequences of interpersonal behavior in all of Marshall’s films.<sup>136</sup>

The use of subtitles in *A Group of Women* and *A Joking Relationship* signaled an important step in John’s move toward greater authenticity in his filming. Ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall considers Marshall’s introduction of subtitling in his sequence films a significant innovation: “Subtitles propelled ethnographic films into a new phase. Audiences no longer listened to spoken information *about* people in these films, but began to watch and listen to them more directly.”<sup>137</sup> To Jean Rouch, “Titles and subtitles . . . appear to be the most effective means of escaping from the trap of commentary.”<sup>138</sup> Rouch notes that John Marshall was the first to use this process. The French ethnographic filmmaker also mentions the difficulties in the procedure: “Besides mutilating the picture, the most difficult obstacle to overcome is the time to read the titles . . . [hence] the subtitle can be no more than a condensation of what is said.”<sup>139</sup> Despite these difficulties, subtitles can put a viewer one step closer to the lived experiences of the people filmed.<sup>140</sup> Marshall’s !Kung sequence films anticipated a general call within the

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>136</sup> In an essay on using Marshall’s sequence films for teaching introductory courses on social anthropology, Timothy Asch and Patsy Asch suggest the usefulness of *A Joking Relationship* in helping “students understand the significance of kinship in organizing a !Kung’s social universe” and also in encouraging “students to examine how kinship influences definitions of appropriate behavior in their own society (p. 341-342). The Asches offer pedagogical advice related to eleven of the !Kung sequence films (plus *N!ai*) in “Images that Represent Ideas: The Use of !Kung Films to Teach Anthropology,” in *The Past and Future of !Kung Ethnography*, p. 327-351.

<sup>137</sup> MacDougall, “Subtitling Ethnographic Films,” in Lucien Castaing-Taylor (ed.), *Transcultural Cinema*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1998, p. 165.

<sup>138</sup> “The Camera and Man,” *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, 1975, p. 96. Rouch refers to “a very simple film,” *The Pond*, as a “model of the genre.” Perhaps Rouch had seen an earlier, differently titled, version of *Men Bathing*.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. Given the drawbacks of both commentary and subtitling, Rouch returned to a version of *Un lion nommé l’Américain* that used neither (p.97). Rouch recommends that a short pamphlet (of explanation) accompany every ethnographic film.

<sup>140</sup> Peter Loizos discusses Asch’s role in developing an emphasis on sequence filming with John Marshall and writes that Asch “was also instrumental in putting subtitles on some of Marshall’s !Kung sequence

social sciences in the following decades for research that was responsive to the voices (literally and figuratively) of research subjects.

### Thick Films

In discussing his sequence films, John often used the term “thick,” to describe films in which the “ratio of content to film time” is high.<sup>141</sup> He offered *The Meat Fight* (1974) as an example of how “important content can emerge from a small event.”<sup>142</sup> Shot in color at /O !Au during the rains of 1958, this 14-minute film centers on the conflicts that arise around the distribution of the meat of a large antelope that had been wounded by the poisoned arrow of a boy (N!amshi). It was the boy’s first large kill and, consequently, extremely important to him. Because of heavy rains, N!amshi lost track of the animal’s spoor. Khan//a, a man from another band, claimed the animal had been killed by lightening, a claim that enraged N!amshi’s family. The two bands are poised to fight over the antelope meat; a wise man from a third band, ≠Toma, intervenes. In contrast to the harmonious in-band allocation of meat shown in *The Hunters*, the contentiousness that sometimes surrounds meat distribution is pictured in *The Meat Fight*. Violence is fortunately avoided when “an old man of impeccable integrity” [≠Toma] oversees the distribution.<sup>143</sup>

In editing footage to be used in *The Meat Fight*, John was faced with the perennial problem of how to retain the “thickness” of a filmed event, while making that event understandable to a non-native audience. In *The Meat Fight*, a new solution replaces the two previously employed interventions of voice-over narration and/or sub-titles of participant speech. The new technique provides John’s voice-over explanation of the situation (in this case, the inter-band conflict over the distribution of meat), along with freeze frames (still images) identifying the individuals involved, *before* the live-action sequence begins. The information offered in the introductory summary makes it possible for a viewer to understand the general situation, then attend to the subsequent moving picture material on a more experiential level than would be otherwise possible.

*The Wasp Nest* (1972) also employs the strategy of providing information in an introductory summary, followed by freeze frame images identifying the seven participants and their relationships to each other, with most of the film time devoted to live action footage in which the events previously described unfold in a cinematic “present tense.” The central event in this 13-minute film is a simple, but essential, one: women gathering wild foods, which provide the basic subsistence for the people of Nyae Nyae. Although foraging is serious work, it is by no means somber. The two adolescents

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films, which were screened at UCLA in 1968 to general enthusiasm,” *Innovation in Ethnographic Film: From Innocence to Self-Consciousness, 1955-1985*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1993, p. 23.

<sup>141</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 46.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

in the group wrestle; a child eats *oley* berries while picking; the women clap and sing. Close-ups of faces, hands, and plants pull a viewer into the scene. N!ai discovers a wasp nest; she and her friend bait it; N!ai sets it on fire. When asked by her mother to take the restless young Debe home, the always willful N!ai refuses, and goes off to join her friend, a reminder of the complications of family life.

Some of the same family members are featured in *Debe's Tantrum* (1972) in which the strong-willed, contrary person is little Debe. This film opens with a kinship chart of the family, an anomaly among these films, even though many of them explore family relationships. The narrator's voice goes in and out of this charming, 9-minute film, explaining that Di!ai, the mother of 5-year-old Debe wishes to go gathering without "40 pounds of restless child." Di!ai instructs Debe's half-sister N!ai to take the child to her home. The little boy throws a screaming tantrum. Meanwhile, his father remains "aloof from the clash of wills." !U, laughs at her sister's predicament, as Di!ai struggles off "bearing on her back her triumphant son." This simple event, which possibly lasted not much more than the screen time depicting it, reveals an important cultural trait: !Kung parents rarely punish their children.

Five short films cut from the 1957-58 footage feature !Kung boys at play: *Playing with Scorpions* (1972), *Lion Game* (1970), *Children Throw Toy Assegais* (1974), *Bushmen Tug of War* (1974) and *Baobab Play* (1974). *Playing with Scorpions* begins with John's voice-over noting !Kung attitudes toward danger, but the other four films have no narration. We hear the boys speak and shout, but there are no sub-titles. Attention centers on what the boys are doing, on their energy, and their imagination. Whether teasing a scorpion, pretending to be a lion that is both attacker and prey, throwing small spears at a tree, wrestling over a length of rubber hose, or tossing sticks from a perch in a baobab, the boys' actions are simultaneously playful and aggressive. Each film celebrates the carefree nature of male childhood among the !Kung. Of the set, *Baobab Play* is noteworthy. It is photographed from two distinct vantage points: inside the tree, alongside the older boys (sometimes beautifully filmed in silhouette) who climb out on the strong branches of the towering baobab, and on the ground, where younger boys congregate to pellet the tree dwellers. The camera's point-of-view shifts: looking up, looking down. The edited result of this cross-cutting produces a cinematically engaging, playful fight sequence.

The theme of male friendship and play is extended to adults in *Men Bathing* (1973), set amidst the surprising sight of water in open pans that resemble small lakes. In a prologue, a group of !Kung men are pictured in live action as they arrive at a pan. Freeze frames of the men appear as John's voice-over identifies the individuals and explains how they are related to each other. Three of the men form one unit, while the two other men separate themselves. The film returns to live action as the men enter the water. Images of /Ti!kay washing clothes (obtained at the white farm from which he rescued his wives) are intercut with the bathing and frolicking of the other men. The beauty of the day and the joyfulness of the men are made visible in the light shimmering on the water and in the close-ups of water being splashed on strong, brown bodies as the men bathe themselves and scrub each other's backs. The men's speech is not translated, but they are

shown laughing (and the beginning summary predicted lewd jokes). The film ends in serenity, with an extended long shot of the backs of the men, now quiet, facing the water. John's narration returns: "When they left the water to dry themselves in the sun, they distributed themselves according to the nature of their relationships." John would later recall how he participated in such moments of male enjoyment: "We simply loved bathing and playing in the sweet water of N!ama after a season of strong rain."<sup>144</sup> MacDonald describes *Men Bathing* as "the most serene of all Marshall's films and one of the most beautiful—a final vestige, perhaps of the filmmaker's fast-fading innocence".<sup>145</sup> The mood of serenity in *Men Bathing* is also found in *A Group of Women*. The films share an appreciation of the physicality of !Kung people and their lack of self-consciousness regarding their bodies. Women are typically bare-breasted with the lower parts of their bodies covered by leather aprons in front and back. *Men Bathing* is unique among the !Kung films in showing adult men in full frontal nudity, here washing, rather than wearing, their loin cloths.

Three of the sequence films demonstrate the central role of ritual and, particularly of trance, in !Kung life. The shortest of the trio, at eight minutes, *A Curing Ceremony* (1969), is a black-and-white account of the struggle of a young woman who is eight months pregnant with her first child. John's voice-over informs the viewer that Sha//ge has fallen ill and, thus, requires the assistance of a healer. She lies under a tree, surrounded by women kinfolk and friends. Two medicine men hover over the woman, performing rituals intended to avert the threatened abnormal end to her pregnancy. One of the healers is the woman's half-brother; the other is Ti!kay. The men scream and chant; Ti!kay enters a mild trance in an effort to draw the sickness out of the pregnant woman. Close-ups of the faces of the woman in pain and the healer in the throes of trance are intercut, creating an atmosphere of urgency. The film ends abruptly with a long shot of the tree, a healthy child, and the group in a circle in a moment of expectation, as the narrator recounts, "The people waited all afternoon. It was not until early evening that the child was born dead after a short and bitterly painful labor. Sha//ge lived."<sup>146</sup>

Also filmed in black-and-white, *N/um Tchai: The Ceremonial Dance of the !Kung Bushmen* (1969) opens with an explanatory narration of the role of *n/um tchai* in healing and warding off evil (*tchai* being the word for gathering to dance and sing; *n/um* meaning

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p. 59. He also recognized that "a salient flaw [in the Nyae Nyae record] is the lack of a sustained effort to show the comprehensive impact of scare water." In later films, such concerns would become central.

<sup>145</sup> MacDonald, p. 39.

<sup>146</sup> How much cultural context should be included in this (or any) ethnographic film is always problematic. In a review of *The Curing Ceremony*, Nancie L. Gonzalez, *et. al* suggest that "It would have helped to have the narration provide the fact that normal birth occurs unattended in the bush," *American Anthropologist* 77: 175 (1975). Fadwa El Guindi (2004) questions the "very notion of sequence film," when she writes "Is the genre that focuses on a current activity or a conversation suitable when such moments are part of wider happenings in Ju/'honasi life?" (p. 99). Many of the !Kung sequence films are supported by detailed study guides (produced by DER) for classroom use

medicine or supernatural potency). Dancing men are seen in silhouette as the narrator explains that the men have danced all night and into the morning. The strikingly beautiful images set a mood of timelessness and dignity. The film then returns to the dance which will last from sunset to sunrise. As the ritual dancing becomes faster and the singing becomes louder, the camera moves in closer, and the editing rhythm accelerates, with the dance reaching its most powerful intensity as the sun rises. (John would sometimes participate in these dances, in addition to filming them.)<sup>147</sup> Women sit in clusters, singing contrapuntal songs without words and clapping in several different rhythms, with an occasional woman dancing. Men sing and stamp the complicated rhythms with their feet. Several men fall into various states of trance, some entering the deepest state, which the !Kung call “half death.” Those who fall into unconsciousness are supported by other men.

John recognized that a film such as *N/um Tchai* “required a lengthy explanation about the relationship between healing and the supernatural world before audiences could appreciate a curing ceremony.”<sup>148</sup> To that end, Lorna Marshall and Megan Biesele produced a study guide to *N/um Tchai* that includes the full narration, a shot list, commentary, and quotations from curers who describe their trance experiences. Additionally, the central principles of !Kung religion are explicated.<sup>149</sup>

A third sequence film that presents trance behavior is *N!owa T'ama/The Melon Tossing Game* (1970). In this exhilarating color film we see women from three different !Kung bands playing the melon game at !O. The dance begins with only women participating, singing and clapping. Each woman rushes to the center of the semi-circle that has formed, dances several steps, then throws the melon to the woman next in line. The camera follows the action from inside the circle, with the editing pace accelerating as the dance becomes chaotic when men disrupt the harmonious pattern. /Gunda, the husband of N!ai, dances with special exuberance. One of the older women, N/aoka, moves in a sexually provocatively manner; N!ai responds by taunting N/aoka and throwing sand in her face. What began as structured play ends in disruption and interpersonal tension.

### Accuracy in Filming

In describing his theory of sequence filming, John stated that

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<sup>147</sup> L. Marshall diary (Peabody Museum, 2003.36.1.4, June 21, 1953, p. 456). In an interview of Jean Rouch (co-conducted with John W. Adams) at the first Margaret Mead Ethnographic Film Festival, John related his singular “trance” experience. See “John [sic] Rouch Talks about His Films to John Marshall and John Adams,” *American Anthropologist* 80 (1978): 1005-1022. See Elizabeth’s descriptions of the trance dances and her first reactions to them, *The Old Way*, 2006, p. 267-273. For photographs of trance and ritual, see L. Marshall (1999, p. 131-139); *Nyae Nyae !Kung: Beliefs and Rites* includes extensive analysis of trance in !Kung life.

<sup>148</sup> J. Marshall, as quoted in Timothy Asch, 2001, p. 8.

<sup>149</sup> *N/um Tchai: A Study Guide*, DER, Watertown, MA 1974.

For me as a cameraman, the most important criteria was accuracy. I wanted people to be seen and heard in film with minimal distortion. In the completed sequences from 1957-1958, Ju/'hoansi are seen being more or less themselves. They talk together and interact without being directed or told what to say.<sup>150</sup>

This attitude represents a crucial shift in John's thinking about accuracy, distortion and authenticity. He recalled that "In 1955 I was still cleaning tin cans out of shots to make Ju/'hoansi in Nyae Nyae look real."<sup>151</sup> By 1957 John's sense of "the real" had been altered. Although he may not have manipulated the settings of the film shot in 1957-58, the settings he chose to include in (almost but one of) his sequence films continued to picture the Bushmen as primarily isolated. Kenyan G. Tomaselli and Arnold Shepperson, after examining the offcuts or outtakes from the Marshall footage in the Human Studies Film Archives at the Smithsonian Institution, describe the completed Marshall films as displaying "structured absences."<sup>152</sup> These two academics from the University of Natal (Union of South Africa) claim that Marshall "excluded footage [he had shot] of !Kung social interlinkages with neighboring black groups, territorial migrations by !Kung families, their employment by Hereros, examples of crew-subject relations, and illustrations of various kinds of enculturation" in order to follow the dominant anthropological thinking of the 1950s "which envisaged the !Kung as the last of the isolated and pure hunter-gatherers . . ." <sup>153</sup>

*An Argument about a Marriage* (1969) is an important exception to the "structured absence" of intercultural interaction, for the background situation that later provokes a dispute between two Ju/'hoan bands is the fact that Boer farmers had subjected Bushmen into forced labor on white farms. Also exceptional is explicit recognition that the Marshalls have operated as intermediaries between the local police and the Ju/'hoansi. The film begins with live action footage of the happy return of Bushmen in (Marshall) trucks. The Bushmen wear western clothes, a clear sign that they have (temporarily) been part of another world, but one they are pleased to have escaped. The narration that begins the film runs for seven minutes and tells the complicated story of how, due to the intervention of the Marshalls with the South West Africa authorities on behalf of the Ju/'hoan band members were released from the farm. However, two weeks after their return, tensions erupted around the status of one of the women, Baou. Although already married, she had given birth to /Qui/'s child during their years of captivity; consequently, she was claimed as wife by men from two different bands. The fathers-in-law enter into a fierce argument, for each could lose the services of a son-in-law. Freeze frame images introduce the central figures in the conflict.

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<sup>150</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 45.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, p. 32.

<sup>152</sup> "Course File for 'Documentary Film, Visual Anthropology, and Visual Sociology,'" *Journal of Film and Video* 49.4 (Winter 1997): 54-55.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

What follows is live-action footage of an emotional eruption of feelings, with sub-titles for some of the speech, but not all, since there is often over-lapping dialogue amid the contentious group. At one point, someone, referring to the release, says, “If it weren’t for the Marshalls—” only to be interrupted by Baou’s father, Ti!kay, who says, “Screw the Marshalls!” Tempers flare and people shout at each other. The moving camera, often in extreme close-up, attempts to track the ongoing argument, from one speaker to the next, capturing a sense of disharmony, at the edge of chaos. N!ai expresses her disdain for the wrangling and argues for the necessity of moving on with the demands of daily life: “I’ll have no part of these wretched, jealous people. I’m sick of it. Let’s get our firewood.” ≠Toma, as ever, the voice of reason, subdues the tumult, saying “When we act like ourselves, these things don’t happen.” His statement operates as prophecy in many respects, for the jealousies and conflicts made visible in *An Argument about a Marriage* will intensify in future years when the Ju’hoansi are displaced. The film ends with a freeze frame of ≠Toma; John’s voice returns, with the unfortunate assessment that “ill feeling persisted.”

In his survey of ethnographic filmmaking from 1955-1985, anthropologist Peter Loizos evaluates the Marshall sequence films:

... at the time, the material was unrivalled in the intimacy and vividness with which it conveyed hunter-gatherer lives, including quarrels, and the dramatic intensity of the rituals needed to effect curing. The ability of Marshall and his co-workers to give his subjects, who were also by this time either friends or people he knew very well, vividness and authenticity as skilled, three-dimensional individuals was at the time unrivalled and the films have been praised by South African scholars otherwise highly critical of many films representing black African lives.<sup>154</sup>

The intimacy, vividness and authenticity of Marshall’s !Kung sequence films have drawn many within and beyond the anthropology community to them. These films “are essentially revelatory rather than illustrative, for they explore substance before theory.”<sup>155</sup> As MacDonald argues, the experiential qualities of Marshall’s sequence films link them to the goals and procedures of personal films.<sup>156</sup>

### **Cinéma Verité and Direct Cinema in 1960s US**

After his expulsion from South West Africa in 1958, John returned to New England and began graduate studies in anthropology at Yale. Through his friendship with an NBC-TV news correspondent, Dean Brellis, John was hired to shoot news footage for the

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<sup>154</sup> *Innovation in Ethnographic Film*, 1993, p. 20-21.

<sup>155</sup> David MacDougall, “Beyond Observational Cinema,” *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, 1995, p.116.

<sup>156</sup> See *American Ethnographic Film and Personal Documentary*, 2013, passim.

American broadcasting company in Cyprus in 1964 and in Greece the following year. Although well-paid, John found television news work unsatisfying.<sup>157</sup>

In the early 1960s a new style of documentary, labeled *cinéma vérité* or direct cinema, was capturing the attention of filmmakers world-wide. Cameramen Richard Leacock and D.A. Pennebaker were at the forefront of the *cinéma vérité* movement in America, due to their collaboration with the innovative producer Robert Drew on the ground-breaking documentary *Primary* (1960), and other documentaries that quickly followed. Utilizing lightweight, hand-held cameras, faster film stock, mobile synchronized sound equipment, and directional microphones, the Drew Associates produced a series of compelling documentaries on many aspects of contemporary American life that were broadcast on national television in the early 1960s.<sup>158</sup> Leacock and Pennebaker left Drew Associates after several years and formed a partnership, which would be short-lived; by 1963 both of these talented cinematographers were producing films independently. Years later, John recalled, “I worked for Ricky and Penny. I was in graduate school and I used to travel down to New York for two days a week but what I wound up doing was writing proposals for them, for a film on aging . . . I didn’t get my hands on the equipment . . . because they didn’t have work.”<sup>159</sup> One can’t help but wonder what directions John’s career might have taken if Leacock and Pennebaker had work that would have included Marshall in 1962.

But another man who would become a notable figure in direct cinema did have work for John. Out of the blue, Frederick Wiseman called John and asked him if he would be interested in shooting a documentary with Wiseman at a Massachusetts prison.<sup>160</sup> Marshall accepted. The two men had never met, but Shirley Clarke (the director of *The Cool World* [1963], which Wiseman produced) was a friend of Leacock and Pennebaker. Using John’s 16mm Auricon and Éclair cameras and film stock which he purchased,

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<sup>157</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 142. John thought that “in Cyprus the networks were making up a war.”

<sup>158</sup> Leacock and Pennebaker both ran camera for multiple Drew productions: *On the Pole* (1960), *Yanki No!* (1960), *On the Road to Button Bay* (1962), *Football [Mooney vs. Fowle]* (1961), *Jane* (1962), *The Chair* (1962), and *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment* (1962). See Stephen Mamber, *Cinéma Vérité in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1974, for an early assessment of this important documentary movement. Although there are subtle differences between *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema, because John Marshall uses the terms as interchangeable, I will follow his lead in this essay.

<sup>159</sup> J. Marshall in Anderson-Benson Interview, 1993, p. 142. In 1960 or 1961, Marshall met Jean Rouch when the French filmmaker was in New York conferring with Drew, Leacock, Pennebaker and Mitch Bogdanovich regarding the creation of the Auricon/Nagra portable sync sound system. “An Interview: John Marshall on Jean Rouch,” conducted by Brenda Baugh, April, 2004, DER. Rouch and Marshall would become close friends and later collaborators. In 1977 Rouch ran camera and Marshall took sound for the 35-min documentary *Cine-portrait de Margaret Mead*, shot in New York during the film festival established in Mead’s honor. The pair also collaborated on another portrait film, *Capt’ain Mori* (1980; 40 minutes), about a merchant sea captain who started the first commercial line between Japan and South Africa. Rouch and Marshall were in Japan to attend a festival of Marshall’s Bushmen films.

<sup>160</sup> Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 143. See p. 143-154 for Marshall’s comments on the *Titicut Follies* project. Marshall was 33 in the spring of 1966; Wiseman 36.

Marshall and Wiseman began filming at Massachusetts Correctional Institution-Bridgewater in April, 1966. Except for several days when Timothy Asch ran a second camera (during rehearsals and performances of the “Titicut Follies” review at the institution), Marshall shot all footage alone; Wiseman took sound (a first for him) with John’s Nagra I recorder over 28 shooting days.<sup>161</sup>

In some respects, the environment at MCI-Bridgewater, a maximum security prison for the criminally insane, was almost as foreign as the Kalahari for John.<sup>162</sup> Although Marshall and Wiseman filmed some interviews (for back up), they generally proceeded in the observational style of direct cinema “. . . it was basically to make a movie with existing events, things happening, not trying to explain it.”<sup>163</sup> Marshall approached filming with his typical zest. Images of solitary confinement, guards taunting an inmate, complaints regarding treatment, an inmate babbling in the courtyard, incompetent medical attention and so forth, accumulate to create a powerful picture of desperation and institutional neglect. The subsequent film reads as a series of discrete sequences, all connected by one place, the dreadful confines of an antiquated prison. There are three exceptions to the pattern of following an action or event through time: first, scenes from the prison theatrical review, the “Titicut Follies,” in which both inmates and staff participate, are shown three times: at the opening of the film, mid-film and as an ending. At two points in the film, scenes are cross-cut, an editing device demonstrating comparisons/contrasts that Wiseman would later eschew as too obvious. Early on, a physical strip search of inmates is juxtaposed with an entry interview between a child sex offender and a psychiatrist; late in the film, footage of a man being forced-fed is cross-cut with the same man being prepared for burial.

Issues of consent and control, always complicated in documentary filming, became particularly problematic in the case of *Titicut Follies*. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts moved for an injunction against the film and filed a complaint against Wiseman, in which the state claimed invasion of (an inmate’s) privacy and breach of (oral) contract.<sup>164</sup> Wiseman asserted that the public had a right to know what was

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<sup>161</sup> David Eames, a journalist and Cambridge neighbor and friend of Wiseman, assisted by changing magazines and tapes, keeping records, and providing a van for transportation. He was named president of the Bridgewater Film Corporation. See Carolyn Anderson and Thomas W. Benson, *Documentary Dilemmas: Frederick Wiseman’s “Titicut Follies,”* Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, IL 1999 for a detailed history of the film.

<sup>162</sup> Some have described the resulting film as “ethnographic.” In a February 12, 2014 blog (<http://PsychoculturalCinema.com/Category/Anthropology/>) Robert Lemelson, lists *Titicut Follies* as one of the “Twenty Ethnographic and Documentary Films Psychological Anthropologists Should Be Teaching.” (Lemelson also includes Marshall’s *A Kalahari Family*.)

<sup>163</sup> J. Marshall, Anderson-Benson Interview, 1993, p. 145-146.

<sup>164</sup> After a series of trials, a compromise was decided by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, whereby *Titicut Follies* could be shown, but only to specialized audiences. That court order was in effect until 1991. See “The Freeing of *Titicut Follies*,” Thomas W. Benson and Carolyn Anderson, *Reality Fictions: The Films of Frederick Wiseman, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, Southern Illinois University Press, 2002, p. xxii-xxxvi.

occurring in a state-run institution, that no consent procedures had been violated, and that there had been no oral agreement of editorial rights promised to the state. Marshall did not testify in any of the trials, but he has subsequently described his shooting at Bridgewater, not as an activity “directed” by Wiseman (as Wiseman would insist in court testimony and, later, in interviews), but as an emotional, personal contact the cinematographer had with the people being photographed. Marshall has characterized his approach as always being sensitive to the desires of his potential subjects, yet he also remembers that once he began shooting, it would have taken “a hand in front of the lens” to stop him.<sup>165</sup>

Marshall participated in the early stages of editing, but eventually Wiseman told him, “We don’t need you in the editing room anymore. I want to make this movie. I want to make it my way, however.”<sup>166</sup> The tension between the two young filmmakers accelerated when, immediately after the injunction against *Titicut Follies* was announced in September 1967, John and his wife Heather, on the advice of the Marshall family attorney, resigned from their positions as officers in the Bridgewater Film Corporation (BFC). Wiseman, an attorney, had formed the BFC, but had no membership in it; the BFC, along with the investors, owned the film. “In testimony, Eames and Wiseman presented the resignations as something akin to a legal technicality that had no serious consequences and fostered no ill will. In private, [according to Marshall] Wiseman was furious.”<sup>167</sup>

In most direct cinema productions, the director is also the cinematographer. The tradition eschews “direction,” in the theatrical sense of staged action, replacing it with the selection of moments of ongoing action photographed and recorded. Over the years, many reviewers and audience members have wrongly assumed that Fred Wiseman shot all the documentaries that he has produced. At a Flaherty Seminar in 1967, Wiseman screened the newly completed *Titicut Follies* and answered questions. One seminar participant commented “I did have the feeling that *Titicut Follies* was shot by somebody who was trained in anthropological work . . .” soon followed by the question “. . . if John Marshall shot the film, what was your part in making it; why is it *your* film?” Wiseman’s answer: “I selected what was to be shot, I did the sound, and I edited the film.”<sup>168</sup> For years, prints of *Titicut Follies* contained the phrase “co-directed” by John Marshall, along with a photography credit for Marshall. At some point, the co-direction credit was removed from prints distributed through Wiseman’s company, Zipporah Films. The

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<sup>165</sup> Anderson and Benson, *Documentary Dilemmas*, 1991, p. 22.

<sup>166</sup> Marshall’s recollection, Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 149.

<sup>167</sup> Anderson and Benson, *Documentary Dilemmas*, 1999, p. 62.

<sup>168</sup> As quoted in Zimmermann and MacDonald, 2017, p. 76. See Benson and Anderson, *Reality Fictions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2002, p. 307-309 for comments on working with Wiseman based on interviews with the four talented cinematographers with whom he has collaborated (in addition to Marshall, Richard Leiterman [on *High School* (1968)]; William Brayne [10 films in the 1960s and 70s]; and John Davey [all films since 1978]). Leiterman and Brayne (both deceased) were Canadian; Davey is British, which may have encouraged the cameramen to approach American (and sometimes French) culture as somewhat foreign.

credits were changed to read: “Director and Producer, Frederick Wiseman; Photography, John Marshall.”<sup>169</sup>

### **The Pittsburgh Police Series**

Still unable to return to South West Africa in the late 1960s, John embarked on a project that took him into another rarely seen American environment: the working world of urban police. Over a nine-month period in 1968-1969 John continued his exploration of the possibilities of sequence filming as he followed the daily routines of policemen from Station 9 in Pittsburgh, PA.<sup>170</sup> The project was sponsored by the Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence at Brandeis University and was initiated due to John’s working relationship with Dr. John Speigel at Brandeis. Shooting in situations of high emotion and potential danger, John physically immersed himself in police activities. The resulting footage—often long, uninterrupted shots with synchronous sound—is stunning in its raw intensity.<sup>171</sup> Marshall and colleagues edited the police material into twenty films, released between 1970 and 1973.<sup>172</sup> More than half of the titles concentrate on a single event/sequence; most of these films run for under ten minutes: (*Vagrant Woman* [1971], *After the Game* [1973], *\$40 Misunderstanding* [1973], *The Informant* [1973], *Manifold Controversy* [1973], *\$21 or 21 Days* [1973], *Two Brothers* [1973], *Wrong Kid* [1973], *Youth and the Man of Property* [1973], *Henry Is Drunk* [1973], and *Appitsch and the Drunk* (1973). Several of the films feature multiple sequences, either providing an overview (*Inside/Outside Station 9* [1970], *901/904* [1972]), or sequences that follow a connective narrative (*Investigation of a Hit and Run* [1972] and *You Wasn’t Loitering* [1973]), or focus on similar situations (*Three Domestic*s [1971] and *Nothing But My Pride* [1973]). A third approach to the material documents the use of the police sequences (or references to them) in classes or discussions (*A Legal Discussion of a Hit and Run* [1973], *T-Group* [1973], and *The 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, & Exclusionary Rule* [1973]). In the third approach, clips of policework from sequence films are intercut with comments; sometimes a panelist’s remarks serve as a voice-over, while the image track shows a police encounter. Pedagogical goals, more than artistic aspirations, drove this project, for Marshall wanted the films to be *useful* to the police themselves, to teachers of criminal justice, and to community members concerned with police over-reach.

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<sup>169</sup> Regarding credits and creative input, MacDonald writes “I have heard that Ricky Leacock believed it was really Marshall’s film.” (2013, p. 354, n 48) *Titicut Follies* launched Wiseman on a distinguished career as a documentarian. In the spring of 2018, at age 88, Wiseman was editing his 41<sup>st</sup> documentary.

<sup>170</sup> During 1968, tensions between citizens and police forces escalated, with urban disturbances throughout the US following the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. in April and Robert Kennedy in June. In August, outside the National Convention of the Democratic Party in Chicago, thousands of anti-war demonstrators clashed with the police in what a later investigation labeled “a police riot.” In November 1968 Republican Richard M. Nixon, who ran on a “law and order” platform, was elected US president.

<sup>171</sup> Marshall was assisted by cameramen Randy Franken and J.D. Smith; Franken, Chat Gunter and Chris Tilliam took sound.

<sup>172</sup> The films were not shown in Pittsburgh to the general public “until years and years later.” J. Marshall, 1993, p. 154. See Marshall’s comments on footage he shot of someone “who was turning information.” Ibid.

The longest of the films in the series and the first one distributed, *Inside/Outside Station 9* (1970), won an award at the Festival dei Popoli in Florence, adding to Marshall's international reputation as an important practitioner of *cinéma vérité*.<sup>173</sup> The film opens with the police knocking on the outer door of an apartment. We are soon inside a domestic space and inside a domestic argument: an angry woman claims she gave her boyfriend \$40 to keep and he will not return it (her rent money). Subtitles attempt to follow the speech, often unsuccessfully, since there is so much cross-talk, but the mood is unmistakable. Marshall's camera work here displays a quality that he has described:

. . . I don't know what it is, but I get into it very fast. I can walk into a domestic argument in somebody's home and start shooting and the whole thing just goes on and happens. I just have a knack at that.<sup>174</sup>

The woman who made the complaint to the police becomes violent and must be subdued by the police who subsequently drive her to the station to book her on drunk and disorderly charges. The white policeman driver seems sympathetic to the black woman, telling her that her charges will be dismissed and giving her some advice: her first mistake, "having him your boyfriend." This powerful sequence was also issued separately as *\$40 Misunderstanding*, just as the sequence that follows (about the police stopping a teenager) is available as *Wrong Kid*. The film continues to follow the police on their rounds, which mostly deal with emotional disputes between people (sometimes pulling the police into the fights) and minor offenses like loitering. These sequences are intercut with applicants to the police force who offer reasons—job security, work variety, adventure—for wanting to join. The police officers (with one exception), magistrate, detectives, and job applicants are all white men; many of the people the police arrest are black. Men in suits discuss how to enforce loitering laws so that cases don't "end up in the hands of the A.C.L.U." (American Civil Liberties Union). Racial tensions are the backdrop to a long, fascinating sequence (issued separately as *The Informant*) in which a young black man is interrogated about his participation in looting during a "civil disturbance" and his possible willingness to serve as a police informant. Often the camera stays on his face as three high-ranking policemen take turns playing "good cop," attempting to establish trust. Tensions are made explicit in the next sequence, through angry, racist language used by a white woman who has called the police to her home. She and her friend "are afraid of those colored people."

In the 8-minute *Vagrant Woman* the police are shown dealing with a well-spoken, well-dressed white woman who has been sleeping in her car, which she is informed is illegal.

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<sup>173</sup> The filmography in *The Cinema of John Marshall* lists the running time as 90 minutes, but the version currently distributed by DER runs 78 minutes. Wiseman's third direct cinema documentary, *Law and Order* (1969), is also a police film. Shot in Kansas City, Mo, *Law and Order* shares many features with *Inside/Outside Station 9*, including outstanding camera work (by William Brayne).

<sup>174</sup> Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 150. Asked if the quality he describes is not invisibility, but "presenting yourself as a trustworthy person," John replied, "Something like that" (p. 151).

She has been accused of brandishing a gun (which she denies; a gun is not found). As the police search her car, she asks “Aren’t you supposed to have a search warrant?” a question they ignore. Asked to explain her circumstances, she reveals that she has left her husband because of his infidelity and has been evicted from her home. Here, as elsewhere, the police offer advice: go back to the husband (whatever the circumstances) and sell the car. She’s unwilling to do either (“It’s the principle”). She does accept their suggestion that she stay at the Salvation Army shelter, but says to the Salvation Army staff member they produce: “Don’t put your hands on me.”

*After the Game*, a 9-minute sequence film, follows the police, responding to a second complaint, into a home where a group of young white men are playing cards. They insist they are doing nothing unlawful, but they are clearly intoxicated. Only one of the group meets the required drinking age of 21. Police find evidence of glue-sniffing and take the group to the police station. A clip from this film returns (as do clips from other sequence films) in *The 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and Exclusionary Rule*, a two-part film that begins with the caution: “The police cases shown in this film were selected for the constitutional issues they raised and are not necessarily typical of police work.” A panel of a police captain, a representative of Boston public television, a lieutenant of the Cambridge police force, a law student, a defense attorney, and a community organizer comprise a panel moderated by James Vorenberg, a professor from Harvard Law School. (Three of the participants in the panel are African American: a woman from WGBH-TV, a law student, and a community organizer; they often mention race as a relevant factor in police decision-making.) Panelists question the police tactics shown in *After the Game*: there was no search warrant and no disturbance in progress at the time of police entry, thus the actions of the police might be considered violations of the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment (against unlawful intrusion). Any intrusion of the camera and crew goes unmentioned by the panel. Did Marshall assume that, by not objecting to the filming, the startled young men gave their tacit consent?

In discussions of the films *Hit and Run* and *The Informant* panelists question the interrogation techniques shown, suggesting that there may be violations of the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment (against self-incrimination) in the police’s eagerness to obtain confessions. These suspects do not have legal counsel, a situation which provokes one panelist to declare “There is no such thing as an intelligent waiver to the right of counsel.” The over-arching question of “Who guards the guards?” drives a discussion of the Exclusionary Rule (regarding police behavior). *The 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and Exclusionary Rule* clearly demonstrates Marshall’s intention to make films that will be of *use* to various constituencies.

In creating the police series, John Marshall followed and extended a practice that Robert Flaherty had pioneered: living with his subjects, getting to know them as individuals, and understanding their way of life.<sup>175</sup> Just as John’s close personal relationship with a core group of Bushmen deepened his observations in the !Kung films so, too, did his close

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<sup>175</sup> Paul Henley, *The Adventures of the Real: Jean Rouch and the Craft of Ethnographic Cinema*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2009, p. 253. Rouch was also influenced by Flaherty’s relationship with his subjects. These same qualities were advocated in the research method known as “participant observation,” which became dominant in Cultural Anthropology by mid-century. There are many similarities between Marshall’s notion of “sequence” and Karl G. Heider’s call for the filming of “whole acts.” *Ethnographic Film*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1976, p. 82-86.

connection with the six men featured in the police films add depth to that series. Years later, John recounted that

[W]hen I shot a lot of film about cops in Pittsburgh, we lived in the station. We had to know these guys . . . A small group, two cars, six guys . . . People are what's important and they provide the structure, the continuity. Getting to know them is what the film is about . . . Some of us became very fond of each other.<sup>176</sup>

The first audience members were the police officers who'd been filmed. John recalled that

On my own, I used the sequences as case studies for discussion with the cops in the loft of Station 9. A number of us would foregather with some six-packs after the four to midnight shift . . . Discussion [on how police should handle family conflicts] was lively . . . The cops in Station 9 had all three schools of thought: get involved and try to help the family; arrest the man, or everybody; do nothing and maybe call the welfare department . . . The police appreciated the reality—a rookie said, 'I feel right behind the leather jacket'—and all said they benefitted from arguing their views and airing their feelings.<sup>177</sup>

In a co-authored essay, published shortly after the police films were released, Marshall and Emile de Brigard invoke language that links the goals and procedures of sequence filming to social science research:

Film can follow small events closely, letting them take their own time and produce their own content. The result is a sequence notable for the lack of a conceptual and contextual framework which other forms of films attempt to supply. Most filmmakers would be unwilling to call a sequence a film, and would probably be right. But a sequence can be *verified* if it is made properly, and *valid* intimate reporting can be *corroborated by independent evidence* [italics mine].<sup>178</sup>

The predicted unwillingness (to call a sequence a film) would probably apply to the films in the Pittsburgh Police Series that run only 3 or 4 minutes. However, Marshall has titled these brief sequences; DER distributes them as single pieces; and they have found their audiences, first with the police themselves in training sessions and then with a larger

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<sup>176</sup> J. Marshall, Anderson-Benson Interview, 1993, p. 150. In contrast, John thought that "You don't get to know anyone, basically, in [*Titticut Follies*]. I personally dispute this opinion.

<sup>177</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 73-74.

<sup>178</sup> "Idea and Event in Urban Film," Paul Hockings (ed.), *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague, 1973, p. 134

public. These audiences may not consider the sequences “films,” but nevertheless find them useful. From law schools to junior high classes, students have discussed issues provoked by watching the sequences.<sup>179</sup> The films have been screened at curated film seminars as noteworthy examples of “observational cinema,” a term that links the goals and procedures of ethnographic and documentary film-making.<sup>180</sup> Marshall’s police films have also resonated with researchers and students of interpersonal and family behavior. E. Richard Sorenson looks to “John Marshall’s law enforcement films” as “phenomenological records [that] capture subtleties and complexities of social interaction . . .”<sup>181</sup> Filmmakers and film students are drawn to the depth of feeling and intricacy of situation that can be contained within several minutes of documentary footage. As Marshall and De Brigard succinctly state: “Ideas precede events, and remain after them.”<sup>182</sup>

Often, in academic settings and elsewhere, a cluster of the police films are programmed together. Peter Ian Crawford advocates this approach:

The contextualization of some experiential films is established only if they are viewed in correlation with many other films in what, in fact, constitutes a series. This is the case in the so-called sequence filming carried out by Marshall among the Ju/wasi of the Kalahari as well as in the Pittsburgh police films.<sup>183</sup>

Anthropologist Paul Hockings labels 1967-1974 a “core period . . . during which much of the groundwork for visual anthropology was laid down.”<sup>184</sup> Hockings comments on notable achievements during these years, including the fact that “Timothy Asch and John Marshall were well advanced in their experimental project to make educationally useful, short, one-theme ‘sequence films,’ and had presented three different cultures in this new format: the Yanomami, the !Kung/San, and the Pittsburgh police force.”<sup>185</sup> During this

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<sup>179</sup> Marshall and De Brigard discuss the use of *Investigation of a Hit-and-Run* in classrooms, *Ibid*, p. 142-143. The film centers on the interrogation of a pregnant teenager who had fled the scene after a three-year-old child was hit by a car driven by her boyfriend.

<sup>180</sup> *After the Game* was shown at the 2000 Flaherty Seminar which followed the theme “Essays, Experiments and Excavations,” Zimmermann and MacDonald, 2017, p. 220. The term “observational cinema” was first developed by Colin Young. See his essay “Observational Cinema,” with a comment by Gerald Temaner, in Hockings, 1973, p. 65-80. Young offers the ostrich dance sequence from *Bitter Melons* as one of his examples.

<sup>181</sup> “Visual Records, Human Knowledge, and the Future,” *Principles in Visual Anthropology*, 1975, p. 463-464.

<sup>182</sup> “Idea and Event,” p. 143.

<sup>183</sup> “Film as Discourse: The Invention of Anthropological Realities,” *Film as Ethnography*, Peter Ian Crawford and David Turton (eds.), Manchester University Press, Manchester, UK 1992, p. 77.

<sup>184</sup> “Preface to the third edition,” *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, 2003, p. viii.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*.

period, John participated in the first colloquium on ethnographic film at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) in 1968 and attended many other conferences and seminars in which his films were screened and issues related to visual anthropology were debated. Marshall's reputation as an ethnographic filmmaker had grown to the point that, in 1975, Margaret Mead listed "the Marshall films on the Bushmen" as her first example of "What we have to show for almost a century's availability of instruments are a few magnificent, impassioned efforts . . ." <sup>186</sup> To Emilie de Brigard, "The most spectacular and influential of all visual ethnographies is John Marshall's record of the Bushmen . . ." <sup>187</sup>

Getting independent films (especially short films), whatever their reputations, to potential audiences is a perennial problem; the difficulties surrounding distribution for ethnographic filmmakers (especially those producing "sequence films") were exacerbated. <sup>188</sup> That is, until John Marshall and Timothy Asch devised a solution in 1968: they, with the help of Frank Galvin, Laurence and Laura Marshall, and Marilyn Wood, founded Documentary Educational Research (DER), a non-profit organization formed to support, produce, and distribute ethnographic and documentary films. DER also produces study guides, going against the traditions of book and film distributors, since, generally "book distributors don't distribute films, and film distributors don't distribute books." <sup>189</sup> For many years, John served as Director of DER, which co-produced many seminal ethnographic films. The company's impressive catalog of international films has made a tremendous contribution to the accessibility of ethnographic productions. <sup>190</sup>

In the fall of 1972, still unable to return to what had become Namibia, John traveled to Botswana. <sup>191</sup> His trip was sponsored by the National Geographic Society, with the intention of producing a documentary updating the story of the Ju/'hoansi and John's

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<sup>186</sup> "Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words," *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, 1975, p. 4.

<sup>187</sup> "The History of Ethnographic Film," *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, 1975, p. 34.

<sup>188</sup> Marshall recalled how funders became impatient with his sequence films of Ju'hoan daily life, for they did not "grab audiences they way films like *The Hunters* did." (1993, p. 71)

<sup>189</sup> Timothy Asch, "The Ethics of Ethnographic Film-making," *Film as Ethnography*, 1992, p. 203. Asch's essay offers clear-minded, practical advice that remains relevant.

<sup>190</sup> The name of the organization changed to Documentary Educational Resources in 1971. The change from "Research" to "Resources" connotes an important shift in identity and goals. DER currently distributes all films produced by the Marshalls and films about the Marshalls, including two films John made in New England in the 1970s: *Vermont Kids* (1975), a compelling look at children at play (later cut into four sequence films), and *If It Fits* (1978), which documents life (including a mayoral election) in the dying industrial town of Haverhill, MA. DER also distributes films by and about Timothy Asch, Robert Gardner, and Jean Rouch, among many others.

<sup>191</sup> In 1968 South West Africa became known as Namibia when the United Nations General Assembly changed its name.

relationship with them. #Toma, !Nai, /Qui and several others of the Nyae Nyae !Kung crossed the border to see their American friend. !Kung contact with the outside world had greatly increased since John had been dismissed in 1958. The year after he was expelled, a road to Tsumkwe had opened. Nyae Nyae was no longer isolated. In 1960 a government post was established to protect the !Kung from exploitation, to teach them Afrikaans, and to assist their transition into a larger world.<sup>192</sup>

John's 1972 return to Africa, his heart-felt reunion with Ju/'hoansi and Khwe friends, and the drastic changes in their lives during his twenty-year absence became the focus of a 50-minute television documentary. Directed and photographed by Robert M. Young, written by Bud Wiser, and produced by David Wolper Productions and the National Geographic Society, *Bushmen of the Kalahari* charts John's years of connection with the Bushmen, as 1950s footage from *The Hunters* and *Bitter Melons* is juxtaposed with Ju/'hoan life in the early 1970s. Broadcast to a wide American audience on CBS television on May 17, 1974 as the first National Geographic Special, the documentary is narrated by the American actor Leslie Nielsen (with additional narration by John).<sup>193</sup>

Around this same time, Lorna Marshall was also looking backward and forward. In her long-awaited and greatly valued ethnography, published in 1976, Lorna clearly stated that "This book is about the !Kung as they were before profound change came."<sup>194</sup> Later in the book, she expressed her feelings on the !Kung's difficult transition:

I personally wish the !Kung could have remained as they were, remote, self-sustaining, independent, and dignified; but that is wishful thinking. Our modern society does not allow people to remain remote. Furthermore, many of the !Kung want change; they want to have land and cattle like the Bantu.<sup>195</sup>

### **John Marshall's Return to Nyae Nyae**

In 1978 John thought "If I'm going to see my Ju/'hoansi friends again, it's now or never."<sup>196</sup> He left for South Africa without a visa to enter SWA. Contacts in high places aided him, for a friend of the Marshall family arranged for a meeting between John and M. T. Steyn, the anti-apartheid Administrator General of SWA. Steyn was sympathetic to John's story of his father, the family Ju/'hoan studies and John's film record; the filmmaker was issued a permit to visit Bushmanland.<sup>197</sup> Now 46 years old and a mature

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<sup>192</sup> L. Marshall, 1976, p. 60-61, n 80.

<sup>193</sup> See MacDonald, p. 353, n 41. Some filmographies list Marshall as co-director.

<sup>194</sup> L. Marshall, 1976, p. 15. Lorna's ethnography is based on observations and interviews from 1951-1955.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, p. 61, n 80. During John's 1972 visit with !Kung they expressed their wish to have cattle.

<sup>196</sup> J. Marshall, 1993, p. 74.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. See E.M. Thomas, 2006, p. 288 for the "legend [that] arose around [John's] return."

filmmaker, John returned to Nyae Nyae with a changed attitude about filming; he was determined to make films that would confront the current upheavals in Ju/'hoan life. His response to this challenge was *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980). Many consider it his best work.<sup>198</sup> Marshall's approach had evolved from "fly-on-the-wall" to "fly-in-the-soup."<sup>199</sup> The a-historical limitations of direct cinema required John to move to another form to construct a decades-long story, combining elements of biography, history, and autoethnography. In 1978 N!ai was in her mid-30s, still engaging, but now, according to the song she sings, "death is dancing [her] ragged." The Marshalls had first filmed the always audacious N!ai as a child of eight; she re-appeared in a cluster of other Marshall films, which provide a historical record of her life and what it means, and has meant, to be a !Kung and particularly, a !Kung girl/woman. N!ai and John alternate as narrators; creating a narration both personal and cultural, as N!ai recalls her own life and, in so doing, tells the wrenching story of her people over three decades. Marshall footage shot in the 1950s (some familiar from released films, along with previously unreleased footage) presents N!ai and her family as isolated, resourceful, generally content hunter-gatherers. The images from the 1950s serve as a stark contrast with contemporary observational footage of the desperate reservation life in Tshumkwe in the late 1970s comprised of squabbles over food and possessions, medical examinations for rampant tuberculosis, attempts at Christian conversion, and military recruitment by the South African army.

Structured around N!ai's direct address to the camera, the film anticipates a major turn in documentary and ethnographic film towards reflexivity with N!ai's recognition of John's camera and her reflections on the negative consequences of filming on her life. The money she has earned from paid appearances in films has triggered jealousy among other Ju/'hoansi. N!ai has a minor role (as the wife of the !Kung protagonist Xi, played by N!xau) in *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980), a comedy directed by white South African filmmaker Jamie Uys.<sup>200</sup> Marshall filmed Uys directing the (1978) shoot of the ending of *Gods* (showing four repeated takes) and incorporated this scene into his documentary *N!ai*. The artifice of Uys's presentation of Bushmen as still living as carefree hunter-gatherers in 1978 serves as contrast to Marshall's approach in *N!ai* in its confrontation with the current despair of the Ju/'hoansi. "Don't look at my face" (repeated) are the last words we hear from N!ai. Her command ends the film; it provokes the ethnographic filmmaker and his audience to consider the effects of image-making on indigenous

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<sup>198</sup> *N!ai* won the Grand Prize, Cinema du Reel (Paris); a Blue Ribbon, American Film Festival; CINE Golden Eagle Award; Gold Medal for Best Television Documentary, International Film and Television Festival, New York; Grand Prize, International News Coverage Festival (Luchon, France); and a Film Commendation from the Royal Anthropological Institute (London).

<sup>199</sup> The frequently used expression "fly-on-the-wall" describes a direct cinema or strictly observation approach to filming. Henri Breitrese devised the counter expression "fly-in-the-soup" to describe explicit filmmaker involvement. "The Structures and Functions of Documentary Film," *CILECT REVIEW*, II, 1 (1986), p. 47.

<sup>200</sup> The world-wide success of *The Gods Must Be Crazy* and its 1989 sequel, *The Gods Must Be Crazy II*, perpetuated what John would term "death by myth" for the !Kung, who were no longer living by hunting and gathering in 1978.

people. The 59-minute film was broadcast in the American public television series *Odyssey*. This broadcast (along with the earlier broadcast of *Bushmen of the Kalahari*) positioned N!ai's story and the story of Marshall's work with the !Kung in a popular venue, in addition to the film's wide use in academic settings.<sup>201</sup>

### Advocacy in 1980s Namibia

John spent most of the 1980s in what had become Namibia. He intensified his advocacy work with a string of new initiatives. With a group of Ju/wa men he formed the Ju/wa Farmers' Union, "with the aim of assisting all those who wanted to keep small herds of cattle. . . and to plant gardens. . . laying claim to their own lands but also to feed themselves and their families."<sup>202</sup> He also co-founded the Ju/'hoan Bushmen Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDNF) with development anthropologist and filmmaker Claire Ritchie. Together they produced short films shown to the press, funding agencies and groups whose knowledge and opinions could influence policy and help Ju/'hoansi establish farms and water resources. John's film career was subsumed by his resolve to assist the Ju/'hoansi in their difficult adjustment to an agricultural form of life. Marshall successfully lobbied to include local governments and cooperative land ownership in the 1989 Namibian Constitution. John's involvement with grass-roots organizing on behalf of the !Kung continued through the 1990s. *To Hold Our Ground: A Field Report* (1991), which was broadcast on Namibian television during a debate on communal lands policy, was typical of a cluster of strongly argued video documentaries Marshall produced in this period.<sup>203</sup>

Because of his deep and obvious commitment to the Ju/'hoansi, Marshall was relatively insulated from criticism leveled against many First World image-makers whose depictions of "The Other" were questioned, as a crisis of representation enveloped the practice of salvage anthropology in the 1980s and 1990s. Relatively insulated, but not entirely. John has run into occasional accusations of exploiting the Ju/'hoansi.<sup>204</sup> More frequent criticisms suggest that either the Marshall family expeditions in the early 1950s

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<sup>201</sup> In 2009 DER retransferred the original film; cleaned, sharpened, and color-corrected the images; and improved the subtitling. The DVD currently distributed by DER includes a split-screen comparison between the original images and the 2009 improvements. In *Seeing Anthropology: Cultural Anthropology Through Film, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston 2001, Karl G. Heider uses N!ai as a teaching example on "sexuality and change" (p. 310-314).

<sup>202</sup> E.M. Thomas, 2006, p. 288. John supported this enterprise with his own money, along with a starter fund from his parents and a contribution from his sister; over time the Union received grants from international charities (p. 289). Laurence Marshall died in 1980 at the age of 91. Profits from the sale of a sheep farm that Laurence had purchased in the late 1950s in South West Africa went to the Development Foundation.

<sup>203</sup> Other titles Marshall produced during this period that addressed the collapse of the hunting-gathering economy and the dispossession of the !Kung were *Pull Ourselves Up or Die Out* (1985), *The !Kung San: Traditional Life* (1987), and *The !Kung Resettlement* (1988). For a discussion of this work, see MacDonald, 2013, p. 49-53.

<sup>204</sup> See John's comments, Anderson-Benson interview, 1993, p. 166.

and early 1960s created an artificial situation that allowed Ju/'hoan bands to live “the old way” or that contact with the Marshalls was destructive to “the old way.” Robert Gardner expresses both of these (contradictory) opinions in his “Kalahari Journal”:

Traditional Bushmen life is clearly at an end. Some may weather the change better than others. As I see it, the only reason there are any !Kung at all is that a few may never have had contact with the Marshalls. For the others, there is the payoff of staying Bushmen as long as the Marshalls are around.<sup>205</sup>

The challenge to authenticity at its most extreme is expressed in the charge that the Nyae Nyae !Kung, “[as] they came to be perceived, were . . . little more than a construct made by the Marshall family.”<sup>206</sup> On a practical (and ethical) level, claims of destructiveness often include the fact that the tracks made by Marshall expedition trucks created roads that then opened the Nyae Nyae region to control by the government of South West Africa (and later, Namibia).<sup>207</sup> Most of these criticisms are endemic to the enterprise of visual anthropology. Their typicality does not mean that the criticisms should be dismissed, but that they must be considered within a larger understanding of project goals and accomplishments. John Marshall’s consideration of and response to these criticisms are embedded in *A Kalahari Family*.

### ***A Kalahari Family***

John’s last shoot in Namibia, and his 15<sup>th</sup> trip to Nyae Nyae, coincided with the new millennium. Twenty-first century Namibian footage would be included in John’s magnum opus: *A Kalahari Family* (2002).<sup>208</sup> This five-part, six-hour series summarizes and concludes the Marshall family record of the Ju/'hoansi over five decades (1950-2000).<sup>209</sup> Although all five parts include some Marshall footage from the 1950s, the first episode, “A Far Country,” centers on the first decade of the Marshall family involvement

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<sup>205</sup> Gardner, *Just Representations*, 2010, p. 21.

<sup>206</sup> J.D. Lewis-Williams, “Foreward,” *Nyae Nyae !Kung Beliefs and Rites*, p. x. Lewis-Williams does *not* hold this opinion himself. He mentions it in a discussion of challenges (by others) to the authenticity of the Marshall project.

<sup>207</sup> See E.M. Thomas, *The Old Way*, p. 277-278 for her account of when a man, following a showing of *A Kalahari Family* at the Margaret Mead Ethnographic Film Festival, asked John if “he did not feel guilty for having opened the way to the Kalahari interior, bringing the Western world to the Bushmen and beginning the process of change.” Elizabeth leapt to her feet to defend her brother. But in *The Old Way* she admits that the family was “partly responsible for starting the change, and not just with our truck tracks.” John expresses similar sentiments in his narration of *A Kalahari Family*.

<sup>208</sup> MacDonald, 2013, p. 55, suggests that the use of the singular in the title *A Kalahari Family* may imply “an extended family that includes many !Kung as well as [John’s] own parents and sister.”

<sup>209</sup> John and Lorna Marshall served as executive producers; the series was funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The Rock Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Tim Disney.

with the Ju/'hoansi (although the episode begins in the ethnographic present with a memorial to John's deceased mentor and namesake, ≠Toma, being erected under the familiar baobab tree). Seven narrators tell the story of the Kalahari family: John and five Ju/'hoansi (≠Toma, his wife !U, their son Tsamko, ≠Toma's niece N!ai, and her husband /Gunda), whose words are translated into English and voiced by South African actors. Using Ju/'hoansi as not just interview subjects, but as narrators, relating their oral histories, continues and extends the significant practice of giving voice and, thus, granting agency to native speakers that Marshall had begun in *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman*. The seventh narrator, Rena Baskin, provides background to the personal recollections, offering historical and other expository material in intermittent voice-over.<sup>210</sup> Clips from Marshall films produced from footage shot in the 1950s (and beautifully remastered) are recontextualized by being intercut with interviews with and comments by Ju/'hoan people and through being embedded in a narrative that recounts Bushmen contacts with a larger world over centuries.<sup>211</sup> A sense of revisionism surrounds footage of a 1950s encounter of a Ju/'hoan band with larger, darker native men returning from work in mines; this sequence reminds us that intercultural aspects of !Kung life, although filmed by Marshall, had been absent from his films released in the early 1970s.

Contacts between the Marshall family and the Ju/'hoansi are remembered vocally by the Ju/'hoan narrators and John.<sup>212</sup> Lorna makes an appearance (filmed in 1992). She comments on the family project and reads impressions from her expedition diaries, yet another way of taking the audience back to the 1950s. The Marshall family-Ju/'hoansi contacts are also visualized, for the first time in the !Kung documentary series, through the use of black-and-white still photographs.<sup>213</sup> As Ilisa Barbash notes, "The combination of intimate, sometimes amusing, interview stories with the images allowed the still photographs to become John's evidence of the Marshall-Ju/'hoansi encounter of what was happening outside the photographic frame, as well as within it."<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Baskin is an actor and professional narrator who mostly works in the Boston area. Her narration was written by the production team with input from academic advisor Robert Gordon. For production details, see <http://www.der.org/kalfam/series-credits>.

<sup>211</sup> Clips from *The Hunters*, *First Film*, *N/um Tchai*, *Baobab Play*, *A Curing Ceremony*, *A Rite of Passage*, *An Argument about a Marriage*, *A Joking Relationship* appear, along with moving footage not used in edited films, such as a tender segment of !U with her newborn child (who would be named !Ungka Norna after Lorna) and a scene of a terrified N!ai at her marriage, in addition to the footage mentioned above of the encounter between Ju/'hoansi and black miners.

<sup>212</sup> John wrote his own narration. Words from the Ju/'hoansi were extracted from interviews beginning in the 1950s; over twenty extensive interviews were recorded with the principal Ju/'hoan characters between 1978 and 2000. <http://www.der.org/kalfam/series-credits>.

<sup>213</sup> Laurence Marshall and Anneliese Scherz photographed the stills used in this episode and also, along with Claude McIntyre, stills in Part Two. Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Barbash, 2016, p. 185. Stills also provide biographical information about the Marshalls, especially Laurence. See Barbash for information about and examples of the work of professional photographers hired by the Marshalls to accompany various expeditions.

The 90-minute documentary “A Far Country” ends with clips from *Men Bathing*, arguably John’s most beautiful film. The resplendent images are rendered poignant by John’s voice-over. He notes that he had been part of the group bathing in the pan, that this footage was shot his last morning among friends before his expulsion in 1958. “Looking back,” he is struck “by how naïve we all were about the future.” Only a year after John was evicted, the men pictured bathing with such abandon moved with their families to a settlement in Tsumkwe. In the late 1950s Marshall had “no idea how soon or how willingly most people would give up the hunting-gathering life.” A sense of innocence lost is palpable.

The next four episodes —“End of the Road,” “Real Water,” “Standing Tall,” and “Death by Myth”— move the sorrowful story forward chronologically. Part Two, “End of the Road,” centers on the late 1970s, beginning with John’s long-awaited return to Nyae Nyae in 1978. His warm reunion with ≠Toma demonstrates their close bond (and John’s fluency in Ju/hoan). Many of the themes from *N!ai* are repeated, along with the late 70s footage from that film that illustrate the dreadful living conditions for the Ju/’hoansi living at Tshumkwe.<sup>215</sup> In response to the somewhat idyllic footage from the 1950s, John recognizes that during that period “life was hard and hungry for the !Kung, but people behaved as if it weren’t.” By the late 1970s, conditions and attitudes had both changed drastically; people are despondent, “trapped in a system of hand-outs and make-shift jobs.”

≠Toma, while being filmed by John (seated on the ground, close to his surrogate father) laughingly remarks that “Your father and I are bosses who don’t really work.” To the accompaniment of black and white still photographs, ≠Toma narrates the story of the late 1950s when he and his family went to work for government administrator Claude McIntyre: a well was dug; more people joined them; they made gardens and kept goats. But, after McIntyre left ten years later, conditions for the Ju/’hoansi deteriorated significantly; they were relegated to the squalor of Tshumkwe. John admits that “his family’s expeditions had played a part in the South African occupation of Nyae Nyae,” partly through the roads they created into the previously uncharted territory. John and his colleague Claire Ritchie develop a Foundation and encourage the Ju/’hoansi to use those roads to leave Tshumkwe, the poverty-ridden headquarters of the Nyae Nyae reservation, and return to /Gautscha. The episode ends on an optimistic note when—to his surprise and pleasure—John discovers that ≠Toma and his family have left Tshumkwe overnight to return to their beloved /Gautscha. Now accompanied by their animals, the band will try to forge a new type of communal life.

Part Three, “Real Water,” moves the story into the 1980s to consider the challenges the Ju/’hoansi face at /Gautscha. Mid-film one of the Ju/’hoan narrators declares, “Water is life.” “Real Water” centers on that crucial fact. In one of the rare uses of 1950s footage in this episode, Ju/’hoan boys are shown collecting water from roots. But cattle can’t live

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<sup>215</sup> Ross McElwee and Mark Erder also shot footage for *N!ai*.

on water roots. Bolstered by money from foreign charities to locate water, drilling begins. All involved are euphoric when the borehole erupts with life-saving water.

International support for and curiosity about the Ju/'hoansi extend to a crew from Nippon TV. In a Nippon interview John (who is identified on screen as an anthropologist) displays his irritation that "the government wants to return [the Ju/'hoansi] to a plastic stone age."<sup>216</sup> In addition to the governmental position of turning the Ju/'hoansi into tourist attractions, that same logic provides protection for lions and elephants. The Ju/'hoansi farmers are not allowed to kill the lions who attack their cattle (although trophy hunting is permitted). Elephants, absent from Nyae Nyae in the 1950s, move along the new roads; they number over 400 by 1988. Not only do these enormous animals drain water from pans, but they wreck the precious boreholes and other structures.

Realizing that they need "new laws for new times," the Ju/'hoansi form a Farmers' Cooperative. ≠Toma's son, Tsamko, follows in his father's footsteps as a wise and effective leader. We see John, taking notes, as Ju/'hoan men, gathered under the ubiquitous baobab tree, debate their strategies. The episode concludes in hopefulness and solidarity; the Ju/'hoan narrator predicts that, united in the Cooperative, "his people will grow together like a strong tree."

Part Four, "Standing Tall," looks forward, with a strategy voiced by a Ju/'hoan that "we must look white people in the eye" and backwards, with a touching sequence when Long Face (John) shows 1950s footage he shot in Nyae Nyae to a fascinated group of Ju/'hoansi crowding around a small television screen. People are delighted to recognize themselves, and relatives now deceased. The value of these "home movies" to the Ju/'hoansi as an embodiment of their "old ways" is inestimable.

Concerns around water and land rights continue, now with the added challenge of competition for scarce resources with Herero people. In 1987 John and Claire Ritchie turn over the directorship of the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation to Meghan Biesele, an anthropologist specializing in economic self-determination. Biesele immediately faces funding problems. Little of the international support surging into Namibia has helped Ju/'hoansi farmers, such as /Kxao and /Qui.

At a pre-election rally (sponsored by the DTA/Democratic Turnhalle Alliance), an argument breaks out between Herero and their supporters (who back the DTA) and John (who, with many Ju/'hoansi, supports SWAPO/South West African People's Organisation). John is attacked for not knowing his place and for using his father's money to support "only a chosen few, including John himself." When asked what he is doing there, John angrily retorts, "Drilling 27 boreholes. Is that bad? What am I doing

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<sup>216</sup> In addition to the Japanese crew, other cameramen and women filmed John's activities during the 1980s and beyond. John hired crews to shoot events occurring in Nyae Nyae, some of which he participated in, so that a visual record would continue; thirteen individuals (in addition to Marshall) have camera credit for the series. <http://www.der.org/kalfam/series-credits>.

here? I'm helping people keep their land!"<sup>217</sup> The episode ends with the victory celebration for SWAPO supporters and John's departure. Looking into the camera, Ju/'hoansi say "Thank you, Long Face. All of us thank you." We see families together; children learning to play the traditional string bow; and a man dancing with joy, linking past customs with future hopes.

Part Five, "Death by Myth," ends the series. Once again, John has returned to Nyae Nyae. It is 1992. John tells his friends that he has been lobbying on their behalf in the highest places, writing (and later meeting with) the Namibian president, Samuel Njoma, and testifying at a hearing regarding land rights. A ruling has supported the Ju/'hoansi Co-operative in demanding that the Herero leave. In John's narration he reports that "everything seems to be coming together," after a period when the Ju/'hoansi "escaped virtual slavery." However, problems remain, the most serious of which is the governmental determination to turn the !Kung into a form of protected "wildlife."

John acknowledges that his early films, along with the fictional comedies of Jaime Uys, and other media, have created an image of resolute and isolated Bushmen who sustain themselves through hunting and gathering. This stereotypical image of hunter-gatherers, unfortunately, appeals to many, not just international tourists, but also governmental and NGO officials. The image is destructive to contemporary Ju/'hoansi.<sup>218</sup> Because of land division and skills lost to later generations, it was impossible for !Kung people to support themselves by hunting and gathering in the 1990s. They have been sentenced to "death by myth," if they don't adapt to the exigencies of a mixed economy and learn new ways to sustain themselves. An autocratic German man had assumed the directorship of the Foundation, moving it away from the initial mission of establishing farms. He is replaced by a younger, more kindly Dutch man, but one who still believes in the myth, as does a representative of USAID (with a budget of 16 million US\$) who advocates the creation of "buffer zones to national parks" for !Kung. Even Tsamko has become a supporter of the Nature Conservancy, as he's been convinced that Ju/'hoansi will profit from hunters, filmmakers, and other "cultural tourist" activities. Late in the film, we see a fake Bushman village, where !Kung dressed in traditional clothing pretend to live "the old way" for the benefit of tourists "interested in San skills."

Some hope resides in Ju/'hoansi leadership, which has now passed to another generation. ≠Toma's grandson, Moses, is an English-speaking government worker who is elected manager of the Farmers' Co-operative, which at one point expanded to include 35 communities. And John Marshall continues his determined advocacy. At a 1994 meeting of the Foundation, John ignores a request not to film and keeps his guerrilla camera running. There is an attempt to exclude him from the meeting, which he resists, insisting that not only was he a founder of the Foundation, but he has "more knowledge

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<sup>217</sup> Any scene picturing John was obviously filmed by someone else. Credits for Part Five list eight camera operators, in addition to John. Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> For example, *People of the Great Sandface* (1985), directed and narrated by Paul John Myburgh, which aired on Channel 4 in UK as a four-part series in 1986, was assailed by John at a 1990 meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association for perpetuating the Bushman myth.

than anyone else here.” John thinks that the initial purpose of the Foundation—“to help people help themselves”—has been abandoned, while the staff has expanded (to 32) and money (3.5 million US\$) has been spent building offices, buying vehicles, and creating reports and articles, rather than training and educating Ju’hoansi and helping them protect their water sources, as had been the original mission.

A 2000 epilogue finds John returning for his fifteenth (and last) visit to Nyae Nyae. Farms are starting again; five village schools have opened; Tsamko settles disputes; his sister Bao is a health worker; !U, ≠Toma’s widow, makes and sells necklaces to tourists. Many want to restore farms, but are presently surviving on government rations of mealie meal. In 2001 six resolute members of ≠Toma’s family continue to live at /Gautscha. The series ends with a reminder that ≠Toma’s memory will live on, but the future of his family is by no means assured, as this deeply moving series reaches its conclusion.

Marshall and his colleagues worked on creating *A Kalahari Family* for fourteen years.<sup>219</sup> Immersed in the massive visual and audio records that had been compiled over five decades, the team faced the challenge of constructing the complicated history of a Ju’hoan family, and a people, that would be understandable, and of interest, to audiences largely unfamiliar with Bushman history and contemporary Namibia.<sup>220</sup> The series became not only the story of a remote African family that has struggled with dispossession, relocation, and the challenges of adaptation, but the reflexive story of an intrepid American family that commits to carefully studying and recording a Ju’hoansi family, and, even more importantly, to knowing them. Through John’s (and Lorna’s) accounts, along with the comments and recollections of ≠Toma and his family, the depth and longevity of the bonds between these two families are revealed to the point where the series title takes on new meaning. As Scott McDonald has suggested, the singular title encourages viewers to see the Marshall and Ju’hoan families as joined.<sup>221</sup> And to see this film as John’s personal odyssey as a filmmaker and a family member. His advocacy for the !Kung drives the series through its last episodes. According to Elizabeth, “When [John] died in 2005, he was in the process of editing *A Kalahari Family* for presentation on PBS [American Public Broadcasting System] so that its message could be distributed more widely. With the last of his strength he was trying to help his adopted people, as he had done for the fifty-five years that he had known them.”<sup>222</sup> As of 2018, the series has

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<sup>219</sup> John directed or co-directed all five episodes; Claire Ritchie co-directed Parts Two and Three. Early in the project development, John described it as “really Claire’s movie and what she wants to do is sort of a history, a wrap-up . . . and she wants to do it kind of based on persons, like the *N!ai* movie, with different characters being the spokespeople for different periods in the film, different aspects.” J. Marshall, 1993, p. 157.

<sup>220</sup> The series incorporates material (some not shown before) from the Ju’hoan Bushmen archive, which contains more than one million feet of 16mm film and hundreds of hours of video, along with tens of thousands of still images, a collection unequaled by any other body of ethnographic material. DER uses these figures in promotional material.

<sup>221</sup> MacDonald, 2013, p. 55.

<sup>222</sup> E.M. Thomas, *The Old Way*, p.289.

not been broadcast on American television, but it was shown on Nambian television, 30 minutes per week, for twelve weeks.<sup>223</sup>

### **Beyond Ethnographic Film**

What began as an adventure for the Marshall family grew into a serious ethnographic enterprise that would eventually demonstrate a rare combination of resources, opportunity, dedication, and skill. As Paul Theroux has written, “The Marshalls—resourceful, quick, curious, bold, humane—mirrored their subjects.”<sup>224</sup> Despite Laurence Marshall’s death in 1980, the family project continued and expanded. Lorna and Elizabeth (Liz) both published additional books on the !Kung, and Liz returned to Nyae Nyae twice in the 1980s; however, it was John who kept in physical contact with his Kalahari family during the 1980s and 90s through his advocacy and development work.<sup>225</sup>

In the years directly before and after John’s death, his contributions to ethnographic film were recognized by a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Visual Anthropology and by the addition of *The Hunters* to the National Film Registry at the Library of Congress. The Ju/’hoan Bushmen Film and Video Collection was added to the UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register; a John Marshall Award for Contemporary Ethnomedia was established; the Museum of Fine Arts-Boston organized a “Tribute to John Marshall”; Anthology Film Archives in New York City held a retrospective of John’s films; in tribute, DER produced a short, “Remembering John Marshall.”<sup>226</sup>

John Marshall’s films are not without their critics; over the years the interrogation of them advanced crucial conversations dealing with the ethics and politics of cross-cultural filmmaking. These conversations will continue. The ethnographic film record he has left of the !Kung people is unequalled (nearly two million feet of 16mm film; 40 hours of video-tape); its value will grow in the years ahead. But it was his work beyond ethnographic film that John Kennedy Marshall most valued at the time of his death: his role in development and advocacy on behalf of and in collaboration with Ju/’hoan friends in their time of crisis. John’s life-long loyalty to ≠Toma and his family led Marshall to devote the last decades of his life to work for and with the Ju/’honasi in their struggle for self-determination. John considered *A Kalahari Family* important not primarily as a cinematic tour de force or as a history of the Marshall family project or as a summary and conclusion of his filmmaking career, but as an advocacy *tool* in support of the

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<sup>223</sup> E-mail to author from Frank Aveni, DER, June 28, 2018.

<sup>224</sup> “Foreward: Families in the Field” *Where the Roads All End*, p. xvi.

<sup>225</sup> Lorna was 101 years old when she published *Nyae Nyae !Kung: Beliefs and Rituals*, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 1999. She died in 2002. Liz published *The Old Way* in 2006 and *Dreaming of Lions* in 2013, 2016.

<sup>226</sup> The 16-minute portrait (2006) was directed by Alice Apley and David Tamès; the documentary short features clips from John’s films and memories recalled by family, colleagues, and friends.

dispossessed Ju/'honasi. Liz Marshall recalled that an anthropologist friend “came to visit my brother as he was dying, and he asked her to continue his work with the farmers. She said she would.”<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> E.M. Thomas, *The Old Way*, 2006, p. 310. John and Liz’s friend Polly Wiessner sold land she owned in Vermont and gifted the profits to the Ju/'hoansi for wells, water pumps and elephant barriers in John’s memory. Wiessner has conducted demographic studies in Nyae Nyae and established the Tradition and Transition Fund. Ibid, p. 310- 311.