



風 歎 息

THE WIND SIGHS:

Navigating voice in a cross-cultural student
documentary production

PART ONE: EXEGESIS

Wendy Fowler
July 2017

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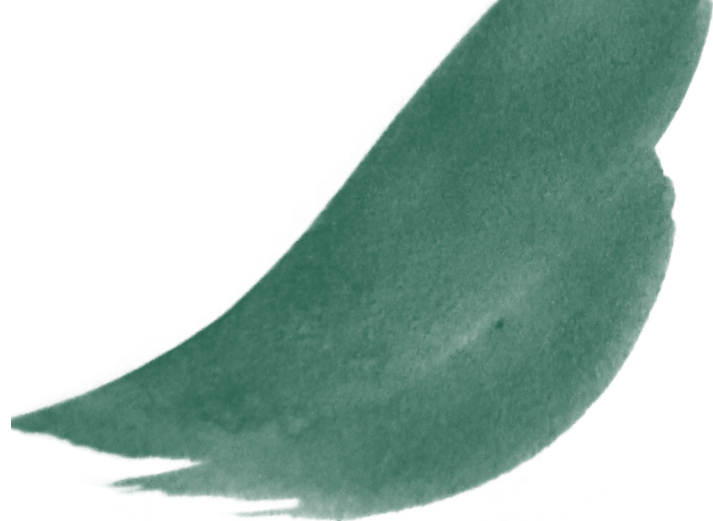


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風 歎 息
The Wind Sighs

The wild duck soars and then circles

Over my orchard.

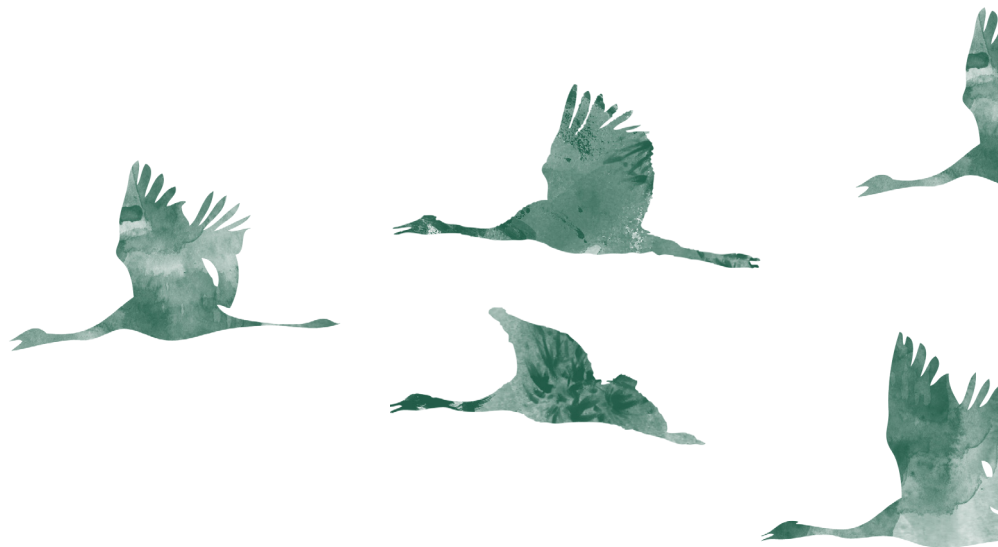
The fruit has fallen, ripe and ready to pick.

I yearn for flowers that bend with the wind and rain.

In my mind I write a play about tea

And the wind sighs amongst the pots and cauldrons.

Tso Ssu

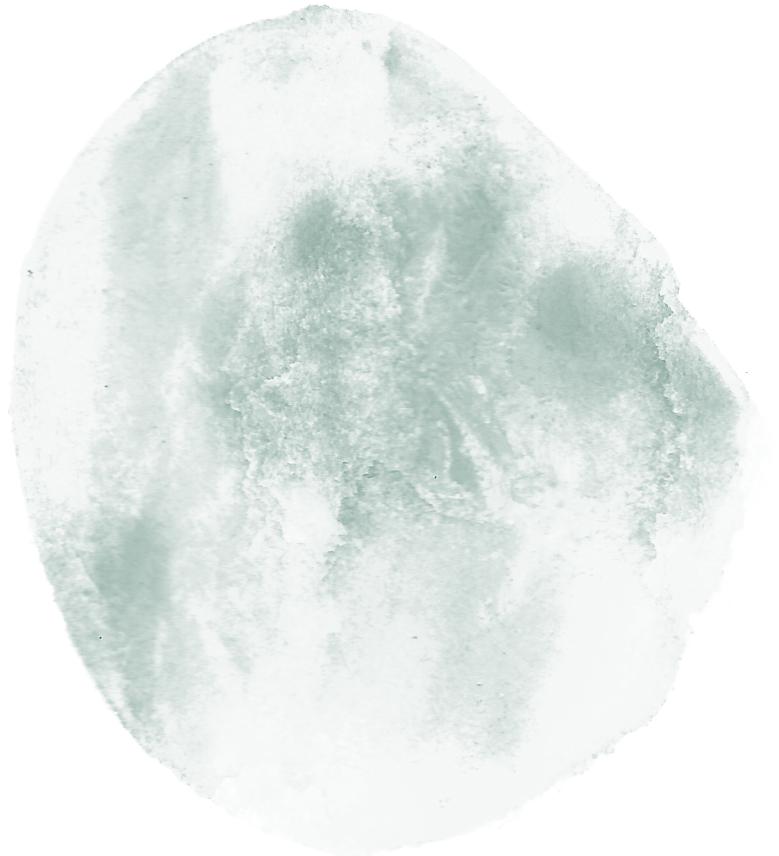


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Declaration

This work does not include any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university without acknowledgement, and to the best of my knowledge does not contain any material previously published or written by another person unless referenced.

Candidate's Signature



致 謝

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On the home front, thanks to my dear friend Alison Ballard for barracking for me in the background, and to Anne Fordham, Dr Julia Archer and Dr Rochelle Wordley-Baker for enriching my academic journey with insights from their own. To Rick Campbrell, thank you once again for understanding my hesitations and helping me finish an unfinished story. Finally, thanks to my beautiful sons, who believe I can do anything.



文 摘

Abstract

At the heart of a student documentary filmmaker's journey is the notion of voice. Students learn to negotiate the perspectives of stakeholders and express themselves through the voice of the film, while balancing their own views against their power to 'speak for and about' their subjects.

This thesis considers practical and theoretical implications of voice in the production of a cross-cultural documentary film, *The Wind Sighs*, from my perspective as a student director.

It considers issues of portraying film subjects in a medium which distorts reality through constructed representations of the external world. It also highlights the challenges of representing voice in a cross-cultural production.

The discussion of voice extends into power, which manifests in both relational dynamics between documentary participants and wider socio-political representations that underpin dominant discourses. As such, it also considers inclusive ways of speaking 'with and to' documentary subjects.

The paper draws on documentary and cultural scholarship, in particular Bill Nichols's concept of documentary representation, Stuart Hall's cultural studies, and Edward Said's theory of Orientalism.

It aims to contribute to the understanding of issues of voice in cross-cultural student filmmaking.

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Introduction

This thesis traces my academic journey to understand the meaning of documentary voice. It considers the implications of voice in a cross-cultural student production, through unfolding themes which mirror my own passage of discovery of voice, Chinese culture, representation, power and polyvocality.

The thesis comprises a creative research project and exegesis. The creative research component is a 14-minute documentary called *The Wind Sighs* about a family of Chinese tea entrepreneurs. It was filmed in and around the Taimu Mountains of Fujian Province in China, and edited in Adelaide across three languages and two primary cultures under a collaboration of Chinese and Australian students and associates. As a student filmmaker, this immersive experience in a foreign culture provided a rich source of material from which to consider voice in a cross-cultural documentary context. It peeled back the skin of classroom learning to reveal first-hand how cultural and language differences can impact on documentary production. It also highlighted the power dynamics of the voices of the documentary and its participants.

The voice of *The Wind Sighs* is located within the wider context of Chinese culture. This is significant given Australia's geostrategic relationship with Asia, which is redefining connections and offering increasing opportunities for international partnerships in areas such as documentary film.

The cross-cultural nature of *The Wind Sighs* examines tensions of, and prospects for, navigating voice in a cross-cultural context, and this issue will have increasing relevance for emerging filmmakers in a diverse, hyper-connected world.

The film is supported by a media kit which includes several promotional tools including a publicity kit, poster, DVD label, DVD cover and website. See www.thewindsighs.com.au

The methodologies used in this thesis are based on theoretical inquiry and practice-led research. Background research for the film was informed by a film and literature review. The exegesis is underpinned by a literature review and reflective practice which allowed me to gather and record insights during the development of the film.

I argue that the voice of *The Wind Sighs* is both singular and pluralistic. It expresses the idea of a story about change, while simultaneously giving voice to an old Chinese tea farmer and his sons about their tea business. It also harmonises the expressions of the cameraperson, editor, sound technicians, designers and musician into the singular expression of the film. Our voices, individually and collectively, represent reality through slivers of sound and vision which were filmed, recorded, culled and stitched together through editing to create *The Wind Sighs*. Due to cultural and language differences, the voice of the film was transmuted by misconceptions about the meaning of words and behaviours, particularly during interviews and translations.

My research considers how the actions of filmmakers reflect and reinforce wider cultural values and meanings. My perceptions of the Lin family were filtered through a Western lens, implicitly reflecting cultural stereotypes about impoverished Chinese farmers. Conversely, my Chinese counterparts appeared to view me as an affluent Westerner from their Eastern perspective.

As such, the voice of *The Wind Sighs* can be seen as a microcosm of the pluralistic voices of society. It speaks of wider, socio-political power struggles identified by Edward Said's concept of Orientalism as a colonised world dominated through powerful, negative Western representations of the East.¹ While fiercely contested, Orientalism has nonetheless highlighted the impact of demeaning stereotypes, and pioneered the resonant school of post-colonial thought.² In placing *The Wind Sighs* in a wider context, the style and content

¹ Edward W. Said, 'Introduction', in *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 2-4.

² Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*, (Vancouver: University of Washington Press, 2014), p. 9.

of this analysis will similarly shift from the micro-focus of a student project to the macro-focus of its cultural and geopolitical environments. My research also identified equitable approaches to documentary voice through respectful, polyvocal filmmaking.³

Furthermore, my research exposed significant contradictions between my tertiary studies in documentary filmmaking, and my professional and educational background in public sector communications and journalism. The latter possess implicit rules of engagement and explicit codes of conduct about what can be said, how and by whom.⁴ Conversely, the less regulated and creative field of documentary film is based on intent and intuition,⁵ which assign a wider licence to directors to deliver their vision⁶ using all available tools.⁷

³ Ian Aitken, *Encyclopaedia of the Documentary Film 3-Volume Set*, (New York, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006) p. 1439.

⁴ Government of South Australia, 'Publications, Policies and Guidelines', 2016. <dpc.sa.gov.au/about/publications,-policies-and-guidelines>.

⁵ Aufderheide (2009) as cited in Willemien Sanders, 'The ethics of documentary filmmaking: an empirical turn', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 10 (2012), pp. 315-317 (p. 316).

⁶ Mick Hurbis-Cherrier, 'Introduction', in *Voice and Vision: A Creative Approach to Narrative Film and DV Production* (United Kingdom: Focal Press, 2013), pp. xvii-xxi (p. xvii).

⁷ Bill Nichols, 'What Gives Documentary Films a Voice of Their Own?', in *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 42-60 (p. 42).

創 意 實 作

Creative Practice

The Wind Sighs is a documentary about Lin Chui Jiao, an 80-year-old Chinese tea farmer and his family, who rise from hardship to success against the backdrop of China's parallel rise from poverty to global superpower.

The idea for *The Wind Sighs* arose from my interest in tea as both a beverage and philosophical representation of humanity and respect. My cursory understanding of the tea industry is based on my formal and informal tea studies in Asia during the past decade.

This documentary film tells a poetic, interview-based story, using a slow tempo and wide pans which echo the pace of rural life in the tea gardens. The interviews with Lin Chui Jiao (Old Lin) and his sons, Lin Xin Biao and Lin Xin Chuo, provide narrative structure for the film's three-part arrangement. The first section begins with reflections by Old Lin about his youth and old China, as he walks to work in the tea gardens. In the second section, the baton is passed to his sons, who describe the expansion of their family business. In part three, Old Lin returns home and as such, the story bookends his life story. His young nephew, Lin Yihang, is also featured in the film and represents the future of both the Lin family and China. Old Lin's daughters were unavailable as they were managing the family's tea business in other cities. His sons' wives had other commitments at the time of filming.

The film is a metaphor for China's ascendancy, which is articulated through the theme of 'change'. This idea of change is expressed in the title of the film, *The Wind Sighs*, which is taken from a Chinese poem about the constancy of tea during seasonal change. Old Lin and his sons also represent constancy

and change respectively, as expressed in the narrative arc of their journeys. Tea is a metaphor of change. For nearly 5000 years, tea has been inextricably steeped in the unfolding philosophical, religious, cultural, economic and political history of China.⁸ In recent years, the beverage has enjoyed a world-wide resurgence as a commodity⁹ and philosophy of teism which further represents China's shift from national to globalising tendencies. Change is also mirrored in the 'agony of the leaves' – the 'transformative moment at which tea leaves unfurl and release their flavour in boiling water.'¹⁰

The Wind Sighs captures the final remnants of old China through the eyes of Old Lin. Since the country was opened to international trade by Deng Xiaoping in the 1970s, China has shaken off its colonial shackles and emerged as an economic and political powerhouse.¹¹ With a population of 1.3 billion,¹² its explosive development has created a landscape striated in contradictions. Every week, China produces a new billionaire,¹³ while many rural peasants still earn less than one dollar per day.¹⁴ Ancient teahouses sit uneasily beside soaring high-rise buildings. Exploding industrial growth has triggered environmental fallout.¹⁵ The convergence of traditionalism and rapid modernisation is fragmenting Chinese society.¹⁶ These contradictions provided powerful vantage points from which to create a short film about change.

⁸ Beatrice Hohnegger, *Liquid Jade, The Story of Tea from East to West*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2006), pp. 9-30.

⁹ Kaison Chang, 'World tea production and trade: Current and future development', Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2015, p. 3. <www.fao.org/3/a-i4480e.pdf>.

¹⁰ Mario Rokas, 'The Agony of the Leaves – To Steep, To Brew...', *Tearoom in the Sky: A Virtual Tearoom*, 18 October 2012. <<https://tearoominthesky.com/2012/10/18/the-agony-of-the-leaves-to-steep-to-brew/>>.

¹¹ Fang Zhang, 'Hero in the West and East', (unpublished master's dissertation, Wake Forest University, 2009), p. 8.

¹² Akbar Ahmed, 'As China Awakens, America – And Pakistan – Should Take Note', *The Huffington Post*, 2017. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/akbar-ahmed/china-awakens-america-pakistan_b_7907758.html>.

¹³ Sophia Yan, paragraph 1, 'China gets a new billionaire every week', *CNN International*, 26 May 2015, <http://money.cnn.com/2015/05/26/luxury/china-billionaires-week/index.html>

¹⁴ Chun H. Wong, 'More Than 82 Million Chinese Live on Less Than \$1 a Day', *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 October 2014. <<https://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2014/10/15/more-than-82-million-chinese-live-on-less-than-1-a-day/>>.

¹⁵ Qiang He, 'China's economic explosion is ravaging its coastal ecosystems', *The Conversation*, 8 August 2014. <<http://theconversation.com/chinas-economic-explosion-is-ravaging-its-coastal-ecosystems-30271>>.

¹⁶ Christopher Crouch, 'Tradition and Modernity in China' in *Contemporary Chinese Visual Culture: Tradition, Modernity and Globalisation* (New York: Cambria Press, 2010), pp. 1-16 (p. 1.)

Production Overview

The Wind Sighs was conceived in Adelaide and enabled by a Chinese friend who introduced me to the Lin family. During pre-production, the background, story and tone of *The Wind Sighs* were researched through books, web searches and discussions about tea and China. I hoped to create a film in the narrative ilk of *El Último Hielero*¹⁷ and cinematic tone of *Le Seigneur de Darjeeling*.¹⁸ Photos and information provided by the Lin family inspired the gentle voice of the film. Various iterations of preliminary scripts, conceptual storyboards, interview questions, themes, shot lists and itineraries were created. The crew was sourced, position briefs written, and fundraising activities rolled out. Legalities were cleared and paper work completed. The crew members watched films and listened to music, as a basis for discussions and a shared understanding about the upcoming film.

During production, I travelled by train with a fellow student, a Chinese national, with film equipment in our backpacks: a SNX70, 6DD, sound recorder, GoPro and tripod. Our journey took us from Shanghai to Hangzhou then on to FuDing, where we spent a week interviewing the Lin family members and filming cutaways. My colleague filmed while I directed and interviewed. Our skeleton crew of two people was supplemented by an entourage of Chinese friends and family who provided assistance with sound recording, translations, transport and advice. The material we gathered reflected our collective voices.

Post-production in Australia involved cross-cultural collaborations of student translators, editors and graphic designers. Footage was uploaded, coded and reviewed in Avid, while multiple iterations of the storyboard and script were developed using screen shots integrated with excerpts of interviews. Chinese language interviews were transcribed, and voice-overs recorded and compiled on the project timeline. Other Masters students filmed back-up footage, and helped address creative, technical and linguistic complexities during multiple revisions of project edits. The film's definitive

¹⁷ Sandy Patch, 'The Last Ice Merchant (El Último Hielero)', *Vimeo*, 22 April 2012. <<https://vimeo.com/66507747>>.

¹⁸ Xavier D. Lauzanne, 'The Lord of Darjeeling (Le seigneur de Darjeeling)', *France 5*, 16 December 2006. <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2144070/>>.

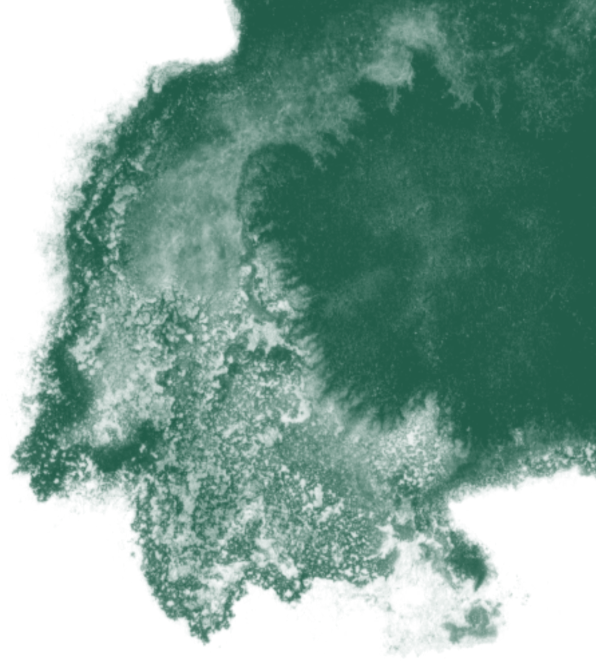
voice was shaped through music, sound editing, colour grading, special effects and text design. It evolved into a dual-nationality production about a Chinese story, as interpreted by an Australian director with influences of the cross-cultural film participants.

Audience and distribution

As a non-commercial student production, *The Wind Sighs* is intended for people who are interested in travel, China, films by emerging filmmakers, cross-cultural experiences and tea, and as such may appeal to travelled, non-traditional film audiences. I plan to distribute it via film festivals, and possibly Western and Chinese social media sites such as Vimeo, YouTube, Facebook, Chinese-Australian student and cultural organisations, and tea-related groups. The project was funded through private contributions, fundraising and a small Flinders Screen and Media grant.

文 獻 回 顧

Literature Review



Documentary voice is an expression of its distinctive representation of the world.¹⁹ A founding member of the documentary film movement, Bill Nichols,²⁰ describes documentary voice as a compilation of sounds and images which express the director's social view.²¹ He has assembled documentary voice into genres based on their shared characteristics. These modes of representation²² are similar to Erik Barnouw's thematic groupings, which connect the director's intent with the tone of the documentary through terms such as reporter, advocate, prosecutor, and guerrilla.²³

The idea of documentary representation has given rise to theoretical quandaries about the inherent contradictions of documentary film.²⁴ As a construction of reality, theorists consider documentary is unable to deliver an accurate representation of its subjects. John Corner and Dirk Eitzen argue that despite its appearance of authenticity and claim to the 'knowledge business,'²⁵ documentary is merely fiction.²⁶ Zhuofei Cheng contends that

¹⁹ Bill Nichols, 'Introduction', in *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. xi-xviii (p. xiv).

²⁰ Roberta Sapino, 'What is a Documentary Film: Discussion of the Genre' (unpublished research paper, University of Turin, 2011), p. 5.

²¹ Bill Nichols, 'Introduction', p. xiv.

²² *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

²³ Erik Barnouw, 'Images at Work', in *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 31-82 (p. 37).

²⁴ Randolph Jordan, 'The Gap: Documentary Truth between Reality and Perception', *Off Screen*, January 2003. <<http://offscreen.com/view/documentary>>.

²⁵ John Corner, 'Documentary Studies: Dimensions of Transition and Continuity', in *Rethinking Documentary: New Perspectives, New Practices*, ed. by Thomas Austin and Wilma D. Jong (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008), pp. 13-28 (p. 21).

²⁶ Dirk Eitzen, 'When Is a Documentary?: Documentary as a Mode of Reception', *Cinema Journal*, 35 (1995), pp. 81-102 (p. 82).

documentary reality is too complex to be recorded,²⁷ while Krystin Arneson describes documentary as having inherently subjective truth-telling value.²⁸

The complexities of representing voice are intensified in cross-cultural documentaries in which differences in culture and language can obfuscate meanings.²⁹ Trish FitzSimons contends that as cultural differences widen between documentary participants, it becomes increasingly complex for the director to manage a documentary's 'vocal relationships.'³⁰

Documentary voice raises implicit issues about who controls representations, and how they impact on film subjects.³¹ Bill Nichols considers that directors control a hierarchy of voices,³² while Gillian Leahy and Sarah Gibson argue that broadcasters and commercial interests drive content.³³ As a student production, *The Wind Sighs* was free of such broadcasting constraints.

At a wider level, power and representations of voice have relationships within and between groups and societies.³⁴ Research by Steven Larkin indicates that stereotypes reinforce dominant groups and silence the voices of the Other through discourses which preserve divisions of power, race and privilege.³⁵ Power and race are pivotal themes in Edward Said's *Orientalism*,

²⁷ Zhuofei Cheng, 'Representation, New Documentary Movement: "A Bite of China Season 1"' (unpublished master's dissertation, University of Arizona, 2016), p. 29.

²⁸ Krystin Arneson, 'Representation through Documentary: A Post-Modern Assessment', *Critical Theory Culture*, 6 (2012), pp. 1-6 (p. 4).

²⁹ Luanga A. Kasanga, 'I am asking for a pen: Framing of Requests in black South African English', in *Meaning Through Language Contrast: Volume 2*, ed. by Katarzyna Jaszczolt and Ken Turner (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003), pp. 213-236 (p. 213).

³⁰ Trish FitzSimons, 'Braided Channels: A Genealogy of the Voice of Documentary', *Studies in Documentary Film*, 3 (2009), pp. 1-16 (p. 4).

³¹ Amanda M. Grue, 'The Use of Archival Footage in Documentary Rhetoric' (unpublished master's dissertation, Montana State University, 2006), p. 10.

³² Bill Nichols, 'What to Do About Documentary Distortion? Toward a Code of Ethics', *International Documentary Association*, 2017. <<http://www.documentary.org/content/what-do-about-documentary-distortion-toward-code-ethics-o>>.

³³ Gillian Leahy and Sarah Gibson, 'Repression and Expression: The Film-maker Voice in Australian Documentary', *Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine*, 2002, pp. 90-95.

³⁴ Bernadette Baker, 'What is Voice? Issues of Identity and Representation in the Framing of Reviews', *Review of Educational Research*, 69 (1999), pp. 365-383 (p. 367).

³⁵ Steven R. Larkin, 'Race Matters: Indigenous Employment in the Australian Public Service' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Queensland University of Technology, 2013), p. 109.

which describes the wholesale silencing of the voices of the East, through denigrating representations which provided a basis of Western imperialism.³⁶

Contemporary debates regarding the representation of documentary voice point to ethics and respectful director-subject relationships as solutions to prejudicial power imbalances.³⁷ Anthropologist Ruby Jay considers issues of voice and power as 'serious matters', and calls for more representative, collaborative, subject-generated films.³⁸ Kate Nash embraces this perspective, asserting that a documentary is enabled through a relationship of trust between filmmaker and participants.³⁹ Meanwhile, FitzSimons draws on conventional and ethnological film scholarship in her case for a more polyvocal perspective of documentary authorship.⁴⁰ She discusses indigenous protocols in Australia which challenge privileged notions about documentary voice, and instead holds up a model of 'braided voices' which acknowledges the voices of documentary players.⁴¹

³⁶ Edward W. Said, 'Introduction', pp. 1-30 (p. 1).

³⁷ Rob Cover, 'Undoing attitudes: subjectivity and ethical change in the Go Back to Where You Came From documentary', *Continuum*, 27 (2013), pp. 408-420 (p. 411).

³⁸ Jay Ruby, *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

³⁹ Kate Nash, 'Exploring power and trust in documentary: a study of Tom Zubrycki's *Molly and Mobarak*', *Studies in Documentary Film*, 4 (2010), pp. 21-33 (p. 31).

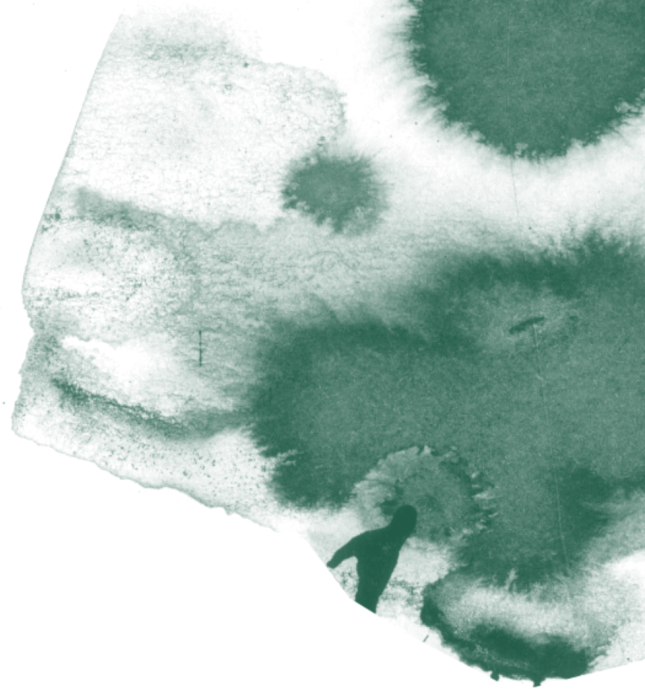
⁴⁰ Trish FitzSimons, 'Braided Channels: A Genealogy of the Voice of Documentary', p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 4.

Analysis 分析

Screen Language

“At one point, we filmed a rice field. I wanted to capture the movement of the arching heads of rice on its sea of greenery. It wasn't so much a physical movement as a palette of tessellating colours, but I couldn't find the words ...”⁴²



Salman Rushdie once said that if you want to tell a good story, you need to find the right language. Use the wrong language, he said, and ‘you’re dumb and blind’.⁴³ In pairing sound and vision with the storyteller’s voice, Rushdie also alludes to documentary voice, which is hewn from the audio and visual languages of film.⁴⁴ This voice speaks through every available means to tell its story.⁴⁵

According to Bill Nichols, documentary voice is first and foremost an expression of the director’s wider values, ethics and artistic orientations.⁴⁶ This reasoning is generally consistent with the way my values and sense of creativity align with *The Wind Sighs*. The film’s intertwining ideas of upheaval and change resonate with my own life. So too did both the beauty of the simplicity of Old Lin’s life in the tea plantations, and his children’s drive for surety in the wake of privation.

In scoping the voice of the film, early consideration was given to its style. Documentary is clustered into distinctive genres of representation: expository,

⁴² Wendy Fowler, (*Unpublished Research Journal*: Flinders University, 2015), p. 12.

⁴³ Salman Rushdie (1991, p. 115) as cited in Daurius Figueira, ‘Foucault’s Texts as a Point of Exit’, in *Exiting a Racist Worldview: A Journey Through Foucault, Said and Marx to Liberation* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2004), pp. 1-17 (p. 17).

⁴⁴ Bill Nichols, ‘What Gives Documentary Films a Voice of Their Own?’, p. 42.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 42.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 43.

poetic, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative.⁴⁷ I wanted *The Wind Sighs* to speak through the poetic genre, which hints at perspective through aesthetic and subjective interpretations of the film's subject matter.⁴⁸ I felt a poetic treatment would suggest the gentleness of the Buddhist Lin family and the culture of tea, while channelling China's era of hardship through understated poignancy. This treatment conveyed the lyricism of Old Lin's life through meditative music, bells, wind sighs, and slow-motion mist, steam, and winnowing leaves. The devices give subjective and emotional depth to the film and help convey its narrative.

The Wind Sighs' musical composition is one of the most emotionally binding components of the film. It uses a contemporary meditative track with Asian influences which indicate the film's Chinese-Western geneses. The composition incorporates musical relationships which reflect and drive emotion, link scenes, project moods, and underscore meaning.⁴⁹

Cinematography is an equally critical element of *The Wind Sighs'* poetic voice, and seeks to express contrapuntal tones of beauty and anguish through soft and hard lines of imagery. Australian cinematographer Christopher Doyle, who has made more than 50 Chinese-speaking films, describes his craft as 'the translation of emotion into light',⁵⁰ and thinks of colour '...the way it's thought of in Chinese medicine - like in alchemy, colour is associated with some element'.⁵¹ In this sense, I discussed light and emotion with the cinematographer, to try to gauge ways of achieving mood through framing, light and colour.

Structurally, filming generally followed interviews and locations based on an original storyboard concept. This delivered narrative-ready footage to guide

“ Strangely enough, humanity has so far met in the tea-cup. It is the only Asiatic ceremonial that commands universal esteem.

Book of Tea,
Okakura Kakuzō (1906)

⁴⁷ Bill Nichols, 'What Types of Documentary Are There?' in *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 99-138 (p. 99).

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 102-103.

⁴⁹ Holly Rogers, 'Introduction: Music, Sound and the Nonfiction Aesthetic', in *Music and Sound in Documentary Film* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1-19 (p. 11).

⁵⁰ 'Interview: Cinematographer Christopher Doyle on his work with Wong Kar-Wai', *Film4*. 2017. <<http://www.film4.com/special-features/interviews/interview-cinematographer-christopher-doyle-on-his-work-with-wong-kar-wai>>.

⁵¹ Gaby Wood, 'His eyes have seen the glory...', *The Guardian*, 17 July 2005. <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2005/jul/17/features.review>>>.

the editing sequences. However, my inexperience constrained the poetic qualities which I had envisaged, as reflected in my research journal:

“ I was guessing and trying to keep things moving as there were so many people milling around and I felt self-conscious and awkward. I had so little experience ... of how to frame or express the beauty of the simplicity around me.”⁵²

Regardless, the skills and sensitive eye of the cinematographer captured evocative footage which was woven through the film's interviews, inter-titles and music and helped provide an organising logic for the film.⁵³

These collective sensory qualities underpinned *The Wind Sighs*' poetic voice and were delivered through the creative capabilities of the film team. However, *The Wind Sighs* also spoke in voices other than poetry, as I would soon discover.

⁵² Wendy Fowler, *Unpublished Research Journal*. p. 11

⁵³ Bill Nichols, 'What Types of Documentary Are There?' p. 104.

Analysis 分析

Cultural Circuits

“Generally, I read people pretty well, but am getting things wrong in China because everything is so different. Clichéd as it sounds, I realise that I need to back up and stop judging things I don’t understand.”⁵⁴

In making a film about China, I learned by trial and error that voice possesses cultural dimensions which are inextricably linked to language and meaning.^{55 56 57} Cultural theorist Stuart Hall explains that cultural meanings are embedded in signifiers such as words, sounds, objects and gestures which are produced in cultural circuits through human interactions. Therefore, people who belong to the same culture interpret and express the world in similar ways.⁵⁸

It quickly became apparent that while I shared cultural similarities with my Chinese colleagues, they used different codes to communicate meaning.⁵⁹ These differences intensified project complexities and influenced the voice of the film. During a four-way interview, my questions to Old Lin were interpreted by three people who translated from English to Chinese, Chinese to Chinese, and Chinese to Min Nan. Old Lin’s responses were then passed back up the line to me.⁶⁰ The process diluted the precision of our original

⁵⁴ Wendy Fowler, *Unpublished Research Journal*, p. 10.

⁵⁵ Bonny Norton, ‘Language, Identity, and the Ownership of English’, *TESOL Quarterly*, 31 (1997), pp. 409-429 (pp. 419-420).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 419.

⁵⁷ Henslin (2006) as cited in SOCI1101 *Understanding Society*, ‘2.3 Culture and Language’, 2017. <<http://vcampus.uom.ac.mu/soci1101/index.html>>.

⁵⁸ Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), pp. 1-29 (p. 2).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁰ Wendy Fowler: *Unpublished Research Journal*, p. 17.

voices as evidenced when it later emerged that my word ‘ducks’ had been mistranslated to ‘geese’ and ‘egrets’.

Language obstacles also occurred in post-production. Interviews were transcribed and translated by Chinese students and associates possessing varying proficiencies in English. As a result, some translations required additional refinements to ensure fluency and logic to the final English script. I felt conflicted in choosing between transcriptions which accurately preserved absolute authenticity of the original voices, and adapting the text for clarity.

During editing of *The Wind Sighs*, poor sound quality prompted the decision to use voiceovers. However, the substitute voices were progressively distanced from the Lin’s authentic voices by technical and logistical constraints. Despite canvassing more than 100 Chinese people, only one suitable mature-aged Fujian speaker was identified, while the other two speakers were from Hong Kong and Malaysia. This meant two of the three Lins were voiced in accents which did not reflect their places of origin. The voice-over actors were coached to animate their voices prior to the recording, which added a further layer to the process of representation.

The recordings were then spliced, paced and toned to synch with the film’s sound and vision. I found this masticating process frustrating, as it meant losing the literal voices of the Lin family, and risked misinterpreting their comments. However, during final cut, the Chinese language editor and I meticulously double-checked the final script against the original footage and transcriptions to ensure it retained its original intent.

In addition to spoken language, Chinese cultural meaning is also conveyed through behaviours and attitudes which can be traced to China’s philosophical traditions.⁶¹ For instance, China’s collectivist culture stems from Confucianism,⁶² which encourages family members to care for each

“ Translation is always treason, and ...can at its best be only the reverse side of the brocade, - all the threads are there, but not the subtlety of colour or design.

Book of Tea,
Okakura Kakuzo (1906)

⁶¹ Warren G. Frisina, ‘Thinking Through Hall and Ames: On the Art of Comparative Philosophy’, *Dao*, 15 (2016), pp. 563-574 (p. 563).

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 564.

other in exchange for deep and binding loyalties.⁶³ During production in FuDing, my colleagues' collectivist values surfaced in the groups of family members, friends and bystanders who followed us in convoys of cars, transported equipment, assisted with recording, served food and fetched and carried items. Their collectivist tradition flowed through to the documentary and helped shape its voice:

“It was becoming obvious that this would be a communal story, as the whole table sat discussing weather, logistics and toasting their undivided support for this film. I wasn't going to have a private creative epiphany on my own terms. It's a curious multi-party decision-making process. I'm unsure what sort of story it'll be, but the end-result will be due to forces greater than me.”⁶⁴

Hall asserts that while meaning is 'slippery', it is important to consider it less in terms of 'accuracy' and 'truth' and more in terms of an effective exchange which enables cultural communication through viable translations.⁶⁵ *The Wind Sighs'* cross-cultural team navigated cultural and language differences through determination, lateral communication and goodwill. In the process, it also encountered issues of cultural and documentary representation.

⁶³ Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (London: SAGE Publications, 1980), p. 1.

⁶⁴ Wendy Fowler, *Unpublished Research Journal*, p. 10.

⁶⁵ Stuart Hall, 'Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices', p. 3.



Analysis 分析

Fact or Fiction?

“I’m grappling with notions of creating, contriving and chronicling the story. This is a whole new game, and I’m unsure if it’s unorthodox or unethical to have created the idea for the film without first seeing the reality.”⁶⁶

Documentary filmmaking has been likened to a journey in which the filmmaker represents their discoveries through constructions of reality.⁶⁷ When I left for China, however, I naively thought my story would be truthful. It did not take long to discover that the notion of documentary truth is sticky. The storyline was pre-set, scenes were choreographed, and sounds recorded for emotive effect. My idea of a documentary voice as reality quickly gave way to concerns about whether it was fact and fiction.

I was not alone in my dilemma. Documentary history is embedded in ambiguity and coloured by debate about its truth claims. Originating in 1877 with Eadweard Muybridge’s sequential photographs of horses in motion, the rudimentary ‘actualities’ documented snippets of daily life for forty years.⁶⁸ By the 1920s, documentary had begun interweaving creative storytelling and information into romantic travelogues⁶⁹ such as Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North*. However, Flaherty’s staged scenes of Inuit actors broke trust with unseasoned viewers,⁷⁰ triggering heated discussion about the identity and authenticity of documentary.

⁶⁶ Wendy Fowler, *Unpublished Research Journal*, p. 14

⁶⁷ Bill Nichols, ‘Foreword by Bill Nichols’, in *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*, ed. by Barry K. Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), pp. 11-14 (p. 12).

⁶⁸ ‘Chronology of Documentary History’, *UC Berkeley – Media Resources Center*, 2001. <<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/docexhibit/docuchron.htm>>.

⁶⁹ Bill Nichols, ‘Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde’, *Critical Inquiry*, 27 (2001), pp. 580-610 (p. 582).

⁷⁰ Robert Christopher, *Robert and Frances Flaherty: A Documentary Life, 1883-1922*, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montréal, 2005), p. 387

Today, its contentious reputation persists. Postmodernist critiques have contested foundational discourses⁷¹ which considered documentary to be in the 'knowledge business.'⁷² They argue its central conflict lies in its opposing journalistic and cinematic forms,⁷³ and this drives tensions between its simultaneous delivery of entertainment and information.⁷⁴

Scholars and practitioners have divergent opinions about the paradoxical nature of documentary film. On one side, avant garde filmmaker Jonas Mekas asks: 'What does it matter what the film is about, its theme, its plot? It is about love, sun, trees, beautiful women, summertime, a picnic in the grass.'⁷⁵ Alternatively, Roberto Sapino considers contradictions within documentary are 'different poles of attraction' which enrich the documentary genre.⁷⁶ At the other end of the spectrum however, documentary is described as illusionism⁷⁷ - 'a sort of cinema mensonge' (lies) which fabricates reality through representation.⁷⁸

In *The Wind Sighs*, the distortion of reality began during filming. The camera captured selective slices of the external world and pieced them together into a semblance of reality during editing.⁷⁹ Nichols argues that creating an illusion of authenticity⁸⁰ gives the impression of non-interference, when in fact documentarians have considerable sway over the variables of a film.⁸¹ During the production of *The Wind Sighs*, the 80-year span of the Lin's story was selectively captured in 25 hours of footage and interviews, then further

“ One master defines Zen as the art of feeling the polar star in the southern sky. Truth can be reached only through the comprehension of opposites.

Book of Tea,
Okakura Kakuzō (1906)

⁷¹ Roberta Sapino, 'What is a Documentary Film: Discussion of the Genre', p. 13.

⁷² John Corner, 'Documentary Studies: Dimensions of Transition and Continuity', p. 21.

⁷³ Krystin Arneson, 'Representation through Documentary: A Post-Modern Assessment', p. 1.

⁷⁴ John Corner, 'Documentary Studies: Dimensions of Transition and Continuity', p. 21.

⁷⁵ Richard Brody, 'Jonas Mekas, Champion of the "Poetic" Cinema', *The New Yorker*, 21 April 2016. <<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/jonas-mekas-champion-of-the-poetic-cinema>>.

⁷⁶ Roberta Sapino, 'What is a Documentary Film: Discussion of the Genre', p. 3.

⁷⁷ John Corner, 'Documentary Studies: Dimensions of Transition and Continuity', p. 16.

⁷⁸ Agnes Varda quoted in Claudia Gorbman, 'Finding a Voice: Varda's Early Travelogues', *SIAS Faculty Publications*, 41 (2012), pp. 40-57 (p. 56).

⁷⁹ Krystin Arneson, 'Representation through Documentary: A Post-Modern Assessment', p. 3.

⁸⁰ Bill Nichols, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

⁸¹ Holly Rogers, 'Introduction: Music, Sound and the Nonfiction Aesthetic', p. 4.

compressed and sutured into 14 minutes of embellished film. The final film was a creative interpretation of their lives, so even though I aimed for an honest likeness, I do not consider their voices to be authentic.

At times, I felt uneasy while editing the tiny, digital representations of the Lin family. There was a potential violability in the intimacy of the editing suite, where decibels of words and frames of faces were spliced and moved with tweezer-like precision of the cursor. The words and faces belonged to real people who entrusted me to represent them in *The Wind Sighs*, but it felt like knitting with gossamer.

This hesitancy was due partly to my background in journalism and public sector communications. While I enjoyed the poetic dimensions of documentary, it was initially difficult to reconcile with journalism which is a less expressive discipline. In Australia, documentary lacks a journalistic equivalent of the Australian Press Council, and has limited regulation under the Australian Broadcasting Commission and Australian Media Alliance. Practitioners tend to use 'gut feelings' to self-regulate their conduct. Of necessity, I likewise found myself measuring and resolving issues through intuition.

At a wider level, representations have implications for power, and my concerns about how to portray the Lin family in my documentary reflect resonant discourses about issues that have divided the world.

Analysis 分析

Power of Voice

*“During dinner, I asked if I could take a photo and was instantly declined. China’s new Chairman Xi Jinping was cracking down on government corruption, and the potential leak of a photo of politicians downing French wine and seafood, especially during the Military Parade, could be awkward.”*⁸²

On the day of this journal entry, the Western media were busily spinning global narratives about China’s Victory Day march, while China in turn was censoring and reporting its own. The Military Parade celebrated the seventieth anniversary of China’s resistance against Japanese aggression in WWII, and President Xi Jinping vowed to ‘uphold the path to peaceful development’⁸³ as 12,000 troops goose-stepped through Beijing and bombers and fighter jets flew overhead.⁸⁴ The event reflected broadly opposing representations of China – one which China sought to portray as ‘devoted to safeguarding international order’,⁸⁵ and the other ascribed to it by the West as a threat.⁸⁶ Implicit in these representations were notions of power. China had risen to become a global military force⁸⁷ in the wake of its Century of Humiliation⁸⁸ during colonial

⁸² Wendy Fowler, *Unpublished Research Journal*, p. 19

⁸³ Stephen McDowell, ‘China flexes military muscle to mark end of WWII; Xi Jinping announces plan to cut troops by 300,000’, *ABC News*, 4 September 2015. <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-03/china-puts-on-huge-show-of-force-at-parade-to-mark-world-war-two/6746936>>.

⁸⁴ S McDowell, *ABC News*, 2015.

⁸⁵ *The Economist*, ‘Victory Day Celebrations: Parade’s End’, 5 September 2015. <<https://www.economist.com/news/china/21663278-real-purpose-rare-military-display-was-show-who-charge-parades-end>>.

⁸⁶ Pamela K. Crossley, ‘What Is China’s Big Parade All About?’, *ChinaFile*, 2 September 2015. <<http://www.chinafile.com/conversation/what-chinas-big-parade-all-about>>.

⁸⁷ Giulio Pugliese and Aurelio Insia, ‘Introduction: Back to the Future? China and Japan’s Drumbeats in the Year of History’, in *Sino-Japanese Power Politics: Might, Money and Minds* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 1-18 (p. 2).

⁸⁸ Pamela K. Crossley, ‘What Is China’s Big Parade All About?’, 2015.

subjugation to Western imperialism. Its celebrations voiced a new identity which defied Western narratives of its inferiority and suppression - of a China which could no longer be dominated.⁹⁰

During the production of *The Wind Sighs*, the relationship between representation and voice consistently raised questions about power. Did the Lins have a voice? How was that voice portrayed? Whose voice dominated in the film? Did I have the right to assert my own? How would those decisions be made? On the surface, the answers were simple. I would produce a short documentary which reflected my voice, while simultaneously channelling the voices of the Lin family. However, in practice this process was more complex because the interests of multiple players competed and required negotiation.

Negotiation occurred through personal reflection and inter-personal transactions of power. Power related to the positionality⁹¹ or speaking positions⁹² of participants, that is, where we stood in relation to each other in the context of the project. At a project level, I generally possessed greater speaking power by virtue of my role as the director. However, this power was relative. In Australia, my speaking power was greater than in China, where I was reliant on my Chinese associates to guide me through their geography, culture and languages. In this context, the speaking power of the Lins was augmented by their influence over what and where we filmed, and how they answered questions.

This is illustrated by their insistence that I view and film their new factory, despite it not being part of the original shoot schedule. As it turned out, the new factory threw fresh light on the story, and provided a fitting narrative arc for the film. This achieved a win-win outcome for both the Lins and me. Later I used my speaking power as director to over-ride an editorial move to use clips of non-local tea gardens in the film, as I considered the footage misrepresented Old Lin's tea environment and may have disrespected him.

“ The average Westerner, in his sleek complacency, will see in the tea ceremony but another instance of the thousand and one oddities which constitute the quaintness and childishness of the East to him.

Book of Tea,
Okakura Kakuzō (1906)

⁸⁹ Giulio Pugliese and Aurelio Insia, 'Introduction: Back to the Future? China and Japan's Drumbeats in the Year of History', p. 2.

⁹⁰ Pamela K. Crossley, 'What Is China's Big Parade All About?', 2015.

⁹¹ Sharan B. Merriam, Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Ming-Yeh Lee, Youngwha Kee, Gabo Ntseane and Mazanah Muhamad, 'Power and positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures', *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20 (2001), pp. 405-416 (p. 411).

⁹² Nick McKenzie, Sashka Koloff and Anne Davies, 'Power and Influence', *Four Corners*, 6 June 2017. <<http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2017/06/05/4678871.htm>>.

Questions also arose about how to represent the Lins. While their spoken voices were replicated through creative decisions and technical processes, the treatment of the storyline, interview questions, camera angles, footage selection and music also contributed to how they were characterized within the story. The matter is significant because, according to Hall, choices about how to portray others influence meaning, and this is also related to power.⁹³ Representations define what is considered 'normal' and who belongs and who is excluded. They frequently essentialise differences through stereotypes which invoke positive and negative responses.⁹⁴ These meanings are fixed by power through representations⁹⁵ which can distort the portrayal of documentary subjects.

My original intent was to portray Old Lin as unsullied and wise in the ways of tea. I had been given to understand he was poor, living in seclusion, and unexposed to the West, and as such considered he could provide interesting perspectives about changes in the global tea market from its fringe. I based this assumption on my six years of communication work with farmers in the Mid North of South Australia which revealed their deep, generational understanding of their land and business practices. However, I also made assumptions about Old Lin as a shy, unworldly man. In fact, though humble and simply spoken, Old Lin was complex in his life experiences and ambitions, and was the travelled patriarch of a thriving international business. Inadvertently, I had projected a stereotype onto him, of the traditional Chinese farmer who I had seen in films, books and advertisements. Of itself, this mistaken perception could be largely rectified through the film. However, at a wider, cumulative level, stereotypes have profound implications for power relations in how they generate and reinforce in-groups, and out-groups.⁹⁶ It does this by enabling and prohibiting voice at micro and macro levels.

French philosopher Michel Foucault argues that power is effected through information clusters called 'discursive formations' which govern what is and

⁹³ Stuart Hall, 'Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices', p. 5.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 11.

⁹⁵ Stuart Hall, *ibid*, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Stuart Hall, *ibid*, p. 24.

is not acceptable in society.⁹⁷ Such discourses involve written and spoken references to particular keywords such as ‘Orient’ and the ‘West’, which are used to influence people about the meaning and implications of those words.⁹⁸ For Foucault, one’s speaking position influences discourses which are linked to power.⁹⁹ This matter has relevance for documentary film, as Nichols notes:

“To present a realistic likeness of something is to efface the agency of representation so that the likeness comes to the fore. To stand for someone or something else is to assert the agency of representation so that an issue or concern comes to the fore.”¹⁰⁰

A resonant theory of cultural discourse called ‘Orientalism’ was developed by cultural theorist Edward Said.¹⁰¹ It highlighted the wide-spread ramifications of discursive formations about the Other, and argued that the West has manipulated images of Asia and the Middle East to justify European and American colonial and imperialist ambition.¹⁰² Said asserts that the West’s romanticisation of the Orient as powerless and inferior has shaped an oppositional, binary perception of the West as powerful and superior. He writes:

“Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.”¹⁰³

In *China as a Documentary*, Rey Chow looks at encounters between ‘native informant and foreign observer’, saying historical power imbalances and

⁹⁷ Michael Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’, *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1982), pp. 777-795 (p. 779).

⁹⁸ Michael Foucault, *ibid.*, p. 780.

⁹⁹ Michael Foucault, *ibid.*, p. 781.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Renov, *Theorizing Documentary*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 175

¹⁰¹ Edward W. Said, ‘Introduction’, p. 1.

¹⁰² Fang Zhang, ‘Hero in the West and East’, p. 8.

¹⁰³ Edward W. Said, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-5.

romanticisation of China by foreigners ‘who know little about China’s history and its people’ have offended Chinese viewers who find images of poverty and shabbiness denigrating. Similarly, Homay King looks at how Western cinema has represented the inscrutable East as an Other through mysterious curios and décor.¹⁰⁴

It is worth noting that Orientalism has also been criticized by scholars who argue that subject-object opposition is impossible to eliminate, and does not necessarily demean the Other.¹⁰⁵ As Clifford asks: ‘Can one ultimately escape the procedures of dichotomizing, restructuring, and textualizing in the making of interpretative statements about foreign cultures and traditions?’¹⁰⁶

I questioned whether or not I fell short as a research student, because I had enjoyed Old Lin’s portal into a different time and place than mine. In retrospect, it is clear that *The Wind Sighs* is tinged with Orientalism. I chose to film tracts of tea gardens and countryside which were free from signs of modernisation and development to preserve the sense of Old Lin’s original farming environment. At the time, I was more aware of ethics than discourse, and did not consider the wider implications of romanticising his world, as I recorded:

“But is it ok to eke out pristine hillsides, or must I show them draped in power lines? Many nature documentaries are filmed in reserves, those tightly managed arks of survival without a blemish in sight. Is that dishonest? And if I want to show Old Lin in his ark of old China, is that the wrong thing to do?”¹⁰⁷

Orientalism has given rise to counter-claims of Occidentalism which seek to explain anti-Western attitudes in terms of ideas and power plays between

¹⁰⁴ Homay King, ‘The Enigmatic Signifier’, in *Lost in Translation: Orientalism, Cinema, and the Enigmatic Signifier*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 19-43 (p. 29).

¹⁰⁵ Silvio Carta, ‘Orientalism in the documentary representation of culture’, *Visual Anthropology*, 24 (2011), pp. 403-420 (p. 406).

¹⁰⁶ James Clifford, ‘On Orientalism’, in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 255-276 (p. 261).

¹⁰⁷ Wendy Fowler, *Unpublished Research Journal*, p. 13

the West and non-West.¹⁰⁸ Orientalism has also triggered the concept of self-Orientalism in discussions around how others represent themselves. A study of China's promotional campaign, CHINA, FOREVER highlights the practise of self-Orientalism as a 'traditional/modern binary' which facilitates cultural identification through representations.¹⁰⁹ Thus, at a microcosmic level, it could be argued that the Lins also sought to self-Orientalise their tea business in *The Wind Sighs* through images of Old Lin as an essentialised Chinese farmer. And likewise, as a stereotypical 'wealthy' Westerner, my projections could potentially assist the Lins to promote their business.

These experiences taught me that power is implicit in documentary voice, and reflects and reinforces the greater circulation of ideas and power within cultures and between societies. It also pointed to the need to consider my own powers and limitations as an emerging film director, and how to approach relationships with documentary participants.

¹⁰⁸ Martin Jacques, 'Upping the anti', *The Guardian*, 4 September 2004. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/sep/04/society>>.

¹⁰⁹ Grace Yan and Carla A. Santos, "'China, Forever': Tourism, Discourse, and Self-Orientalism", *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36 (2009), pp. 295-315 (p. 296).

Analysis 分析

Sum of Its Parts

*“This story ... should be told by a Chinese person who knows their own culture. I feel like an interloper. But so many Chinese people have influenced, helped film, interpret, edit and shape this film. It’s a collective product...”*¹¹⁰

My research into documentary voice raised questions about complex power relations between the filmmaker and subjects. How can filmmakers ensure that documentary voice is representative of its participants? What are the possibilities of speaking with and to, film subjects? Can cognising pathways be found through cultural representation? In addressing these issues, my study identifies ethics and polyvocality as remedial agents which are employed by filmmakers to help correct practice-based power imbalances.

In the absence of formal regulating mechanisms, documentary ethics is a primary means by which filmmakers control their own professional behaviour. A significant study by the Center for Media & Social Impact found power differences are central concerns for filmmakers who resolve them through personal codes of behaviour. These codes involve measures such as protecting vulnerable subjects, sharing decision-making in fine cut, paying subjects, honouring trust and editorial judiciousness.¹¹¹ Anthropological documentary filmmakers similarly turn to self-prescriptive codes of conduct about participatory and self-reflexive practices, compensation, informed consent and collaboration. These implicit contracts of trust between filmmaker, subjects and audience are cornerstones of ethical filmmaking. Likewise, Kuei-fen Chiu and Yingjin Zhang point to the importance of

¹¹⁰ Wendy Fowler, *Unpublished Research Journal*, p. 26

¹¹¹ Aufderheide (2009) as cited in Willemien Sanders, ‘The ethics of documentary filmmaking: an empirical turn’, p. 316.

respect as a crucial tenet of ethical encounters with others, and advocate a relationship of respect between filmmaker and subject that recognises Self in the Other.¹¹² Barbash and Taylor claim the interrogation of documentary ethics intensifies in the context of cross-cultural films, and magnifies issues of representation, language barriers, cultural differences and power imbalances.¹¹³ They argue that right and wrong are culturally relative and should be negotiated through trust, collaboration and reciprocity between filmmaker and subjects.¹¹⁴ Calls for an industry-wide code of ethics for filmmakers have so far been unsuccessful; as Kate Nash argues, while such a code would be valuable, it would need to reflect both the theoretical interests of scholars and complex professional requirements of documentarians.¹¹⁵

Documentary power and voice are also addressed through the idea of polyvocal filmmaking which recognises ‘complex cultural politics’ about who speaks for whom.¹¹⁶ Polyvocality describes an interplay of documentary voices which is greater than the sum of its parts, and is articulated in the theories of positioned utterances,¹¹⁷ shared voices,¹¹⁸ polythesis,¹¹⁹ and choric voices.¹²⁰ In her discussion of documentary authorship, Trish FitzSimons advocates a model of ‘braided voices’ which acknowledges the contributions of documentary’s multiple voices. She cites David MacDougall who says:

“The concept of the author of a work as a stable centre is illusory ... in fact, our voices as authors are plural...The author is never isolated but always a

“ Our mind is the canvas on which the artists lay their colour: their pigments are our emotions; their chiaroscuro the light of joy, the shadow of sadness. The masterpiece is of ourselves, as we are of the masterpiece.

Book of Tea,
Okakura Kakuzō (1906)

¹¹² Kuei-fen Chiu and Yingjin Zhang, *New Chinese-Language Documentaries: Ethics, Subject and Place*. (New York, Routledge, 2015), p.3.

¹¹³ Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor, ‘Between Diegetic and Extradiegetic’, in *Cross-Cultural Filmmaking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 420-425 (p. 421).

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 421.

¹¹⁵ Kate Nash, ‘Beyond the Frame: Researching Documentary Ethics’, *Journal of Writing and Writing Programs*, 15 (2011), pp. 1-13. (p. 2).

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ James Clifford, ‘Introduction: Partial Truths’, in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 12.

¹¹⁸ Jean Rouch and Steven Feld, *Cine-Ethnography* (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2003).

¹¹⁹ Rouch and Feld 2003

¹²⁰ Stella Bruzzi, *New documentary: a critical introduction*. (London ; New York, Routledge), 2000, p. 48.

contingent being, and the author's 'voice' is always constituted in relation to its object.”¹²¹

My own experiences of addressing power imbalances in documentary voice were negotiated on an ad hoc basis. Many of the ethical conundrums I encountered were unfamiliar to me and as previously stated, were refracted through my professional prism. I found the implicit power of voice to be daunting, and was initially confused and hesitant about matters such as construction and perspective. These experiences were influenced by the cooperative orientation of my Chinese film subjects and colleagues, and by the participatory dynamics which are pivotal to documentary filmmaking. My research showed me that what filmmakers set out to say reflects the expressions of many people through the voice of the documentary. I believe this matters, because as Mikail Bakhtin says, when we arrive at voice, we come up against the human being.¹²²

¹²¹ David MacDougall, *Transcultural Cinema* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1998).

¹²² Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-258.

總 結

Conclusion

This research project has found that documentary voice is negotiated, polyvocal and located in power. Through the collective voices of its participants, it projects the intentions of the director. Documentary voice is a representation of reality which is defined through the process of film production. This issue is amplified in the context of cultural difference. My research found that the power of documentary voice is complex and expressed through the speaking positions of its participants, and that consequently, subjects also possess power to vary documentary outcomes. I also discovered synergies between power dynamics within the local project context and the wider socio-political environment, and these highlighted the need for filmmakers to be aware of the nature of their representations of others. My research also uncovered the importance of strong ethical foundations and respect in the filmmaker's relationships with their documentary subjects.

As a student production, *The Wind Sighs* is marked with strengths and weaknesses, reflecting my inexperience and learning journey. Every marred cut, blurred image and vocal utterance is a lesson for the real world. It was ironic and disappointing to lose the literal voices of the Lin family. Nonetheless, I believe the film is a sound reflection of the well-intentioned expressions of the film's Chinese and Australian collaborators.

My research demonstrated the challenges of producing a cross-cultural student documentary. Despite having exposure to the Chinese culture prior to *The Wind Sighs* project, I was unprepared for the complexities of managing a project in a foreign environment, and editing in multiple languages. These experiences suggest opportunities for further research into the development of a cross-cultural framework and cultural competency training for screen and media students. These initiatives could build awareness and help position emerging student filmmakers for cross-cultural film partnerships in a culturally diverse, globalised environment.



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平 面 設 計

Graphic Design

This exegesis - including its appendices - has been treated with a graphic design which is complimentary to, but distinctive from, the project's media kit.

Its overarching design combines a contemporary, open style with Chinese and Western fonts which reflect the cross-cultural nature of the project, and forms part of the voice and branding of *The Wind Sighs* project.

The media kit incorporates project stills from *The Wind Sighs*, while the exegesis and appendices feature a mix of traditional Chinese and contemporary brushstroke paintings.

This juxtaposition of styles echoes Orientalism, a concept outlined in the exegesis. Orientalism considers Western artistic and literary portrayals of the Orient which exaggerate differences between the East and West.

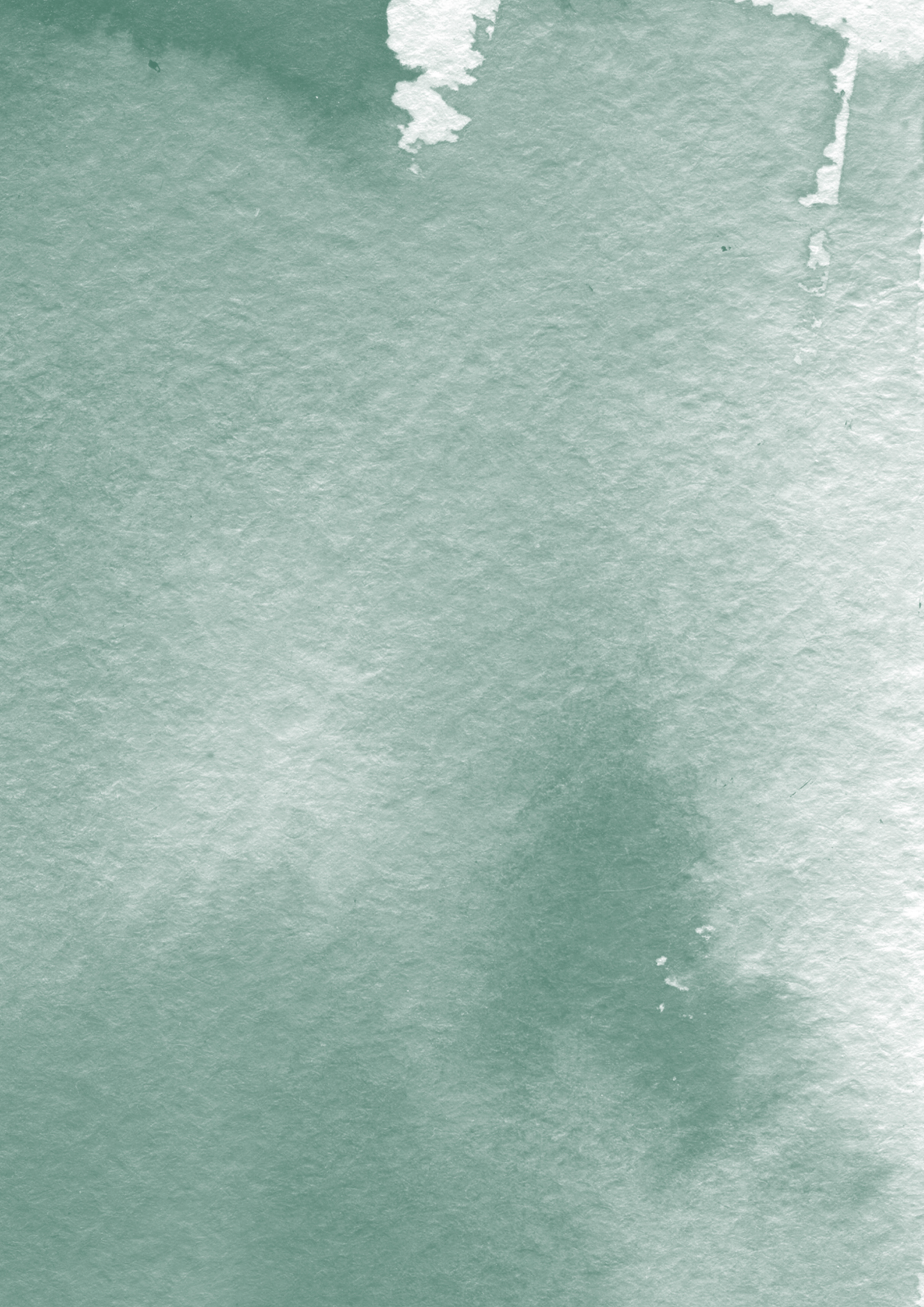
The flowering plant on the cover of the exegesis and appendices is *Camellia sinensis*, the Chinese tea plant, which is a central focus of *The Wind Sighs* documentary. It has been hand-painted in traditional Chinese style by Taiwanese artist, Hoieng Lai.

The single painting of the plant has been split over the front and back covers of the two books.

In Hoieng's words, 'The top section of the plant on the exegesis cover says, "See here first." The bottom section of the plant on the appendices cover says, "See here last."' The integrated images reflect the complete body of work presented for this thesis.



Design by Hoieng Lai



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THE WIND SIGHS

PART ONE: EXEGESIS

Wendy Fowler

July 2017

