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**Long Walk to Pretoria: a study of the adaptation of Nelson Mandela's autobiography "Long walk to freedom" to the cinema in terms of subjectivity**

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The ceremonies took place in the lovely sandstone amphitheater formed by the Union Buildings in Pretoria. For decades, this had been the seat of white supremacy, and now it was the site of a rainbow gathering of different colors and nations for the installation of South Africa's first democratic, nonracial government. (Mandela, 540).

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## 1. Introduction

Much has been published regarding the process of film adaptation. Traditionally, the quality of film adaptation was evaluated based on assumptions that literature was a superior form of art compared to cinema. As Stam lengthily discusses it, those assumptions were based on a number of beliefs, e.g. literature was a senior form of art compared to the more novice cinema, the cultural prejudice against visual arts and the word-centeredness of our culture (21). Furthermore, Xavier points out that critics used to evaluate films in terms of how “faithful” they were in relation to the source text, basing that evaluation solely on their interpretation of written text and films (61). But the same author also explains that the inflexibility towards film adaptation gradually changed in the last decades following cultural changes that established a new relation between written text and film adaptation, one that is understood as a “dialogue” between two works of art. Notions of authorship and originality were questioned by Bakhtin, as discussed by Stam (23). In other words, film adaptation is now seen as a process of artistic creation in which it is possible to change the perception of events, redefine the sense of time and even alter the meaning of the characters’ experience. After all, “book and film are apart in time; the writer and the movie director do not share the same sensibility or perspective. Therefore, one should expect from adaptations not only a reference to the original text but also towards the intended context” (Xavier, 62) <sup>1</sup>.

If that perspective is appropriate for novel adaptation, it is particularly fitting for adapting autobiographies to cinema. According to Chatman (132) and Mooney (294), the adaptation of autobiographies frequently involves a change in perspective from the first to the third person, as well as the omission of certain events not directly related to the plot. In autobiographies, however, those “wanderings from the story” are seen by the reader as a sign of authenticity (Mooney, 293). Therefore, one important aspect to be analysed is the inherent sense of subjectivity of autobiographies and how a biographical fictional movie, a biopic, can create the sensory experience of confiding, of having privileged access to the main character’s psyche. In fact, that is exactly the aim of this research work in analysing the adaptation of Nelson Mandela’s autobiography *Long*

*Walk to Freedom* (1994) to the recently released film *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (Chadwick, 2013).

Since the publishing of Mandela's autobiography in 1994, many films have portrayed the South African leader, such as *Goodbye, Bafana* (August, 2007) and *Invictus* (Eastwood, 2009). But they focused on specific periods of Mandela's life and no attempt had yet been made to represent his entire life. In 2013, however, the movie *Mandela: long walk to freedom* was released, just as the real Mandela was about to die. The movie, directed by Justin Chadwick, is an adaptation of the 500-page autobiography and, hence, attempts to represent several decades in two and a half hours. The process of adapting Mandela's autobiography to a movie script lasted sixteen years and was conducted by screenwriter William Nicholson.

Movie critics unanimously praised Idris Elba's performance as Nelson Mandela, but they were divided in their appraisal of the film. Gritten considered the challenge of portraying Mandela's whole life in a two-hour film and concluded "the script by William Nicholson does a creditable job of assessing the great man's achievements". Holden has a similar perspective and he goes on to praise the "humanizing moments" in the film which prevent it "from seeming stuffily reverent". On the other hand, Brooks considered the film to be conservative because of its reverential tone towards Mandela. And Travers criticized the attention given to well known facts about Mandela, leaving "little room to investigate the political and personal changes that altered Mandela's thoughts about violence and its uses". However, for the purpose of this study, it is necessary to go beyond the film critics' perception. In order to do that, we will have a closer look at the genres autobiography and biopic, as well as review some important concepts of film narrative.

## 2.1 Autobiographies

Even though they are non-fictional books, biographies are still a form of narrative. And a major characteristic of narrative is having a double notion of time, the time of the plot or events narrated and the time of the narrator. Chatman defines the first one as "story-time" and the second

“discourse-time” (122). The same characteristic is foregrounded by Mooney, who emphasizes the control of the “present writer/narrator” over past events (292).

In biographies, the narrator corresponds to the author who is investigating the life of another person (Bourdieu, 184). Bourdieu calls them the “subject” and “object” of narration, respectively, as well as the “investigator” and the “investigated”. However, in autobiographies the subject and object of narration is the same person. As Mooney puts it, “in the case of autobiography, identity among author, narrator and protagonist defines the genre” (285).

Another shared characteristic among biographies and autobiographies is the overall intention to attribute meaning to memories or past events narrated. According to Bourdieu, life is not a linear succession of logical events, but rather ever-changing, often random and fragmented (189). The traditional role of the narrator, therefore, is to select the events and present them in a way that the resulting narrative expresses an overall intelligible intention <sup>2</sup>. The same characteristic is presented by Mooney, who discusses the adaptation of Tobias Wolff’s autobiography to cinema (292). According to him, a pattern in past events is discovered by the author and developed throughout the autobiography, exerting crucial influence in “selection, manipulation and reorganization of material” (292). In fact, White compares the process of organizing events in the historical discourse to that of writing fiction. As he says, “the interpretation engendered by historic discourse cause it to be more than a mere sequence of events organized by time, providing the formal coherence characteristic of plot structures of fictional narrative” (White, 7). There seems to be, hence, a similarity between the idea of an interpretation imprinted in the discourse by historians and the intention that influences the writing process of (auto)biographies. This perspective is also developed by Schmidt when studying similarities in biographies, in literature and cinema. In his own words, “biographies are a border genre between history and fiction, reality and imagination” (1998, 14) <sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, Schmidt establishes the probable origin of the biographies in ancient history, discussing how Marx criticized what he considered to be the personification of social forces and the new interest with which the genre has reappeared.

Regarding the context, one must consider that if we have on one hand a society of masses, on the other there is the individual search for identity, that is, humans turn to the past in search for guidance towards the present. Besides that, the current crisis in the public sphere – illustrated by the exacerbation of individualism and by criticism to the traditional forms of political and social participation – causes people to scour other people’s private lives, especially of famous people. (Schmidt, 1996, 171) 4.

## 2.2 Biopics

Biopics are part of the same new found interest described by Schmidt. And if people are interested in reading biographies and autobiographies, they are particularly more inclined to watching biographical movies. Interestingly, because of the characteristics of the film media, biopics are even more accessible and increasingly popular than their written counterparts.

Similarly, Cruz identifies the interest in biopics and attributes it to a desire of not being alone, of temporarily assuming another person’s life, and of bridging the gap between past and present (10). Likewise, Sheehan identifies the surge of biopics and unveils an interesting aspect, as biopics are increasingly portraying living personalities. In her own words, this trend in “the genre of the biographical picture presents us with historicized pictures of our immediate political and cultural present” (Sheehan, 1). Interestingly, this new interest in biopics appears to indicate an urge for actualizing the past, making it possible to grasp current events not yet included in the history books. In other words, “a paradox in which the present is figured as both historical and ongoing” (Sheehan, 1).

It is the case of the three movies analyzed by Sheehan, *The Queen* (Frear, 2006), *W.* (Stone, 2008) and *The social network* (Fincher, 2010). It is also the case of *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* since its royal premiere was on December 5, 2013, the same day Mandela passed away. The screenwriter, William Nicholson, described in a newspaper article how surprised the premiere’s audience was to receive the news about Mandela’s death (Nicholson, 1). Even Mandela’s daughters

Zenani and Zindzi were present at the event. And if that is not enough, the process of writing the film was initiated in 1996. “My involvement goes back to the summer of 1996, when Nelson Mandela presented Anant<sup>1</sup> with the film rights to his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*. Anant came to me with the suggestion that I write the screenplay” (Nicholson, 2). Therefore, the movie pre-production phase initiated while Mandela was still the President of South Africa. He had been in power for only two years.

Despite being a popular form of probing in the past of personalities, it is important to distinguish between a biopic and a memoir or autobiographical movie. According to Mooney, biopics are not memoirs because they are the collective result of a film crew (285). In other words, the author and the protagonist are different people. Furthermore, there is frequently a change in perspective from the intimate omniscient narrator to that of the camera (Chatman, 132). That is to say, from the first person to the third person perspective (Mooney, 294). Besides that, because of time limitations, a scriptwriter often chooses to omit many events or details not related to the overall intention. In autobiographies, however, those “wanderings from the story” are seen by the reader as a sign of authenticity (293).

Mooney goes on to state that there is a compromise in the trust that the autobiography’s reader has regarding the author (293). The same author defines this “trust” in terms of Philippe Lejeune’s concept of “pacte autobiographique”, that is “the commitment made by the author to recount his or her life directly, in a spirit of truth” (Lejeune, n.p., qutd. in Mooney, 293). However, although Mooney certainly contributes to show the differences between autobiographies and biopics, his conclusion about the rupture of trust seems somewhat hasty. After all, Mooney draws a general conclusion from the analysis of a single case, the film *This Boy’s Life* (Jones, 1993) based on Tobias Wolff’s autobiography. Besides, although presenting interesting comments about the voice-over and the movie perspective, Mooney adopts a discourse of fidelity and betrayal from the start (286). Furthermore, when carefully reading Lejeune’s “The Autobiographical Pact”<sup>2</sup>, it is clear

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<sup>1</sup> Anant Singh, the film producer.

<sup>2</sup> Mooney does not refer to this source, 27 pages long. He refers to a website, 1 page long.



Lejeune's system was intended for written media, autobiography books and autobiographical novels, and his concept of pact seems to be overextended in Mooney. Furthermore, one should raise the question of what is to be considered truth and what is to be considered fiction. Even though there is the autobiography author's commitment to "recount his or her life directly, in a spirit of truth", it is nonetheless a retelling. In other words, there is the narrative aspect, that is the fictional aspect of attributing meaning and of interpretation. It is even clearer if we consider the conditions in which Mandela's autobiography was written: in secrecy, fragmented in manuscripts and smuggled outside the prison in 1976, and the writing would only be resumed after he was released from prison in 1990. It is obviously not the ideal writing process and it must have been very difficult to piece the memories together without photos, letters and other sources. And the film is very successful in portraying how dehumanizing the Apartheid's treatment of political prisoners was by depriving them from contact with their families, causing them to grow apart from their loved ones, in increasing isolation. During his twenty seven years of imprisonment, all Mandela had available besides rare family visits were letters and telegrams that would often be censored. Then, it becomes clear that one of the most important things Mandela's autobiography and the film here analysed have in common is that they are both recollections. On one hand, when writing his autobiography, Mandela himself did not have much to base his writing apart from his own memory, especially during his incarceration. And even if we consider the period after his release, although there were then other sources available, twenty seven years of imprisonment in the brutal Apartheid regime had taken its toll in terms of Mandela and his family relationship. There was much he had been deprived from and therefore he could not write about. And reading his autobiography, one comes across many passages in which the author reveals his frustration, his regret of not being able to give emotional support to his family and not being part of its daily life. On the other hand, the movie director and screenwriter had access to Mandela's own recollection of his life, his autobiography, as well as other biographies and sources available. One can conclude that criticising a retelling exclusively for being more fictional than factual seems very outdated and a bit pointless since the

autobiography and the biopic are examples of retelling. If that is not enough to dispel Mooney's criticism of film adaptation, it is also possible to discuss the various techniques that can be used to create the sense of being invited into the character's deepest thoughts and emotions. In order to better understand how such idea of subjectivity can be created in cinema, it is necessary to include in this framework some important concepts from film narrative.

### 2.3 Narrative and subjectivity in film

Biographies and biopics are both the result of narration, through which events are selected and organized in a way that an overall intention is expressed (Bordieu, 189). Accordingly, Schmidt refers to a common element of biographies and biopics, that is, their fictional aspect. (Schmidt, 13 and 14). Likewise, a double time structure can be found in both genres. One is the time of the "thing told", and the other is the time of the "telling" (Metz, 18). This double temporal sequence allows the manipulation of time in narrative. And, as Chatman clearly states, "any narrative can be actualized by any medium that can communicate the two time orders" (122).

In film studies, the idea of narration corresponds to the concept of diegesis. As Metz explains, it is "the sum of a film's denotation: the narration itself, but also the fictional space and time dimensions implied in and by the narrative, and consequently the characters, the landscapes, the events, and other narrative elements, in so far as they are considered in their denoted aspect" (98). Based on that concept, narrators who are not characters are named "heterodiegetic", while characters who narrate the story are called "homodiegetic" (Genette, qtd in Kozloff, 42).

One of the techniques frequently used in film is voice-over narration. It is defined by Kozloff as "oral statements, conveying any portion of a narrative, spoken by an unseen speaker situated in a space and time other than that simultaneously being presented by the images of the screen" (5). The voice-over may be from one of the characters, as for example Mandela<sup>3</sup>'s voice in some scenes of the film *Mandela: long walk to freedom* (Chadwick, 2013), or it may be from that of an "anonymous commentator" (Metz, 236). However, beyond voice-over, there is another level of

<sup>3</sup> Mandela, the character. It is of course Idris Elba's voice, the actor that plays the role of Mandela.

narration. It is not as obvious as the nominal narrator, but it is nonetheless present and of vital importance to the interpretation of the events narrated. Metz calls it “master of ceremonies” or “image-maker” (21). Similarly, Kozloff adopts the latter to name this primary level of narration, which encompasses the different techniques that compose image and sound (44). Interestingly, if the “image-maker” is ultimately accountable for image, dialogue, sound effects and music, it is also responsible for voice-over narration. In other words, “voice-over narrators could never be responsible for primary diegesis. They are always embedded within the image-maker’s discourse” (Kozloff, 45).

The relation between voice-over and the “image-maker” might not be perceived in the same way by the audience, however. A movie viewer has, in fact, a perception of film as discourse (Metz, 21). He or she knows that since there is a story, someone or something must be narrating it. Furthermore, the viewer “is leafing through an album of predetermined pictures, and it is not he who is turning the pages but some ‘grand image-maker’ who is first and foremost the film itself as a linguistic object, or more precisely a sort of ‘potential linguistic focus’ situated somewhere behind the film, and representing the basis that makes the film possible” (Metz, 21). Of course, if the viewer knows the story is being narrated, it is not the same to say he or she is able to identify the primary diegesis, that is, the “image-maker”. In fact, it is more plausible for the viewer to associate the narrator with a human figure, be it a character, a human voice or even a combination of both.

Moreover, character narration is so widespread that movie viewers frequently assume the voice-over narrator to be the one in control of events and of the whole film. In other words, “we put our faith in the voice not as created but as creator” (Kozloff, 45). That is exactly one of the main possibilities to create the sense of subjectivity and, therefore, to maintain the viewer’s trust. This is especially true for homodiegetic voice-over narrators, since the viewers tend to identify the character as the principal storyteller and therefore grant him or her the omnipotence of the “image-maker” (Kozloff, 49). Kozloff uses the word “pose” to refer to this perception of voice-over as the primary source of narration. She says “the structure of each film (and the predispositions of each

viewer) influence whether the viewer suspends disbelief and accepts the pose of the voice-over” (45). And she adds that “the film must tie the story to the character – the tighter, the better” (Kozloff, 45). In order to create such a connection, the interaction between the homodiegetic voice-over narrator and the other information provided by the “image-maker” must reinforce that “pose”, that is, the voice-over narrator’s claim to be the primary source of diegesis. This is more effective than quantity of voice-over itself, since “once the presence of the voice-over narrator has been established, the entire film serves as a sort of linguistic event, as the narrator’s speech even when there is none” (Kozloff, 47). In other words, the perception of the film’s “linguistic nature”, pointed out by Metz, becomes a linguistic event pertaining to the voice-over narrator. It becomes his or her own story.

Furthermore, Kozloff explains the history of voice-over narration and presents the influence of other forms of oral narration in voice-over narration. In fact, voice-over can be compared to the oldest form of narration, oral storytelling, “the most ancient, fundamental, and widely accessible. In films with voice-over narration the older form has been superimposed on top of the newer” (1). Likewise, Kozloff analyses the claim of literature’s influence over cinema narration and concludes that there is in fact more similarity between film and theatre: “The intrinsic connections between the two types of narrator are striking. Because theatrical narration, like voice-over, is first intermittent; secondly, interwoven with dramatic scenes that are not mediated through that narrator, and thirdly – crucially – *spoken aloud*, it parallels voice-over narration’s formal characteristics much more closely than novel narration” (18). In light of these arguments, one can explain the discourse of loss and misrepresentation of certain critics of film adaptation by the false expectation that film narrative is primarily derived from literature. In other words, one can argue that even if an autobiographical book is adapted to cinema, film narrative continues to have more in common with theatrical narrative than with literary narrative, nonetheless.

As previously discussed in this section, although author and narrator differ in biopics, the audience perceives the homodiegetic voice-over narrator as the storyteller. Hence, Mooney’s claim

that biopics break the autobiographical pact just because they have different characteristics from those of autobiographies appears extravagant. Indeed, the viewer's trust is not forsaken but rather reinforced. In films with voice-over narration, the viewer feels as if being spoken to by the narrator and not, therefore, in the position of a spy. In other words, "voice-over narration is a mechanism for assuaging the guilt involved by such voyeurism. One is no longer spying on unconscious characters. Instead, the tale is being deliberately addressed to us" (Kozloff, 51).

Besides voice-over narration, there are other techniques employed to create subjectivity in cinema, such as point of view shot<sup>4</sup> and sound perspective, as well as the depiction of dreams and memory. On one hand, POV and sound perspective are examples of perceptual subjectivity, when "we see shots taken from a character's optical standpoint" or we "hear sounds as the character would hear them" (Bordwell, 91). On the other, the depiction of dreams and memory correspond to mental subjectivity when we "see the character's inner images" and have access to the character's state of mind (91).

After discussing the genres autobiography and biopic, and talking about film narrative, it is important to present more information about Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* and the biopic *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (Chadwick, 2013).

### 3.1 Mandela's autobiography

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela's autobiography, entitled *Long Walk to Freedom*, was published in 1994 simultaneously in Canada and the USA by Little, Brown and Company. Its manuscript started in 1975 during his term on Robben Island, but it would only be continued when Mandela was released from prison in 1990.

The tale of writing and concealing that manuscript, which was considered forbidden since Apartheid authorities had prohibited the publication of words or pictures of banned individuals and political prisoners, is thoroughly described in chapter 78: "My fiftieth birthday had passed without

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<sup>4</sup> According to Bordwell, a subjective point of view shot allows the viewer to see "through a character's eyes" (192).

much notice in 1968, but in 1975<sup>5</sup>, when I turned fifty-seven, Walter and Kathy<sup>6</sup> approached me with a long-term plan that would make my sixtieth birthday more memorable” (Mandela, 415). In fact, Mandela and his peers were very much interested in keeping the struggle alive inside or outside the prison and the book would “serve to remind people of what we had fought and were still fighting for”, as well as “become a source of inspiration for young freedom fighters” (415).

The writing process proved to be very challenging, not because of any kind of writer’s block but rather because of the suspicious vigilance of prison authorities. Hence, Mandela started an “unorthodox work schedule” (415): he would stay awake writing during the night and sleep during the day. Besides, Mandela was helped by Kathy and Walter, who used to read each new page and write their own comments on the margins. “This marked-up manuscript was then given to Laloo Chiba, who spent the next night transferring my writing to his own almost microscopic shorthand” (415). Finally, the transcribed pages were hidden inside the bindings of notebooks by Mac<sup>7</sup>, who was able to smuggle the entire manuscript when he was released from prison in 1976. However successful they were writing and smuggling the manuscript, disposing of the originals was altogether different. They buried the originals in three different holes in the courtyard. But, a few weeks later, a crew was digging a trench and found one of the sections of the manuscript. As a result, Walter, Kathy and Mandela lost their study privileges.

Besides this interesting and unusual example of writing process, the book covers Mandela’s life from his childhood in Transkei to his inauguration as President. The book also includes many other important passages such as his adolescence dedicated to the studies, running away to Johannesburg, starting his legal career, getting involved in politics, playing a key role in the ANC<sup>8</sup>, his troubled family life, going underground, being banned and charged in different trials, helping to organize the armed struggle, being convicted, imprisonment for twenty-seven years, political and legal activities in prison, conducting negotiations with the regime, the transition phase and, finally,

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<sup>5</sup> Although in chapter 78 Mandela states he started writing the manuscript in 1975, in the Acknowledgments section he said it was in 1974.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Sisulu and Ahmed Kathrada, important South African freedom fighters and politicians.

<sup>7</sup> Mac Maharaj, a member of the ANC and a South African politician.

<sup>8</sup> African National Congress.

being elected President. In order to organize such vast amount of information, the 558-page book is organized in 115 chapters, with eleven different parts.

### 3.2 The film

The 141-minute-long film entitled *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* is the adaptation of Nelson Mandela's autobiography. The screenwriter, William Nicholson, described in a newspaper article the long and difficult process of adaptation and also offered insights about his decisions in how to tell the story. The adaptation process took sixteen years for a number of reasons, such as the scale of the story and Hollywood's lack of interest (Nicholson, 3-4). In the screenwriter's own words, "Too much material for one film, too complex a political story, too many key characters. Add to that the iconic nature of the hero" (3). The screenwriter claims that he tried different starting points, that he tried breaking the sequence and using flashbacks and that he was also unsure about the ending point (4). Nonetheless, he envisioned that Mandela and Winnie<sup>9</sup>'s love story could be used as a metaphor for the liberation struggle. "Mandela and Winnie's love story – their love tragedy – was a metaphor for the struggle for freedom. Through their parallel lives we could represent the two paths to liberation. Mandela isolated on Robben island, learning to forgive. Winnie, tortured beyond endurance, learning to hate" (Nicholson, 4). In addition, the screenwriter decided to present a more human and imperfect hero, subject to moral flaws such as adultery.

I have taken his marriages as a major theme, because through this side of his life so many people will be able to identify themselves with him. Very few have endured long prison sentences. Many have known the anguish of failed marriages, of loving and losing love, of feeling the guilt of failing loved ones. My belief is that the more human Mandela becomes to us, the more extraordinary and admirable his achievements become. Like you, I see Mandela as a role model: but I do not see him as a saint. If he is superhuman, his qualities are beyond our reach. If he is human,

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<sup>9</sup> Winnie Madikizela, political activist and Mandela's second wife.

then we too can say, 'As he did, so can I.' That is the true role model.<sup>10</sup> (Nicholson, 3).

After presenting more information about Nelson Mandela's autobiography and also about the biopic studied, it might be relevant to present the selected scenes from the film and briefly comment on the criteria for selection and analysis.

### 3.3 Selected scenes

In order to select relevant information from the book, close-reading was used in addition to note taking. Similarly, the movie was watched and paused, with certain scenes being watched again and notes made. The scenes were selected based on the main objective, which is to investigate how the sense of subjectivity is created in the biopic studied. Below, a chart presents the selected scenes and why they are relevant.

Number	Time	Scene description
1	1'	First scene, which takes place after the credits. It is a dream in a subjective point-of-view shot and the <b>voice-over</b> of Mandela.
2	62'	Sequence of shots: Mandela receiving a censored letter, impossible of reading, followed by a shot of him alone in his cell at night (camera zooming out) and a shot of Winnie holding their baby at home. Mandela has lost access to the realm of family.
3	70:32'	Sequence of shots while we hear Mandela in <b>voice-over</b> writing a letter to his daughters: the camera approaches a distracted Mandela looking at the horizon, then it turns 180° and we are able to look into his eyes, although he continues looking at the horizon. After that, a shot of Mandela writing the letter in his cell. Then, shots of Winnie in jail and of the daughters at home.
4	77:42'	Sisulu tries to comfort a devastated Mandela in prison. Mandela has just learned of his son's death through a telegram. His mother had also recently died. His request to leave the island to bury his son is denied. Mandela is facing the wall and the camera closes-up to his face. He says "I'm losing them all. My mother. My son. My wife".
5	129:39'	Mandela dining alone after his speech on TV calling for peace and elections: <b>Voice-over</b> with the character's

<sup>10</sup> Letter dated 4 July 1997 responding to Kathrada after the submission of the first draft.



		thought - “after so much suffering, why would anyone believe that putting a mark on a piece of paper is going to change the world?”
6	131:20’	A closing scene with the same dream, subjective point-of-view. <b>Voice-over</b> once again. We learn the house we see is Mandela’s house in Orlando. “I can hear all the ones that I have loved the most in the world. I want to reach them, to touch them, but they are gone”. Immediately after, a shot of Mandela in his office on the day of his inauguration as president. Transition from private affairs to public.
7	133’	The final sequence. In Transkeii, Mandela is walking on a trail amidst the grass. Children run after him and pass him. We hear in <b>voice-over</b> a famous passage from the book.

The selected above sequences will be analyzed in order to identify the techniques used to create a sense of subjectivity, as well as to check the interaction of voice-over narration with the other elements in sustaining the perception of Mandela as the primary source of narration. In other words, the selected sequences will be analyzed in terms of voice-over narration, camera work, dialogue and visual content. If necessary, excerpts from the book might be used to aid the analysis.

#### 4. Results and discussion

Right in the beginning of the film and also at its end, two scenes help establish a frame for the story. The first scene, right after the movie title, opens with children running and entering a house (1.1). The camera follows them inside, where the other family members are, as the voice-over narrator “introduces” himself. He says: “I dream the same dream, night after night. I am coming home to the house in Orlando. Everything is the way it was. They’re all there, all the ones that I have loved mostly in the world. They seem fine, getting on with their lives. But they do not see me. They **never** see me.” (Chadwick, 2013). And as the narrator speaks, we see the voice-over narrator’s family members: many children and three women. Those three women present in the dream, as one has the opportunity to discover later on, are Mandela’s mother (1.2) and his two first wives, Evelyn and Winnie (1.6).

When reflecting upon this initial scene, we realize we do not see the one speaking. After all, it is a subjective point-of-view shot with a voice-over. He is not present in the scene, even though

he claims to be going home. In addition, the voice-over narrator indicates the desire to be looked upon, to be acknowledged. After all, the word “see” is repeated to emphasize his desire. Interestingly, in a subjective POV shot it is expected to see what the character is seeing. Hence, if he was really with his family, it would be natural for him to look and be looked upon. However, this is neither a regular shot of family life, nor a recollection of one. It is a dream scene, probably the result of juxtaposing fragments of the character’s memory. That explains why although we have the subjective visual perspective in the scene, the other characters cannot acknowledge Mandela’s presence. After all, he is not really there and that is not really happening since it is a dream. But still the combination of the voice-over narrator emphasis in wanting to be seen by his family, the camera movement almost as if chasing the characters around, and the characters complete obliviousness of the voice-over narrator desire (1.4 – 1.7) create an emotional connection with the viewer. Even though it is a dream, even though we know it is not real, even though we never forget this is a fictional film, we still cannot help but share the same desire of Mandela to be seen by his family.



**1.1** – The camera follows the children inside.



**1.2**<sup>11</sup> – Mandela’s mother.



**1.3** – Winnie looks right...



**1.4** – and then left, ignoring the camera.

<sup>11</sup> Note that the boy on the far right seems to be looking towards the camera, but that impression is short lived since as the scene continues the boy walks right in front of the camera completely ignoring it.



**1.5** – Mandela’s mom looks to a boy and passes in front of the camera without acknowledging it.



**1.6** – Evelyn (left) and Winnie (right) talk. Then, Evelyn walks towards the door on the right and Winnie follows her with her eyes, but neither of them sees the camera.



**1.7** – After Evelyn leaves, she turns and walks towards the couple’s bedroom. The camera follows her to the bedroom. Then, the image dissolves into the brightness of a nearby window.

Overall, the first dream scene functions as sort of orientation, by which “the narrator explicitly tells us that this is his or her story” (Kozloff, 45). Furthermore, Metz also makes reference to the “subjective insert”. In his own words, “there are the various kinds of shot that owe their autonomy to their status as syntagmatic interpolations and could be collectively termed inserts” and further on he defines “the subjective insert (i.e., image conveying not the present instance, but an absent moment experienced by the hero of the film. Examples: images of memory, dream, fear, premonition, etc.)” (125). As we can see, by having the dream scene in the beginning of the film, the voice-over narrator is being established as the source of primary diegesis. Likewise, the second dream scene, at the end of the film, also emphasizes the same aspect, but with a little difference. Mandela’s relatives are not present and all we can hear is the echo of their voices in an empty Orlando house. But apart from that, we still have voice-over narration. “I still dream the old dream,

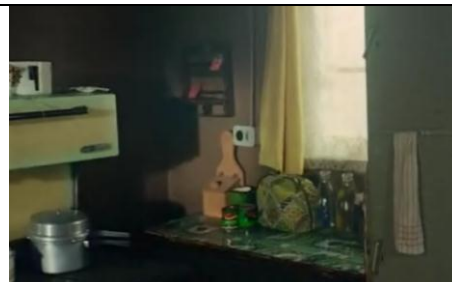
back in the house of Orlando. I can hear all the ones that I've loved most in the world. I want to reach them, to touch them, but they have gone" (Chadwick, 2013).

We also have the subjective point-of-view shot. In fact, the camera starts showing the space exactly where the first dream scene cut, staring at the bright bedroom window in an extreme close-up. Then, it dollies to the left and backwards, leaving the deserted bedroom (1.8), moving and turning to the right in the main room (1.9) where previously the three women had been and then the camera dollies back through the front door of the house. It is a retracing of steps, the camera does the exact same movement as in the first dream scene, but in an inverted order. This camera movement, combined with the voice-over, is an indication that the narrator is retracing its steps in his own dream. Somehow, after repeating the same "old dream", it has acquired a greater degree of realism compared to the first dream. There is no one living in the Orlando house and the loved ones are just but an echo. "They have gone" and there is nothing Mandela can do about that. Of course, this inference can only be made after all the information the film provides about the relationship between him and his family. In other words, the inference is only possible because this scene is at the end of the film.

Ironically, the second dream scene is immediately followed by a sequence of Mandela's inauguration ceremony as President of South Africa. The sequence starts with a medium close-up of Mandela in his office (1.10) and the camera pans slightly to the right as it moves in for a close-up. On Mandela's face, we can see the sadness associated with his private life and family relationship. But as the sequence progresses, the camera follows Mandela as he makes his way from his office



**1.8** – The empty bedroom.



**1.9** – The main room.

inside the Union Buildings to be acclaimed by a crowd outside (1.11). This sequence is, therefore,

a perfect transition from private life to public matters. On one hand, Mandela faces a difficult and frustrating family life. On the other, he played a decisive role in the end of the Apartheid regime and was elected President in South Africa's first general elections.



**1.10** – Medium close-up of Mandela in his office. The camera pans slightly to the right as it moves closer to his face in a close-up. Mandela takes a deep breath and closes his eyes. Then, someone off the screen tells him it is time.



**1.11** – Mandela walks down the steps as the angle shifts from low to straight on. As the camera stops dollying back, Mandela walks towards it. We can see the satisfaction on his face as he looks to the cheering crowd.

Interestingly, the close-up shot of Mandela in his office marks a very symbolic moment in narrative, called *anagnorisis*. Northrop Frye defines it as “not simply the knowledge by the hero of what has happened to him, but the recognition of the determined shape of the life he has created for himself, with an implicit comparison with the uncreated potential life he has forsaken” (212). In other words, the decisions made by Mandela regarding the liberation struggle initiated a sequence of events that caused both the failure in family matters as well as the success in public life. It is a similar idea as the one developed in Frost's poem, *The Road Not Taken*.

And both that morning equally lay  
 In leaves no step had trodden black.  
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
 I doubted if I should ever come back.

The similarity here consists in the “potential life” that has been forsaken, or “the road not taken”. And once the hero has made his decision, “way leads on to way”, that is, he cannot change course anymore. This fatalism, explored in biopics, is pointed out by Sheehan. According to her, “the hermetic course of action in these stories, which account for their tragic nature, occur as the image gains momentum and neither the film’s characters nor its spectators can intervene” (8). This tragic nature is acknowledged by Nicholson when he says that the movie presents “a great victory accompanied by great personal defeat; a hero who is human, who can be hurt; an emotional journey that is also the story of a nation” (4).

And it is precisely the suffering and sacrifice, after twenty seven years of imprisonment and being secluded from his family, the key to understand the potential life forsaken by Mandela in his quest for freedom. It is also a vital element in creating subjectivity, since we tend to sympathize with Mandela even more after knowing what he had to endure in order to achieve the political victories that culminated in a free democratic society<sup>12</sup>. The film viewers learn about the hardships Mandela and his family had to endure through alternating scenes of him being mistreated in Robben Island, with scenes of Winnie being harassed by the police and scenes of the children growing up fatherless. This alternation happens from the fifty third minute to the seventy ninth and creates a sense of parallelism, as if we were witnessing the characters growing apart little by little. It is at this point that “the image gains momentum” and Mandela’s failure with his family becomes unavoidable.

The aforementioned sequence starts with a few sequences that help establish both the prison routine and the severe conditions political prisoners were subject during Apartheid. After a harsh reception in the Robben Island Prison’s airstrip, the prisoners are stripped of their clothes and receive their uniform. The African prisoners are given shorts while the Indian ones are given trousers (1.12). As Mandela explains, “apartheid’s regulations extended even to clothing [since the]

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<sup>12</sup> As discussed before, we tend to attribute to a human figure the story narrated. And this is especially true in this case, since the prison sequence comes after the first dream scene, which establishes the voice-over narrator’s claim.

short trousers for Africans were meant to remind us that we were ‘boys’” (334). After that, the political prisoners are taken to their individual cells (1.13). Each prisoner is called by the last name and enters his cell, an eight-foot by seven-foot<sup>13</sup> concrete space where each one is expected to spend the rest of one’s life. “This is it, boy. Home, for the rest of your life”, says the warder with a cheeky grim on his face.



**1.12** – Kathy (left) receives a trouser and socks, while Mandela (right) receives only shorts.



**1.13** – A lot of tension between prison guards and prisoners as Mandela has his name called and he moves towards his cell. The warders seem to be leaning towards Mandela and the latter seems to be leaning away from the guards.

We see Mandela’s disappointment and surprise on his face (1.14). Then, a subjective point-of-view shot, as if the camera were once again Mandela, this time gazing in disbelief at the cramped room. This transition from medium close-up of the protagonist to a subjective point-of-view shot back to the medium close-up reinforces the voice-over narrator’s claim to be the source of primary diegesis, established in the beginning of the film. In the same scene, after the warder locks the cell gate, Mandela has one more look at the cell. There is a cut to show Kathy and Sisulu’s similar reactions.

<sup>13</sup> That is approximately 5 square meters.



**1.14** – A medium close-up of a surprised Mandela entering his cell.



**1.15** – Subjective point-of-view shot as if we are seeing what Mandela sees. The camera tilts down to show the room and imitate the character's head movement.



**1.16** – The camera approaches Mandela and pans slightly to the left to show his face. Mandela is staring at the horizon.



**1.17** – Transition from inside the room to outside, shot/reverse shot. Then, the camera moves up in a crane shot.

Mandela then raises his fist in the famous ANC thumbs-up salute and cries “Amandla<sup>14</sup>!” but at this time no one answers. Their spirits have been shaken. Mandela turns to the window, holds at the bar and seems to seek comfort in the horizon, staring at a distant point in the brightness (**1.16**). The camera pans slightly to the left, revealing his full face. Then, the image cuts to the reverse shot, showing the other side of his face through the glass (**1.17**). And as Mandela gazes mysteriously at the horizon, we gaze at him trying to discover what is on his mind.

Interestingly, the images of bright windows and gazing at the horizon, which appear in different parts of the film, might be a metaphor to a leader's ability to see the future even when it is yet unclear for other people. After the shot/reverse shot, the camera moves up in a crane shot and then the image cuts to an extreme long shot of Robben Island. This shot serves as a reminder that this is an island. In other words, the only way in or out is by airplane or boat. It is a prison within a

<sup>14</sup> From Xhosa and Zulu, meaning power. The leader would cry “Amandla” and the other would respond “awethu” or “Ngawethu”, or “to us”. In other words, “power to the people”.



prison. And the shot also functions as a transition to the next scene, of secret police storming the Orlando house and harassing Winnie (1.18). By having that scene of Mandela frustrated in his prison cell immediately followed by the police harassing Winnie, the “image-maker” indicates the helplessness of Mandela’s situation.

And then there are scenes to present the prison routine, such as exercising (1.19) early in the morning, the warders screaming for the prisoners to get up (1.20), the prisoners emptying their sanitary buckets (1.21), working in the lime quarry (1.22) and eating (1.23). In fact, the routine

 <p><b>1.18</b> – The secret police storm the family home in Orlando, searching through all the rooms and objects. Winnie resists and is arrested.</p>	 <p><b>1.19</b> – Mandela exercises in his cell.</p>
 <p><b>1.20</b> – Warder’s daily wake-up call.</p>	 <p><b>1.21</b> – Prisoners emptying the iron buckets.</p>
 <p><b>1.22</b> – Prisoners (center) are watched by armed guards on top of the hill and also at the quarry.</p>	 <p><b>1.23</b> – Prisoners serving food through the cell’s gate.</p>

is essential in a prison. As Foucault argues, prison authorities have absolute power over each and every aspect of the inmates’ daily lives. And the purpose of such routine and regulation is to form a

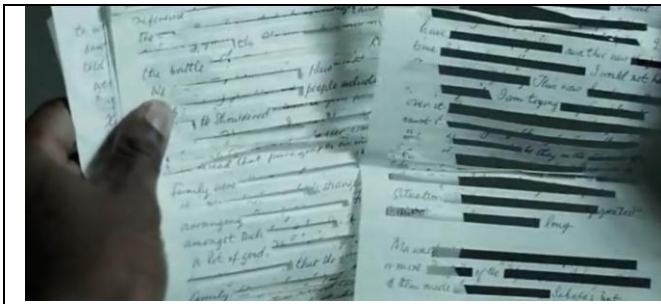
“homogeneous and interdependent mass” (237). In other words, identity and individuality are lost in this homogeneous mass and the prisoner becomes not more than a number. Likewise, Mandela emphasizes the purpose of routine.

Prison not only robs you of your freedom, it attempts to take away your identity.

Everyone wears the same uniform, eats the same food, follows the same schedule. It is by definition a purely authoritarian state and as a man, one must fight against the prison’s attempt to rob one of these qualities. (291)

Prison is designed to break one’s spirit and destroy one’s resolve. To do this, the authorities attempt to exploit every weakness, demolish every initiative, negate all signs of individuality – all with the idea of stamping out that spark that makes each of us human and each of us who we are. (341)

What Foucault and Mandela himself tell us is that prison authorities try to eliminate the identity of the inmates. And a very important aspect of such identity is the individual’s relationship with his or her family. Hence, by limiting the number of visits, limiting the number of letters and censoring their content (**1.24**), prison authorities in Robben Island deprived Mandela of family comfort and company. Indeed, after receiving the letter in tatters, we see an alternation of shots of a desolate Mandela in his cell with shots of Winnie and the baby. Interestingly, one can observe the contrast between the dark blue and gray colors of the prison (**1.27**) with the bright yellow of Winnie’s shots (**1.26**), indicating the latter are in fact flashbacks, that is, Mandela’s memory. Another indication of flashback is that the camera is slightly out of focus and that both Winnie and the baby are looking straight at the camera (**1.29**), which is construed as Mandela. Hence, we are seeing Mandela’s memories of a family scene prior to his incarceration. And as Mandela holds on to his memories, he struggles to maintain his family ties. Nonetheless, his family is growing apart from him.



**1.24** – Close-up of Winnie’s censored letter.



**1.25** – Mandela “cornered” in his cell with the letter in his hands. He is helpless.



**1.26** – Flashback. Winnie looks at the camera.



**1.27** – Mandela struggling to sleep in his cell.



**1.28** – The camera cranes up, reinforcing the idea of flashback.



**1.29** – Flashback. A happy Winnie and a baby Zenani look straight at the camera.

As discussed by Metz, the subjective insert shows absent moments previously experienced by the protagonist (125). Hence, the flashbacks in *Mandela: long walk to freedom* can be considered examples of subjective shots, since they exemplify the homodiegetic narrator’s memory. And according to Bordwell, the representation of the character’s inner images such as memory or dreams is termed “mental subjectivity”, as opposed to “perceptual subjectivity” – the use of point-of-view in terms of images or sound (91). Therefore, the use of flashbacks grant privileged access to Mandela’s mind, reinforcing the perception of the voice-over narrator as the source of primary diegesis. Additional examples of flashback are spread through the first half of the movie: in the very first scene we see a boy running in the countryside<sup>15</sup> (1.30); afterwards, a young Mandela taking a

<sup>15</sup> Mandela spent his childhood in Transkei, a rural province of South Africa.

bath in the river (1.31); Winnie running in a field (1.32); a small Thembi looking to the camera (1.33).



**1.30** – A boy runs onscreen from behind the camera. Then, the movie title appears in red over the boy, “MANDELA”.



**1.31** – After seeing Mandela showering in the prison, a flashback of the young man Mandela. He is cleaning himself in the river after his rite of passage into manhood.



**1.32** – In a similar sequence as the one analyzed above, after Mandela tossing and turning on his cell at night there is a flashback of Winnie running playfully in a field. She is looking to the camera.



**1.33** – After receiving word of his eldest son’s death, Mandela closes his eyes in desperation. Then, there is a flashback of a young Thembi looking to the camera. We hear an echo of child’s voice saying “dada”.

Interestingly, there is no flashback in the second half of the movie. Possibly because it is the first half that focuses on Mandela’s freedom struggle and his incarceration - establishing the existential drama of growing apart from one’s family and of being deprived of one’s identity – whilst the second half focuses on Mandela’s second marriage failure and on his role in the transition process to a democratic South Africa. Two other sequences clearly emphasize this existential drama. In the first one, after a scene where Winnie is arrested once again, the camera approaches a distracted Mandela gazing at the horizon (1.34 and 1.35) while we hear in voice-over: “My darling daughters, I have been told that our beloved mama has been arrested again. This is hard for me because I am the source of all your troubles”. And at this point, both the voice-over and the image of Mandela gazing at the horizon are interrupted by the guard’s voice off telling him to resume

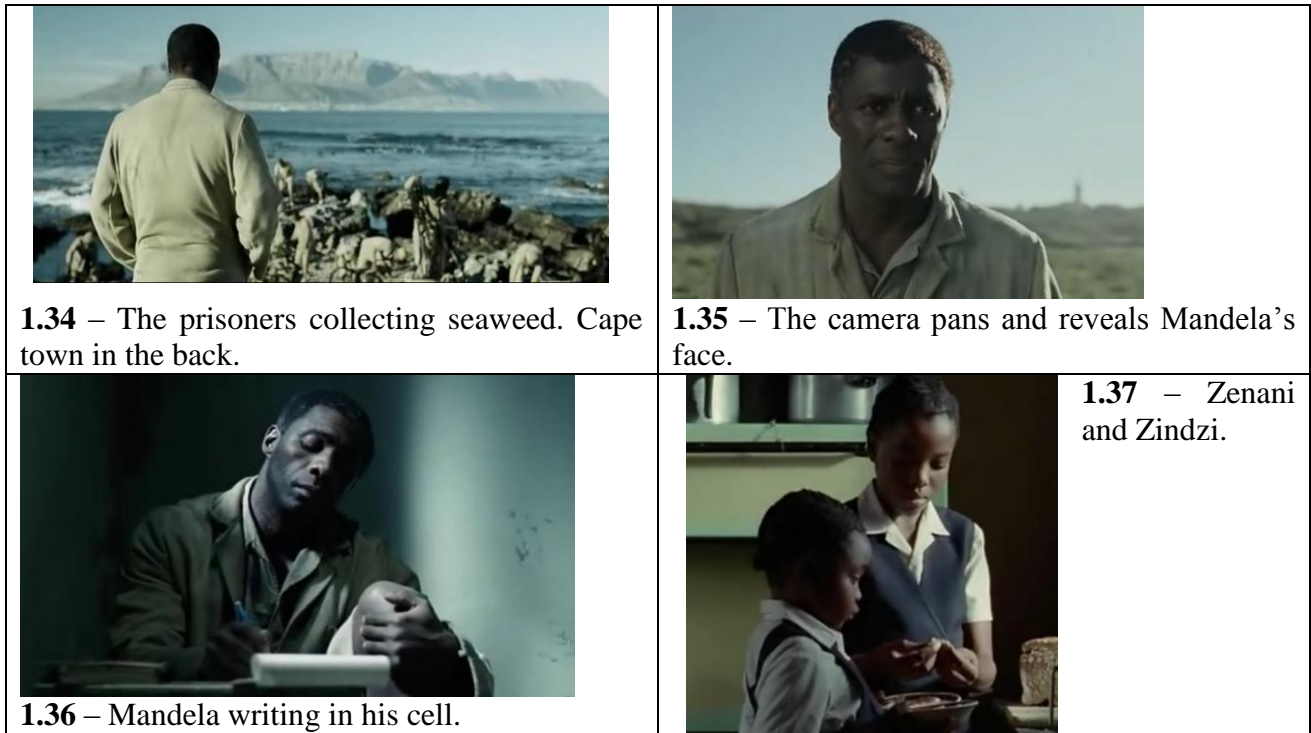
work. Immediately after, the voice-over continues: “All that I wish for you to bear in mind is that we have a brave and determined mother who loves her people from all of her heart”. At this point, the image cuts to Mandela writing the letter in his cell (1.36). The voice-over continues: “When you are grown up, you will understand how she has sacrificed her own happiness in the battle for truth and justice”. The voice-over continues, while we see first Winnie in solitary confinement and then the two small girls growing up parentless (1.37): “I am only allowed to send you two letters a year. I am told that you’ve not been getting them. But I shall keep on writing. There is so little I can do for you. These letters are the only means of passing my love to you” (Chadwick, 2013). From this voice-over, we can infer that Mandela blames himself for the family being torn apart. Besides that, he acknowledges his connection to his family is reduced to a depressing possibility of only two letters a year. Nonetheless, he continues writing. And this resolution is a sign of resistance towards the prison’s attempt to extinguish his subjectivity. The same idea of resistance is also present in other scenes, such as the ones related to his request for long trousers. In Mandela’s own words,

For us, such struggles – for sunglasses<sup>16</sup>, long trousers, study privileges, equalized food – were corollaries to the struggle we waged outside prison. The campaign to improve conditions in prison was part of the apartheid struggle. It was, in that sense, all the same; we fought injustice wherever we found it, no matter how large, small, and we fought injustice to preserve our own humanity (355).

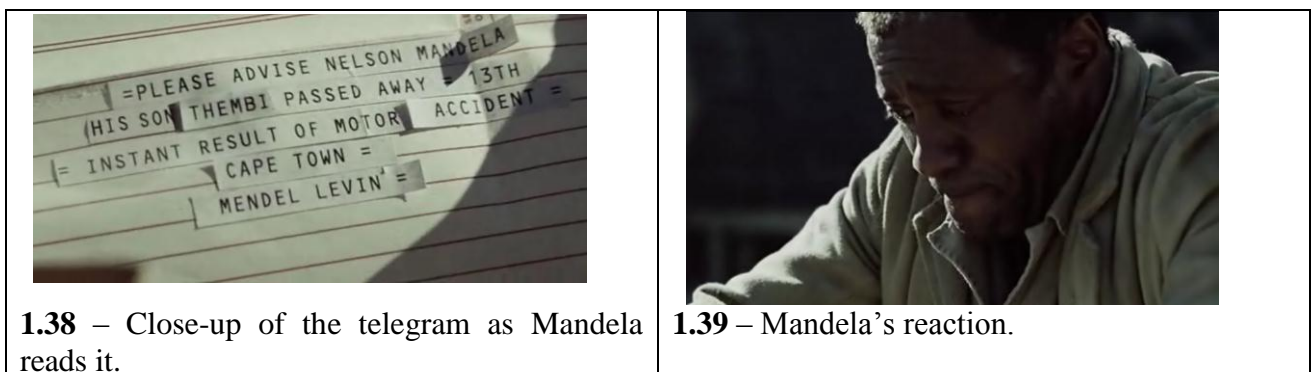
As we see, it is precisely the political prisoner’s resistance that prevent them from being deprived of their subjectivity and humanity. For one of the most effective means of establishing

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<sup>16</sup> Since the prisoners worked in a lime quarry, the sun light reflected on the lime dust would almost blind them. That is why they requested sunglasses.



discipline in prison is isolation. As Foucault once again clarifies, “solitude assures a sort of self-regulation of the penalty and makes possible a spontaneous individualization of the punishment: the more the convict is capable of reflecting ... the more lively his remorse, the more painful his solitude” (237). And this pain is very well translated into the second sequence that emphasizes the existential drama. It starts with Mandela working on the prison yard along with other inmates. A warder approaches him and hands him a telegram. The medium close-up on the warder’s serious face is a bad omen. And a close-up of the telegram allows the viewer to read its content (**1.38**).



Then, a medium close-up reveals a Mandela shocked by the devastating news of his firstborn son’s death (**1.39**). Next, we see Mandela requesting the right to attend his son’s funeral, but his request is denied by the prison commander. This amounts to his suffering, since Mandela’s

mother had recently died and since Winnie had been recently arrested. Mandela is powerless. He resumes to his cell, mourning. First, there is a medium close-up of him through the bars of his window. Then, a reverse medium shot through the bars of the cell's gate. After that, there is a close-up of Mandela, but the back plane is still in focus. We see the warder opening the gate and letting Sisulu in. Without facing his friend, Mandela says "I'm losing them all. My mother. My son. My wife" (Chadwick, 2013) (1.40). Indeed, in this sequence one can see clearly the "painful solitude" Foucault refers to and the extent of the existential drama Mandela faced in Robben Island.



**1.40** – Sisulu tries to comfort a devastated Mandela.



**1.41** – Mandela dines alone in his home.

Besides the two dream scenes and the letter scene previously analyzed, there are two other occurrences of voice-over narration. The first one is after Mandela's speech on TV calling for peace and stressing the importance of the election. There is a medium shot of Mandela dining alone at his home. He lays the knife and fork down and holds his hands together pondering. Then, we hear the voice over: "After so much suffering, why would anyone believe that putting a mark on a piece of paper is going to change the world?" (Chadwick, 2013). Once again, we have privileged access to the hero's mind. It is another example of "mind subjectivity" (Bordwell, 91).

The other instance of voice-over narration is the last scene in the film. It starts after the inauguration ceremony (1.11). The screen turns white and then there is an extreme long-shot of countryside. In the distance, there are three little huts over a hill (1.42). They are the same huts established before in the movie as Mandela's birthplace in Transkei. As the camera goes past them, still in the same take, we see children (1.43, bottom) running after a man ahead on a trail (1.43, top). Still in the same take, the camera starts to rotate 360°, showing the children reaching Mandela



**1.42** – Extreme long shot. Note the huts at the center.



**1.43** – Children running at the bottom. Mandela at the top (red circle).



**1.44** – The camera rotates 180° showing the children reaching Mandela.



**1.45** – The camera completes the 360° rotation as the children pass Mandela and continue running towards the horizon.

(1.44) and passing him (1.45). Mandela cheers them on as the camera tilts up to show the blue sky. And during this whole aerial take, we hear in voice-over a slightly altered version of a famous quotation from the autobiography: “I have walked a long walk to freedom. It has been a lonely road, and it is not over yet. I know that my country was not made to be a land of hatred. No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin. People learn to hate. They can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart” (Chadwick, 2013). And here the image of children running with which the film opens also serves as closing. Furthermore, it symbolizes both the idea of “long walk” and also the future generations surpassing Mandela’s accomplishments. And, as discussed before, it reinforces the voice-over narrator’s perception as the source of primary diegesis once again.

One final idea contributes to the notion of subjectivity in the film. Ironically, it is by definition the very antonym of privacy. It is the incessant surveillance of prison authorities over Mandela and fellow inmates. It is present throughout the film (1.13, 1.20, 1.21, 1.22 and 1.24). But



this surveillance becomes evident when Kathy, Sisulu, Mandela and a few others are transferred to a cell in Pollsmoor Prison. There is a big mirror right in the middle of the cell. Mandela and the others stare at it aware they are being watched (1.46). As the reverse shot reveals, there is in fact a police officer observing their movements and recording their words. He can see them, but they cannot see him. Therefore, they have to assume he is always there. They have to assume they are always under surveillance. This idea, which corresponds to that of the Panopticon discussed by Foucault, is a form of voyeurism (201).



**1.46** – A police man monitors and records each and every word is said. He can see their every movement, but the prisoners see only a mirror. They assume there is always someone watching them.

And even if the guilt for this unauthorized surveillance lies with the prison authorities, it nonetheless contrasts to the viewer's access to the narrator's deepest thoughts and emotions. Different from the guards with their constant surveillance, we the viewers have been invited into this story by the voice-over narrator. In fact, voice-over is indeed, as Kozloff argues, a mechanism for reducing or eliminating the guilt associated with having access to the hero's subjectivity.

## 5. Concluding remarks

After studying the techniques employed in film making to create the idea of subjectivity and after analyzing the movie *Mandela: long walk to freedom* in detail, it is clear that this film is successful in making the viewer feel as if having privileged access to Mandela's own thoughts and emotions. From the start, it establishes the voice-over narrator's claim to be the source of primary diegesis, concealing the actual prime narrator – the image-maker – behind the much more convincing protagonist and homodiegetic narrator. The claim is established in a dream scene, which also functions as a frame for the whole story.

Voice-over narration appears in a number of other scenes and always reinforces the same claim or perception. And there are additional techniques to support the voice-over narrator's claim. One of them is the subjective point-of-view shot, which is used in a number of scenes. That type of shot, along with the echo of family members in the second dream scene and in Thembi's flashback are examples of what Bordwell names "perceptual subjectivity". The dream scenes, voice-over and the flashbacks, which are also numerous, are examples of "mental subjectivity". Furthermore, Idris Elba's own acting and the creative use of lighting are elements of *mise-en-scène* that help enable viewers' sympathy towards the hardships endured by Mandela and his family. Besides that, the alternation of prison shots with the family being harassed by the secret police presents the existential drama lived by a political prisoner during Apartheid. The routine, the deprivation of one's identity and the painful solitude reinforce the sense of subjectivity. Finally, by exposing the prison authorities' voyeurism, the film contrasts the access viewers have to the story, reinforcing at the same time the voice-over narrator's perception as source of primary diegesis.

This is a story about a well-known icon. His autobiography is an acclaimed and reliable source. Numerous newspaper articles and other biographies offer information about Mandela's life. Nonetheless, this film is original not only for being the first to cover the entire span of his life, but also because how well the sense of subjectivity has been developed. It is, therefore, not to be

considered “less” or “more” as the autobiography, but it must be appreciated as a complete work of art in itself.

## Notes

1. “Afinal, livro e filme estão distanciados no tempo; escritor e cineasta não têm exatamente a mesma sensibilidade e perspectiva, sendo, portanto, de esperar que a adaptação dialogue não só com o texto de origem, mas com o seu próprio contexto, inclusive atualizando a pauta do livro, mesmo quando o objetivo é a identificação com os valores nele expressos.” (Xavier, 62)
2. “Postulado do sentido da existência narrada” (Bourdieu, 184).
3. “Estas citações mostram que a biografia é realmente um “gênero de fronteira” entre a história e a ficção, a realidade e a imaginação” (Schmidt, 1998, 14).
4. “Em termos contextuais, deve-se considerar que a massificação da sociedade contemporânea tem como contrapartida a procura da identidade individual, ou seja, os homens voltam-se ao passado em busca de referenciais para sua conduta no presente. Além disso, a crise atual do espaço público – evidenciada pelo individualismo exacerbado e pela crítica às formas tradicionais de participação política e social – faz com que as pessoas se interessem por vasculhar minuciosamente a vida privada dos outros, sobretudo dos personagens destacados, o que talvez explique o grande sucesso editorial das biografias.” (Schmidt, 1996, 171).

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