

Educational Sheet - Africa2020

Sauve qui peut le court métrage - Centre Yennenga



Author: Farah Clémentine Dramani-Issifou
Design & publication: SQPLCM - Centre Yennenga



INSTITUT
FRANÇAIS

THE FILM

Crew

Director: Dian Weys

Producers: Keenan Arrison, Le Roux Fourie, Dian Weys

Script: Dian Weys

DOP: Pierre de Villiers

Language(s): Afrikaans, English

Cast

Oscar Petersen, Nicola Hanekom, Gretchen Ramsden, David Isaacs, Dean Balie, Robert Hindley, Earl Kruger

A law enforcement officer has to remove homeless people in order to make way for a 10km fun-run.



THE DIRECTOR

Dian Weys studied Law and English at the Free State University and Film and TV at Capetown University. He obtained a Masters' degree in Film Studies with honours at Capetown University in 2016 and has published research articles on ethics in cinema and responsible filmmaking.

Versnel, his first short film, was screened in around 15 festivals, five of which were Oscar-qualifying. Plaashuis, his second short, financed through crowd-funding, was selected in festivals such as Tampere, accredited by the FIAPF and the Message To Man International Film Festival.

Bergie (2022) is his third short.



ORIGINS OF THE FILM

"There were three elements that lead to Bergie's conception. I live in Cape Town where it is a very common sight to see people sleeping on sidewalks. I heard a story about a person that was homeless who died, but people thought he was sleeping. I wondered for a long time how long it took for people to realise that the person lying there was actually dead.

Secondly, there are a lot of homeless people close to my apartment. I sometimes see how law enforcement wake them up and remove them, while other times there are activists who try to block their removal by serving court papers. The scenes taking place behind our apartment block are usually quite dramatic.

The third element that triggered Bergie was that, in the same area, there is a 5km fun-run every Saturday morning. Just after the start of the race, we would pass underneath a bridge where a lot of homeless people would be sleeping and, in the process, our running and stomping would wake them up.



ORIGINS OF THE FILM

While running one of the races, these three elements clicked together as I thought that one of the ways in which you would realise a homeless person has died, is, unfortunately, when he or she is in your way. And usually, law enforcement deals with such a situation, not us. I therefore wrote the script with this location in mind, close to my apartment, where these different events were taking place.

(...) The term "**bergie**" is a South Africanism that refers to people that are homeless, since they usually sought refuge on the slopes of Table Mountain (called "**Tafelberg**" in Afrikaans). Today, the 14,000 homeless people in Cape Town are 11 times more likely to be arrested than the average South African. Those having to enforce these archaic 'vagrant laws' are nevertheless confronted with someone in need.



In "Bergie" when a law enforcement officer has to remove people that are homeless to make way for a 10km fun-run, he has to navigate the complex intersection of the law and personal responsibility. (...) This short film therefore invites us to think about our relations to others and what it means to take responsibility for another."

Dian Weys

THE SEQUENCE SHOT

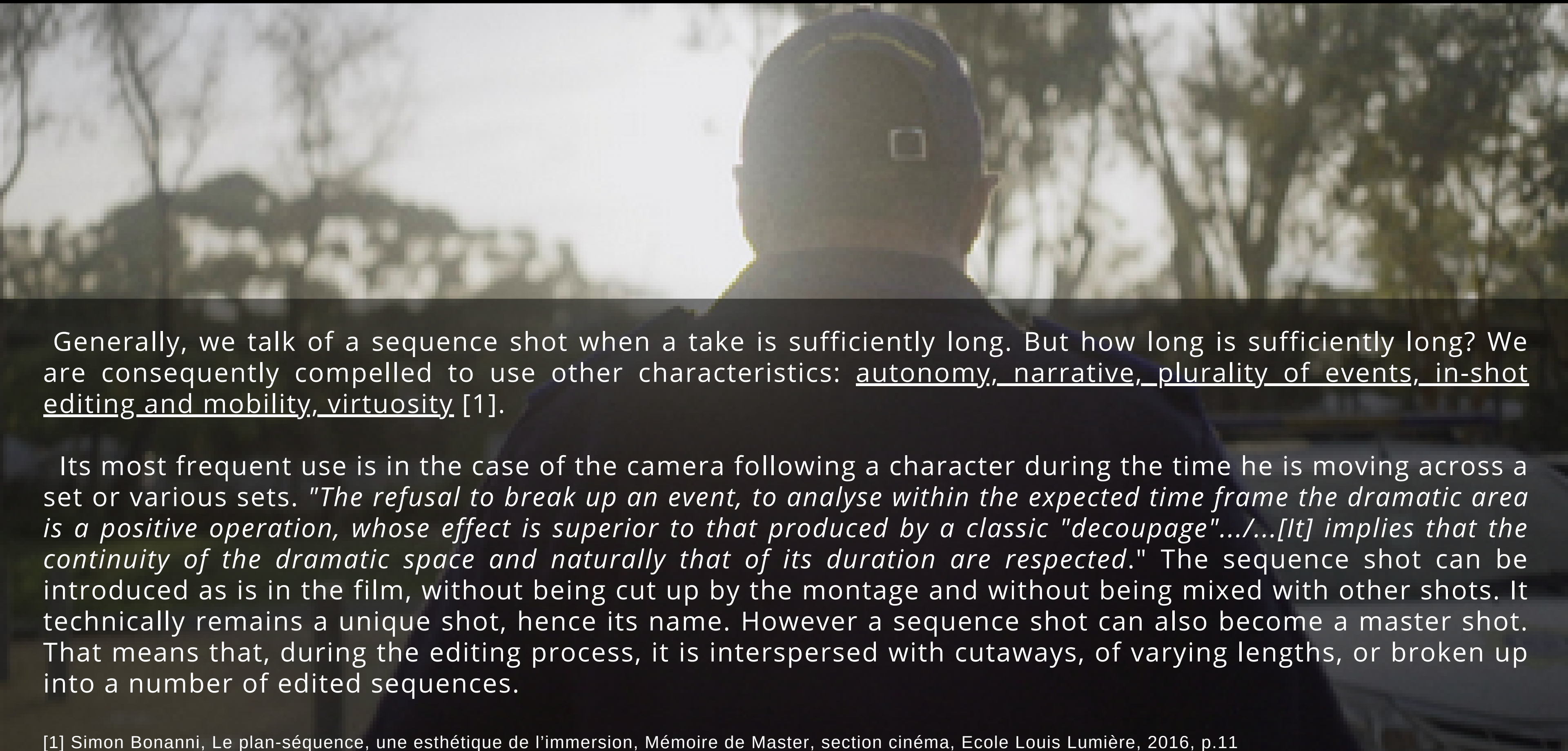
A BIT OF HISTORY

The first sequence shot in the history of film can be found in *Bound for Glory* (1976), an American film by Hal Ashby. Invented by Garrett Brown in the 1970s, the Steadicam (brand of camera stabiliser mounts for motion picture cameras) disrupted American film shoots, as it allowed cameramen to carry out tracking shots, where the camera effectively moves through space during the take, which allows it to change the viewpoint physically and therefore follow the action closely and seamlessly.



In cinema, a sequence shot is a single long take unfolding in various points of the same location or successively in various locations related to each other. This **ubiquity** means that the sequence shot obviously includes many camera movements, pan shots and tracking shots (otherwise, it's a long take within the same setting).

THE SEQUENCE SHOT



Generally, we talk of a sequence shot when a take is sufficiently long. But how long is sufficiently long? We are consequently compelled to use other characteristics: autonomy, narrative, plurality of events, in-shot editing and mobility, virtuosity [1].

Its most frequent use is in the case of the camera following a character during the time he is moving across a set or various sets. *"The refusal to break up an event, to analyse within the expected time frame the dramatic area is a positive operation, whose effect is superior to that produced by a classic "decoupage".../...[It] implies that the continuity of the dramatic space and naturally that of its duration are respected."* The sequence shot can be introduced as is in the film, without being cut up by the montage and without being mixed with other shots. It technically remains a unique shot, hence its name. However a sequence shot can also become a master shot. That means that, during the editing process, it is interspersed with cutaways, of varying lengths, or broken up into a number of edited sequences.

[1] Simon Bonanni, Le plan-séquence, une esthétique de l'immersion, Mémoire de Master, section cinéma, Ecole Louis Lumière, 2016, p.11

THE SEQUENCE SHOT

In *Bergie*, the sequence shot of the disconcerted policeman allows us to see his reactions and emotions in the face of the unfolding situation, with the effects of the events on his environment in the background, as the chase continues.



Whilst remaining very close to his face and body, the camera follows the policeman's movements and emotions simultaneously, as it more or less erases everything around him: we find ourselves **totally immersed in the main character**.

A POST-APARTHEID SOCIETY BESET BY DISCRIMINATION

APARTHEID



Apartheid is a regime of systematic segregation that existed in South Africa between White and Black communities, which was abolished on 30 June 1991. The word immediately brings to mind South Africa and yet, it is a crime against humanity, as defined in a number of international law documents, and that can take place elsewhere in the world [1].

It's a system of oppression and domination of one racial group over another, institutionalised through laws, policies and discriminatory practices.

[1] Lire la définition sur le site d'Amnesty International <https://www.amnesty.fr/focus/apartheid>

A POST-APARTHEID SOCIETY BESET BY DISCRIMINATION

TOWARDS A CONSTITUTIONAL STATE

A few months after the liberation of Nelson Mandela on 11 February 1990, after 27 years in prison, South Africa adopts the Rule of Law and becomes a constitutional state from 1991. The concept of Rule of Law is in direct contradiction with arbitrary power. It designates a State in which public authorities are subjected to the rule of law. General elections which took place in South Africa from 26 to 29 April 1994 were the first non racial elections with universal suffrage in the history of the country. The first non racial government and first Black president - **Nelson Mandela** - were elected.



THE MIRAGE OF A RAINBOW NATION

The Rainbow Nation is a notion invented by archbishop **Desmond Tutu**[1] to describe his dream of seeing the emergence of a post-racial South African society. It's also a metaphorical way to think of the cohabitation of the various communities, not through their fusion but through their juxtaposition. Criticised for its symbolism, the notion, which succeeded the one of a plural developed society under Apartheid, has long stayed a mirage given the evolution of the country.

[1] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desmond_Tutu

A POST-APARTHEID SOCIETY BESET BY DISCRIMINATION

RACISM, POVERTY AND CLASSISM

Terrible inequality still plagued the country despite the abolition of Apartheid: in 2021, the rate of poverty (with a threshold of 1.9 USD per day) reached 21% against 19% in 2019 and 16% in 2010[1]. The level of inequality, already one of the highest in the world, continued to rise.

In Bergie, the woman asking the policeman to move the body of the homeless man is showing class contempt. Class contempt or classism describes a set of discriminatory behaviours that are more or less explicit, exhibited by an individual or a groupe of individuals towards people belonging to a social class deemed inferior. Under the pretext that it is a homeless man that has lost his life, she asks that his body be moved, contrary to what the law dictates in this case.

"Given that race is the central element of South Africa's history,"[1], the Black policewoman - Black being of course a social construct - faces a dilemma: obeying the woman's demands at the risk of in turn showing contempt towards the deceased or **answer to his own sense of responsibility.**

This situation can be interpreted as a metaphor for the **condition of the black policeman** in a post-Apartheid society: he is in a way stuck between his status as a policeman, which gives him a certain social position, a certain power, and the status which he maintains in the eyes of this white woman[2] - who enjoys a certain level of privilege borne out of colonisation and Apartheid - and who is most certainly one of the organisers of this race.

The policeman has interiorised this systemic violence and does everything to resemble the one who continues to dominate him, at the risk of reproducing himself the same pattern of domination, considered legitimate, towards the homeless.

TO FIND OUT MORE

 [Written interview with Dian Weys](https://clermont-filmfest.org/en/bergie/) from the Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival

<https://clermont-filmfest.org/en/bergie/>

