10. Telling about Mormons

Documentaries produced by non-Mormons often have a purpose different from that of documentaries produced by Mormons. We focus here on the role played by Mormonism, its presentation and the ethical implications. Perhaps not unexpectedly, a more critical view of Mormonism is prevalent. The outlook of the filmmakers is usually not in accord with the Mormon worldview; the production has no ties to or dependency on Mormon networks. To understand how their critical argument is formulated and what moral reasoning is at work, here too, in the case of non-Mormon sponsored productions, we will explore the hermeneutic horizons of the filmmakers and social actors and their affinities. The camera gaze is again revelatory as we ask how moral reasoning shapes the narration and thus the depiction of the represented world.

The discussion addresses four presentations, all of which are considered documentaries although their formats differ according to production and distribution contexts. *Tabloid* (Errol Morris, US 2010), and *Sons of Perdition* (Tyler Meason and Jennilyn Merten, US 2010) are typical Indie productions intended for film festivals; *Polygamy, USA* and *Meet the Mormons* (Lynn Alleway, series *Real Stories*, UK, 2015) are intended primarily for television viewing and streaming platforms.

10.1. Getting close to Mormons

As we saw at the start of this chapter, the moral reasoning of the docu-series *Polygamy, USA* combines two modes, the sensational and the informative. Both are referenced at the very beginning of each episode (except in the first episode) when white letters appear on a black background, channeling the spectator's attention toward the words "The following program reveals the lives of practicing polygamists. Due to the sensitive nature of their beliefs, some individuals have requested that their names be changed" (*Meet the Polygamists, Polygamy USA*, 00:00:13).[583] The narration promises to shed light on a phenomenon that has not been seen publicly

583 The title of the episode is not to be confused with the already discussed documentary *Meet the Mormons* (Blair Treu, US 2014).

before. The announcement raises expectations and curiosity, but also feeds a craving for sensation, for something new. In indicating that the community opened itself up to being filmed, the narrative seeks to assure the audience that those who chose to participate are not being exploited. Some faces, mostly of male leaders, are blurred and names are changed. While intrusive, the filming is thus apparently sensitive and founded on mutual consent. That mutual consent flourishes at the start of the production; whether all participants are in agreement with the final product is a separate consideration. The social actors become part of the narrative argument and are used to entertain and inform the audience. As part of that audience, the social actors may find they do not agree with the presentation of their words, appearance, and absence, as we will see in the example of *Tabloid*.

Tabloid reconstructs the story of a young American woman, Joyce McKenney, and her relationship with Mormon missionary Kirk Anderson in the late 1970s. McKenney was accused in the United Kingdom of having kidnapped and raped Anderson. The film covers the different views of the events and shows how tabloid newspapers, mainly the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Express*, competed to provide the most sensational coverage of the incident. The director, Errol Morris, produced extensive interviews with a number of the protagonists to present their personal viewpoints. The narration weaves the conflicting versions into a single story, without claiming to have established the truth or resolving contradictory evidence. The film is indicative of Morris's directorial strategy, which seeks to question documentaries' ability to represent objective truth. In the words of film scholar David Resha: "His [Morris's] films challenge the idea that there exists a reality to which documentary has privileged access."[584] The film style is very evident in the *Tabloid*, and it highlights the relation between the presentation of pure facts and their construction. This narrative strategy denies the documentary film's ability to show reality. At the end the audience does not know what "really" happened, for what actually happened may not be what they have been told over the previous 87 minutes had happened. We should note that Mormonism is widely discussed, and the audience is fed with information about Mormon theology and practices, as we will see, although no church member speaks directly on those topics.

By the time *Tabloid* was produced, Morris was already a successful filmmaker. It was his ninth documentary: alongside those other documentaries

584 David Resha, *The Cinema of Errol Morris* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2015), 6.

he had also made mini-documentaries, further mini-docu-series, short-documentaries, and documentaries for television. He also directed television commercials, which helped finance his documentary productions. *Tabloid* was shot quickly: the interviews were filmed over three days and the film was edited over the course of just three months. The film premiered at the Telluride Festival in 2010 and many other festivals followed. It played for eleven weeks at 37 theaters in the US and took $700,000 dollars at the box office.[585] Its success was a surprise, as were the mostly positive reviews by critics. The LDS Church did not react to the depiction of Mormonism, but non-Mormon protagonist Joyce McKinney sued Morris for, along with other accusations, misrepresenting her as "engaging in S&M for money"[586] and because she had been "tricked into giving an interview."[587]

An acclaimed documentary filmmaker, Errol Morris has a unique documentary style. He never attended film school and left two universities (Princeton and UC Berkeley) without graduating.[588] One of his most successful films is *The Thin Blue Line* (US 1988), in which through interviews he reconstructed events surrounding the crime for which Randall Dale Adams had been sentence to death. The film proved Adams' innocence and brought about his release from prison.[589]

Morris had no direct ties to Mormonism or to this specific incident, which came to be known as the case of the "Manacled Mormon" as it was known in the public. His interest was in the tabloid-told story, namely in how the events were reported and recounted from different perspectives. He did not have particular loyalties, therefore, to a specific party. The filmmaker plays with the different views and profits from the social actors' interest in defending their unique versions, using their statements as raw material for his own story. In this sense his loyalty is to his story and, we might say, to the audience who are to be entertained with the story of the tabloid coverage. He chose to interview McKinney and not to interview

585 "Tabloid (2011) – Box Office Mojo," accessed November 1, 2018, https://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=tabloid.htm.

586 Michael Hann, "Joyce McKinney Sues Errol Morris over Tabloid," *The Guardian*, November 8, 2011, sec. Film, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/nov/08/joyce-mckinney-sues-errol-morris-tabloid.

587 Roy Greenslade, "Judge Finds for Filmmaker in 'manacled Mormon' Case," *The Guardian*, October 17, 2013, sec. Media, https://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2013/oct/17/joyce-mckinney-california.

588 Resha, *The Cinema of Errol Morris*, 13.

589 Linda Williams, "Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (1993): 12–14.

others. Anderson, and also others involved in the original events, did not wish to participate.

When we approach the documentary in light of what it tells its audience about Mormonism, Ex-Mormon Troy Williams is a central figure, alongside the female protagonist Joyce McKinney. Those interviewed are eager to defend their own truth as effectively as possible, as in the case of Williams, who seeks to defend his decision to leave the church. While his hermeneutic horizons are those of a member of the church, his loyalties are no longer to the church, a combination we see repeated in non-Mormon documentaries. Both Joyce McKinney and Troy Williams wish to speak of LDS Church practices and beliefs, and with no one in the documentary to contradict them, their opinion of Mormons and Mormonism is dominant in the narration. McKinney and Williams support each other's arguments and pursue the same goal, namely to denounce the church for suppressing and brainwashing its members. They use their appearance in the documentary to communicate what "really" happens in the church, a view that goes uncontradicted.

All social actors are interviewed with the Interrotron technique, invented by Morris and first used in *Mr. Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred A. Leuchter, Jr* (US 1999).[590] The technique has been copied by other filmmakers, most recently by Wim Wenders in his *Papst Franziskus – Ein Mann seines Wortes* (US 2017). The camera acts as Morris' gaze onto his social actors, and is the only perspective provided. No observational scenes are included. As noted, Anderson was central to the events but refused to be interviewed for the film; Mormonism is therefore explained through the eyes of McKenney and Williams, accessed by Morris' Interrotron technique. This method is based on the principle of the teleprompter. In place of the teleprompter text, which is attached to a camera, an image of the interviewer appears before the interviewee, with the interviewee's image in turn transmitted to a teleprompter to which the interviewer has access. During the conversation the interviewee is therefore looking directly into the camera and at the interviewer's face on a monitor, while the interviewer sees the interviewee's face. Although filmmaker and social actor see each other as if in a mirror and talk to that mirror image, each party can perceive the immediate responses and gestures of the conversation partner. With no diversion available in the surroundings in this artificial setting, the focus is intensely on the interview itself. Framed in a medium close-up, the social actor sits relatively close to the camera and almost trapped by its

590 Resha, *The Cinema of Errol Morris*, 115.

Fig. 162/ Fig. 163/ Fig. 164/ Fig. 165 Morris uses a graphic style that references tabloid newspapers. (Tabloid, 00:05:02/ 00:05:03/ 00:05:04/ 00:05:05).

gaze. In a review that appeared in the *New York Times* and commented on the effect of keeping the camera on the social actor until the whole story has been told, Morris was described as a "collector of souls."[591]

Modes of moral reasoning in relation to religion are steered by this interview style. All the social actors are filmed against the same greyish background and the interviews are edited by inserting blacks that punctuate their statements. Jump cuts between the statements add further dynamics to the interviews. Morris allows his social actors to explain their thoughts and views, which may be obviously mistaken or inconsistent. This is the case when the absent Anderson is introduced by Joyce McKinney and Peter Tory, a *Daily Mirror* journalist who reported on the case.

McKinney first explains "When I met my Kirk…," then a black-and-white portrait of Anderson is inserted (Fig. 162) and for three seconds at a time graphic statements by McKinney about Anderson are superimposed below his name: "beautiful blue eyes" (fig. 163), "the cleanest skin" (fig. 164) and "dedicated Mormon" (fig. 165).

591 A. O. Scott, "'Tabloid,' Errol Morris's Take on 'Manacled Mormon' - Review," *The New York Times*, July 14, 2011.

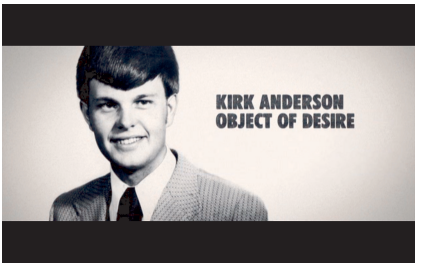

Fig. 166 Kirk Anderson is not a typical "object of desire." He looks like the perfect Mormon missionary rather than like someone who might evoke such feelings (Tabloid, 00:05:10).

Fig. 167 Joyce McKinney describes her first meeting with Kirk Anderson as like a romantic tale where a couple's eyes meet and love at first sight is inevitable (Tabloid, 00:05:14).

The orchestrated introduction of Anderson ends with McKinney's voice saying: "… it was like in the movies." Finally the image remains static and the words spell out "Kirk Anderson" and, on a new line, "object of desire" (fig. 166).

The interview with McKinney continues as she explains (fig. 167): "When the girl comes down the stairs, and their eyes meet. When Juliet looks at Romeo, and it's …phew! That's how it was. He had the most beautiful blue eyes and the sexiest smile, …" Her vivid narrative sounds very authentic, with the audience following her feelings in this moment and imagining the blue eyes and the sexy smile.

As McKinney continues, "…and he always had the cleanest skin," the 16 mm footage in home-movie style that follows, apparently of Anderson, (fig. 168) gives the viewer reason to question her description.

The slow-motion footage suggests Anderson is rather introverted, clumsy, and definitely less attractive than McKinney describes. The editing allows the audience to speculate that this "object of desire" is a projection by McKinney. Tory's voice in the following stylistically similar sequence confirms this suspicion (00:05:45–00:05:48): "Kirk Anderson was a very big, rather flabby, 300-pound, 6 foot 3, …." Tory appears, filmed by the Interrotron technique, as his voice continues,

Fig. 168 Kirk Anderson gets out of a car and walks toward a building. McKinney is enthusiastic about Anderson's personality and the impression he made; another social actor will later be less positive (Tabloid, 00:05:45).

> …not athletic or attractive-looking man in the accepted sense of the word, who had a very shuffley kind of walk, the last person in the world that you would think would be the object of a kind of strange sexual passion.
> [cut to black]
> He had known Joyce McKinney in Salt Lake City. And she had fallen in love with him. Fallen in love with him… become **obsessed** (highlighted by a fading title) by him, because another thing about Joyce is obsession. I mean, she just obsesses about things.
> [cut]
> I don't know what the details of their relationship was in Salt Lake City, but they obvious had some kind of romance or love affair, if one's to believe Joyce at all, he had promised her a family and children.[592]

Tory tells the story from the opposite angle, so that it collides with McKinney's version. Although their descriptions of Anderson do not coincide,

592 *Tabloid*, 00:05:45–00:06:32.

Fig. 169 Goofy sound accompanies Kirk's lollypop-like rotating spiral eyes (Tabloid, 00:18:46).

Tory at least agrees that Anderson and McKinney "had some kind of a romance or love affair." This moment in the narration clearly marks that different versions of the same story exist. According to Resha, "Morris shifts through these breakthroughs and errors, prompting the viewer to raise larger questions about the workings and limits of human knowledge."[593] On a meta level the filming certainly raises larger questions, concerning, for example, how reality is reconstructed in documentaries. The protagonists are each given space to relate the events in accord with their individual experiences and imaginations. The speechless Mormon Anderson plays a central role in the multidimensional reasoning as an empty canvas for not only McKinney's but also all the other social actors' projections.

The audience is presented with a particular picture of Mormons and Mormonism and it seems likely that most of that audience will not be in a position to counter that picture with other evidence. All the various stories converge on the silent Anderson. Such narratives are sometimes expressed in fanciful terms (fig. 169), as when McKinney distinguishes between Kirk number one, the beloved Kirk, and "cult Kirk", the number two Kirk.

593 Resha, *The Cinema of Errol Morris*, 7.

In a digression, the mission duty that falls to each young male Mormon is explained by an Ex-Mormon missionary after McKinney has recounted the only problem she and Anderson had (00:06:32–00_08:16): "I was wanting to get married in the Christian church, and he was getting pressure from the other side, and so one day, he vanished into thin air. I don't mean he left me. I don't mean he abandoned me. I don't mean he left me for another woman. I mean he evaporated into thin air." As a result, she moved to Los Angeles, worked hard to hire a private investigator and traveled to England, where the private investigator found him. "The Mormons had him." McKinney's last sentence introduces another testimony in Morris's tabloid story, that of Ex-Mormon Tory Williams, who is also introduced with tabloid-style graphics, described as "radio talk show host", "gay activist" in mirror writing, and "gay rights activist", ending with his name, "Troy Williams, former missionary" (fig. 170). Williams explains: "All young men in the church from the time when they are young boys were indoctrinated to prepare to go on mission. We sing songs like 'I hope they call me on a mission'" (00:08:38–00:08:51).

Fig. 170 Troy Williams explains trenchantly what being a missionary means (Tabloid, 00:08:43).

This song is played within the music score and again 16 mm footage shows a happy and light-hearted Anderson shortly before he disappeared, the nar-

rative suggests. The closeness to Anderson appears a way to a better understanding of who he is (fig. 171/172).

Throughout this footage the LDS Church missionary song is sung by a child's voice. The sequence creates a romanticized and naïve atmosphere that is associated with the Mormon missionary duty. Williams returns, finishing his version of the narrative, which is illustrated with footage from the cartoon *The God Makers* (Ed Decker and Steve Hunt, Jeremiah Films, US 1984): "You leave as a boy you come back as a man. For Kirk when he reaches the age of 19, [insert portrait of Joyce McKinney] he doesn't get whisked away from Joyce. [A still from *The God Makers* is inserted, showing a blond young man dressed in white with other young people in the background.] He is fulfilling his religious-spiritual responsibilities (00:08:57–00:09:13)." Another still from *The God Makers* shows a priest between two columns surmounted with fire. The imagery refers to the spiritual preparation undertaken by missionaries. The sequence ends with a black and tells in pragmatic terms that Anderson had to leave for his mission service and that he was not abducted by the Mormons as McKinney's versions suggest. The two versions of the same events are consistent in content but not in interpretation – one speaks of love and forced separation (McKinney), the other of standard Mormon practice (Williams).

In addition to mission service, Mormon theology and other practices are also addressed by the documentary. McKinney explains at the beginning and again as illustrated by the cartoon *The God Makers* what Mormonism is all about. A white hand energetically knocks at a door. McKinney introduces Mormonism in the voice-over: "They were Mormons." A woman opens the door and looks at the person who was knocking. "They didn't tell me what Mormonism is all about. He didn't say we are a group that believes …" An elderly man with a white beard who stands in front of the door is filmed in a close-up frame and subjective shot. He looks at the audience/the women behind the half-open door. McKinney continues: "…that Jesus was a polygamist and was married to Magdalene (fig. 173). He didn't say that God lives on a star named Kolob (fig. 174). He didn't say that black people were cursed with the mark of Cain (fig. 175)." Accompanied by dramatic music the white Mormons change to black ones (fig. 176). "They made me think they were a church (fig. 177). They made me think that they were family oriented" (fig. 178).

McKinney presents herself as a victim who found something good in Mormonism, but the audience is introduced to Mormonism as problematic. They receive an image of Mormonism when African Americans had not yet been accepted by the church, as was the case in 1977, when McKinney

Fig. 171 Kirk Anderson speaks with two other men, who, the voice-over suggests, are Mormon missionaries (Tabloid, 00:08:51).

Fig. 172 The camera, probably as a result of image manipulation during editing, zooms closer to the still light-hearted Kirk Anderson (Tabloid, 00:08:51).

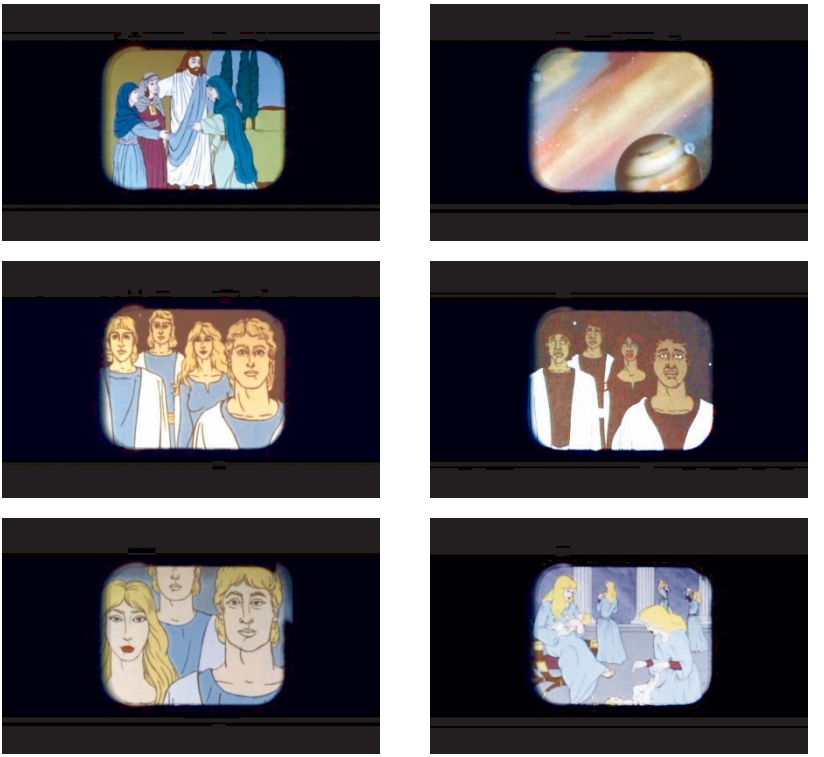

Fig. 173/ Fig. 174/ Fig. 175/ Fig. 176/ Fig. 177/ Fig. 178 The footage of The God Makers is rather simple and the audience might be surprised that Joyce McKinney, with a self-declared IQ of 168, believes everything Mormons say about themselves (Tabloid, 00:03:14/ 00:03:21/ 00:03:22/ 00:03:27/ 00:03:30/ 00:03:32).

met Anderson. No mention is made of the change to this policy in 1978. By 2010 this characterization of the institutional church was anachronistic, but McKinney's statement about what was hidden from her remains valid. Mormon dress is a further topic addressed here. McKinney explains that while she and Anderson were in the rented cottage she wanted to massage his back but was unable to do so because of the garment covering Anderson's body. "How am I supposed to give a back rub with this Mormon thing on it (00:21:58–00:22:01)?" She decided to rip the garment off and burn it in the fire place "…because they smelled, you know, and they had those, … occultic symbols…(fig. 179)."

Fig. 179 Some random "occultic symbols" are faded in (Tabloid, 00:22:06).

Fig. 180 The tabloid shows how the McKinney case led to Mormonism becoming a matter of public interest. With the reconstruction of the story, these "secrets" are again brought to life (Tabloid, 00:22:40).

Accompanied by explanations given by Williams, extracts from the English tabloid *Sunday People* are shown in rapid succession, ending as a gong resounds as the title "Chastity suit revealed" (fig. 180) appears. The editing alludes not only to the printing of the newspaper but also to the sensational effects provoked by the *Sunday People*.

Williams explains that people continue to wear the garments even though they no longer attend the Mormon church. His gestures are intended to suggest the underwear is absurd.

The next religious lesson concerns sexuality, with Williams again the expert and his explanations again illustrated with the Mormon cartoon *God Makers*, in which a blond young man becomes Lucifer to the sound of thunder claps. The transformation into the devil is contrasted with a couple who marry in white, walk into heaven, and fly into space. In a voice-over during the cartoon Williams explains the temple ritual of the Melchizedek priesthood during which the members receive the "sacred underwear" and a secret knowledge of the key to heaven. During this ritual of endowment they are told "in a menacing tone" (00:32:43) that those who do not abide by the covenants into which they have entered – for example, in remaining chaste – they will end up under the control of Lucifer. Chastity is understood as meaning that intercourse happens only with a legally married partner. During this temple ritual an actor plays the part of Lucifer. The sequence is accompanied by a mystical music score.

During the interview Morris asks Williams: "'Manacled Mormon Sex Slave' wrecks that?" referring back to the tabloid headlines recently displayed. Williams answers: "Completely wrecks that. If Kirk Anderson was a willing 'Manacled Mormon', he will have violated his temple covenants,

violated the law of chastity, violated his temple covenants." "Manacled Mormon" is inserted as soon as Williams repeats the title. "What he risks is excommunication from the church and … [cut] … greater than that [cut] … unless he repents, he won't be able to ultimately become a God … and have his own planet. That is Mormon theology. That's what they are working towards." As Williams names the law requiring chastity a black-and-white photo of McKinney posing with a snake and an apple is inserted. Red markings signal that the photo was the work of a professional photographer (fig. 181).

Fig. 181 The insert of the photograph show McKinney referencing Eva and the garden of Eden motive with an apple and a snake (Tabloid, 00:33:29).

The lesson about Mormon theology is steered by the director's question, which quotes a tabloid headline. The sensationalism of the digression comes from the use of tabloid styling. While the facts about Mormonism are correct, the narrative shapes their presentation in an entertaining mode.

Most of the information about Mormonism provided by this documentary comes in the first third of the film, through the gazes of ex-missionary Williams, McKinney and Morris. The moral reasoning mode involves the combination of an intimate mode, achieved through the interview recording technique, and a sensational mode. Although all the social actors agreed to be interviewed, the interviews are a central artistic means of pos-

ing ethical questions. And what of the responsibility of the director? The camera gaze shows that the protagonists seem to enjoy receiving Morris's attention during the interviews. The focus on the church's suppressive tactics and brainwashing and on sex sensationalizes and entertains. The figure of the mute Mormon and the story of three days of S&M experience are especially sensational when set against the Mormon ideal of chastity.

The complex narrative structure makes it difficult to determine the possible loyalties of the viewer. The film might offend Mormons, for Kirk Anderson is presented as strange and inapproachable; neither are they likely to identify with Joyce McKinney, who loves the man but rejects his religious affiliations. Non-Mormons receive a one-sided and only partly accurate picture of Mormonism, as the narrative does pursue neither neutrality nor advocacy; indeed, its presentation of the information is distinctly skewed. The mode of moral reasoning can be described as involving the impossibility of access to absolute information or as relaying that life events exist in multiple versions, dependent on the perspective from which they are told and how they are experienced.

The account of Mormonism given in the documentary is not current. The narration refers to Mormonism in 1977, when, for example, black people were not given equal rights by the church. So what are the hermeneutic horizons of the film in relation to Mormonism? Knowledge of McKinney's story and the "Manacled Mormon" of 1977 is now limited and largely a product of a vague memory of the tabloid version of the incident. A cinephile audience, film scholars for example, will situate *Tabloid* in the context of Morris's oeuvre. Mormons are not the intended audience. Ex-Mormon Williams reinforces the exclusion of Mormons from the story as his specialist knowledge is critical and negative. His account of the church's teachings is often condescending, and his rhetoric is enhanced by the style of the narration. *Tabloid* does not provide a balanced representation of Mormonism, which is instead used in an argument about the ambiguities of the representation of reality. Religion is an obvious and effective realm in which to situate that argument, for its interpretative nature allows for different perspectives. Inadvertently, through his silence the "manacled Mormon" Anderson supports the version of Mormonism delivered by Errol Morris, Joyce McKinney and Troy Williams, whose criticism is recounted via tabloid sensationalism. The next two documentaries discussed here adopt a different strategy for convincing their audiences of the case they seek to make, for their filmic style is less complex and at the same time very close to their social actors.

10.2. Revealing abuses in the FLDS Church

The documentary *Sons of Perdition* (Tyler Meason and Jennilyn Merten, US 2010, 85') deals with the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) and sheds light on abuses in the community through the eyes of four teenagers who are no longer members. The title *Sons of Perdition* references a term used in Mormonism for followers of Satan who will not live in a Kingdom of Glory. The boys who are the subject of the documentary were under enormous pressure to please the leader in order to be allowed to marry. Marriages were arranged by Warren Jeffs, the prophet and leader of the polygamy-practicing FLDS, who decides how worthy a man is on the basis of that man's submissiveness to his own directions. Women are chosen for marriage by the leader and assigned to a man, who may be far older than his wives. If a man is obedient to the system and regarded as worthy by the leader, he may be rewarded with several wives. The details of this polygamist marriage practice are specific to the FLDS and are not shared by all polygamist groupings. With one man marrying more than one woman, not all men can marry. Male teenagers and young men who decide to leave the group are called "sons of perdition" – they have left the sacred space of the religious community and are living in what FLDS members believe to be the "sinful world outside."

The film shows the difficulties faced by teenagers who no longer live according to the strict rules of the polygamist lifestyle controlled by Warren Jeffs and have left their families. Some of the teenagers portrayed in the documentary are guests in a couple's home for a while; others go to a shelter for teenagers from polygamist families. The film follows the social actors organizing their lives from scratch: some work on constructions sites, others prepare to go to high school as soon as they have the fixed address needed for enrollment. One important narrative thread is filmed with a hidden camera and is both thrilling and sensational. The film team accompanies Joe (17), who was beaten by his father, as he tries to get his mother and siblings out of the community; after two unsuccessful attempts his mother and siblings finally arrive with him.

Sons of Perdition premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City and was also presented at other festivals, where it received several prizes. At the Salt Lake City Film Festival it won the *Best of Fest Award*, which is not surprising as its critical view of polygamy is in line with the

stance of the LDS Church.[594] It was also screened in several theaters in the US, usually for no longer than a week. The film was produced by Left Turn Films, of which both directors are partners. The film was coproduced and distributed by the OWN documentary club, owned by media personality Oprah Winfrey. Winfrey praised the film when it was aired on her network on 2 June 2011 and also appears on the DVD. The end credits start with a reference to Holding Out Help, an organization that supports those who leave polygamous groups, with a mission to help people "to transition from isolation to independence."[595] The reference to this organization is indicative of a central aim of the documentary in seeking to inform its audience about the situation facing outcasts from polygamous groups and the repressive lifestyle of these groups.

Directors Tyler Meason and Jennilyn Merten are both ex-LDS members, which determines their hermeneutic horizons and loyalties.[596] Meason served as a missionary but left the church because of its support for Proposition 8, created by opponents of same-sex marriage. Both directors know Mormonism as insiders and share their opinions publicly.[597] Meason took part in the counter campaign *I Am an Ex Mormon* with the video *I'm a searcher, I'm a wanderer, I'm a filmmaker* (US 2011) and he was the field producer of *Believer* (US 2018), a documentary about the front man of the rock band *Imagine Dragons*, a former LDS Mormon.[598] Their loyalties are clearly with the teenagers and all Ex-Mormons. Their interest in informing audiences about abuses in the FLDS community intersects with the LDS Church leaders' opinion, who have very clearly distanced themselves from polygamy. The LDS Church is not the filmmakers' focus, although some Ex-FLDS members reach out to become members of the LDS Church. The documentary's critical take on how polygamy is experienced is in line with

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594 "Sons of Perdition Screenings," accessed November 13, 2018, http://www.sonsofperditionthemovie.com/Sons_of_Perdition_Screenings.html.

595 "Holding Out Help – Helping, Encouraging, & Loving Polygamists," accessed November 12, 2018, http://holdingouthelp.org/.

596 Meason appears as interview host on the blog "Mormon Stories," where Ex-Mormons talk about their experiences after leaving the church. See "900–902: Tyler Measom – Documentary Filmmaker," *Mormon Stories* (blog), accessed November 9, 2018, https://www.mormonstories.org/podcast/tyler-measom/.

597 "Reason.Tv: The Sons of Perdition Filmmakers on Warren Jeffs' Polygamist Church – Hit & Run," Reason.com, July 29, 2010, accessed November 9, 2018, https://reason.com/blog/2010/07/29/reasontv-the-sons-of-perdition.

598 "'I'm a Searcher, I'm a Wanderer, I'm a Filmmaker.' | I Am an Ex Mormon," accessed November 13, 2018, http://www.iamanexmormon.com/2011/08/im-a-searcher-im-a-wanderer-im-a-filmmaker/.

the LDS Church's interest in rejecting its polygamous past, which is not the case for other shows, such as *Sister Wives (TLC, US 2010–2020)*, *Three Wives, and One Husband (Netflix, US 2017, six episodes)* or the documentary series *Polygamy, USA*, which present a more positive view of polygamy.

Unlike the filmmaker, the social actors have had limited experience of the world beyond the FLDS. The narrative makes this ingenuousness clear to its audience as, for example, when Joe is shown confusing Hitler with Bill Clinton. The scene could have been cut to protect the social actor, but the directors appear to have been concerned to show the young people's lack of education. Joe explains to Merten, who is not in the picture, the nature of the history he was taught (01:00:11–01:00:36). Warren Jeffs, he recounts, talked only of the prophets' lives. Mertens asks about the subject of the previous night's discussion. Joe answers that it was "Pretty cool. We talked about World War I and II and Bill Clinton about how he fried all the little kids." Merten responds with surprise: "Bill Clinton? Not about Bill Clinton." Joe asks: "What's his name?" Mertens: "You mean Hitler?" Joe confirms: "Hitler. Who is Bill Clinton?" Joe is left sitting with this question, for the director does not respond, and his ignorance has been exposed to the audience. During the three seconds the camera rests on Joe in a medium shot, it makes evident that he does not know what he is talking about and feels uncomfortable (fig. 182).

Fig. 182 The camera's gaze rests on Joe's irritated face when he confuses Hitler and Bill Clinton and does not know who Bill Clinton is (Sons of Perdition, 01:00:36).

Only a few experts participate on camera. A number of Ex-FLDS adults who handled the transition successfully tell about their experiences. Author Jon Krakauer, whose non-fiction book *Under the Banner of Heaven*

Fig. 183 Children and mothers in prairie dresses are picnicking in a park. One woman is evidently pregnant. They are filmed from a car window (Sons of Perdition, 00:03:17).

(2003) is set in an FLDS milieu, appears in a short interview.[599] Most of the social actors share a background in the FLDS, which they have fled recently or some time ago. They have traumatic experiences in common and most have lost contact with their families. They share the sympathies of the filmmakers. Loyalty to the FLDS runs counter to the thrust of the documentary's moral reasoning and is represented only rarely and mostly without prior agreement, filmed with a hidden camera and with faces obscured.

The hidden camera and other approaches to the social actors are revealing of modes of moral reasoning at play in this documentary. In the opening sequence, for example, several long shots from a car window show in blurred slow motion the landscape where members of the FLDS Church live. Men are working in the fields and women in colored prairie dresses are looking after the playing children. Warren Jeffs preaches in the voice-over, accompanied by harmonic and slow banjo riffs. The inserted title says: "Voice of the prophet Warren Jeff": "All young people, eternity is within your reach, if you will just live faithful so the prophet can place you properly in marriage. I want you to believe these stories. There are no monogamous in heaven (fig. 183). Men have many wives. And that is the way men become gods and wives become heavenly mothers. I want to tell you young people, it's a sin to even talk about boyfriends and girlfriends because you know the right way. But what happens to people who turn away from it? The revelation says they will be destroyed."

599 Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*.

After this panoramic introduction to the place where the teenagers have been raised with Warren Jeff in the voice-over, 17-year-old Sam is introduced. He is sitting in a car and looking out of the window. The editing suggests that the audience follows the young man's gaze and listens to his inner voice, where he is remembering Jeff's prophetic sermon. The director then asks Sam if he gets nervous when he returns to his home place. The camera frames his face in an extreme close-up from the side. Sam does not appear comfortable, with the question seeming already to describe Sam's current emotional state. He quickly rejects the thought because "they can't do anything to me… I'm getting nervous when I see my Dad though" (00:04:22–00:04:00).

The close camera on the protagonist's face combined with the view out of the window immediately establish that the gaze of this documentary is on the young former member of the FLDS Church. It also tells the audience that the narration is seeking to be as close as possible to the social actors. The camera wants to grasp the fear and insecurity the teenager feels before he meets his parents. Another moment of intimacy and exposure is even closer, when the teenagers are dancing at the home of Don and Suzanne, a couple who host teenagers who have left (01:05:45–01:08:31). Some of the young people are obviously drunk (fig. 184). Sabrina and her friend dance exuberantly to the rhythm of loud stomping disco music. They seem no longer aware of the camera.

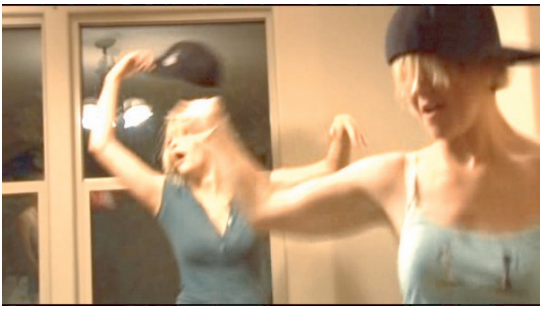


Fig. 184 Sabrina and her friend are dancing exuberantly, filmed by a camera that takes part in the action without being noticed (Sons of Perdition, 01:05:41).

In a conversation cut in between the dancing scenes, Hillary recounts that she knew nothing of sex when she got married aged 17. At the time of the documentary she is 24. Her four children still live in the FLDS community. After the interview Sabrina is again shown drunk and dancing, now on

another occasion (she is wearing different clothes). Exhausted from the dancing, she finally falls down on the floor. The other young people try to help her to get up, give her some water to drink, and ask her if she needs assistance. Sabrina gets up, walks into the kitchen and accidentally smashes a glass on a counter. Her brother moves her away from the pieces of broken glass. Sabrina cries, stumbles back into the living room and again falls on the floor (fig. 185/186).


Fig. 185/ Fig. 186 The camera is extremely close, exposing Sabrina's misery. When she cries, the camera zooms out and the social actor is permitted some more intimate space, but the focus is still painfully close (Sons of Perdition, 01:07:59/ 01:08:08).

After a while Sabrina starts to cry hysterically. Joe comments: "When she is drunk all the memories from the Crick come out." The sequence ends with a sad and speechless Joe filmed in a medium shot. What is the function of this intimate mode in the narration? Should the camera film such moments when the social actors are not in control of the situation or of themselves? Are the filmmakers still loyal to their protagonists or are they more interested in filming intimacy or even sensation? The scene suggests that the social actors enjoy their freedom but are not yet in control of their lives. Their behavior is not at all in accord with the moral standards by which they lived in the FLDS community. The intimate mode has become sensational and the audience has become voyeuristic, an experience neither required nor necessary.

We have noted the sensational mode that is a product of the use of a hidden camera. This mode is adopted when some of the social actors have not agreed to be filmed, which is ethically problematic. We see such an example when Joe's father drives to the house where his wife is staying with their children after leaving the family home (fig. 187). The husband asks about his wife and wants her to come out to talk to him in person. Joe's host appears to be talking to the husband and then hands him a cell phone

so that he can talk to his wife. The husband rejects this suggestion and insists (00:37:32): "I'm not answering to you. I want to hear her say no."

Fig. 187 The hidden camera films the dialogue between the rejected husband and the person hosting his family, who tries to negotiate (Sons of Perdition, 00:37:39).

The scene is filmed through the window of a car parked on the street opposite the house. Although the dialogue is fairly audible, subtitles transcribe it. The host calls the police, and the teenagers standing close to the car seem nervous. Suspense-generating music indicates the dangers of the situation. The same camera and editing style are repeated in other situations, too, when the teenagers meet members of the FLDS Church who would similarly not have agreed to be filmed.

The mode of moral reasoning is used here to reveal inequality, to show how a religious system suppresses these teenagers, and to call for an end to such exploitation. The lives of the teenagers are at the center of the narration. The oppression they have experienced is represented by images taken from a car as it is driven through the community. These images are in a way stolen, as we can assume that this filming took place without permission. Additionally, the underage teenagers are open and allow the camera to be present in intimate situations. Even though the filmmakers are loyal to their subject, we wonder if they will benefit from appearing in the documentary, with its intimate depictions, in the long term. Further we might consider the extent to which the filmmaking has steered the story and events. For example, when Joe goes to his family's home to persuade his mother to leave the community, the presence of the camera supports his plans and encourages him. The camera provides the social actor with some protection because everything is being filmed; it can claim to be part of the

teenager's emancipation, with the final credits depicting the three main characters in their new lives and suggesting their achievements (01:24:05–01:24:30). Joe is employed at a prestigious resort in Park City, Utah. Sam, who poses with his brother Wayne, works full time and looks after his younger brother, who was forced to leave Colorado City, AZ. Bruce is married and "the proudest father you'll ever meet" according to the title. He is shown with his wife and baby. Hillary, Joe's sister, and his other siblings go to school; Jorjina is writing a cookbook "that should sell like hot cakes." At the very end a picture of Warrens Jeff is inserted with the caption: "In August 2011, Warren Jeffs was sentenced to life by the Texas Prison System. He still maintains control over Colorado City." Jeff may be controlling Colorado City but he is no longer controlling Joe, Wayne, Bruce, Hillary and Jorjina, a new situation to which the film has contributed.

We would expect the loyalties of the audience to lie with the teenagers; only members of the FLDS community might feel differently and with all forms of media consumption strictly forbidden, they are unlike to watch the documentary. The film uses an advocacy mode[600] to convince the audience of a cause, but it also applies sensational and intimate modes. The film's purpose is to attract the audience's attention and to cause them to side with the Ex-FLDS teenagers and young adults. Some scenes show footage of Warren Jeff being arrested, in court or in prison. His weak voice becomes menacing when heard in the context of the teenagers' stories. The audience are encouraged by the narration to form a specific picture of the FLDS Church. They are provided with information – for example television footage is used to inform the audience about the history of the FLDS Church after Warren Jeff's father handed its leadership to his son – in a form that presents it as a strange, repressive, secluded, and abusive religious group. The narrative excludes positive or even neutral statements about the FLDS Church. While no member of the FLDS community may have been willing to talk to the filmmakers, it seems also possible that they were omitted on purpose. The documentary is not intended to provide a balanced depiction of the FLDS and its former members. *Sons of Perdition* informs its audience about sexual and mental assaults within a religious community that were inflicted on social actors who are willing to be open about their experience. This balance of exposure and information is also an issue in the next documentary we shall consider.

600 Aufderheide, *Documentary Film*, 77–90.

10.3. The LDS Church as supervising shadow

Meet the Mormons (UK 2015, 46') was produced by Channel 4 in the series *True Stories* and distributed by the streaming platform *Real Stories*, which specializes in documentaries.[601] The platform has a section entitled "Religious Documentaries," which contains films that are mostly critical of religious institutions. The section includes titles such as *Forced Marriage Cops* (Channel 4, UK 2015) and *Scientology: Mysterious Death* (NTV, DE 2014). *Meet the Mormons* (which should not be confused with the documentary of the same name that is produced by the LDS Church and was discussed earlier in this chapter) tells about the hardships and sacrifices of becoming and being a young missionary. Unlike the narratives produced directly or indirectly by the LDS Church, this narrative takes an outsider perspective. The filmmaker, Lynn Alleway, follows 20-year-old Josh Field as he becomes a missionary. While staying with a Mormon couple, Field spends seven months at the missionary center in Lancaster, United Kingdom, where he is taught about proselytizing, *The Book of Mormon*, and the daily routine of a missionary. He is also taught about the people he may encounter: they may be struggling in their marriages, with health problems or financial issues, the instructor at the mission center explains to the newly arrived. Such individuals may in turn be looking for help, friends, and comfort in the gospel. Through the "setting-apart" ritual, Field is finally incorporated into the community of the LDS Church mission, separated from his family and sent out as a missionary in Leeds, United Kingdom. The film focusses on Field's emotional struggles, particularly as he misses his family; while other missionaries are also homesick, they seem better able to live with their unhappiness. During the filming, the director comes to care for the main social actor and feels for him in his misery. Elder Field, his official missionary title, continues in his mission even though he is fighting homesickness and sadness or even suffering depressive episodes.

The filmmaker's hermeneutic horizons are influenced by her professional experience as a journalist. Currently Lynn Alleway is a producer and director of documentaries for *Modern Times*, a BBC Two documentary series.[602] During the production of a film Alleway will often spend a great deal of time with the social actors. *Meet the Mormons* was filmed over six

601 Again the title of the episode is not to be confused with the already discussed documentary *Meet the Mormons* (Blair Treu, US 2014).

602 "Lynn Alleway – About," accessed December 4, 2018, http://www.lynnalleway.com/about/.

months, during which the director met Field several times. She was never able to speak to him alone, as a church representative was always also present, listening and observing their conversation. Repeated reference to this situation is made by means of cutaways. Cutaways usually present a secondary activity parallel to the main scene. They provide the context for an activity, for the camera can show only what is in front of it and not what is happening simultaneously to the left, right or behind it. Alleway's loyalties are evidently with Field. She is the only person that Josh Field meets outside the church. All the social actors are Mormons who know what it means to be a missionary. They differ from Field only in their positive relation to the mission. That positive relationship can be combined with the sadness of mothers who weep as their sons leave for the missionary field.

The director's interactions with the main social actor and the camera gaze that tries to encounter him in a private space are key to the film's efforts to ensure the audience sympathizes with Field. The film uses different narrative styles. Discussions involving filmmaker and social actors alternate with information about Mormonism and specifically about missionary work. The nature of life as a Mormon is commented in voice-over by the filmmaker and represented visually with, for example, images of Mormon temples from inside and outside, references to Mormon underwear, and observation of missionaries during training or going about their daily routines.

At the very beginning of the documentary, the filmmaker explains that she was allowed to enter a temple and that the church wanted her to make a positive film about the LDS faith. She explains what baptism of the dead is, and images of fountains with twelve oxen are shown, signifying the twelve tribes of Israel. Alleway remarks (00:01:48–00:02:19): "I soon realized that this was a church anxious about its public image." After this introduction to the issue of image control, Alleway meets the main social actor at a parking lot and accompanies him to a Mormon dance evening. Des, a representative of the LDS Church is introduced, with the director explaining that he will be consistently present (00:03:13–00:03:26): "He is going to be present for all of the filming, listening to everything that I say to Josh and everything Josh says back to me. It was strange not be able to talk to Josh on my own."

Control and observation by church officials during filming are treated in detail in a scene in which the filmmaker visits Field at the Leeds home of his hosts, both church members, where he is preparing for the mission. The sequence introduces Richard as LDS Church supervisor and an un-

wanted presence during filming. Alleway complains in the voice-over that she was unable to ask the questions she wanted to, for example on the subject of celibacy (00:09:46–00:11:06): "Questions about being celibate had already got me into trouble. But I hadn't yet asked Josh about how he coped with the rules governing sex and masturbation. We should be joined by church official Richard. He'd been told to listen to all the conversations in the home including in twenty-year-old Josh's bedroom."

In general, the presence of LDS Church representatives within the narrative skews the director's intent. They define who will appear on the screen and deprive the filmmaker of the ability to select her own subjects. Often the church officials emerge from the background to intrude into the space of representation. The LDS Church representatives reverses roles: rather than have the camera enter into private lives, the LDS Church takes up an unwelcomed place in front of the camera (fig.188).

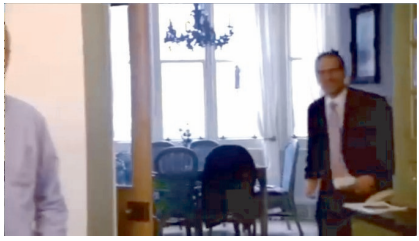


Fig. 188 Richard is reading in a corner, trying not to attract attention (Meet the Mormons, 00:09:39).

Fig. 189 Richard is leaving his hiding-place after his hosts have requested that he says hello (Meet the Mormons, 00:09:47).

The question of who decides what happens and what is shown becomes a power game played by filmmaker and LDS Church. The camera is the filmmaker's personal weapon. It records places and situations that are evidence of hierarchy amongst the social actors and demonstrates that Josh is low on the ladder.

The first time Alleway mentions the mute guest hidden behind the camera, she jokes: "He made himself so scarce that we can't find him." She invites Richard to speak (fig. 189): "Come say hello, Richard," and explains to the audience, "The church's representative today is Richard."

Richard's task is to stay close enough to hear everything that is said but at the same time to keep out of the picture. He emerges to say: "Good evening, I just sit." Then Josh asks Richard if he would like something to

drink. It seems odd that Richard is hidden in a corner, invisible to the camera, with so much attention upon him. Alleway doesn't surrender. She films Richard sitting in the corner and drinking his glass of milk (fig. 190).

Fig. 190 The church official inconspicuously drinks his glass of milk. His intended discreetness is penetrated by the camera gaze (Meet the Mormons, 00:10:08).

Fig. 191 Richard is no longer amused and seems to feel hassled by the camera (Meet the Mormons, 00:10:14).

Richard finally agrees to being questioned and the filmmaker asks what he is doing here. At this point the camera is close to the social actor and frames Richard from a high angle (fig. 191).

Richard can evade neither the gaze of the camera nor her question: "What instructions has the church given you?" Richards starts stammering: "I think it's – it's – it's just really to facilitate – to reassure – ." "Reassure what?" asks the filmmaker. The camera shows Field looking out the window. The shot highlights that there is nothing here to facilitate or about which to reassure. From off-screen Richard continues: "…just the fact that everything is ok. And there is someone there who, who, who, not just is responsible but who, who is there to – um – that everything is above board."

As the living room does not provide privacy, the filmmaker asks Field if they can talk in his bedroom. She is obviously looking for a private space where she can talk to Field alone. Field asks almost impatiently: "Why do you want me?" but the filmmaker seems more concerned about Richard: "Where is Richard going?" Field: "Richards sits down at the door" (00:11:06–00:11:17). Again, the camera shows Field's perspective on Richard, who is sitting around the corner (fig. 192). As soon as Field mentions "the law of chastity", Richard lifts his head and listens attentively.

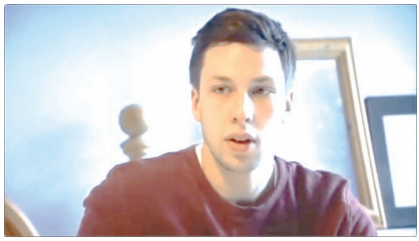


Fig. 192 Again, Richard sits around the corner, attentively listening to the conversation between the filmmaker and Josh when the keyword "chastity" is used (Meet the Mormons, 00:11:16).

Fig. 193 For the first time Josh is framed in a close-up and is able to answer the filmmaker's questions (Meet the Mormons, 00:11:27).

Eventually the camera frames Josh in a close-up and it seems that for the first time the filmmaker is able to approach Josh without interference from a church official (fig. 193). During the conversation with Josh, cutaways to Richard let the audience know that the discussion is being supervised.

The conversation between Josh and Alleway centers on sexuality and its regulation for unmarried LDS Church members. At first Josh seems to provide personal insights into the topic, but the footage from an LDS Church educational film explaining the meaning of virtue proves otherwise, for Josh's statement exactly corresponds with the church's official opinion about sexuality. The editing makes evident that Field's thoughts have been memorized from the church's official teachings.

During the course of the narrative the filmmaker expresses sympathy for Field's situation. She is critical of church officials, confronting the missionary president as the following sequence shows (00:22:01–00:26:33). The filmmaker comments that Elder Field was crying and asks him why. Ashamed, Field answers that he misses his family. The camera is directed at an LDS Church official who is sitting around the corner and listening to the conversation. Field explains that he has realized that he will not see his family for two years. "This makes me sad" (00:22:30-00:22:32). He sniffs and tries to suppress his tears (fig. 194). The filmmaker exposes Josh's emotional condition and at the same time becomes his friend.

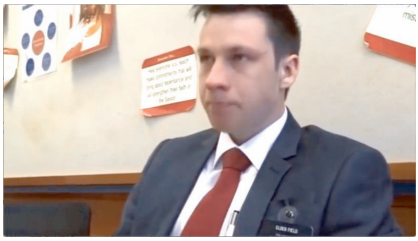
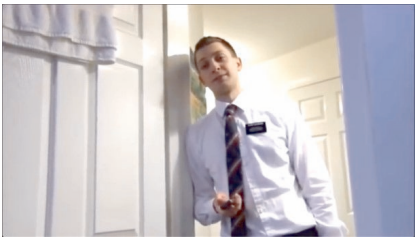


Fig. 194 The filmmaker approaches Josh who is struggling because he misses his family so badly. Pitilessly, a close-up reveals his emotional condition (Meet the Mormons, 00:22:34).

Fig. 195 The camera frames Josh in a close-up and waits until he is able to talk (Meet the Mormons, 00:24:05).

Finally, the filmmaker confronts the mission president with Elder Field's sadness: "Couldn't he be a good missionary and still talk to his mum?" she asks. The president laughs: "Contact could actually be worse," he explains, continuing that this is a period of adjustment and that he is a counselor and therapist with experience in dealing with such emotional conditions. He gives Field some mind-quieting techniques. In a parallel editing with the interview, Field is shown sitting in classes at the mission center with his colleagues. The filmmaker's relationship with Josh is now more exclusive. By this point she is the only person outside the missionary center with whom Josh is in contact. In the voice-over Alleway explains that Josh has become completely isolated. She asks Josh if he wants to talk. Josh cries, unable to control his emotional low (00:24:22–00:24:24). "Just sad," he says. The filmmaker responds: "I would like to give you a hug, but I'm not allowed to." Josh holds on to the positive aspects of being on mission (00:24:32–00:24:51): "I have to say I'm so happy to be here but it's just at the same time it is hard because you are giving up the ones you love. It's just difficult. That's just a part of it." Elder Field is under visible stress caused by his homesickness (fig. 195).

In the voice-over the filmmaker relates that it is hard to understand why Field does not return home to his family when he feels so unhappy. She immediately provides a response to her own question. Young people are expected to stay as a matter of faith, she states, with sorrowful music accompanying her comment. The narrative returns to the classes, showing other missionaries listening to the instructors. The first part of the narrative finishes with a final shot portraying the fairly depressive atmosphere at the missionary center. Elder Field is ready for his mission in Leeds.



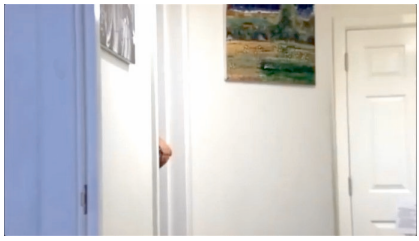


Fig. 196 The Swiss missionary Baumann, Elder Field's companion, seems sure that he has the right to listen to the conversation between Alleway and Field. The low-angle shot emphasizes his intrusion (Meet the Mormons, 00:36:14).

Fig. 197 The camera catches people listening in to the conversation, like this man around the corner, who is probably Richard (Meet the Mormons, 00:36:22).

The filmmaker is increasingly concerned about Field's condition. During her visits to his apartment, Richard, the church official, is again present. The film observes the missionaries in their daily routines, such as starting their studies with a song followed by prayer. The filmmaker explains in the commentary that the missionaries must remain with their companions all the time.

> They must always stay in the same room together and the only time when they can be apart is when they go to the bathroom. This way they can keep an eye on each other in case they are tempted to stray. They always sleep in the same room and get up and go to bed at exactly the same time as each other because they must never even try to be alone,[603]

referencing her inability to film Field in private. Field's bleak situation is illustrated with cutaways of passers-by in Leeds, many of them with religious markers such as headscarves or turbans. The sky and streets in Leeds seem to be always grey, a harshness emphasized by intense classical piano music.

On another occasion, as the filmmaker tries to speak to Elder Field she hears a sound in the adjacent room. She asks if his companion Elder Baumann is there, because she heard his cellphone beeping (00:36:13-00:36:15). Baumann explains that "we usually stay within sight and sound of each other" (fig. 196).

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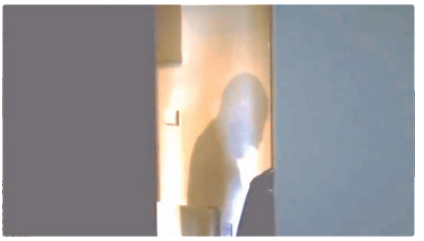
603 *Meet the Mormons*, 00:34:15–00:34:40.

Elder Baumann seems to complete the control team, alongside Richard. He is instantly revealed in a cutaway shot of his hand holding the door frame (fig. 197). Other ears are evidently listening to the conversation.

Finally, Alleway asks how Elder Field is feeling (00:36:33–00:37:29): "I'm tired [smiles] but I feel ok. It's just difficult getting used to this [makes a gesture towards the bedroom]. It's just hard at the moment. But yeah, you get better." A long shot of Leeds is shown, with brown houses and brown trees, while Field continues: "I'm a bit down but it's a grieving process. It takes a while to adjust to missing people." Field tries almost apologetically not to admit that he is still depressed. And finally, the filmmaker asks: "If you were on your own you don't have someone here, a few feet away I mean, do you think you still be here?" Josh replies: "I would say, I cannot do it, I cannot do it." He sighs and looks at the filmmaker with a sad smile. In the voice-over she explains the duties of Mormon missionaries and the conditions in which they live (00:37:35–00:38:02): "Mormon missionaries have to work 356 days a year. So, for two years they never get a whole day off. Their set goals: In the first year the target is to recruit four new converts. To become a Mormon you are expected to pay 10% of your income to the church. And as full members you will also be expected to wear special underwear." The numbers are intended as evidence of the efforts and personal investment the church asks of its missionaries. With long shots of Bauman and Field on mission on the streets of Leeds, Alleway highlights again how demanding missionary work is.

The Elders' proselytizing efforts on mission are evidently not bearing fruit. They ask those they meet if they can talk about *The Book of Mormon*, but their offer is consistently rejected. Alleway comments (00:39:16–00:41:02): "For the last 18 days Elder Field has been constantly in his companion's presence. He hasn't been allowed to speak with any of his friends or family. He is forbidden from reading books or newspapers, listening to the radio, watching television, going on the Internet, going to the cinema, theater and nearly any other cultural activity."

Light and melodious guitar music accompanied by singing helps generate empathy for those experiencing the emotionally cold and disciplined daily life of mission. The two Elders are back in their room. Another morning begins. At sunrise they wake, kneel on the floor with their elbows on the bed, and pray. The shadow of a guardian, perhaps Richard, is shown in a cutaway (Fig. 198).



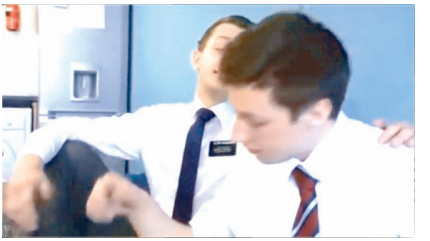


Fig. 198 The missionaries' disciplined life is emphasized by the cutaway showing the shadow of the LDS Church official (Meet the Mormons, 00:41:02).

Fig. 199 Elder Baumann symbolizes with his hand on Elder Field's shoulder that Elder Field belongs to him and is under his control (Meet the Mormons, 00:44:20).

A last unsuccessful attempt by Alleway to talk to Field takes place at the end of the documentary. The filmmaker's voice seems almost desperate during her visit (00:41:04–00:41:10): "I was concerned how Elder Field was coping. I wanted a moment with him to check if he is ok." The filmmaker tries to talk alone with Field, who explains that Elder Bauman will be present. Baumann stresses that he does not speak for Field but that "they stick together." Field mentions that on the previous occasion he was uncomfortable about being alone with her. The filmmaker asks (00:43:05–00:43:11): "How is it the two of you? I mean you have no privacy now." Elder Baumann repeats that he and Elder Field are friends, that they stick together. His comments seem almost intrusive, as is his physical presence: on several occasions he cups his hand on Josh's shoulder (fig. 199) and is often standing or sitting very close to him. In claiming that closeness to Field, Baumann is competing with the filmmaker.

Field supports Baumann's remarks and explains how great it is to do everything with a friend. He believes that God will reward him in life and in the afterlife for his sacrifice in going on mission. The filmmaker appears to doubt him and seeks, unsuccessfully, to dig deeper. The film ends with a longshot of Elder Bauman and Elder Field undertaking missionary work on the street; they ask passersby if they are interested in *The Book of Mormon*, but nobody is.

In *Meet the Mormons* the camera is used as a tool to reveal the harshness of the missionaries' daily life. The filmmaker Lynn Alleway is concerned about Fields' emotional state. The documentary shows how difficult it is to adapt to mission and how much these young men have to invest of themselves. The filmmaker's comments provide factual information about what

is required of the missionaries. She equips the audience with knowledge about missionary work undertaken by members of the LDS Church. While the documentary proposes that circumstances experienced by the missionaries are unfair, even abusive, it also exposes the missionaries by asking questions they find embarrassing. Alleyway shows how that missionary life is controlled and allows no privacy, with the missionary expected to be submissive.

Through the cinematic mean of cutaways, the omnipresence of the church is referenced and revealed. With Elder Baumann the narrative presents an example how the institution successfully moulds young people according to its moral standards. The mode of moral reasoning presents the mission as demanding, with exaggerated requirements for the young people. The film shows how they are constantly observed and convinced to follow the church's ideals without question. The one-sided narrative allows for few divergent audience perspectives on the topic. The narrative unambiguously laments the suffering of Josh Field. The empathic attitude of the director facilitates the audience's sympathies for the young missionary and argues against the attitude of church officials.

But the reception of the documentary will still depend on the audience's hermeneutic horizons. Convinced Mormons loyal to the institution's mission practice might see Field's experience as an isolated case in which a weak young man is unable to adapt to the requirements of the mission. For Mormon missionaries with similar experiences, the film may be a relief and acknowledgement of their suffering. Non-Mormons would find it hard not to sympathize with Field and his homesickness, as reviews of the television show confirm. Reviews also highlight the filmmaker's unprecedented access to the LDS Church mission experience,[604] and the uncommon relationship between Alleway and Field: "Perhaps this breaks some conventions of documentary making, but the film is all the more touching and human for it."[605] One critic notes the lack of answers from "blank faced Elder Field. [...] These reminders of his inscrutability only made our frustration more acute."[606] Another review complains about the general unwillingness of the

604 "Meet the Mormons, TV Review: Very Few Revelations on Mission," The Independent, June 27, 2014, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/reviews/meet-the-mormons-tv-review-very-few-revelations-on-mission-to-uncover-mormonism-9566619.html.

605 Sam Wollaston, "Meet the Mormons – TV Review," *The Guardian*, June 27, 2014, sec. Television & radio, https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2014/jun/27/meet-the-mormons-tv-review.

606 "Meet the Mormons, TV Review."

church's representative to talk about topics such as underclothing, sex, and the mission rules.[607] That lack of information is key to the narrative of the documentary, which shows how young men are taught to obey without questioning. Alleway reveals the mechanisms of the missionary strategy with a journalistic gaze, applying an interventionalist mode that generates information about the emotional state of one of the missionaries. The director is sympathetic to Field, but she also has a responsibility for the wellbeing of the social actors. Her interventions are interrupted in turn by church members who want to be in control of the situation and intervene as they deem necessary in Alleway's relationship with Field.

One ethical question concerns whether the film improved Field's situation. We might wonder if he profited from his emotional openness or if the gains were reaped only by the documentary audience and the filmmaker. The journalistic gaze and interventional mode may have positive future outcomes but at the cost of the social actors. Field did not leave the mission and the filming may have reinforced his misery. But might the church itself or future missionaries be given pause for thought by *Meet the Mormons*? And perhaps the film will arouse sympathy or even compassion for young people who are on the street eager to talk to strangers about *The Book of Mormon*.

10.4. Telling about strange and perverted Mormon practices

Closing the circle of this sub-chapter entitled "Telling about Mormons," I pick up again the discussion of the episode *Meet the Polygamists* from the docu-series *Polygamy USA*. We end with a number of general observations and consider, for example, how the mode of moral reasoning of this documentary series is to be understood and where power lies in the images of religion given by the documentaries. As we have noted, the narrative of *Meet the Polygamists* combined sensational and informative modes. At the end of the first episode a title informs the audience that other than some leaders who feared legal persecution – their faces are blurred – most of the community agreed to be filmed. Some members express doubts about having allowed the cameras into their community at the end of the last season,

607 "Meet the Mormons, Channel 4, Review: 'awkward but Revealing' - Telegraph," accessed December 5, 2018, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/tv-and-radio-reviews/10928747/Meet-the-Mormons-Channel-4-review-awkward-but-revealing.html.

but they hope for greater acceptance of their religion and polygamous family constellations. The mode of moral reasoning in this documentary is based on tolerance – the non-FLDS audience is asked to tolerate a community that wants to live its particular lifestyle in peace and seeks to convince the audience that it is harmless.

Meet the Polygamists includes images of children, with the permission of their parents. But when they are adults, how will these children feel about their having been filmed? This issue of permission-granting on behalf of minors is central to the ethical dimensions of the film. Another ethical aspect concerns the patriarchal nature of the community. Young women receive revelation about who they are to marry and the man chosen will surely agree, as one bachelor notes – polygamy means fewer women are available for first marriages. Both husbands and wives promote the filming of their community, but the men in polygamous marriages are at greater legal risk: they have multiple wives; their wives have only one husband. Wives still risk, however, the dissolution of their primary social unit. Are all parties fully conscious of the potential risks of being filmed? Many of the social actors know little of the world beyond Centennial Park, with their hermeneutic horizons limited to their family and community life. In 2013, when the docu-series was produced, they may have been ignorant of what it could mean to be filmed.

As we explore the ethical implications, we should also note that the filmed interactions between filmmaker and Mormon social actors in this production are less explicit and conspicuous than in other productions discussed in this work. The National Geographic documentary style defines the camera's gaze and the narrative style, which is informative and entertaining. Thus, during the interviews the filmmaker(s) is (are) never in the image and their voice is audible in the off only on a few occasions. The episodes are aesthetically developed but still essentially conventional, and on the whole the social actors are carefully and respectfully filmed. The results is a distance between the social actors of Centennial Park and the camera. The camera is seldom very close to its subject and it does not enter private or intimate spaces, unlike, again, in other documentaries discussed here. The production is not highly critical of the lifestyle of the community's members – indeed the image is of 1,500 people living a life of love and community spirit. National Geographic Ltd seems uninterested in revealing problems that might disturb the audience; their goal is to entertain that audience, not to challenge them with morally ambivalent issues that demand reflection. As their target audience includes families, the narration must be appropriate for minors. The audience is left to focus simply on the Centennial Park community and its

sympathetic residents without distraction. The hermeneutic horizons of the audience will influence their reception of the documentary. If they know little of Mormonism, then they may normalize this depiction, accepting it as a regular Mormon lifestyle, yet LDS Church Mormons reject both polygamy and its depiction, sensitive to being tarred with that brush. The documentary's reception by Ex-FLDS members who formerly practiced polygamy will surely be influenced by their negative experiences in this setting, while those who are open-minded about polygamy might watch the series with curiosity or even satisfaction. How, we might wonder, would the children of *Sons of Perdition* or of the inhabitants of Centennial Park respond to the documentary?

Having discerned the different loyalties and hermeneutic horizons in the communication spaces of the documentaries, we now must ask who has the power of meaning making in the space of production? The interaction between the camera and the social actors is crucial to defining the ethical space of a documentary. All the productions in this chapter depended on their social actors agreeing to be filmed. All who did agree shared some form of interest in having their story told. Some of them may have been comfortable with the camera; others, like Mormon Kirk Anderson in the *Tabloid*, did not want to participate; some, like the leaders of the Centennial Park community, wished to remain anonymous. Most of the wives and other women in *Meet the Polygamists* appear shy and were reluctant to talk with the director; at the end of the docu-series one wife mentions that they had not felt comfortable with the camera around them. Elder Field in *Meet the Mormons* (Lynn Alleway) was evidently not always at ease with the camera. Others, however, were self-confident and sometimes joyful in their interactions with the camera, as was the case for Joyce KcKinney, former Mormon Troy Williams, and *Daily Mirror* journalist Peter Tory in *Tabloid*, who avidly shared their versions of the story. In *Sons of Perdition* the camera seems almost like a friend to the teenagers, with the directors their allies in their difficult separation process from their religious community. The examples show the power of the camera and of the images that functions independently of the interests of the social actors. The latter might decide what they are willing to reveal about themselves, but how those revelations are filmed is not ultimately in their control. For the way a scene is filmed, how close the camera is and how the raw material is edited leave much space for the directors to steer a particular finalized reading mode, to use Foucault's term. This process empowers the filmmakers to define meaning and leaves the social actors who appear in front of the camera in a potentially weaker position. The camera is a tool deployed to wield power.