In the case of socially or politically oriented documentaries, it is easy to assume that the ideologies of the film and the ideologies of the film-maker are one and the same. Reading formations frequently infer a link between the social or political intentions of the film-maker and those of the documentary, a notion I discussed in Chapter 4 in regard to Kim Longinotto’s ‘cinema of translation’. The aim of this chapter and the next is to look more closely at the author as a site, and indeed a product, of the emotions – emotions that tie individuals to social issues.

Here I perceive the documentary author through a mode of selfhood in which performative speech acts, such as the films themselves, express the subjective emotional attachments of the film-maker. In the documentaries that I discuss, frequently the object of care is the social collective represented in and/or addressed by the documentary. These authors are framed as agents who intend, through their film-making, that the collective will become the object of the viewers care. In this sense, emotion plays a potentially binding role; emotion circulates with the documentaries and binds viewers, film-makers and the social collective. In this chapter, the Asian Australian author-subject is posed as a site of mourning and care; emotions that coalesce around these diasporic individuals as they engage in and are produced through social and textual relations. In these cases, the documentaries’ aesthetic qualities reinforce and mirror the different functions of the emotions, accentuating the production of authorship as a site of the emotions.

The potential for documentary to play a role in the process of mourning, whether the process is undertaken by film-makers or
particular communities and audiences, has been well established through a number of different notable examples. These range from prominent films such as Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985) or *Last Days* (1998) to works as varied as *Tongues Untied* (Marlon Riggs 1989) or *Blue* (Derek Jarman 1994). These films frequently offer a meta-discourse of mourning in ways that make grief and emotional anguish representable and contribute to the process of unburdening or detaching from those who have been lost. My focus in this chapter is, in some small part, concerned with this documentary meta-discourse as a way of accommodating loss. Yet much more central to this analysis is the effect of the struggle over the representability of loss. The grouping of films that motivates this enquiry expresses mourning as a dimension of diasporic authorship. Examining a cluster of four films, this chapter understands a caring Asian Australian authorship to emerge as a consequence of a process of mourning.

These documentary narratives are propelled by the activity of mourning for that which has been lost or is unfulfilled. Yet as I discuss, this is not simply mourning that exists as an end unto itself; this mourning informs relations between subjects and operates in conjunction with a caring attachment to particular communities. The first two documentaries I discuss, *Chinese Takeaway* (Mitzi Goldman 2002) and *Sadness: A Monologue by William Yang* (Tony Ayres 1999), feature a strongly biographical central narrative which is spoken, and at times performed by a single narrator who is the locus around which Asian Australian subjectivity is formulated in the documentaries. The second two, *The Finished People* (Khoa Do 2003) and *Letters to Ali* (Clara Law 2004) are films that are directed by Asian Australian film-makers, but take as their object of enquiry the broader field of the Australian public sphere. Although *The Finished People* was a film marketed as a drama, its generic coding is ambiguous and, as I will argue, there are a number of ways in which it can be fruitfully understood as a documentary work. In many respects, this grouping of films offers an avenue to question straightforward categorisations of authorship. All the films suggest a strongly collaborative production process and, as I will discuss, in the first two documentaries, the Asian Australian subjects are in fact co-authors, positioned alongside the credited director.