



## FROM WALLPAPER TO INTERACTIVITY: USE OF ARCHIVE FOOTAGE IN DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

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*'Documentary can, and does draw on the past in its use of existing heritages but it only does so to give point to a modern argument'* (Rotha as quoted in Leyda, 1964:9)

In 2010 I became involved in a small documentary project which aimed to explore different ways of using archive footage in documentary filmmaking. Having used archive footage often in films, and also having produced a film existing *only* of archive footage, I was aware of the very limited and often predictable ways the archive footage was used, or even misused, in documentary practice. In the last decade the use of archive has significantly increased in documentary filmmaking, due to the digitalisation of film archives. Access has also been facilitated by extensive databases. However, it is remarkable that very little reflection has taken place within the documentary filmmakers' community or in a scholarly context on how archive footage is used in documentary practice. This article will analyse practices of making use of archive footage in a historical context and will finish with the analysis of an experimental project *Against the Tide* (<http://www.tide.org.uk/>) which explored innovative ways of using archive footage in a new media context. This article aims to create an initial taxonomy of how archive footage is used and the different ways of defining archive use by the way it is edited and the relation it establishes with the past.

### Remaking our connection to the past

Manoff (2010:9) posits that *'Our relation to the past is being transformed by digital media. Internet and digital databases increase the presence of the past and remake our connection to both past and present.'* But how is this relationship to the past remade? How do these newly created texts use archive footage in the process of reconnecting audiences to both the present and the past? Documentary production has a long and complex relationship with archive materials from films that use archive materials to establish a scene, create a juxtaposition between past and present, to documentaries existing completely of archive footage. Some filmmakers, such as Shub (1894-1959) and de Antonio (1919-1989), based their films only on archive footage, described by de Antonio as 'collage junk films' or by Leyda (1964) as 'compilation films'. Most documentary makers, however, rely on a combination of newly shot footage and a selection of archive footage, creating in the process films that oscillate between past and present and between found and made. Documentary has played and is playing an important role in the creation of collective memories of important social, cultural and political events. It is therefore important that documentary filmmakers should be aware of the particular effects and impacts of the usage of archive footage in their films.

### Re-purposing and re-contextualisation of archive footage

The essence of repurposing archive footage or found footage is 're-contextualisation'. Some meanings inhere in a single shot, but within filmmaking a wide range of meanings are derived from its context, whether this be other shots, narrativisation or narration. Kuleshov's (Fairservice, 2001) famous experiment in which he uses the same emotionally bland shot of an actor in combination with other shots (a plate of soup, a girl and a little girl's coffin), illustrated this concept. When audiences were shown these short sequences of shots their reactions changed in relation to the sequences that were shown, while actually the same bland shot of the actor was being used. Does recontextualisation mean that documentary can only be perceived as a subjective document devoid of truth, and do we enter a postmodern binary opposition between historical/factual and fictive/subjective? This is not a helpful distinction or approach for a genre which historically has been driven by finding ways to tell 'truths' or represent 'realities'. Bruzzi suggests a workable approach that does not throw away the baby with the bathwater.

*'Documentary film..... a hybrid offspring of a perennial struggle between the forces of objectivity ( represented by 'documents' or facts that underpin it) and the forces of subjectivity ( that is translation of those facts into a representational form.'* (Bruzzi, 2000:39)

This complex tension is at the heart of documentary storytelling and archive use can increase this tension through recontextualisation. But present documentary filmmakers using archive footage are operating from contemporary ideological perspectives, as the quote from Rotha at the start of this article states. Looking from the present to past events will produce analysis and meanings that at the same time might be new but also constrained by contemporary thought.

McDougal, (1998), a much celebrated ethnographic documentary filmmaker describes an archetypal type of documentary about the past that is cobbled together from interviews enhanced with archive footage and old photographs. His critical attitude to this approach led him to opt for a film style that eschews interviews, archive footage or photographs, aiming for a pure observational method that expresses a 'sense of wonder at witnessing the spontaneity of life.' (idem:125) Obviously the observational documentary film movements are the only tradition within the genre that rejected use of archive footage, while emphasising the immediacy of filming on-going events, celebrating the long take, and hiding directorial interventions. McDougal's idea of the archive film might be too disrespectful, but it is actually not too far from the truth. For instance, the six -part BBC series *'Windrush'* (1998) about the arrival of the West Indians in the UK, confirmed his prejudice in many ways. In this series the use of archive material not very imaginative, completely utilitarian and it feels indeed 'cobbled' together. The structure tends to show the following pattern: archive footage followed by an interview or an interview followed by archive sequences with the narration pulling the narrative into coherence. By contrast, a recently made film by Terence Davies *Of Time and the City* (2008) is a good example of imaginative use of archive. The film explores his individual memories about his childhood in Liverpool and is at the same time an ardent critique on the hypocrisy of religion, poverty and the post-industrial city. The variation of relationships between past and present that is being created is impressive. Sometimes it is illustrative, sometimes associative, and sometimes irony, parody, critique and anger are expressed via the personal narration of Terence Davies himself.

### Situated practices

Before I take a closer look at the way archive is used, I should emphasize that too narrow a focus on textual analysis of documentaries loses sight of how established production practices influence production choices. This could also partly explain the lack of attention within this community of practitioners to the ways archive footage is used. Documentary film production, as in all creative practices, is a situated practice; the organisational context will influence the production process and the values expressed in the production, but how this works is not always entirely clear. Parker (2007) describes how choices made during the production process of the successful archive -based documentary series *Nation on Film* (2005-2010) were influenced by professional standards developed within the public broadcasting set-up of the BBC with its remit to inform, educate and entertain. The BBC output is a product of a specific set of historical circumstances. This comment is not to denigrate its documentary output because it clearly has produced thought-provoking and world-shocking documentaries, but to illustrate the fact that the production context will influence both aesthetic and content choices. In the case of *Nation on Film*, the



reflection on and awareness of its production context led to different choices. Archive footage was being challenged and being commented on, which led to the different position of the archive materials in the film. Instead of having an ancillary, supportive role, the archive footage was central to the narrative. Tony Parker, the executive producer of the *Nation on Film* series, wrote:

*'We did not want straight forward 'history' stories, where pictures were simply used to paint words; we did want stories about archive film that would perhaps throw a light on historical events and themes (2006:221)*

This reflection on the production context and its values in which the filmmakers were operating is rare and it led in this case to a remarkable series. (See *Nation on Film* website)

### Money talks

Archive footage is expensive. Depending on the source, it can cost as much as £1,500 per minute and significant events can be even more expensive. Publicly funded archives tend to be cheaper and can offer important cultural and political events often from different perspectives, as they archive both commissioned (commercial and publicly funded) films as well as home movies.

Filmmakers and archive libraries work together on the basis of trust. The filmmaker or production company reports after they have finished the film how many seconds of footage they have used and subsequently receive an invoice on the basis of this information. No one checks; although it would be possible to check the seconds/minutes of archive in a film, it would be labour-intensive. However FOCAL (Federation of Commercial Audiovisual Libraries), which provides access to 130 audio/visual libraries worldwide, states on its website that *"at least 25% of our content used is unpaid for"*, FOCAL website, accessed 4 April 2011) No evidence is provided but financial pressures within the production sector could explain incomplete returns.

### Database culture and archival digital logic

Many archives are now on-line which makes archive research to a certain extent easier but at the same time complicate archive research. It is a double-edged sword. The notion of archive, with its association of warehouses full of film cans, has been made redundant. Lev Manovich (2001:218) adopts the notion of 'database' as a reigning paradigm of contemporary culture. The instant access of archives and database changes our relationship to knowledge and history. There is a technological element as the interface changes the whole time to incorporate new digital devices and sources and will, therefore, increasingly determine our 'database' experience' of culture. The computer screen has become the dominant screen which changes perception and the computer interface filters our way of experiencing culture, both past and present.

Digital databases create new ways of cataloguing and archiving. Many archives provide the public with topic based access. For instance, the RTE (Irish public broadcaster) set up a database of preselected sequences, edited around certain topics, to provide access to RTE's archives. (Wylie, 2007) History arrives on your computer screen pre-edited and contextualised.

Jacques Derrida (1995) and the media historian Belinda Barnett (2001) both believe that the emergence of the Internet, and digitalisation has led to the impulse or the drive to archive and to create a 'gigantic repository of ideas, a cultural memory' (Barnett, 2001:221). Derrida even describes it as 'archive fever'.

*...the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event.* (Derrida, 1995; 16-17)

Documentary research is not research into the original material, film and footage anymore but edited catalogued versions of historical events framed by a computer screen which is a long way from its original 16mm, 35 mm or even video tape material. Digital aesthetics seem to have conquered this world. They are not regarded as problematic or even questioned within documentary practice but often only seen as 'handy'. This form of audio-visual research will ultimately lead to a narrowing of the reinterpretation of historical events.

### Film archives: a false sense of completeness

The work of film archives is essential for documentary filmmakers; after all, the historical world is our world, our professional habitus. The sheer size of contemporary archives suggests a completeness which does not exist. Many materials have never been archived, have been lost, or, in the case of film and TV footage, have not been seen as culturally significant.

Jerry Rothwell, a documentary filmmaker, comments:

*'The problem with a database driven culture of the contemporary archive is that if something is not entered in the database, it's as though it does not exist. We found materials in other places and in other films that were not in a database.* (quoted in Andy Glynn, 2008:450)

The increasing awareness of the value of audiovisual archives can be illustrated by the foundation of an annual World Day for Audio Visual Heritage on 27 October, which UNESCO has established in 2007:

*'Documentary heritage reflects the diversity of languages, peoples and cultures. It is the mirror of the world and its memory.* (Unesco website accessed 5 April 2011).

Since the 1930s many western countries have established major archives such as the Cinematheque Francaise in Paris, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the British Film Institute in London, now called the National Film and Television Archives, in order 'to maintain a national repository of films of permanent value'. In addition to these national archives many smaller archives have been set up which, as Wylie (2007) states, are the results of the passion for films of some individuals and their dogged persistence to preserve films.

Technical innovations and a changing attitude to the cultural value of moving image has meant that state policies and budgets have become available, in addition to commercial archives to preserve our national AV heritage. The International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF)<sup>1</sup> founded in 1938 represents 155 institutions in 77 countries dedicated to preserving and cataloguing audio-visual material both as cultural heritage and as historical documents and emphasises the cultural importance of AV material. No one has ever doubted the importance of the Lumiere Brothers' footage or early actualities but television archives have been neglected.. Broadcasters have long underestimated the value of their audio-visual material. Apart from technical issues, when TV and radio were broadcast live and recordings were expensive and technically complicated, TV was seen as 'ephemeral' and 'culturally insignificant' (Wylie, 2007: 241). Initially recordings took place not with the intention of archiving but for repeats of events that were considered of historical and cultural value; state events, sporting events and important cultural events. It was not till the 1950s that videotape was used and that the television signal itself could be recorded on magnetic tape. The same picture quality could be recorded that had been broadcast live.

In short, both financial, technical and cultural reasons are at the basis of having very patchy archive footage of the early years of television broadcasting while other archives may give a sense of completeness but are actually as 'patchy'. Selection of archive footage is further more determined by production context, finance and the assumed needs of the documentary text itself. Above mentioned processes could

<sup>1</sup> For a chronological overview of film preserving and archiving see the FIAF website



be best described as a funnel, so for documentary filmmakers it is essential to go beyond the database and immerse themselves in the world of the film cans and tapes in order to avoid missing relevant and possibly import archive materials as well as critical reflect on the uses of archive footage in the documentary text.

#### Misuse of Archive footage

Jerry Kuehl provides an useful summary of the principal categories of the misuse of archive footage:

- 1) Film which is claimed to be of one event which is in fact of another event
- 2) Film shot in one place which purports to have been shot somewhere else
- 3) Feature film masquerading as factual film
- 4) Film of an event which was never filmed at all- like the maiden voyage of the *Titanic* or the first flight of the Wright Brothers aircraft.
- 5) Film made before the invention of motion picture cameras, like the Battle of Waterloo or Columbus discovering America. (as
- 6) quoted in Haggith, 2012:261)

The two latter examples are best described as fakery. However does contemporary use of archive footage break open these in itself obvious categories and could it still be considered misuse. Desmond Bell (2004) a documentary filmmaker, describes how he uses archive footage from a variety sources, including fiction and home movie to create historical sequences in his films. He states 'Word and image lack an ordered referentiality. ... images are often assembled with a view to achieving expressive force or to probe the veracity of accounts rather than as evidential proof.' (2004:3) . He continues to argue that the key feature of his films is in 'a conjunction and counterpoint it a particular sort of voice over( 2004:4).', which he describes as a vernacular, 'that is a voice-over that in its commitment to storytelling reveals its own partiality (4)'. This use of archive footage ignores the different status of the archive materials for narrative and aesthetic reasons. From a purist point of view as described Kuel's position this would be considered problematic but because a direct referentiality is missing the argument of misuse is hard to sustain.

However a good example of the misuse of archive footage can be illustrated by Alain Resnais' much celebrated film about the holocaust, *Nuit et Brouillard (Night and Fog)* (1955) as described by Haggith (2012)..

While using archive footage originally shot by the British Army, US Signal Corps and Red Army after the liberation of the concentration camps, Resnais used these visuals as an illustration of the experience of the prisoners before their liberation. The relevant sequence starts 10 minutes into the film, with photographs of prisoners at different concentration camps followed 'by black and white sequences of archive footage filmed at Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz after liberation, at which point the script directly refers to the experiences of the prisoners in the camps' (Haggith, 2012:262) <sup>2</sup> The problem is not only a matter of editing and voice-over but lies also in the authority attributed to archive footage. Seeing is believing in this instance.

#### Archive footage in documentary film

The honour of producing the first film consisting solely of archive footage goes to Lumière's cameraman Francis Doublier, who in 1898 recut unrelated scenes from 'actualities' to a short film purporting to show the court-martial of Dreyfus in Paris in 1894. (Leyda,1964: 13). He showed a military parade, a government building and a departing boat, all shots that did not depict or even bear a relation to the event. It is not only the first compilation film but also the first time that archive was used in a metaphorical way.

Arthur (1999) posits that in the 1920s and 1930s archive footage was repurposed 'through editing techniques emphasizing the fantastical, previously ignored, formal or metaphoric qualities in otherwise banal scenes'.(Arthur 1999:59) A method described by Arthur as 'estrangement' is found in the work of avant-garde filmmakers of the that time, such as Rene Clair, Hans Riethe, Walter Ruttmann and Charles de Keuleleire. (*idem*)

The 1930s saw also the birth of an important documentary genre, the compilation film, which is based on Russian montage methods and offers a political recontextualisation of archive footage ( Bruzzi 2000,2006 , Arthur 1998, Haggith 2012).The Russian avant -garde documentary filmmakers such as Esther Shub, Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein, brought this approach to the foreground and it became though not publicly well known but significant strand in documentary filmmaking.

Leyda wrote the first and, up till this moment last book, on compilation film, which uses only archive or found footage to create a new film but he struggled to find the right description for it. Some confusion can be noted in the literature on the term 'archive' or 'found footage'. 'Found footage' derives from the French ' objet trouvé'. 'Found footage', as a term, seems to be preferred more among avant-garde filmmakers.

Leyda finds the term 'compilation' film unsatisfactory because 'The term should also indicate that it is a film of *idea*, for most of the films made in this form are not content to be mere records or documents' (Leyda, 1964:9)

The *Idea*, the central concept , in these films tends to be political. Esther Shub is often credited with pioneering the compilation film. Other examples of this genre were made in Britain in the wake of the First World War, however, Shub was the most creative in her use of archive footage and approached her filmmaking from Marxist montage principles drawing on her experiences of working as an editor in Soviet cinema. She was also inspired by Eisenstein's use of archive footage in *Battleship Potemkin*. Her films *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) and *The Great Way* (1927) were commissioned to tell the story of the Soviet Union from the February Revolution of 1917 up to the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution in order to provoke debate and to challenge existing historical narratives on the nature of the Russian Revolution and its inspirations. The emphasis in reporting on parades, delegates' arrivals and departures and meetings ignored the transformation to a new political economy of the country. She used footage of the news reels and the tsarist archives to recreate a new representation of life after the revolution.

Her ideas about montage can be illustrated by the following quote: '*Montage rests fundamentally on the interaction of the images...ideological montage claims a precise political or moral point in putting together images which have no strictly causal or temporal*' (Taylor and Christie 1988)

It is a truism that all editing is driven by a certain ideological approach, although not always explicitly foregrounded as in the case of the Russian filmmakers at that time.

The main aim of subversion and recoding historical narratives has become an important strand in the documentary genre.

During the Second World War some compilation films were produced using film material of the Germans to create propaganda films such as the *Why We Fight* (1943,UK) by Frank Capra.

After a quiet historical period the compilation film reemerged in the 60s and 70s.

Emile de Antonio , an American film maker, reinvented compilation film by describing it as 'collage-junk films'. He intended not only to provide an alternative critical historical narrative but at the same time to reinvent the form itself.

<sup>2</sup> See also J. Hirsch (2004) *After Image: Film Trauma and the Holocaust*, Philadelphia: temple University Press,p. IX



*'My films are a kind of history of the United States in the days of the Cold War. They are episodic disjunctive histories. They're not like a written history which moves magisterially from the beginning to the end. They're chaotic.'* (quoted in Jackson, 2004)

He made 10 films of which *Year of the Pig* (1968,US) was the best known as it was the first documentary that challenged America's involvement in Vietnam. Although mostly based on archive footage it does contain interviews, but the style is 'polemical and confrontational' (Bruzzi: 2000:32). The film was badly received by many audiences who sent bomb threats and vandalised film theatres in which the film was exhibited. After 50 years Leyda's concept of the political 'Idea' as the driving factor of the compilation film was still at the core of this specific documentary strand. De Antonio related his work to the early tradition of compilation films: 'The collage theory I thought was uniquely left wing because it bore a close relationship to the early Soviet films which were essentially films in editing. The collage is a more sophisticated form of editing. It makes no difference where the material comes from.. (as quoted in Jackson (2004)) Contemporary compilation films using the internet, editing software and the wide availability of video online have given rise to what is described as 'digital remixing' *'this practice of moving image appropriation on the Internet, called digital remixing, represents a continuation in the development of the strategies and techniques of found footage filmmaking but possesses its own unique aesthetic and rhetorical contributions'*. Horat 2011:1)

Most digital remixes critique popular culture and address racism, sexism, homophobia, social engineering and consumer culture. It is part of the political critique of the compilation films but is at the same time a cultural critique though there is also a strand of digital remixing that celebrates popular culture and can offer a more reactionary approach.

### From wallpaper to interactivity

Arthur states that by 1945, 'the deployment of archival images to reanimate or polemically reinterpret prior events, figures and social processes was a standard feature of non fiction films' (1999:58. Bruzzi identifies two ways that archive is used within documentaries the illustrative and the polemical, confrontational style of the compilation films, as mentioned above. (2000:32) The most common use of archive footage in contemporary documentaries is in combination with newly shot footage The following paragraphs attempt to provide a taxonomy of different ways archive footage is being used by documentary filmmakers.

### Illustration

By far the most common usage of archive footage is as a visual reference, illustration, or 'wallpaper', as Kuehl (as quoted in Haggith 2012:260) describes it.. For instance, an interviewee talks about the invention of the first cars and in between the cuts of the interview, archive footage and photographs are edited to illustrate, to make visual, what the interviewee is referring to. It is a simple and very handy editing tool to cut an interview and to bridge continuity problems between shots. It tells in pictures what otherwise would have to be told in words and it gives the audience an indexical clue to what is being discussed.

### 2) Setting the scene, providing a historical backdrop to introduce a historical period or the theme of a film

This other 'wallpaper' is often used at the start of a film with what is often described as 'generic' shots. The archive footage has an aesthetic and narrative role in this case but unfortunately this 'backdrop' role in combination with the above mentioned production practices has led to the recycling of the same shots and can reinforce existing stereotypes. For instance films about the Nazi period in Germany tend to use extracts from Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1934) of which the shots of Hitler in an open car or standing on the podium giving the 'Heil Hitler' salute can be recognised immediately. They become part of collective memories by their ubiquitous usage. Collective memories will determine one's 'generic' ideas about a historic period. The sixties were 'swinging' because of Woodstock and the increased popularity of pop music, but it was also the decade that Rachel Carson, a scientist and writer, wrote *Silent Spring* (1962) and warned that our earth would be harmed by pollution and chemicals. In 1968, Shirley Chisholm was elected America's first black woman to Congress. The Vietnam War was well under way but in popular memory the sixties remain 'swinging'. Documentary filmmakers cannot escape existing ideological stereotypes but one would expect a more reflective and critical attitude considering their informational role in the public domain. Documentary in this case could challenge and critique both official, popular or autobiographical memories of events. The idea of 'generic archive footage' should be challenged and critiqued Archives, like the one from the Imperial War Museum (Haggith 2012:260) report receiving phone calls with requests for archive footage needed to fill a specific slot in a film, often described as 'generic shots'. I must admit I, as part of this community of practitioners, have used the term rather thoughtless and basically building on a kind of stereotypical historical notions which were not challenged.

The most obvious and most recognizable way of using archive footage as illustration is in juxtaposition with the past. The same footage can be used in different ways. For instance, a sequence of shots of unemployed people queuing for food in the '30s can be used as juxtaposition to illustrate the argument that the unemployed are now eligible for social benefits and romanticises the past. But the same sequence can be used to argue that the present crisis is not as bad or even worse as the crisis in the 1930s.

For instance in one of my favourite films *The Life and Time of Rosie the Riveter* (Connie Field, 1980,US), the archive sequence at the start of the film shows women working in factories and listening to the radio during the Second World War. We hear a speech by F.D. Roosevelt which highly likely was not heard on the radio when the women were listening. The sources of the archive are recruitment films, home movies and news footage and recruitment posters. The whole sequence sets the scene providing a historical framework for the women who are being interviewed in the film, and who are inserted in the sequence. It is not a literal representation but a figurative one. The audience will initially read the first archive sequence as an introduction to the position of women during the war. In *Rosie the Riveter* the experiences of the 'Rosies' after the war are juxtaposed against the propaganda and recruitment materials before the war. The labour of these women was necessary during the war but after the war men were supposed to take over the jobs again. The ongoing work of memory, whether public or personal, is re-evaluating, even *recreating* the past. Documentary can provide a discourse between different subjectivities as in the case of *Rosie the Riveter* and can construct a way of looking at the world that is intersubjective. It is a typical film from the '80s, a period during which many cultural or ethnic minorities who were 'edited' out of historical narratives, and which used archive footage to challenge and recreate historical narratives.

### Metaphorical usage of the footage

In the documentary *The Corporation* (Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott,2003, Can) the commercial enterprise is analysed in psychoanalytic terms as a human being and being laid bare on the psychotherapy couch. In the film the economist Milton Friedman uses the word 'externalising', which implies that two parties have an agreement but a third party experiences the negative consequences of this agreement.. In this case the film refers to companies that produce products, make a profit and employ people but which damage the environment. The point is that society, or rather the public purse, pays the price for clearing it up. The issue of 'externalising' is visualised by an archive sequence from a black and white feature film showing a woman throwing a cake at a man who ducks so that an innocent bystander gets the pie in his face. The effect of the above mentioned archive sequence is comical and critical at the same time In this case



the use of archive footage does not create a relationship with the past. Instead, it is a form of visualisation which makes the point the sequence wants to make and criticises it at the same time. It is a key distraction of the factual archive used in most documentary films and creates a different referential status of the archive footage.

#### 4. Archive as narrative resource

In the prize winning documentary *Deep Water* (2007, Osmond and Rothwell), which tells the story of the *Sunday Times*- sponsored 1968 Golden Globe Race; a solo, non-stop circumnavigation sailing race. The film consists of 80% of archive footage and some recent shot footage, CGI and interviews, the narrativisation of archive footage was at the core of the film's editing strategy (de Jong, 2008)

The aim of the directors was to tell the story as a 'drama'. Continuity editing of the archive footage was used to create a dramatic arc as is used in the classic realist narrative. One of the directors, Jerry Rothwell, describes their intention.

*'Our aim was to find footage that could bring the story alive. Documentary, and particularly the doc feature, need events to unfold in the present, to play out the story in front of an audience in a time limited experience. The challenge is to use material in a way that isn't just illustrative but enacts events in a way a drama might. With images leading the story rather than following it... news or diary material rarely in itself contains the story beat you need on screen. Instead you hope to build them out of a jigsaw of sounds and pictures, reinterpreting material, which has been shot for a completely different purpose.'* (Glynn, 2008 :45)

There are several issues at stake in this approach: stories do not present themselves as ready-made in archives, and the role of these films is to re-evaluate past events. It is a risky enterprise and needs careful consideration because it can create an illusion of a recoverable past which is what happened in this case. The power of documentary is that it can provide a narrative of different subjectivities and not 'one interpretation'. The drive for a coherent realistic narrative narrows down the possible interpretation of the events. (De Jong, 2008) In *Deep Water*, sources are identified in the credits but all archive, which is the basis of the film, is used as a narrative resource and recontextualised to create a new dramatic narrative.

We could compare this approach to *Capturing the Friedmans*, (2003, Andrew Jarecki), which provides an intimate portrait of an American Jewish middle-class family living through the period of the allegations of sodomy and child abuses against the father, Arnold and the son, Jesse Friedman. The Friedmans were avid home video makers and continued to make these during the legal process investigating the allegations. This home movie footage is used in the film, it has been inserted a short edited sequences into the overarching narrative. The 'thriller/suspense dramatic tension' (Austin, 2007) of the narrative has the effect that the archive footage is positioned in the 'did they do it?' frame of the narrative. The audience looks at the father playing with the kids on the beach, children's parties, all of which can be seen as 'innocent' footage which is being framed by this overarching narrative. Archive footage in this case sinks into the general narrative created by the filmmaker.

#### Archive footage as legal evidence

Documentary footage, in common with photography, provides an indexical link to past events which can be allowed to be used in some court cases. Well-known sequences include the Zapruder films or the footage of the beating of Rodney King. Both were shot by amateur filmmakers who happened to be at the scene of events. In 1963, the amateur filmmaker Zapruder stood at an elevated position in relation to the presidential parade and was able to film the killing of President J.F. Kennedy when his limousine was driving past in Dallas. It became one of the most studied pieces of footage in history and played a crucial role in subsequent legal hearings and in many debates about the angle of the footage and the missing frames of crucial moments during the events. Lawyers from different sides used theories of media, semiotics as part of their legal arguments.

Haggit (2012) describes the first court case in Britain which used footage as evidence of a crime. In *Chesterfield* on 17 May 1935 police screened a 16 mm film as evidence of illegal betting which they had shot from a window overlooking the street. An indexical link proves that the defendant was there but does not provide a context or show how events unfolded. Further investigations of circumstances and the relations between people will reveal the nature of filmed events. Still our surveillance of citizens on streets, and in shopping malls has increased beyond belief in the last ten years and the footage is being used in courts. It has undoubtedly increased the validity of moving image as a source of evidence in the public mind, which creates a complex problematic situation for the position of archive footage in the non-fiction genre. Just as in a theoretical context the value of the indexical link and its implications is a controversial issue, in the popular mind the image is being confirmed as 'proof' of what has happened.

#### **Against the Tide (<http://www.tide.org.uk/>; explorations in using archive footage)**

*Against the Tide* is an experimental project developed by Earthstock Films (UK). Not only did it aim to use archive footage in a non-illustrative way, but the selecting of archive footage was at the heart of the film process. Four filmmakers were asked to select footage from the South East Screen Archive to make a three-minute film which were to provide a link between the archive footage and newly shot footage, providing access to the past via stories told in the present.

The films are embedded in a website, offering comments by the filmmaker on the selection process of the archive and their experience working with it. The website also offered a selection of edited archive sequences which had not been used in the films. Films and website pop up using mobile technologies on the location where the films have been shot.

#### **Permanently Yours: historical continuity**

'Permanently Yours' was made by Daisy Asquith based on home footage of a couple who ran a hairdressing salon in Folkestone. Her approach was inspired by the archive footage itself; *'I tried to stay with the feel of the archive, to give my footage the same jovial mood.'* (ATT website, accessed 10 May 2011)

The film merges archive footage with present day footage and is kept coherent by edited interview sequences used as narration. June Pain, the wife of the hair dresser, didn't actually like her hair to be permed or 'done' every week, but for 60 years she cooperated with her husband's passion for hairdressing. The director writes that this film is about 'love and compromise'. (ATT website) Merging archive footage and newly shot footage emphasises historical continuity in this case.

#### **A New School: archive reveals children's experiences of the present**

Danny Weinstein selected a film made in the '70s about the building of a new school in Newgate, the replacement of an Victorian school. He decided on a very different approach by asking children who are currently being educated in the new school to comment on the archive footage. *'I thought that if I showed the film to the children at the school and filmed their responses, it might be possible to get some sort of dialogue going between the two generations and also to question the nature of archive and the passing of time.'*

The responses were remarkable as the pupils not only commented on the school building itself but also on the life of the children, who they thought may have had a more crammed school but more freedom. The film highlights how the pupils feel restricted by the contemporary curriculum and health and safety rules.

It is a good example of how archive footage may actually reveal more about the present day experience of in this case children.



### **Back at the Ranch: crossing class boundaries**

I became intrigued by archive footage shot by a female amateur filmmaker, Enid Briggs, who started filming in the 1930s. This was an unusual situation; not only had she started filming very early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but she was a woman. Most amateur filmmakers are men and start slightly later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The footage was silent and black and white and not always of the greatest quality. This limited the possibilities of the editing, and I quickly came to the conclusion that I could only use the footage in little blocks. Merging black and white footage with newly shot footage would not be really an option. It would disturb the historical specificity of the period that the archive could evoke. Enid Briggs was not only a filmmaker she also had set up a home for retired horses at a time when horses were slowly being phased out as a mode of transport and being replaced by lorries. I tracked down one of the stable boys, Ken Taylor, who spent time as a youngster at the Ranch, and a story about a lifelong friendship emerged.

*Back at the Ranch* is a story about an unusual friendship between two people which lasted for 35 years, as well as a piece about class relations in the UK."

The film starts when Ken Taylor comes down the stairs with an old map and points out where the Ranch once was. The film continues as a reminiscence about a lost but special friendship. Although archive usage is used to illustrate both the 'Ranch' and the class difference between the two friends, it is used in its historical specificity.

### **Old man and the sea: romanticization of the past and critiquing the present**

David, a sea swimmer from Brighton tells the story about the swimming club his father founded. Kath Mansoor, the filmmaker, selected the archive footage on the basis of David's story.

*'I was looking for footage that showed that heyday (of the seaside) to contrast with David's story, which is all about the trivialisation of the seaside - people taking more interest in eating ice-cream than in understanding the power of the sea.'*

David recounted the heyday of the club as the time when 1000 men bathed off the men's beach in Victorian times - and he was genuinely sad that in our modern day, connection to sea swimming seemed to be lost.

Juxtaposition between then and now shows a romanticisation of the past when commercialisation of the seaside had not taken place and offers a critique on the state of contemporary seaside towns.

*Against The Tide* demonstrated that locally created archive footage can give access to local stories and give insight in local histories. By using the present as a route into the archived past, it avoided the illusion of a recoverable past, but emphasises 'recontextualisation'. In this case use of archive showed both continuity and discontinuity between past and present. At the same time audiences are meeting people like themselves, and can connect to their lives and experiences and create a historical awareness of daily life in a local context. The films embedded in website offered a context to the production process as well as the historical context. It proved to be a successful local project and around 11000 people visited the website between February 2010 and September 2011.

### **Conclusion**

This article demonstrates that the use of archive footage in documentary film is richer and more varied than recent theorisations indicate, but that a more critical awareness should be developed among practitioners and academics alike.

Selection of archive footage should be given more attention in order to use archive in all its cultural richness and to cross the boundaries of 'illustration' only. It should comment, juxtapose, merge or explore other ways of creating a relationship with the past to enhance documentary's historical informative role in the public sphere to use the evocative power of archive in a creative and inspiring way.

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#### **Filmography**

***Against the Tide*** (<http://www.tide.org.uk/>; Earthstock Films (UK

-*Permanently Yours*, Daisy Asquith

-*New School for Newgate*, Danny Weinstein

-*Back at the Ranch*, Wilma de Jong

-*Old Man and the Sea*, Kath Mansoor

*Capturing the Friedmans*, (2003, Andrew Jarecki, US)

*Deep Water* (2007, Osmond and Rothwell, UK)

*The Corporation* (Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott, 2003, Can)

*The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927, Esther Shub, Russia)

*The Great Way* (1927, Esther Shub, Russia)

*The Life and Time of Rosie the Riveter* (Connie Field, 1980, US)

*Triumph of the Will* (1935, Leni Riefenstahl, Germany),

*Nation on Film* (2005-2010 Tony Parker, BBC, UK)

*Nuit et Brouillard (Night and Fog)* (1955, Alain Resnais, France)

*Of Time and the City* (2008, Terence Davies, UK)

*Windrush*, (1998, David Upshall, BBC, UK)

*Year of the Pig* (1968, Emile de Antonio, US) |

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