

Archival Effect, Found Footage, and Photographic Dichotomy. Truth and Truthfulness in Historical Documentaries

Alexandru Sterian¹

¹I.L. Caragiale National University of Theatre and Film, Bucharest, Romania

alex.sterian@unatc.ro

Abstract

How do we recover and preserve memories through archived visual sources? This paper will address the use of archived footage in features and documentaries. Helped by digital technology, today we stress the lack of ontological structure of virtual support through its myriad visual declinations from the "original" source. Through documents, film footage, and photographs the historic validation is assumed by the viewer as a trustful proof or, to quote Michael Zry, "[...] photographic images seem to carry the promise of the true and accurate representation of history" (2003, p. 47). The use of archived footage (motion picture and photographs) is compared in two different directorial approaches in order to exhibit the degree of interventions on each case study. Valuable film heritage is restored and preserved in archives around the globe: What if some "excerpts from archived movies" are in fact reenactments or fake found footage marked as "never seen before"? Is digital manipulations of historical footage justified enough for shifting to a "trendy look" for modern viewers, even if the connection to historical reality is lost?

Keywords: found-footage, mock-documentaries, reenactments, re-appropriation.

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We begin this article by defining two recurring terms which will occur throughout the paper, 'found footage' and 'archived footage'. Though these terms seem to have the same meaning, the filmmaker's freedom to manipulate the content of visual support (film and video footage) is larger regarding the first. The found footage, sometimes labeled as home movies, can seamlessly be enhanced with reenactments or fake documentary parts, these shots are inserted in the movie's timeline to divert or underline some specific storytelling plots regardless they original meaning. The source doesn't count either, the content becoming far more relevant than its truthfulness, a dichotomy also addressed by Bill Nichols: "although the indexicality of the audiovisual document guarantees a certain ontological relationship to its referent, it cannot guarantee the meanings of these referents when the 'document' is (re)contextualized within a 'documentary'" (1991, p. 161). What separates the object-image from its ontologic indexicality is the archival referentiality. The archive, as an institution, mediates the process of curating and restoring the visual sources, hence validates the artefact's historical presence into the past flow. To cover our topic, the main goal of a documentary is to record historical reality based on written or visual references, closely linked with what Vivian Sobchack stressed:

The term documentary designates more than a cinematic object. Along with the obvious nomination of a film genre characterized historically by certain objective textual features, the term also – and more radically – designates a particular subjective relation to an objective cinematic or televisual text. In other words, a documentary is less a thing than an experience. (1999, p. 241).

In a taxonomic approach, the found footage can be also called lost footage, labeled as never seen before film recovered from an obscure, hidden or private collection. The archived film as a historical proof doesn't necessarily validate the here and now paradigm, but rather analyzes the historical facts as captured, intentionally or accidentally, within the known historical events. Deciphering the footage's meanings itself could overwhelm the viewer through its polyvalence, ambiguity and discursive density. The creator's perspective is merely interpreted and assumed as a metahistorical approach of real facts and events frequently used in feature films diegesis.

Today's digital technology changes the ontological referentiality of analogue film and photography. Looking back on the era when photograph used to

be strong evidence in trials, through the degree of modern digital interventions, this support can no longer be taken as a truth.

Since the advent of digital technology, more often the scholars started to stress a twofold approach of using the archived film footage, the source referentiality and the ethical use of it in features and more so in documentaries. In fiction film where the found footage stylistic structure is used, directors try to strengthen the diegetic structure to reach higher viewership engagement upon the story. Most of the times the aesthetic value of the analogue film is emphasized through its ontological dimensions: the shooting format (film gauge), the aspect ratio and the degradations or the images restored stages. The archive, as a repository and validation of visual documents, plays the role of sole guarantor for footage and pictures kept in the vaults, therefore the archive-based documentaries become very popular nowadays on streaming platforms and dedicated television channels. The sources from which the directors start their documentation process are heterogeneous. Archives, understood as institutions, aren't merely "a repository of unmediated evidence about the past, but [...] a particular structure of power in which particular kinds of documents are kept in a particular order" (Foucault, 1969, pp. 28-29). It's the curators' and historians' responsibility to collect all the signs and relevant marks about the historical flow, private and public facts or global events which synchronously unravel in significant layers.

Aiming to analyze the influence of forged stories and mystifications in mock-documentaries Scott Wilson wrote: "The mock-documentary offers the potential to blur fact and fiction to the point where it is not possible for viewers to either trace the film's referents in the socio-historical world or to clearly identify the narrative within the realm of the imaginary" (2012, p. 182). Inevitably, the viewer is fully engaged in a fictionalised or mock-documentary diegesis, the degree of this immediacy can be approached through various declinations. Sanchez & Myrick used the found footage technique in *Blair Witch Project* (1999) where the viewer is aware from the beginning of the movie about the context of the project which will commence. The viewer is confronted with a reality simulacrum built upon two different stylistic expressions of the shooting formats, 16mm B&W film and digital Hi8 camera. Spectators' engagement is mediated by these two realities; in this dichotomy the B&W layer become a faithful representation of an archived footage even if the directors assumed the forensic value of the discovery from the beginning. Throughout the movie the creators balance these visual layers into an

intertwined reality of simulacra and simulacrum to build the tension and gradually increase mistrust between the heroes. The text displayed at the beginning of the movie is used as a statement to persuade the viewer of the reality of the story, an undoubted truth which is slowly exposed as the movie advances. The degree of immediacy involved in Blair Witch Project is synchronized with the gradual loss of trust between the characters shown by Heather with her digital camera footage. The relevance and trustfulness of this POV camera becomes more relevant up to the point when one of the characters disappears inside the forest. This is the turning point to their fatal end, this specific moment is caught on both cameras, as an ultimate proof of their destiny.

When an archived footage source is used in documentaries, its symbolic dimension can be assumed as visual reference approached through appropriation or re-appropriation technique, depending on the personal interpretation degree. According to the MoMA glossary of terms, the appropriation is defined as an "artistic strategy, an intentional borrowing, copying, and alteration of preexisting images and objects" (n.d.) to create new meanings through artworks. A well-known artistic genre using this approach is the American Pop-art movement. The re-appropriation takes a step further, embezzling the original meanings of the support through manipulations and interventions upon the ontological values of film footage.

The archives reflect the modern historical flow revealed through trustful sources (documents, photographs, and movies) which have been cataloged, restored and preserved by museum experts. In film and visual archives, the relevance of the artefacts is evaluated in relation with their uniqueness, movie's historical relevance and its truthfulness. For archivists, the restoration means the process and actions to bring the film back to its original form. Regarding the silent period of film history, we aim to restore and preserve the original, physical references of the support; the graininess and contrast, special colouring process (stencils, tinting or toning) and, nevertheless, the sharpness, or the lack of it, caused by the film and lenses low performances during that time. The main goal for an archive, like any museum, is to preserve the visual proofs as they have been produced and recorded during a historical timeline flow. The archival film footage visual structure can be easily changed by digital technology intervention throughout the restoration process.

Back in the 1930's Walter Benjamin stressed for the first time a concept which seemed important for the seventh art, the dissolution of aura and its

referentiality in a mechanical reproducible medium (cinema). In Benjamin's view, the work of art's aura is validated by its uniqueness and the here and now reality (the unmediated creator's interaction with the work of art; painting or sculpture and its presence within the exhibition area). Today, this paradigm is reversed when we stress the dichotomy of digital files and analogous support. This ontological value of 35mm film and its referentiality to silent era movies is completely changed by digital technology. The digitization process erases the analogous ontological values (the image object) and preserves in metadata only the immaterial dimension of it. Boris Groys addresses this topic in his book *In The Flow* where he states that

[...] digital archiving, on the contrary, ignores the object and preserves the aura. The object itself is absent. What now remains is its metadata - the information about the here and now of its original inscription into the material flow: photos, videos, textual testimonies (2016, p. 4).

Hence every time we watch the footage on a digital screen, through metadata decoding process, we recreate a different version of the source object (its ontological reference). This footage's historical relevance is changed to a new DNA metadata which doesn't represent the object but the digital imprint of the workflow, in our case the scanned version of the film. In his digital enhancement process Jackson uses several techniques to improve the material appearances adding or intervening upon: shooting frame rate and aspect ratio, the black and white support, sync sound and sound effects, digital zooms, background changes and so on.

Film directors use in their productions (documentaries or feature films) visual references to strengthen or validate the storyline. Is there an ethical code to approach this kind of archived footage, or is the historical truth a fluid term adjusted by any means to accommodate with the viewer's nowadays visual paradigm? The truthfulness is assumed with a risk as Michael Zryd states in *Found Footage Film as Discursive Metahistory*:

[...]when we look at footage of the U.S. military helicopters utilized in the invasion of Grenada in 1983, we seem to be seeing the historical event itself, represented and captured at the time that the image was exposed. This is the fundamental contract that the nonfiction image establishes with the

viewer through the automaticity of photographic technology: the promise of historical evidence with both immediacy (the iconic power of resemblance to reality) and a guarantee of veracity (the indexical power of the photographic image as an imprint of time) (2003, p. 47).

The picture's indexicality doesn't stand itself for its historical accuracy, this resemblance can be achieved by using the sources in their original stages, from the time when the shoot occurs. The viewer is not aware of the intervention degree which is involved in the film workflow. Do these interventions divert the viewer's belief in footage truth? The historical support referentiality vanishes through recurrent processes of digital interventions. We'll continue to further illustrate the main aesthetic and photographic WWI footage properties: aspect ratio, shooting frame rate, and the achromatic reference of support (negative and print).

We generally admit that silent movies have a shooting aspect ratio of 1:1,33 (4/3 in super 35mm format). Jackson decided to change it to 1:1,77 (nowadays HD television aspect ratio) his decision hasn't been clarified whatsoever but we're admitting that the distribution format was one of the reasons. Do we identify this as an issue? Certainly yes. The composition, camera angle and framing were the main creator's storytelling tools, and chopping into the original frame, cutting off the top and bottom to accommodate the new aspect ratio, means an inopportune aesthetic intervention in the footage (figures 1-4).

Second, the shooting frame rate; during WWI the shooting frame rate wasn't standardized because of the hand cranked film cameras construction, therefore the shooting frame rate was around 16 to 18 fps. The slight acceleration feeling of the silent era footage, which sometimes we experience when we nowadays watch the movies, wasn't the screening reality in the silent era. The camera operator and the projectionist hand cranked the machine with the same speed during the shoot or while projecting the movie. Because of the low shooting frame rate, to avoid the light flickering effect on the screen while projecting the movie, the screening frequency had to be raised up to 48Hz. This issue was solved by a technical adjustment, adding an additional shutter blade in the projector, so that even at lower frame rates, the flickering of the projection was resolved and moving people had a natural speed, neither slowed down nor sped up. Jackson involved a heavy computing process to convert 16-18 fps to 24 fps (today's cinema distribution frame rate), this intervention means inserting new frames into the original timeline (up to 6 to 8 frames). This computing approximation (through digital interpolation

of data) is seen as a disturbing smear effect throughout the movie. If the edges, objects, and people are duplicated for this purpose, then all these interventions on different VFX (Visual Effects) layers merge to an overall fake reality feeling. Aesthetically speaking, Jackson's visual changes engage this modern look to the viewer. The truthfulness of the actions of the soldiers and officers, weapons and costumes look staged and like they're shot nowadays with movie extras and props.

As we already stated, the original purpose of the footage used by Peter Jackson in *They Shall Not Grow Old* was as newsreels from the WWI frontlines. Obviously, his intention was to make a fiction film based on documentary footage (film reels and photographs), adding some re-enactment scenes. Through the digitization process, Jackson changed most of the original footage features adding another dimension never used in that period, colour. Due to the Black&White film structure, the symbolic and aesthetic meaning of colours wasn't addressed in the original footage. The way the colors were added to these parts apparently became a matter of the technician's personal taste, as there are no historical references to the colors of actual houses in the villages, nor to the civilian clothing or attire shown in the footage. The first intervention to the footage regarding all these changes (technical and aesthetic) occur after 25 minutes from the movie beginning. Nevertheless, during this part, covered with B&W original footage on the original aspect ratio, the screening speed is wrong (accelerated because of the matter explained before). Jackson's decision was based on the assumption of a better engagement of the audience to this totally new look, often even with sync sound (figures 5-8). This slowdown effect is shown throughout the movie even when the sound should be lip synced. Another unwanted effect derived from this speed conversion is the smear effect also visible in Jackson movie, it happens oftentimes when the software erroneously interprets the pictures' foreground as a digital artefact (figures 9-10). In his endeavor to build a fictionalized story out of real battlefield footage, Jackson blew-up frames and reused the same takes in different stages of the movie. The biggest fictionalized part comes in the battle scenes which have never been shot per se. Used as a propaganda newsreel to raise the national British pride, all the footage has been shot during the preparations and the soldiers' free time behind the front lines. That explains the cheerful and relaxed moments of the soldiers in the excerpts. To specifically enhance the dramatism of the never seen battles, Jackson adds some edited photographs and modern re-enactments of the artillery troops in action, aged footage (scratches, sparks, and artefacts) similar to

the WWI newsreels. Applying various processes of removing dust and scratches, de-grain, de-noise, sharpen, and interpolation, the technicians involved in this process changed the original appearance of the footage, newsreels showing the life of English troops behind frontlines.

The dialogues and sound effects played their role in this fictionalization, some of the sync sound parts and VO's are purely director's imagination. We see fragments with a lip sync scene where an officer makes a briefing for the out coming military operations, which is all fully ADR (Automated Dialogue Replacement). Sometimes, the character is overlaid to a still photo background or intensively zoomed in from an original footage overlayed in a different action (figures 11-13). Jackson's approach was commented by David Walsh (head of London Imperial War Museum and FIAF executive) and Mathew Lee (curator at IWM) during a University of Amsterdam - Eye Museum event in 2021 (Eye Filmmuseum). While Lee, referring to all the technical interventions on the footage, found a good reason for re-appropriation of the archived footage through a Hyper and Ultra restoration, David Walsh stressed the results of these changes which could be inadequately used in the movie.

Since the viewer is unable to compare the original and the restored version, in his or her perspective the re-enactments and digital manipulations of the found footage became a valid and trustful reference. The feeling and the immovability of the footage with the historical era is lost, therefore another question arises: What happens if some excerpts from archived movies are in fact fake footage only, marked as never seen before?

This deontological norm of use of archival footage ignoring the original purpose of it was addressed by Bill Nichols who argues:

[...] misrepresentation may involve appearing to present authentic historical footage that is actually reenacted or taken from a time and place other than the one ostensibly depicted. The responsible use of archival footage is a clearly fraught area of debate, and no single standard prevails in current practice. Like reenactments it is an area where consensus about what works, what audiences will accept or trust, remains open to debate and the influence of new approaches (2016, p. 161).

Nichols was referring to the director's freedom to use original and reenacted footage to validate a historical subject in a style of mixed representation of it. That approach can be easily included in a meta-historical reinterpretation of facts.

For *They Shall Not Grow Old* Peter Jackson justified his massive intervention on the footage as a better way to preserve memory ignoring both the ontological dimensions of the source and historical reality. Back in 1995, together with Costa Botes, Jackson produced and directed *Forgotten Silver* which proved to be a fake documentary about a New Zealand movie pioneer, Collin McKenzie. The directors fabled around McKenzie's biography, life, and career, but mostly about his importance as a filmmaker. Jackson interviewed, among others, film historians and archivists from New Zealand National film archive and, presumably his latest surviving wife, to validate the theory about Collin McKenzie's career. Referring to *Forgotten Silver* Scott Wilson stated:

[...] the mock-documentary offers the potential to blur fact and fiction to the point where it is not possible for viewers to either trace the film 's referents in the socio-historical world or to clearly identify the narrative within the realm of the imaginary (2012, p. 182)

Jackson and Botes fully fictionalised McKenzie's bio starting with the moment when, in 1901 at the age of 12, he built in his workshop a 35mm film camera. The entire hoax was overlaid with film history milestones and not only.

The validation of their theory is supported by excerpts from newspapers and photographs presumably done during that time. The core of his groundbreaking reveal is the footage which Jackson discovered in a neighbour's house. He opened the documentary with a reenactment of the moment when he finds Collin McKenzie's 35mm film roles, hidden in a shed on his widow's property. The testimonials of people who knew Collin McKenzie (his last wife, a child actor who played in his movies and so on) are enforced by genuine interviews with film producers, actors, film historians and government officials like the head of New Zealand film commission. McKenzie's inventions and contribution to world history is told throughout the film starting with his invention of 35mm film base gelatin made from egg yolks validated by a published newspaper story about a mysterious egg thief who stole more than 2000 eggs. McKenzie's career continued and Jackson proved with excerpts from 35mm found footage that the first worldwide airplane

flight took place in a rural part of New Zealand where Richard Pearse, a passionate farmer, built an airplane and flew it before the Wright brothers' historical record. Jackson validated this theory through a digitally enhanced detail extracted from one of the attendees' newspapers (seen in his back pocket) which revealed the exact date of the flight (figures 14-17). The links with the people and real facts that actually occurred in New Zealand's history make the story believable ("Richard_Pearse", 2025). This fictionalization continues with several groundbreaking inventions in the film industry. In 1908, according to McKenzie's biography, he shot the first talkie ever. More than 20 years before the introduction of sound in film, McKenzie produced and distributed the first sound movie. Jackson explains the lack of exposure of McKenzie's groundbreaking innovation: the film's spoken language. Because the distribution was entirely based on Chinese actors, the movie passed unnoticed in New Zealand with no box office success. The 20 years term is again claimed for McKenzie's following invention, the color 35mm film which he produced in 1911 and the proof is again found in the excerpts from a short color reel shot in Tahiti where Collin manufactured the film. The biggest fake follows, Peter Jackson himself is drawn in this endeavour and with stubbornness follows the clues to discover the ultimate gem of this documentary, the hidden sets from the only feature length production which McKenzie shot with American and Soviet finances. We see documents and photographs with McKenzie in the US and together with Stalin in his attempt to raise the money to complete the movie. The result was the two versions of Salome and John the Baptist story, alternatively shot to accommodate the two ideologies, capitalism and bolshevism.

Jackson's contribution to New Zealand's film history resumes here, his expedition deep into the jungle concludes with a huge discovery, buried in a stone sarcophagus the team finds all the 35mm film reels, the lost McKenzie's movie Salome. After being buried deep in the jungle for more than 60 years, Salome finally had its gala premiere in 1995 when New Zealand high officials attended. The Forgotten Silver case study reveals how the viewer is drawn into the never seen before found footage paradigm, structure which eases the path to a fake-documentary, an entirely fictionalized story and a historic hoax. Jackson and Botes intentions were to induce the feeling of story trustfulness by using reliable and expert validated film archive sources which proved to be entirely re-enactments and fake footage.

In an interview after the film was released, Jackson said he never expected that the hoax behind Forgotten Silver to be discovered at the first screening by any

viewer and neither such a highly emotional and nationwide pride response following the national television airing. From the beginning both directors' intention was to fictionalize McKenzie's biography in a classic historical documentary structure commissioned and co-produced with the New Zealand National Film Commission, details which were kept secret by all the cast and crew till the premiere.

The manipulation degree of historical artefacts has been approached differently by Radu Jude in *The Dead Nation*. This historical endeavour follows a different stylistic path being structured exclusively on B&W photographs. The visual support of the texts is a selection of still pictures shot by Costică Acsinte in the same era which Jude recalls in his documentary. Jude's aesthetic choice to use still pictures as sole visual support for his story led to Jaimie Baron's disparity approach: "[...] using photographs as 'archival documents' he might (i.e., the director) be entrapped into an 'intentional disparity' because the intentionality of making those pictures hasn't been clearly defined". And Baron continues: "the image's simple intentions were to preserve a significant historical moment or event and, thus, are perceived as historically significant but also nearly 'empty' of historical interpretation" (2014, p. 32).

This purpose is revealed from the movie's subtitle, *Fragments of parallel lives* which leaves room for stylistic improvisation helped by viewer's imagination engagement. Well-known for his reenactments, Jude plays in *The Dead Nation* with the same tropes he used in more heavily fictionalized works such as *I Don't Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians* (2018) and *Uppercase Print* (2020): the metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. These tropes are related to Hayden White's study on historical relevance through different storytelling approach, his book *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* notes: "the historical work is [...] a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes" (1973, p. 2), pointing to the narrative influences on documentary film through the tropes mentioned above.

Jude's aesthetic goal was to use the photographic layer's decays of stills to build a faithful representation of Romanian political society turmoil between the First and Second World Wars. Stressing the social context caught on film by Acsinte, Ágnes Pethő writes:

On the one hand, we have the rural or small-town Romania portrayed in endearing group photos marked by a kind of naïve aestheticization showing people of varying social strata from middle class downwards. Butchers, bakers, tailors, cooks, shoemakers, seamstresses, soldiers, musicians pose with the tools of their trade, farmers and townspeople are photographed with their family and domestic animals, sometimes captured at leisure in the company of friends gathered for social occasions. (2012, p. 51).

Therefore, the societal mirroring addressed in the movie subtitle emerges as the sole illustration of historical content described within written documents and visual representations of the era.

The ontological photographic reference plays multiple roles: its present stage validates the historical era that they were shot in, aesthetically underlines the simultaneous decomposition of humanity and tolerance within Romanian people and last but not least, Jude transfers to the viewer a haptic dimension of a bidimensional support. This stage is achieved by the visible gelatin creases and cracks of the glass base photographs seen throughout the movie (figures 18-19). The *Dead Nation* storyline is a petrified one, this feeling comes from the visual immobility displayed as unique objects, individually shown in their entirety. The story rhythm and pace is based on direct cuts, no editing effects have been introduced to highlight details or relevant parts of the photos (fades, cross-dissolves, zooms or pans). This stylistic approach is doubled by Jude's inspired overlays between photographic long shots with the rural atmosphere and the soundtrack, all together merging into an essayistic/poetical film structure. This visual structure was used before in movies (fictions and documentaries), Chris Marker in *La Jetté* and Jean-Luc Godard & Jean-Pierre Gorin in *Letter to Jane*. In both cases the analytical and symbolic value of the key visual relays solely on the ontological reference of photographs. As mentioned before, Jude had the inspiration to manipulate an additional dimension of Acsinte's photos, the haptic value. Photographic time validation comes from the advanced picture's degradation and damage upon which the director doesn't interfere to recover or restore details through digital enhancement processes. The viewer is invited to inspect and feel the surface roughness and glass cracks as he or she analyzes and touches every displayed photograph. In this timeline, Jude constantly confronts the viewer with the doubt whether the images shown are a faithful illustration of the plot or they should be taken as an appropriation and collage of the original photos. Another sign

of authenticity is engraved on the photos surface (the photoshoot dates), this gesture validates the time flow presence of objects and fulfils the director's desire to display the lack of political authority and the nationalist revival during the Romanian fascist era. The entire visual weight of the documentary relies on these visual clues, the heavily degraded stages of Acsinte's photographs. Jude used the scanned photographs only, no other interventions have been done to recover, restore or enhance the details nor other exponents of the pictures. To illustrate Emil Dorian's family drama, a Jewish doctor who lived in Bucharest during that time, the director mixes the voice over texts with radio speakers news and live aired demonstrations of right-wing party leaders. As the story progresses, the perfect storm is completed by Ion Antonescu's nationalist speeches, Romanian prime-minister whose decisions led to the Odessa, the surging wave of antisemitism and Roma deportation to Transnistria. This irreversible Romanian society fracture, nationalist and ideological, is shown in this pictures-sound ambivalence. The director's aim is to engage the viewer's emotions and build a meta-documentary from stills, radio interviews, nationalist music from the era and VO with excerpts from Dorian's diary. The sound design is based on foley between Voice Over and excerpts from radio shows (political speeches and triumphalist music) aired between the 1930s and 1946.

In this article, we have gone through a variety of directorial approaches that gradually move from documentary to fiction film, in which found footage and photographs represent the narrative support of the story. The narrative core of all these films consists of the creative use of archival footage and photographs, sometimes doubled by reenactments, simulated historical images or fake documentaries. Though both aesthetic and historical value of the sources are meant to strengthen movies diegesis and contribute to its multilayered analytical, symbolic, oneiric or poetical dimension, the message is easily diverted by the director's will to show a more appealing, modern depiction of the past. Hence, the ethical use of the footage addresses another approach for archived sources regarding its immovability and authenticity expected by curators and archivists from film producers and directors. The case studies addressed in the text show how often the viewer can be embezzled and lost in a found footage based story which sometimes is entirely edited from reenactments or fake documentary footage. Peter Jackson approached both paradigms and freely inserted fake documentary and reenactments footage which supposedly are interpreted as authentic by the viewer.

Nevertheless, by involving in his documentary movie experts (film critics and archivists) he validated, from the viewer's perspective, all the archived materials shown. His aggressive and irreversible interventions on original film specifications (shooting speed and aspect ratio, contrast, graininess and Black&White referentiality) changed the original meaning and purpose of film footage shot during WWI. In the end, the historical relevance of a still photo or motion picture footage is a transparent visual reference if their meaning is recontextualized regardless their link with history flow. When these visual sources are used, a meta-historical or hyper-historical approach couldn't preserve the here and now paradigm since the creators manipulates, through appropriation or re-appropriation, the support trustfulness. The lack of trust in the new digital world comes from its technological potential to build entirely virtual environments which erodes the relevance of the ontological object reality as accepted before. The statement: It happened, I've seen it with my own eyes no longer represents modern mediated reality, much less in simulated documentaries or historical reenactments where the story could be built on digitally manipulated found footage and photographs.

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Annex 1 – Figures



Figures 1-2. *They Shall Not Grow Old*.
The original and adjusted frame aspect ratio

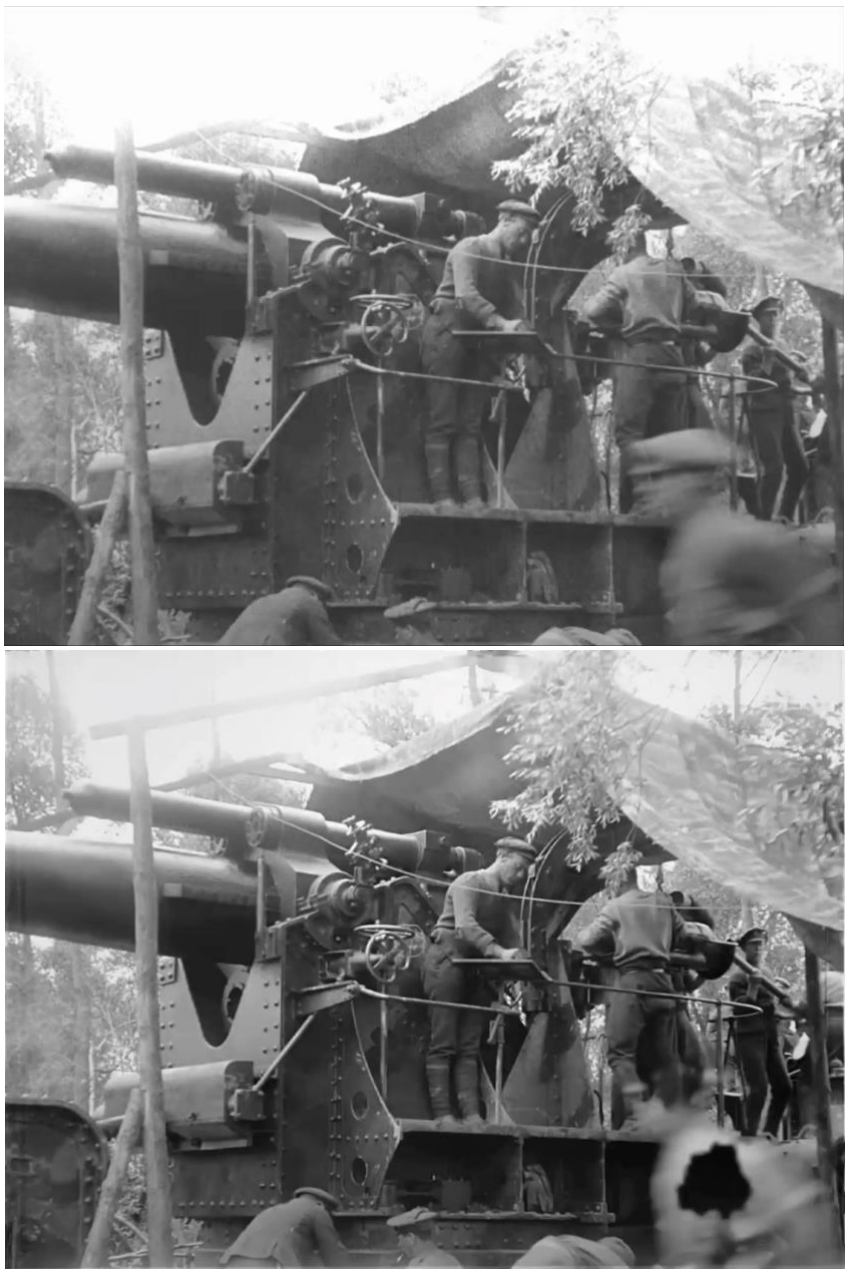


Figures 3-4. *They Shall Not Grow Old*.
The original and adjusted frame aspect ratio





Figures 5-8. *They Shall Not Grow Old*.
Transition from original B&W footage to coloured one

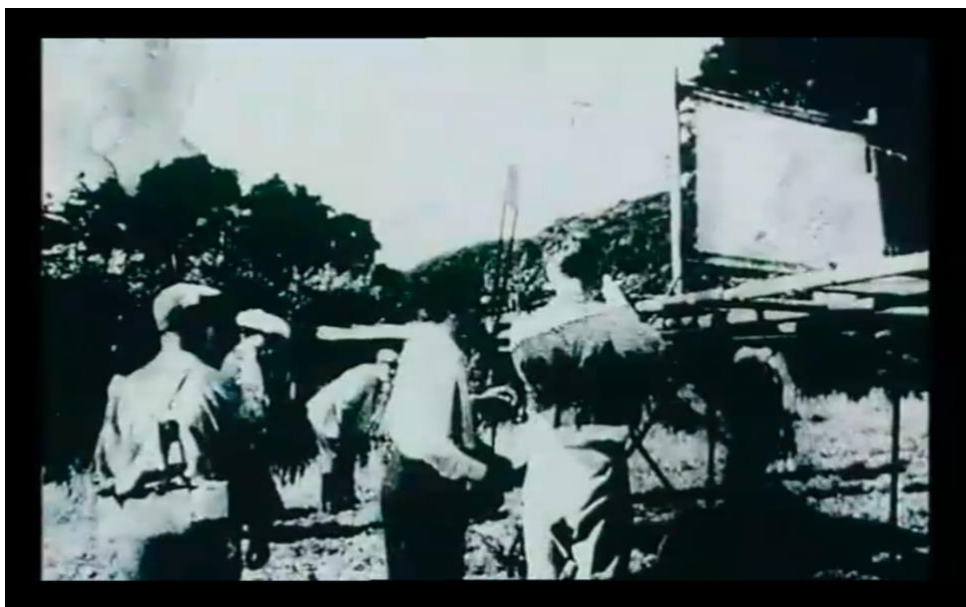


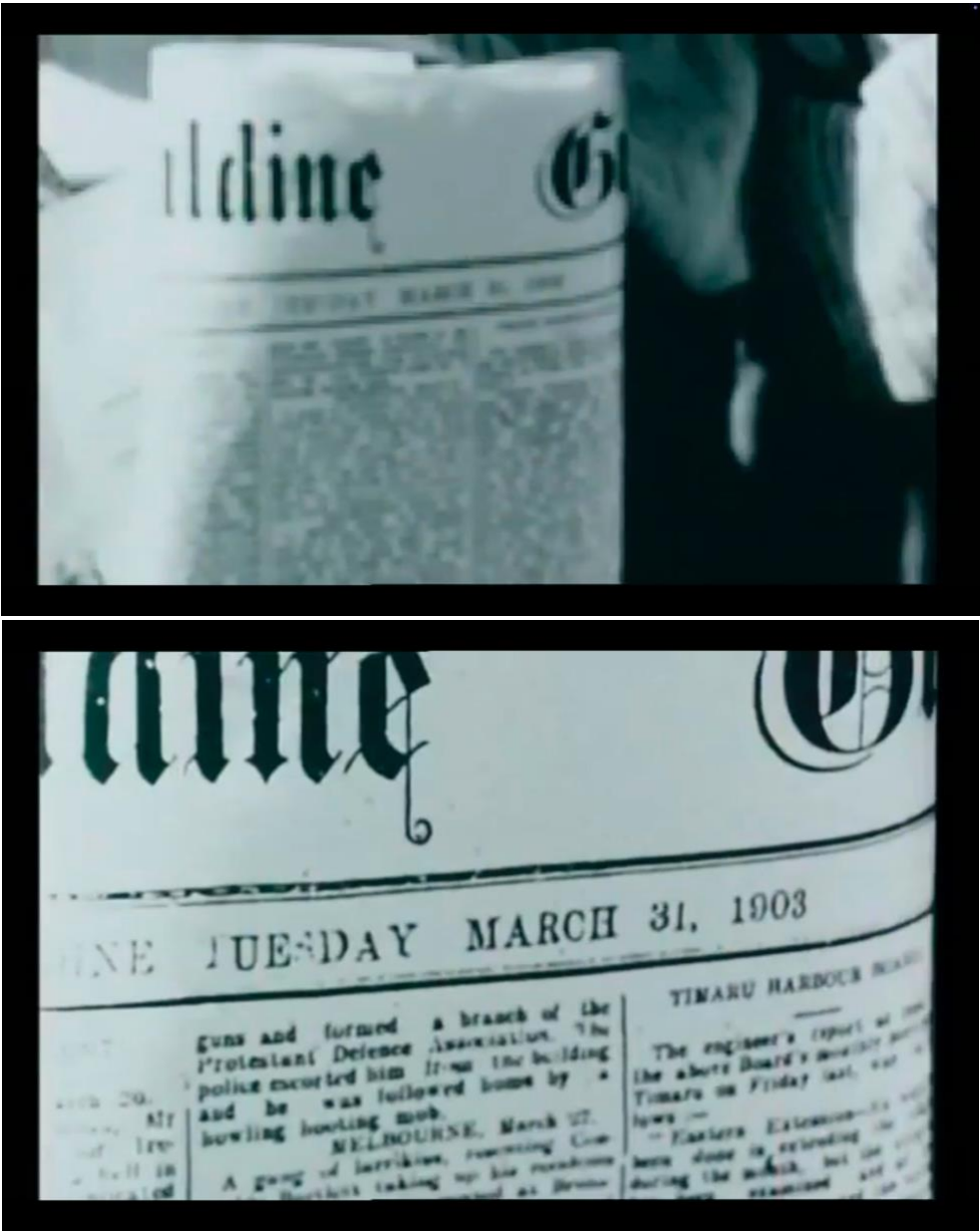
Figures 9-10. The algorithmic picture sharpening
and the unwanted artefacts
(bottom right)



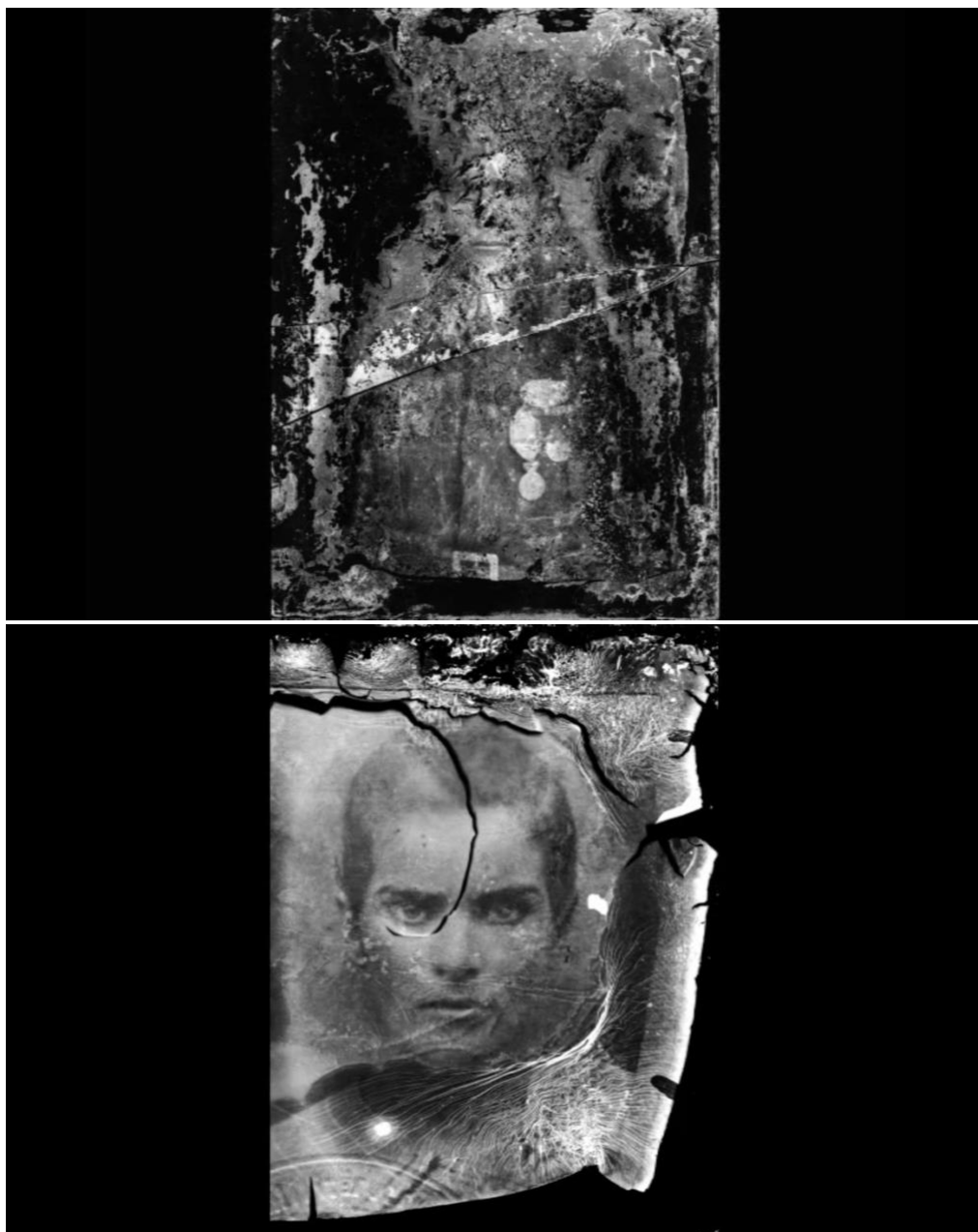


Figures 11-13. Intensive zooms into original footage
to show a different soldiers' mood





Figures 14-17. *Forgotten Silver*.
The proof of flight day captured on film by Collin McKenzie



Figures 18-19. *Dead Nation*.
The photograph's haptic dimension. Two portraits