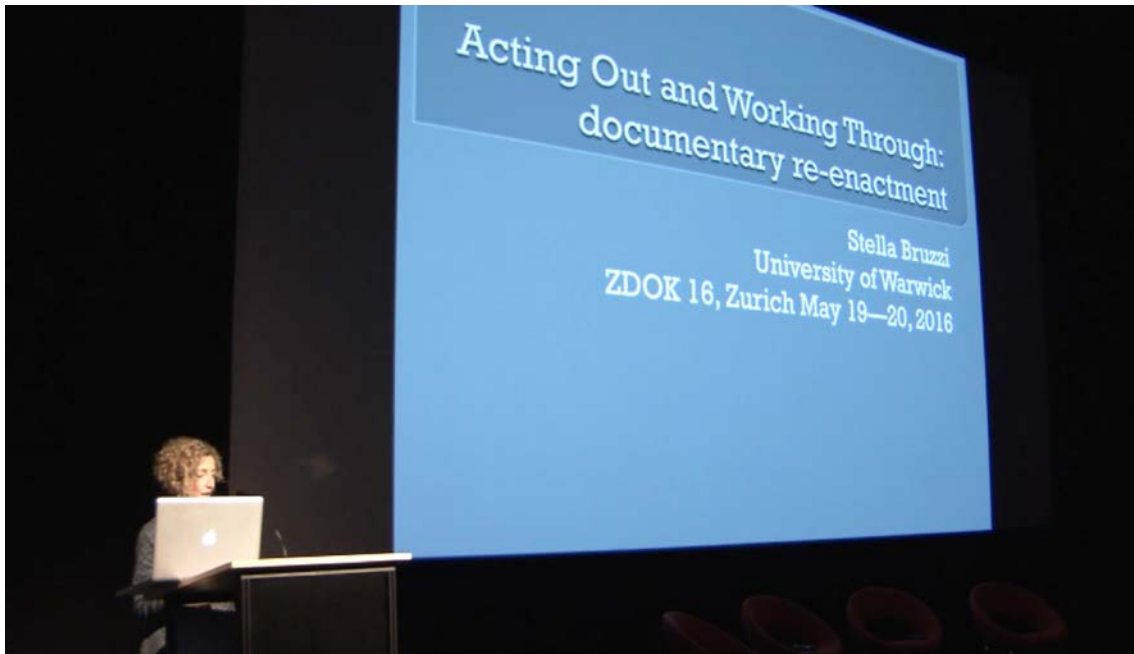


Acting out and working through: Documentary Re-enactment

by Stella Bruzzi



Stella Bruzzi at the ZDOK documentary conference in Zurich, May 19, 2016

Just as all documentaries are arguably re-enactments, so all re-enactments contain elements of 'acting out'. However, when approaching this article I sought to extend this by asking questions about the status of these reconstructions of past events. Answering my initial question of whether or not re-enactment is always *acting out*, that is the performed reprisal of a previous action, in the affirmative, I went on to pose a second, more probing question about the status of this 'acting out'. Using as my springboard Freud's 1914 essay 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through', I was keen to establish how often re-enactment can become *working through*? When does a documentary re-enactment also begin to embody the understanding and resolution of a past action, and become more than 'acting out'? My assumption had been before embarking on this article and the conference paper that preceded it that yes, most re-enactments would both *work through* as well as *act out* prior events, that they would perform a therapeutic as well as reconstituting function, but now I am less sure. Quite a lot of documentary re-enactment seems to suggest that repetition is remembering, without going to the next, more problematic and potentially confrontational stage of working through often traumatic memories. Using Freud as my touchstone, I will examine the key role of repetition to an understanding of documentary re-enactment as well as some of the more tangential psychodynamic aspects of being, as spectators, witness to re-enactments – engaging therefore with that potentially therapeutic value of the act of remembering, with

the value of re-enactments as attempts at '*working through*' by contextualising and making sense of a personal or a collective trauma. As a means of testing the differences between 'acting out' and 'working through', my examples will be wide-ranging and disparate, though more from the British documentary tradition than any other.

To begin with Freud: it is hugely significant that 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through' was written in 1914 – at the outset of the so-called 'Great War' in Europe, which people assumed wrongly would be over by Christmas but that instead dragged on for four years, altering and scarring the European landscape for the remainder of the twentieth century. Still to come, therefore, as Freud wrote his essay was one of the last century's key events, begging still to be remembered, commemorated and worked through.

On 21 September 1914 the *London Times* published Lawrence Binyon's poem *For the Fallen*. David Rieff opens his recent book *In Praise of Forgetting* by quoting Binyon's poem as 'the quasi-official poem of remembrance' (Yale University Press, 2016: 2), especially the stanza:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month is still a memorial day observed by member states of the Commonwealth of Nations, paying tribute with a minute's silence to members of all armed forces who have died in the line of duty in all wars since 1918. The anxiety Rieff detects, however, is the fear not that we *might* forget, but that we *will* forget those who fell, and he goes on to offer a radical re-evaluation of remembrance, arguing instead that we should not be punished for 'mustering the courage ... to contemplate the meaninglessness of history' (5) and allow ourselves to live in the present by letting the past slip away and be forgotten.

Re-enactment, it immediately struck me, is infused with a comparable dual fear that a past action or event, if not brought into the present by being reconstituted as re-enactment, will be forgotten, and alongside it a deeper anxiety that the simpler act of repetition will not yield render the remembered action or event understood or worked through. The tension between the two states of re-enactment are exemplified by Claude Lanzmann's obsessive, relentless and insistent dialogue with his interviewees in *Shoah* (1985), the struggle between director and subjects being neatly 'acted out' by the long exchange with Jan Karski, a young member during World War Two of the Polish resistance movement. At first, Karski – by that point a professor at Georgetown University and a US citizen – refuses to recall for the benefit of Lanzmann's camera the war atrocities he had witnessed, saying 'I don't go back', before tearfully walking away from the interview. Lanzmann is left alone, but Karski eventually returns, explaining: 'In 35 years after the war, I don't go back; I have been a teacher for 26 years,

I never mention it, the Jewish problem to my students'. He then nods his head and continues: 'I understand this film, it's for historical record, so I will try to do it'. After a brief pause Karski then starts the long account of his wartime memories, frequently adopting – as if often the case in re-enactments – the present tense ('every day counts'; 'perhaps it will shake their [the Allies'] conscience') when describing his part in smuggling out information about the holocaust. As Karski's struggle attests, *Shoah* is both acting out and working through, both record and analysis. Documentary re-enactment can, I would suggest, be both ritualised repetition (the uncritical recall of past events) and an active act of remembrance.

Freud keenly scrutinised throughout his essay the difference between the two, arguing for instance that repetition was a displacement activity engaged in instead of remembering: a symptom of *not remembering*. The patient, not yet brought to the point of recalling repressed memories, does not, according to Freud, 'remember anything at all of what he has forgotten and repressed, but rather acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory, but as an action; he repeats it, without of course being aware of that the fact that he is repeating it' (Freud 1914: 150). Pursuing this train of thought: 'the compulsion to repeat' (150) is synonymous with *not* knowing and is in fact an act laced with disavowal, as it 'replaces the impulsion to remember', with the desire to acquire and confront knowledge.



An essential, foundational component of the majority of documentary re-enactment is acting out, namely the repetition of an action as a way of re-invoking it or summoning it from the past into the present. The interviewee being invited to 'act out' events she or he is describing for the purposes of a documentary is a very familiar feature of many films. In Peter Greenaway's early 30-minute documentary, *Act of God*, made for Thames Television and featuring interviews with people who had survived being struck by lightning, many interviewees 'act out' their memories expressively as they are talking through them.



Stills from Peter Greenaway's early documentary, *Act of God* (1980)

Here 'acting out' becomes an act of recall, an instance of re-enactment as testimony. The urgency, the degree of presentness in the individuals' re-enactments becomes an integral component not just of the interviewees' performances but also of spectatorship as the 'acting out' transfers onto the viewer the urgency of being there, of being transported back to the historical moment described. Re-enactment as 'acting out' in *Act of God* summons up a charged historical moment into the present, regardless of when we are watching (although the potency of the testimony becomes dissipated over the decades).

Another more nuanced and less light-hearted example of documentary re-enactment as 'acting out' is proffered by Jean-Xavier de Lestrade's series *The Staircase* (2004), in which the director follows the high-profile case of author and Vietnam veteran, Michael Peterson, from his arrest on suspicion of having murdered his second wife Kathleen through his trial to his eventual conviction. Although many later crime- and trial-focused documentaries make copious use of dramatized re-enactments, *The Staircase* does not; instead, it features, like *Act of God*, examples of the animated interview in which its protagonists – notably Peterson – walk through the events they are recalling verbally. In the first of eight episodes De Lestrade introduces Peterson (who always protested his innocence) via just such an animated interview, as he goes through in detail the events of the night Kathleen died.



Michael Peterson in Jean-Xavier de Lestrade's series *The Staircase* (2004)

This gives us a classic 'walking through' documentary moment, an 'acting out' for the camera that has some therapeutic worth but falls short of a fully cognisant (*affective* as well as *effective*) 'working through' of a historical trauma. What is most interesting about Peterson's version of this active interview is not that he repeats his *own* actions (or version of) on the night his wife died, but that he starts to enact *Kathleen's* movements too (the second image shows Peterson 'walking through' his wife's actions as she decided to go up to bed before him).

To Freud's mind, the patient's compulsive repetition of 'everything that has already made it from the source of the repressed into his manifest personality' should not be treated as an event of the past 'but as a present-day force' (Freud, 1914: 151). *The Staircase*, as is the case with many other documentaries that use re-enactment, possesses (or more accurately *crafts*) a temporal as well as a formal fracturedness. A vital component in the series' own compulsiveness is its simultaneous status as both a re-enactment of events that have already concluded and as the enactment of those same events as if they have not yet occurred. This temporal duality is responsible for the disquieting uncanniness that characterises the series and Peterson's performance in particular – his use of both present and past tenses, for instance, as he calmly walks through for the benefit of the camera his version of the events of 9 December 2001 within the series' retrospective narrative frame.

So the first conclusion to reach about documentary re-enactment – especially in light of these interviewees' literal walking – is that *walking through* ≠ *working through*; to repeat an action even site-specifically, with all the emotional and psychological charge that brings, is not necessarily to assimilate, comprehend or explain the actions being repeated. As a means of teasing out this difference

again with reference to 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through' is to try and understand the significance for Freud of abreaction, specifically 'the expression and consequent release of a previously repressed emotion, achieved through reliving the experience that caused it'. Abreaction, therefore, conjoins 'walking' and 'working' through, it makes the act of acting out an essential component of the psychological desire to make sense of as well as remember a historical trauma. With this in mind, I now want to turn to two very different re-enactments of traumatic events in which the site-specific aspect of the re-stagings and repetitions are key.

A recurrent feature of many re-enactments in documentary is the inherent belief that *being there* – returning to the site where an event, especially a traumatic one, occurred – will bring us closer to understanding what 'really happened'. Taking Freud's observation that 'the greater the resistance, the more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering' (Freud 1914: 151), I want now to turn to a traumatic event that has been acted out in documentary and other narrative forms more than most, namely the assassination of JFK. Physical proximity has become a key component of remembering Dallas 22 November 1963. The location in which Kennedy was shot, Dealey Plaza, has become a notable site for 'dark tourism'; tourists gather there in significant numbers every day to (for whatever motive) get closer to the assassination, to imbibe the atmosphere, look at the X on the Elm Street tarmac that marks the spot where the



Dealey Plaza, the X on Elm Street



Dealey Plaza, view from the picket fence

president was struck by the fatal head shot and, of course, visit the site-specific assassination-fixated 'Sixth Floor Museum' housed in the Texas School Book Depository building from which Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly killed Kennedy. Dealey Plaza appears uncannily untouched by the passage of time; for such an iconic site, which looms so large in the shared cultural imagination, it is surprisingly small and unremarkable. The way history and people have treated the site is contradictory. On the one hand, Oswald's reconstructed angle of the TSBD and the permanently half-cocked window through which he positioned his rifle is a cordoned off, untouchable space; unlike the notorious video game *Reloaded*, the Sixth Floor Museum does not permit us to have a go at shooting the president, just as it discreetly excises from its endlessly looped Zapruder film the gruesome frames when Kennedy's brain is quite graphically blown apart. Conversely, the place from which most conspiracy theorists believe the actual fatal bullet was fired – the white picket fence just before the Stemmons underpass and freeway – has, most irreverently, become incorporated into the Sixth Floor Museum's car park, and in between green lights tourists risk their own lives to pose on the Elm Street X for photographs.

What makes an event, an image iconic? In the recent documentary *Bobby Sands: 66 Days* (Brendan J. Byrne) journalist Finton O'Toole memorably defined an icon as something about which one is both hugely knowledgeable and hugely ignorant. We both 'know' what happened on 22.11.63 in Dallas – Kennedy was killed – and yet remain ignorant as to *how*. The number of re-enactments of the assassination, not just the stream of visitors to the site in Dallas, testifies to the magnitude of that trauma, as well as to its unresolved status. The compulsion to repeat the events of Dallas are arguably the symptoms of the fantasy that maybe, if we once again put in motion the sequence of events that led up to the death of JFK, return to before the motorcade entered Dealey Plaza, that either this time we'll solve the mystery of the assassination or, more tantalisingly, that we'll this time be able to prevent it from happening. This impulse is, of course, acted out in Stephen King's time travel novel *11.22.63*, in which the protagonist is persuaded by a dying neighbour to return to 1963 in order to prevent Oswald from killing Kennedy, in the poignantly idealistic belief that this will also prevent the negative events that followed in its wake, such as the assassinations of Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King in 1968 or the Vietnam War. Back in Dallas, on the trolley car tour that departs from Houston Street opposite the TSBD and tracks Oswald's movements immediately following the assassination, our guide started his narrative account by reminding us that in Dealey Plaza 'every day is the 22nd of November, 1963'. Endless repetition has not enabled us to collectively 'work through' this particular trauma.



The Eternal Frame (Ant Farm and T.R. Uthco, 1975)

The Eternal Frame (Ant Farm and T.R. Uthco, 1975) is a complex if not very reverential art documentary in which the artists repeatedly restage the death of Kennedy, taking as their main reference point the Zapruder 8mm home movie film. Re-enactment in this instance is both an act of remembering and mis-remembering, a fascination with the seemingly incontrovertible evidence the Zapruder frames furnish historians with as well as an acknowledgement of its elisions and tantalising silences. Although *The Eternal Frame's* multiple re-enactments – from different angles, in colour and in monochrome – stand as testimony to the shortcomings of repetition as a means of working through, the film in its entirety

seeks to 'work through' another problem, namely the potential emptiness of the media image. Doug Halls as JFK, the 'Artist-President', makes a television address in which he says of both Kennedy and Dallas:

I suffered my image-death on the streets of Dallas, Texas, August 10, 1975 in order to render my ultimate service to the media which created me and without which I would be nothing [...] no president can ever be more than an image, and no image can ever be in the past, or could ever be in the future, anything but dead.

A re-enactment such as the repeated restagings of the assassination in *The Eternal Frame* is a symptom of both the present and the past. Playing a secret service agent, T. R. Uthco's Jody Proctor, admits that they 'fucked up' on this one, but then runs into Elm Street to participate in another re-enactment having been urged by a fictional reporter to act it out as if Kennedy hadn't died. Presentness is a particularly distinctive feature of this re-enactment's psychological and narrative potency – that in re-watching any re-enactment, but most certainly when watching a re-enactment of an iconic event, the ability to suspend knowledge as well as disbelief and enter a state of disavowal is, for the spectator, a welcome, maybe necessary precondition. In entering the perpetual *Ground Hog*-esque presentness of sitting through another re-enactment of an event as familiar as the death of JFK we are – despite what we consciously know – allowing ourselves temporarily to believe that things this time could turn out differently, only to then be confronted with the disappointing realisation that this is impossible. This is the duality, the stalemate position of walking through and revisiting a site – the event, like the X in the road – is immovable, while reinterpretations are always in motion: transient, mutable, restlessly changing.

The Eternal Frame raises two aspects pertaining to documentary re-enactment worth exploring: the relative importance of proximity and distance to acting out and working through. In a tangible sense the re-enactments in this film incorporate both: in their present tense urgency they recreate the classic documentary sense of 'being there', which Richard Leacock identified as so important to the documentary experience, while in their temporal and formal detachment from the events they depict they offer a more evaluative, analytical distance from those events as well. Repetition as analysis is what is promised.

So far, I've dwelt on the idea that presentness is encapsulated in the re-enactment, in dynamic dialogue with past events. Actually, in their fragmentariness, their formal restlessness, re-enactments offer up different presents and pasts – which brings me to another question, related still to site-specificity, namely: what is being acted out or worked through? The past events portrayed in the re-enactment or what re-enactments make later audiences think about those events?



The Battle of Orgreave (Mike Figgis after Jeremy Deller, 2001).

My next example is Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* – the Turner Prize-winning artist's 2001 re-enactment of the pivotal confrontation between members of an English police force and picketing miners in the 1984: the 18 June clash at the Orgreave coking plant near Rotherham, South Yorkshire. Actually, this re-enactment will perpetually exist in another form: that of Mike Figgis's documentary made for Channel 4 and built around the anniversary re-enactment. Deller, by the way, did not like the film.

I hadn't intended to use this example – until the news, on April 26 2016 that an inquest jury had finally concluded that the 96 Liverpool FC supporters who died in the crush at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough stadium on 15 April 1989 were unlawfully killed due to police negligence and incompetence. What's this got to do with Orgreave? Well, on BBC Radio 4 that morning there was an interview with Gareth Peirce, the solicitor who represented many of the miners charged with riot following Orgreave, in which she concluded:

And if the families at Hillsborough had been subjected to the further ordeal – which they should not have been – of winding the clock back to why it happened, the story would have started at Orgreave. Members of the same police force were on duty and similar requests are now being voiced for a similar inquest into Orgreave. Miners didn't die that day, but they were badly beaten; evidence was fabricated and tampered with; television news programmes were instructed to misrepresent events and depict the police as the reactive force not the instigators that day.

Jeremy Deller returned to the site – or rather to very near the site – of the original confrontation in order to 'right a wrong' as he states to the documentary camera, to in a sense put history right. His staged re-enactment, using ex-

miners, policeman, historical re-enactment groups and other non-actors, charted the events of the Orgreave 'battle' through to the police force's final charge through the local villages.

Thinking about site-specificity, some things have changed, others have not – the absence here of an X to mark the spot, a plaque of remembrance or commemoration also indicates the desire *not* to work through but rather to wilfully *supress* the 'battle of Orgreave'. Unlike in Dealey Plaza, Orgreave does not have a weird *Groundhog Day* existence; although many of the markers (the Sheffield road sign, for instance) are still intact, time hasn't stood still – but this is an indication of neither resolution nor closure.

Waverley has replaced Orgreave; the coking plant has been pulled down. History had literally been suppressed well before the battles have been resolved.

The Deller re-enactment is imbued with liveness, presentness – acting out *as* remembering this time, not *instead of* remembering. Deller's 2001 re-enactment is a site of collision and conflict for which he employed different groups – most notably the real striking miners who had been present that day in 1984 (cast as both miners and policemen) and professional and amateur re-enactors, under the



The Sheffield road sign towards Handsworth and the newly built village of Waverley on the disused coke plant site

direction of Howard Giles a historical re-enactment specialist. As a costumed example of 'living history', Deller's Orgreave is an authentic historical reconstruction that keeps as close as possible to the events being reconstructed. The historical re-enactors saw it as their role to bring authenticity, to restage but not necessarily to re-open events that had not reached closure. The 1984–5 miners' strike was a war of attrition between polarised political forces and ideologies; Deller's re-enactment was therefore restaging an especially symbolic episode in what can now be viewed as the beginning of the systematic destruction of the British trade union movement as an influential political force. It continues to be a 'live' and contentious event. As the miners arrived for the rehearsal and then the re-enactment proper of the battle, one of them jests that this time 'we'll win' – again as if re-enactment offers the potential for change or even reversal of outcome. As the words of Gareth Peirce attest, watching again the 2001 re-enactment *now* opens up all the other permutations and layers embedded in the ostensibly simple act of re-enactment, serving as a reminder, for example, of the criminal and violent behaviour of the discredited South Yorkshire police force of the 1980s. These are events still manifestly being worked through; at the same time they are being acted out and remembered.

To pick up again the notion of distance as an integral component of many re-enactments: that closeness and detachment are facets of both acting out and working through resonates throughout Freud's essay: that the treatment of the patient who acts out instead of remembering a past trauma, for instance, involves working with symptomatic manifestations of an event the patient does not recall; that the analyst's attempts at unlocking this memory is met with resistance which must be overcome if it is to be worked through. The extreme resistance mounted against abreaction is, to return to the Kennedy example, a prominent feature of Stephen King's *11.22.63*, in which history fights back hard against being changed.

Distance, it might be tempting to presuppose, forms a barrier to working through, just as one might assume that when the re-enactment and the events coincide and become close (as for instance will occur with any future re-enactment of the events of Hillsborough as, post-2016 inquest, it will be understood to possess a direct as opposed to implied correlation to 'what really happened'). However, my penultimate example of Andrew Jarecki's series *The Jinx*, makes it clear that this is far too simplistic. Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing*,

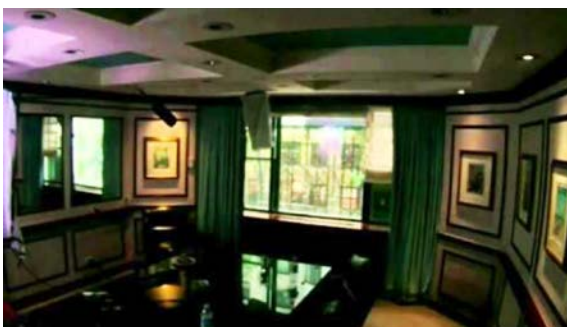
made before *The Jinx*, did more to change the perception of re-enactment in documentary than possibly any other recent film; but while the images that conclude it suggest that the trauma at the heart of the film's re-enactments has been worked through (Anwar Congo walking out of shot falsely resonates with closure), this does not chime with the multiple re-enactment themselves, for example Anwar gesturing that he can't go on with the gangster re-enactment in which he's taken the role of one of the torture victims reverberates instead with



One of *The Jinx*'s many glossy re-enactments



Robert Durst during his final interview in *The Jinx*



The final shot of *The Jinx*

incompleteness and irresolution, of history and ghosts not having been laid to rest. *The Jinx* ends on a similar internalised contradiction as its subject, property millionaire Robert Durst, offers an ambiguous and tantalisingly inconclusive ‘confession’ off camera but into a still ‘hot’ microphone to three, maybe more, murders. This explosive finale, played in the series against a wide shot image of the interview room being dismantled and its lights shut down, in turn make us as viewers ultimately reflect back on the series’ many glossy re-enactments as moments of fissure and trauma offering little comfort, conclusiveness and certainly no easy answers.

This is characteristic of Jarecki’s (Errol Morris-esque) style. Having failed to be convinced by the superficial disambiguation of the series’ ending, is it then possible to argue that distance – in the form of a highly stylised and ‘unrealistic’ re-enactment – can achieve greater credibility? Certainly, if this is the case, this is one of the many instances when the

synergies between patient and documentary re-enactment are harder to detect, for Freud’s preoccupation with getting his patients to the point of ‘working through’ involves engineering a coalescence between past and present, as a past trauma is finally remembered. Robert Durst, like Michael Peterson, remains self-detached, he talks to and about himself; maybe it’s into the breaks between act, enactment and re-enactment discernible throughout documentaries such as *The Act of Killing* and *The Jinx* that what ‘really happened’ begins to emerge.

Distance is an effective tool in re-enactment because sometimes closeness would be obscene, too traumatic; we as the viewers, the interviewees as the tellers wouldn’t be able to take it. As Claude Lanzmann argued when asked why he didn’t use archive in *Shoah*, a documentary that uses re-enactment in the form of site-specific testimony in place of archival material, the only archive that would have made any sense to him would have been the record of the deaths of those in the gas chambers – an unimaginable, unwatchable obscenity. By its very presence, re-enactment is built on the suggestion that events and memories remain unresolved; repetition is only part of the process.

I want to develop this notion of the potency of distance and detachment to how re-enactment functions in documentary by considering Clio Barnard’s extraordinary film, *The Arbor*, in which – as stated at the very start – actors lip synch the words of her interviewees as she retells the tragic story of playwright Andrea Dunbar. The disjuncture between memory and ‘what really happened’ is accentuated in *The Arbor*, not by the lip synching being bad, but by the lip synching ultimately signalling the interviewees’ lack of self-scrutiny. In Lorraine’s case (Dunbar’s eldest daughter) she remembers only the bad things about her mother, although the archive from an old 1980s documentary used at the very

end of the film, in which Andrea talks very affectionately about her close relationship to Lorraine as she cradles her in her arms, resonates with Lorraine's obdurate refusal to WORK THROUGH her childhood. But this is a documentary, a public re-enactment of Lorraine and Lisa's lives with their troubled mother, not therapy. Repetition is only part of the process: we as spectators are invited, through witnessing the re-enactments, the imperfections, the juxtapositions between different textual layers such as archive, words and dramatisations, to start the task of piecing the memories together – of working through what Lorraine is only able to repeat.

In a later essay, 'Inhibition, Symptom and Fear' (1926), Freud returned to ideas of repeated action and a desire to obliterate past events. 'The obliteration of past events' is in fact a translation of a German word, *Ungeschehenmachen*, whose literal meaning is to *render something un-happened*. But in describing the obliteration of a past event (in the case of the obsessional neurotic), Freud detects a duality of memory and forgetting: the act of forgetting the unwanted memory is an action that 'in effect cancels the first, as though it had never happened, whereas in reality *both* have happened' (Freud 1926: 187). Just as re-enactments can never supplant or be entirely replacements for the events they reconstruct – they exist, even as 'mere' repetitions, in tandem with the original events – so the event being rendered *un-happened* is not simply buried under its re-enactment but comes to exist in dynamic dialogue with it. As Freud goes on to observe the compulsion to repeat is common in obsessional neurosis 'the actual enactment of which then becomes the rallying point for a variety of conflicting purposes. Anything that did not happen in the way the person wanted it to happen is obliterated by being subjected to repetition in a *different way*' (188). The repetitive but non-identical re-enactments of *The Eternal Frame*, for instance, illustrate this.



Philippe Petit in *Man on Wire* walking between the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center

I want to bring together notions of rendering events un-happened and of working through and remembering a past event with reference to one final example: James Marsh's *Man on Wire* (2008). As a documentary *not* about 9/11, *Man on Wire* elegantly uses the recall and re-enactment of Philippe Petit's 1974 tightrope walk between the twin towers of the World Trade Center to both obliterate that past event and re-voke it through distance. The dialectics between different pasts and the film's present serve as potent

reminders that working through is an entirely different stage in the process to acting out, and that maybe the belief that working through is an inevitable result of effective re-enactment is constricting.

Throughout *Man on Wire* we are compelled to recognise an event that is not there, that has quite effectively, on a literal level, been rendered un-happened. And yet, the *un-happened* (namely 9/11) and the happening past and present (Petit's walk in archive, interview and dramatized re-enactment) co-exist simultaneously in a sort of *reverse uncanny*, as we find ourselves perpetually reminded of events that are not those the film is reliving.

Remembering obliquely is not the same as forgetting, which is where I began, but neither is it the same as memorialising. *Man on Wire* has helped to bring into focus a key issue for documentary re-enactment, namely the need for the re-enactment to function both as performative memory and as an acceptance that an event that is passed will always remain inaccessible. It can, however, be acted out or worked through in the present – replaced but not obliterated.

And back, finally, to the thorny issue of whether or how a re-enactment can work as a working through as well as acting out of a past event, as an act of understanding as well as remembering. A re-enactment is always a rupture, or series of ruptures; in its very form it problematizes the very notion of completeness and having worked something through to a neat conclusion. Its residual incompleteness – characterised as formal layers, as temporal levels – signals the fact that enactments are never completed actions, done with, but are perennially open to change, to modifications in light of and in relation to later events, arguments and discoveries. As his re-enactment of the Battle of Orgreave gets underway, Jeremy Deller confesses to Mike Figgis's documentary camera that he's no longer in control. This is potentially an apt metaphor for all re-enactments and fits alongside the haphazardness of the psychodynamic process: re-enactments are best characterised as studies in the randomness and fragility of memory and remembering – as relinquishing control in order to potentially pave the way to 'working through'.

Bibliography

Freud, Sigmund (1914). 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through' (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II), *The Complete Works Volume 12* (ed. James Strachey, London: Vintage Books, 2001).

— (1926). 'Inhibition, Symptom and Fear', *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings* (Penguin Freud Library, ed. John Reddick, 2003)

Rieff, David (2016). *In Praise of Forgetting: History, Memory and its Ironies*, New Haven: Yale.

Stella Bruzzi

is a professor at the Department of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick, UK, where her main interests in research are gender and identity in film, particularly masculinity; documentary film and television; fashion and costume; film, television and the law. Stella Bruzzi has become well known in the documentary world with her book "New Documentary: A Critical Introduction" (Routledge 2000/2006.)