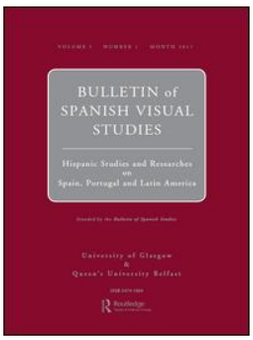

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Staging the Spanish Civil War: History and Re-enactment in Joris Ivens' *The Spanish Earth* (1937)

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1 Truth, Fiction and Documentary Film

Re-enactment in documentary film can be controversial: for its advocates, the fictionalized re-enactment of real events is a legitimate and necessary film technique; for its detractors, it leads to historical inauthenticity. 'Authenticity', especially when dealing with contentious events such as the Spanish Civil War, is a slippery concept, and documentary re-enactment is a mediated performance of the past that is culturally, contextually and politically inflected. Epistemological concepts such as authenticity, truth and objectivity—loaded terms—need to be defined, if only briefly. Authenticity in documentary gauges the accuracy of the representation of an historical event (i.e., if events are depicted as they actually occurred, then their representation is deemed 'authentic'). Needless to say the process of 'authenticating' is highly problematic since it often involves the promotion of one version of the event over others, the selection of some facts over others. Additionally, a film can construct a sense of authenticity by making the spectator feel as if they were there, producing a kind of (falsified) presence. Knowing the 'truth' about an event can be understood as our capacity to measure the veracity of an account independently of subjective opinion; but again, this objective measure of truth is wholly unattainable. Objectivity itself—a stance that is neutral *vis-à-vis* the truth it seeks—is compromised by relations of power (the power to authenticate an account, for instance), by perspectivism and by political ideology. It is reductive to insist on stark oppositions between objectivity and subjectivity, truth and falsehood, or fiction and documentary. These terms do not function as binary opposites, but relate in fluid and ever-changing ways, complicating the nature of documentary.

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The same can be said about historiography's relation to these terms, since, as Michel de Certeau, Hayden White and other historians have shown, history writing today often involves 'demystifying or showing the context-relative value of all inquiries into the past'.[1] Indeed, since the linguistic turn the traditional concept of historical objectivity—the belief that there was a real past that the historian could describe as that which had actually happened—has been replaced by understanding that the past can only be known through its textual (or filmic) representation, mediations that are subject to culture and ideology. In short, historiography does not have a privileged window into the past and is subject to narrative and imaginative processes. This article delves into the controversial issues surrounding re-enactment via a twofold approach: the first half examines re-enactment as a theoretical concept in documentary film and in the discipline of history in the context of the 1930s, and the second half studies how filmmaker Joris Ivens deployed re-enactment in *The Spanish Earth* (1937).[2]

The Spanish Earth, perhaps the best-known documentary film made during the Spanish Civil War, sparked controversy after its release over its use of re-enactment and its anti-fascist position. The *Washington Post* accused the film of being 'Loyalist propaganda', other sources criticized it for being unfriendly toward Italy and Germany, and in England, where parts of the film were censored, the *Observer* called it a 'scorching piece of propaganda'.[3] Directed by Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens (1898–1989), *The Spanish Earth* was a politically committed war docu-drama, a hybrid production that dramatically staged the Spanish Civil War by assembling filmed scenes of the fighting on the Madrid front and of life in the village of Fuentidueña de Tajo, alongside assorted newsreel and stock footage, and combining these with re-enactments, composed shots and other cinematic techniques aligned with fiction genres.[4] The criticisms levelled against the

1 Hayden White, quoted in Volodymyr Sklokin, 'It Is Not So Much a Paradigm Shift As a Total Breakdown … : A Conversation with Prof. Hayden White', *Histor!ans* (14 May 2012), n.p.; available online at <http://www.historians.in.ua/index.php/en/intervyu/258-it-is-not-so-much-a-paradigm-shift-as-a-total-breakdown-a-conversation-with-prof-hayden-white> (accessed 1 January 2017). See also Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. P., 1978).

2 *The Spanish Earth* (dir. Joris Ivens, 1937), narrated by Ernest Hemingway, distributed by Contemporary Historians Inc., New York. Original unedited version available online at <https://archive.org/details/TheSpanishEarth1937DirJorisIvensNarrErnestHemingwayOriginalUneditedVersion> (accessed 1 January 2017).

3 Alex Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War: Bearing Witness to the Spanish Civil War* (Iowa City: Univ. of Iowa Press, 2011), 130–32 (p. 131).

4 Another relevant documentary about the Civil War was Herbert Kline and Charles Korvin's *Heart of Spain* (1937), a film which met with less commercial success than *The Spanish Earth*. For an in-depth study of both films' reception history, see Sonia García López, '*Spain Is Us': la Guerra Civil española en el cine del 'Popular Front' (1936–1939)*, prólogo de Román Gubern (Valencia: Univ. de Valencia, 2013).

film focused on two points: its pro-Loyalist point of view and its use of fiction techniques, both closely linked to the film's use of re-enactment.

Undoubtedly, the central role played by re-enactment in *The Spanish Earth* was in tension with the emphasis Ivens placed on his understanding of authenticity (which he did not equate with objectivity). Far from detracting from the message of solidarity, this seeming contradiction between partisanship and truth energized the film and was consistent with Ivens' approach to committed documentary. The tension between the performativity of re-enactment and the immediacy of combat is captured by one of the film's emblematic moments, as the Republican troops march to Madrid's Jarama front, and Ernest Hemingway's voiceover narrates, 'men cannot act before the camera in the presence of death' (9:20). Despite its dramatic tone, Hemingway's assertion rings false, since the emotive force of Ivens' film hinges on a complex play between fiction and reality, acting and spontaneity, contingency and calculation. This back and forth movement between the factual and the fictional is evident in Hemingway's script, in the elaborate montage techniques, in the use of fictionalized scenes and in the introduction of characters (whom Ivens calls 'actors') with the intent to 'personalize' and represent reality from a markedly anti-fascist perspective.[5] As Thomas Waugh explains, *The Spanish Earth* was placed at the crossroads of two radical filmmaking traditions, the first, 'the "international solidarity" genre, in which militants […] used film to champion each new front of revolutionary armed struggle', and the second, the 'utopian genre in which the construction of each new revolutionary society, as it emerges, is celebrated and offered as inspiration'.[6]

The film was also entrenched within a Leftist militant *milieu*; *The Spanish Earth* was associated with the European and North American worker photography and film movements of the 1930s. The movement, of which Ivens was a principal figure (along with Robert Capa, David Seymour, Gerda Taro, Eli Lotar, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Paul Strand), promoted photography and film about and by the working class, foregrounding a proletarian outlook meant to counter bourgeois culture and promote class consciousness. Encouraged by the Third Communist International, photography and film were deployed against capitalism and fascism, and the camera was considered a weapon in the class

5 Ivens employs 'personalize' to describe his use of a character to provide narrative continuity, real people playing themselves, who were asked to re-enact events they had participated in (Joris Ivens, *The Camera and I* [New York: International Publishers, 1969], 212).

6 Thomas Waugh, ' "Men Cannot Act before the Camera in the Presence of Death": Joris Ivens's *The Spanish Earth*', in *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*, ed. Barry Keith Grant & Jeannette Sloniowski (Detroit: Wayne State U. P., 2014), 122–40 (p. 122).

struggle.[7] Besides Ivens, 'many of the participants in the worker photography experiment in Europe were to be found in Spain during [the Civil War]',[8] as were members from the American Workers Film and Photo League.[9] Despite the emphasis on documenting life as it happened, staging of photographs was commonplace in the context of the anti-fascist struggle. In fact, 1930s documentary photography was 'given the task of shaping society and the photographer granted the mandate to *create* a potential reality'.[10] Just as staging or posing was common practice for documentary photography (although not exempt of controversy or always openly admitted), re-enactment was accepted in documentary film within Ivens' militant circles.[11] Indeed, it was embraced, since as Christopher Robé has argued, 'the Spanish struggle had a decisive affect on […] reshaping Left documentary cinema into a more commercially friendly form',[12] through the deployment of strategies that brought it closer to fiction cinema, thereby making progressive content more digestible for mainstream audiences. This meant that 'the issue of plot, character, dramatic re-creations, and professional acting were thus no longer simply dismissed as products of bourgeois art but elements that needed to be reconsidered' so as to allow for audience identification with the characters.[13]

Re-enactment was preeminent in the 1920s and 1930s, prior to the development of other techniques and materials (such as lightweight cameras) that allowed greater immediacy and spontaneity, and, as Bill Nichols suggests, until it was 'slain by the "vérité boys" of the 1960s […] who proclaimed everything except what took place in front of the camera without rehearsal or prompting to be a fabrication, inauthentic'.[14] Prior to

7 Jorge Ribalta, 'Introduction', in *The Worker Photography Movement 1926–1939: Essays and Documents*, ed. Jorge Ribalta [exhibition catalogue] (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2011), 12–19 (p. 18).

8 'A Hard, Merciless Light: The Worker Photography Movement, 1926–1939' [exhibition flyer], Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 6 April–22 August 2011. For information about the exhibition, see <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/exhibitions/hard-merciless-light-worker-photography-movement-1926-1939> (accessed 4 October 2019).

9 Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War,* 74.

10 Jo Anna Isaak, *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter* (London: Routledge, 2002), 126; emphasis in the original.

11 Re-enactment, dating to the Lumières' first film, *La Sortie de l'usine* (*Workers Exiting the Factory*) (1895) reached its apogee with works such as Peter Watkins' *Culloden* (1964), and has returned in films such as Werner Herzog's *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (1997), Errol Morris' *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008), Josh Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012) and the provocative *Los rubios* (2003) by Albertina Carri, among others.

12 Christopher Robé, 'The Good Fight: The Spanish Civil War and U.S. Left Film Criticism', *Framework. The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 51:1 (2010), 79–107 (p. 80).

13 Robé, 'The Good Fight', 81.

14 Bill Nichols, 'Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject', *Critical Inquiry*, 35:1 (2008), 72–89 (p. 72).

that shift toward observational documentary, films such as Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) or *The March of Time* newsreels (1935–1951) used dramatic re-enactments extensively. Re-enactment began to again 'play a vital role' after the *cinema vérité* interlude (1960s and 1970s), with *Far from Poland* (1984) and the reflexive turn.[15]

In its melding of the real and the fictional *The Spanish Earth* could be seen as a precursor to the postmodern documentary, a genre that also draws on fiction techniques to recover the past, even as it declares such past inaccessible.[16] An important distinction has to be made, however, since *The Spanish Earth* is unlike the postmodern documentary in its overarching goal of political engagement. Re-enactment, for Ivens, was not meant to cast doubt on the event, but to enhance 'the sense of collective effort and common cause forged in the heat of social conflict'.[17] Ivens' use of fiction techniques poses provocative questions, such as: what did he achieve through historical re-enactment, character development and fictionalizing events? Was Ivens' use of re-enactment artificially causal, creating situations in which meaning and truth were forcibly conflated by his anti-fascist perspective? Did his film sacrifice a nuanced portrayal of the disorganized chaos of the Spanish Civil War?

To answer these questions, it is helpful to compare Ivens' dramatic re-enactments with analogous practices present at that time in the field of history. I am referring to an approach to the retelling of past events dubbed 'imaginative re-enactment' by the anti-positivist historian R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943). Collingwood's method is like Ivens' in that, without questioning the actuality of the past event, it nevertheless allowed for a great deal of latitude in fictionalizing the past. Imaginative re-enactment was a key component of Collingwood's methodology, which relied on the 'historical imagination' to reconstruct the past. During imaginative re-enactment Collingwood used primary source materials and objects to try to understand the actions and thoughts of the actors in past events, and, in an imaginative sense, to re-live them (through empathy). So, for Collingwood, 'historical inquiry require[d] a re-enactment of past thought on the part of the historian', in fact he understood re-enactment as the 'essence of history'.[18]

Although Collingwood was not alone in the 1930s in accepting the imagination as a historical tool, history and historiography have progressed

15 Nichols, 'Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject', 72.

16 Linda Williams, 'Mirrors Without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary', *Film Quarterly*, 26:3 (1993), 9–21 (p. 14).

17 Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana U. P., 2017 [1st ed. 2001]), 169.

18 See William H. Dray, 'Introduction', in R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of History and Other Writings in Philosophy of History*, ed., with an intro., by W. H. Dray & W. J. van der Dussen (New York: Oxford U. P., 1999), i–lxxxvii (p. lxiii).

beyond his particular understanding of the event. Indeed, history as a modern discipline was still young in Collingwood's time, merely dating to Ranke's development of objective source-based methods in the late nineteenth century (prior to that moment, objectivity was not at all a goal when writing about the past). In Collingwood's days, the discipline had not yet fully achieved the nuanced complexity that would arrive with the mid twentieth century. Nevertheless, there had long been concerns with the rigidity of approaches founded on 'objectivity', and historians were aware of the mediated and semi-constructed nature of historiography. A significant transformation of the discipline was underway, as it incorporated methodologies from other social sciences such as economics and anthropology. These disciplinary changes were evident with the founding of the *Annales* School in 1923 by Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre and, later, Fernand Braudel and others. *Annales* historians de-emphasized the importance of single historical events in favour of a long-term vision of history, critiqued the instrumentalization of the discipline for political ends, and opposed the creative or imaginative approach adopted by Collingwood and others. Meanwhile, in America, Arthur Lovejoy had been developing the subdiscipline of intellectual history, which placed great emphasis on subjectivity.

The nineteenth-century view of history as the unmediated reconstruction of the past was further destabilized during the 1970s and '80s by Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur and others, who, without necessarily raising postmodern doubts about the possibility to apprehend the 'truth', insisted that the historian acknowledge her enunciative position. Despite the eventual waning of postmodernism, these critiques triggered a more reflexive and self-critical practice of historiography that persists today. In the 1930s, however, enough historians still believed—at least partially—in the objectivity of facts. Comparing Collingwood's and Ivens' use of re-enactment taps into a 1930s *Zeitgeist*, reflecting these debates in history and documentary circles, and the changing attitudes toward a more flexible and subjective understanding of past events. While the two genres—historical writing and documentary film—are so distinct in terms of form and content, production and reception, it is precisely the intermedial nature of this juxtaposition that provides a multifaceted and deeper understanding of the practice of re-enactment. Interestingly, Ivens' project also entailed a kind of intermediality that joined disparate creative media such as film and (narrative) text as exemplified by his presence as director and Hemingway's as scriptwriter and narrator, and according to Guill, the Dutch director often pointed to 'the connections between cinematic and literary expression' and both men 'consistently and intentionally traversed literary and visual genres in an effort to capture reality'.[19]

19 Stacey Guill, ' "Now You Have Seen It": Ernest Hemingway, Joris Ivens, and *The Spanish Earth*', *The Hemingway Review*, 30:1 (2010), 51–68 (p. 57).

Drawing on an approach to retelling the past akin to Collingwood's 'imaginative re-enactment', Ivens' dramatic re-enactment sought to portray the Civil War accurately and to further the cause of the Spanish Republic by placing the spectator affectively in the struggle. The filmmaker was transparent about his own enunciative position, as an avowed anti-fascist committed to the Republican fight. Clearly, Ivens' portrayal of the war in Spain, the Spanish Republic and those fighting on its behalf, partly followed the guidelines established by the Communist International. In the 1930s, broad anti-fascist coalitions such as the Popular Front sprung up throughout Europe and the United States and were both sponsored and covertly controlled by the Comintern. The electoral triumph of the Frente Popular in 1936 in Spain was a direct result of these Comintern policies. As Michael Denning documents, part and parcel of the Popular Front in the USA was their 'politics of international solidarity' and 'the struggle to mobilize Americans to stand with the Spanish Republic'.[20]

I suggest that both historical and documentary re-enactment, as practised in the 1930s by historians and filmmakers, engaged in a kind of performance of history and current events that sought to place the reader or viewer simultaneously inside and outside of the event and sought to provide a subjective and politically nuanced understanding of historical phenomena. Their position, although historically and contextually determined, has parallels with our contemporary fluid understanding of veracity and objectivity.

The Spanish Earth was filmed with a sense of urgency, since by 1937 the war's progress was unfavourable to the Spanish Republic. Ivens felt that his film had to present a clear ideological stance, stated in the simple terms necessary to stir the lukewarm American and European public opinion to support Spain's legitimate government, whether by donating funds or volunteering to fight with the International Brigades. Ivens' re-enactment techniques were not only meant to document history but also to intervene in the course of the war. Documentary was a genre flexible enough to do both.

Flexible, since documentary film inhabits a shifting space between creative fiction and factual presentation. In its construction of meaning, it is like history, a discipline that, as White posits, has 'a mythic element […] by which the structures and processes depicted in its narratives are endowed with meanings of a specifically fictive kind'.[21] This flexibility to fictionalize comes at a cost. Despite their widespread use, documentary techniques such as re-enactment or personalization can cast doubts on a film's accuracy in depicting past events. *The Spanish Earth* is an ideal case to study the

20 Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London/New York: Verso, 2010), 11.

21 White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 58.

1930s' understanding of re-enactment in both documentary and history, and to ascertain how the technique impacted the film's goal: to act directly in the anti-fascist struggle.

John Grierson, a pioneer of the genre, defined documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality'.[22] Definitions are reductive, but in plain terms, documentaries are non-fiction films that may contain some fictive elements. They are built on primary sources and informed by a particular point of view. Film theorist Dirk Eitzen stipulates that, 'a neat definition of documentary on the basis of textual features or authorial intentions has proved very tricky'.[23] Nichols introduces factors in which historical developments, social context, and the reception of documentaries come into play, linking the genre to institutional networks, and with specific audience expectations. In his view, 'the subjective dynamics of social engagement in documentary revolve around our confrontation with a representation of the historical world'.[24]

Ivens did in fact seek to confront and mobilize audiences to support the Republic, facing them with the historical imperative of anti-fascism: 'our film had to *convince* […] of the righteousness of the democratic cause, and to *offer the truth* about the people's fight in Spain'.[25] The Dutch filmmaker was concerned with historical accuracy ('offer the truth'), but reinforced his version of events with creative touches marshalled to combat Fascism (to 'convince'). His documentary was fashioned as a contemporary history, not one which relied on the dry enunciation of facts and dates, but one which drew on *reportage* techniques, re-enactments and the scripting of participants, directed with a political agenda. Yet, Ivens wrestled with the use of techniques that pitted the fictionalized past *versus* the present. The first drafts of the script sought to re-enact Spain's recent history to foreground the causes that led to war, but in his memoirs, Ivens bemoans the difficulty of asking those fighting to win the war to re-enact historical events such as the departure of Alfonso XIII, or the declaration of the Republic.[26] He opted not to retell past history to that degree, striking a compromise between the complicated conditions for re-enactment and the need to construct a cogent story that supported his engaged idea of truth.

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22 John Grierson, 'The First Principles of Documentary', in *Grierson on Documentary*, ed. Forsyth Hardy (London: Faber & Faber, 1966 [1st ed. 1946]), 145–56 (p. 147).

23 Dirk Eitzen, 'When Is a Documentary? Documentary As a Mode of Reception', *Cinema Journal*, 35:1 (1995), 81–102 (p. 82).

24 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana U. P., 1991), 178.

25 Joris Ivens, 'Repeated and Organized Scenes in Documentary Film (1953)', in *Joris Ivens and the Documentary Context*, ed. Kees Bakker (Amsterdam: Amsterdam U. P., 1999), 261–73 (pp. 264–65; my emphasis).

26 Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War,* 82.

Ivens saw film not as a mimetic device to represent the world as it was, but as a method to expose submerged problems to articulate a process of social transformation and political action. Documentary's transformative role distinguished it from the discipline of history—conceptualized in the 1930s by mainstream historians as a science of detached observation that analysed the past. Documentary film, while borrowing strategies from history, looked not primarily to the past, but to the recent past's interplay with the present and the future. The creative interplay of temporalities was at once a strength and a weakness of the documentary form, and re-enactment could either bolster its political message or undermine its documentary status by sliding toward the fictional.

2 Relating Documentary to Collingwood's Theory of Re-enactment

What do we mean when we speak of re-enactment? The popular version of re-enactment denotes an activity in which participants physically recreate a historical event (such as a battle). A more 'technical' interpretation of re-enactment, as practised by historians (such as Collingwood in the 1930s, or, in a more sophisticated version, Ilga Clendimen, Iain McCalman, Stephen Gapps and Paul Pickering today), involves placing oneself mentally in the situation of the persons of the period in question, to understand their thoughts and actions. It is an intellectual activity used in conjunction with traditional archival methods, and which draws on performative, ethnographic, and generally creative methodologies.[27] For McCalman and Pickering, re-enactment demonstrates 'a yearning to experience history somatically and emotionally—to know what it felt like'.[28] Re-enactment, for Collingwood, was a partly subjective and intuitive approach that also relied on evidence to reconstruct the past. Unlike other types of historiography, it relied heavily on empathy and intuition, and sought to achieve an almost telepathic connection with individuals from the past; this degree of subjectivity is starkly different from more standard historiographical methods. In documentary film, re-enactment is the filmed recreation of an event, which did not itself take place before the cameras. Therefore, documentary and Collingwood's historical re-enactment share a goal, to re-create an event as accurately as possible in order to understand it.

Collingwood was a supporter of Spain's Republic, who, according to Fred Inglis, decried 'the moral failure of parliamentary Britain when the

27 Katherine Johnson, 'Performing Pasts for Present Purposes: Reenactment As Embodied, Performative History', in *History, Memory, Performance*, ed. David Dean, Yana Meerzon & Kathryn Prince (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 36–52 (p. 37).

28 Iain McCalman & Paul A. Pickering, 'From Realism to the Affective Turn: An Agenda', in *Historical Reenactment: From Realism to the Affective Turn*, ed. Iain McCalman & Paul A. Pickering (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1–17 (p. 6).

Falangistes [*sic*] set the Spanish Army against the Spanish Parliament'.[29] He was also an atypical historian in his embrace of the creative imagination, which went beyond narrativizing history. For Collingwood, man's actions are the expressions of his thoughts, and history is the stuff made from man's actions and so, in order to interpret, understand and shape history into an intelligible narrative, the historian's task is creatively to re-enact the thoughts of men so as to explain their actions. Collingwood believed in 'a living past, a past which, because it was thought and not mere natural event, can be re-enacted in the present and in that re-enactment known as past', so that history was 'an integral part of experience itself'.[30]

Collingwood's theory and methodology of historical re-enactment argued that the relevant questions regarding the past were: 1) how can we know what happened; 2) how can we know why it happened; and 3) what value does knowing what and why things happen have for us today? Collingwood's answers were equally applicable to historical and documentary re-enactment: 1) that we can know what happened through an imaginative re-construction of past events (through re-enactment); 2) that we can know why it happened by re-enacting past thoughts (including those of participants of events we did not witness); and 3) that the value of finding these things out is, quite simply, the accumulation of self-knowledge and a better understanding of both past and present.

From our contemporary perspective, Collingwood's theory has problematic aspects, including its universalist ap-proach to knowledge, its disregard for the cultural specificity of different historical periods, and its assumption that the historian can accurately re-enact the thoughts and actions of an Other regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender etc. Nevertheless, Collingwood's approach was transgressive in the 1930s, and shared concerns about authenticity and objectivity with documentary film, at a time when such questions were becoming central for both filmmakers and historians, but also literary and cultural critics.[31] Eitzen claims that, 'whether they are deemed, in the end, to be reliable or not—[documentaries] revolve around questions of trust. A documentary […] is susceptible to the question "Might it be lying?" '.[32] A focus on truth-value raised concerns for history and documentary film as to the validity of re-enactment, given its engagement with creative imagination and fictionalization. For its detractors, re-enactment was just acting for the

29 Fred Inglis, *History Man: The Life of R. G. Collingwood* (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 2009), 244.

30 Inglis, *History Man*, 195.

31 For example, the debate around Robert J. Flaherty's use of re-enactment in *Nanook of the North* (1922); in that film Flaherty had his Inuit subject 'perform' the tasks his forebears had practised, even though many, like spear fishing, had already disappeared.

32 Eitzen, 'When Is a Documentary?', 81.

camera and resulted in a loss of the spontaneity and 'truthfulness' that some thought to be at the core of documentary film, at the core of realism itself.

So, on the one hand we have historiography's inevitable narrative and 'emplotment' elements (as indicated by White), and on the other, the debates around realism and fictionalization that formed around documentary film in the 1930s. As Nichols observes, 'although documentary is often seen as a sober enterprise, it clearly contains elements that are removed from the usual forms of factual representation, most notably but not exclusively in reenactments'.[33] The multilateral Marxist debates around (socialist) realism and modernism—as well as the interplay between aesthetics and politics—taking place in the 1920s and '30s (as articulated by Benjamin, Bloch, Bredel, Lukács, Brecht, Adorno and others) had a direct effect on the form and content of politically committed documentary; debates which were taking place during the rise of fascism and its opposition by socialism. These well-known debates, many articulated in the German literary journal in-exile *Das Wort* and supported by the Comintern, sought to reframe realism not as the opposite of modernism and the *Avant-Garde*, but as imbricated forms, so that revolutionary culture combined the presence of realism within modernism, and *vice versa*. In documentary, reality and imagination, some argued, are elements in negotiation with each other, and do not reduce to an opposition of positivist hard fact (or 'truth') *versus* fiction and creativity. Speaking about Depression-era documentary in the US, for example, Jeff Allred argues that the sometimes non-realistic fragmentary style—montage—deployed by photographers and filmmakers ought to be read as 'plausible fictions of the real', given that, 'a commitment to sociological observation, with its technological handmaiden, the camera, is central to this aesthetic, but this capturing of bits of experience must be seen as only one moment within a larger process of framing, captioning, layout, and narrativization'.[34] At this historical juncture, explains Allred, documentary deployed 'the "document" as a trace of the real […] whose presence destabilizes the relationship between reality and representation', in a process that echoes Benjamin's point about the author as producer, who carefully assembles documents into a greater (often committed) narrative.[35] Thus Allred convincingly posits that documentary is not the opposite of the modernist *Avant-Garde*, but that these were converging forces, so that the way many documentaries of the period 'reference[d] reality as trace subverts their realism by foregrounding

33 Bill Nichols, *Speaking Truths with Film: Evidence, Ethics, Politics in Documentary* (Oakland: Univ. of California Press, 2016), 10.

34 Jeff Allred, *American Modernism and Depression Documentary* (New York/Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2010), 10.

35 Allred, *American Modernism and Depression Documentary*, 15.

contingencies of perception and representation'.[36] Or as the debates between Bloch, Lukács and others suggested, the role of art (including film and documentary) was the creative or artistic presentation of contradiction. To put it more succinctly, as Robé does, in Ivens' film realism and montage are held in (dialectical) tension with each other, proving that 'the adoption of more commercial conventions can nonetheless coincide with montage theory's emphasis upon thought and action'.[37]

Unconcerned by bourgeois positivist positions, Ivens practised what he believed to be judicious re-enactment. Those who opposed re-enactment, he argued, were 'just clinging to narrow classifications and definitions of film art [in their belief that] asking people to act belongs solely to the domain of the fiction film'.[38] The criteria Ivens applied to re-enactments are remarkably similar to Collingwood's: 1) past events were acted out as accurately as possible, but allowing for minor adjustments, substitutions or 'imaginative reconstruction' when something was not fully known; and 2) Ivens insisted on recapturing a certain mood or tone, by recreating past feelings or thoughts in his 'actors' prior to re-enactments—reminiscent of the Oxford historian's method of placing oneself in the mindset of a historical figure. For both men, judicious re-enactment followed specific steps or rules meant to establish a delicate balance between documented fact and extrapolated assumptions, between the materials of history and the vagaries of the fictive. Collingwood described his method as a sort of high wire act:

> The historian's picture of his subject […] appears as a web of imaginative construction stretched between certain fixed points provided by the statements of his authorities; and if these points are frequent enough and the threads spun from each to the next are constructed with due care, always by the *a priori* imagination and never by merely arbitrary fancy, the whole picture is constantly verified by appeal to these data, and runs little risk of losing touch with the reality which it represents.[39]

The historian, said Collingwood, interprets the past by constructing a careful (but often stretched, tense) narrative based on testimonial and archeological evidence, interpolating between 'known' facts and arriving at a 'reasonable' re-creation of what (possibly) happened—admittedly, there is much leeway both in the act of interpolating and in what one may consider as known or reasonable. Ivens follows a similar method, selecting which

36 Allred, *American Modernism and Depression Documentary*, 15.
37 Robé, 'The Good Fight', 84.
38 Ivens, 'Repeated and Organized Scenes in Documentary Film (1953)', 265.
39 Collingwood, *The Principles of History*, ed. Dray & van der Dussen, 242.

scenes should be re-enacted so they do not harm the film's integrity or truth-value. To express the truth, Ivens insisted, 'such scenes should be directly related to the central ideological theme, should be typical and characteristic of the situation, and should be acted convincingly, possibly by the same people at the same place of the original scene'.[40] As this quote shows, Ivens, an avowed anti-fascist, saw no necessary contradiction between truth and political commitment. He viewed the world as a clash of competing ideologies (i.e., socialism *versus* fascism) each with its claim on truth. This could seem paradoxical at first, since for Ivens commitment entailed using images as weapons to build a utopian future, but he also saw documentary as uncovering facts. However, it was in how those facts were interpreted and presented that his political commitment came into focus. And, as I mentioned, this apparent conflict had been 'resolved'—or at least negotiated—in contemporaneous Marxist debates surrounding questions of realism as theorized by the Frankfurt School, by critics such as Adorno, Lukács, Brecht, Bloch and Benjamin, among others. These intellectuals eventually concluded that only from a politically committed position could one have a clear and accurate perspective of the historical processes that were overtaking the twentieth century.

But the debates between objectivity and commitment still marked certain differences in the use of re-enactment between 1930s documentary and historiography. The belief by traditionally-inclined positivist historians was that historical re-enactment—situated at a safe temporal distance from the event it was meant to recreate—should not indulge a particular political perspective, since it represented a re-telling of the past in order to shed light on it from a neutral observer's position (the myth of the objective historian). That unattainable stance toward neutrality was still prevalent in much mainstream historiography in the early 1930s, prior to the rise of the *Annales* School or later, with New Historicism. The documentary, however—often filmed concurrently with the event it documents—was broadly understood to offer a particular perspective that determined which scenes were re-enacted and how, so as to reach an *a priori* conclusion. Documentary film in the 1930s, like worker photography, assumed a transformative role, aiming to register *and* change the *status quo*. As with the analogy of the imaginative web strung between factual points, the committed documentary selected those particular facets of the event that would, in turn, suggest the desired course of action.

I do not wish naïvely to suggest that the *real* difference between a historian's and documentary film's use of re-enactment depends on a highly debatable point, that is, on history's arguably 'neutral' stance as afforded by its distance from the event, but that *was* the perception by mainstream

40 Ivens, 'Repeated and Organized Scenes in Documentary Film (1953)', 266.

positivist historians in the 1930s. Naturally, history and historiography, as shown by Marxist historians such as Eric Hobsbawm, or by Hayden White, Michel de Certeau and others who associate the writing of history to the legitimization of power, are never innocent practices recording events without bias, but discursive modes aligned with empire building, colonial projects and economic interests. But such distinctions were less clear in 1930s mainstream historiography, and even Collingwood, so accepting of imaginative approaches, insisted on the historian's goal of approaching objectivity. Perhaps the most telling actual difference between documentary and historical re-enactment (beyond medium differences), lies in the *expectations* of the audience, as historiography still purports some degree of 'objectivity'—unless one is a postmodern historian—while documentary typically embraces its subjective perspective.

Ivens never concealed his goal to construct a narrative about the righteousness of the Republican cause and its link to socialist revolution. He strung his narrative web from facts chosen to serve this ideological motif/motive. 'Besides keeping a strong central theme during the making of a documentary film', he argued, 'you have to keep on the lookout for events that will illuminate that theme'.[41] Historians similarly reconstruct events so they conform to a particular narrative scheme, giving a historical episode a beginning, middle and end, and providing its 'actors' with a script of what they might have said or thought. This exercise becomes extreme in historical fiction, but so-called traditional historiography also fills in the blanks and fleshes out the figures it portrays. This narrativizing at times responds to the way reality itself suggests cause and effect. Events are not necessarily a chaotic or formless mass, indeed, natural and historical processes often have a structure that could be read as a narrative. In that case the historian—or the filmmaker—may be only recreating a set of events following that pre-established narrative structure. The problem is thus revealed as even more complex, since we are before a double narrativization, one ontological, the other representational. This added complexity compounds the distancing from the event.

Both documentary film and historical narratives rely on audience manipulation to achieve a desired effect. To tell a story with his given perspective, Ivens sought to influence the audience's emotions, to align them with

> […] the personal, social and political point of view of the film maker. This might be called emphatic cutting, pulling the spectator by his emotions from stage to stage of an idea's development, [… This] editing method

41 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 122.

> comes mostly from a wish to deepen the relation of real things—to show what is below the surface.[42]

However, according to Ivens, even when drawing on imaginative fictionalization, the documentary filmmaker must present his interpretation of the real world, not of an imaginary one; his task was to show the world as it existed and provide a path for its possible transformation, not to create fantasy worlds removed from external reality. Granted, it is difficult to draw a hard line between the reality Ivens wanted to show and the ideological underpinnings of its discourse, since politics pervaded everything he filmed. Nevertheless, Nichols believes, even today, in the persisting link between documentary and truth, proposing that documentarians are bound by a fundamental creed, 'a common, self-chosen mandate to represent the historical world rather than imaginary ones'.[43] By now we amply know the obvious, that the historical world is unavoidably impregnated by discourses (and thus ideology) and imaginary constructions. Even so, postmodern critic Linda Williams reassures that the link to truth, however contingent, is *constitutive* of the genre, and that although truth is never free from politics,

> […] some kinds of partial and contingent truths are nevertheless the always receding goal of documentary tradition. Instead of careening between idealistic faith in documentary truth and cynical recourse to fiction, we do better to define documentary *not as an essence of truth but as a set of strategies designed to choose from among a horizon of relative and contingent truths*.[44]

Inevitably, for both documentaries and historical accounts a primary question becomes that of perceived truth, as the viewer or reader asks: did this event actually occur as it is being represented? The answer hinges on an assumed pact between viewer/reader and filmmaker/historian, that the material is a re-presentation of a real event that *took place*, even if fictionalized or reframed by a particular perspective. Theorizing the historical and the documentary as enmeshed with subjective interpretation allows for a more flexible view of truth and an acceptance of overlapping categories (truth/falsehood, documentary/fiction, subjective/objective), a position which grants leeway to the re-enactment of the historical event, leading to a nuanced historical analysis.

In his critique of the (impossible and undesirable) separation between subjectivity and objectivity in documentary, Michael Renov explains that

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42 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 126–67.

43 Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 14.

44 Williams, 'Mirrors Without Memories', 14; my emphasis.

'given nonfiction's historical linkages to the scientific project, to observational methods and the protocols of journalistic reportage, it is not at all surprising that, within the community of documentary practitioners and critics, subjectivity has frequently been constructed as a kind of contamination, to be expected but minimized',[45] a situation reversed in the 1990s with the autobiographical and subjective turn. Through his engagement with a political point of view, Ivens' film ushered an earlier, proto-subjective turn.

3 *The Spanish Earth*: A Re-enactment Case Study

In 1937 a group of New York Leftist intellectuals who named themselves 'Contemporary Historians Inc.', led by Archibald MacLeish and John Dos Passos (and including Ernest Hemingway, Lillian Hellman, Dorothy Parker and Dashiell Hammet), set about producing a film to counter fascist propaganda about the developing civil conflict in Spain, and selected Ivens to direct it.[46] Regarding the centrality of propaganda in twentieth-century conflicts, Olivar believes that 'information and misinformation became a part of military tactics'.[47] This film was also meant to be a propaganda piece, although not in today's 'untruthful' sense of the word. Propaganda was, of course, the use of mass culture for political purposes. Fascist propaganda drew on mass spectacle, on large rallies and speeches, but also on film. A great deal of anti-fascist propaganda also relied on film, a medium defended by Benjamin for its capacity to create a critical consciousness, and vilified by Adorno and Horkheimer for its capacity for mass distraction. Propaganda, in the context of the 1930s, was thought either to reveal hidden truths and shock the viewer into awareness (Ivens' intent), or to manipulate the masses into docile acquiescence (fascism). Cécile Whiting writes that in the 1930s propaganda was used to 'label art that was perceived as committed to a specific political dogma [… and] polemicize for a particular political position'.[48] The term was seen as closer

45 Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2004), 174.

46 See Waugh, ' "Men Cannot Act before the Camera in the Presence of Death" ', 127. See also Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War*, 80. Hispano-Film-Produktion (an Hispano-German company affiliated with the Nazis) made several propaganda films meant to justify the rebellion, including Carl Junghans' *Die Geißel der Welt (Kampf in Spanien)*/*Scourge of the World: The Battle over Spain* (1937) or Joaquín Reig's *España heroica*/*Heroic Spain* (1938). See Josetxo Cerdán & Vicente Sánchez-Biosca, 'Newsreels, Documentary, Experimental Film, Shorts, and Animation', in *A Companion to Spanish Cinema*, ed. Jo Labanyi & Tatjana Pavlović (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 521–42 (pp. 522–25). See also Jordi Olivar, 'This Is Their Fight! Joris Ivens' *The Spanish Earth* and the Romantic Gaze', *Revista Forma*, 10 (2014), 59–72.

47 Olivar, 'This Is Their Fight!', 60.

48 Cecile Whiting, *Anti-Fascism in American Art* (New Haven: Yale U. P., 1989), 5.

to 'information', and workers' film movements in Europe and the United States understood documentary as educating and informing (even though it must also have artistic appeal) in the context of class struggle.[49] As propaganda, Ivens' film adopted an engaged, polemical stance and used rhetorical and stylistic devices against fascism, expanding the scale of the struggle from the particular (Spain) to the universal (Europe, the world). Propaganda was institutionalized and practised by many filmmakers, for example Luis Buñuel worked for the Republic's Ministry of Propaganda on the film *España 36* (1937).[50] Anti-fascist propaganda was viewed as a necessity, and could be combined with *avant-garde* film techniques (montage) to combat the totalizing narrative of fascism. Moreover Ivens' film integrated into its propaganda effort elements from socialist realism (arguably re-enactment), and *avant-garde* fragmentary approaches (montage). According to Nichols, '[i]ndividuals such as Buñuel, Vigo, Dziga Vertov, Richter, Delluc, and Joris Ivens moved readily between a stress on the effects of form itself, in keeping with the modernist tradition, and a stress of social impact, in keeping with a documentary impulse'.[51] The concept of propaganda began to shift after World War II and eventually the word acquired its contemporary connotation of outright deception. In this essay I refer to its earlier meaning, as Ivens understood it.[52]

The story of the making of this film is a fascinating one. Director Joris Ivens, cameraman John Ferno, editor Helen Van Dongen and their crew spent months working for free and in dangerous conditions to film *The Spanish Earth*.[53] Fuentidueña de Tajo, a small village on the contested Madrid-Valencia highway on the shores of the Tajo River was chosen for

49 For a detailed accounting of the involvement of the US Film and Photo League and other workers' movements in the promotion and funding of Left documentaries, see William Alexander, *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931 to 1942* (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1981).

50 Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War*, 81.

51 Bill Nichols, 'Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde', *Critical Inquiry*, 27:4 (2001), 580–610 (p. 592).

52 Although both sides favoured propaganda, unlike many fascist films, *The Spanish Earth* was not a straight political manifesto, but an accurate portrayal of the development of the war, albeit with a Leftist point of view. Ivens employed news footage and re-enactment responsibly unlike filmmakers who distorted the newsreel fragments they repurposed. Often the same footage was used by both sides with a different message, and, 'inflected though intellectual montage and subjected to agitprop voiceover, news became propaganda [in the contemporary sense of the word]' (Cerdán & Sánchez-Biosca, 'Newsreels, Documentary, Experimental Film, Shorts, and Animation', 522).

53 As Guill shows, Van Dongen did not go to Spain but remained in New York and took care of the editing, although she also worked diligently and voluntarily on the editing of raw footage. Other participants in the post-production included Irving Reis, Virgil Thomson and Marc Blitzstein. For more details see Guill, ' "Now You Have Seen It" ', 63–64.

symbolic reasons to stand in for the Republican struggle at large.[54] The community of Fuentidueña de Tajo had reclaimed the hunting grounds of absentee landowners for farming, and created an irrigation system to turn the dry Spanish soil into fertile ground. Scenes in the village provided the utopian, revolutionary imagery that served as counterpoint to the fighting in nearby Madrid. The themes of agrarian reform, of collective ownership and of social revolution were linked to the fight against fascism through the war effort. Olivar argues that from the start, Hemingway's narration 'impersonates the collective voice of the 1,500 villagers of Fuetidueña'.[55] In the cause and effect narrative devised by Ivens, the peasants were irrigating the land so they could help feed the Republican troops defending Madrid. That way, the connection between the agricultural labourers and the city's workers and intelligentsia was established as an organic and necessary one. This was a stark contrast with the top-down alignment of interests and rigid, authoritarian command structure in the Nationalist side. The battle scenes, showing fighting between Republican and Nationalist forces, were filmed by the crew in Madrid and at the Jarama front, or repurposed from newsreels.[56] The narrative of a soldier's life, Julián, a young man from the village, served as a plot device that provided cohesion to the film. Ivens' use of Julián sparked questions about the authenticity of re-enactment, since, as Vernon states, 'his role as an emblem instead of a person, risk[ed] the fictional'.[57] Ivens' use of this and other creative techniques prompted some critics, such as Olivar, to suggest (not without some justification) that his film 'dabbles in the realm of fiction'.[58]

The Spanish Earth exemplifies Ivens' use of fiction techniques to re-create events that he was unable to film directly, and to idealize certain aspects of the fight. For example, the plot line explores the (supposedly) perfect symbiosis between two interrelated struggles: the Loyalist army's front-line defence of the Republic and the villagers' activities, growing food to feed the troops and implementing land reform as part of an ongoing social revolution. This was wishful-thinking, since the Republican government, an uneasy coalition comprised of moderates, anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, Trotskyists, communists and others, used all means at its disposal to minimize the impact of collectivization attempts, as these undermined

54 See Waugh, ' "Men Cannot Act before the Camera in the Presence of Death" ', 126–27. Other spellings used by critics include Fuentedueña, Fuenteduenna, Fuenteduenja. I have chosen the one still in use in Fuentidueña de Tajo.

55 Olivar, 'This Is Their Fight!', 65.

56 See Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War*, 82–85. The battle for the Jarama, a key event in the greater battle for Madrid, took place in February 1937, as both sides fought to control roads and bridges near the Jarama river (a Tajo affluent).

57 Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War*, 120.

58 Olivar, 'This Is Their Fight!', 60.

Popular Front unity. Given Ivens' commitment to land reform, however, he chose to foreground that revolutionary component of the struggle.

Although the focus was on the collective nature of the fight, the director includes a character to personify and unify both narratives (the war and the socialist revolution) through an individual life. As Nichols and others have asserted, the use of characters and character types is key to the construction of narrative, which in turn serves to provide a structure of closure to the depicted events. For Nichols,

> […] through the introduction of a temporal axis of actions and events involving characters […] narrative imbues time with historical meaning [and] overcomes the fetishizing lure of spectacle and the factual conclusiveness of science. It restores the mystery and power of historical consciousness [and] introduces the moralizing perspective or social belief of an author.[59]

Julián, a young man from Fuentidueña de Tajo, appears in three critical scenes. First, we see him at the front, writing a letter to his parents in the village. This scene introduces an element of pathos meant to involve the audience affectively with the character's life and by extension, with the film's message. In the second scene, Julián arrives to Fuentidueña de Tajo on leave and his homecoming is momentous: his father is called from the fields, his mother meets him at the door and the family listens to his stories from the front. Although, as Waugh observes, this scene is 'synthetic' since it uses both family members and random villagers to create its emotive montage, it is seamlessly assembled through Van Dongen's meticulous editing. The third scene shows Julián drilling some village boys so one day they too may join the fight (made evident with a fade-in to adults drilling), stressing continuity and the collective nature of their struggle—no doubt, the emphasis placed on the collective seeks to include the spectator. In all three scenes re-enactment, montage and narrativization play key roles; although the scenes with Julián portrayed real events, Ivens explains that they were reconstructions necessary to establish narrative continuity:

> We re-enacted Julián's return on a truck to his village Fuentidueña. This re-enactment naturally developed into a whole real scene of Julián's homecoming, with three generations meeting him in front of their home, and Julián's little brother calling the father from the vine field. The shots in front of the house seemed a little stiff and awkward (how we wished we had been there the day before when Julián really came home!) so I made sure of having plenty of close-ups, just in case.[60]

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59 Nichols, 'Documentary Film', 589–91.

60 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 125.

Asking non-actors to play themselves—or at least, a version of themselves, a character that fits the film's narrative—was common in 1930s documentaries, so that 'spectators would not have read these scenes as fiction'.[61] Ivens never explicitly identifies which events are re-enacted, resulting in an unmarked transit between the 'authentic/real' and the recreated scenes. Nichols dubs thus type of re-enactment a 'realist dramatization', describing it as one in which 'the status of the scenes as reenactments, as well as drama, remains shrouded, the better to intensify their affective dimension'.[62] In a sense the distinction between real and recreated is moot, since in any case, once the film crew placed a camera in front of the subjects, there will be some degree of acting, all spontaneity lost; these debates would lead to the development of direct cinema and the observational style in the 1960s, with the equally problematic attempt to film unaware subjects. Nevertheless, documentary, in its fraught relationship to the real, inevitably entails a *mise-en-scène* and acting for the camera. The distinction was also unimportant to the Dutch filmmaker for other reasons, since he believed in re-enactment's potential to transform into a 'real' scene, in other words, for Ivens' re-enactment could bring forth a situation with similar pathos and presence as the 'original' scene. Although filming Julián's actual homecoming may have been preferable (the acting more natural), the (doubly) manufactured event served the film almost as well. It was a necessary scene to develop the 'soldier's return' plot line that was paramount in establishing the links between the village and the front that, in turn, reinforced the anti-fascist point of view. Ivens saw re-enactment not as a minor device on a par with other techniques, but as the film's driving mechanism, a kind of bridge between its realist and *avant-garde* modes.

The staged homecoming, theatrical and self-consciously acted, would never have occurred without the filmmaker's intervention. But many circumstances blunt its fictional edge according to Ivens: it re-enacts an event that happened recently (the day before its filming), with the same participants (family and villagers) and under a similar mood and set of mental attitudes (the joy of the homecoming). For Collingwood these were ideal conditions for historical re-enactment, conducive to a (relatively) accurate portrayal of past events—arguably better, given that historians rarely had access to the same participants and many years elapsed since the event. Under such seemingly favourable re-enactment conditions charges of inaccuracy against the film seem somewhat misplaced; in fact, the historian's task of re-enactment appears more daunting than the

61 Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War*, 121.

62 Bill Nichols, 'Documentary Reenactments: A Paradoxical Temporality That Is Not One', *Dok Revue*, 1:14 (28 April 2014), n.p.; available online at <http://www.dokrevue.cz/en/clanky/documentary-reenactments-a-paradoxical-temporality-that-is-not-one> (accessed 1 January 2017).

filmmaker's. Nevertheless, there was a prejudice against re-enactment in the 1930s that prevented its critics from accepting it as a credible tool for analysing current or past events. Even Ivens, despite his enthusiasm for the technique, feared that careless recreations of past events could enter 'dangerous grounds … closing in on the fiction film' thereby losing the faith of spectators.[63]

Brian Winston argues that suspicion toward re-enactment can be allayed if the documentary effect is situated within a nuanced spectrum of truth-value, beyond a rigid truth-false polarity, suggesting 'when we consider reconstruction as a documentary technique, we are actually simply dealing with situations which we can place towards one end of the filmmaking continuum'.[64] At one end of Winston's spectrum we find complete non-intervention, for instance, the filming of a natural disaster with an unmanned, stationary camera. At the other end we have total intervention, for example a fiction film such as *Star Wars*. In Winston's opinion, if a documentary 'uses actors and sets to re-enact situations otherwise unfilmable', it still retains 'its claim on documentary legitimacy', on account of the reliability of its script, based on factual evidence, memoirs, documents, corroborated by eyewitnesses and situated near (but not squarely on) the non-intervention end of the spectrum.[65] In *The Spanish Earth* these debates play out in the inherent contradiction of seeking to reinforce legitimacy through the avoidance of professional actors or built sets and by the limited stage instructions issued by Ivens (who directed the family to not look at the camera and to repeat what they had done the day before), even as such instructions already betrayed the artificiality of attempting to recreate lived experience. Tellingly, through re-enactment, films adhere 'to the details of their subjects' lives while indulging in cinematic liberties of scenic and characterological reconstruction'.[66]

The film's re-enacted sequences constitute a hybrid blend in which levels of fictionalization are intricately interwoven with selected factual events from life at the village and the front. This hybridity extends to the blurred distinction between actor and non-actor, individual and type, character and subject. Julián exists not only as an individual soldier but also as a type representing all Republican soldiers. The filmmaker's interest in following Julián stemmed from his desire to 'personalize' the narrative by providing a protagonist. Material reality, however, intruded into Ivens' plans, since Julián disappeared prematurely:

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63 Ivens quoted in Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War*, 121.

64 Brian Winston, ' "Honest, Straightforward Reenactment": The Staging of Reality', in *Joris Ivens and the Documentary Context*, ed. Bakker, 160–70 (p. 163).

65 Winston, ' "Honest, Straightforward Reenactment" ', 169.

66 Jonathan Kahana, 'Introduction: What Now? Presenting Reenactment', *Framework. The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 50:1–2 (2009), 46–60 (p. 48).

> […] we were thinking of an end to the film built around Julián in the trenches […] when we tried to find him later, he was completely lost—no one could tell us if he had been wounded or killed. With our chief 'actor' lost I had no idea how the film was to end.[67]

Despite his 'role', Ivens never considers Julián an actor in the strictest sense—as one who merely plays a part that is separate from his actual identity. Julián was, after all, a real-life combatant 'playing' himself whose fate was not make-believe, and for many like him, it held a tragic end. Seen in this light, there was a deeper and prescient truth in these re-enactments, which captured what the script called the 'true face' of war.[68]

4 Types of Re-enactment, Audience Manipulation and Ethics in *The Spanish Earth*

According to Waugh, in *The Spanish Earth* there are three distinct filming modes, each embodying a unique approach to re-enactment: the *mise-en-scène* mode, the 'spontaneous' mode and the newsreel mode. Each mode and type of re-enactment fulfils specific functions in the construction of a single, cohesive narrative. The first mode is the up-close, highly narrative and personal *mise-en-scène* of the scenes in Fuentidueña de Tajo depicting daily life, farm work, bread-making, and the re-enacted family reunion previously discussed. As Waugh explains, in these scenes, with 'their heavy tripod-based Debrie camera, Ivens and Ferno developed a kind of documentary "mise-en-scène", a collaborative shooting style staging "real" actors in "real" settings'.[69] During the village scenes the filmmaker relied on composed shots, crafted to enhance the nature of the collective effort or to cast the villagers in a positive light. He selected framing and camera angles, including low-angle medium close-ups that emphasized the heroic quality of the villagers and other shots that 'idealized their relationship to the Spanish earth'.[70] In order to represent a slice of village life, Ivens drew on his 'historic imagination', and his romantic, pre-conceived idea of what the Spanish villager or *campesino* was like, staging his shots to present their sense of duty, righteousness, commitment to hard work and self-sacrifice.

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67 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 125.

68 In Julián's case, however, the end was not tragic. Years later, on a trip to Fuentidueña de Tajo in the company of film historian Román Gubern, Ivens discovered that the Republican soldier had survived the war and lived in Madrid. See Román Gubern, *1936–1939. La guerra de España en la pantalla: de la propaganda a la historia* (Madrid: Filmoteca Española, 1986), 43. Of course, many others were less fortunate, including some featured in the film such as brigade commander Jesús Martínez de Aragón, who, according to the narrator, died while defending the University City (14:38).

69 Waugh, ' "Men Cannot Act before the Camera in the Presence of Death" ', 142–43.

70 Waugh, ' "Men Cannot Act before the Camera in the Presence of Death" ', 143.

We can observe a second filmic mode, according to Waugh, in the seemingly 'spontaneous' action shots capturing the fighting in Madrid's University City and in the village of Brihuega, as well as urban bombing raids near the capital. This style freely mixes actual fighting with staged scenes. Its loose, unstructured framing and mobile camera corresponds to a less stable filming environment in the front lines, where the crew was shot at and forced to keep moving. Embedded with the Communist 5th Regiment, the precarious filming conditions required light equipment and speed. Using two hand-held cameras to get closer to the fighting, Ivens captured the brutality of modern combat. These scenes are blurry, shaky, out of focus, but still manage to retain an artful quality, in some cases bordering on *avant-garde* stylistics. Noticeably unscripted, soldiers and civilians look straight at the camera, bewildered. More often they are too preoccupied with the fighting to acknowledge the presence of the filmmakers. It is then that the film captures the unaware gesture, for instance, of a woman wiping away a tear, standing amidst the rubble of her home. The spontaneity of the style adds an air of authenticity to scenes that are, nevertheless, still mediated. These battle scenes prompt the film's most memorable lines, 'men cannot act before the camera in the presence of death' (9:20) and 'this is the true face of men going into action' (8:30). However, despite these assertions and the powerful images, Hemingway's tone has an epic resonance that recalls the fictional, indeed, several lines from the script found their way into his 1940 novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.[71] And as Robé observes the film had at first been conceptualized 'in a fictional format', but after arriving in Spain and witnessing the combat, Ivens decided a documentary format was more appropriate.[72] Therefore, although in the 'spontaneous' mode there aren't any overt uses of re-enactment, the scenes are edited with measured precision and the voice over is carefully composed so as to 'follow an emotion-idea line'.[73]

To gauge Van Dongen's precise and purposeful editing, we need only consider one aerial bombardment sequence—shot in decidedly *avant-garde* Soviet montage vein—in which fourteen camera shots were meticulously arranged to intensify the spectator's experience of the arrack and its chaotic aftermath:

> […] tension before the bombing; the threat; the fright; the explosion; the destruction; the horror of not knowing what its all about; the running around of the women; the start of activity; searching for victims; the

71 Vernon, *Hemingway's Second War*, 150–51. Hemingway also wrote a fictionalized account about the experience of making the film in one of his short stories, 'Night Before Battle' (1939) (Guill, ' "Now You Have Seen It" ', 55–56).

72 Robé, 'The Good Fight', 84.

73 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 127.

> slight happiness of [finding a live] baby; then the horror of corpses and the accusation against the enemy.[74]

Beyond the horrifying images presented by the rhythmic montage, sound editing provides another type of re-enactment. The elaborate soundscape was studio assembled and based on real battle sounds from various sources, composed of voices, screams, airplane motors and explosions. 'We reinforced our image editing', the director declared, 'with an interesting sound dissolve in which the inhuman airplane sound dissolves into the human sounds of a chorus. There is even a short passage of total silence before the last airplane sound that switches to humanity over the shot of the unhurt baby'.[75] Pre-recorded sounds, typical in the 1930s when direct sound was difficult to attain outside of a studio, function as an aural re-enactment of the sounds of an actual bombardment. The sound montage underscores the cruelty of the enemy within the overall narrative, enhancing the spectator's experience, placing him/her in the battlefield.

The last mode identified by Waugh is a newsreel style, static-camera footage, exemplified by the scenes of the Republican Popular Army rally. Re-enactment is almost completely absent from this mode, which was partly assembled from previous news coverage—and therefore, highly processed and mediated. The footage was inserted by Ivens to provide a historic context to his story about Fuentidueña de Tajo, a back-drop illustrating the overall direction of the war and the revolution. It presents some of the main 'actors' at the national level. By including the speeches of well-known political leaders of the People's Army —icons such as Dolores Ibárruri (*La Pasionaria*), José Díaz and the Colonel (later General) Enrique Líster—Ivens creates a historical counterpoint to the more plainly fictive techniques used to re-enact Julián's life.

The paradox here is that the speakers' overblown rhetoric, their melodramatic gesticulation and the grandiose setting (the stage podium), all signal an event of political theatre more obsessively choreographed than Ivens' relatively discrete re-enactments. Nevertheless, these are two closely connected phenomena which again raise echoes of Benjamin's 'Work of Art' essay,[76] Ivens' politically inflected film (art as politics), and the theatrical rallies (politics as performance). Politics are often performative, as political 'actors' play with public 'perceptions' in order to shift public opinions and gain public trust. Granted, this understanding of the theatrical in politics does not negate the central problem for documentary authenticity: precisely because of the setting, an audience watching politicians on a stage might be

74 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 127.

75 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 127.

76 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1935), in *Illiminations*, ed., with an intro., by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 217–51.

more aware of a theatrical element (there is a mutual understanding and expectation that this will be part of the presentation), while documentary is at times naively assumed to contain a minimum of theatrical artifice. Undoubtedly, the newsreel mode displays a complex internal dynamic in the play of 'authenticity' *versus* 'theatricality'.

While the newsreel mode was effectively deployed during the dictatorship to foster Francoist positions (especially through the NO-DO [Noticieros y Documentales]), even then it sought a patina of objectivity through its official look, its static camera, the voice-over narration etc. This problematic link between style and authenticity points again to the ease with which spectators can be manipulated, as feared by Adorno. Likewise, in *The Spanish Earth*, the spectator is reassured by the sense of momentous history and the quality of 'reality' fabricated by the newsreel mode. Van Dongen added another element of politically inflected 'realism' (a socialist perspective) by editing the newsreel scenes with a compelling chronology and iconology: the applause, the rapid succession of leaders, the focus on the closed fist salute of the communists, the overlay of patriotic music.

Perhaps obviating the complexities of mediation, it would seem that Ivens believed that a re-enacted scene could surpass its constructedness and somehow become authentic, somehow transcending representation, since 'if such scenes are not artificially rendered, but emerge honestly out of the filmmaker's reality, life itself will capture such scenes and fill them in with new form and emotion'.[77] What Ivens seems to be gesturing toward is a kind of 'production of presence' out of representation, a mechanism coined by Hans U. Gumbrecht (after Alain Badiou), in which 'any form of communication implies such a production of presence, that any form of communication, through its material elements, will "touch" the bodies of the persons who are communicating in specific and varying ways'.[78] In similar fashion, Collingwood's theory of historical re-enactment sustained that history can bring a narrative into the present day by making the event relevant and subjective (perhaps also somehow tangible). For Collingwood, history actualizes the past, making it live again, so that

> […] every age must write history afresh. Everyone brings his own mind to the story of history, and approaches it from the point-of-view that is characteristic of himself and his generation […] the attempt to eliminate this 'subjective element' from history is insincere […] and always unsuccessful.[79]

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77 Ivens, 'Repeated and Organized Scenes in Documentary Film (1953)', 263.

78 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford: Stanford U. P., 2004), 16.

79 R. G. Collingwood, *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. William Debbins (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 138.

Ivens, who filmed actuality (or history-in-the-making) rather than past history, presents a subjective perspective grounded on current events. Thus we could say that re-enactment is a process through which a subjective, flexible and orchestrated interpretation of both recent and past events, may transform into an actual event, so that the staged becomes a kind of new (but highly mediated and temporally multilayered) reality.

In Ivens' documentary *Misère au Borinage* (*Misery in Borinage*) (1933) we see another instance of a re-enacted scene gaining 'authenticity'. The film documents the plight of striking miners in the region of Borinage (near Brussels). While filming Ivens missed a political demonstration when miners marched rallying behind a portrait of Karl Marx. A month later, Ivens staged a re-enactment with a handful of miners and extras. As they walked behind the portrait to simulate the previous event, townspeople spontaneously joined the now 'real', but different if also performative, march. Police arrived and legitimized the real dimension of the event through their hostility toward the marchers. 'The scene', recalls Ivens, 'developed into a real demonstration because of the preexisting tense political situation'.[80] So an 'authentic' demonstration grew out of the re-enactment, as filmmaking became history-making and the 'actors' (whether playing themselves or, more likely, a carefully staged version of themselves) became participants (political actors) through the presence of the camera. The 'iterative effort of going through the motions of reenacting' imbued the scene 'with the lived stuff of immediate and situated experience'.[81] The re-enactment also placed the demonstration within a history of union activism in the region, showing that the march was not a singular event, but part of an ongoing, collective struggle in which the filmmaker and crew also played a part. As the documentary negotiated its ambiguous relationship to the real, it also transformed that same reality, through a staged action that was performative, ritualistic, even theatrical, but with real life consequences.[82]

To avoid the danger of collapsing the performance of re-enactment with the event it depicts, Nichols insists re-enactment call attention to its own status as performance, lest the distinction between reality (presence) and representation (mediation) disappears:

> Viewers must [be able to] recognize a reenactment as a reenactment even if this recognition also dooms the reenactment to its status as a

80 Ivens, 'Repeated and Organized Scenes in Documentary Film (1953)', 262.

81 Nichols, 'Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject', 80.

82 This appeal to real life does not negate the undeniable ontological differences between reality (i.e., presence) and representation (its double), as any recreation can vary as to its accuracy, as order and narrative are imposed on perception. And epistemologically, there is always inevitable distance between the subject and object of filmmaking, between the producer of images and the images produced.

> fictionalized repetition of something that has already occurred. Unlike the contemporaneous representation of an event—the classic documentary image, where an indexical link between image and historical occurrence exists—the reenactment forfeits its indexical bond to the original event.[83]

Hence the inherent paradox in Ivens' desire to render re-enactment as authentic, since it is impossible 'to retrieve a lost object in its original form even as the very act of retrieval generates a new object and a new pleasure. The viewer experiences the uncanny sense of a repetition of what remains historically unique'.[84] By becoming aware of the performative nature of the re-enacted event, the audience also gains awareness of its own, often uncritical, position toward documentary images.

Ivens cautiously tested the limits of documentary re-enactment, even as he sought to maintain a pact of veracity with the audience. While remaining committed to an overall sense of 'truth' in his project, the Dutch filmmaker was not opposed to constructing the re-enacted scenes so they altered the details of what was still construed in the 1930s—by Objectivist documentarians, by traditional historians—as the 'original' event, founded on the belief that experience requires presence at a specific time and place, also tangible, with a real impact on human bodies. Although today we accept that the event cannot be apprehended without the mediating interference of our own subjectivity, our cultural conditioning and a myriad of other factors, in Ivens' time there remained a fetish toward an unattainable but still desirable unmediated original. His approach, however, blended past and present, defying temporality and the singularity of the event. Ivens deliberately intervened to alter the perception of the event, to 'improve' the past and to achieve an aesthetic result, stating

> […] the director interjects his directions and suggestions into the action to obtain higher technical and artistic qualities for the film. He tries in certain cases, to obtain more concentrated expressions and movements in the pictures that those incidental, arbitrary ones which he often gets during unprepared shooting.[85]

The value of Ivens' operation resided in its hybrid and self-reflexive juxtaposition of two systems, one supposedly subjective (re-enactment) and one arguably objective (the camera's capturing of life unawares) so that his work alternatively asserted and denied the authenticity of the images and exposed both filmic mediation and the indeterminacy of all texts.

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83 Nichols, 'Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject', 73–74.
84 Nichols, 'Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject', 74.
85 Ivens, 'Repeated and Organized Scenes in Documentary Film (1953)', 263.

The shifting ground of imaginative re-enactment troubled advocates for the observational documentary style—which supposedly captures what is before the camera without any intervention—just as its historical variant concerned Collingwood's critics in the 1930s. Although Collingwood's use of the imagination in historical reconstruction was based on rigorous requirements, namely 'the fact that historians must ground their conclusions in prior historical knowledge, even the requirement that they reach them in accordance with autonomous principles of interpretation, even the idea that they should elaborate a picture of the past in a mutually supportive relationship with what they regard as evidence',[86] these safeguards did not dispel the suspicion of the word 'imagination' held by some of his fellow historians. Doubts also emerged regarding how documentaries such as Ivens' with a politically motivated point of view could maintain autonomous principles of presentation and interpretation. However, was autonomy even desirable in the context of the anti-fascist struggles of the 1930s and '40s?

Far from a neutral observer, in *The Spanish Earth* Ivens casts himself in the role of a committed soldier for the Leftist cause, one who is present, albeit one who remains behind the camera; like other members of the 1930s worker photography movement he conceptualized the camera as a weapon in the revolutionary struggle. It is problematic for obvious reasons to equate militant intellectuals such as Ivens or Dos Passos with the mostly proletarian soldiers at the front (the Julianes, many of whom fought less out of conviction than for practical or geographically-determined reasons). But although we should not take Ivens too literally in this analogy of the filmmaker-soldier, his film was not only crafted to generate sympathy for the Loyalists, but more tangibly, it raised funds to send ambulances to Spain (it sent sixteen of them, as the film was well received in the US, even though it only achieved limited distribution).[87] In his memoirs the director wrote passionately about his commitment: 'It is such a wonderful day, you are going straight to the front where you will film a very hard fight […] you are in a people's war in which you have taken sides. There is no hesitation'.[88]

The filmmaker identified so closely with the 5th Regiment that he called it *his* unit. Others in the crew, Hemingway and Ferno included, were equally devoted, operating like a quasi-military unit under Ivens' command, especially when filming at the front:

> […] the documentary man must set himself a minimum and a maximum objective just like a military commander does with his troops in his

86 Collingwood, *The Principles of History*, ed. Dray & van der Dussen, 199–200.

87 For more detailed information on US reception to the film and the original objectives of the 'Contemporary Historians, Inc.', see Olivar, 'This Is Their Fight!', 63–64.

88 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 117.

> order for the attack. Like the commander, you have to know what you will risk to get to your objective, how many lives and how much material you want to risk. And during the battle […] every member of your unit has the same right as every man in a machine-gun crew to know where and when to go forward, who is on his flank.[89]

Stacey Guill asserts that Ivens realized that the movie 'was an extremely dangerous project requiring filming strategies that required battle tactics'.[90] At the same time, Ivens skirted the line between unquestioning loyalty to the Republic's information warfare effort and openly acknowledging his role as the presenter of a partial view of the war, of presenting *a* nuanced perspective (his, the Republican side's) rather than pretending to offer *the* perspective (some unattainable neutral account). Undoubtedly he felt he successfully managed this dilemma. It is useful to recall that, in accordance with his times, Ivens read the term 'propaganda' as 'information' intended to inspire action. Although Ivens' role recalls today's embedded forms of journalism, in some respects, Ivens and other so-called propagandists from the 1930s were more forthcoming about their political perspective than embedded journalists today, as the latter rarely declare their allegiances and willingness to promote a particular point of view.

The film is also permeated by a dialectic that oscillates between presenting documentary as unmediated reality and accepting its constructed and fictional nature, akin to its manoeuvering between realist and *avant-garde* aesthetics. There is another parallel tension between material that is subjective (but accurately reflects the struggle) and some that borders on the hyperbolic-fictional. As stated, internal conflicts in the Republican side are rarely depicted. Due to his close affiliation with the Loyalist cause and its Leftist ideals, Ivens either resolves these opposing tendencies by dismissing them as irrelevant once one is committed to an ideologically informed perspective, or attempts to mitigate them by visibly including them in the film. Thus, on multiple occasions *The Spanish Earth* self-reflexively displays its use of propaganda techniques. There are several scenes that display a large Republican propaganda truck (which might allegorically stand in for the film), a vehicle equipped with a long-range loudspeaker deployed as part of a psychological warfare strategy intended to encourage the enemy to abandon the fight (20:20). This truck is, like the news reporting and the film itself, part of an extensive effort to win the information war. By openly displaying propaganda as a tactic, Ivens asserts its legitimacy as a weapon that could provide hope, transform reality, and awaken spectators into action.

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89 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 120–21.

90 Guill, ' "Now You Have Seen It" ', 55.

At other times the propagandistic tendency is not openly acknowledged, but becomes enmeshed in the film's form itself. In one of the key scenes, a German Junkers plane is brought down by Republican anti-aircraft fire (39:51). This was an unusual event, since the German air force was technologically superior to Republican firepower, but Ivens chose to include the sequence precisely for its propaganda value and as documentary evidence of the intervention of supposedly neutral nations. To show only the bombardment of a city and the casualties stripped the viewer of hope, a necessary ingredient for continuing the battle and critical to elicit support from foreign audiences. Ivens rearranges the order of events and introduces the shooting of the Junkers after the montage of images from an aerial bombardment that took place elsewhere. By altering the sequence he creates a causal chain: first, he shows the murderous attack on innocent civilians, then, the aftermath, death and destruction, then, with Hemingway's voice-over the German Condor Legion is accused of the bombardment and finally, after the shooting of the Junkers, retribution is delivered. The filmmaker insisted that honesty and propaganda are not mutually exclusive,

> […] that is why we showed the enemy plane brought down, to stress that hope. Naturally, my idea was to help free Madrid again. I was honest about it. I wanted the audience to see my point. [… It was …] of course, what people call straight propaganda, when we show the German coming down.[91]

Again, note the mention of propaganda as a positive tool, as a shaping of information to inspire the audience to act, well within Ivens' vision of responsible filmmaking.

Unlike the historian, who examines the facts retrospectively, perhaps dispassionately, from the safety of his armchair, Ivens was personally involved in the struggle. He attempted to establish an affective and political connection with spectators, to transform their view of a remote conflict and place them in a more immediate, subjective perspective, in the fight. According to Julianne Burton, filmmakers that are committed to political transformation use techniques such as re-enactment to 'facilitate a more active relationship with the spectator' and to act 'as advocates and accusers, agitators and dissenters'.[92] In fact, Ivens' anti-fascist film did even more: it placed the spectator both within the struggle—committed to it on some

91 Joris Ivens, 'Documentary: Subjectivity and Montage' (1939), in *Joris Ivens and the Documentary Context*, ed. Bakker, 250–60 (p. 258).

92 Julianne Burton, 'Towards a History of Social Documentary in Latin America', in *The Social Documentary in Latin America*, ed. Julianne Burton (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 3–30 (pp. 26–27).

level—and at some analytical distance from it, with an outside perspective that allowed an intellectual appraisal of the conflict.

5 Re-enactment in the Balance

I began this article by exploring the relationship between documentary and historical re-enactment *vis-à-vis* the events they depict in an anti-fascist film from the 1930s. Although Ivens' filmmaking shares many characteristics with Collingwood's approach to historiography, such as the use of re-enactment itself, the issue of point of view seemed initially to separate their practices. Collingwood and other historians from the period viewed history as closer to a science based on evidence, rather than a practice intent on transforming reality like documentary film. However, as we saw on closer inspection, distinctions between these disciplines (history/historiography and documentary filmmaking) based on objectivity, authenticity or point of view blur and become a matter of degree. The point of bringing these two disciplines (and media) into contact was, precisely, to show that methodological affinities between history and documentary do not devalue history by labelling its narratives as fictional, but instead raise the status of documentary film as a reliable tool for analysis of current and past events. By comparing the uses of re-enactment in history and documentary at a time of profound change for both—the 1930s—we begin to see that any pretense of objectivity by either fails under scrutiny. It was after this historical juncture that, paradoxically, documentary shifts towards the purported 'objectivity' of the observational mode even as mainstream history begins to accept the role of subjectivity. Regardless of such historical shifts, the analysis of Ivens' and Collingwood's work in their respective fields and specific media shows that the subjectivity present in documentary filmmaking and historiography does not delegitimize the knowledge they impart about the recent and distant past. Although the interpretation of historical and actual evidence may vary based on personal subjective factors such as life experience, generational and cultural differences, an ethical link to past and present remains.

Reflections about the interplay of the historical and the fictional crystallize further when applied to the specific case of Ivens' film. *The Spanish Earth* was neither arbitrary nor capricious in its presentation of the war; it was, however, committed to a transformation of the reality it informed about, engaging not just the past, but the present and future. Critics of Ivens' film objected to the presence of an ideological bent in his re-enactment and editing techniques. However we have come to understand that ideology and technique, form and function are inseparable in any text or film, whether it is essentially historical or politically committed, or, in this case, a mixture of both. In *The Spanish Earth* this interplay between

the subjective and the objective, between the dispassionate observer and the committed filmmaker, drives the narration forward and energizes a film that counters 'images of victimization with images of resistance and revolution', articulating 'a world view that sees people as agents of history, not its casualties'.[93]

Ivens saw the role of the militant filmmaker as not only to inform but also to agitate the audience, to 'mobilize them to become active in connection with the problems shown in the film'.[94] Even as the fight in Spain was lost, *The Spanish Earth* stood as a prescient historical document, one that warned of the horrors to come as fascism spread throughout Europe. It remains, to this day, a relevant documentary, for both its role in keeping alive a pivotal moment in the history of Spain and in the history of documentary filmmaking itself, as a foundational model for a re-enactment-based, politically committed documentary style—a style which also goes beyond the political, into artful storytelling that challenges the divide between performance and reality.*

93 Thomas Waugh, *'Show Us Life': Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 123.

94 Ivens, *The Camera and I*, 137.

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