

The use of the audiovisual archives in audiovisual works: ethical issues in the compilation documentaries

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As James Peterson puts it, the compilation documentary is a postmodern film (i.e. a very contemporary form of art) as it seems to dramatise one of the central tenets of poststructuralism/postmodernism: that the content of a representation is not reality but always another representation (in Bertens, H. / Fokkema, D. (eds.) *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice*, John Benjamins, 1997, pp. 145-146). The compilation film, usually a documentary is constructed from fragments of archival footage and sounds. It is not a recent development and in its pure form it contains only preexisting historical footage. However, the hybrid form of mixing archival footage with newly photographed material is far more common. Within this context, several issues arise: the "representation of representations" addresses questions of all three themes of a regular documentary its status as aesthetic artefact, the documentary veracity and the embedding of documentary making within different political, economic and social orders (Corner, J. *The Art of Record*, Manchester University press, 1996, p.11). However, what is at stake in the compilation documentary is precisely the conflict between the journalistic and scientific ethical issues of objectivity, balance and fairness of the archival material versus the tradition of the compilation documentary as an art, an expressive practice where issues like impact, imagination, fantasy and beauty apply. Although "we do not usually worry too much about ethics with art" (Nichols, B. in Curran Bernard, S. / Rabin, K. *Archival Storytelling*, Focal press, 2009), the compilation documentary genre that incorporates whole pieces of archival material unavoidably involves in questions like who controls history, what *fake* is, who has produced the original material and under what purposes, what the boundaries of editing are, what the limits of using music and other non-diegetic elements over the archival footage are etc.

The case study of this paper is the documentary film "In exchange of five apartments and one shop" produced by Benaki Museum in 2004-2005 and directed by the author. It is a compilation film and, at the same time, a documentary essay on the architectural evolution of Athens and the society that created it, as shown in the Greek fiction films (from the oldest Greek fiction film of 1924 to these of 2004). Consequently, it almost entirely consists of archival footage taken from the major features of Greek cinema. In total, 530 images (shots) of Athenian living and architecture were taken from 184 different films (selected among 650 different Greek features related to the subject).