

## Abstract

This thesis is submitted alongside the film *Forecast* (2015) to be a submission for the PhD project Cantre'r Gwaelod and Tales of Inundation. The project aims in its entirety to propose film as a mode of enquiry regarding ways in which the dangers of climate change, specifically anthropogenic climate change, can be addressed in a documentary film. Using the possible allegorical power of the Welsh flood myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod, the original aim of the project was to create a documentary film which used this myth as a way to illustrate the effects of a changing climate. During the research, however, it became apparent that myth as a concept presented several points of interest which overall problematised its use in this way. Myth itself could be seen to be present in mass communication because some simplification of complex issues needs to take place in order to make this type of communication possible. Furthermore, it also became clear that the issue of climate change had to some extent been mythologised through a similar process of simplification.

This project looks closely at the ways in which this tendency towards mythology in communication, especially regarding complex issues such as climate change, might, in fact hinder the communication of themes and ideas and damage the efficacy as a result. It therefore became obvious that the purpose of this project was to develop a methodology which attempted to communicate through a documentary film in a way that eschewed mythology as much as

possible. This written thesis looks at the ways in which this was achieved, both theoretically and practically and details extant work that serves to illustrate this.

## Introduction

This thesis is to be submitted alongside the film *Forecast* as the total submission for the PhD project *Cantre'r Gwaelod and Tales of Inundation*. The PhD project is comprised of a written thesis and a feature documentary film. Any additional material generated during the project, or material that specifically relates to the project, even though it may have been generated *a priori* is detailed in the appendices at the end of this thesis. Within the appendices, some material, or links to this material, that might be described as test pieces, assembly edits or experiments, have been included as well. I have included links to this material in order for the examiners to fully understand how the project developed over the research period from a practice point of view.

The project is a KESS funded project, with participation from Snowdonia National Park and the Centre for Alternative Technology. As well as being a practice based research project, the aim of KESS funding is to produce a piece of work which can be classed as 'knowledge transfer'.<sup>1</sup> In the abstract and accompanying DVD, the film *Rhydd Ddu Restoration Project* is included. This film demonstrates how knowledge transfer might work with regards to a film project. The film is a short overview of a project conducted in Snowdonia National Park, by the park authority, that aimed to return an area of peat land to its original state. While this short film does not directly relate to the final PhD film, the skills used: night time-lapse, interviews and outdoor shooting do relate technically. It is an example of how the final project and equipment could be transferred

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<sup>1</sup> Aberystwyth University. (2015) *Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/rbi/business/services/initiatives/kess/> (Accessed: 9 August).

from the context of research to commercial use. It also allowed a certain amount of testing of equipment and, in particular night time-lapse, to test filmic techniques that would later be employed in the final project. The final project itself takes the form of a feature length documentary entitled *Forecast*. Later in this introduction I will go on to detail some of the aims of the project and further detail the knowledge transfer, as far as the partnership between Snowdonia National Park and the Centre for Alternative Technology might be, but at this stage I will present a summary of the project. This explanation, which includes the research questions the project attempts to address, is a useful place to begin.

Cantre'r Gwaelod and Tales of Inundation' will be a case study that proposes filmmaking as a mode of enquiry and as a tangible research output. The project will culminate in the creation of a documentary film which will ask questions, from the standpoint of furthering our understanding of the effects of climate change, about the enduring myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod (often translated as 'The Lowland Hundred'). The project will employ the medium of film to encourage public engagement with stories surrounding this specific mythical sunken kingdom, but also, importantly, with related flood myths and narratives. Above all, this project will seek to answer questions such as:

- How do human beings relate to coastal areas and changes in sea level specifically in terms of the ways in which these events are remembered and mythologised?
- What, ultimately, is learned from inundation narratives?

- How far can common themes and anxieties be detected in inundation narratives which spring from different periods of history and from different cultures?
- How important might the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod be in developing a cultural geography and imaginary of West Wales?
- How might this myth be utilized in order to further develop West Wales as an important centre of initiatives that seek to promote sustainable living?
- How might the medium of film document 'loss' or 'absence'?
- How might the medium of film document concerns about climate change and promote sustainable living?

While these questions formed a major part of the original proposal for the project and were certainly visited throughout the period of research – informing the film, preparations for the film and a wider methodological approach to this and subsequent work – it very quickly became clear to me that as useful as these initial research questions were in shaping the project's ideas and methods, if the project was to be considered purely through the optic of a documentary film, a far more valid, and simplified, research question must emerge. While the initial research questions certainly dealt with the variety of themes that transpired during the research (and I'm happy to assert that they were individually answered in the final film and also in smaller preparatory practice) they did not necessarily cohere in the way I initially expected my practical submission should. This meant that in seeing all of the questions combined in a film, they needed to have a singular and practical purpose, and it is for this reason that another, central question evolved (in agreement with my supervisors). The question that eventually became central was,

'how to make an effective film about climate change?'. Throughout the project I considered my initial research questions as a springboard towards this far more practical question. In what way can I make a film that will engage audiences in thought about their own position on a future threatened by depleting finite resources and a changing climate, that was more than likely going to result in increasingly volatile weather, mass migration and scarce resources (among other things)?

An effective film in this context would be a film that enabled some discussion or debate, provoked thought, perhaps at a time when, to many, anthropogenic climate change was a foregone conclusion and to others was simply not a thought at all. An effective documentary about climate change would be accessible, in so far as it would mirror sections of a future audience that may not hold similar views. Effectiveness here would not focus its attention on experts, but harvest opinion from those who might be termed 'non-experts'. Approached in this way I hoped the film might have *reach* and be more likely to be watched by those who may not normally engage at all with this topic. In essence, an effective film about climate change, must be one that in using – however loosely or not – the conventions of the documentary film will stand some chance of being widely seen and when seen would be likely to elicit the kind of thinking and discussion that would be able to provoke lifestyle change and a general awareness of the central issue as far as this thesis and film are concerned.

The project *Cantre'r Gwaelod and Tales of Inundation* frames climate change against the backdrop of a landscape that is now absent. Cantre'r Gwaelod (in English known as The Lowland Hundred) is essentially the Welsh version of the Atlantis tale and shares links with other flood myths, the most profoundly similar being the legend of Ker Is off the coast of Brittany at The Bay of Duarnenez.<sup>2</sup> Cantre'r Gwaelod was said to be part of the Kingdom of Merionnydd and stretched around 20 miles out into the Cardigan Bay, roughly between the Islands of Ramsey in Pembrokeshire and Bardsey off the Llyn Peninsular. Gwyddno Garanhir (said to be born circa 520 AD) ruled this fertile land, but while this land was said to be four times more valuable than other lands, it relied on sophisticated sea defences to keep the sea at bay (which may resonate with some of the work being carried out along this stretch of coast today. The film (see Appendix 1) *British Sea Defence* was a film I made before starting this PhD project which relates strongly to the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod and therefore the final PhD film. This particular film was basically a response to the very sudden construction of a sea defence system in the coastal town of Borth, just outside Aberystwyth in 2010. As it transpired many of these shots, or at least the position the shots were taken from, were repeated in my final PhD film when I arrived in Borth. Again, the efficacy of the time-lapse technique is here tested.<sup>3</sup> The defences attempt to mitigate or 'future proof' precisely the type of event depicted in the Cantre'r Gwaelod myth.

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<sup>2</sup> The Baie De Dournenez is on the west coast of France. It is the subject of Admiralty chart 2349

<sup>3</sup> Borth sea defence is an ongoing scheme dating back to 2010. The objective is to provide this small seaside town with a 25 year defence against flooding.

It is said that one fateful day a fierce storm blew in from the south-west (not an uncommon phenomena in this area), combining with an exceptional high spring tide. The keeper of the sluice gate, a man called Seithennin, who was known for his intemperate ways, left the gate open during a night of reverie in nearby Aberystwyth. Because of his neglect, the land was flooded and the population, those who weren't drowned, were forced to move to much less rich pickings.

There are obvious parallels that might be drawn between the complex sea defences of this mythical kingdom and the physical reality that coastal areas, not just in Britain but Worldwide, increasingly have to construct complex sea defence structures to prevent flooding. These include obvious examples such as the Thames Barrier, London, or the Hafen City development in Hamburg, Germany.<sup>4</sup>

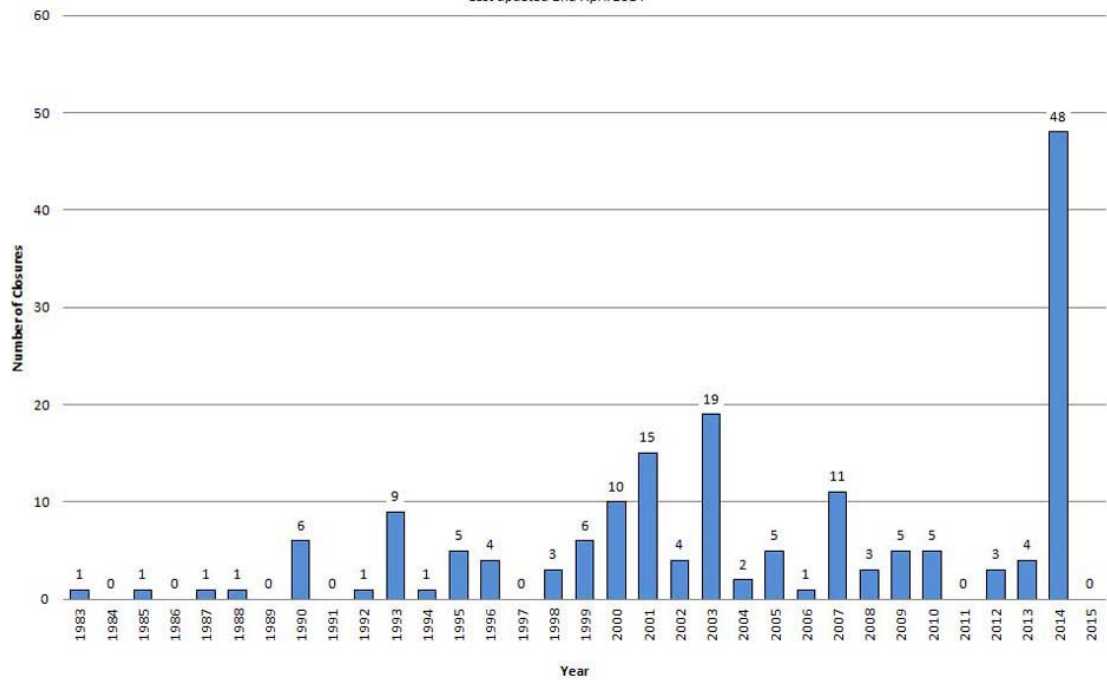
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<sup>4</sup> Hafen City is a city development which has in-built future proof characteristics with regard to sea level rise. Greenpeace has their headquarters there. HafenCity Hamburg. (2015) *The HafenCity Project* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.hafencity.com/en/overview/the-hafencity-project.html> (Accessed: 9 August).



## Thames Barrier Flood Defence Closures by Year

Last updated 2nd April 2014



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If seen as modern versions of the dyke systems talked about in the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod, the flood defences detailed above demonstrate respectively a very real awareness of the risks presented by a changing climate and consequent increases in extreme weather events – including flooding. The graph above demonstrates – albeit circumstantially – that the Thames Barrier, here used as one example which might stand for other similar flood defences, is being increasingly relied on to provide the defence for which it was constructed.

The Thames Estuary 2100 plan sets out how flood risk will be managed in the Thames estuary to the end of the century and beyond. It also recommends what actions the Environment Agency and others will need to take in the short term (next 25 years), medium term (the following 15 years) and long term (to the end of the century). The plan is based on current guidance on climate change, but is adaptable to changes in predictions for sea-level rise and climate change over the century.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Gov.UK. (2015) *The Thames Barrier* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/the-thames-barrier> (Accessed 15 January)

<sup>6</sup> Gov.UK. (2015) *The Future of the Thames Barrier* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/the-thames-barrier#the-future-of-the-thames-barrier> (Accessed: 15 January)

In the case of Hafen City in Hamburg, this is an example of a city development that has in-built into its design, 'future proofing', which presupposes that the median sea level is almost certainly set to rise.

Hamburg has used a different strategy – also driven by the location of its cargo port inside the city limits. It will allow flooding, but designed a major new part of the city to be resilient to high water, with water-proof parking garages, a network of emergency pedestrian walkways 20 feet above the street, and no residential units at ground level. Even the parks in this new Harbor City district are designed to withstand battering by waves and storm surge, either by floating as the waters rise, or by incorporating lots of hard surfaces that only need to be washed off when the waters recede.<sup>7</sup>

The examples given above show that there are a number of different approaches to devising projects that mitigate the impact of climate change. Dr Hill refers to the two main approaches to climate change mitigation as 'protect' and 'adapt', but regardless of what is being done, the mere fact that it *is* being done must surely leave serious questions about the future. However the dyke systems of Cantre'r Gwaelod might fit into the activities of today, whether we would consider them 'protection' or 'adaption' (or even perhaps a managed landscape), there is no doubt that obvious parallels can be drawn between the myth and some of the modern day activities that occur as a direct result of a changing climate.

Certainly these physical similarities between myth and current day reality are interesting, but for the purposes of this project – a documentary film – my interest is much more focused on the

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<sup>7</sup> Dr Kristina Hill is the Chair of the Landscape Architecture Department at the University of Virginia. Asla. (2015) *Interview with Kristina Hill on the Effects of Climate Change* [Online]. Available at: <http://dir.asla.org/2010/08/24/interview-with-kristina-hill-on-the-effects-of-climate-change/> (Accessed: 15 January)

way in which the myth might be communicated, or perhaps utilized, and what questions might be subsequently elicited from them. The central theme of inundation is repeated in both the myth and reality, while the inhabitants of Cantre'r Gwaelod protected themselves from the rising sea, so we now anxiously *protect* our coastlines and estuaries or *adapt* our cities in preparation for flood. It is these anxieties around climate change and sea level rise that are of particular interest in this project, given that a number of the research questions interrogate the ways in which the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod might be utilized as a thematic springboard for such a discussion. This film and accompanying written thesis will create links between the myth and the ways in which this myth relates to current concerns, but also how myth itself – the idea of myths as a concept, in and of themselves – is part of the business of communication, both positively and negatively.

I will concentrate in more detail on the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod and associated myths in the next chapter and go on to look at the use of myth as a language of warning and how myths are often cautionary tales. I will then go on to concentrate on how myth might be seen as a reduction of a complex tale, a *re*presentation of fact which endures precisely because of this simplification. It is in this area of investigation that I see a significant tension; myth as a communication tool on the one hand is useful as it endures, but conversely endures as a simplified version of what it once was, or what narrative it originally developed from. It is only when the significance of climate change and consequent impacts are viewed through a mythological optic that this tension presents its import.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported in a press release dated 27/09/13, that, 'It is *extremely likely* that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century. The evidence for this has grown, thanks to more and better observations, an improved understanding of the climate system response and improved climate models.'<sup>8</sup>

In their own rating system they explain that the words 'extremely likely' translates in percentage terms as 95-100%. Given that the statement above refers to climate change being based on 'human influence' – therefore suggesting that there is something we can do about it – there seems then, further links between the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod and the actions taken today to mitigate climate change. In both cases the destruction spoken about is a product of human actions and in creating a narrative that in some way *warns* we may be able to bring about behavioural change. Naturally, if the causes of a changing climate are not down to the activity of humans, it could then be argued that there would be little we could do about it and, further more, little point in creating the stories that might elicit change. But there is also a very convincing argument that whether or not climate change is a result of anthropogenic activity, human beings might well consider behavioural changes in line with an increased desire to live more sustainably in light of dwindling resources and increasing population. The issue is of course complex, and this is reflected in many decisions made during the filmmaking process – which I will explain in full in chapter three of this thesis.

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<sup>8</sup> IPCC. (2015) *News and Events* [Online]. Available at: [http://www.ipcc.ch/news\\_and\\_events/docs/ar5/press\\_release\\_ar5\\_wgi\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/news_and_events/docs/ar5/press_release_ar5_wgi_en.pdf) (Accessed 16 January) my italics

*Cantre'r Gwaelod and Tales of Inundation* is a practice as research PhD project. Broadly, the project can be split into two distinct components. The first - standing for 60% of the overall project, is the film. The film – which, for the purpose of this introduction will be considered a documentary feature – was filmed over the entire month of May 2012. Subsequent additions in the form of time lapses and map/chart animations were added, but the majority of the content was filmed on a walk along the boundary of the mythical site of the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod. The written thesis, which accounts for the remaining 40% of the project value, exists to support the film and clarify what the film offers in research terms. This written thesis is comprised of three chapters, with an introduction and conclusion. The overall word count for this thesis is approximately 40,000 words.

The project was funded by the KESS scholarship system with support, financially and 'in kind' by Snowdonia National Park and the Centre for Alternative Technology. The project, as well as being a PhD project, is designed to research documentary theory and practice as it relates to communication through film on the subject of climate change. It also encouraged the forging of working relationships between the candidate and the supporting organisations. As detailed in the appendix of supporting film work, several short films were created for Snowdonia National Park, one of which was a corporate video detailing work the park had done at Rhydd Ddu peat bog restoration project (see appendix 5) – in conjunction with students from Bangor University and local volunteers. This cooperation was useful in developing skills relevant to the overall project, as well as demonstrating how useful KESS projects can be in promoting dialogues

between academic institutions and supporting organisations. Across all the academic disciplines, KESS have been developing projects that seek firstly to facilitate research, but also to develop strong links between academic institutions and host organisations. While this is perhaps a more straightforward relationship in certain areas where research outcomes are likely to be predictable, an example being scientific research, the collaboration between artists and organisations has been extremely useful in the development of communication between these organisations and the general public.

During the project I made several short films in order to interrogate some of the theory I was interested in. An example of this is three short films using head cameras, which tried to visually illustrate the cultural geographer David Seamon's theory around pre-conscious actions which he terms Body Ballets. (Seamon: 1979) (See appendix 3c) This proved useful in testing the technology of the GoPro head camera before embarking on the walk during which the majority of the film was shot. Other films included in this appendix have been screened at exhibitions or shown as part of the monitoring process, they all demonstrate the research process through practice and should be considered alongside the final documentary film as integral to the project. These research films are all listed in the appendix and available online as well as on the DVD attached to this thesis.

The written thesis is divided into three chapters, with an introduction and conclusion. The first chapter is concerned primarily with myth, not only the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod, but ways in which myths may be seen to repeat. Drawing on the seminal research into myth by Claude Levi-

Strauss, this chapter investigates to what extent myth can be understood as a language. This chapter considers the importance of a structural analysis of myth and communication in general finally leading to Roland Barthes interpretation of modern institutions and events as myth. This chapter concludes by evaluating the extent to which filmmaking and the structures of film and broadcasting seem to ape the suggestions by Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes; that there is a purpose to myth and this can be seen to be present in the construction of films.

Chapter three considers existing films and their definitions that have been made with similar methodologies or deal with similar subjects. The chapter begins by looking at existing environmental films and analyses to what extent these were successful films or otherwise. The chapter continues by looking at films that have been made about landscape, both in Wales and beyond. At this stage I begin to develop the concept of the framing and look, superficially at this conjecture, at the *profilmic* and the *afilmic*. I conclude this chapter by focussing on two particular documentary films that I believe closely relate to my own, whether that is because of methodological approaches or subject matter. The purpose of this chapter is to attempt to contextualise my film work in relation to the extant canon while highlighting the difficulties this presents in view of the myopic tendency of the 'maker'. This chapter enables an introduction to my own film *Forecast* particularly given its relationship to other extant films.

The third and final chapter looks closely at the methodological considerations given to the filming and subsequent editing of *Forecast*. The chapter begins by outlining some key theoretical concepts that I feel to be crucial in devising an appropriate methodology. This review

of the key concepts begins with a detailed analysis of framing the landscape. I draw heavily on the work of John Wylie in illustrating some of the tensions that exist between what he terms, 'landscape as a way of seeing' and a phenomenological sense of *being within* the landscape. (Wylie: 2010) I move on to link this mediation from lens to landscape and argue that there are similarities between the mechanical perception of the camera and the process, suggested by Edmund Husserl, of our own perceptual process he terms intentionality. Linking these processes I then suggest that the mediation experienced in the use of cameras is in itself a process of potential mystification or myth making. Relating to my methodology I attempt to explain some of the methods by which I attempt to narrow (or fully remove) this 'mediation gap'. I discuss, in relation to the work of David Seamon and others, how the use of body-mounted cameras can go some way to narrowing the gap between the lens and the landscape. It is here that I look closely at the *afilmic* and *profilmic* and attempt to address these concepts in relation to equipment/technology and its use in filmmaking. The concept of the profilmic and afilmic is discussed frequently in this thesis and it is worth, therefore, to briefly outline the meaning here in the introduction. Micheal Chanan investigates these concepts in relation to the documentary in his book *The Politics of Documentary* (2007) and defines the terms, "Profilmic", indicating what is found in front of the camera and leaves its impression on the film, is one of a series of terms introduced by Etienne Souriau in the 1950s. They also introduced 'afilmic', for the reality that exists independently of any relation with film...' (Chanan: 2007, p.52) Souriau considered that the afilmic was the subject of documentary and Chanan develops the concept to suggest that documentaries record the afilmic through filmic manipulation, however, I use these terms in a



simplified way to suggest that in documentary there is also the space in front of the camera, but also the 'reality' away from it. What interests me is how this afilmic might be evoked in what is shown on the cinema screen.

The final part of this chapter examines the process of walking and improvisation. I briefly look at some of the developments in psychogeography from its roots in the Situationist International, to its presence in literature and the arts today. I make the case for an elicitation of *affect* through improvisation – meeting people on their territory, engaging in conversation, experiencing the world *alongside* the subjects of the film. Here I make the case that in truly embodying being within the landscape, by the process of walking and improvisation and in response to contingency, it is possible to reach audiences in a particular *affecting* way.

This chapter closes by looking at some of the practical and technical decisions made before and during the walk. I look at the equipment, its relationship to each other and how sound relates to the image. Here I also discuss the editing process and how this also was undertaken with mediation very much in the forefront. Some of the components of the film that were filmed outside of the month long walk are dissected here, with attention being paid to time-lapse and map animations.

The conclusion gives, in particular, some detailed but general reflections about the film, but also about the project and its trajectory as a whole. I will pay particular attention to the notes I made during the research process, in order to unpack the efficacy of the film and the project as a

whole. My central research questions will be evaluated in relation to the practice in particular, but I will also highlight what I feel to be the unique contribution of the project to wider research around documentary methodology and ethics and communication of the subject of climate change.

As mentioned earlier in this introduction, this project has developed considerably from the proposal originally submitted. Perhaps none of the research questions have changed, but a simplified but paradoxically more complex question became central to the film and thesis. As I have said this question was, 'how can an effective documentary film be made about climate change?' Altering, or at least developing the question in this way meant that some methodological and conceptual decisions became infinitely more challenging. A thorough examination of the dynamics of recording in film became important, an evaluation of extant films became central, as did a full investigation of myth. At the start of the project it might have been possible to use the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod far more directly, using its allegorical potential to full advantage in projecting a message about climate change and consequent sea level rise. Early on, I decided that to do this would not enable a thorough enough investigation of how climate change and its effects might be properly and responsibly communicated through film. Given the urgency afforded to the communication of a message that might elicit behavioural change/development in relation to a changing climate and the debates and tensions that rage around it, I consider my decision to develop the project in this way appropriate.

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## Chapter 1 - Myth and its Meaning

### Cantre'r Gwaelod: the liminal space of myth

Stand forth, Seithenhin,  
and look upon the fury of the sea;  
it has covered Maes Gwyddneu.  
(R Bromwich 1950, p.219)

Legends about lands beneath the sea do not fully reveal themselves when attention is confined to manuscripts and the printed page, for, unlikely as it may seem to those who take it for granted that literature and science have nothing in common, there is a scientific background against which such stories can be set (North: 1957, p.12)

According to legend, Cantre'r Gwaelod was a highly fertile section of land that stretched out about 20 miles into what is now the Cardigan Bay. The section of the Cardigan Bay coastline that might be described as the liminal point between the mythical kingdom of Cantre'r Gwaelod and its present day edge is approximately 250 miles between the landmarks of Ramsey Island and Bardsey Island (SM695235 and SH125215). This is a sixth century myth, variously recorded – mostly in fragments – in literature old and new which includes the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, for example, in which it takes the form of a poem, the first stanza of which is written above in its English translation.<sup>9</sup> Of course, like many ancient myths, it is probable that most accounts of the tale have been given orally and have probably altered considerably by being either simplified or

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<sup>9</sup> See, The Black Book of Carmarthen (in Welsh, *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin*) is a book of Cymeric metrical verse, written in the 1250s and held in the National Library of Wales. Source ([http://www.celtnet.org.uk/ancient\\_books/llyfr\\_du.html](http://www.celtnet.org.uk/ancient_books/llyfr_du.html) accessed 28/03/2015)

changed in some way, but continue to retain certain established themes that appear to repeat as central tenets in these accounts, as Frederick North puts it,<sup>10</sup>

That, in passing from generation to generation, recollections of encroachments by the sea should have been clothed in language that relates them to stories of wide distribution is not at all surprising when we remember the extent to which early man travelled in these regions; nor is it surprising that the simple stories should have been further obscured by masses of superimposed detail since the days when they were discovered by the seventeenth century romantics. (North 1957, p.120)

The legend or myth tells the story of a land so fertile that many cities were constructed here.<sup>11</sup>

The safekeeping of this seemingly large community was the responsibility of a man named Seithenhin, a gatekeeper of the sluice gates. The land relied on a sophisticated series of sluice gates, that would be opened and shut according to the tides and, as he was in charge of this process, Seithenhin not only had significant responsibilities to the communities he protected, but was also a valued servant to the king of the land, Gwyddno Garanhir, known also in mythology as 'Longshanks'. Said to date to the sixth century (Longshanks is said to have been born circa 520AD) the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod recounts the time when Gwyddno Garanhir held a party in Aberystwyth which Seithenhin attended. However, Seithenhin had far too much to drink and failed to return to the kingdom to carry out his duty of closing the floodgates at high tide.<sup>12</sup> It is said that on this particular occasion a particularly fierce storm had blown in from the southwest and this

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<sup>10</sup> Claude Levi Strauss looks closely at the importance of this in *Myth and Meaning* (Levi Strauss: 1978). This is discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Nick Smyth makes an important point in his article for *Country Quest* magazine regarding what actually constitutes a city in translated Welsh, which places the myth in a more believable context, 'The Welsh word for city is the same as that for fortified village or enclosure, so the settlements could have been quite small.' (Smyth: 2004, p8)

<sup>12</sup> At least once this question of drunkenness being at the heart of the disaster have been challenged, 'The inclusion of drunkenness in the story seems to have stemmed from a misunderstanding about a word in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* poems. 'Gwineu' means 'bay' or 'chestnut' and refers to the colour of Meredid's horse. Morris (Lewis Morris who translated the legend from the *B.B.C.* in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century) mistranslated it as 'wines' – and the idea of a wild and disastrous booze-up in Cantre'r Gwaelod was born' (Thomas: 1991, p21)

had combined with an exceptional spring tide. Because of his neglect, the land was flooded and the population were forced to move to much less rich pickings. It is said that when similar conditions are experienced in the Cardigan Bay, specifically at Ynyslas (SN605925), the bells of the old churches can be heard to ring over the rushing incoming tide. A particular folk tune 'The Bells of Aberdovey' was written with specific reference to this flooding event and the bells that can be heard beneath the sea at high water.<sup>13</sup>

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the flooding event happened, and that there was indeed a highly fertile plain where the Cardigan Bay exists between the two significant markers of Ramsey Island and Bardsey Island. Firstly, and most famously (at least in the local area) there are petrified forests, the most notable of all being at Ynyslas, near the small coastal settlement of Borth. These forest remains, know as Coed Gwyddno, are exposed at extreme low water after a significant period of unsettled weather, which in turn unsettles the sandy seabed. In fact, seeing the submerged forest of Coed Gwyddno is an almost mythical event in itself since the conditions required to see it are rare. Indeed, in the making of the film and while undergoing the walk I did not come across the forest as I walked past Ynyslas. Proving the claims that there was a flood event of some kind in the area is further assisted by the presence of Sarns. These are natural causeways, which when exposed, also at low water, appear to be anthropogenic in quality, resembling sea defences or the walls of dykes. There are three Sarnau in all: Sarnau

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<sup>13</sup> An excellent academic account of the flood can be found in: Edwards, G. (1849) *The Inundation of Cantre'r Gwaelod: Or The Lowland Hundred*. London: Pickering

Cynfelin, Badrig and Sarn-y-Bwlch.<sup>14</sup> One Sarn in particular, Sarn Cynfelin (SN585857) features in *Forecast* at 28'49". The Sarnau are suggestive of some man-made structure, so do not prove scientifically that there was an inundation in this area, however, the sunken forest conclusively proves that there was. G.Edwards states,

There are many other indications along the coast in these parts that the sea, in days gone by, has encroached upon the land. Remains of large forests have been discovered in various parts, extending a long distance into the sea, and the marks of the axe were distinctly seen upon some of the trees thus found. (Edwards 1849, p.11)

Edwards goes on to point out that,

Many circumstances lead me to think it (the inundation) must have happened at a much earlier period than in the fifth century; for if it had taken place as late as that time, there would have been found a better and more circumstantial account of it, connected with the history of Wales during that period. (8)

While there appears strong evidence to refute the myth, or rather the event, as being one that occurred in the fifth century, and that no account from the period concerned exists that would support it, Rachel Bromwich explains why the Sarnau may have contributed to the development of the myth.

Whether the tradition of Cantre'r Gwaelod represents a remote recollection of this event or is as I suggest merely based upon observation of the natural phenomena – the submerged forest and the *Sarnau* – the view of the *Sarnau* from high ground inland would clearly be sufficient to account for that feature of the popular tale by which the lost land was enclosed by dykes. (Bromwich 1950, p.227)

The extraordinary landscape that remains on the edge of where the mythical land was said to have existed, its physical properties and the poignant nature of the story itself make the

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<sup>14</sup> Some useful information on the Sarnau of the Cardigan bay exists here: Friends of Cardigan Bay. (2012) *Ecological Importance of the Sarnau in Cardigan Bay* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.friendsofcardiganbay.org/interesting-stuff/21-the-ecological-importance-of-the-sarnau-in-cardigan-bay.html> (Accessed: 30 March)

creation of an enduring myth entirely understandable and explains the plethora of representations of the story in Wales and beyond. From children's books to mentions in film works and, obviously, in the poetry that describes the myth variously, from the modern day to ancient texts like the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, it is clear that the myth is captivating as a story alone, regardless of what messages the myth might contain.<sup>15</sup> It is in the message, however, rather than the poetic power of the myth that is of particular interest to this project given the connection being drawn between it and climate change. Rachel Bromwich underlines the subtext of the myth when she states,<sup>16</sup>

The poem on Cantre'r Gwaelod is an artistic presentation of the theme of an inescapable judgement. The particular form of guilt attributed to Siethenhin, the ruler of Cantre'r Gwaelod, the sin of presumption. In what did this presumption consist? The popular versions of the story stress the richness and fertility of the submerged domain, with its sixteen flourishing cities. Just as it was the debauchery and excess of the inhabitants of Ker-Is which provoked divine wrath, so also it may well have been pride and vainglory in his opulent and fertile territory which was the cause of Seithenhin's downfall, in the early story from which the poem derives. (Bromwich 1950, p.228)

Here Bromwich also mentions the Breton legend of Ker-Is, which for the purpose of this section of the chapter can be explained as a myth that shares considerable similarities to the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod. What is more significant, however, is that Bromwich here discusses the themes of *guilt* and *presumption*. Not only is guilt present in the story of Cantre'r Gwaelod,

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<sup>15</sup> Representations of Cantre'r Gwaelod continue to be made to the present day. Peter Stevenson, a local storyteller recounts the legend in his book *Ceredigion Folk Tales* 2014. Actually Stevenson takes an interesting line with the story, adding sexual violence to the tale, 'Meredit screamed as her defences were penetrated and the land screamed as the sea walls of Maes Gwyddno were breached.' (Stevenson: 2014, p68) Stevenson also contextualises the tale in the present day through his mention of its reference during Borth Carnival and the fact that there were floods along the Welsh coast (and in other parts of the UK) in 2011 and 2012. The tale has elicited both scientific responses and poetic reflections. These are almost too numerous to entirely cover, but a search of the National Library of Wales's archive revealed 105 sources.

<sup>16</sup> In this quote Bromwich refers to Seithenhin, the gatekeeper, as the ruler of the land. In the varying accounts of the story of Cantre'r Gwaelod, Seithenhin has variously been recorded as the keeper, the king or a visitor to the land.

because the flood gates were neglected – both a personal guilt, but also the fact of being *guilty* of the crime of having being neglectful – but this, it could be argued, is our own position with regards to our neglect of the environment and the subsequent environmental havoc that that elicits. The reference here to presumption is far less transparent, but is none the less clear in Bromwich’s translation of ‘*The Bottom Cartref*’. Is this a presumption that we should have everything we want or need – especially in relation to the resources of the planet – which Bromwich above suggests, or is this the presumption that in having everything we will suffer no consequence? In this a parallel can also be drawn between the legend/myth/folktale, and our current confrontation with a changing climate. Whichever way one might look at it, the parallel is an obvious one; in excess we must expect consequence.

The parallel between the myth and our environmental challenges is clear, but Bromwich also highlights the startling similarities between the myth of Cantre’r Gwaelod and the myth of Ker-Is, as mentioned above. These connections have much, perhaps, to do with the connections between the Celtic nations, in this case Brittany and Wales. These two places not only share a small nation status (or at least, in the case of Brittany the aspiration to be a small nation, distinct from France), but a similar language.<sup>17</sup> It is no surprise that the probability that, through similarities of language and culture and the inextricable ties these created, the myth may well have travelled. The legend of Ker Is has deviations from its Welsh partner that are so slight as to

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<sup>17</sup> Artist John Rogers cements the links between the landscapes of the ‘Celtic Sea Board’ in the book of his journey along a route that links the Celtic nations. Rogers. J (2007) *From Africa to Iceland: A Visual Celtic Voyage* Llandysul: Gomer



hardly matter at all. The Breton story states that the Bay of Douarnenez, on the west coast of Counouailles was inundated after the king's daughter Dahut steals the key to Ker Is and opens the floodgates. The king had already been warned by God that he should improve his kingdom as the kingdom was displeasing God because of the debauched behaviour there. Once the land flooded, the only way the king could escape was to leave his daughter to drown. His daughter, in the end, becomes a mermaid. (Bromwich: 1950, p.228) The legend of Ker Is is documented comparatively late, 'The poem *Livaden Ger-Is* ('the Submersion of Ker-Is') by Hesart de la Villemarque appeared for the first time in 1845 in the second edition of his *Barzaz Breiz*. The subject is a sea-inundation story closely resembling that of Cante'r Gwaelod.' (Bromwich: 1950, p.232) In reality, the story of Ker Is is a, '...well established folk tale of the region.' (ibid) and it is likely that the tale travelled from Wales to Brittany at some stage. The probability of this trajectory from north to south is made likely by the recording of the legend in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* in 1250; it was, it appears, first recorded there.

These two flood narratives indicate that flood events have some causal responsibility for the development of later myths around those events. There are, of course, far more famous flood events and these are numerous, perhaps even ubiquitous, indeed it is almost certain that most cultures appear to have some flood narrative and while, as Dorothy Vitaliano states, 'Flood traditions are lacking in semi-arid Central Asia, which is hardly surprising...' (Vitaliano: 1973, p.160) they certainly appear in the rest of the world. The list, in fact, is endless but the most famous of all is the biblical flood myth. This myth, found in Genesis 6-9, is also repeated in the

Koran in Surah 11 25-48. Both myths involve the central figure of Noah or Nur respectively and both feature Mt. Ararat.<sup>18</sup> Again, the close links between the Old Testament flood myth and the repetition in the Koran indicate that at the very least there is something in very ancient history that must have occurred to create such myths. Of course these may well have been small isolated events, or, as many believe, one catastrophic event that occurred after the last ice age up to 10,000 years ago.

Exactly why such myths persist is an interesting question and it is one that not only cannot be fully answered in this thesis, but may in fact, be difficult to answer at all. Due to the nature of ancient myth, which is often a folk tale transmitted through the spoken word, the written representation is often long after the event it might refer to and will be, as myths are, altered from fact considerably. For the purpose of this thesis and the film that accompanies it and returning to the legend of Cantre'r Gwaelod, '[...]' we may reasonably conclude that the inundation happened at some point before the Christian era,' (Edwards: 1849, p.9) but, far more importantly we can conclude that these myths, with all their colour and elaborate, visceral narrative, can provide extremely useful themes from which a film can be constructed. If the meaning of flood myth is malleable, which Bromwich points to in her evaluation of the meaning of *presumption* in her translation of *The Bottom Cartef* then it is up to me, the filmmaker, to decide

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<sup>18</sup> For analysis of myths in the Old Testament see: Frazer, Sir James G (1919) *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, vol. 1, London: Macmillan & Co.

how best to utilise the myth in the construction of the film about it and the modern concern of climate change and environmental disaster.

## Ordering Myth: A possibility of de-mystification

The French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss was the vanguard of the very simple, but extremely innovative idea that like the hard sciences, such as chemistry or, and most especially, maths, it was possible to make sense of a world, which at first may seem chaotic, through, ‘...the quest for the invariant, or for the invariant elements among superficial differences’ (Levi-Strauss: 1977, p.8) In his 1963 book *Structural Anthropology*, Levi-Strauss applied his structuralism in understanding ritual, family structure and the composition of what he preferred to name cultures, ‘without writing’ (Levi-Strauss 1977, p.15) rather than the term ‘primitive’, popular at the time. For the purpose of this thesis, however, it is, of course, Levi-Strauss’s theories around myth that are of particular interest.

It is because of this that I turn to Levi-Strauss’s collection *Myth and Meaning* (1977) that is a transcription of talks held on CBC Radio between Claude Levi-Strauss and Carole Orr Jerome, a producer at CBC Paris.<sup>19</sup> (Levi-Strauss: 1977, xvii) In *Myth and Meaning* he outlines the complex

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<sup>19</sup> It is interesting, though entirely co-incidental, that at the time of this broadcast Glenn Gould, pianist and radio producer, aired his third part of the *Solitude Trilogy* (1967-1977), *The Quiet in the Land* (1977) at CBC. Not only does this broadcast deal with the influence of modern life on the Mennonite community near Winnipeg, it demonstrates Gould’s fascination with sound and *structure*. I will discuss Gould’s work a little in chapter three.

way in which myth can be understood by analysing the components of any given myth, or perhaps better put, the parts of the myth that are repeated in other myths. Levi-Strauss states, 'It is, I think, absolutely impossible to conceive of meaning without order.' (Levi-Strauss 1977: 12) and he noticed that

Mythical stories are, or seem, arbitrary, meaningless, absurd, yet nevertheless they seem to reappear all over the world (...) My problem was trying to find out if there was some kind of order behind this apparent disorder (1977, p.11)

It would certainly appear, as I have shown in the section above, that there are significant repetitions between the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod and that of Ker Is, indeed, the myths are almost exactly the same. But if the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod is placed alongside any flood myth, certain connections can start to appear. It is when these connections begin to appear, for example the two key words Rachel Bromwich identifies: guilt and presumption, that something approaching a language might begin to be deciphered. In his explanation of this process of conversion from this arbitrary-ness, from this appearance of meaninglessness to structure, Levi-Strauss explains the process thus,

(1) Myth, like the rest of language, is made up of constituent units. (2) These constituent units presuppose the constituent units present in language when analysed on other levels – namely, phonemes, morphemes, and sememes – but they, nevertheless, differ from the latter in the same way as the latter differ among themselves; they belong to a higher and more complex order. For this reason, we shall call them *gross constituent units*. (Levi-Strauss 1963, p.211)

These constituent units, perhaps better seen as the building blocks of myth – as a castle from lego is constructed from multiple blocks – are also, more specifically known as *mythemes*. In

analysing myth by using mythemes, Levi-Strauss proposed a deconstruction of the story to constituent parts by,

... analysing each myth individually, breaking down its story into the shortest possible sentences, and writing each sentence on an index card bearing a number corresponding to the unfolding of the story.' (Levi-Strauss 1963, p.211)

From these constituent units, seen as sentences might be in conventional written language, it is possible to construct tables from disparate myths, perhaps only connected by one central theme, a flood for example, and understand what links them, thereby getting closer to seeing their true meaning.<sup>20</sup> In deconstructing the Cantre'r Gwaelod myth, as Levi-Strauss suggests above, a resulting, albeit crude, table outlining the relations between ecology<sup>21</sup>, behaviour and consequence might be constructed like this:

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<sup>20</sup> Levi-Strauss demonstrates in table form his structural analysis of the Oedipus myth in: Levi Strauss, C. (1963) *Structural Anthropology, vol.1*. USA: Basic Books pp. 213-214

<sup>21</sup> Here I use ecology in it's original etymological definition; the study of home



This rather simplistic diagram does, however, underline some of the basic themes that can be isolated and treated as mythemes, especially in the treatment of the flood myth. While tensions between behaviour and consequence appear to surface in many myths, which may, indeed, be considered cautionary tales, the flood myth presents these simplistically. It is possible,

therefore, to not only to map other flood myths – more or less – onto the table above, but we can also map climate change itself. If we apply the same headings for the climate change narrative, a familiar picture appears:

<i>Ecology</i>	<i>Behaviour</i>	<i>Consequence</i>
Abundant planet	Using resources	Fewer resources
Sustaining life	Exploring possibilities	
Finite resources	Growth/development	Speed/space
Complex life support systems	Quest to understand the world	
	Quest to strengthen life support	Reliance on science
An enabling planet - on which	Using resources to develop	Waste/pollution
beings can evolve, indeed must	Developing beyond resources	
evolve		
	Happiness through consumption	Need for resources
	Evolving away from sustainable lifestyles	Need for resources
		Changing life support by evolving
		Climate Change
		Death/discomfort



These tables are illustrative devices to demonstrate both a structural approach to the myth in question here, but also the universality of some of the narratives contained within them and perhaps draws attention to the ubiquity they appear to achieve. This is not only useful in understanding complex events or accounts and how they relate, but is also extremely useful when tackling the question of how to make a film about climate change, especially since it is framed against the backdrop of the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod. Drawing on the structural breakdown of an event – one mythical, one potentially very immediate and threatening – not only am I able to see any running themes, but also to consider each component as something to be considered methodologically and technically. I will refer back to this structural breakdown in later chapters of the thesis.<sup>22</sup> In reality the tables above identify three common denominators between the myth and climate change; the transition from our ecology [the extant, possessed and relied upon], behaviours [that which threaten our ecology] and what the consequence will ultimately be.

While the factors, or as we might call them, mythemes, involved in a fifth century myth may not be numerous, the fact that they can act allegorically in relation to a much more complex issue such as climate change is interesting. Climate change as a challenge or as a concept, might reasonably be considered extremely complex, from intricate climate modelling, to wider

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<sup>22</sup> In reality, this structural approach is key to many aspects of this particular project. A deconstruction of the film, its methodology and technical execution, as well as the more nebulous evaluation of its meaning, are in themselves structuralist in nature.

sociological questions and the evolution of established economic models. Conversely if the same common denominators are applied to the issue, as we have seen above, that are to a fifth century myth, it is possible to simplify the issue massively. The question is not, is it possible to structurally unpack a constructed climate change narrative, because of course it is, the question is, is it appropriate to do so? If we consider what James Gleick, science historian and journalist, says of the earth's climate, this possible desire to simplify is put into context.

(A Climatologist's) natural bias is to make models with a strong tendency to return to the equilibrium we measure every day on the real planet. Then, to explain large changes in climate, they look for external causes – changes in the earth's orbit around the sun, for example. Yet it takes no great imagination for a climatologist to see that almost-intransitivity<sup>23</sup> might well explain why the earth's climate has drifted in and out of long Ice Ages at mysterious, irregular intervals. If so, no physical cause need be found for the timing. The Ice Ages may simply be a byproduct of chaos. (Gleick 1988, p. 170)

The complexity of climate change makes the discussion of it immediately reliant on some form of filtering. In essence, due to the myriad of factors involved, in order to make a film about it some choices need to be made. These choices, however, are uncomfortable when we take Levi-Strauss' comments on order and chaos into account.

To speak of rules and to speak of meaning is to speak of the same thing; and if we look at all the intellectual undertakings of mankind, as far as they have been recorded all over the world, the common denominator is always to introduce some kind of order. If this represents a basic need for order in the human mind and since, after all, the human mind is only part of the universe, the need probably exists because there is some order in the universe and the universe is not in chaos. (Levi-Strauss: 1977, p.13)

What Levi-Strauss presents here, and I agree with him, is the suggestion that whatever the issue and however complex it might appear, within it there is to be found an order or answer. That is not to say that Levi-Strauss does not *simplify* myth to seek meaning and some evidence of

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<sup>23</sup> *Almost-intransitivity* is a term climatologist Edward Lorenz used to describe a climate that is stable for very long periods, but suddenly changes. In mathematical terms, specifically in chaos theory, a similar phenomenon is known as *bifurcation*.

universality, but it begs the question whether simplifying current and urgent narratives is appropriate given that structure is likely to exist within the extant complexity *a priori* any application of common denominators. It is an uncomfortable truth that a structural analysis of climate change is rendered quite impossible simply because of the complexity of it; we are not (yet) up to the job. Perhaps it is better to say that myth holds two factors which make it ripe for simplification: (1) it is a story extrapolated from fact (2) it is a past event that has already occurred. Climate change, however, is neither of these and so in simplifying it as a concept, for example: Ecology, behaviours and consequence, is this an act of myth making in itself? Without retaining the complexity, does the act of simplification of an extant theme such as climate change not mimic the same transformation so common in the recounting of myth over passing years and centuries?

In this section of chapter one I have linked the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod and climate change through the optic of structuralism in order to interrogate my own approach to creating a film about which, in itself, interrogates these themes. As it is a film I seek to make, I need to discover in the subject of climate change something that can, within the timeframe of a typical documentary length, seek to ask the questions elicited by the subject perhaps only relying on answers when they are clearly present. If I conflate the comments by both Gleick and Levi-Strauss pertaining to chaos, in the one sense in relation to the science of climate and the other the chance that there may lay order in chaos, I must find a way to create a film which allows these complexities and potential ambiguities to exist. If I seek to understand the subject, in the

same way Levi Strauss seeks to understand myth, I will need to simplify the subject to an unacceptable degree. Of course, if I decide, as I did, to leave aside answers, to not approach the film with the broadly structural aim of achieving order, but leave it to become (as far as it ever can be) a window through which people might seek to find order, or patterns, I might allow for this space I speak of above. Levi-Strauss himself admits, ‘...I do not claim there are conclusions to be drawn.’ (Levi-Strauss: 1977, p.12), which certainly permits me to consider and reference the structural, without approaching the task with the essentialist aim of seeking a truth of any kind (while having the intent to *attempt* to do so, however). Roland Barthes explained why he believed that anything was possible to mythologise when he states, ‘Every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state, open to appropriation by society, for there is no law, whether natural or not, which forbids talking about things.’ (Barthes: 1957 p.109) In this quote Barthes implies that the act of talking about something requires its mystification, because in the act of utterance, whether through written, oral or filmic language the subject must fit the method of its communication. Whether many would agree, in the current era, that laws did not prevent the discussion of anything, means his point is certainly one that those who wish to communicate subjects would be well placed to consider.<sup>24</sup> How, then, will my communication of this subject be or not be a simplification and thus a kind of mythology? Do I see this possible act of mystification as problematic, or is that simply the nature of mass communication? Roland Barthes, in his

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<sup>24</sup> More and more there appear to be subjects that might be thought of as forbidden. Recent arguments over immigration and the rise of the UK Independence Party underline this. More importantly, however, it has become less acceptable to be affiliated with views that suggest a person is a ‘climate denier’.

seminal essay 'Myth Today' forcefully argues that myth is most certainly a problematic way to communicate to the world, another view with which I tentatively agree.

In the film I pay homage to structuralism through the use of maps and charts, sometimes these intermingle and morph, becoming representations of universal truths or universal coastlines or islands. I'm seeking to show the interconnections between myths that Levi-Strauss could show in his columns and mythemes. My interview contributors are anchored by the grid references they were found within and where our discussions took place. Where possible, within reason, anything that can be structured or given value is, but I never lose sight of the sheer impossibility of applying structure to the questions or answers present when talking about climate change. My narrative arc, loosely based on following the coastline, is never determined by common denominators, with the ambition of passing over a message that has been predetermined. In film, the act of framing, the edit and the bars and notes of the soundtrack, all have a basis in structure. The editing software for video and sound is, to all intents and purposes, the very blocks and columns of Levi-Strauss's system. Each video clip is a mytheme, each note or bar is the same building block from which a narrative might be constructed, perhaps even in any order. Levi-Strauss himself compares his approach to the structural analysis of myth with reading a musical score, 'And it is only by treating myth as if it were an orchestral score, written stave after stave, that we can understand it as a totality, that we can extract meaning out of the myth.' (Levi-

Strauss: 1977, p.45)<sup>25</sup> The tension here, however, in discussing approaches to the film in front of the backdrop of structuralism, is the way in which this *meaning*, if any, is conveyed. It is this that I will attempt to answer as I progress through the thesis.

## **Deeply coded messages: What's wrong with myth?**

If a myth to some is a charming folk tale that brings to mind extraordinary visual imagery and perhaps some insight into the quaint societies of the past, to Levi Strauss myth is a highly coded puzzle that might be solved, revealing the underlying motivations of societies without writing, however, to Roland Barthes myth was an altogether more dangerous concept.

In this section I would like to devote some time to Barthes' thesis on myth, not only because Barthes' clarity allows a refreshing re-examination of a ubiquitous concept but also because in creating a film based on myth, I needed to fully examine how myth was perceived philosophically in order to decide how I might treat it in the film. Naturally, at the start of the project I was drawn to develop some of the rich imagery available from the Cantre'r Gwaelod story, indeed all the components were present except, of course, the place itself now covered by the sea. But the remnants remain, perhaps rock pools at low tide, or the discarded detritus of fishing trips and, of course, the sunken forest in Borth. All these clues pointed at a place no longer visible, subsumed

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<sup>25</sup> Again I see some interesting parallels with the interests of Glenn Gould though I was unable to establish whether Levi-Strauss and Gould were associates in any capacity.

under the very threat that climate change itself presents. It would have been easier, in many ways, to ignore the wider interpretation of myth in favour of a straightforward representation, however poetic, as an allegory for climate change, however clear, but close reading around ways in which myth has been interpreted raised some questions about the representation of climate change itself, especially in film.

As we have seen above, however crudely, it is possible to divide myths into themes. Central tenets that can allow a manageable understanding of, what might seem, confused and meaningless stories. Once rendered in this way, these seemingly fanciful stories adopt wider meanings and also appear to engender possible comparisons with other stories which may be both historically, or geographically dislocated. If applied to myths (rather those that are identifiable as *folk tales*), which are sure to have been passed down from generation to generation, altering in narrative structure and supposed fact as they have travelled through history, this structural dissection seems appropriate if only because it is essentially *harmless*. It is unlikely that by simplifying the message of an already simplified narrative any immediate or detrimental effects will be felt. It is when, however, we attempt the same simplification and subsequent structural analysis on a subject that is very current, engaging large sections of the scientific, academic and political communities (to name a few) that this approach seems wide of the mark. With the complexity that exists within what might be termed the climate change narrative, illustrated above by James Gleick and the deep complexity of the climate itself, any simplification seems problematic. My own challenge then, is to allow for all the complexity of the

issue of climate change to exist within the constraints of the medium through which I wish to communicate it and since at its heart the project seeks to make loose comparisons between the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod and climate change, I am presented with somewhat of a problem. The simple inescapable truth is that climate change is not myth, but in presenting it in film, am I in danger of mythologizing it? There are examples of ways in which I conducted initial experiments to discover how I might represent the myth included on the DVD with this thesis. These, *Inundation* and *Cantre'r Gwaelod*, do not avoid presenting an otherworldliness of the myth, indeed, these experiments employ filmic tactics to accentuate this. In the final film I certainly used night time-lapse techniques to allow a pause and reflection for the audience. I wanted them to see the myth presented as perhaps it is best presented in film, as highly mediated, which night time-lapses really are. These initial experiments were extremely useful ways of developing the film's structure and rhythm given I was quickly becoming certain that these techniques would be augmented by different filmic textures. The final film uses night time-lapse as a valuable technique. This was only possible to discover in the research by producing short films to assess reaction and how the project would juxtapose with these images.

When Roland Barthes states, '...everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse.' (1957, p.109) he states a case perhaps at odds, but certainly different, with that of Levi Strauss. For Levi Strauss it was societies he termed, 'without writing' (1977) that interested him and arguably his understanding of myth was perhaps more in line with the conventional anthropologist's folk tale. Barthes, in declaring that anything communicated might be



mythologised opened the definition of myth and allowed it to be seen as a force at work as much in the past as the present. It is in the statement, '...myth is always a language-robbery.' (132), which so drew my attention, that Barthes' fundamental discomfort is displayed. Barthes assumes that in presenting the subject, after a value is placed on it, a process of mythology, or mystification occurs. Take, for example, Barthes explanation of the description of a tree, 'A tree is a tree. Yes, of course. But a tree as expressed by Minou Drouet is no longer quite a tree, it is a tree which is decorated, adapted to a certain type of consumption, laden with literary self-indulgence, revolt, images, in short with a type of social *usage* which is added to pure matter.' (Barthes: 1957 p.109)<sup>26</sup> Here, the *pure matter* is a tree, but the same tree might be described as a *fact* or, in danger of naming the unnameable, a *truth*. What Drouet seeks to do, and it is fairly clear that Barthes is not a fan, is to decorate the tree for the purpose of poetry. Of course, this assumes that a tree can be a tree as a fact or pure matter after it is perceived, and I will revisit this concept in chapter three. But for the purpose of considering how a fact might be presented on the screen, in my own case, the fact of climate change, it is highly important to understand my own potential to decorate this fact in its presentation. As straightforward as it would be to use the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod as my central theme, representing it poetically and hoping that in the representation of the flood story I might in turn warn of impending flood as a result of climate change, it would also be straightforward to take the basic tenets of the myth, its mythemes, and transpose them to the subject of the film. This would be acceptable perhaps, but it is worth considering that large sections of the coastline bordering the edge of Cantre'r Gwaelod will

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<sup>26</sup> Minou Drouet was a poet, musician and actor of French fame in the 1950s

never flood as they are perched high above the sea. Sections outside Newport Pembrokeshire (SN055395), for example, would not flood, while frantic preparations for inundation are occurring at locations such as Borth (SN607898) and Tywyn (SN586989). It is obvious then, that to take such a simplified view of the inundation narrative and to apply it to the very current concerns around climate change, and all of the complexity involved in it, requires some attention and gives credence to some of Barthes concerns.

In chapter two I will go on to look at some of the ways climate change has been discussed in film and also look at some key films that look at the wider issue of landscape and community. For the time being, however, I wish to continue this idea of simplification by looking briefly at one particular part of the complexity that makes up the climate change idea. Broadly, there are two views that are of particular importance with regards to climate change; there are those that agree that climate change is as a result of human activity and there are those that do not. The idea around which these two views hang is known as the anthropogenic global warming hypothesis, otherwise known as AGW.<sup>27</sup> As I mentioned in my introduction, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, have reached a figure of 95-100% probability that AGW is a reality and this has caused somewhat of a shake-up in broadcasting, especially for the BBC. In its editorial guidelines, the BBC reminds us that, 'Impartiality lies at the heart of

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<sup>27</sup> I have been unable to trace the genesis of the term Anthropogenic Global Warming, but according to NASA, the term Global Warming was first used in 1975 by geochemist Wallace Broecker. See, (Broecker: 1975).

public service and is the core of the BBC's commitment to its audiences.<sup>28</sup> But when scientific evidence seemed to overwhelm the sense behind this statement, namely that AGW seemed so likely that to feature the voices of those who did not believe the science began to appear potentially irresponsible, the BBC made somewhat of a historic move. The BBC's requirement to impartial reporting read,

The (agreement) accompanying the BBC Charter requires us to do all we can to ensure controversial subject are treated with impartiality in our news and other output dealing with matters of public policy or political or industrial controversy. But we go further than that, applying due impartiality to all subjects. However, its requirements will vary. (ibid)

It is this variety of requirements that caused such controversy. In an effort to artificially reflect the perceived certainty with which AGW might now be afforded, the BBC held a seminar in which they discussed their future impartiality as far as climate change was concerned. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, this political decision meant that when it came to climate change, there would no longer be impartiality and a voice would not be given on its platforms for those who felt sceptical towards the idea of AGW.<sup>29</sup>

In creating the film it became clear that I would need to decide whether to take an approach akin to the BBC and present a message that favours the received wisdom of the IPCC, accepting that it is the only responsible approach. Returning to Barthes stark warning about myth, however,

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<sup>28</sup> BBC. (2015) *Editorial Guidelines* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/page/guidelines-impartiality-introduction/> (Accessed: 4 March).

<sup>29</sup> Paton, G. (2014) 'Row over BBC climate change conference 'cover up'. *The Telegraph*, 12 January [Online]. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/bbc/10566952/Row-over-BBC-climate-change-conference-cover-up.html>: (Accessed 7 April 2015)

leads me to a different conclusion; that as the filmmaker it is in fact my responsibility to show what it is I find, whether or not this suits my own thesis. Unlike the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod, my aim is to connect with the issue directly and unflinchingly avoiding what Barthes terms the *privation of history*,

Myth deprives the object of which it speaks of all History. In it, history evaporates. It is a kind of ideal servant: it prepares all things, brings them, lays them out, the master arrives, it silently disappears: all that is left for one to do is to enjoy this beautiful object without wondering where it comes from. (1957 p.151)

We may never know whether or not Cantre'r Gwaelod existed outside of the pages of the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, indeed whether any inundation occurred due to the carelessness of Seithenhin at all. The drowned forest of Coed Gwynno suggests something beyond the myth, that an historical event occurred - probably at the end of the last ice age – and it is important to treat the potential for future calamities with the anti mythological stance taken by Barthes, or at least be mindful of his warning.

For Barthes then, myth was as much an issue of power as it was the colouring of narratives. He saw myth as a tool for the maintenance of order, as Barthes states, 'Myths tend towards proverbs. Bourgeois ideology invests in this figure interests which are bound to its very essence: universalism, the refusal of any explanation, an unalterable hierarchy of the world.' (Barthes: 1957, p.154)

In chapter two I will look at a selection of films that have attempted to deal with climate change. What appears to be the common theme about these films is their didacticism and willingness to simplify the issue, or at best assume a conclusion. I believe it is doubtful that effective communication will take place unless the issue is given room to breathe within the film in its entirety. This may well require giving a voice to opinions that depart from those deemed acceptable by the BBC. As Liverman suggests, 'Scientists can listen to our colleagues in the arts to better understand their audiences, know what is useful information or research, and to make sure communication is not one way.' (Liverman 2012, p.27) because as he identifies, 'Effective communication of the risks and relevance of climate change to people's lives remains elusive.' (Liverman 2012, p.24)

## **The movie as myth**

Stuart Voytilla did not write his book *Myth and the Movies: Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films* (1999) to discuss the documentary form, but the fiction film. Voytilla does warrant some brief mention in this chapter, however, because of the way he uses a similar method as Levi Strauss when looking at scriptwriting and narrative structure for the cinema. As he puts it,

Movies serve the function of all storytelling, to entertain, inspire and perhaps even teach us to cope with problems. But the key here is that moviemaking can be considered the contemporary form of mythmaking, reflecting our response to ourselves and the mysteries and wonders of our existence. (Voytilla 1999, p.4)

Voytilla specifically considers the mythic hero's journey, seeing that a repetition of certain themes recurs in many well-known films. He splits his structural analysis of screen narratives into components resembling mythemes. These repetitions are of particular interest to Voytilla, 'The Stages and Archetypes of the Hero's Journey provide a flexible, analytical tool to understand why *any* movie's story works or fails. But most important, the paradigm guides us to an understanding of why a story resonates on a universal level by answering our deepest mysteries.'

(4)

While Voytilla refers to the fiction film and not the documentary, it is important to consider the potential for the documentary itself to be something of a mythological concept. The documentary's search for truth, of course, is problematized by the glaringly obvious fact that it is the filmmaker that chooses what to shoot, what to edit, what to include and what to leave out. That coupled with the fact that it is notoriously difficult for the audience to really understand what has occurred in the making of a documentary. As Paisley Livingston states,

For various practical reasons, most film spectators simply do not know what went on during the making of the film they are viewing, yet the interpretative process requires them to attribute attitudes and implicit meanings to someone's expressive activity. (Livingston in Murray and Smith: 1997, p.146)

It is vital that in making a documentary that deals with a subject so important to the future of our planet to fully consider the ramifications of the myth-making process. To reach an audience it is probably extremely important that the audience recognises that where possible the filmmaker is speaking the truth he or she can, or at least attempting wholeheartedly to do so, and in deciding

an appropriate methodology that considers the responsibilities involved in documentary making seriously. In chapter two I will begin to outline some of the ways in which I have approached my methodology with this in mind. I can turn to the anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch who identifies the central concern of the documentary maker as regards to the search for truth,

[Cinema-verite:] it would be better to call it cinema-sincerity....That is, that you ask the audience to have confidence in the evidence, to say to the audience, This is what I saw, I didn't fake it, this is what happened....I look at what happened with my subjective eye and this is what I believe took place....It's a question of honesty (Rouche in Levin 1971, p.135)

It is not that filmmakers naturally tend towards dishonesty, or even that this is likely at all, but the primary issue here is the existence of subtext and agendas.<sup>30</sup> It is hard for example, to imagine that approaching a documentary with a pre-prepared thesis could ever be successful. That Barthes wrote on myth in 1957 means that it is an issue to be afforded some consideration. If my film is to engage with the audience at a level where I may, at the very least, be able to raise significant questions about how we behave, what our aspirations are and how we might proceed in the face of a crisis that is theoretically so bad that it threatens human life itself, I must raise my own concerns about myth. Mythology is not enough to elicit these questions, used as we are to didactic rhetoric in a media landscape of imperatives. The issue of climate change does not affect governments alone, nor does it only affect those able to communicate the problem, the issue of climate change affects everyone who lives under the climate that is changing. It is unlikely that any mitigation of climate change will come from any one particular place, or indeed,

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<sup>30</sup> I cannot provide evidence or examples that adequately support this statement without presenting views which are controversial, and certainly quite far from my own. In Chapter 2 I examine some of the fissures and controversies that have occurred in representing climate change, but for a very clear presentation of the 'climate skeptics' argument please see, (Delingpole: 2012)

any one particular set of rules, it is reliant on the behavioural change of everyone. To that end, the film for this project seeks to include the audience, give them some agency and allow them to reach conclusions for themselves. In this film I seek to attempt to make a documentary that does not rely on the 'top down' discourse, but to suggest this universal condition and to invite the audience to take part. As Barthes states,

[...] in ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose 'performance' – the mastery of the narrative code – may possibly be admired but never his 'genius' (Barthes 1977, p.1)

From Cantre'r Gwaelod to the writings of Barthes, what myth does is disseminate a message, as Levi-Strauss saw it, a language, that is the communication of the powerful, those who can be considered 'myth makers', to those who are not. In questioning myth as central to the overall starting block from which the film might evolve, I believe this project will fully interrogate other possible paths in documentary film, to avoid mythology and thereby address one central and important question mentioned in my introduction, 'how can an effective film be made about climate change?'

## **The lessons of myth**

In this chapter I have examined some of the key issues surrounding the idea of myth, eventually looking at how these raise questions about documentary film and attempting to give some



background to the choices I made during the making of the film. Without this context it would be difficult to show why certain methodological choices were made, which I will go on to discuss later in the thesis. In the next chapter I will examine a selection of key films that either discuss climate change directly, or have been made about landscape and community – which are also relevant to this project. It is urged, however, that some of the themes discussed in this chapter are kept firmly in mind as I begin to examine how climate change and the environment have been treated in film. I will, of course, return to myth throughout the thesis as it is fundamental to the project's ideas.

In this chapter I suggested that *Cantre'r Gwaelod*, despite it being a compelling story and certainly based on some inundation (likely at the end of the great ice age), is nonetheless a simplification of a much more complex story connected to the vagaries of climate over millenia. The remains that fuel the myth – the sunken forest and the Sarnau – provide a rich aesthetic picture which might well provide a beautiful allegorical narrative for the potential ravages of climate change. It would have been one approach to this project to take the myth and use it, perhaps referencing it poetically, perhaps recording the sea and time-lapses of the out going tide at Ynyslas or recording the chimes of Marcus Vergette's bell at Aberdovey; these were all possibilities.<sup>31</sup> (See appendix 2a and 2b). There were perhaps many ways to represent the myth,

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<sup>31</sup> Marcus Vergette's *Time and Tide Bell* is an installation of a large bell, close enough to the water to sound at high tide. The bell references the myth of *Cantre'r Gwaelod*. Time and Tide Bell. (nd) *Aberdyfi Time and Tide Bell* [Online]. Available at <http://www.timeandtidebell.co.uk>: (Accessed: 8 April 2015)

but what stood out was the way in which myth itself raised so many other questions; questions that seemed to resist being ignored.

It is interesting to note how Claude Levi-Strauss attempted to deconstruct myths through the optic of structuralism and to a point this seemed to highlight the way myth can be seen as a type of language, but also to demonstrate the universality of some mythical themes. This can, of course, be seen starkly in repetitions of the flood myth from Biblical stories to the close connection between Cantre'r Gwaelod and Ker Is. Levi-Strauss reaches for logic and consistency in his attempt to seek meaning in the myths that he studied, suggesting that myth has a very real purpose. His approach was certainly not without strong criticism, as Francis Korn states in his critique of Levi-Strauss' methodology in *Les Structures Elementaires*, 'Levi-Strauss' monograph is not immune to the demands of logic and empirical test; or, if it is, then it has no claim to any scientific status.' (Korn 1973, p.144) and he concludes,

In fact, the outcome of our own experience when dealing with Levi Strauss's specific cases is that when he departs from the work of his predecessors he is usually mistaken. It is a problem, rather, to account for the renown of a theoretician who is unimpressive as an analyst and whose theories, which are seldom original, are regularly refuted by the facts. (Korn 1973, p.145)

The extent to which Levi-Strauss's theories of myth stood up to the tests of logic and the strictures of science is not of particular interest to me in this thesis, however, what is particularly interesting is the idea that myths can serve as tales that *warn* and to what extent they appear to repeat endlessly, suggesting a recurring anxiety in societies that may be far removed by geography or history. In looking closely at Levi Strauss's arrangement of his mythemes in tables,

and attempting to translate them to the concerns around climate change today, it appears that the simplification from myth to current events places an overt reliance on simplification and as a result things are left out. To consider the structural evaluation of a current event like climate change in the same way as we might a 5<sup>th</sup> Century mythical story is shown to be unreliable by this comparison. A myth is already simplified language, as discussed by Roland Barthes, therefore a myth is ripe for this type of structural analysis. Climate change, however, contains such complexity as to resist simplification, at least without *losing something* of the truth about it. It is important to be aware at least, that in fitting meaning into a feature length documentary requires more than simply extracting that which will fit, it requires allowing, somehow, as much of the narrative, truth or fact to exist within the film unmolested. This is of course the challenge for the filmmaker when reaching out to communicate with his/her audience and what I will endeavour to outline in chapter two and three.

My mention of Stuart Voytilla's structural examination of myth in relation to fiction cinema, albeit briefly, relates to the fact that Voytilla uses a method resembling (and no-doubt influenced by) Levi-Strauss's structuralism to imply that cinema itself is more than capable of mythologizing. The extent to which this relates to films about climate change is clear: (1) not all films about climate change are documentary and (2) to what extent does this tendency to mythologise in the film business extend to the structure of documentary as well? Trihn T Minh Ha problematizes the notion of a documentary as pure actuality, without any intrusion of fiction when she states,

A documentary aware of its own artifice is one that remains sensitive to the flow between fact and fiction. It does not work to conceal or exclude what is normalised as “nonfactual,” for it understands the mutual dependence of realism and “artificiality” in the process of filmmaking. (Minh-ha 1991, p.39)

To continue without close attention to the idea of myth and the act of mythologizing would be to undermine the potential effectiveness of the documentary for this project. In the ensuing chapters I will seek to further develop some of the definitions and attendant issues around the idea of documentary. The conflation between non-fiction and fiction elements that complicate the definitions will also be discussed, but at the centre of the discussion will be the idea that while the intention of the filmmaker can never be known fully, at its heart filmmaking is, to put it bluntly, a significant responsibility, especially if the film concerned has any ambitions whatsoever to show fact.

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## Chapter 2 - Documenting Change: Approaches to recording Future Perfect Continuous Issues

### What is out there? A walk through what led to a walk

Mike,

Can you delete any emails you may have had with Keith re AR4? Keith will do likewise... Can you also email Gene and get him to do the same? I don't have his new email address. We will be getting Caspar to do likewise...

Cheers

Phil<sup>32</sup>

Oh no, not another film about climate change  
(Armstrong 2011).

In some ways climate change, specifically the issue of anthropogenic climate change, lends itself well to the subject of a documentary film: the evidence to support it is strong, many people are very concerned about it, both among the general public and what might be termed 'the professional community', i.e, those working in climate (and related) sciences, and those involved in its communication. Since the net effects of it are potentially so serious, there are plenty of visual references and subject areas to cover. In other ways, however, the subject is extremely complex and, as I briefly discussed in chapter one, it is far from straightforward to condense *every* aspect of the issue into a feature length documentary. In chapter one I identified that one approach to this problem was to accept that in some way or another I would attempt to allow, through my methodological approach, all potential strands of the climate change narrative to

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<sup>32</sup> This is a transcript of an email from Phil Jones of the UEA's Climatic Research Unit in response to a freedom of information request from climate skeptic David Holland regarding tree ring specialist Keith Britta's correspondence (still secret) with Micheal Mann also of the UEAs Climatic Research Unit.

(<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/jul/07/hacked-climate-emails-analysis>: accessed 09/05/15)

exist within the film. This seemed only possible if a pre-destined conclusion was avoided and that through the methodology, and with minimum intervention, the subject could in some way be uncovered through encounters, and be discovered rather than predetermined. It is therefore very useful to look at extant documentaries that approach the climate change issue to assess how this has been historically documented, and if there are any lessons to be drawn from these films. In this chapter I will look at existing films – especially documentary films – that look at climate change and some of the theories around the new genre ‘Environmental Science Fiction’. Two particular examples of ‘documentary’ surface in this chapter that resonate particularly with my own film work and methodology.

It is certainly true that many films exist that look at climate change, and there is no shortage of different and innovative approaches that have been applied to look at the subject. These films are not confined to documentary by any means, however, given that I certainly call my own film a documentary – even though work in film theory around the definition of documentary problematizes this somewhat – I will concentrate primarily on extant documentary work on the subject here. In considering the definition of documentary in this context I mostly consider Bill Nichols’s documentary modes. Nichols’s documentary modes are well known in documentary theory. Nichols suggests there are six modes, or type, of documentary that include: Poetic Mode, Expository Mode, Observational Mode, Participatory Mode, Reflexive Mode and the Performative Mode. The system, or genus, that Nichols provides is useful in obtaining a general sense about the kind of documentary under scrutiny, however, I have found these modes problematic as

many films seem to cross over the established boundaries, in other words, few documentaries seem to exist comfortably within any of Nichols's theoretical boxes. (Nichols: 2001, p. 33)

Contrary to Nichols's fairly ridged and prescriptive structure, Eric Barnouw's method of classifying films (itself not entirely a classification, but perhaps more of a mechanism to negotiate the history of the documentary) allows for significantly more room for interpretation. In *Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film* (1993) Barnouw focuses on the filmmakers themselves, dividing them into types. He discusses the history of the documentary film through the optic, for example, of the 'prophet' – Lumiere features here, the 'explorer' – Robert Flaherty features here, or the 'reporter' – Dziga Vertov features here. In identifying certain traits in the filmmakers he examines in his historical analysis, Barnouw usefully begins to reveal the characters that drove the films they made.

While, just with the classifications/modes coined by Nichols, I struggle to situate my work comfortably within Barnouw's documentary character types, they do appear to provide a better way to understand why I made certain decisions in the filmmaking process. I can see through the evaluation of the intentions of various filmmakers whether or not I share their intentions or indeed their history, character or ambition in film. An example of this is where Barnouw cites Richard Leacock, 'It's when I am not being told something, and I start to find out for myself, this is when it gets exciting for me...' (Richard Leacock quoted in Barnouw: 1993, p236) In his analysis of Leacock and this quote above I recognise that my own ambitions in film may well be similar in

this respect, but I am also aware that the fact that Barnouw categorises Leacock as an ‘observer’ is in itself problematic. Leacock may observe, but that is not all he does. It is certainly interesting to ‘retrofit’ Barnouw’s classifications around current and recent filmmakers and this again proves useful, but inevitably turns the focus to the *intention* of the filmmaker rather than the films he/she produces. I will now go on to look at some examples of recent work that is particularly relevant to my own project leaving as a subjective and rhetorical question, ‘where in Barnouw’s book would these appear?’

One of the most influential climate change documentaries of recent years was Franny Armstrong’s *Age of Stupid* (2009), which caught the public’s attention not only because of the fact that it was one of the first films to be financed by crowd funding<sup>33</sup>, but also that it used sections of fiction to illustrate the effects of climate change.<sup>34</sup> Looking back from 2055, an archivist, played by Pete Postlethwaite, marooned in his library surrounded by a rising sea, looks back through archive footage where experts warn us of impending doom and footage shows the damage being caused by unpredictable weather patterns and so on. In an article written for the *Huffington Post*, Armstrong gives her reasons for making the film, ‘Love and war will soon become minor concerns to us humans, as the full horrors of climate change begin to unfold.’ In a fairly nebulous and irreverent statement on the film she goes on to say, ‘Our film, ‘The Age of

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<sup>33</sup> Crowd-funding is the process of generating small amounts of capital from a wide number of individuals, in order to fund a project. This is generally achieved through social media.

<sup>34</sup> Information about the film is available here: Spanner Films. (2015) *The Age of Stupid* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.spannerfilms.net/films/ageofstupid> (accessed: 11 May).



Stupid', focuses on the big moral human stuff.<sup>35</sup> There can be little argument about where Franny Armstrong might stand on anthropogenic climate change, in an interview with her own film production company *Spanner Films* she responded to the following question thus, 'How can people possibly be expected to navigate their way through the complexities and ironies of climate change? And why should they have to?' and she answered, 'Because the future of our species and everything we have ever achieved is at stake.' (Armstrong 2015)

It appears that *Age of Stupid* was, from its conception, created to directly cause an affect in the audience that would challenge current behaviours most linked to the exacerbation of climate change through anthropogenic activity. Not only is this evidenced through Franny Armstrong's own comments on the film and her track record in documentary work (which tends towards 'socially aware' protest films: *Drowned Out* (2002) – a film about the flooding of a community to make way for a hydro electric project and *McLibel* (2005) – a film documenting the libel case McDonalds brought against detractors Helen Steel and Dave Morris), but also that the film was linked to the 10:10 campaign in collaboration with *The Guardian*, which was a campaign to reduce the UK's carbon emissions by 10% by 2010.<sup>36</sup> This was not a film that *examined*, it was a film that *told*. While *Age of Stupid* is by no means an isolated example of a film that took a predominantly didactic approach to conveying a message about environmental destruction, the

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<sup>35</sup> See footnote 34

<sup>36</sup> Information about the 10:10 campaign available here: 10:10. (2015) *Learn More* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.1010uk.org/about> (Accessed: 12 May).

director certainly knew the power of the medium she had chosen, when asked why film was such a powerful medium for portraying issues such as climate change, Armstrong replied,

Because it's a mixed-media format – ie spoken words, images, music, graphics – the size of the emotional punch it packs can be so much bigger than single-media formats like books, songs, photographs or newspaper articles. Plus, the 90-odd minute length has been shown by the history of cinema to be the perfect slot for people to follow and feel a story (Armstrong 2015)

There is, of course, much truth in Armstrong's statement above and I share the belief that film as a medium can do much to contribute to the climate change issue for these very reasons. Where I disagree with Armstrong is not in her approach to film as a tool for communication, but her approach to the subject. In telling the audience what to think, does Armstrong in fact run the risk of alienating them? One very prominent example, and one that involved Armstrong, of a climate change film creating an entirely undesired, but profoundly real, negative impact was the *No Pressure* (Curtis: 2010) promotional video that effectively shows climate change sceptics being blown up in various settings. One particularly visceral scene shows a teacher (Gillian Anderson) asking her class whether they would participate in activities that might help the planet, when a couple of children don't wish to take part, the teacher presses a button and both children explode. The video caused severe shockwaves for the environmental movement and meant several public apologies and the loss of sponsorship by organisations such as Sony and O2. (Delingpole 2012: 209-211) James Delingpole explains,

[...] what made the video so shocking, (Was) (n)ot the content per se, but the fact that a collaborative team of at least fifty film professionals and forty actors, led by so assured and bankable and cosy director as Curtis, could remain so blissfully unconscious of just how toxic the video's underlying message actually was. (2012, p.211)

Clearly, by being such a powerful instrument of communication, film can be in danger of causing profoundly negative effects, something that I am naturally mindful of with regards to my own film project. This incident might well be considered exceptional in its impact, but to what extent could other film works be regarded as less controversial vehicles for the same effect? Perhaps other work, like Armstrong's *Age of Stupid* might also at best be ineffective? In their study "Fear won't do it" Promoting Positive Engagement With Climate Change Through Visual and Iconic Representations', O'Neill and Nicolson-Cole (2009) state,

Although shocking, catastrophic, and large scale representations of the impacts of climate change may well act as an initial hook for people's attention and concern, they clearly do not motivate a sense of personal engagement with the issue and indeed may act to trigger barriers to engagement such as denial (O'Neill, Nicholson-Cole 2009, p.21)

This 'shock tactic' methodology was unappealing as an approach for my own film in relation to the project because my film was, and was required to be, centred on a localised place, whether or not the place concerned, in this case the coastline at the edge of the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod, was in fact a large area. It would be essential for me to focus on something very specific, at least in part, and generate any wider philosophical points from what was *there* rather than take a global generic look at the subject. I was also unable to afford to make the kind of film that would employ the techniques that would be able to depict catastrophe (or even afford the archive footage) and so felt much more drawn to concentrate on the local. The main reason, however, that I did not wish to follow the 'shock tactic' methodology was of course that, as

O'Neill and Nicholson Cole imply, it would actually not be effective. The approach they favour is much more in line with my own approach,

The results demonstrate that communicators approaches that take account of individual's personal points of reference (e.g., based on an understanding and appreciation of their values, attitudes beliefs, local environment, and experiences) are more likely to engage individuals with climate change. (O'Neill, Nicholson-Cole 2009, p.21)

As I will go on to discuss in chapter three, my methodology was informed by the awareness that neither 'shock tactic' or didacticism were, it appeared to me, the most effective way to address the issue of climate change, nor in-keeping with the project as a whole. Walking the coastline, talking to people I encountered (see Appendix 4) and responding to the contingencies of that walk, seemed to far better create an opportunity to make a film that fulfilled some of O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole's points above. It is quite surprising that more films do not exist, both in the documentary and fiction genre, that attempt this and it does seem that a language has developed in climate change communication that tends towards the approach that O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole discredit.

In his article, 'Is this climate porn? How does climate change communication affect our perceptions and behaviour?' Thomas Lowe outlines a particular approach to the climate change issue explaining that,

Environmental Science fiction, as a relatively new addition to the human story telling genre, has deeply rooted mythical, religious or astrological story telling origins as an imaginative method of predicting, understanding and communicating our knowledge of the social and physical world. (2006, p.8)

It certainly appears that there are films that seem to fit Lowe's Environmental Science fiction, this could include *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) but also, of course, Franny Armstrong's *Age of Stupid* (2009). Both of these films employ conventions found in science fiction films, for example, the use of CGI to recreate terrible climate disasters on the screen. Lowe goes on,

Recent research into the 'linguistic repertoires' used in popular media coverage and communication campaigns (Ereaut and Signit, 2006) identifies (among others) a language of 'alarmism' incorporating urgent tones and cinematic codes with "...images and ways of speaking that are familiar from horror and disaster films (employing) ...a quasi religious register of doom, death, judgement, heaven and hell...using words such as 'catastrophe', 'chaos' and 'havoc' (2006, p.7)

Of course, in Lowe's description we can see how *Age of Stupid* was doing precisely that.

Consider, for example, the tag line from the film, 'Why didn't we save ourselves when we had the chance?'<sup>37</sup> My contention would be here that it is very difficult to imagine an audience member when confronted with such a sentence – which is uttered by Postlethwaite in the film – feeling like positive action if the message they received, however mistakenly, is that we have already ruined the planet and our lives as a result. It is also interesting, returning briefly to some of the points I made in chapter one, that these larger themes, or the language Lowe discusses above, are often present in myth; this film language is locked in the past tense and as such elicits a sense of helplessness. The story of Cantre'r Gwaelod itself presents the consequence of 'presumption' as doom, death and judgement, but in reality, or certainly for those of us in the

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<sup>37</sup> See footnote 34

west, the reality of climate change is likely to be more gradual, perhaps simply an issue of increasingly difficult weather events or some flooding. It may be simply a gradual turn from predictable weather, to increased volatility. It is by confronting this reality head-on, without the use of 'shock tactics' that an audience is more likely to engage with a film about climate change in my opinion.

The majority of film work that has had climate change as its central theme, which I have encountered during the course of my research, has largely followed the above model. It is questionable, as we have seen, that these approaches work. There are perhaps two ways to look at it, '[...] whilst the kinds of messages which have recently been dubbed 'climate porn' (Ereaut and Segnit, 2006) can instigate a range of negative effects, from fatalism and apathy to rejection and anger (Rogers, 1983), it must be considered that they can also instigate strong feelings that something must be done.' (Lowe 2006, p.4) My sense, and it is just a sense, is that the popular didactic 'shock tactic' approach is not likely to do anything other than instigate negative effects, and that while many might feel something needs to be done, they are unlikely to do anything if bombarded with such messages. One other key issue that Lowe identifies as the net effect of this method in making climate change films is the way the audience might perceive the issue of climate change in terms of its enormity; the idea that it is a *catastrophic global disaster* in waiting rather places the issue out of the immediate reach of the imagination,

The fact that film viewers saw climate change impacts as a threat more distant in time suggests that the unreality of the images they were exposed to departed from personal experience to such an extent that it could only be possible in the distant future (Lowe 2006, p.19)

The challenge it seems, as far as the evidence afforded by the 'mistakes' or missed opportunities of extant films are concerned, seems to be that the film must be relevant, localised and present climate change as immediate and real. In other words people need to remind themselves that climate change is not a problem that only affects the third world. Lowe concludes,

Communicating global risk to a global community is a challenge with limited historical precedent and one which shows no immediate signs of success great enough to have significant effect. What is clear, however, is that the problem must be made tangible and manageable if warnings are to have real impact. (26)

So we can see that Lowe and O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole identify issues around the employment of filmic techniques that search for affect generally; these seem not entirely effective. It is possible, however, that this ineffectiveness is not simply down to this, but I contend is also connected to the way in which the filmmaker didactically communicates. It is perhaps possible that an audience, already habituated to a dynamic in documentary that has a tendency to talk *at* or lecture, may be, as a result, less responsive to the message in general. It is therefore interesting to consider some of the arguably more effective ways that climate change has been communicated through the medium of film.

## Whisper, don't shout: alternative ways of presenting climate change in film

There are of course films that tend towards different approaches in confronting the communication of messages, both about climate change, but also other important global issues and I wish to look at a number of those now. While the idea of making the *perfect* film about a subject so complex must surely be identified as an ambition that is probably out of reach, the following films admirably attempt to try to put their message across in an inventive, but also heroic way. Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) directed by Davis Guggenheim, while having triggered a scandal itself due to the 'bad science' it was said to contain, took what I consider a novel approach.<sup>38</sup> The film focuses on a lecture tour given by the ex-vice President and shows footage of the lectures themselves with cutaways to demonstrative actuality of climate disasters; all archive footage. The film also contained footage of Gore's tour around the US while travelling to and from the lectures. In this footage we see Gore using limousine and private jets – hardly environmentally friendly conveyances – and therefore showing the carbon realities of such a lecture tour. The power of the film seems to originate from its intention to be transparent on this issue, but also to be transparent about its central didactic nature; this is the record of a lecture tour, which must be one of the most didactic ways to communicate of all. Gore is open about his own hypocrisy, but in showing us, removes the audience's ability or need

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<sup>38</sup> The nine scientific errors are written here in an article by the Daily Telegraph: Peck, S. (2007) 'Al Gore's 'nine Inconvenient Untruths'. *The Telegraph*, 11 October [Online]. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/earthnews/3310137/Al-Gores-nine-Inconvenient-Untruths.html> (Accessed: 21 May 2015)



to search for duplicity. *An Inconvenient Truth*, whether successful or not, boldly, by declaring its intentions in this way, displays the message clearly, but also displays the overall intention of the film. Oddly, while it relies on didacticism and ‘shock tactics’, it does this framed as if to admit that it is doing so, thus gifting the meaning to the audience. So while O’Neill and Nicholson-Cole state, ‘Unlike marketing or health-based approaches that connect on a personal, tangible level, climate change represents a greater communication challenge as it is temporally and spatially remote from the individual.’ (O’Neill, Nicholson-Cole: 2009, p6) Gore’s film allows the audience to connect on its own terms.

Gore returns the film from his lecture tour, his private jet, his limousine and his very clear views on climate change to the cinema audience by acting reflexively, or at least allowing himself to be presented so as to act reflexively. It is as if he opens his experience and his views to the audience by saying something like this, ‘this is what I believe and it is what I want you to believe too. You can witness what I am presenting as one of my audience and make your choice as one of them – it is all here for you to see, so think what you will.’

Godfrey Reggio’s *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982) does not explicitly confront the climate change issue directly, but looks at the way people appear to be living in, as the English translation from the Hopi title suggests, ‘a life out of balance’.<sup>39</sup> With a soundtrack by Philip Glass and

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<sup>39</sup> *Koyaanisqatsi* was made before the current concerns around the environment were crystallized as ‘climate change’, or indeed ‘global warming’. The film illustrates a general unease about how human beings have grown distanced towards nature.

cinematography by Ron Frike, this film eschews any conventional attempt to convey an explicit meaning. It does not contain a spoken narration and the narrative is propelled by a series of highly cinematic images assembled in montage, set against Glass's bespoke soundtrack.<sup>40</sup> This montage attempts to reveal more, perhaps by explaining less. As Reggio reveals in a recent interview about *Koyaanisqatsi*,

With more to say than can be spoken, the cinema I offer is aimed at the solar plexus. It is directed at the viscera, not the mind. To feel the subject, to affect the audience is the intention. Poetic cinema is the approach [...] In foregoing logical discourse and linear story, poetic cinema opens the screen to the play of the aesthetic triplets: Sensation, Emotion, and Perception. The films forego the path of the intellect in favor of intensity, spontaneity and impression, and through them shine a light on the invisible truth of who we are and the reckless path we are on (Circus 2014)

The 83 minutes of *Koyaanisqatsi's* juxtaposed film clips, for example scenes of great natural beauty cut with scenes of large scale environmental destruction, passes on a message through an unfettered film and sound language; this film shows but does not tell. The audience for Reggio's film is given the opportunity to apply meaning to what is in front of them, which certainly repositions the sense of agency which seems lacking in more didactic work. Reggio clearly explains his intention for the audience and the path by which he attempts to achieve it,

This autodidactic form invites and engages the aesthetic triplets that reside within us all. Even as the film unspools, it is each member of the audience that must become the storyteller, must become the character and plot of the film. This is a cinema to speak to the heart and this is the process I use in my attempt to achieve this. (ibid)

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<sup>40</sup> Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi* in its assembly has been likened to the work of Dziga Vertov who I discuss later in this chapter. It is obvious that in Reggio's film we see the dialectic positioning of film clips, which in turn produce a third meaning. A technique pioneered by Vertov, becoming known as 'Soviet Montage'. Specifically film theorists refer to this juxtaposition as 'the interval'.

Reggio's clarity of methodology and intent resonates particularly with my own. As we have seen in the films previously discussed in this chapter, it seems altogether ineffective to harry the audience with doom-laden predictions and didactic commentary. It is my belief that converting the audience to storyteller, or allowing them to become a vicarious 'part' in the film, we can provide the sort of inclusivity that not only works to engage, but also seems appropriate when dealing with a crisis – the crisis of climate change – that necessarily involves all of us equally. Drawing on Lowe's comment on the seeming remoteness of the issue (mentioned above), we might see that Reggio brings his audience into the frame by giving them the task of deciphering meaning. Certainly, this is my exact intention in my own film especially since there is certainly, '...more to say than can be spoken.' (ibid)

It is easy to see Reggio's film as a film acting as a 'window' on the world. It is certainly an act of pure observational cinema on one hand, but edited to become poetry on the other. It is in the editing, however, that questions of authenticity arise. While there is no didactic narration, the act of framing, editing and assembling the clips naturally counts as a form of didacticism. As Michael Chanan says of the photograph, '...the indexical attributes of the photograph are tamed by the subjective control of the photographer, whose stylistic choices can so inflect the image as to imbue it with all sorts of artistic hues.' (Chanan: 2007, p.52) This is, of course, a film that particularly evidences both the mechanical realities of cinema – a series of photographs spliced together at 24 frames per second (or time-lapsed at perhaps 1 frame per second) – but also

Chanan's comments above. Frike's framing is from the mind of Frike, so the audience works with *his* vision in assembling their narrative, rather than the narrative of their own framed life-worlds.

These problems of agency do not disappear in Reggio's film, but his intention and attempt, illustrate the way in which cinema, in changing its underpinning relationship with the audience, can begin to act as a route to elicit thought and debate, but most importantly, engagement with the central issue.

*Koyaanisqatsi* is a film that indirectly tackles the themes that lie under the climate change issue.

Put simply, in its focus on the fracture between human population and the natural world

(specifically the West in this case), the film fits into what might be termed an ecological film

genre. It is relevant that the film was made in 1982 where concerns around environmental

destruction were wide-ranging (from whaling, nuclear testing to toxic waste disposal), indeed

Greenpeace International was formed only eleven years before the film's release. The

specificity of facts and scientific research may well have led to the didactic films on the

environment we see in later years such as *An Inconvenient Truth* or *Age of Stupid*, with sufficient

evidence being available to start basing documentaries around graphs and statistics. This does

not mean, however, that films like Reggio's have disappeared as agents of social change and

protest. While not connected (at least explicitly) to the environment, Peter Snowdon's *The*

*Uprising* (2013) relies on similar techniques to *Koyaanisqatsi* in presenting a political event –

The Arab Spring 2011 – on the cinema screen.

These films are similar only in their central attempt to use disconnected film clips to present a narrative, *a la* Vertov's *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929). In the case of *The Uprising* Snowden ingeniously predominantly uses film clips from mobile phone footage uploaded to YouTube as his building blocks. This was footage filmed in a variety of locations in the Middle East during the Arab Spring of 2011. The footage came from Syria, Libya, Yemen, Tunisia and Egypt – where Snowden had lived – and shows, from the camera's position, people filming in the midst of the chaos and danger of those times. In editing these together, Snowden removes their geographical or chronological context in order to create a revolution of his own. I see in this film an attempt to address the, '...more to say than can be spoken.' (ibid) that Reggio presents. Snowden attempts to direct his film to, '...the viscera, not the mind.' (ibid) by allowing the clips to speak without an established history. Snowden states,

In the YouTube footage, I was able to see all of the videos as elements of a single conversation that I could recompose in order to make it visible. It's not being done to disengage from the immediacy and emotionality of it at all. It's more that I think the status of reality is a bit of a red herring in general, particularly in terms of artistic practice, and also in terms of political practice. (Snowdon in Cohn: 2014)

In particular it is this recreation of an event from extant archive footage that interests me most as far as my own work is concerned. In order to allow the myriad of complexity to exist within a film – and the Arab Spring is clearly extremely complex, not least because of the variety of places involved and the differing political realities that existed in them – Snowden and Reggio seek to minimize the intervention of narration that peddles fact, and rather create a 'film world'

that might exist as a place of contemplation for the audience. Both these films are examples of filmmakers seeking to contain complexity within the narrow boundaries of the feature film length, and it is this that is crucial to my own work in representing climate change and is why these specific films are featured in this thesis. Of course, it was as early as 1929 that Dziga Vertov, in producing *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929), first pioneered this art. Interestingly, Vertov's cinema, like Snowdon's, has revolution at its heart. The very way that Vertov's wife Yelizaveta Svilova (Vertov's lifelong collaborator and editor of *Man With A Movie Camera*) splices together clips, has been seen by many theorists, and indeed Vertov himself, as an act of revolution, as Michael Chanan explains,

It seems that questioning the integrity or authenticity of a documentary sooner or later comes down to the truth value of the individual image, the fragment seized from reality, even though, at the same time, the fragment is given its meaning only through combination with other such fragments, through montage, the process of editing [...] Back in 1920s' Soviet Russia, one of the sites where documentary was born, this was readily understood as a dialectical phenomenon; in Vertov's formula, life facts become film-facts which have to be combined by montage into film truth. (Chanan 2007, p.47)

In this opposition of clips, in this collision, new realities are born, but only on the cinema screen. This collision, like the overturning of systems to produce new systems, is at the heart of the revolutionary act. It is, of course, extremely interesting that throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this methodology of montage remained as a powerful way to represent complex realities in documentary. What seems to link Vertov, Reggio and Snowdon is their vision of film to elicit social change and to accept the challenges of complexity. Vertov demonstrates his commitment that cinema might be, 'socially useful' (Turvey 2011, p.135) 'By linking otherwise

separate human beings and activities, *Man with a Movie Camera* attempts to show Soviet citizens that they are united in the common goal of building the new Communist society, that their actions have a purpose, a meaning, that they are part of a teleological, organic whole.'

(Turvey 2011:144) Reggio wishes to deal with, '...the reckless path we are on.' By creating films that appeal to a democratic redistribution of cinema's relational agency, as he says,

Rather than giving you information or telling you a story, these are stories to behold. They are called experiments, because they differ radically from conventional cinema with no market category in which to house them. They are a meta-language (the language of art) of image and music to conjure an experience that may affect the viewer. The meaning of art is the experience of it - everyone sees a different picture.

Snowdon similarly harbours social ambitions in the production of *The Uprising*, and of the reasons for making the film Snowdon states,

If I had a reason to make this film, it was my fear that these films would be lost, swallowed up into YouTube without being seen again, or not being seen as what they are. In making this film and writing about these videos, my imperative is to make them visible because what they are is a completely unprecedented form of access to the subjectivity of the most ordinary actors of a revolution. (Snowdon in Cohn: 2014)

While the work of Vertov, Reggio and Snowdon share methodological similarities and intentions they are separated somewhat by the footage they used in their films. In the case of Vertov and Reggio, this was footage shot by the filmmakers and then reassembled in order to create the 'new film world' mentioned above. In the case of Peter Snowdon, his footage was shot by others and then curated by the director (and his producer Bruno Tracq) in a similar way. The methodology, and arguably the overall result, of the three films is similar, but the way the footage

was hewn does give rise to a momentary question; is it more or less 'authentic' for the filmmaker to have at least been present while the shot was made, or does the re-edit, or re-working of extant footage in fact betray considerable didactic control. While this question is impossible to answer fully here, I think it is essential to at least acknowledge the need to bear this in mind.

Peter Snowden discusses his absence and how this altered the ethical relationship to the footage he used, 'On another level, I came to understand that I was making a film about these images, not about the revolution. I wasn't there during the Arab revolutions.' (Snowdon in Cohn: 2014)

My own film *Forecast* uses footage I shot from a head camera along the route of the walk (See appendix 3b). The footage, like Snowden's mobile phone footage, shows the *perspective* of the filmmaker but does not include a framing of the filmmaker, and it was one choice for me to edit my own clips of the walk in the order they occurred geographically. After much deliberation I decided that it would be best to allow the clips of the walk to compliment the other 'disconnected' clips I shot – either the interviews or the time-lapses, or general landscape views. I decided that, much like the films above, the ordering of clips might come too close to *telling*, rather than attempting to achieve Reggio's 'visceral' triptych. I wished to affect the audience and felt somehow that by creating a 'film world', not hampered by specificity (at least in narrative, because there is specificity in location provided by grid references and charts). The elements of the film did not need to cohere in chronology or geography because the issue itself was far beyond the 250 miles of the coast path. The film therefore achieves both the local and the



universal in this created film world, never shying from its authentic place in the world, but becoming bigger by being assembled for the cinema and not as a mirror to the world. For me then, this montage is vital for its capacity to give room within the tight constraints of the typical documentary format to large amounts of information. This is why, in my opinion, this cinematic methodology is extremely important as a sub section of the genus of documentary. It is therefore vital to turn now to the father of this method, Dziga Vertov.

### **Dziga Vertov's, *Man with a Movie Camera*: The creation of cinematic worlds**

I am kino-eye. I am a builder. I have placed you, whom I've created today, in an extraordinary room which did not exist until just now when I also created it. In this room there are twelve walls shot by me in various parts of the world. In bringing together shots of walls and details, I've managed to arrange them in an order that is pleasing and to construct with intervals, correctly, a film-phrase which is the room. (Vertov in Michelson 1984, p.17)

Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* has had a profound influence on my own work before and during this PhD project. Vertov's work, analyzed by Vertov and film theorists alike, is almost limitless in its complexity, but it is not this that immediately attracted me, especially, to *Man with a Movie Camera*. Indeed, the thing that most drew me to Vertov's work was the very profound energy both he and his cameraman brother Mikhail Kaufman brought to the act of filming. It was as if the two men were entirely seduced by the technology of cinema, asking enthusiastically, 'what can we *do* with this marvellous technology?' Kaufman, reflexively filmed by Vertov in the film, races around, carrying out impressive feats with the heavy camera and tripod of the 1920s. He rides on the gunwales of a car or catches a lift with his camera on a crane, he runs up the

side of bridges; at all times full of the excitement of the shot. This palpable energy comes through the cinema screen when watching *Man with a Movie Camera* and even in the era of special effects and digital cameras, this film stands as an extraordinary work despite having been shot in 1929. I recognized this enthusiasm for the power of the technology when I too was confronted with the wide array of choice afforded by the digital cameras of the day, from SLRs to head cameras, I too was taken by the very same question, 'what can I do with this stuff?'

While it was the visceral, corporeal endeavor of filming, so enthusiastically demonstrated by Vertov and Kaufmann in *Man with a Movie Camera*, the theories behind the film and the writings of Vertov himself, strongly resonate with my own film project for this PhD. As I have discussed above, Vertov, '...worked within a revolutionary tradition which believed in political, instructive and inspirational cinema.' (Bruzzi 2000, p.22) and *Man with a Movie Camera* is shot at a time of considerable challenge and change in Soviet Russia at a time when, '...the ideological imperatives of the Revolution provided a continuing rationale for documentary endeavours.' (Chan: 2007: 69) While on the surface, *Man with a Movie Camera* retains a quality of innocence; this does not, in fact, do the film justice at all. Considering the fact that the film was shot in 1929, *Man with a Movie Camera* is almost unbelievably ahead of its time and Vertov's ambitions for film as a medium still appear radical today. Consider, for example, Vertov's own explanation of his methodology, 'Kino-eye uses every possible means in montage, comparing and linking all points of the universe in any temporal order, breaking, when necessary, all the laws and conventions of film construction.' (Vertov in Michelson 1984, p.88)

Vertov's ambition here is to let the film, constrained as it is by its relatively short length, to speak beyond the limits of conventional language and order, by creating a completely new language of film itself. By subverting the typical characteristics of documentary – narration being particularly key here – Vertov allows all the complexity of city life to exist within his film. He goes on,

Kino-eye plunges into the seeming chaos of life to find in life itself the response to an assigned theme. To find the resultant force among the million phenomena related to the given theme. To edit; to wrest, through the camera, whatever is most typical, most useful, from life; to organize the film pieces wrested from life into a meaningful rhythmic visual order, a meaningful visual phrase, an essence of "I see." (ibid)

What seems to be most important in Vertov's statement is his use of the word 'find'. It is apt that a documentary maker uses this word in this way and Vertov's methodology is, quite simply, using the film itself to find *what is there*. While this use of film agrees entirely with my own methodology, other successful filmmakers at the time were not so convinced. John Grierson, often described as the father of documentary, in his essay 'The Russian Example', does not entirely appreciate Vertov's approach to the documentary film<sup>41</sup>,

The Vertov method of film-making is based on a supremely sound idea, and one which must be a preliminary to any movie method at all. He has observed that there are things of the every-day which achieve a new value, leap into more vigorous life, the moment they get into a movie camera or an intimately cut sequence. Vertov, however, has pushed the argument to a point at which it becomes ridiculous. (Grierson in Hardy 1946, p.127)

In having, '[...] observational claims and (a) war against narrative' (Winston 1995, p.165) Vertov's

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<sup>41</sup> It is hard to imagine that Grierson would have felt charitable towards Vertov's experimental style. Grierson's films can comfortably be described as expository in nature. Bill Nichols defines expository thus, '*Expository Mode*: emphasizes verbal commentary and an argumentative logic. ... This is the mode that most people identify with documentary in general.' (Nichols: 2001, pp 33-34)

approach to documentary was, 'far more overtly rigorous and complex' (Winston: 1995, p.164) than Grierson's and as a result Vertov's work, especially *Man with a Movie Camera* is an enduring masterpiece in the documentary canon and I make no excuses for having taken considerable inspiration from it in my own filmmaking. Vertov, quoted in Winston, describes his methodology as 'a "higher mathematics" of facts', or perhaps a filmmaking method which might be simply explained as a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. (Winston: 1995, p.165) Seeing the camera differently, Vertov's experiments in film attempted to bring us closer to the possibility of recording truth, as he says 'The movie camera was invented in order to penetrate more deeply into the visible world.' (Vertov in Winston 1995:165) I will look at Vertov's claims for the camera in more detail in chapter three, as I unpack some of the methodological approaches I took when making my own film. In particular I wish to focus on this idea of the 'mechanical eye', the machine that sees *what is there*, a claim asserted by Vertov in his classic quote,

I am (the) cinema eye – I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you a world such as only I can see. From now on and for always I cast off human immobility, I move constantly, I approach and pull away from objects, I creep under them, I leap onto them, I move alongside the mouth of a galloping horse, I cut into a crowd, I run before charging troops, I turn on my back, I take off with an airplane, I fall and rise with falling and rising bodies. (Vertov quoted in Chanan 2007, p.20)

While this demonstrates Vertov's excitable enthusiasm for the camera, it also betrays far deeper ambitions for the recording of 'truth'. Vertov believed that in some way the camera could record the world free of mediation and/or the limitations of the human body and eye. I assert in chapter three that in essence then, Vertov suggests that the camera might be linked to the process

described by Edmund Husserl as the 'phenomenological reduction' or as his assistant Eugen Fink describes it, '(a) 'wonder' in the face of the world.' (Merleau Ponty 1981: xiii) I will examine this in more detail in chapter three, however, Fink's straightforward explanation seems to be very much in line with Vertov's filmmaking methodology, despite his detractors clearly not seeing beyond Vertov's surface excitement.

The Man With the Movie Camera (sic) is in consequence not a film at all: it is a snapshot album. There is no story, no dramatic structure, and so special revelation of the Moscow it has chosen for its subject. It just dithers about on the surface of life picking up shots here, there and everywhere, slinging them together as the Dadaists used to sling together their verses, with an emphasis on the particular which is out of all relation to a rational existence. (Grierson in Hardy 1946, p.127)

Perhaps what Grierson did not understand was that meaning for Vertov was in a construction of truths. Fragments of film joined, in juxtaposition, to form a resounding whole. If Chanana's quote that, 'life facts become film facts which have to be combined by montage into film truth.' (Chanana: 2007, p47) then Vertov rejoined film facts, captured by the mechanical eye in order to create possible worlds within the limits of film. For example, Vertov made no excuses for the fact that *Man with a Movie Camera* was shot in several different Russian locations, so an *impression* of Moscow was created. Vertov puts it like this,

...I put together any given points in the universe, no matter where I've recorded them. My path leads to a fresh perception of the world. I decipher in a new way a world unknown to you. (Vertov in Michelson 1984, p.18)

While I can see some didacticism in Vertov's comment above (in that *he* will create worlds for his

audience) it is my own desire to similarly create a coastline edited from many hours of footage that, once edited, may not be a literal representation of the one I walked, but that shows (or evokes) the experience of doing it. Similarly, I wish to show, through montage of selected shots that vary in method, texture and technology, the experience of walking a coastline at a time when climate change is a serious concern and one that – mostly through unpredictable weather – has had a significant influence on that experience. What Vertov attempted was a transparent reorganization of the pro filmic to present something that transcends what may have been there, giving us a glimpse into the afilmic. As I will further discuss in chapter three, it is this unseen filmic realm, a realm in film that transcends film – again with a total greater than the sum of its parts – that most interests me about Vertov’s work and relates so strongly to my own ambitions for this project. While Vertov may have struggled to deliver the exacting ambitions he set himself in filmmaking (as is probably true of anyone who seeks to document truth), it is clear that his attempt to do so was extremely admirable, even though he may only have achieved an evocation of the truth he sought to capture.

My need to show more in a film than can be achieved through, for example, the ‘expository’ styles of Grierson et al, is vital not only because of the complexity of the subject of climate change, but also, as I have touched on, because in creating ‘film worlds’ or films that create impressions of places (as in the Vertovian montage), it seems more possible to evoke a sense of what may not, in fact, be recordable. The film upon which this project is based deals with climate change through the optic of a flood myth. This location, Cante’r Gwaelod, is in essence a location that is

no longer there. When we speak of the profilmic, ‘Profilmic’, indicat(es) what is found in front of the camera and leaves its impression on the film...’ (Chanan 2007, p.52) a myth about a place that no longer exists cannot belong there. This place, central to the premise of the film, can never actually be recorded, in this case a place of history, or indeed of imagination. The matter of how I might include this missing actuality lies in, not only, finding out what it is that is being left out, (see chapter one) – in this case a flood myth – what that flood myth means, but also how to evoke this meaning in the film. I turn not only to the afilmic realm and unpacking what that materially means, but to extant films that also seek to include elements of loss or absence. For this purpose I wish to look now at a film that deals with an enormous human tragedy that can no longer be seen, but as the filmmaker might favour, can still be detected. By looking at this film and comparing some of the methodological considerations applied to it’s making, I may be able to further contextualize some of the decisions I made while making *Forecast*. For this reason I carefully turn to the film *Shoah* (1985) directed by Claude Lanzmann over twelve years and being over nine hours in length.

### ***Shoah*: A past perfect continuous film grammar**

*Shoah*, taken from Hebrew and meaning ‘destruction’, is a film that dealt (deals) with profound human tragedy.<sup>42</sup> I am, of course, extremely mindful of this in making comparisons (however

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<sup>42</sup> *Shoah* is taken from the original Hebrew word for ‘destruction’, but has come to mean the mass murder of European Jewry since the 1940s. Yad Vashem. (2015) *The Holocaust* [Online]. Available at: [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource\\_center/the\\_holocaust.asp#!prettyPhoto](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource_center/the_holocaust.asp#!prettyPhoto) (Accessed:30/05/15)

slight) between the methodologies of a film about the Holocaust – an event from the past that retains its immediacy through the sheer horror and expanse of it – and my own about climate change. If we flip the view, however, from that of the *actual* to the *possible*, is it reasonable to say that in the face of a disaster on the scale that climate change may represent, it might be excusable? *Shoah*, and specifically the auteur Lanzmann, aimed to create a record and/or a document of the Holocaust to preserve the event in the present. It was Lanzmann's aim to create the definitive record, in spite of the films of the Holocaust that had gone before. In the same sense, any film about climate change must aim to show that through some faith things can be done *a priori* the destruction and horror, so, in essence the aims of both films was to capture, respectively in the past and the future, what is not before the lens. In essence, one film has the faith that the work will serve to prevent the event, by denying its disappearance into past, the other the future by anchoring that in the present. Lanzmann states, 'The worst moral and artistic crime that can be committed in producing a work dedicated to the Holocaust is to consider Holocaust as past.' (Lanzmann 2007, p.35) In the same way as Lowe's study, mentioned earlier in this chapter, suggests creating a film about climate change that gives the impression that it is not immediate and present universally, might, or should be, viewed as Lanzmann's 'artistic crime' as far as climate change is concerned.

Lanzmann faced the prospect of creating a record from patchy accounts, of places which, in many cases, no longer revealed themselves visually,

His quest somewhat resembles those of children who come back to a place because they absolutely



want to see the place where they were born, even if it no longer exists or has been irreparably changed into something else, a highway or a supermarket.' (Didi-Huberman: 2007, p.114)

He did this because '...he absolutely wanted to see, and make others see, the places where millions of his fellow men and women were destroyed by other human beings.' (115)

The landscape of the coast of west Wales does not contain the mythical kingdom of Cantre'r Gwaelod; all that remains is its potential trace or outline, which here must be brought alive somehow. 'One does not kill legends by opposing them with memories but by confronting them, if possible, in the inconceivable "present" in which they originated. The only way to do this is to resuscitate the past and make it present.' (Lanzmann: 2007: 35) Can we substitute the legend Lanzmann refers to with that of flood, or unpredictable weather, or mass migration and so on, caused by climate change, and if so how? Lanzmann's *Shoah* is confrontational in nature; he is concerned to elicit facts, sometimes apparently forcefully, from his interview contributors, often asking for specific facts. He searches for structural anchors to provide his truth, stabbing at charts, maps, block plans and models. He wishes to know *where* something happened, *when* something happened, worrying much less about *why*, given that in asking the former questions, some how the latter becomes answered. In essence, Lanzmann's attempt to pin the facts down replaces the language Roland Barthes feels robbed in myth, making concrete the mythologized. (1972:132)

There is indeed an absolute obscenity in the project of understanding. Not to understand was my ironclad rule during all the years Shoah was in the making: I braced myself on this refusal as on the only

possible attitude, at once ethical and operative. Keeping my guard high up, wearing these blinkers, and this blindness itself, were the vital condition of creation. (Lanzmann 2007, p.51)

Lanzmann's contributor choices are not confined to either victim or perpetrator. These are not, however, arbitrary, scattergun-snatched conversations, but they too seem to be part of a process of recording *what is there*. It appears that this is part of his unflinching gaze, filming everyone from the civil servant that organized the transport of the victims to the camps, the deputy commandant of Treblinka to the barber who was there, just outside the gas chambers, cutting the hair of those about to be 'liquidated'. He wishes, it seems, to build a picture of the event, bringing it to the present, in the moment, in the houses and workplaces of the people as they were during filming. The camera records Treblinka Station as it was at the time of filming. The audience is given the task of processing these images with the past and present in mind all the while the interviews continue to tie these images to the present, but the subject of discussion is the past. The film is, 'haunted by those images that we never see.' (Camper 2007, p.104) This unflinching gaze, although palpably driven by an almost obsessive desire to see and uncover truth, recalls the energy of Vertov and like Vertov's montage, reveals more in its edit and the juxtaposition of the film clips than it does through what it shows. The past is present in the film only in the subtext of the edited present and it is this that interests me most if transposed to be the future represented in the present within the immediacy of encounter. Some of the victims, those that were in the camps and interviewed by Lanzmann – including the barber, the Sonderkommando (inmates charged with jobs such as the disposal of corpses) seem to have

been interviewed partially because they *could* survive and therefore their presence at the time *Shoah* was made tells us more about the event and how those events themselves survived; the Holocaust survives as long as people are linked to it, or feel a connection to it that has, of course, not disappeared.

In dealing with such a subject, the murder, worse the industrialized murder, of six million people, it is impossible to fit this within the frame. Lanzmann makes no attempt to, choosing to avoid archive footage of bodies, or emaciated inmates of the camps. If it fits within the frame, arguably it quantifies and as Fred Camper concludes his essay,

Films that include images of the camps take a step, if only a small one, in the direction of pretending comprehensibility: if one thinks one is seeing the facts, one begins to take their measure and makes them one's own. By presenting his subject not only through its facts but through a form that gives that subject a life in film, through its haunting vision of an unseeable and unhealable wound, a void that can never be filled, Lanzmann has given the most profound and everlasting of names to those who were lost. (Camper 2007, p. 111)

Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* is not conceptual. The Holocaust did occur and clear evidence exists that can make history concrete. It would be as easy to construct a film about the Holocaust as it would about climate change that relied on the act of *telling*. Like Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi* or Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* it is in between the film clips, or film truths that this 'life in film' (ibid) comes to being. The juxtaposition of clips providing an afilmic landscape and a stage for reflection. It is, in my opinion, this that gives film its power. It is, therefore, not easy to categorize *Shoah* as a documentary per se, indeed the film has been described as having, '...(refrained)

from aesthetic criticism and instead has presented the film as a “stirring document” (Koch: 2007, p.128) In tearing the past firmly into the present, Lanzmann generously relies on the imagination of his audience, in at least processing what this, ‘interview film’ (Koch 2007: 129) shows. In deciding what type of film *Shoah* actually is, many people have found problems – in many senses this may well be due to the fact that the film has been subjected to heightened levels of scrutiny because of its serious nature, ‘The fact that it is also a work of art is acknowledged only in passing and almost with embarrassment. Purists of the documentary form came closest to acknowledging the problem, since they were struck by the fact that long stretches of the film are not “documentary” at all’ (Koch 2007, p.129) Quite what Koch would term documentary is not made clear in his essay, but Didi-Huberman makes the point that,

Undoubtedly, the counter-myth of *Shoah* was certainly not interested in the history of cinema, because it had to confront a history much more threatening than those in our ordinary feast of images. But the form of this confrontation, in the nine hours of its images and speeches, will change the very course of the cinema through its conscience, that is, the story it tells. (Didi-Huberman 2007, p.122)

*Shoah* deals with a subject so large, so important and so stark that it seems to completely avoid the need for classification in relation to any other film at all. In looking upwards to this film in order to provide some kind of framework, or opportunity to explain my own film about climate change, I recognize the exceptional characteristics of Lanzmann’s second film. Given the presence of myth and the looming possibility of large scale destruction in my own film, my focus on finding an ethical horizon from which to operate, and an appropriate methodology, having admired the appropriateness of Lanzmann’s own, means that in making the comparison of my

film with his, to borrow from Grierson, I must 'let it stand.' (Grierson 1932:1)

Lanzmann's past perfect continuous filmic grammar: "she has been doing", implying that she has continued doing something from a point in the past to the present, is relevant in tackling myth as a central theme of my film. This grammar can re-contextualize the myth in the present day and makes the challenges presented by sea level rise (and other associated effects of climate change) current and universal. In other words, as long as flooding exists, so might a filmic reality of Cantre'r Gwaelod in some form or another, just as the possibility of Holocaust exists as long as persecution on the basis of race or religion exists; it is immaterial whether these ideas are mythological if it is conceivable that they might actually exist in the present world.

On one level, achieving this past perfect language in film is not hard at all, simply recording what is there should, on a basic level, recall the myths of the past if we accept that our landscapes are rich with the memories of the past and that that past is indelible and informs what we see now. What is hard, of course, is preserving the energy of the past and applying it to the present.

Consider the comfortable interview location for Franz Suchomel, the second in command of Treblinka camp. How does Lanzmann anchor him in the past? How does Lanzmann show him as a figure involved in such horror? The answer seems linked to the way in which Lanzmann works with what is there, a man who is secretly filmed, shown on a small distorted CCTV screen; he is presented as he then existed (at the time of filming) and it is no less horrifying. But it is also through Lanzmann's energy, in this case a palpable, almost obsessive energy, born here out of a

rage that seems to throw the horror of the past into the images of the present.

My question is then, if Lanzmann can contextualize the past in the present, then surely it is possible to contextualize the future in the present too. Given that in this chapter we saw how some of the methodologies in documentaries about climate change employed, 'shock tactics' and rendered climate change a distant or geographically removed issue, this ambition, to render the future possibilities immediate, becomes extremely important and an obvious route towards making documentaries around climate change effective. In outlining some of the prominent examples of films that – whether entirely documentary or not – are in many ways failing to deliver the communication impact that they might, through the questions raised, for example, by studies O'Neill, Nicholson-Cole and Lowe have conducted, I suggest that other methods might be considered as far as the climate change documentary is concerned. I wish to demonstrate that some of the more experimental montage elements, eschewing the conventional interview/illustrate/narrate dynamic, employed by conventional documentaries may in fact generate work that is either not communicating effectively, or worse, having a largely negative impact.

At the start of this chapter I investigated films that dealt with climate change, including *Age of Stupid* and *An Inconvenient Truth*, in particular. I went on to look at how these films may be less effective than they might be due to their didactic nature and their employment of 'shock tactics'. I then went on to look at the montage films of Godfrey Reggio and Peter Snowdon, arguing that

this montage concept, by creating a unique 'film world' actually manages to allow more information to be present in the film – and within the film length – but relied on the audience to interpret this to some extent. This method interested me in particular regarding my own film, because I identify that by using this montage idea, I am able to allow the existence of all the extremely complex strands of narrative that exist around the issue of climate change. I therefore turned to one of the most famous montage films of all, *Man with a Movie Camera*, in order to closely examine the extensive theories that surround this work, in order to properly contextualize my own choices when making *Forecast*. Considering the idea of the profilmic and afilmic elements of a film, I went on to look at Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* making the connection between the montage film and the film which aims to keep history alive. I make the argument that both *Man with a Movie Camera* and *Shoah* rely far more on the afilmic rather than the profilmic to produce meaning. In the former case, Vertov uses locations that only suggest the location of his eventual 'film world', which only exists in his montage in the cinema. Lanzmann avoids filmically referencing the past through archive and so on, but allows the profilmic (the shots of the concentration camps and interviews *at the time of shooting*) to suggest the afilmic aspects (the horror of the past). These concepts are not at all straightforward. The idea of showing the afilmic appears to be the rearrangement of the profilmic so as to suggest the parts that are not there, that cannot be filmed. This is not only an act of talent in a director and editor, it is an elusive trick that is hard to achieve and even harder to assess in terms of efficacy. This idea of the afilmic, which I believe is key to *Man with a Movie Camera* and *Shoah*, is a notion suggested by Werner Herzog when he talks of 'ecstatic truth'.

...I elevate [*erheben*] the spectator, before he has even seen the first frame, to a high level, from which to enter the film. And I, the author of the film, do not let him descend from this height until it is over. Only in this state of sublimity [*Erhabenheit*] does something deeper become possible, a kind of truth that is the enemy of the merely factual. Ecstatic truth, I call it. (Herzog 1992, p.5)

It is this 'ecstatic truth' that I seek with my own film. I want my audience to experience my film as Herzog describes above. This is how I have experienced *Man with a Movie Camera* and *Shoah* as an audience member because the methodologies employed by both Vertov and Lanzmann create a film where it is possible to be removed to a 'film world', distinct, but none-the-less as authentic as the real world. These films record both what is in front of the camera, but also what is around and about it as well. Films like these, in my opinion, are films that are most likely to have affect on an audience and therefore transmit an essential message effectively.

In the next chapter I wish to examine how I have made decisions that attempt to bring an 'ecstatic truth' to my audience. I will look at some ideas about the camera as a tool for recording truth and go on to think about perception and how we perceive the world, particularly landscape, with particular attention placed on how we might record this. I wish to closer look at the idea of *affect* and how this relates to the afilmic, the notion of 'ecstatic truth' and perception, particularly some ideas around phenomenology which inform how we place the filmmaker in the world in relation to his/her subject. The next concluding chapter will focus on the technology I used in the film, the methodology employed while filming and the way in which the film was edited.

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## Chapter 3

### Section One: Becoming the Camera: Media technologies and being in the world

#### Landscapes: locating the frame

In this chapter I wish to examine some theories and filmmaking choices relating to methodological matters while carrying out this PhD project. In chapters one and two, I examined some of the extant work relating to the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod and identified how these informed some thematic directions to be explored in the film. These points of focus were: myth and structure, specifically the inadequacy of some of the structural analysis proposed by Levi-Strauss, in that this 'simplification' gave no room (in film) for wider complexities associated with climate change. I looked at Roland Barthes and his assertion that myth was, 'language robbery.' (1972, p.131) This raised the issue that myth might not simply be seen as a device to frame meaning and aesthetics within the film, but also represents a central problem with the notion that messages about climate change might themselves be prone to mystification. In chapter two I contextualised these ideas through the optic of extant films themselves, giving examples of films that appear to be efficacious in passing on a message and having the possibility of eliciting a positive affect on the audience, and those that appear to have the opposite effect.

This chapter aims to link the previous two chapters by outlining some key theoretical perspectives that made many of the specific methodological decisions in my own film essential.

I will look at the way in which the filmmaker might frame the landscape in film and how this problematizes any notion of authenticity. I will give a couple of key examples of films that have approached the idea of framing landscape and discuss the issues they present. I will focus on the characteristics of the camera and how this relates to the framing of landscape and ways which filmmakers might mitigate the tendency for the camera to statically frame the landscape and will make the argument that this is less likely to evoke a sense of the afilmic and therefore tend to elicit less affect in the audience because what is in front of them on the cinema screen is framed and therefore highly mediated; it is, of course, removed from their direct experience.

In looking at other ways to use modern filmmaking technology, I will seek to show how techniques I used in my film, giving examples of these being used in different contexts, might seek to bridge this sense of remove in the audience and therefore elicit affect in them. I will show that through careful methodological decisions, not only in filming, but deciding to walk the Welsh coastline, for example, I was able to narrow what I term a 'mediation gap'. I will attempt to make clear why this is vital when discussing climate change via the medium of film throughout this chapter.

Considering my own methodological approach to a documentary about climate change, especially given the practice as research structure underpinning this PhD project, I needed to consider both the theoretical reasons for deciding particular approaches, but also the

technological requirements for making a documentary film. Therefore, I wish to, as far as possible, begin this chapter at what I consider to be the beginning in film work, the camera itself.

## **Can the camera see truth?**

It is possible, with a little expertise, to use the camera's lens to calculate distances based on the focal length of objects within the frame. If a tree is in focus on a 250mm lens, then, by looking at the focus ring, the marked corresponding number can give a fairly accurate indication of distance. This is a useful technique. Without the camera and its lens, we are forced to rely on much more primitive methods to calculate distance, which might include drawing on our experience of what distances *look* like, or *feel* like. We might take as a reference a football pitch, or perhaps use ourselves, our own scale if you like, pacing or using our arms for measuring. Without the camera, our ability to measure distances falls to our memories or our physical presence within the landscape; we must belong in the realm that the camera marks to see our distances.

The camera is within the world, but the world it visually records is never behind its lens.

Considering the profilmic versus the afilmic, the world the camera records is confined to what the camera can frame. There are some exceptions – perhaps recording sound using a wide field stereo mic or a binaural set of microphones – which will be able to sonically record things that

are beyond the lens, indeed sound plays a part in recording the afilmic, or what is around the lens. This artifice of representation describes the camera as an object that does not have memory (it does have a virtual memory of course), senses or any cognisance of its physicality and has nothing other than its function to draw on. We accept the camera is a machine. In measuring distance, for example, it renders the landscape a place of mathematics and structure, a place of physical reality. The camera is undeniably structural, regardless of whether the operator is a structuralist or post-structuralist, because the camera mechanically structures what it records. The camera's world is a world of linear perspective, 'the depiction of three-dimensional spaces and objects upon two-dimensional surfaces.' (Wylie 2007: 56). The camera is, therefore, an object limited by its function, capable of much less than the human eye, ear, or indeed, the entire body, although this is not a view that was held by Dziga Vertov, perhaps because of his excitable enthusiasm for the camera. Malcolm Turvey identifies that, 'The human eye, according to Vertov, is weak, flawed, and primitive in contrast to the camera.' (Turvey 2011, p.154) and Vertov himself states, 'The mechanical eye, the camera, rejecting the human eye as crib sheet, gropes its way through the chaos of visual events, letting itself be drawn or repelled by movement, probing as it goes, the path of its own movement.' (ibid.)

The camera is not possessed of emotions or senses that for us, as humans, allows primitive access to our understanding of the world around. We rely on memory, vision and reason, among many other things of course, which mean we don't need the camera for our everyday business at all; we live and perceive three-dimensional space, but we do not record, except in our memories.

The camera does not perform the function of the human being in the middle of the contingency of the world. Our responses to *what is there* are informed far more by what we might consider *was there*, or what *will be there*, our imaginations performing the task of recording *beyond* our eyes. In other words, we naturally allow for the afilmic in our understanding of what we witness, in spite of what we might consider the human anatomical profilmic realm captured by our eyesight. Paul Virilio, here talking about progress and the development of screen technology and its wider implications, but remaining relevant to our discussion here about the primacy of the human eye over the camera, states,

Augmented reality is a fool's game, a televisual glaucoma. Screens have become blind. Lateral vision is very important and it is not by chance that animal's eyes are situated on the sides of their head. Their survival depends on anticipating surprise, and surprises never come head-on. Predators come from the back or the sides. There is a loss of the visual field and the anticipation of what really surrounds us. (Virilio 2012, p. 37)

The audience in the cinema is still prone to these reactions as they observe a film, being physically present in the cinema. It is therefore important to me that this relationship is considered. If the filmmaker is eliciting affect through some of the techniques *Age of Stupid* employs, for example, then while the filmmaker created the affect through CGI or 'shock tactics', the audience responds to them as a human being, capable of feeling fear, anxiety and despair. If the filmmaker can be seen to be experiencing exactly the same sensations while making the film, not only does this suggest a better ability to connect, but goes some way towards democratising the relationship between filmmaker and audience and makes more likely an

affecting connection; the audience can recognise the behaviour of the filmmaker and, perhaps, his/her intentions. This chapter keeps this realignment of the filmmaker/audience as an extremely important underpinning principle regarding the methodology employed in making the film.

Understanding the limitations of the tools we use to make work, at least in basic theoretical and ethical terms, makes easier our ability to assess the efficacy of both extant work and methodologies applied when planning or executing work yet to be made. In particular, when recording landscape, it is important to understand the camera's passive record of the landscape (we can, if required, extrapolate landscape to mean *mise-en-scène* or *profilmic*) in terms of how this influences the meaning of a piece of work. If we understand the linear perspective of the camera as giving, '(An) impression of depth, of three-dimensionality, (which) is an illusion' (Wylie 2007: 56), the question stemming from this might be, '[...] can we trust the content captured by this camera as being anything other than an illusion too?' It is by looking more closely at the issue of framing in the landscape that we can begin to unpack some of these concerns about the role of the camera in making a film that deals, in a large part, with the filming of landscape. In doing this, we can begin to outline ways – ways I adopted in my own film's making – of thinking about how this relationship between the camera and the landscape might influence any affect that the film has on the audience.

In his investigation of landscape in his 2007 book *Landscape*, human geographer John Wylie outlines some of the core theoretical approaches to the ways in which we relate to landscape as human beings. I have found these useful when approaching ways of creating a work that, despite being about climate change, is also concerned with the landscape of the Welsh coastline, given that it is the predominant *mise-en-scène* in the film. It is from Wylie's overview of two particular approaches to defining the idea of landscape that I concentrated on as a route to critical thinking on the subject, but also for inspiration as far as determining a methodology was concerned. Wylie's book, *Landscape*, is an overview of several theories. The central thesis in his book is that there are two overarching ideas of landscape; being within the landscape or being the observer of it. While it is true that a nuanced view of landscape might allow for a person to exist as both the participant *within* and the viewer *of*, I have found it useful to consider – particularly from the very literal optic of the camera lens – this notion of landscape, and how we frame it or otherwise, in binary terms. (Wylie 2007, p 2)

How we see landscape and how this informs how we might record it in visual terms is both an issue of philosophical perspective and technological evaluation. Wylie posits that one way we see the landscape is as if it is framed by a window, or a picture frame. This 'way of seeing' suggests, 'landscape as veil, landscape as text, landscape as gaze.' (Wylie 2007: 67) The landscape, as a result of a Cartesian duality, is a landscape framed by the mind, as the mind observes like a camera; it is a framed picture before us. While Wylie concentrates primarily on the human being's perception of spaces we might term landscapes, rather than the way in which

the camera captures the *mise-en-scène*, it is interesting to consider the similarities between this 'landscape as a way of seeing' and the camera (ibid). If we can, as Vertov attempted to, anthropomorphise the camera, then its record of what it perceives must be, as Wylie puts it, 'a way of seeing' because the camera does not, and cannot, possess the human qualities required (as flawed as these may be) to experience the *mise-en-scène* bodily, firmly planted within that which it films. As I earlier mentioned, the camera cannot draw on experience, memories or the senses possessed by human beings; the camera records as a mind separate from the world. (Turvey 2011, p.152)

Of course, giving this amount of attention to the camera ignores the presence of the filmmaker. In isolation the camera as a tool may be limited by its own functionality, but considering it is a tool that is used by a sentient human being and therefore the extent to which this characteristic is central to the meaning of what is filmed, depends on how it is manipulated. I have given very close consideration to the camera's use in making my documentary for this PhD project and have employed various techniques to mitigate the limitation of a static, passive camera. This has been through the employment of handheld camera work, the use of body-mounted cameras and, of course, the use of other equipment that anchor the camera, so it behaves in a way that gazes rather than participates. Later in this chapter I will expand on these ideas, but underline here that understanding the camera's basic structure, or inherent anatomy, enables a better understanding of my own methodological perspective and how this relates to some of the other work I will go on to consider here, but also have examined in previous chapters.



I argue that, in representing climate change, the way in which information or ideas are captured at their most fundamental level, respectively reveals their efficacy as tools for social change.

...landscape, as a way of seeing, is duplicitous, because whilst on the one hand it offers redemptive transcendent and aesthetic vision of sensual unity with nature, on the other it operates as a smokescreen concealing the underlying truth of material conditions and manipulating our vision such that we have become unaware of the distancing which separates us from the natural world. (Wylie 2007, p.67)

This distance from the natural world may indeed lie at the heart of our struggle as human beings to develop a symbiotic relationship with the world around us, which may enable us to mitigate our supposed destruction of it. Framing the landscape, to use Wylie's focus, from a position where we are not within it, or part of it, encourages, as Roland Barthes put it, '(a) mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal nature.' (Barthes: 1990, p.9). In other words, through a process of mystification we might at best promote a utopian solution to our negative influences on the environment, at worst we might entirely miss the central reason why our relationship with our environment deteriorated in the first place. As Raymond Williams argues, 'a working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation.' (Williams 1985, p.26). If the camera tends towards this observation, then attempts to use it as a tool to mitigate climate change in whatever way this might be achieved it must be understood as having the potential to, as Barthes posits, mythologise.

If seen from a Cartesian perspective – the camera being a dislocated ‘mind’, viewing the world as separate from itself – the camera might be seen as a device that almost automatically mystifies. This is because its record misses out fundamental details. In other words, the camera records the profilmic, but cannot, as we have seen, record the afilmic. Since this project is based around a film that considers myth at its heart, this characteristic of the camera becomes key in considering its use methodologically. I reiterate, of course, that one of the central areas of focus in this project is myth, the myth of Cante'r Gwaelod, that, whether directly or not, needed to be represented in the film attached to the project. This myth and the idea of myth provided a rich line of enquiry that at the very least propelled my research forward both in representing that which is no longer there (or, indeed, may not be in the future), but also the propensity for documentary to make myth of its subjects. Of course, here I am particularly focussing on the way in which the camera depicts landscape, and intend now to give a few examples of the way in which this has been attempted on the screen, using this as a springboard for further examination of some of the relevant theories that surface as a result.

### **Directing the landscape: *Patagonia* and other myths**

One film in particular that centres on the Welsh landscape and one particular flooding event is Marc Evans' *Patagonia* (2010). While this is a fiction feature film, the use of the landscape is interesting, and I feel relevant to this PhD project. The film deals with themes such as loss,

colonialism and cultural identity and can be classed, certainly through its aesthetics, as a landscape film. While predominantly shot in the Argentinian province of Patagonia, some of the film (primarily the second half) depicts the landscape of Wales and at one point presents a version of the flood narrative of Capel Celyn. Capel Celyn was a small village, just outside Bala (a town within the Snowdonia National Park, whose economy is, at least in part, derived from Llyn Tegid, or Bala Lake, which is a haven for sailing and other outdoor pursuits). Capel Celyn was flooded in 1964 in order to provide a secure supply of drinking water to the people of Liverpool. Because of the nature of the scheme and, more importantly, how it was conducted – evictions, the relocation of graves and the compulsory purchase of land – this has become a symbol for nationalism and the perceived erosion of the national identity in Wales. Certain comparisons might be made between this event and *Cantre'r Gwaelod*, not simply because of the idea of inundation, but because both 'events' symbolise a warning. In the case of Capel Celyn, this symbolises the erosion of traditional Welsh culture and in the case of *Cantre'r Gwaelod*, the erosion of the landscape itself. Here, inundation represents the permanent deletion of values associated with localism, cultural identity and sustainable community by a geographically dislocated craving for natural resources. It is possible, therefore, to recognise a conflation of symbolism between these two events – bearing in mind, of course, that the story of *Cantre'r Gwaelod*, as discussed in chapter one, is entirely mythological and based on events that occurred long before the historical setting.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For historical context and a description of the flooding of Capel Celyn see: Thomas, E. (2007) *Capel Celyn. Ten Years of Destruction: 1955-1965*. Llandybie: Dinefwr Press

While *Patagonia* is a fiction feature, its use of this landscape icon raises some important questions about how landscape is represented in film. Capel Celyn (now known as Tryweryn reservoir) in symbolising the displacement of communities to serve a larger, 'colonial' nation is rendered sacred as a place of tensions around Welsh identity and independence. There is something iconic and important about the location of the drowned village of Capel Celyn – not least there is a chapel, built to commemorate the event, with the removed gravestones assembled in the chapel gardens. This is a very specific place, indeed with its strange tower by the dam wall, a place many residents of Wales would recognise. To use this political event in a film, but substitute a different, more photogenic location, to replace the less appealing Tryweryn, could easily be seen as unacceptable, however, this is precisely what Marc Evans does.

In representing a flood story like this, Evans crosses a line. His camera mythologises this important location by featuring an entirely different landscape for its aesthetic advantages. This is an important example of John Wylie's 'landscape as a way of seeing' because the filmmakers do not consider it important to have been within the very landscape they choose to (mis) represent. I decided very early on in my methodological decision-making that it was essential that I was present in the landscape I wished to consider in my film. I needed to see for myself what existed on the boundary of the myth, how climate change might have impacted that place and be able to speak to those along the way about the place and climate change itself. It was important to me that I lived through the historical reality of the coastline in order to properly

connect to an idea of inundation and to see for myself exactly what remained. Marc Evans is not considering environmental issues in *Patagonia*, but the film does concentrate on Welsh identity and its potential erosion. Of course, the effects of climate change are wide reaching and could indeed include this erosion of culture and certainly the very real erosion of landscape itself.

Generally speaking, Evans' film does speak of loss, using the landscape as its palette as I have done in my own work on climate change and Cantre'r Gwaelod. At the very least, *Patagonia* demonstrates that the way in which the landscape is represented can be vital in conveying political subtext, if we accept a pared down binary that sees landscape as either framed as a 'way of seeing', or a landscape that we are entirely within and inescapably part of. As Wylie states, 'The landscape way of seeing is thus understood to be the preserve of an elite, it symbolises their dominion over the land in the very act of 'naturalising' it, of making its particular representation seem the natural order of things.' (Wylie 2007, p.69) In representing climate change through a journey on foot, a journey of encounter and contingency, I was drawn to consider how the landscape itself both on screen and around it affect the central meaning of the film and that in using a mythological, indeed iconic location, I needed to put the landscape itself in primacy.

Given the colonial nature of the flooding of Capel Celyn (see appendix 2a) some questions are raised about the idea of a remote, removed relationship with the landscape. In this case, Liverpool City Council flooded a specific village to provide drinking water for a place far away. There is, in this a sense of descending on a place, arriving and putting a stamp on a location.

This is also what often seems to happen in film. Marc Evans arrives to film, captures his footage and then departs. This vaguely colonial behaviour, or the sense that a camera descends on a place with a sense of privilege and ownership, is not only ironic, given the subject of *Patagonia*, but also echoes the idea presented by Wylie that the landscape is there to be consumed, rather than experienced. There is no sense of his travel in the film, or, especially given the substitution of locations, any sense really that he was there at all. There are, of course, exceptions and I would like to look at one striking example of a landscape film that, while seeming to gaze, also gives a strong sense of 'being within' the landscape filmed.

### **Moving towards the gaze: Raymond Depardon's *Modern Life***

In his 2009 film *Modern Life*, a film which provides a snapshot of rural French life at a time of transition into the modern world. Raymond Depardon, through a partially sub-textual sense, partially through his relationship with his interview subjects and his apparent familiarity with the landscape he films shows a way of being in the landscape and an apparent sensitivity to the place he films and the people working within it. In thinking about the subtext present in Depardon's work some attention might be given to his intentions as a filmmaker. Paisley Livingston's argument that an author's intentions are still key to understanding a work is useful in seeing, at least in part why *Modern Life* describes the landscape of its focus so well.

(I) maintain that an understanding of individual agency is crucial [...] In making an utterance, an author acts on an expressive intention, the content of which is a representation of some attitude to be made manifest and of a means of so doing.' (1997, p.133)

While we can obviously never fully understand the intentions of the artist in assessing a piece of work, understanding Depardon's background and methodology helps identify the things that make the film *Modern Life* work. Depardon seems to have mastered the idea of *being within* the landscape. While he relies on the static camera throughout the film and films the landscape in a 'painterly' way, there are other ways in which despite being a film that exists in the profilmic, the afilmic is implied by what seems to be going on behind the scenes. Raymond Depardon is a Magnum photographer and, rather as he might shoot a still portrait or landscape shot, it appears, on first glance, that he films from a place of remove, except he does two things that are crucial to giving a sense that he films *within* the landscape. The first is that he records on his journey to the places he films, recording his arrival – for quite some time – through the windscreen of his car. Clearly, this movement contextualises his place as a filmmaker who travels through the landscape he films as he is involved in his filmmaking process. While the camera remains static within the car, recording the car's movement rather than his own, he is, of course, the one who is driving through the French countryside he documents. The second thing that firmly locates Depardon within this place is the relationships he has developed with the rural people - farmers mainly – with whom he obviously has a highly evolved friendship. Depardon spent ten years documenting the lives of farming families in rural France – he would, for example, take photos at his subject's weddings, and therefore displays an on-going relationship with his subjects. In his edit, Depardon includes his own questioning at times and it is this reflexive device that further shows that the filmmaker was very much among his interview subjects. *Modern Life* appears to

show, both beautifully and ethereally, a truth of some kind. Depardon opens a privileged window of candour for the audience onto the place he filmed, so often shut in films where the filmmaker appears so distant. It is a film that reaches into what is within the land it features and in so doing goes a long way to eschew mythology or utopian notions while still placing the aesthetics of the land and its people in primacy. It is because of this that Depardon's approach appeals very much when considering ways in which to approach my own work. Indeed, it is also because of this idea of documenting travel – in order to contextualise the resulting landscape footage – and a conversational interview style, that my own film evolved in the way it did.

Despite the many differences and nuanced politics over issues such as independence, language and culture, Wales lends itself to the filmic treatment that Depardon applied to his beloved French countryside because it is has countryside that, like in *Modern Life*, is rapidly changing in the face of sociological and technological advance, among other things. In the Welsh landscape film *Sleep Furiously* (2010) we are introduced to the life of the small community of Trefeurig, in the heart of mid Wales. Unlike Depardon, Koppel takes a predominantly observational stance, at least on the surface. Described by the filmmaker as, 'a love letter to a way of life', Koppel's film achieved critical acclaim.<sup>44</sup> The reason the film elicited such acclaim however, is problematized by the film critic Alex Cox when he states that it was, 'the least anthropocentric film I've seen.' (Cox 2012) Aesthetically the film closely resembles work such as Depardon's *Modern Life* or

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<sup>44</sup> See, United Agents. (2015) *Gideon Koppel* [Online]. Available at: <http://unitedagents.co.uk/gideon-koppel> (Accessed 4 July 2015)



Nicholas Philibert's *Etre D'Avoir* (2002), but a distinct lack of interaction with those who live in the landscape, observed, as they are, silently from afar, sets it apart. While *Etre D'Avoir* shares Koppel's observational approach, the proximity of the camera, even if reflexive through a sense of the filmmaker's presence, belies an interaction (some semblance of a developed relationship) that is not present in *Sleep Furiously*. The intention of the filmmaker, while a typically elusive mode of enquiry, does help in analysing what is actually going on in *Sleep Furiously*, for example, Gideon Koppel's own comments on his practice do, I think, reveal a lot, 'I am not chummy or chatty with people in front of the camera...When I am making a film, I am primarily trying to evoke my experience of the world – perhaps a sense of the transference and counter transference.' (Koppel in Pearce and McLaughlin 2007, p.71) Is this transference and counter transference Koppel's own imaginings as he turns his gaze to this place, or does he mean he searches for the true nature of the lives of those within the landscape and notice, as a consequence, the influence this humanity has on that landscape? Turning his focus to the lives of the people he would go on to film in *Sleep Furiously*, in the promotional film *Sketchbook for a Library Van* (Koppel: 2007) Koppel removes his interview subjects from the landscape entirely and films them against a plain white screen, creating, '...an alternative text in which the characters of the film were isolated from that landscape which is integral to their lives and stories.' (Koppel in Pearce and McLaughlin: 2007, p.67), the intended result, '...revealing the physicality and gesture of the characters, almost with the brutality of a Lucien Freud painting.'

(68).

While Gideon Koppel's film demonstrates clearly a tendency to gaze upon the landscape, which is certainly a view galvanised by the comments he makes on his practice, climate change is an issue that is directly connected to the landscape and its population. It is within the landscape that climate change will be experienced and it is human behaviour *towards* the landscape that will exacerbate climate change. My focus as a filmmaker must, therefore, go beyond a record of a landscape devoid of people, or perhaps better put, in spite of people, and go beyond recording people disconnected from landscape. As I have said, my camera will record the profilmic, but I must also attempt to capture the afilmic, in a way that Depardon evidences in *Modern Life*.

Whether through the act of filming, and filming within the landscape – by a corporeal involvement in moving through it, or a genuine relationship with those I speak to on film, or whether, like Vertov, creating a new meaningful and affecting world in the edit. I chose to do both things and refer to these films and their methodologies in order to contextualise my own. It is essential for this project to remember that all human beings, regardless of their geographical location, their position within their respective societies, will be affected by climate change in some way or another. Quite apart from the fact that it is those within the landscape, including the filmmaker, who can verify how bad things have got, or otherwise, it is within these spaces, or landscapes that people will feel the net affects of a heating planet. Choosing to film observationally, or from a Cartesian remove – a mind separated from the realities of bodily interaction with the world – even if this is an attempt to re-contextualise people in order to remove the complexities, or confusions of the land in which they live, seems inappropriate when making work about a subject that involves us all and involves our collective home.

I would argue that *Modern Life* has a broadly phenomenological approach. I would certainly assert that my own methodology aspires to follow this theoretical path and feel that it is the approach likely to be the most appropriate for my film. John Wylie explains that,

The general argument is that landscape comprises the totality of relations between people and land. These relations are seen as on-going and evolving rather than static, they constitute an embedded and engaged being-in-the-world that comes before any thought of the world or the landscape as merely an external object. (Wylie 2007, p.144)

I wish to move on in this thesis to outline in more detail the idea of phenomenology and how it relates to documentary film. Given that my film is underpinned by many of these ideas, I hope that by doing so I will further explain decisions that were made while constructing the film.

Apart from some of the larger philosophical considerations that reverberate from this tension between a camera separate from the world and a filmmaker within it, there are more prosaic, but related ethical tensions that exist between the filmmaker and the subject. All documentary makers in some way or another will question their relationship to their subject at one stage or another and Russian documentary maker Sergei Dvortsevov is not alone with the sentiment that he expresses here,

People think you show some truth, but this is not the case. When you see through the lens, you lie immediately, because this is only part of the truth. It is a very compartmentalised truth. Documentary art film is not 'reality', but a reality that a director creates. This is creation, even though we call it documentary, because you point the camera and you construct the frame. From this point you lie. (Dvortsevov in Pearce and McLaughlin 2007, p.37)

This position perhaps should be the very first place from which a documentary filmmaker might begin formulating some ethical standpoint and subsequent methodology, and it is certainly a place from which I began planning the progress of my own film. Dvortsevov, above, summarises the arguments presented earlier in this chapter, specifically those regarding the camera as a recorder *of* or *within* the landscape. He also makes a clear reference to the recording of the profilmic and the afilmic. For Dvortsevov, the camera is only able to record the profilmic and in so doing we do not see *everything*. It is here that we lie, but also make a value judgement as to what is seen; in doing this could we be said to mythologise?

As I have discussed in chapter one, if myth somehow, according to Barthes, becomes inevitable, it is in understanding how things become mythologised that we can begin to unpack the way myth works and go some way to neutralising its effect. It is in this stripping away to what is actually there, whether this is through framing, or the static camera that an act of simplification occurs; a reliance on the profilmic. It can be seen, therefore, that it is here, in this simplification that myth gains a foothold. 'The signifier of myth presents itself in an ambiguous way: it is at the same time meaning and form, full on one side and empty on the other.' (1957, p.117) and when Barthes states, '[...] the journalist who starts with a concept and seeks a form for it.' (128), he brings his concerns directly to the field within which documentary could reasonably said to reside. It is indeed a familiar situation in the commissioning editor's office and can be seen at work in documentary production. Rather than discover what is there – as I aimed to do in my film – aim instead to find what you already supposed was there? This is why, as I will come to later in

this chapter, improvisation and contingency (mostly through the act of walking) were so vital to my methodology, allowing as they do a sense of discovery.

In order to appropriate or devise an ethical system that worked within my own methodological structure for this project, I found it useful to concentrate on one particular philosophical perspective that allowed me to film within the landscape and to theoretically reflect on my reasons for doing so. Climate change, as previously mentioned, is an issue that concerns us all, regardless of class or geographical location and so on. Climate change is a universal phenomenon and there can be no way of stepping back from the resulting affects. Policy, or communication about climate change can, and often does, happen from some symbolic point of remove and decisions are often abstract or somehow never quite ready to confront the absolute here and now of the problem. We cannot deal with the problem of climate change from a framed profilmic space, indeed we cannot step outside the afilmic realm of climate change, compartmentalising it, in the same way we cannot step outside the afilmic realm of our planet. On our planet and under its weather systems and potential catastrophes, there is only the present and the embodied afilmic realm. There is, therefore, only one appropriate philosophical theory that seemed available to me in devising my methodology.

## Phenomenology: a documentary language

It is characteristic of the Husserlian system that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something. Husserl uses the term 'intend' or 'intentional' to mark this relationship. 'Intention' in this sense is derived from the Latin term *intentio* meaning extending or stretching out to.' (Casebier 1991, p.15)

In phenomenological perception we reach towards the object. This 'reaching towards' is a constant temporal process that occurs as we move through our own life worlds. Allan Casebier, in his book *Film and Phenomenology: Towards a Realist Theory of Cinematic Representation* breaks down his explanation of the perceptual process into distinct components utilising Husserlian definitions. It is, however, important to consider the concept of intentionality in some detail, as within the process it has primacy.<sup>45</sup> The word 'intention' can be used differently to describe the relationship between the artist and his/her work, and the artist as a perceiver. Looking at the artist's relationship to their work, the idea of intention is used to denote the reason for the work. Looking out of a window, an artist assesses the potential impact of what they see if transposed into a work of art. When the artist phenomenologically perceives, the meaning of intention is different, but related, not only etymologically. In this instance the artist looks from the window towards the objects he/she perceives and there develops a hierarchy of things perceived. The artist can, theoretically, see everything from the window, but intentionality – the process of moving our perception towards something in *particular* – divides the scene into

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<sup>45</sup> Jean Paul Sartre clearly explains his understanding of intentionality in his essay on intentionality "Une idée fondamentale de la phenomenology de Husserl: l'intentionnalité." (1947)

things more noticed than other things. Crucially, however, in phenomenology all the things that can be seen from the window are perceived; they are just perceived in slightly different intensities.

In *Film and Phenomenology* Casabier outlines the processes Edmund Husserl saw in our phenomenological perception. Casabier details these processes individually, but I have found it helpful to bear in mind that they are interrelated, constantly evolving and act like a swirling energy. Casabier starts his description of Husserl's theory with the idea of *noema* and *noesis*. These are two crucial concepts that help describe the idea of perceptual intentionality *moving towards*. *Noesis* is the reaching towards the *noema*, which put simply is the thing to be perceived. Here then, is an action, *noesis*, which apprehends the things to be perceived, or *noema*. Casabier then introduces *hylectic data* which is the 'stuff' we move through as we stretch out to perceive. When intentionality places a tree in the primacy of his/her perception, the artist is also aware, when perceiving the tree, both consciously and unconsciously, of the other things that are happening in the view from the window. The artist, in focussing on the tree, assimilates other conditions present at the time: the tree's geographical position, the weather, the seasons and other activities within the view. This if considered from a perceptual standpoint, means that the above factors shape the way the tree is perceived. From a filmic perspective, Husserl's definitions of perception also align with those of the profilmic versus the afilmic. The filmmaker intends his/her camera *towards* something, but all around, outside of the camera's ability to see, are the other things we might term *hylectic data* or the afilmic and this is why, again, this theory of

perception and framing is so vital to my research. I am charged with the responsibility of conveying versions of events, concepts, situations or objects, in this case relating to climate change and this involves understanding the way a camera might be seen to perceive, but also how the perceptual process of the filmmaker him/herself might affect the film.

In my own methodological approach I have taken the Husserlian version of phenomenology, because of how well it seems to fit my ideas about the camera and framing and the relationship with that and human perception. Even if this comparison is not ontologically exact, it has provided me with a springboard to develop approaches that encourage a symbiosis between practical, ethical and theoretical ideas in order to further develop an appropriate methodology for a documentary about climate change. It is the gap between the act of perception that interests me and I would argue that in both human perception and the artificial perception of the camera, present what might be considered a 'mediation gap'. It appears that the narrowing of this gap of perception (or record) is the ambition of many people, especially those engaged in media practice, but a fascination with the idea of a return to the essence of things, their authentic selves in other words, is also present in meditative practices such as mindfulness.<sup>46</sup> Mindfulness, perhaps, represents some of the basic principles known in phenomenology as the 'reduction' and cast them into the 'mainstream'. This new therapeutic device seems to demonstrate the human desire to reconnect to the world around. This, of course, seems logical

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<sup>46</sup> A concise overview of the therapeutic benefits of mindfulness can be found here: NHS Choices. (2015) *Mindfulness for mental wellbeing* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mindfulness.aspx> (Accessed 17 June)



in a world threatened by a changing climate that is not only universal, but seemingly out of our control. This anxiety, in my opinion, is not assisted by some of the film work that employs the shock tactics discussed in chapter two. Maurice Merleau-Ponty best summarises this idea of the 'reduction' when he defines it as follows, '(phenomenology is) a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins as 'an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated on re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status.' (Merleau-Ponty 1986, p.1)

This 'direct and primitive contact with the world' (ibid) appears to be a rational antidote to our environmental disconnection, which, through consumerism, or the neo-liberal quest for growth, has caused the 'inalienable' (ibid) to become alienable. We are all inhabitants in the landscape of climate change – while conditions caused may vary geographically – so to believe it is possible to exist outside of it is highly problematic, creating a false belief system that is unengaged with *what is happening* and in that sense is mythologised. As Wylie explains,

Here, one argument is that a narrowly observational field science (geography or anthropology) misses altogether the everyday textures of living and being in landscape – misses, in other words, the point of view of a landscape's inhabitants. To access this point of view, it has been argued, the researcher must not only theorise landscape via corporeal dwelling, but also come to know landscape through participating in it with his or her whole body. (Wylie2007, p. 6)

In my decision to walk the coast, I wanted to do exactly what Wylie suggests above and avoid the kind of methodology, employed by filmmakers like Marc Evans, which involves an arrival and departure, with no sense of being within the landscape. By walking the landscape I was able to

open myself to encounter what existed there. This in itself is a kind of ‘anti-mythology’ and in the following sections I will go on to develop and explain some of these ideas which I appropriated for use in my own film.

## **Walking and talking: uncovering the truth of the myth**

When considering the idea of a record of the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod, the first thing I considered was that there was essentially nothing to film. As I have discussed in chapter 1, the myth can be seen to be full of meaning, but lacks any tangible, recordable image and I am unable to participate in person in a place that has disappeared. The edge of Cantre'r Gwaelod (simply now the coast), however, remains and if I wish an ‘immersion within’ the myth this is all that is available to me. It is for this reason that I decided to walk the boundary of the myth – which stretches between Ramsey Island to Bardsey Island. There were two reasons for choosing to film this way: the first reason was that as a project concerned with climate change, a low carbon methodology was deemed entirely appropriate, the second, and most important, was that in walking the coast path between the two islands enabled a full engagement with the weather, the terrain, the people and gave a correct sense of distance, time and pace.<sup>47</sup> Within reason, this walk would provide the narrative spine of the film, whether the walk would be edited as a chronologically exact record or not. The walk would enable the film to return to a theme that

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<sup>47</sup> Will Self discusses pace and the idea of technology that derives from the body at 10'45" in this video: Talks at Google (2007) *Authors at Google: Will Self* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVEgOiB7Bo8> (Accessed 17 July 2015)

would be central to its unfolding story; it is both a story about climate change and a *journey* undertaken to find out about it.

Wylie suggests, in his quote above, value in a participant observational approach to fieldwork, but this is among myriad theories and emerging methodologies that I am unable to fully engage with here except to include some ideas that had a significant influence on my own practice. A good example of a utilisation of walking engaging with a symbiosis of theoretical and practice based research is that of the Situationist International. This group, lead by Guy Debord, turned the act of walking into, 'a tool in an attempt to transform urban life, first for aesthetic purposes but later for increasing political ends.' (Coverley 2010, p.10). Debord, often cited as being the father of psychogeography, an activity which aims, through various theories and practices, to engage with the ways in which human beings relate to their environment, both physically and emotionally. Debord built his organisation on the work of several other writers and practitioners, not least the humble flaneur, so this idea that Debord's version of psychogeography was anything like new is certainly wrong. (Coverley 2010, p.57) It was Debord, however, that gave shape to the revolutionary ideals presented by psychogeography as a practice and has provided a place from which many modern practitioners have developed it. In his idea of the *derive*, for example, Debord saw an opportunity to re-map Napoleon's grid organised Paris, enabling the psychogeographer to see beyond what Debord recognised as a bourgeois construct designed to oppress the dweller in a system which did not enable freedom from a life organised around hegemonic preservation of *power* over the *consumer*. The *derivé* is, 'A mode of experimental

behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances.’ (Coverley 2010, p.93) While it may be some jump from this idea of a subversion of the *hegemony* over a regimented militarised consumer culture to that of a general concern over climate change, it is related in the sense that we are identifying the links between the complex nature of our modern way of life and climate change.

The theoretical basis for Debord’s practice, which as Coverley suggests in his book *Psychogeography* (2010), is viewed with some scepticism, ‘...one cannot help but notice that while the theoretical and instructive elements of psychogeography are manifest, the actual results of all these experiments are strangely absent.’ (Coverley 2010, p.99), none the less, Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) reveals ideas that are not only useful in the investigation of urban spaces, but also the relationship between people and the world around them. Debord’s psychogeography and the theory that underpins it have acted as a profound influence on my own methodological approach. It is this that made my principle methods on the walk about my response to contingency and my way of improvising the resulting filming. Of course, climate change is a phenomenon with effects that can only be responded to. Changing weather patterns and resulting issues, such as migration, will only be mitigated by adaption. Climate change is entirely about change and adaption and so this approach seemed the right one for this project. At no stage, at least in the footage of the walk, could I have pre-planned my encounters or my head-camera footage. I turned on the cameras at the beginning of the walk and largely recorded until the end. To me this strongly echoes the idea of the Situationist moving

through the streets of Paris, recording what they found was there; to some degree I see my own walk as a one-month long filmic *derive*, primarily because I was very willing to be diverted from my route in response to events that might occur along the way.

It is clear that Debord sought to find the 'truth' somewhere in the streets of Paris, rather like I seek the afilmic or Husserl seeks the reduction; all three approaches seem to be an attempt to connect with *what is there*, avoiding supposition and guess work. These methodologies attempt to strip away the unnecessary possibilities, which might also be described as the mythical properties of objects, cities or films. To what extent we can see these as deliberate myth making is debatable, but if things are described by systems or particular people, then there is an argument that they risk mystification. As Husserl asks us to reconnect with the world, or to relook at what something actually is, so the Situationists wanderings strive to reconnect to a world – or the streets – not framed by an elite. Similarly, in understanding the process of mediation in the production of documentary, it is possible to work towards the production of work that seeks to present an unvarnished version of the world through a clearer and more direct contact between the filmmaker and the audience. Debord states, 'In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.' (Debord 2010, p.1) He goes on, 'The images detached from every aspect of life fuse in a common stream in which the unity of life can no longer be re-established. Reality considered *partially* unfolds, in its own general unity, as a pseudo-world *apart*, an object of mere contemplation.' (ibid)

Again, it is easy to see the relevance of this cast against a backdrop of climate change, a scenario which represents, through a powerlessness and the belief that the problem is far bigger than the individual (a problem of government or a systemic problem) that is beyond repair and 'doesn't bear thinking about'. We rely on the myth of representation, which more often than not emanates from the decisions made by a hegemony of communicators, broadcasters and media, whose conventions are often those that call for framing – or being limited to the profilmic. The problem presents itself again as a problem of distance; the gap between our *intending* and *perceiving* (noesis to noema), or the gap between the lens and the record (which I have argued is similar), and it is in the narrowing of this gap that I believe a more effective way to communicate can be found. Of course, walking allows, as the Situationists believed, a rehabilitation of place, as place is experienced through improvisation and contingency. This is an experience beyond the frame and I argue, therefore, it is a more authentic place. It was my aim, as far as possible, to carry the act of filmmaking directly to the field and to enable a proper engagement with the places I recorded. To a certain extent, some of my control as a filmmaker as far as the images depicted on the screen was diminished, which in my opinion allows for the presence in my film of a sense that anything *could* have happened, which opens a door, at least to some extent, on the afilmic and those elements outside of the frame.

In the next section I wish to focus on the practical considerations in walking the coastline. I will look at equipment and the filming technology that I employed and attempt to contextualise the decisions I made theoretically.

## **Section Two :Walking Cantre'r Gwaelod**

### **Boots and other concerns**

In order to fully consider the impact of the endeavour that was a walk approximating 250 miles, that was to be conducted over the period of about one month with no break in continuity while also making a film, sometimes in extremely remote locations, it is vital that some mention is given to the very basic equipment chosen. A choice of footwear, for example, on a walk this length becomes crucial. The failure of a shoe or an injury sustained because of a poorly chosen one, especially in a remote location, is enough to end a walk. The shoe is our connection to the ground and it mediates between our bodies and the land. A hobnailed boot, for example, is almost entirely useless, indeed is dangerous, on the marbled floor of the modern shopping centre; it is a boot out of historical context and has ceased to be useful in the modern world given the alternative options. I therefore opted for modern walking boots, chosen for their multi-functional use (and the fact that they were made in Britain).<sup>48</sup> I carried a tent and sleeping bag, as well as all the general objects required for life on a coast path for a month. The kind of

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<sup>48</sup> It pleases me to put a footnote detailing the footwear I wore on the walk: Walsh Enforcer walking boots.

rucksack and jacket I chose, that enabled me to easily film along the way, presented certain problems when interviewing people. I had chosen a military Burgan and used a technical photography jacket. To this jacket I attached camera mounts and various bits of my sound kit; in all honesty I'm not sure how many of my potential interview subjects might have been put off by my appearance. Nevertheless, I can very simply state here that filming for this project and the business of everyday living was at the very least arduous.

My choice of equipment was, on one level at least, motivated by the desire to minimise weight, to reduce the chances of damage and to provide a basic level of quality required to make a documentary. I also carefully considered a number of theoretical issues that the technical characteristics of certain recording equipment presents. I wanted to fully and practically engage with issues around mediation, such as those I have discussed earlier and became very conscious of how much influence the camera type used might influence the meaning present in the film. Grigori Boltiansky, an associate of Dziga Vertov echoes this interest in technology in relation to the filmmaking process when he states,

Ideally all footage for newsreel should be bits of 'life off guard', the most persuasive, genuine, and unforced type of footage, but it cannot be obtained by an unwieldy camera that has to be set up, attracts attention, and creates unavoidable artificiality and tension. (Boltiansky in Hicks 2007, p.33)



While technology is important in terms of the practical realities of making a film while conducting a long distance walk, it is really the impact of this technology on the central efficacy of the film and the consequent meaning that I wish to focus on now.

### **Walking as the camera: filming and walking as authorship**

In most cases the documentary film will be the work of a crew. As Berys Gaut puts it, 'A film is no more the product of a single individual than is the music of an improvising jazz group.' (Gaut 1997:166) Given that Gaut wrote these words back in the 1990s, they may well have been accurate at the time, but there are in fact, plenty of examples of single authored films on internet platforms such as Vimeo. I myself have produced, before and during this project, films that were entirely my own work, from the music to the editing; it is possible to find films made by individuals alone. The fact that it is now possible to create a film entirely alone casts the traditional model of a film 'team' into the foreground. It is the effect of the film 'team' that interests me most. In a film 'team' we might have a camera operator, a soundman, a producer and a director. All of these people might be in the field, recording a situation and therefore all contributing to a 'cinematic utterance' (Livingston in Allen and Smith 1997, p.137) It is clear, therefore, that a group contributing to one utterance, is less likely to respond like a person might of directly confronted by the situation being filmed.

In the process of documentary filmmaking it is common that many agents are present and their roles all have an impact on the final image. What is also important is the nature of the equipment with which they choose to film. The two essential components in capturing sight and sound are obviously the camera and the microphone, rarely, however, does one person use both devices. They are most often, even now in the age of portability, co-operatively used and placed in such a way as to stand between the filmmaker and the thing that is being filmed. Using the microphone as an example, the microphone is directed towards the subject, it is most often shaped like a stick and even when mounted on a boom pole tends to be an intrusive object, spatially positioning the thing being filmed as an observed entity, unable to participate in a genuine interaction with the filmmaker (s). The traditional shoulder mounted camera, so often used in documentary production and news gathering, resembles an offensive weapon in shape and size and when directed at the subject, can have a similar subjugating effect. The devices used in the traditional broadcasting/filmmaking setting generally cannot fail to alter the dynamic of a discussion, or what ends up being recorded within the frame of the profilmic. The filmmaker, both through the structure of the team and the equipment used, can, in conventional settings, be elevated above the purely experiential to a powerful mediator, whether this is accepted or not.

Choosing how we film, or make records, must be seen as a manipulation of the 'reality' that reaches the cutting room and eventually the screen. While many filmmakers have striven to address the possible gulf between the filmmakers and the subjects, it is not a straightforward

conundrum to be solved. Lars Von Trier in the Dogme 95 manifesto<sup>49</sup> makes clear his ambition to create rules which overall might have the effect of democratising the business of filmmaking, 'Today a technological storm is raging, the result of which will be the ultimate democratisation of the cinema.' (Jensen, J. and Nielsen, J., p.2000)

Various attempts have been made by filmmakers to address the imbalance between the mechanism of filmmaking and the desire to bring us closer to the illusion of 'being there', in other words to remove as many obstacles as possible in search of something real. The Dogme 95 project attempted to align cinema with the possibility of becoming pure and authentic through methodological rules. (Trier and Vinterberg 1995) The project's authors, Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg encouraged the limiting of aestheticizing tools in the shooting of Dogme films, insisting instead on the use of diegetic sound, the exclusive use of locations, hand holding cameras, no filters and the strict use of available light. These measures, applied mostly in the making of fiction features, had extraordinary effects, for example, foregrounding the improvisational possibilities within the frame, rather than concentrating entirely on the beauty of the work. This manifesto, if not entirely palatable to all critics, allowed a re-think of the role of the filmmaker in shaping what appeared on the cinema screen.

Filmmakers have consistently returned to the idea that the camera itself, used with the minimum of intervention in the act of capturing the image, can bring us closer to something that captures

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<sup>49</sup> See, (Hjort and MacKenzie : 2003)

the way the world *is*. In his 1977 film *La Soufrière* about a volcano on the verge of eruption on the island of Guadeloupe, Werner Herzog chooses to use a hand held camera and a small crew of three. Perhaps this was more for logistical reasons than anything else, but it enabled Herzog and his team to move freely and quickly about the island in order to pick up the story. Pre-planning in this context was always going to be difficult and it forced the crew to arrive on the island ready to adapt to the constantly changing situation and consequent conditions, a situation not dissimilar to my own while walking the coastal path. Generally, the overriding sense in the film is that Herzog encountered his characters naturally, feeling the same fear as them, the same uncertainty and the volcano touched the small crew's senses in the same way it did the island's three remaining residents as he improvised the film that was gradually revealing itself to him. We can see this idea of presence too in the work of filmmaker and ethnographer Jean Rouch, especially in the torch wielding dancing sequence in *Les Maitres Fous* (1955). The immediacy that comes from Rouch's ability to frame on the move, to place himself in sight of the action without disturbing it, makes his work express an authenticity which prevails even after the mediation of the edit. While Rouch is famed for his recreations of scenes, these none-the-less become themselves a reality to be re-captured. They are not directed sequences, therefore they become a simple re-run, rather than a re-performance of that which was already there. In this sense, there is almost no point in questioning the reality of such work; the extra-cinematic, or the afilmic, is almost palpable watching these ethnographic documents. 'For him (Rouch), the camera is not confined to the role of a 'passive recording instrument', but becomes rather an active agent of investigation and the camera *user* can become an interrogator of the world.'

(Loizos 1993, p.155) It is certainly in this that I relate strongly to Rouch's belief in the camera as a tool for interrogation. Being among the subjects he filmed, attempting to bond with them and experiencing life in the field, much the same way as they experienced it, spoke strongly to me as I undertook my walk in order to find out what people thought about climate change and also experiencing what might *be* climate change first hand. The skill in the filmmaker here is to be able to constantly respond to contingencies thrown up by the very thing filmed in constant improvisation.

### **Push record and go: Head cameras and other 'extreme' technologies**

It is in this ability to move with the image, to improvise with the camera, that can provide the 'intimate immediacy which brings us closer to the illusion of 'being there' (ibid). It is oddly not the world of documentary filmmaking that reveals this experimental methodology most often, but the field of 'extreme sports' that seems to have pushed this 'illusion' the furthest. Specifically it is, and was, the technologies that have developed out of this desire to record the act of *being there* that attracted me to the developing technologies that allowed action to be recorded independent of decision making processes. What particularly interested me was the head camera, which I chose to wear as I walked the coastal path.

I have included several films that acted like studies of head camera technology in the appendix and on the Blue Ray disc. *Snowdon* in particular was a film that enabled me to fully assess the aesthetic qualities and the ruggedness of the GoPro headcamera, which I used in the final film. Developing from this film I wrote an academic paper on the head camera and its relation to phenomenology, which I will go on to talk about in this section of the thesis. I presented these papers in Aberystwyth, Bangor and Reading. This particular early test proved extremely useful in situating this type of footage in my final film, because I could not only see how the footage would 'sit' with other footage used – DSLR and Handycam – but it also allowed me to assess how easily it would be for the camera to be set while on the move. In editing *Snowdon* I began to realise that the GoPro footage could very easily be used to provide a narrative spine for my final film, showing a sense of movement through space, contextualising the idea of a journey along the coast path.

The mountain biker, rock climber and skier (to name but a few extreme sports), all aware of the photogenic nature of their activities, sought to bring them home to the screen to re-watch.

Theorists such as Paul Virilio have identified some of the real problems with this development, particularly in relation to the compression of speed that this new technology encourages.<sup>50</sup>

Using handheld 'prosumer' cameras, extreme sports enthusiasts began to populate social

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<sup>50</sup> Virilio's book *The Administration of Fear* brings up issues that I'm certain are very pertinent to the issues I discuss in my film, however, within this thesis I simply do not have the space to discuss them. Indeed it is true that some of Virilio's comments on our modern condition as a direct result of progress make the use of recent technologies somewhat contradictory in a film about climate change, however, I believe that the use of the head camera allowed me to achieve more in the film's favour than it's detriment

media with their exploits captured on film. These short films contained no intrinsic meaning or subtext, but existed only to demonstrate the fact that they had done something risky or impressive. There was a use to this for me in that I wished to capture me 'being' on the coast path as I was walking it, with minimal intervention. In response to this new idea of filming sports, companies began to recognise the market niche and began to produce tough, waterproof cameras that could be mounted on bodies and could record passively the filmmaker's point of view. It is now possible to record high quality images from a camera mounted on your head by simply pressing record. For those people seeking to act as well as record, it had become possible to accurately evoke in the audience the sense of doing the activity itself. An important leap had occurred; no longer did the audience watch the activity filmed by someone who had first seen the activity and then planned how they might shoot it, now the audience could watch the action from the perspective of the person who was engaged in it.

The underlying concept behind this was not new; indeed some experiments using body-mounted cameras had been undertaken many years before they appeared in mainstream shopping malls.

In Margaret Raspe's pioneering *camera helmet* films a simple, silent Super 8 camera is mounted on a helmet worn by the film-maker, permitting her to film herself engaged in activities requiring the use of both hands. From this situation a body of work emerges: the form demands new content, and so a variety of under-the-camera activities are recorded, and a new sub-genre is created. Appropriately for a domestic format, most of the films are of domestic activities – food preparation and washing up – and the intimacy of the medium harmonises with the closeness to the activities that the method of filming brings the viewer. (Hamlyn 2003, p.113)

This use of head camera technology largely went unnoticed in the mainstream until the value of this 'hands free' technology became apparent. Predictably, as these cameras developed, mainstream broadcasters, including the BBC and the Discovery Channel, began to adopt them. This use, however, was and continues to be confined to very occasional shots where other cameras would not be practical. The Discovery Channel in programmes such as *Born Survivor* and *Deadliest Catch* have begun to recently experiment with the head camera and other lightweight cameras in order to enhance the sense of 'being there', but these techniques still remain largely underused and are still considered experimental. It was, however, the BBC that first broadcast a programme that predominantly featured the use of head cameras by serving British military personnel in Afghanistan. *Our War*, broadcast on BBC3 on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011, showed footage released by the Ministry of Defence, filmed by the troops on the ground using head cameras. While there may be ethical questions about the intervention of the MOD in *releasing* the footage, there can be little argument over the authenticity of the footage itself. Executive producer of the programme Colin Barr said of the footage 'It feels like you're in somebody's head. When they look left, you look left. When they look right, you look right. And when they run, you run.'<sup>51</sup>

While the point of view camera is limited to an ability to record sight and sound alone (as all cameras are), some of their limitations are to a large degree part of their strength. The fact that

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<sup>51</sup> BBC News. (2011) *Life at war captured through the eyes of soldiers* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/uk-13573611> (Accessed: 30 June 2015)



simple, high quality cameras, which can be mounted on the body, have limited controls as far as exposure and lens choices are concerned can be seen as one way to limit mediation in the image capture. The movement of the filmmaker is what the camera essentially records and that pure movement and corporeal actions of the filmmaker that can evoke a sense of 'being there'. The point of view camera, the one I used for my own film was the GoPro head camera, might easily be seen as a tool available to filmmakers that most evokes the authentic event and might bring us closer to recording the afilmic through this evocation. In order to theorise this further, I return to phenomenology.

As a way of perceiving the world, a phenomenological perspective seems at odds with the methodological approaches of filmmakers who practice conventional techniques, especially if large crews are involved. Perhaps a conventional technique is best seen as positioning filmmakers apart from the thing/landscape/place they intend to feature. The connection is anything but direct because the filmmaker becomes conscious of the thing well in advance of filming it. For phenomenological theorists like David Seamon, this methodology ignores the *pre-conscious* condition in perceiving the 'lifeworld'. This pre-consciousness is posited by Seamon in *A Geography of the Lifeworld*, where he focuses on the everyday instinctual activities like walking, driving or eating, which are things we do without conscious effort or any particular focused perceptual process. These activities he terms *body ballets*.

Borrowing the term from Merleau-Ponty (1962), I call this bodily intentionality *body-subject*. Body-subject is the inherent capacity of the body to direct behaviours of the person intelligently, and thus

function as a special kind of subject that expresses itself in a pre-conscious way usually described by such words as “automatic”, “habitual”, “involuntary” and “mechanical. (Seamon: 1979, p.41)

He goes on to define his idea of body ballets as:

Body-subject houses complex behaviours extending over considerable portions of time as well as space. These behaviours are of two types that I call *body ballets* and *time-space routines*. (ibid)

By using a head camera for part of my film I was able to ‘film’ the pre-conscious act of walking. In my opinion, this greatly assists in the evocation of ‘being there’ and ‘direct bodily contact’. I believe this is important in that it enables the audience to experience the action filmed and potentially evoke other senses, through a kind of recall, that might more commonly be seen as a filmic component. I am sure that this kind of filming can add to the potential affect of the overall film and place the audience alongside the filmmaker. I was able to look closely at the head camera in relation to the theory presented by David Seamon in my series of head camera films *Body Ballets*. These three films take footage of everyday actions, I would consider pre-conscious, and present them on the screen. The aim of these three shorts was to assess the extent to which the act of recording a pre-conscious action altered its nature to that of highly conscious. It was hard to examine exactly how effectively these films ‘captured’ the pre-conscious, but again, as with *Snowdon*, it was an ideal opportunity to interrogate theory, and also technical concerns, through practice.

There is no question, however, that many human actions go beyond the pre-conscious and become conscious acts. The very nature of phenomenological perception and its temporal and

constant nature mean that we are always engaged in a variety of processes of perception which occur on many levels of consciousness. If we are to evoke a sense of being in a place/situation in film, then we must evoke as many of these levels of consciousness as possible.

It is in the employment of the tripod, the framing of the shot, the choosing of a lens or filter that position the filmmaker as an entity at a distance from the place situation as it is shown. If filmmakers use images created by utilising technology that automatically limits choices, in the case of the head camera, reducing these choices to corporeal motion, this has the effect of narrowing the gap of mediation, if we again return to the idea that in making *a priori* decisions about images this sets up a gap between the experience and resulting footage. Through the head camera it is possible to evoke the body ballet Seamon describes through the recording of movement. It shows the direction of his/her visual attention through the movement of the head, it shows the spatial relationship between the filmmaker and the lifeworld; put simply it better records the act of being present in the world.

Whether or not it is important for filmmakers to develop this technology in their work and for it to become accepted practice in mainstream documentary is open to debate. Much of this will come down to the intention of the filmmaker. Is the intention to show, as far as the limitations of cinema allow, the afilmic, or does the filmmaker wish to evoke *their* sense of what actually exists there? Obviously, it is not for anyone to decide on a correct way to make films, but I believe it is important that the body mounted camera, the hand held shot and perhaps even the notion of the

single author, to be habilitated into accepted methodology and creative practice of the documentary filmmaker. The professionalised nature of filmmaking always seems to focus on the idea of footage being 'broadcast quality' which is a highly subjective phrase.<sup>52</sup> This notion of broadcast quality, being generally subjective, itself is a kind of mediation of what *should* be seen on our screens, in both cinemas and on television. Indeed, while the BBC was happy to broadcast the images from soldier's head cameras in *Our War* it still anchored the footage with conventionally shot interviews. Meaning therefore was transferred from the head camera images to the way in which the professionals interpreted them. Colin Barr, the producer of *Our War* stated of the head camera footage,

'If you're an embedded cameraman, you're filming with an eye to telling the story as you go and you're thinking about that all the time. If you're looking at this footage, it doesn't have any of those values in it... and without the interviews underpinning it, it would be meaningless.'<sup>53</sup>

But the footage taken on its own is not totally meaningless if the audience is trying to understand the experience of 'being there'. Being there is not explained, it is felt and this footage evokes the very afilmic elements that allow this feeling to occur from the screen. Still present in this footage is a reality, unmediated by a distant eye which is telling a story, and this footage contains a

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<sup>52</sup> See here the BBC production guidelines; specifically page 9, which outlines some areas the BBC consider denote broadcast quality. They are rather nebulous. BBC. (2015) *Technical Standards For Delivery Of Television Programmes To BBC* [Online]. Available at: <http://dpp-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/specs/bbc/TechnicalDeliveryStandardsBBC.pdf> (Accessed: 1 July)

<sup>53</sup> See footnote 60

depiction of events as they were. From a personal perspective, I gained a lot of understanding of war by concentrating on the head camera footage alone.<sup>54</sup>

There exists an important argument in Colin Barr's analysis of the head camera footage. If, to achieve a documentary that is of a standard to be broadcast, we must include an eye which tells a story, whose story is being told? Is it the story of the Afghan people, the soldier, the cameraman, the editor, the soundman or the executive producer? Perhaps it's the story of the UK government or even the entire west? The head camera footage will be edited, may have post-production effects applied to it, but even in fragmented form, because only the movement of the filmmaker mediated it, the story is told by the camera alone. It is precisely this connection between the camera and the subject that preoccupied Vertov, Rouche and others in their quest to connect documentary film to the idea of truth gathering. I do not, of course, propose that the head camera be the only acceptable technology for use in documentary production, nor do I propose that the only methodology used should be based on the assumption that the camera should always be seen as the primary means of perception, as in Vertov and his Kino Eye. I simply propose that these approaches are valid and extremely useful to the documentary filmmaker and detail them here, as they have proved so vital in making my own film for this project. Furthermore, I believe that this approach, that of attempting to evoke the afilmic through the use of techniques that limit mediation are particularly useful in a film that aims to affect

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<sup>54</sup> There are several studies of the use of head cameras that I undertook during my PhD which are on the DVD of the practical submission. Three of these films attempt to interrogate some of David Seamon's thesis. See appendix 3.

people and therefore elicit change. I propose that the value of these methods, especially the use of head camera and similar technologies, is high and the capacity of the documentary to evolve may well hinge upon the increased use of them. While the value of a documentary cannot simply be judged by the amount it can be seen to capture 'real' events – indeed the value of carefully composed shots and the emphasis on beauty is certainly not something that should be scorned in documentary work – it is important to be clear about the link between the technology and its ability to bring us closer to what is there. In employing an improvisational style, responding to events as they arose and filming within the constraints of the weather and terrain, allowed me to reach my subject – both the landscape and the people within it – as they found it themselves. We were all living with what was there and the people I interviewed I believe recognised this and were more prepared to talk to me. I hope that the audience will also recognise themselves or people they know in those I spoke to, or indeed me. Using lightweight cameras and ignoring outdated ideas about a particularity of the 'broadcast quality' film, I hoped to open my film to the possibilities presented 'in the world' and to be in strong position to capture them as they appeared.

Once I had completed the walk, I had several hours of head camera footage of the walk. I was delighted to have a filmic map of the entire walk of the coast as I had planned before the event. In the editing process I knew that I would only use a fraction of this footage, so for an exhibition at Aberystwyth Arts Centre, I spliced together the whole head camera footage of the walk and sped it up. It is interesting on viewing this footage just how drastically the coastline changes in

only a short distance. This valuable footage was recycled in order to create a separate video art work that could be exhibited in different contexts, most usefully in the gallery context. This not only chimed well with the sustainable ambitions for the project, it also meant that I would have extra footage to take beyond the research period when delivering papers on point of view technology, especially the head camera.

### **Listening for chimes: Sound, myth and the afilmic**

While by now a hackneyed declaration, film is not visual alone, indeed in my personal background in broadcasting I come from radio, having then moved towards film. I have no difficulty placing audio alongside, or indeed in primacy to, the visual. While this is the case, however, I intend here merely to outline some of my decisions about sound in the film and why these decisions were made. I am unable to devote quite as much space as I would like to sound alone, but underline that much discussed so far, especially some of the theoretical perspectives explored, were explored with both sound and visuals in mind.

Where the camera frames the scene and cannot record what is behind its lens, at least not literally, sound has fewer restrictions. In order to maximise the possibility of sound as a tool to expand the field of view within my film I decided to use – where possible – binaural microphones, which I believed would complement the use of head cameras and would dovetail with the theory

behind that use, as detailed earlier in this chapter. Binaural sound recording was developed as far back as the 1880s but was, and to an extent still is, slow to catch on. Certainly binaural recording techniques have not been assimilated into mainstream techniques. Binaural recording still remains a largely niche technique. (Pike: 2013) The basic principle – here avoiding overly complex technical explanation – was that two omni-directional microphones (usually placed where the ears would be on a ‘dummy head’) have the effect of replicating the way human beings hear, capturing sound from all around the head. Overall, binaural recording has the effect of reproducing a three dimensional audio field that, if listened to over headphones, is profoundly realistic. This realistic effect can only be achieved by listening back over headphones, which in the cinema is impractical; even so, the stereo image produced by binaural recording is exceptional.

Modern day technology has rendered the process of binaural recording far more straightforward, unobtrusive and inexpensive. The microphones I used during the making of the film are Soundman OKE11 binaural ear mounted microphones. These small electret microphones fit in the ears and record sound in the same way larger rigs record binaurally. In theory then, I would be able to either attach these in-ear microphones to my camera, or a separate sound recorder in order to capture ambient sound and/or interviews I wished to conduct along the coastal path. In practice, however, recording sound in this way turned out to be far more complex than I had originally expected, due to issues around wind noise and the difficulty of keeping the microphones secure as I walked. Even though I imagined myself actually being able to wear all



my recording equipment, it was not that simple. I decided that I would use the binaural microphones for recording ambient sounds only, in order to maximise the stereo imaging that these microphones provided. The interviews were to be recorded on a directional mono microphone, which I also found helped in imaging the subject and creating a hierarchy of sound clarity, which in turn helped to foreground interviews when this was appropriate. The mono microphone provided direct and clear recordings that punched through any non-diegetic soundtrack with clarity, but the binaural recordings had the effect of wrapping the sound around the images and mono recordings. The mono recordings seemed to play to the profilmic, but the binaural referenced what lay beyond in the afilmic. The mix of diegetic and non-diegetic sound, and the stereo and mono recordings, provided an aural texture that complemented the visual textures achieved by using different cameras.

It is this complimenting that interested me most for the purposes of this film. The only sound that is one hundred per cent diegetic is the interview sound. The other sounds, including soundtrack music, are created as soundscapes in post-production. Many of the soundscapes are created from the binaural recordings in the field, but these certainly will have been through some post-production manipulation. Edward Branigan describes why sound might well be employed in this way, and indeed why I used it like this in my film,

The way in which human biology is able to exploit the physical difference between light and sound results in sound having a lesser survival value for humans than light. This fact may underlie the claim by Christian Metz that sound is basically *adjectival* while vision is noun...A 'whistling' sound still needs to be specified: the whistling *of* what? *from* where? the whistling *of* the wind *in* the trees *from* across the river (Branigan in Allen and Smith 1997, p.98)

By using sound to illustrate images I felt able to make some sub-textual references to some of the common themes of the film. The myth is evoked in the multi-track mixes of diegetic sound, but these, in turn, may well be mixed with some non-diegetic sounds captured after the walk. Of course these post-production soundscapes operate in much the same way that the time-lapse video operates, to create another tier to the film that might be termed mythical. It is in this sense of surround, disturbing the actuality, that adds some extra dimension to the film which follows it throughout. Perhaps one of the most significant influences on my sound work, both generally and in this project is Glenn Gould's *Solitude Trilogy* (1967-77). These three, one hour long, radio documentaries took recordings and interviews from people living in the north of Canada, in one way or another living in some solitude and away from the bustle of the world. He created out of these interviews soundscapes that were edited following the structures of JS Bach's contrapuntal compositional style. It seemed to me that Gould's editing style created the aural 'world' so familiar in the work of Vertov and Reggio. Gould's *Solitude Trilogy* has the overall effect of creating from audio clips, a reedited *overall* idea; in this case an idea of solitude and sub-arctic life. There are sections within my film where it will be obvious where the influence of this seminal work is most prevalent. (Jordan-Baker: 1989)

As Metz proposes, sound almost always operates as adjectival and as such I wish to allow the sound in my film to serve its purpose as an illustrative medium. The influence of Gould is not exhaustive and my description of the work is far from comprehensive, however, I am happy that the sound in the film can be understood as both document (the interviews) and illustrative (the

soundscapes and music). I wish here to convey my thanks to Tim Noble for his musical contribution to the project; his specific contributions are detailed in the credits of the film.

### **At best an evocation: realism in the face of grand ambition**

Overall my focus when making *Forecast* was to give my audience a sense that I had 'been there'.

I have outlined in this chapter some of the various ways I attempted this. By striving to present this idea of embodiment in the film I hoped that I might tap into the afilmic of the coastal walk, but also the affecting possibilities of the myth, mindful that the myth itself was no simple allegory and existed on several levels that in many ways were problematic in the face of the central subject, climate change.

I posit in this chapter, that by reaching into what is available to filmmakers to *evoke* the afilmic, whether that is technology, or theoretical/methodological notions, it is possible to cause affect in the audience. Affect is naturally nebulous and mostly subjective and I will go on to briefly look at this in my conclusion. At best my efforts to record more than the profilmic, by evoking the afilmic is exactly that, an evocation. While at times during the project, particularly while experimenting with head cameras and binaural recording techniques, I was driven to take a rather essentialist view of embodiment and 'being there' in the making of documentaries, it soon became clear that to recognise the power of evocation, and to accept it, was far more likely to

garner results. In filming by head camera, it appeared possible to evoke in the audience far more than that which lay before the lens, but this was never altogether *provable* and in speaking about my film, I had to accept that I would be talking from the position of faith. Even though I have watched the film several times on a large cinema screen, I cannot predict the impact, or otherwise, it might have on the audience. To a large degree, the decisions made during creative endeavours are necessarily instinctual, however, by looking at some theories that underpin my decisions, as I have done in this chapter, I hope that my instinctual decisions might at least be placed in some wider context.

In my conclusion which follows, I will draw together the three chapters of this thesis in order to reflect upon whether overall I feel the film was: (a) generally successful and (b) what I have learned as a result of making it. Within the limitation of the words available to me here I am left feeling that I wanted to expand upon some of the points raised, but certainly feel that this would have in practice been impossible, indeed, some of the areas I have discussed are not only worthy of volumes of writing, but entire modules of study. I accept that I have often focussed on the very least to complement my film. I, of course, rely on my practical submission to speak alongside this thesis and, if possible, stand apart from it also.

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## Conclusion

On May 1<sup>st</sup> in St Davids Cathedral while the organist went about the secular business of practising, I clocked in, pressed record and began to intend not only the end of my walk, but the conclusion of my film. (Christie 2015, p.2)

I theorize *with* my films, not *about* them. The relationship between the verbal, the musical and the visual, just like the relationship between theory and practice is not one of illustration, description or explication. It can be one of inquiry, displacement and expansive enrichment. The verbal forms a parallel track and is another creative dimension. (Trinh T Minh Ha in Pearce and McLaughlin:2007, p.107)

It is with Trinh T Minh Ha's comments above in mind that I approached the business of writing about my film *Forecast* in this thesis. Partly this was due to the fact that it is difficult to write about work that has been made in some senses by drawing on instinct and the sense that something 'feels right'. It also makes sense that given the fact that the majority of my audience will not also read the thesis about the film, that the film is capable of surviving any lack of explanation. What I have attempted in this thesis is to do what Minh Ha refers to as, "...not speak(ing) about' but only 'nearby'" (ibid)

In chapter one I presented the myth of Cante'r Gwaelod and discussed ways in which this myth, so important to the Welsh nation, has been represented in poetry and writings. I looked at the possible reasons that this myth endures and considered how the myth might act as an allegory for current concerns around climate change. By giving this background on the myth I hoped to demonstrate that while I was aware of the poetic possibilities of such a story, with all the visual

cues it contained, I wanted to further investigate what myth meant outside of the rather simplistic form they tend to adopt. In looking at Levi-Strauss's structural analysis of myths I wanted to underline that myth itself is a kind of language, but in order to operate like this it requires simplification. In other words myth operates as a universal language once its specificity is removed. In applying the same deconstruction to the issue of climate change – identifying and using some of the common themes – I wanted to show how climate change could also be manipulated like myth. I concluded that it was almost inevitable that an issue as complex as climate change could not be accommodated in the compressed world of documentary cinema without undergoing some simplification. It is for this reason that I wanted to examine how film might accommodate all the complexities that arise from climate change and thereby operate more effectively.

It was this simplification that, of course, interested Roland Barthes in his study of myth. What Barthes uncovered is that myth is perhaps not something we should consider a benign cultural device, but a far more sinister method of conveying hegemonic narratives. Barthes raises the question about *who* is creating myth and *why*, which naturally should be interrogated when considering climate change through the optic of myth. To what extent, I ask, is climate change itself subject to mystification? Without these questions underpinning the film I do not think that I would have been moved to investigate ways of narrowing what I term the 'mediation gap'. At the end of this chapter I go on to ask to what extent is the film industry itself guilty of mythology? To what extent is the very structure of the industry prone to creating mythologised versions of more

complex stories? In placing the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod in this kind of context it is possible to see why I avoided some of the more conventional methodologies when creating my documentary film. At all costs I wished to make a film that showed rather than told and was extremely mindful of the power of didactic approaches and the responsibility and privilege of the filmmaker.

In chapter two I went on to look at a small selection of films that have been made with the issue of climate change at their core. Looking at films like *Age Of Stupid* (2009) I wanted to show how, while some approaches to climate change films may appear worthy of praise and are full of good intention, this does not, in fact, mean that they are effective as tools of communication about the issue. In the case of *Age of Stupid*, it is probable that the majority of the audience would be already highly concerned about anthropogenic climate change, so the film's first failure to be effective was its reach. The studies mentioned in this chapter also highlighted the ineffectiveness of 'shock tactics' employed in films like this. It became clear to me that in making my own film I would be forced to find a different way. I did, of course, give some praise to the film *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) which employed some of the tactics mentioned above, but which had sufficient reflexivity to be of some value in the canon and positioned itself away from the overtly didactic filmmaker/audience relationship.

In looking at two particular films *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) and *Shoah* (1985) I aimed to demonstrate some of the methodological intentions that I shared with these very important films.

While the subjects were about things other than climate change, the filmmakers themselves employed techniques that considerably influenced me when making *Forecast*. Specifically, Vertov's enthusiasm for the camera and his assemblage editing style interested me because of his desire to create 'film worlds'. It seemed to me that in creating a 'film world' I might maximise the opportunity for my film to have an effect on its audience. Godfrey Reggio also employed this montage editing technique to achieve a similar result. In Landzmann's *Shoah* two things in particular interested and influenced me: the way Landzmann concentrates on bringing the past into the present – perhaps better put, keeping the past in the present – by refusing to use footage that runs the risk of situating the holocaust in the past, and I was intrigued by the idea that I might be able to apply similar approaches to the idea of anchoring the *future* in the present. Landzmann tirelessly interviews those involved at the time the footage was shot and films the locations as they were when the film was made. This had the effect of giving the audience a chance to understand the horror of the holocaust through the optic of a world in which they now lived, which made the film far more powerful as a result. It was this filmic grammar that interested me for this project, as I wished to render the future palpable in the present on the coast path. Landzmann's interview style has also been an influence on my film, in that he drives his interview subjects to *explain*, eliciting from them what actually happened, Landzmann seems free of any pre-formed expectation of what he might find and as a result his interviews appear to be conversations leading towards discovery and eventual conclusion. In my film this was rather more difficult as I was trying to find out from those I met on my walk what they thought might



happen and how they felt about that *now* and in the context of the threatened landscape of the film and myth.

In chapter three I concentrated on the idea of framing and attempting to move beyond the profilmic to evoke the afilmic in the audience. It is by doing this that I propose that an audience might be more likely to be affected by a film. In turn, I believe that if a film has the power to affect the audience, it is more likely to elicit change. What interested me in particular is how filmmakers negotiate the camera's natural tendency to frame and naturally create a large gap between what happened in the field during filming and what the audience is offered in the cinema. While I concede that the camera will always frame and record the profilmic, here I wonder to what extent the choice of camera and the way it is used may go some way to evoke other sensations in the audience and that by limiting the intervention of the filmmaker, might increase a sense of agency in the audience which might facilitate an evocation of the afilmic. In focusing on a small selection of films that deal with landscape I wished to demonstrate some approaches that I felt were more or less likely to achieve this evocation of the afilmic and subsequently elicit some affect.

It is to phenomenology that I turned to provide theoretical context for some of the decisions I made methodologically regarding the use of technology in narrowing this 'mediation gap'.

Thinking about the relationship between the camera and the world, I looked at David Seamon's ideas around pre-conscious actions, those things we do automatically, in relation to the head

camera. I could see that the head camera allowed a recording of the world with minimum intervention by the filmmaker and framed what it shot according to his/her movements. To me, the possibilities presented by the head camera – especially in evoking a sense of ‘being in the world’ – are possibilities that are extremely valuable to the documentary filmmaker. While the Dogme 95 project proposed the use of handheld camera work as a necessary rule, the head camera seems to allow the filmmaker to go even further. I did not, of course, confine my camera work in the film to the head camera, but took a great interest in using the head camera as a recurring theme, albeit edited out of geographical and chronological order, that might be constantly returned to in order to provide a narrative spine.

*Forecast* is a film that, at least technologically, can essentially be divided into four textures. The cameras used and the style in which they were used dictated these textures which were: (1) The head camera footage which predominantly shows the physical act of walking along the coastal path, (2) The handheld footage of the interviews with those encountered on the walk, (3) Time lapses and other general views which offer a pause for the audience and an evocation of the highly mediated form of myths and (4) The animated map and chart drawings which attempt to echo an idea of structural analysis of myth and to detail what was undeniable fact; the geography of the landscape. My thinking here was that in order to give a structure to the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod, I would include elements (the charts) which reached the limits of what we know to be fact. In initial edits of the film it was clear that these four component textures were far too obviously separate, however, by mixing the audio, so as it spanned transitions between

the sections and concentrating closely on the rhythms of the edit, these sections started to work as one whole.

The editing was done in a traditional way, Final Cut Pro X with clips assembled as standard on a time line. Some audio was edited in Ableton 9, which is a programme that through a non-linear system of 'blocks of sound' allows for a manipulation of the audio in a similar way to a DJ or musician. It is possible using this programme to play the edit live, and manipulate as if the edit was a performance. I am very interested in experimenting with live editing in this way in future projects, using this type of system to manipulate both visual and audio clips, however, for this project I felt that it would be better to be able to produce a fixed or 'locked' edit which in turn would enable a concrete product to be produced. This was especially important because the project would need to be examined. It is also true that the film itself dealt with such a complex theme and involved so many varied components, that editing in this 'live' way may well have elicited failure in producing a watchable film; in essence, there would be too much going on.

In creating the film I also considered the idea that I might be able to use third party footage and that my role might be to curate this footage in a film. This, of course, was the approach taken by Peter Snowden in his film *The Uprising* (2013) and gave some agency to those that were there, their stories only mediated by the filmmaker in his edit. While this may be an approach I might take now if starting again, I felt that there would be issues that would arise around authorship that I felt were unnecessary and I actually wanted to see for myself what existed along the

boundary of the myth I was tasked to make a film about. I do accept, however, that this approach may well have provided significant opportunities for community engagement and elicit debate among those likely to be worst affected by the initial ravages of climate change. I would strongly suggest that this type of film project would be an excellent way to reach out to communities about the subject of climate change and hope to see such projects in the future.

While it was in the forefront of my mind to limit how much I, the filmmaker, featured in the film, it is interesting to me now to see that my film is very personal. This is the case both through the reflexivity of the camera's movement, especially in the head camera footage, where the camera follows my own physical movements, but also in that I have included my questions and occasionally I feature on the screen. As Stella Bruzzi states of Bill Nichols's 'Performative Mode' (Bruzzi: 2005, p.153), this documentary mode lays open to the audience the act of observing in that these documentaries, 'function as utterances that simultaneously both describe and perform an action' (ibid). The Performance documentary mode differs from the 'Observational Mode' in that the film making process is revealed and allows the *process* of observation to be witnessed. '...documentary only comes into being as it is performed, that although its factual basis (or document) can pre-date any recording or representation of it, the film itself is necessarily performative because it is given meaning by the interaction between performance and reality.' (ibid) I accepted early on in the project that a lot of information, for example in the communication of data about climate change, depends at least partially on the *act of making* or the *process*. In some ways, how the information gets to its destination is almost as important as

the information itself. In having the reflexive elements in the film, in essence I was admitting the process and showing to what extent I was influencing it. Russian documentary filmmaker Sergei Dvortsevov encountered this methodological issue when making his film *In the Dark* (2004)

When I started making this film, I wanted to make it 'normally', so that you cannot understand where the crew is, or where the camera is. I wanted to make a standard film, where we observe the person. We show his tragedy, his soul and at the same time he is blind, he doesn't understand where we are, or that we can show everything. This is not an honest conversation, I decided to leave in my entering the frame, because it looks very strange when you shoot a blind man and you show him and he doesn't know where you are. I was here and he knew all the time that I was here and we were shooting. Of course that is part of the truth, I would say. I wanted to reduce the absurdity a little bit in *In the Dark* (Dvortsevov in Pearce and McLaughlin 2005, p.42)

Primarily one of the key ethical issues for me in making this documentary was this evocation of truth or as Dvortsevov puts it to at least 'reduce the absurdity' (ibid) of the documentary. It is in the gap between filmmaker and audience that this absurdity resides. I wished to show the process so my audience would know how this film came to fruition on the cinema screen. In this sense I am certain that I have achieved this aim in the film and give the audience an opportunity to encounter the people I interviewed and the landscape I walked in a similar way to the way in which I encountered them and it. In this way I hope that the film provokes a debate in the audience and encourages them to really consider how they feel about climate change as an issue. Given the variety of people that I interviewed I rather hope that there will be someone that every audience member might be able to agree with or, indeed, feel a connection to and in this sense perhaps the audience will see themselves reflected in someone interviewed in the film.

As far as it is possible I wish to screen the film in as many different locations as possible, beyond the cinema. I would like to bring the film to a wide audience by staging free screenings in locations along the coast. I hope to avoid an all too common problem of screening films to an exclusive audience who are likely to already share the views expressed in the film. This may be a question of screening in village halls, public houses and club venues etc. in order to maximise the opportunity for as wide an audience as possible to see it. I also think that where possible, especially given the subject of this film, that I should be present at as many screenings as possible in order to answer questions people may have about what they have just seen. It is my hope that in these Q+A sessions after the screening, I will be able to encourage debate and the opportunity for the audience to air their views in a public setting, thereby contributing to a wider debate and discussion about climate change. Used in this way I think the film will be a valuable addition to the work that is made communicating the risks of climate change. It is hoped that the lack of didacticism I have striven for might be appreciated by the audience and be a catalyst for a more open and frank discussion. 'The growing atmospheric pressure caused by global warming is joined by dromospheric pressure, the tension created by speed in our daily lives and work' (Virilio 2012, p.44)

The project overall can be seen as an original contribution to knowledge in that it examines the role of technology and filmmaking techniques, as well as methodology in an attempt to locate ways of creating documentaries that attempt to elicit a direct *affect* on an audience in order to bring about behavioural change. The project sought to refocus the attention of the documentary

from the didactic to a format (an exchange of information) that might be seen as enabling. This has been possible by examining the way in which myth itself works, not only as the subject of the film, but how myth operates in the creation of film (and broader communication) itself. The project, in dealing with a specific myth, enabled a development of an understanding of how myth operates, which was transposed to its presence, or otherwise, in documentary and how myth alters the efficacy of a film. In re-evaluating the central research question, 'how to make an effective film about climate change?' it was necessary to garner the opinions of colleagues, professionals and academic staff working with the project. While the screening process is very much in the early stages, it is possible to take opinions from those who have seen the film. Overwhelmingly those who have watched the film have stated that the areas designed to elicit *affect* have overall been successful. The use of footage of my children, the headcamera footage and the conversational style of the interviews serve to narrow the sense of disconnect between the audience and what they witness on the screen. Many have described 'feeling' or being 'moved' by sections of the film. Some have stated that the film made them sense some things that are beyond what is possible to describe in sight and sound alone, suggesting a process of *affect*. Overall, people have reported that in seeing the film they were left thinking, felt like examining their own behaviour or sympathising with the views of those they have heard speak on the screen. In that sense I certainly feel that the film has indeed been effective as a tool for communicating issues around climate change.

It is an inescapable fact that global warming, especially driven by anthropogenic factors, is one of the foremost threats to our civilisation globally. As I have discussed in this thesis, the problem is a complex one that must consider everything from chaos theory to the choice of light bulb. It has been and will continue to be a challenge to those in the communications business to elicit change in the face of such potential disaster. My film is one of many that look at the subject, and my ethical and methodological approaches are only one way into such a wide-ranging issue. I accept that my project is an *attempt* and as such is as liable to failure as much as success and I am pleased that I was prepared to take some risks in making it. What I hope the thesis adds to the project is to provide some theoretical context that will in turn enable those engaging with both the film and the thesis to understand from what standpoint many of the decisions were made. There are some areas in the film that have been left to stand on their own, without a laboured explanation. The reason for this is two fold: on one hand I am simply unable to explain all decisions and on the other I would like the film to be able to explain itself. Pertaining to this I take seriously that saying, 'show don't tell'.

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*Drowned Out* (2002) Directed by Franny Armstrong UK: Spanner Films

*Être et avoir* (2003) Directed by Nicolas Philibert France: Les Films du Losange

*Koyaanisqatsi* (1982) Directed by Godfrey Reggio USA: Island Alive New Cinema

*La Soufriere* (1977) Directed by Werner Herzog USA: Filmproduktion

*Les maîtres fous* (1955) Directed by Jean Rouch Netherlands: Les Films de la Pléiade

*Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) Directed by Dziga Vertov Soviet Union

*Mc Libel* (1997) Directed by Franny Armstrong UK: Spanner Films

*Modern Life* (2000) Directed by Raymond Depardon France: Palmeraie et Désert

*No Pressure* (2010) Directed by Franny Armstrong and Richard Curtis UK: 10:10

*Our War* (2011) BBC

*Patagonia* (2010) Directed by Marc Evans UK: Rainy Day Films

*Shoah* (1985) Directed by Claude Lanzmann USA: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC),  
Historia, Les Films Aleph, Ministère de la Culture de la République Française

*Sketchbook for a Library Van* (2005) Directed by Gideon Koppel UK: Radical Media

*Sleep Furiously* (2008) Directed by Gideon Koppel UK: Bard Entertainments

*Solitude Trilogy* (1992) CBC Records

*The Age of Stupid* (2009) Directed by Franny Armstrong UK: Spanner Films



*The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) Directed by Roland Emmerich US: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox

*The Uprising* (2013) Directed by Peter Snowdon Czech Republic: Rien à Voir Production

## Appendix (All entries are included on the attached DVD)

- (1) *British Sea-Defence*, a short film  
<http://cargocollective.com/forecast/British-Sea-Defence>
  
- (2) Close studies of the myth of Cantre'r Gwaelod
  - a) *Inundation*, a short film  
<http://cargocollective.com/forecast/Inundation>
  - b) *Cantre'r Gwaelod*, a short film  
<http://cargocollective.com/forecast/Cantre-r-Gwaelod>
  
- (3) Methodology testing, experimentation with the use of head-cameras
  - a) *Snowdon*, a short film  
<http://cargocollective.com/forecast/Snowdon>
  - b) *Ramsey to Bardsey*, Head-camera footage of the walk in entirety  
<http://cargocollective.com/forecast/Ramsey-Bardsey-The-Walk>
  - c) *Body-Ballets*  
<http://cargocollective.com/forecast/Body-Ballets>
  
- (4) Rhydd Ddu Restoration Project  
<http://cargocollective.com/forecast/Rhydd-Ddu-Restoration-Project>