

Review Article

Television from the Trenches: An Archival Review of *No Price Too High**

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RÉSUMÉ Ce commentaire critique examine l'utilisation des sources archivistiques dans le documentaire télévisuel *Le Prix de la liberté: les Canadiens et la Deuxième guerre mondiale* qui a été diffusé pour la première fois en 1996. L'auteure se guide sur une approche contextuelle des documents, laquelle est basée sur une connaissance de l'origine, les buts premiers et les caractéristiques des documents. L'article prétend que plusieurs des histoires les mieux rendus du documentaire sont celles qui respectent la nature originale et la provenance des documents et qui explicitent les connexions entre eux.

ABSTRACT This review article examines the use of archival sources for the television documentary *No Price Too High: Canadians and the Second World War*, which first aired in 1996. The author is guided by the contextual approach to records, which is based on knowledge of the origin, original purposes, and characteristics of records. The article contends that some of the most effective stories in the documentary are those which respect the original nature and provenance of records and make explicit the connections between related records.

Few events, if any, have received as much attention in historical documentaries as the Second World War. Because the war was one of the most significant world events in recent memory and also because it generated an unprecedented amount of visual and oral documentation, it is an obvious choice for documentary filmmakers. Indeed, the Canadian specialty channel History Television has been criticized for offering little else.¹ In Canada, the 1992 broadcast of *The Valour and the Horror*, a documentary on the history of the Second World War, was a watershed moment in the public debate over

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¹ Christopher Moore, "History Television: Stay Tuned," *The Beaver* 78, no. 1 (February-March 1998), pp. 50-51. For a discussion of the proliferation of Second World War documentaries, see Eric Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of Non-Fiction Film*, Second Revised Edition (New York and Oxford, 1993).

history and collective memory. Professional historians, journalists, veterans and others became actively involved in a debate over the presentation of the history of the war on television. Veterans who felt that they were being portrayed unfairly and that Canadian history was being sacrificed to made-for-television historical conspiracies were motivated to provide what they believed would be a corrective to *The Valour and the Horror*.² One of the results was the production of another documentary, *No Price Too High*.

No Price Too High: Canadians and the Second World War premiered on the Canadian Bravo! Network in January and February 1996 after being refused by the three major Canadian networks (CBC, CTV, and Global). It has been rebroadcast several times, on various networks such as Bravo!, History Television, PBS, and, finally, the CBC. The television premiere of the series was accompanied by the publication of a companion book co-authored by Terry Copp, historian and historical consultant to the documentary.³ The documentary was aired in its entirety to commemorate Remembrance Day on History Television in 1997 and on the Bravo! Network in 1998. Finally, in the spring of 1998, after much lobbying on the part of the supporters of *No Price Too High* and with the support of CBC President Perrin Beatty, the CBC featured the documentary under the umbrella of a continuing Sunday night series entitled *Remembering Canada at War*.⁴ The series, thus, had a less prominent debut than *The Valour and the Horror* and, likely because its perspective was more conventional, it did not receive the media attention accorded its more controversial counterpart. In fact, a search of Canadian newspapers revealed no articles or reviews written in response to the 1996 premiere. The few reviews written in 1998 concentrate more on the documentary's relationship to *The Valour and the Horror* and the battle to have it aired on the CBC than on its merits as a historical documentary.⁵

No Price Too High incorporates a wide range of archival sources and provides an interesting point of comparison to *The Valour and the Horror*. Historians may debate the merits and deficiencies of the historical interpreta-

2 Christopher Moore, "Living History, History Dying," *The Beaver* 78, no. 4 (August-September 1998), p. 54.

3 Terry Copp and Richard Nielsen, *No Price Too High: Canadians and the Second World War* (Toronto, 1996). The book was intended as a complement to the series and, although it incorporates some of the script and sources, the text is not a duplicate of the documentary script. Both the companion book and videotapes of the series were advertised for sale at the end of each episode.

4 See related stories in Greg Quill, "War Series Finally Airs on CBC," *The Toronto Star*, Metro Edition (14 May 1998), p. A29; and Anthony Wilson-Smith, "A 'Happy Warrior' Wins – His Way," *Maclean's* (1 June 1998), p. 11.

5 Quill, "War Series," p. A29; Jeffrey Simpson, "CBC Series Marks Proud Page in Canada's War History, Warts and All," *Globe and Mail* (15 May 1998), p. A16; Wilson-Smith, "A 'Happy Warrior'," p. 11.

tions presented in the two series. An archival review, however, will necessarily examine the incorporation of original documents. The contextual approach to archival records, based on knowledge of the origin, original purposes, and characteristics of records, will guide this review. To aid this analysis, some comparison will be made with *The Valour and the Horror*, which has been reviewed by archivist Ernest Dick.⁶ This present review, however, will focus primarily on an assessment of the use of archival sources in *No Price Too High*. It will be contended that some of the most effective stories in the documentary are those which respect the original nature and provenance of records and make explicit the connections between related records.

Not surprisingly, the production of the two documentaries was guided by very different motivations. *No Price Too High* was produced largely because some veterans and military historians wanted Canadians, and especially younger Canadians, to be given a comprehensive visual historical lesson which would teach them the veterans' opinion of the significance of the war and that the sacrifice made by veterans directly affects the quality of life in Canada today.⁷ *The Valour and the Horror*, on the other hand, was produced by two CBC journalists, Brian and Terence McKenna, who approached the subject as investigative reporters and who, as members of a younger generation, were interested in examining the war from a critical distance and exposing the evils on all sides.⁸ *No Price Too High* was produced by Richard Nielsen and Anderson Charters. They worked together with the No Price Too High Foundation which was chaired by the Honourable Barnett J. Danson, a veteran of the war and former Minister of National Defence. The foundation consisted of politicians, veterans, and other interested citizens. The foundation raised more than \$1.5 million for the production of the series and also established an Advisory Committee made up of "distinguished veterans" who provided comment at various stages of the production process. The executive producers of *No Price Too High* had the undeniable support of veterans who were "seek[ing] ways of re-establishing an accurate collective memory of the meaning of the sacrifices of war."⁹ Terry Copp, the academic historian who served as consultant and on-air commentator for the series, indicated further that the series was produced as a response to books and films which, in his view, were portraying the war critically and unfairly, with seemingly little

6 Ernest J. Dick, "History on Television: A Critical Archival Examination of 'The Valour and the Horror'," *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992), pp. 199-216; and Ernest J. Dick, "'The Valour and the Horror' Continued: Do We Still Want Our History on Television?" *Archivaria* 35 (Spring 1993), pp. 253-69.

7 Moore, "Living History," p. 54.

8 Dick, "History on Television," pp. 202-203.

9 Copp and Nielsen, *No Price Too High*, p. 9.

regard for the sacrifices of the men and women who participated.¹⁰ At the end of each episode, the credits include a dedication “to the generation that met the challenges of World War II, in particular those who fought and those who died.”

The Valour and the Horror consists of three issue- or event-oriented episodes. *No Price Too High* is more traditional in its format and traces the story of the Second World War by giving a chronological overview. The series consists of six one-hour episodes which, at least in its premiere broadcast on Bravo!, were aired without commercial interruption. The six episodes constitute a retelling of the events leading to the war, the war itself, and the aftermath of victory. The series focuses on the Canadian experience, at both the political and the grassroots levels, at home and overseas. Because of the chronological format, each episode deals with a variety of subjects and issues which are separated from each other like chapters in a book by the insertion of titles. Each episode consists of a variety of basic elements: a narrator, a few “expert” comments given by Terry Copp, archival documents in various media, and contemporary footage of some relevant European locations.

Both *No Price Too High* and *The Valour and the Horror* feature archival sources prominently, and the producers extended their search for sources far beyond archival repositories. Each documentary seeks to tell the story of Canadian participation in the Second World War from the perspective of the ordinary men and women who were involved, instead of focusing solely on an examination of high level military tactics or political details. As a result, the sources used necessarily had to move beyond the official public record to the documents created by private individuals and organizations. In fact, it is clear throughout *No Price Too High* that the narrative and direction of the production were set in consultation with the original sources as opposed to the common technique of writing a script and then going to the archives to find the “perfect” images to match the story. Executive Producer Anderson Charters led the nation-wide search for sources for *No Price Too High*. Undoubtedly, the strong presence of veterans in the No Price Too High Foundation, as well as the strong opposition to *The Valour and the Horror*, provided a valuable network and led to untapped records stored in the homes of Canadians. The credits for each episode include numerous archival institutions as well as a special appreciation of people who offered diaries and letters for use in the production. The footnotes to the companion volume reveal many individuals who offered their private records for use in the series. The wide-reaching search for sources conducted by the No Price Too High Foundation is impressive to archivists who promote a “total archives” approach to the historical record. Records from both private and public sectors are used to

¹⁰ Ibid.

create a more inclusive view of the past. Letters, journals, photographs, and other records represent both anglophones and francophones, men and women, high-ranking officials, politicians, enlisted men, and conscientious objectors. Throughout *No Price Too High* the original nature of the documents is respected and, as Jeffrey Simpson stated in his review, the voices and faces of those represented in the documents who participated in the war are allowed to be the “stars of the show.”¹¹

Another important element of the total archives equation is research into and the incorporation of records of different media. One of the strengths of an audio-visual presentation is its ability to create a multi-sensory product which allows viewers the opportunity to see historical footage and photographs and to hear sound recordings or excerpts read from textual documents all in one production. *No Price Too High*, like *The Valour and the Horror*, includes several documentary media. The visual element of *No Price Too High* is largely archival. Photographs, whether informal snapshots, portrait shots of soldiers in uniform, or “official” photographs of the war taken by military personnel, are featured prominently. The series also makes use of a wide and impressive array of moving images which include Canadian and German newsreels, German propaganda films, amateur footage (in Canada and Hong Kong), training films, and various other images taken on the home front and on the battlefield. Finally, a few pieces of documentary art, including conscription posters and one painting, are shown. (While documentary art is virtually ignored in *No Price Too High*, war artists and the documentary record are featured in *The Valour and the Horror*.) In addition, several sound documents were also incorporated into *No Price Too High*. CBC and BBC radio reports were included along with recordings of speeches made, for example, by Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, and William Lyon Mackenzie King.

While the documentary is strongly visual, textual documents are the cornerstone of *No Price Too High*. Textual records, such as diaries, letters, telegrams, and newspaper articles, are incorporated effectively using a technique perfected and made popular by Ken Burns’s documentary series *The Civil War*. In this method, actors read the original text and identify the author of the text at the end of the quotation. The actors are never seen; instead, the text is illustrated by moving and still images and, at times, punctuated by additional sound effects. Thus, the makers of *No Price Too High* avoid one of the most contentious elements of *The Valour and the Horror*. In the latter, actors in period costume dramatize the contents of textual documents and oral history interviews. This technique de-emphasizes the original nature of the texts while making the dramatized words of the soldiers appear to be fictionalized. Many of the quota-

11 Simpson, “CBC Series Marks Proud Page,” p. A16.

tions, for example, are taken from oral history interviews conducted in the 1970s, but the actors portrayed soldiers and other characters as if the words had been said or written during the wartime experience. The reading of original texts, as incorporated in *No Price Too High*, accompanied by related footage and photographs, is a respectful way to bring words off the page and is a respectful method of incorporating written sources.

Beyond the wide range of documents which are used, several techniques employed throughout the series emphasize the original nature of the documents, connecting them directly with the acts of creation and with their creators (provenance) and with other related records (original order). Contextual details are frequently made explicit in the use of records of all media. The reading of letters often begins with the date of writing and the customary salutation. At the end of the quote, the actor will state the name of the author and, when applicable, will often include his or her rank and regiment. The context of the creation of these records is enhanced further when numerous letters by the same author are read or when a series of correspondence is read, including letters between two or more people. Several episodes, for example, feature correspondence between Jean Partridge and William "Pat" Patterson, a young couple who were married in 1942 before Patterson went overseas with the Royal Canadian Air Force. While these letters are read, photographs of Jean and Pat are shown. In the fifth episode, several of Pat's letters to Jean are read, with all of the dates given showing the progression of letters. At the end of these excerpts, a newspaper clipping is shown reporting that Pat Patterson is missing in action, and then the voice portraying Jean Partridge reports the circumstances of Pat's death. His grave is shown in the final scene of the episode.

Another example of the use of related records is found in the fifth episode which includes several letters written by Lance Corporal Alec Flexer to his parents. The letters are illustrated by, among other visuals, his portrait in uniform. Following excerpts from Flexer's letter, his death is acknowledged. It is then explained that, even though she had been notified of his death, his mother continued to write to him. The excerpts from Mrs. Flexer's letters to her dead son, accompanied by pictures of him as a boy, are more powerful and meaningful because the context of their creation has been explained. The letters exchanged by Jean Partridge and Pat Patterson and by Alec and Mrs. Flexer are given meaning because they are not treated as isolated paragraphs disconnected from their respective creators. Rather, they are connected directly with related records, including photographs and the newspaper clipping, with dates and with surrounding circumstances. Letters, and statements within letters, are better appreciated when read in the context of continuing correspondence and with at least some understanding of their authors and their relationship to each other.

Identifying elements are provided for other documents as well. Several

original sound recordings of radio broadcasts are used. Most include an identifying statement by the reporter at the beginning or end of the report in which he states his name, his affiliation and, often, his location. Particularly in a series in which ambient sound is recreated, and actors read the words of historical figures, features which delineate a sound recording as original are crucial to their authenticity. In the sixth episode, for example, a newsreel is shown. The clip begins with its title shot, "Food for North Holland. Canadian Army Newsreel" which unobtrusively identifies both the creator and the form of the document. Having identified the Canadian Army as the creator, the viewer will understand immediately that the clip is not, for instance, a commercial newsreel but that it was created by the army for a specific purpose. It is also clear that the original soundtrack was not removed from the footage. This maintains the "original order" of the newsreel and allows the viewer to pick up oral clues to help interpret the corresponding visuals.

The emphasis on form and the relationship between records strengthens the use of documents and the presentation of history within the documentary. The presentation of documents in this manner, however, is not consistent. While the Partridge/Patterson and Flexer interchanges are certainly not the only examples of multi-media documents being used effectively and within context, there are several examples where related documents are presented but linkages are not made or where opportunities for connecting documents are missed. In the first episode, for example, during the discussion of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's visit to Germany and his meeting with Adolf Hitler, numerous excerpts from King's diary are read. One mentions a gift Hitler gave to King: an autographed portrait of himself. While this is read, a portrait of Hitler is shown but no autograph. If the gift photograph is still in existence, it would have been a powerful visual and an excellent corollary to the text. On the other hand, if the picture could not be located, there may have been a very interesting story in its disappearance.

Another example is found in the fourth episode which includes a few excerpts from the journal kept by war artist Charles Comfort. Oddly, before the excerpts are read, both moving and still images show Comfort in uniform and painting. The images, however, are in no way connected to the text and make no sense within the context of the production. Better editing and more explicit image identification could have been used to connect image and word. Also, a viewer might ask why this war artist was introduced without any real mention of his work or shots of the documentary art record he produced. The speed at which a television production moves allows for inconsistencies to go unnoticed, particularly by a one-time viewer. Several inconsistencies found in the documentary, in fact, could only be confirmed by comparing the television series to the companion volume. The challenge for the archival reviewer, then, is to point out the relative strength of the portions which emphasize at least some original elements of the records used as opposed to those which do not.

Another point where the use of original documents could be strengthened is in the presentation of textual records. While the use of textual documents in *No Price Too High* is extensive and generally respectful, the impact of these “original” words read from diaries, letters, and other records could have been enhanced by showing some of the actual documents. The only textual documents shown are newspaper clippings. In the fourth episode, an excerpt is read from a letter in which Lieutenant Frank Hall apologized that his poor handwriting resulted from the “throbbing of the ship’s engines.” A shot of this letter may have been a good illustration. In addition, shots of such documents as pages from the diary of Mackenzie King in which he describes his first impressions of Adolf Hitler or his communications with his dead mother, a telegram notifying a family of the death of a son or husband, or the last letter Jean Partridge received from Pat Patterson could be powerful images. They would remind the viewer that the quotations being heard were created deliberately by an individual in a specific historical time and place. Textual documents, after all, are more than just words on a page. Visual elements such as a postmark, handwriting, or a typewritten script all add authenticity and personality to their documents.

Photographs and moving images are used consistently in *No Price Too High* to illustrate the words which are being spoken, whether through narration or original texts. These images, however, have differing degrees of connection to the specific events or persons which are being presented. Some photographs, as in the examples above, are connected explicitly to specific individuals and events and their connections are made obvious as the viewer is shown several images of the same person or as the same image is shown every time a specific individual is quoted. Some moving and still images (and even some radio recordings) include a caption which clarifies for the viewer the name of the person being shown or heard. These captions are used inconsistently and infrequently, however, and so seem out of place when they do appear. Other images are connected to the text but are not linked clearly. Again, the only way a viewer can discover some of these linkages is through the series’ companion book. Finally, many images are used generically as illustration and are connected to the text only because they represent a similar subject, time, location, battle, or person. The use of images in this manner is inevitable. Television is inherently visual and an archivist cannot and should not expect every image to link directly to every quote or every event being presented. Certainly, such a production would put even archivists to sleep! Instead, the question becomes one of balance.

When photographs are used out of context or when the context behind a photograph is not made explicit, it becomes very easy to construct a meaning to fit the argument or perspective being presented. For example, portrait photographs of individual soldiers are shown frequently throughout *No Price Too High*. While a quote is read by an off-screen actor, the camera focuses

more and more closely on the soldier's eyes, as if looking in the man's eyes will allow the viewer to really "see" the person in the uniform, to understand his deepest motivations, and, if the quote is actually his, to truly comprehend what he is saying or, if the quote is not his, to appreciate that probably every soldier felt the same thing. No consideration is given to the fact that the photograph and the text were likely created at very different times and in very different locations and that studio shots were probably created in an artificial, unnatural setting. In these instances and others, the use of images in *No Price Too High* re-enforces the assumption that individual photographs are snapshots of "reality" and not subjective documents framed by an author.

Undoubtedly, the best and most archivally sound use of photographs is found in the sixth episode in the section on the entry of Allied forces into the Nazi concentration camp at Belsen. The photographs shown were taken by King Whyte, a Public Relations Officer in the Canadian First Army. Whyte sent the photographs home to his wife along with a letter describing the contents of the pictures and his impressions of the camp. Excerpts of Whyte's letter to his wife are read by an actor. They include significant detail about the photographs being shown. The images of the Belsen concentration camp are striking on their own, but become much more powerful when they are coupled with the words of the photographer as he describes to his wife the horrific scenes which he has witnessed. The photographs provide much more than mere illustration. Their status as evidence is enhanced because the pictures are connected directly to their creator. They not only provide specific information about the concentration camp but also the surrounding context of action that was taking place beyond the frozen image of each photograph.

In his brief review and discussion of *No Price Too High* in *The Beaver*, Christopher Moore suggested that the series "skillfully explores the rich archive of film that Canadians created between 1939 and 1945."¹² An archival review must consider the quality of this exploration. Indeed, there are many archival moving images which are incorporated into the documentary, and the creators of *No Price Too High* are to be applauded for resisting the "easy" method of using stock shot moving images.¹³ Unfortunately, these documents are the ones most frequently used in many documentaries. Moving images are rarely given a clear contextual connection. There are many scenes showing, for instance, soldiers falling, men in combat, men and women in the military dancing or socializing in pubs, naval ships coming upon beaches, and wartime industrial production at home in Canada. Most moving images are used solely as illustration. For most of the footage shown, it is unclear who the cameraperson might have been, for what purpose the film was created, or

12 Moore, "Living History, History Dying," p. 54.

13 No stock shot libraries are listed in the credits.

even if the scenes being shown connect directly to the action (specific battle, place, and time) being described. Unless the reviewer has extensive specialized knowledge of all of the records being used, it is nearly impossible to know whether or not archival footage is showing the events, places, or people being discussed. The reviewer must assess to what degree this correlation, or lack thereof, matters. Is it acceptable to use footage of one battle to depict or illustrate another? Does it matter if a photograph of one soldier is shown throughout the reading of a quote by another soldier? Do most viewers assume the connection of image and word? The inconsistency of the identification of records in *No Price Too High* may be problematic in this regard. Because some records are connected so clearly, the viewer may well assume that all records are. Considering that veterans reacted most strongly to the perceived misrepresentation of the words of soldiers and other documentary evidence in *The Valour and the Horror*, one might ask whether the unclear or generic presentation of visual evidence in *No Price Too High* is not equally deceptive. Unfortunately, however, it seems that as long as the historical interpretation does not become a point of public controversy for viewers, the misrepresentation or unclear representation of historical evidence will not be questioned.

In addition to examining the respectful use of archival documents as clues to the history and meaning of the records being used, it is important for an archival review to consider, at least briefly, some of the production elements which are employed and how these affect the “reading” of archival documents by the viewing audience. *No Price Too High* uses, for instance, many “conventions of truth” which are used to lend credibility and authority to the production. The perspective from which the documentary was produced has a distinct effect on how documents are portrayed. *No Price Too High* chooses to situate its interpretation of the war in a distinctly patriotic framework, which, first and foremost, honours the bravery and sacrifice of Canadian participants. Indeed, the standards set for the production are somewhat lofty: to create a definitive and “true” telling of the war. The Bravo! Network introduction, which preceded each episode of *No Price Too High*, indicated that the documentary would “take an honest look” at Canada’s involvement in the Second World War. It is important, then, to recognize elements of the production which promote the overall impression of authority.

The truth status of the documentary is constructed throughout the production with the use both of a “voice-of-God” narration and the expert testimony of a professional historian. The narrator, Arthur Kent, is never seen and his voice, which is not particularly distinctive, allows him to maintain a quasi-omniscient status. This technique is a contrast to *The Valour and the Horror* which uses Terence McKenna, a prominent journalist whose voice is recognizable to many Canadian viewers and who, in a technique which might be viewed as a healthy acknowledgement of bias, appears on camera at a few

points in the series. The role of the narrator in *No Price Too High* is to give background information and to guide the telling of the story, especially as it takes topical leaps. The narrator seems to be more prominent in the earlier episodes, with a decreased presence as the series progresses and as personal accounts are used to tell more and more of the story. The truth status of the narration is promoted further by the “expert testimony” of Terry Copp who appears between two and four times per episode. Copp is a professor of history at Wilfrid Laurier University who has written extensively on the Canadian military in the Second World War. Throughout the series, Copp’s comments orient the viewer to the larger picture and tie together some of the sources being shown or read and the stories being told. Both authority figures used in this documentary appear, in a sense, as teachers instructing students. They add credibility and perspective to what could be a disjointed presentation of footage and archival texts. Fortunately, the makers of *No Price Too High* did not allow either of these figures to dominate the production. Rather, they appear as effective partners and guides through the chronological tour of the Second World War.

In assessing the balance between narration/expert testimony and the use of records, the reviewer must examine the degree to which documents are allowed to “speak for themselves” and the impact of pacing and editing on the presentation of documents. In this, the length of quotations or film footage and the time spent showing photographs or other images must be considered. Photographs are used in a style similar to Ken Burns’s “still-in-motion” cinematography, in which the film camera often lingers on individual photographs, panning the entire image and focusing on specific details. Moving images, particularly the newsreels mentioned above, are often shown in lengthy clips. There are numerous moments in *No Price Too High* when the voices of the past are heard very clearly and in which the stories of the war are told directly by its participants rather than the narrator. One example is found in the fifth episode. A journal entry of 8 July 1944 written by F.H. Metcalfe of the Queen’s Own Regiment is read in its entirety. The entry describes a full day of battle based on one man’s experience. Equally strong is the use of William Lyon Mackenzie King’s diaries. In the first episode, the diaries are particularly effective. Lengthy excerpts are read which describe King’s meeting with Adolf Hitler in 1937. He describes the events of the visit, his conversations with Hitler, and the degree to which both Hitler and the strength of the German economy impressed him. Another quote includes a detailed description of Hitler’s facial features. These lengthy excerpts represent a general respect for the information being conveyed in the documents, as the viewer is able to hear whole paragraphs instead of mere disembodied phrases. Because the filmmakers allowed time for the documents to “speak,” viewers are better able to appreciate the spirit and intent of original records and, at least to some extent, to weigh the merits of the evidence being presented.

Film speed is another creative element which relates directly to the pacing and editing of the documentary. *No Price Too High* includes some examples of “fast motion” film. Several clips of World War I footage are shown in the first episode. This footage was shot originally at sixteen to eighteen frames-per-second. When the clips are projected at the customary twenty-four frames-per-second, the motion appears to be jerky and almost comical but, as fast motion film is commonly associated with old Hollywood movies, the viewer is reminded that this footage, too, is very old. More often, the makers of *No Price Too High* employed slow motion techniques when showing archival footage. Images of battles, of artillery being fired, of men being shot or running away from explosions are shown at a surreal, slowed pace. Slow motion allows the viewer to examine the action more closely, as the normal speed of the film might be too quick to absorb. The technique achieves other effects as well, as is argued by Richard Gollin: “For expressionistic purposes, slow motion can present a dreamlike world, languorous, lyrical, ecstatic, interminable, sodden or horribly entrapping in time as well as space.”¹⁴ *No Price Too High* incorporates many of these effects and encourages an uncritical, romanticized reading of the archival images being shown.

Another production element, which contributes to the impressions given by the documents as well as to the overall authority status, is the use of sound. The documentary employs “foley” sound throughout. In other words, the sounds of battle (artillery firing, screams), parties in bars, and crowds cheering are added to otherwise silent footage or, possibly, to replace or add to the original sound from the film footage. These sound effects also commonly accompany and punctuate the actors’ readings of original texts, adding drama to the words being spoken and giving the impression that the viewer is hearing a voice from the past even though this is obviously not the case. Music is another extremely effective aural tool which establishes a mood and encourages an emotional response to what is being viewed and heard. *The Valour and the Horror* features quite prominently Gabriel Fauré’s “Requiem.” It creates an ominous and foreboding mood. The use of music in *No Price Too High* is quite different. Several pieces, including “The Maple Leaf Forever” and “O Canada!” (played by a solo trumpet at the end of the last episode), construct a distinctly patriotic tone. Popular songs such as “Lili Marlene,” “After the War,” and “When the Lights go on Again” are heard throughout the series. Like other techniques, these songs are used to transport viewers back in time, instructing them to feel that they have entered the culture and the camaraderie of the war and encouraging, again, a romanticized reception of both the original records being presented. The music featured in *No Price*

14 Richard M. Gollin, *A Viewer’s Guide to Film: Arts, Artifices and Issues* (New York, 1992), p. 41.

Too High helps to create what Ken Burns described as an “emotional consensus,”¹⁵ in which the documentary invites viewers to “feel good” about its interpretation of the past.

In the final analysis, an archival review must add up all the various components of the critique and decide whether or not the total production is satisfactory, in terms of the use and representation of original sources. It must be remembered that the primary goal of the producers is to entertain and, secondarily, to educate. Provenance and contextual information are not their guiding philosophies, nor should archivists expect them to be. However, if an archivist can point to areas where these details might strengthen a production or at least be able to comment intelligently on the strengths and weaknesses of a production after the fact, they might be able to contribute to further understanding and respect for the distinct characteristics of original documents.

No Price Too High illustrates some of the challenges of the television documentary, particularly in the frequent use of archival images as illustration as opposed to evidence. The strongest element of the production, from an archival standpoint, is its ability to bring together related documents, including those of different media, and to give them meaning by situating them within the lives of real people, their creators, and their subjects. Archivists must challenge each other and researchers to consider all archival media as information technologies with distinctive characteristics and capacities for carrying information about the past which need to be read and interpreted. In this documentary, it is much more likely that the context behind a quotation from a textual document will be made explicit than it is for a still or moving image. Clearly, however, still and moving images become much more powerful when the context of their creation is known and when they move beyond illustration to evidence, as was shown in the example of the Belsen concentration camp photographs. The challenge comes, obviously, in introducing this information without making the production laboured or pedantic. Would it be possible for the “omniscient” narrator to become more engaged in the process and perhaps to point directly to the images being shown? Perhaps the narrator could name the cameraperson who filmed a certain battle, give details about why he was there, how the record came to be created, maintained, and archived, or on specific details in the image itself. Could captions be used more effectively to add meaning and context to visual documents?

No Price Too High was a deliberate attempt to issue a corrective to a perceived deficiency in Canadian documentaries on the war and to provide a forum for Canadian veterans to participate more fully in the presentation of

15 Thomas Cripps, “Historical Truth: An Interview with Ken Burns,” *American Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (June 1995), p. 746.

the Second World War on television. Because this documentary did not provoke a controversy, its profile was much lower than *The Valour and the Horror* and, as such, viewers might not even think to question its interpretation and presentation of the past. This review has neither challenged nor upheld the historical interpretations presented in the six episodes of *No Price Too High* and has, instead, focused on an archival critique of the use of original sources and the ways in which the inclusion or omission of archival details affects the quality of the production. In the end, *No Price Too High* achieved a respectable balance of documents used as evidence and as illustration. While there are many points at which details of context and content are left unknown, there are also many examples where the provenance of archival documents is enunciated clearly and where the original order of related documents is maintained and, therein, is used effectively as a tool for connecting stories and individuals. The documentary is to be applauded for bringing to the screen a wide variety of documents, created by a diverse cross-section of authors in different media, to portray the history of the Canadian experience in the Second World War. It serves as an excellent example for archivists trying to understand better the effect of television on the interpretation of the records they are charged to defend.