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Date: **9/7/2001**
THE NARRATIVIZATION OF ACTUALITY
CONVERGENCE OF FORM AND GENRE IN FILM AND TELEVISION

By

COLIN PERRY, B.Ed., B. Litt. (Hons.) Deakin University.

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

October, 2000
I certify that the thesis entitled:

The Narrativization of Actuality: Convergence of Form and Genre in Film and Television

submitted for the degree of:

Doctor of Philosophy

is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis in whole or in part has not be submitted for an award, including a higher degree, to any other university or institution.

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Summary of Doctor of Philosophy Thesis

The thesis concerns the treatment of actuality in film and television, particularly the narrativization of actuality images, and the context of their placement within audio/visual texts. Several instances of the convergence of media form and genre are analyzed, and the conventions of classificatory systems and boundaries that pertain to film and television representations are reconsidered in light of changes in the conventions of genre. The distinction between, and convergence of fictional and non-fictional conventions of narrative are therefore central to the thesis, as are the related issues of viewer response, the nature of subjectivity in the viewer, the connectivity of text and culture, and the relations of actuality to the text. The thesis traces the narrativization of actuality through textual, formal and genre boundaries, adopting a "line of flight or deterritorialization" that enables the thesis to "change in nature and connect with other multiplicities." 

A multi-perceptival approach is applied to the permeability of, or transcendent relations of the analysis to the boundaries between genres, between texts and culture, and between actuality and virtual representation. In the thesis there is also a theoretical deterritorialization that consents to a pluralism of theory, which is an approach demonstrated by Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus. 

The model of multi-perspectivalism adopted in the thesis engages in establishing connections and similarities between theories, rather than emphasizing contradictory and exclusive practices. The Foucauldian notion of the rules of formation in discourse, Nichols' theories of documentary representation of reality, Bordwell's schematic interpretation, and several other positions are critiqued, as the line of flight embarked upon in the thesis intersects with, and passes through both textual and theoretical boundaries.

The thesis consists of two parts: firstly, a location of theoretical perspective, in which the issues of theory pertaining to actuality and narrative are explicated, and the methodological approach of the thesis is defined. The second part commences with an analysis of the most familiar instances of actuality in film and television, with particular attention to documentary forms. It then engages in the analysis of films that represent actuality but which, in the process of narrativization, display a convergence of genre conventions. The films selected for analysis include Steven Spielberg's Schindler's List, (1993) Oliver Stone's JFK, (1991) and Robert Zemeckis' Forrest Gump, (1994) and Contact, (1996). Hence the thesis is concerned with the application of a pluralist theoretical approach, with, however, an emphasis on the Deleuze-Guattarian notions of rhizome and assemblage. Within this theoretical frame, the connections between actuality and the audiovisual text are explicated, and the formation of text as "a rhizome with the world", is analyzed across a range of examples.

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2 In particular, see Deleuze, 1989 and Deleuze, 1986, in which multiple theoretical positions, from Bergson to Peirce are applied to particular aspects of cinema.
4 Deleuze and Guattari, op.cit., p.11.
PART ONE

Theoretical Perspectives of the Narrativization of Actuality
A beffiting way to introduce this thesis is to identify the original spark of inspiration which brought about my involvement in this field of research. During 1994 I selected a video for an evening’s entertainment, and having missed the cinema run of Oliver Stone’s JFK it seemed an appropriate choice. The subject matter had been of interest to me previous to the release of the film, as the Kennedy assassination had been the topic of various television documentary programs, books and late night discussions with friends debating the accepted historical account of events. Was Lee Harvey Oswald a lone gun assassin who had single handedly managed to shoot the youngest president in the history of the United States of America, or the victim of a conspiracy to cover up the identity of the actual assassins? As I immersed myself in the narrative I was startled at the appearance of the Zapruder footage, an amateur film which had become famous as the only visual record of the assassination, and had appeared on countless news and documentary programs which sought to explain the circumstances of President Kennedy’s assassination. I was fully aware of the fact that the film was in the form of a fictional narrative, and yet the familiar scene of the presidential cavalcade gave the narrative an air of authority which disturbed my preconceived expectations of Stone’s film. Surely this footage did not belong in a fictional narrative. Was Stone’s choice to include the Zapruder footage a conscious effort to claim documentary status? At that point my perception of the film as a speculative fiction ceased, and my interpretive response took the form of an assumption that the narrative had entered the realm of actuality. The images I was viewing were not fictional, but the visual record of actual events which had occurred thirty years previously.

This experience awakened my interest in the use of actuality footage in fictional film. I was challenged by the confusion which ensued; the diegesis blurring into the actual world, the uncertainty of the evidential value of the film, the multiple contexts in which the Zapruder footage had appeared and the persuasive impact of recognizable images appearing in a fictional narrative. JFK had unsettled my system of defining narrative as fiction or non-fiction. This film contained elements of both, yet had successfully combined them within a single narrative structure. Furthermore the Zapruder footage had traversed a wide range of media forms; amateur film, news footage, documentary, photographic images in newspapers and books, fictional film in cinema, and finally viewed as a video tape of the movie JFK. This strip of film had been incorporated into many types of narrative, yet had maintained its authenticity as evidence of actual events. It stands as a potent example of the narrativization of actuality.

The Aims of the Research

My response has been to endeavor to research the methods by which groupings of texts are delineated, and to scrutinize the conventional assumptions that lead a viewer to interpret textual content as pertaining to actual events, or as the product of imaginative invention. The central concern of this thesis is to examine and analyze the processes whereby images of actuality are integrated into a narrative structure, with particular attention given to images and production techniques which traverse between media forms and genre. Convergence of form and genre has occurred
extensively in the 1990s as boundaries have been challenged by breaches of convention which defy established delineation between distinct forms and genre. My use of the term ‘form,’ in this context, is intended as a reference not only to the form of a narrative structure, but also to discrete forms of media such as film and television, and ‘genre’ as a term describing broad categories of films or television programs, such as fiction and non-fiction, or news and documentary. The appearance of screen images and sounds which are associated with television in film, or alternatively, image and sound which are associated with film appearing in television constitutes a convergence on two fronts. Firstly, convergence of form involves the traversal of images between media forms, where a television image becomes a film image, (or vice versa,) and secondly, convergence of genre, where an image or production technique which is characteristic of a specific genre appears within another genre.

An assumption which is integral to this research is that narrative is not limited to conventional notions of story, but that it encompasses speech, literature, constructed sounds and images, dance and dramatic performance. Narrative provides the structure in which these elements are selected and ordered. Narrativization is a term which describes the process of creating narrative from non-narrative elements, the transformation of actuality into a narrative form, and the utilization of signification for the purpose of inclusion within a narrative. Representations of events, objects and characters, whether actual or imaginary, are combined into an inter-connecting network of causal relationships and presented in a particular form, be it a novel, film, radio or television program, photographic, sculpted or painted image, or oral account. For the purpose of this research I intend to examine narratives which are in the form of film or television, and which incorporate images, sounds, or conventions which could be considered to have origins which are external to the particular form and genre of the narrative. Hence I will specifically investigate two major areas, firstly, documentary film and television, and their incorporation of conventions which are associated with fictional narrative, and secondly, film narratives which incorporate images or conventions which are associated with television news and documentary, and their depictions of actuality.

The use of the term ‘actuality’ in this thesis is intended to draw a distinction between existents and their representations. Although in recent theoretical discourse the term ‘reality’ has been employed to describe the events, characters and objects which exist prior to their representations or independent of representation, I have chosen to refer to these as actual. The use of the word ‘reality’ can bring about confusion in terminology. The word itself has come to imply more than existence. Human belief systems as to what is ‘real’ and what is not ‘real’ vary according to individual and cultural background. An approach to the concept of reality which takes subjectivity into consideration allows for multiple realities, where reality is connected to perception and interpretation and is a flexible term according to the intended application. To speak of a reality as applying to an individual or cultural perception removes it from the existent world. ‘Her reality’, ‘his reality’ or ‘their reality’ can differ according to the interpretation of the existent. Therefore, reality is a term that can apply equally to an individual apperception, to a collective interpretation, or to a disconnected existent world. In using actuality as term to describe existents I am seeking to avoid the possible connotation of subjectivity, and to distinguish between the existent world, and that of human perception and
interpretation. Actuality is a term which connotes existents as independent from subjectivity. By adopting this approach I have no intention of diminishing the validity of subjectivity, but rather to clearly differentiate between 'reality' as possibly including the interpretive process, and 'actuality' as referring exclusively to existents prior to perception and interpretation.

The concept of truth is intrinsically linked to that of reality, particularly when considered within the context of news and documentary representations. These genres are accompanied by attendant cultural presuppositions as to the veracity of their content. It is important to distinguish between truth as a quality of communicative veracity, and the more general concept of 'truth' which refers to the transcendental notions of cultural belief systems. Truth involves belief or trust in the veracity of representations in order to accept their 'reality'. Both truth and reality are concepts which are dependent on interpretive strategies and are subjective determinations. For viewers to accept a visual account as 'real', they must also accept that the account itself is 'true' to its source, and that the representation is isomorphic with actuality. It has been posited in recent years that images and sounds do not correspond to actuality, but, as Nichols observes, can only claim to be representations or reality. ¹ From a viewer's perspective these representations can be accepted as 'true', or questioned as subjective opinion, depending on the extent to which the viewer is willing to trust, or believe the veracity of the representation. The viewer's experience of representational forms and conventions become crucial in deciding the extent of this belief, and rhetorical persuasion and the adoption of accepted conventions are customarily employed in order to encourage acceptance of the veracity of the representation.

A clear understanding of the distinction between these terms is necessary when dealing with images of actuality, to differentiate between the actual event, the image of actuality, the cultural context of the image and the interpretive strategies which are applied in the reception of the image. Cultural conventions define the strategies of representation and interpretation through comparison with other texts and previous viewing experiences. The semiotic system through which a cultural group utilizes signification provides the context for interpretation of each text in relation to other texts and their interpretations. The reading of a text involves entering into an interpretive strategy and attributing meaning to signs according to preferred readings, (or in resistance to, in the case of oppositional readings), the conventions of the culture. ² Within a culture which regards television news and documentary as a major source of reliable information images which are known to originate from television news carry with them associations with the actual world. Such representations have been sanctioned as records of the actual world in western societies, despite the apparent decline of their acceptance by viewers as being 'true'.³ Images which are known and recognized by a large proportion of society as being 'documentary footage' achieve this status by portraying individuals or events which exist in the public domain, and by adhering to a code of conventions which reinforce social acceptance of the images as valid. Images of politicians, famous performers, well-known historical events and world leaders have been transformed into cultural icons.

¹ Nichols, 1991, p.110
by the media culture of the late twentieth century, and these images have retained their strong association with actual events and historical significance.

Such images could be described as mythic, particularly when considered within the narratives in which they appear, portraying the heroes and tragedies of contemporary society while using their actual tales in combination with fictional characters and events to explore the values of the society which produced both the heroic figures and the myths which establish them as cultural icons. The mythic form of television and film narratives reinforces their context as cultural devices and social influences which engage both producers and viewers in an ongoing contesting and affirmation of societal values. The narrativization of actuality in film and television could be described as a contemporary ‘re-vision’ of oral culture, where stories are composed and circulated in order to make sense of the actual world. Texts, regardless of their form and structure, cannot be removed from their cultural context, and should be considered as reflections of, or reactions to, a culture. The convergence of fictional and non-fictional genres indicates a change in cultural expectations of screen images by exploring the gap between myth and mimesis, or story and argument.

Form and Genre

In addition to the cultural context, the structure of narrative can shape the interpretive strategies which are applied to the narrative. Adjoining images and sounds cannot be considered in isolation from the narrative components which surround them, which precede and succeed them in a continuous chain of causality and expectation. The study of the narrativization of actuality images provides an opportunity to evaluate the significance of placement in shaping the meanings viewers draw from stories constructed around actuality footage and, conversely, the role of actuality footage in altering the interpretation of fictional narrative. The integration of actuality footage into fictional film, documentaries or ‘docu-dramas’, is also a cue for the application of interpretive strategies which are associated with the genre, and the expectations that accompany the genre and the implications of the evidential significance which is attributed to actuality footage.

The conventions of genre are, however, not the singular influence on interpretive strategies. The realism of the cinematic image is in itself a persuasive rhetoric, in that the correspondence between the audio/visual sensory data perceived in the cinema, or while watching the television screen, and the direct sensory experience of actuality, is cogent. Prince has called for a reappraisal of film theory in order to account for the increasing intervention of computer generated images, and the alteration that this technological advancement has brought about with regard to the relations between actuality and film images, stating that:

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Theoretical Perspectives of the Narrativization of Actuality

referentially unreal, a paradox that present film theory has a hard time accounting
for.  

The capacity of the medium to provide a realistic likeness of actuality, and yet to also
provide an artificially manipulated modification of actual events, presents film theory
with a conundrum. The representational and the referential functions of film have
become indistinguishable, in that the documentary image is now, more than ever,
subject to the risk of manipulation and alteration which may be imperceptible to the
viewer. The relations between the image and actuality have been further complicated
by the potential for sensory illusions that give the impression of actuality in the
image, but are artificially constructed. Indeed, the central theme of this thesis is the
notion of correspondence between the image and actuality, and the stages of
mediation that lie between the two milieus. If a single question could be offered as a
hypothesis it would concern the imposition of narrativization on actual events. What
are the levels of narrativization that are applied to actuality in texts of various genres,
and how do they affect the interpretation of texts with regard to their reference to
actuality? Further to this, how do the presuppositions that are attendant to particular
genres affect the interpretation of texts? In answer to these questions, this thesis will
offer a theoretical perspective that has the capacity to account for the changes in
technology, and the alterations in textual form, and will then proceed to analyze
selected texts with regard to their methods of integrating actuality images into a
narrative form.

The Structure of the Thesis

Rather than select texts for analysis according to any notion of artistic merit or
avant-gardism, I have decided on the basis of the means by which these texts have
narrativized actuality. Each of the selected texts exhibits a particular approach to
actuality, some including actuality images within the narrative, and others depicting
actuality through specific referential functions of the text. The significance of
cultural convention in this research also requires the analysis of texts that have
impacted on interpretive strategies, and that have come to be considered exemplars in
their field. The selection of popular Hollywood films, then, is not an unconscious
accession to the dominance of the American film industry, but a conscious choice of
films that offer examples of the narrativization of actuality that mark a historical shift
in mainstream conventions of form and genre.  The selected texts are not always the
most recent instances of their specific narrativization techniques, but their contents
have broken with traditional means of constructing narrative. The presuppositions
that are associated with particular genres have been affected by the methods that have
been applied in these texts to the representation of actual events. In each of the
analyses the narrativization of actuality takes a specific form, as dramatic
re-enactment, as documentary reconstruction, and as manipulated actuality images,
and each of these forms of narrativization will be considered with respect to its
ontological implications. In each of the texts the emphasis will be on the conventions

4 Prince, 1996, p.34.
5 Several authors have seen fit to comment on the significance of these texts, and are cited in chapters
6, 7 and 8.
that are employed in order to influence the viewer to accept the actuality that is portrayed by the narrative, and the cultural codes that specify interpretive responses to the text.

The first chapter, Theoretical Perspectives, Cultural Truths and Perception of Actuality, consists of the establishment of a theoretical framework around which the analysis of narrativization in various forms and genre is conducted. It highlights the tendency in theoretical debate to deal in absolutes by taking a reactionary stance toward previous theories. In this chapter I suggest a holistic theory in which theoretical positions are seen to exist on a continuous spectrum, as a multiplicity rather than as mutually exclusive elements. Comparison will be made to the notion of rhizome as posited by Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus. * My aim is to adopt a theoretical perspective which does not adhere to a single position, but takes multiple perspectives into consideration. The differentiation between structuralism and post-structuralism provides an example of conflicting theories which have suggested alternative approaches to the interaction between the audio/visual text, viewers and the problematic concept of reality. A pluralistic approach does not require that either argument function exclusively, but that each position can be considered as resultant of its antecedents. This approach will then be applied (in the following chapters) to the usage of actuality footage in film and television, with particular reference to the boundary between fictional and non-fictional narrative. The first chapter will continue with an examination of the concepts of truth, reality and actuality, clarifying the distinction between them and exploring their function with regard to narrative construction and interpretation.

Fictional narrative does not provide evidential reference to the actual world, but creates a diegesis which can be accepted by the viewer as a valid simulation of the actual world, or alternatively, it provides an imaginary world which is sufficiently complex and consistent so as to enable the viewer to engage in a temporary suspension of disbelief. The verisimilitude of the text enables a viewer to give credence to the constructed imaginary world, and persuasive devices are customarily employed to assist in the suspension of disbelief, where a viewer is invited to temporarily accept the fictional world as 'real', while simultaneously maintaining an awareness that the fictional world is distinct from actuality. 4 The 'impression of reality' which is generated by a film can either assist viewers to suspend disbelief, or, if the fictional world as portrayed by the film does not convince viewers of its credibility they are unable to believe in the fictional world, and reject the diegesis as inadequate. When images, which are known within a culture to represent actuality, are included within a fictional narrative they affect the viewer's perception of the diegesis. When images consisting of actual events appear within the imaginary universe of fictional narrative, they emerge within a narrative context that conflicts with their status as a 'reality'. The recognition of actuality footage is challenged by the context in which these images have been placed, requiring that viewers reconcile the imaginary world with actuality. This convergence of genres encourages viewer awareness of the subservience of images to the context in which they are seen, or, as Silverstone observes, "it is not just the uttered texts but also the contexts of their

utterance which are important 10. The images which surround the actuality footage provide a narrative context which suggests possible readings of the images as they appear within that narrative, as opposed to the way they have been interpreted when viewed in the context of documentary film and television.

The second chapter, Narrative as Fiction and Nonfiction, explores the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, firstly by examining the interaction between actuality and fictional narrative. Actuality is present to varying degrees in all texts and its influences can be observed in both fictional and non-fictional narrative. Fiction utilizes interpretive skills which implement knowledge of formal narrative structures and also experiential knowledge of actuality. The diegesis of fictional narrative is reliant on cultural awareness in order to establish its credibility. Credibility in fictional narrative, however, does not involve conscious, indexical reference, but utilizes aspects of actuality in order to create a diegesis which is to some extent 'believable'. Barthes' notion of the referential code 11 defines the interaction between actuality and the diegesis that occurs when the viewer integrates textual material into their conceptual framework.

In contrast, many non-fictional narratives assert an embodiment of the actual world. Their conventions and methods of representation, however, differ considerably. Conventional non-fictional narrative consists largely of indexical signification, where the images and sounds represent actuality rather than presenting a diegesis through dramatic enactment. This distinction is, however, more problematic than it may at first appear. The actual world as depicted by non-fictional narratives appears as a representation that has undergone many processes of narrativization. Nichols describes documentary as a 'fiction un-like any other', 12 in that its images represent, rather than imitate the actual world, while also incorporating many of the 'story telling' strategies of fictional narrative.

The conventions of representation and interpretation that are applied in the definition of fictional and non-fictional texts can be seen to originate in the cultural traditions of myth. The function of myth as a delimiting factor in the composition and interpretation of narrative forms is considered in the final section of chapter two. The significance of the orthodoxy of codification that is imposed, both on the form of the text and the interpretive strategies of the viewer, is considered in light of the Deleuze-Guattarian reappraisal of the relations between the individual and society. 13 The overcoding of actuality with conventional narrative structures is influential on the formation of subjectivity, and affects the interpretation and composition interpretation of texts.

In order to explain the processes of narrativization the functions and structure of narrative are examined in chapter three, Narrative as Discourse and Cognition. Film and television texts do not exist separately from their producers, their viewers, or the culture of which they are a component. Narratives are created, distributed and interpreted within a particular context, defined by form and genre which is reflected in the content and structure of each narrative. They function as a form of social discourse which involves complex interaction between writers, producers,

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11 Barthes, 1974.
institutions, viewers and culture. Various models have been put forward attempting
to explain this interaction, such as Hall's concept of encoding and decoding, 14
Bordwell's implementation of the Tomashevskian notions of fabula and Syuzhet,15
Foucault's notion of exteriority, 16 and the Deleuze-Guattarian model of the text as
rhizome, 17 amongst others, describe the multifarious processes of narrative.

The study of narrative cannot be limited to discourse, but also includes cognitive
processes. Bordwell and Branigan examine the role of cognition in the interpretive
functions of viewers, with Branigan suggesting a 'top-down' cognition, where
narrative is an existent and complete structure which is then applied to the text, while
Bordwell suggesting a combination of 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' cognition, where
the text provides a limiting framework which is then incorporated with the pre-
eexisting top-down structure. 18 This approach proposes that narrative interpretation is
dependent on cognitive activity in combination with the text.

The function of cognition in the interpretation of narrative also requires the
discrimination between actual and virtual aspects of the text. The classification of
virtuality becomes a significant factor in the interpretive strategies that a viewer
applies to the text, and is of particular importance in regard to the narrativization of
actuality. What are the strata of virtualization that are applied to actuality in the text,
and how do they affect the interpretation? Deleuze's analysis of The Time Image will
be applied to the notion of virtualization, and the definition of several modalities of
actual/virtual divisions. 19 The variable relations between the image and actuality are
defined, also taking the cognitive activities of interpretation, such as memory,
imagination and dreams, into consideration.

Any examination of film and television involves interaction between the text and
the audience as readers of the text. Chapter four, Audience Expectation and
Interpretation of Narrative, explores the notion of the audience both as individual
viewer and as a community. Critical awareness of the audience varies according to
theoretical perspectives, from the demographic divisions of empirical, quantitative
research or the qualitative, ethnographic research supported by Morley and Ang. 20
The viewer has been defined in a variety of ways, as a faceless demographic number,
a complex psychological entity, or a product of cultural influences. Attitudes
concerning audiences have depended largely on the particular theoretical perspective
which each researcher has adopted.

The development of complex systems of interpretation through viewing
experience and exposure to public discourse concerning film and television (such as
film reviews, media magazines, books on media and self-reflexive television
programs,) have assured that audience reading of film texts is continuing to evolve
and diversify. Stuart Hall 21 and Martin Allor 22 observe the shift in audience

14 Hall, op. cit.
16 Foucault, 1972.
19 Deleuze, 1989, pp. 68-70.
21 Hall, op. cit.
perception which has occurred as cultural awareness of audience roles and media strategies has developed through the greater availability of media product. The research of Liebes and Katz has also revealed a disparity between cultures in terms of interpretive emphases and priorities, demonstrating a higher level of interpretive capacity and meta-linguistic awareness among those cultures which have had prolonged exposure to media. The ongoing development of interpretive strategies is considered in light of this body of research.

Experienced viewers cannot be assumed to be naive in their interpretations of film and television texts. Production conventions, which are culturally encoded cues for interpretive strategies, cannot be assured to induce specific responses from viewers who are aware of systems of codification. Hence the boundaries and divisions between genres which have been accepted as ‘signposts’ to encourage particular modes of interpretation are no longer blindly accepted by an unquestioning audience. Preferred readings are contested by a growing proportion of the highly educated audience of western cultures, who question the dominant interpretive conventions that have become synonymous with specific genre, and commonly distrust the intentions of producers of audio/visual texts. The relationship between viewers and filmmakers is one in which the rhetorical persuasion and verisimilitude of the text attempts to convince the viewer of its evidentiality (in the case of non-fiction) or of its credibility (in the case of fiction). The intention of film-makers could be seen as an attempt to persuade viewers to accept their program content as a reality, whether through temporary suspension of disbelief or permanent modification of the viewer’s understanding of actuality.

Having established a theoretical position on which to ground the analyses of texts, the second half of the thesis consists of the application of these theories to the selected texts. The remaining chapters deal with examples of genre and form, and are ordered according to the relative claims of veracity present in the genre under examination, working from the genre of documentary, which bears innate claims to evidential value, toward films in which dramatic reenactment, documentary reconstruction, and, finally the manipulation of actuality images are utilized. Each of these examples employs the evidential and referential qualities of the actuality image to a lesser or greater extent. The analyses consider the specific relations that are formed between the conventions of their genre, (or genres as the case may be), and the actuality to which they refer.

The fifth chapter, Documentary Claims of Evidentiality, scrutinizes the development of the numerous methods used in documentary film and television to represent actuality. The development of documentary forms will be observed by comparing the four, (and later, five), modes of documentary as defined by Bill Nichols, with the more specific delineation between speech and visual modes of documentary offered by Corner. The relationship between the documentary producer and the viewer has gradually adapted from the ‘voice of God’ commentaries of early documentary to the self-awareness and reflexivity of contemporary documentarists. The assumed source of knowledge has migrated from the producer-

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36 Corner, 1996.
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filmmaker to the viewer, with more recent forms allowing for choice of multiple readings in viewer interpretation. Nichols’ and Corner’s conception of the modes of documentary reflect this evolvement of knowledge by outlining the conventions of presentation which have become established as the codes which have shaped documentary narrativization of actuality. A comprehensive system of accounting for the numerous modalities and functions of documentary form is posited in response to the existing models put forward by Nichols and Corner.

The validity of the claims of many documentarists to provide veracity and objective coverage of events is evaluated through an analysis of several examples which demonstrate the conventions of documentary narrativization. The ‘fly on the wall’ or observational style of documentary will be assessed as to the validity of its claims to provide a virtually unmediated view of reality. The presence of the camera in an actual situation alters the nature of that reality in a more profound way than any ‘fly on the wall’. The camera, crew, lighting and audio equipment transform the actual world in the act of observing. People cease natural activity and become ‘social actors’, modifying their behavior as a result of the presence of the camera. The act of filming documentary shapes the actual world as recorded by the camera, bringing about behavioral changes and altered discourse, as the subjects of the camera’s gaze act according to their awareness of the conventions of society as a (mass) observer.

The interview has become one of the major sources of information exchange in documentary and this chapter briefly examines the issues which surround interview as a means of communicating and manipulating information. The interview appears to be a means of providing information, but is in fact a means of imposing opinions. The interviewee becomes a secondary source of narrative construction, taking on the role of a subordinate narrator in the documentary and providing their point of view, which undergoes a process of selection at the hands of the producer during post-production. Interview can be manipulated to accord with the intention of the documentarist, firstly by providing only one point of view rather than a range of opinions, and secondly by limiting the range of possible responses through choice of questions, or editing of content during post-production. Interview strongly resembles the oral traditions of pre-industrialized cultures, where verbal accounts of actual events were collected and became a culture’s historical record. It engages in the hierarchy of the social status of interviewees in order to appropriate their authenticity within a gradation of social positions, and the inclusion of titles beneath the images of interviewees serve to establish this hierarchy.

The documentary is a representation of reality, which can either be accepted as indicative of the actual state of affairs, or be challenged or resisted by a viewer as to its evidential value. The subjective point of view, which is universally present despite all claims of objectivity and impartiality, constitutes a level of mediation between actual events and their representation in film and television. In order to accept the evidentiality of documentary within the present social milieu the viewer must also accept the reputation and reliability of the producer and/or the institution which has seen fit to provide broadcast or distribution services. The acceptance of documentary as evidence of the actual world involves either the ignorance of mediated opinion in the production process, or belief in the ethical standards of those who have mediated the message.
In recent times the boundary between fiction and nonfiction has been blurred by the documentary genre. Although a recent inclusion in the documentary genre, the earliest documentary and news films commonly included re-enactment of events using actors. The reasons for this early re-enactment were, however, the result of equipment and transportation limitations rather than being ideological statements, whereas recent documentary re-enactment has been created with an awareness of the ethics of journalism and social responsibility. The selected examples point to a changing perception of the role of documentary, as a means of presenting an argument concerning the actual world and changing social attitudes, and of the multiple conventions of genre that are appropriated by the contemporary documentary. The issues encountered in documentary production and its evidential value lie at the heart of this discussion of the narrativization of actuality. Subjectivity, the narrator's voice, the filmmaker's voice and the social perception of media and its various forms all combine to provoke questions as to the media's ability to represent the actual world, and their responsibilities in the manner that representations are constructed.

Corner's work also touches on the issue of reenactment in documentary. In chapter six dramatic re-enactment of actuality is analyzed, using Spielberg's Schindler's List (1994), as an example which challenges the delineation between documentary and drama by utilizing actual events as a basis for its fictional world, employing documentary conventions of filming in a dramatic enactment, and also integrates footage of actual holocaust survivors, thereby briefly entering the realm of documentary. Reliance on research as a measure of authenticity is evaluated, and the influence of the actual historical events in shaping the text are considered in opposition to the absence of correlation between actuality and the text.

The following analysis concerns documentary reconstruction, and the integration of actuality images into an enacted performance. Such narratives use actuality as a setting, and create a diegesis which puts forward a speculative account of actual events. Oliver Stone's JFK (1992), provides an example of both the fictional re-enactment of actual events, and the existence of dominant and oppositional historical accounts. The use of the Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination breaches the boundary between fiction and nonfiction by fusing images of actuality with dramatic depictions. JFK manipulates interpretive strategies by encouraging a reading of the text that is a convergence of documentary and historical drama. It reveals political and cultural motivations which raise questions about the socially accepted account of the Kennedy assassination, and the inclusion of actuality images evokes a sense of realism that offers more than verisimilitude. The implication of this narrative is that reality is not defined by the image, but that the conventions employed in the text manipulate the interpretation.

The convergence of actuality footage with fictional images is not limited to a simple juxtaposition of image with image, but recent technological advances have allowed the digital treatment of images in order to incorporate actors into actuality footage, or to digitally create images of known public figures and incorporate them into images of the diegetic world. The convergence of the fictional and actual worlds within an image raises questions concerning the role of visual images as evidential reference to the actual. The emergence of this capacity to digitally blend images has destroyed any illusions of the photographic image as an infallible record of the actual
world. The old adage, "the camera never lies" has never been entirely valid, as
techniques of photographic construction have always allowed for superimposition of
images, but digital technology has provided methods which are easier and more
effective in creating a credible consistency within an image. The image can not be
cited as evidence of the actual, particularly since the advent of digital technology.

The manipulation of images as is evident in Robert Zemeckis' Forrest Gump
(1994), and Contact, (1996), challenge the notion of the image as a referential
representation. The existence of boundaries between past and present, dramatic and
actual, and the fictional/non-fictional delineation, is reevaluated in light of the
capacity of digital technologies to reconstruct and combine images, thereby severing
any theoretical connection between the image and its referent. This chapter evaluates
the affect that manipulation has on the interpretation of images, and examines the
assumption that the veracity of the images is abandoned in these circumstances. The
digital manipulation of images casts doubt on the authenticity of film as an inviolable
historical record, but is the absolute rejection of the authenticity of the image an
appropriate response?

This progression from the supposedly 'raw' actuality of documentary through to
fiction which is based on actual events is used throughout the second half of the
thesis to demonstrate the understanding of genre boundaries as a gradated continuum
rather than a sharp division between fiction and nonfiction, or drama and
documentary. The conclusion will consist of a reappraisal of the theories considered
in the first part of the thesis, and an evaluation of their efficacy in accounting for the
convergence of form and genre that are encountered in the analyses. Finally, the
potential for continuation of research in this field, and adjoining fields of research is
suggested.

The progression through multiple theoretical positions, and various examples
drawn from several texts, may seem a broad territory to encompass, but my intention
is to traverse theoretical terrain, and a variety of texts intertwined with cultural
references and connections: an attempt to come to an understanding of the
multifarious influences that conjoin to bring about the interpretation of audio/visual
texts and their pertinence to the 'real' world of actuality. The vector of this line of
flight is one that cannot hope to cover the entire scope of potentialities across these
fields of research, but maintains a focal point throughout, which is the connectivity
of actuality, text, culture and viewer. The narrativization of actuality is in itself a
journey through these points in which each connection opens a possibility for flows
in several directions. The purpose of the voyage is to enter into heterogeneity, and to
emerge at a point of culmination having experienced multiplicity, and arrived at a
destination that offers an account of the experience, and sheds some light on the
theories and texts that have been encountered. Such an account does not dictate a
unified theory, but offers a fresh approach to the theorization of narrative and its
relation to actuality.
Chapter 1

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES, CULTURAL TRUTHS AND PERCEPTION OF ACTUALITY.

1.1 Methodology: Absolutism in Epistemology

Theoretical Absolutism
The methodology of a thesis requires a clear delineation of the techniques that will be applied to the substance of the research. There is no one theorist, no exhaustive theoretical position that encapsulates the entirety of the task that is embarked upon. Directions, alliances, and accessions are a more accurate description of the theoretical position/s I intend to enter upon in this thesis. Indeed, to give precedence to one theory and exclude all others is at odds with the stated aims of the thesis. Rather, it is to apply a position of pluralism, yet by no means an all-inclusive pluralism, but one which sets out along a vector of thought, and observes the theoretical landscape that passes beneath the pen of the author in the path of this line of flight. The theoretical milieu is territorial, yet dynamic, with borders fluctuating, battles erupting between established empires of theory and scarring the epistemological landscape with the aftermath of the responses to papers, letters of retort and rejoinders that contradict, disqualify and emasculate.

In the search for a theory that allows the freedom to deterritorialize, Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus \(^1\) provide an opportunity to locate theory within an existing framework, while allowing for the escape from restrictive confinements. Their theory, while presenting a challenging multiplicity of conceptual frames, traverses the boundaries of convention, and encourages the reader to embark on a 'line of flight', where the territories of established orthodoxy are no longer an impervious barrier to the analytic journey. This theoretical positioning of the thesis is, however, an alliance with a theory, not the adoption of an exclusive and prohibitive doctrine.

Academic theory has been characterized by a tendency to react against previously held theoretical positions, while simultaneously recognizing the accrual of influences that have provided the content of discourse. De Certeau points out the significance of culturally accrued experience and modes of discourse concerned with the establishment of social power structures, which effect the perceptions of a culture. He identifies the social, political and cultural 'stratification' that underlies the existence of contemporary modes of discourse:

\(^1\) Deleuze and Guattari, 1987.
This insight can be applied to theoretical discourse, with each successive theoretical progression responding to prior theoretical orthodoxy, and forming a new territory on the decaying foundation of a past milieu. New bodies of theory consist of refinement of, and reaction against previous theories. As structuralism was followed by poststructuralism, and modernism by postmodernism, each theoretical advance responded to the perceived inadequacies of those that were formerly accepted as the conventional teachings of their time. Theoretical perspectives will be considered in this thesis as interdependent in a temporal development of reciprocal positions, each opposing the previous theory in order to arrive at its characteristic emphases. The postmodern tendency to advocate popular culture can be seen to be a reaction against modernism, evident in the response to Leavisite elitism, an elitism that rejected all forms of popular text as inferior. The two theoretical standpoints of modernism and postmodernism are vastly different, yet they are the products of a process whereby theory looks back on its antecedents, and responds to the perceived shortcomings of previous positions.

Multiperspectival Analysis

The progression of textual forms through time has been manifested in the postmodern era as a convergence of form and genre that utilizes fragments of previous textual conventions, but re-presents them in an altered configuration. Jameson nominates the existence of a postmodern "pastiche," where fragments of images that refer to the past are combined and reconstructed stylistically as textual representations of the past that are reinvented through the postmodern depiction of historical images. Postmodern pastiche, according to Jameson, exhibits the qualities of "the imitation of a particular or unique style, the wearing of a stylish mask, speech in a dead language." This thesis suggests the possibility of applying this notion (with caution, and in an appropriate manner), to theoretical positions. It is an approach that appears to have been adopted by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as they revisit the theories of Hjelslev, Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Nietzsche, Marx, Bergson and Husserl, amongst others. Each position is evaluated, and the aspects of that particular theory that prove useful to the project at hand are

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2 De Certeau, 1984, p.201.
3 Leavis, 1930. See also Docker, 1994, chapter 2, 'Literary Modernism', in *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, pp. 15-23.
5 ibid., p.114.
appropriated and applied. Areas of theoretical conflict are recognized and identified, as is particularly noticeable in their treatment of Freud in the *Anti-Oedipus*, but such conflicts are not considered to be a cause for excluding the writings of a theorist in their entirety.  

The narrativization of actuality provides ample material for testing the validity of an approach that is pluralist, yet not blind in its acceptance of all theory. This chapter is an attempt to put forward a perspective that avoids the adoption of extreme or exclusive theoretical positions, and the tendency to summarily dispose of the theoretical antecedents that have been indirectly responsible for shaping current theoretical positions.

In order to analyze the narrativization of actuality within the context of the rapidly changing forms of film and television in the 1990s, and into the new millennium, epistemological approaches must adapt to the new combinations of conventions that have recently occurred. A theory of fictional narrative must take account of the relations between the actual world and the diegetic world, and all possible connections between the two worlds. To understand the nature of postmodern fiction is also to comprehend the complex cultural references which point towards actuality, and intertextual references to the representations of actuality seen in news and documentary formats. Conversely, documentary forms are affected by the conventions of fictional narrative.

The movement from clearly defined boundaries in film and television toward heterogeneity and an increasing awareness of multiplicity in form and genre is accompanied by a parallel shift of awareness in theory. The challenges to the boundaries of form and genre that arise from the appropriation of material from areas that are not conventionally considered to be within a particular genre grouping, or analyses that move beyond the boundaries of a genre, demand a theoretical awareness that is not limited to particular textual forms and genres. This thesis will apply a combination of theories that accounts for fictional and non-fictional genres, film and television forms, and the increasing occurrence of hybrid texts that combine these textual categories. Rather than attempt to arrive at a unified theory that can be universally applied to textual analysis, the thesis will recognize the heterogeneity of both texts and theories in an analysis of the conjunction of narrative with the actual world.

**Institutional Determinism**

The development of unified and absolutist theoretical approaches to film and television criticism and analysis originate from the institutional frameworks that are the site of such activities. Strictly defined institutional approaches bring about a tendency to work within a tradition of theory, and to apply systems of analysis that have become entrenched in the practices of an institution. Bordwell demonstrates an awareness of the conventionality of criticism that exists covertly within the framework of existing academic institutions, but is not always an observable influence:

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7 Deleuze and Guattari. 1983.
Critics arrive at interpretations, I suggest, by using certain conventions of reasoning and language ... But critics do not obey stringent rules, like the one that directs drivers to stop for a red light. Critical interpretation, it seems to me, chiefly consists of a "covert" or tacit conventionality. In such cases people are largely unaware of the conventions they obey. Imitation and habit lead agents to expect coordinated action from others but without any particular awareness of an underlying rule. 

Just as the cultural environment of their personal and artistic development influences filmmakers, so critics reflect the cultural and educational circumstances that contribute to the formation of their approach to theory.

Interpretive strategies in the academic context are developed, and emerge from a theoretical framework that is gradually established through the study of previous and existing approaches to criticism. A historical appreciation of film allows a critic to recognize influences, traditions and stylistic movements in the composition of films. This is accompanied by an awareness of the critical perspectives that have developed concurrently with the styles and approaches of film direction. The same argument holds true for the realm of television criticism. As new textual forms appear, and gain acceptance and exposure, theoretical positions incorporate these progressions. Often the most recent theories will refute the claims of previous theorists as ineffectual and irrelevant to new textual forms. As participants in this continual evolution of theoretical trends, academic institutions, or more particularly, groups within academic institutions, construct, choose between, or react to the theories of the time, reacting to recent changes in theoretical schools of thought. Bordwell recognizes the influence of academic institutions in shaping approaches to criticism.

Interpreters, like most everyday problem-solvers, construct a problem in keeping with the norms of the institution they inhabit. They go on to employ pragmatic strategies that allow them to produce appropriate critical inferences. These strategies consist of some general inductive propensities and principles and some strategies specific to the domain of interpretation.

Schools of thought develop and become entrenched within institutional structures, tending to encourage the adoption of modes of criticism that concur with their particular point of view, or originate from their particular perspective.

Delineation Between Genres

The classification of film and television into strictly defined genres has become commonplace, with television programs considered mass media communication (the equivalent of the newspaper and magazine format of the visual media), and film as the artifact (being treated in a similar fashion to the novel in literary studies). In order to comprehend the vast scope and variety of film and television texts a system of classification provides a system of reference, and means of comparison between groupings of texts which have similar characteristics. This process of classification has become more intransigent than is necessary, and currently requires reappraisal as

* Bordwell, 1985, pp. 30-31
to its relevance in the postmodern era. On the one hand, writers, producers and
directors, and on the other, theorists and critics are reconsidering the necessity for
sharply defined boundaries between historically established classifications by
challenging the classification process. Whereas previously the distinction between
fiction and documentary has been considered to be absolute, the current trend is
toward hybrid texts. This change is a response to the limitations that are placed on
each of the classifications by the conventional work practices that result from such
categorization, and the conditions it places on their ability to explore beyond the
accepted boundaries.

Although these classifications exist, critical analysis, according to Bordwell,
should demonstrate an awareness of their flexibility, and be on the lookout for those
occasions where they are disregarded.

The handling of genre serves as a prototype of the critic’s acts of classification.
Fiction/documentary, narrative/nonnarrative, mainstream/oppositional - such
alternatives function in critical arguments, as they function in comprehension, as
enabling schemata, not closed, deductively guaranteed categories. The separating
stroke can always be blurred, the categories are always permeable. (Indeed, often
the critic’s aim is to show that the film has broken out of its category). 10

One of the hallmarks of the postmodern era is the occurrence of intertextual
reference, where a text makes reference to, imitates, or includes fragments of other
media texts. A single text may include characteristics of a number of genres, yet be
classified as predominantly consisting of a single genre. Prevailing practices are
parodied, as the conventions of genre are dislodged from their original context.
Jameson, in defining his notion of ‘pastiche,’ states that “pastiche is blank parody,
parody that has lost its sense of humor”. He identifies moments of mimicry that are
not intended to contrast idiosyncratic stylistic tendencies with a homogeneous
normality, or conventionality, but imitate in order to apply “stylistic diversity and
heterogeneity”. 11 Techniques associated with previously accepted conventions of
genre reappear in new forms, as the accrued body of texts is integrated into the
present in an accumulation of sounds, images and texts that form the postmodern
media artist’s palette. This fusion of forms is assisted by the ready availability of
historical media texts, particularly as television content. Postmodern texts
demonstrate an awareness of the conventions of production, and of the cultural
artifacts that have become exemplars of their genre.

Multi-Perspectivalism in Documentary Theory

It is not only the boundaries between genre which become blurred by the
postmodern collage of existing texts, but also theories which attempt to account for
evidentiality in documentary and verisimilitude in fiction. In the cases I will analyze
in the thesis fictional and documentary film cease to be definable as a diegesis or an
actuality, but become momentarily indistinguishable as either fictional narratives or
documentary. On one hand the fictional representation no longer provides

verisimilitude, not an approximation or imitation of actuality, but, rather, images of actuality are presented within the context of a diegetic world. On the other hand, documentary no longer provides any guarantee of veracity, as individual accounts are enacted for the camera and treated with all the artistic flair of fictional film. Evidential value is sacrificed in an attempt to depict actuality in a way that is not limited by the conventions of documentary form. Hence fact and fiction are combined in a heterogeneity which defies convention and calls for new applications of existing theory.

John Corner illustrates the tendency towards absolutism in documentary theory by citing a recent example of the debate concerning Griersonian documentary theory. Corner opposes the notion put forward by Winston that documentary should rely on "reception rather than representation" as "a way to preserve its validity." Winston claims that:

The Griersonian idea of "actuality" depends on the assumption of a particular naivete in the audience. Without such naivete, the audience could not believe that anything of the real would survive "creative treatment." 12

Corner, however, responds by asking:

Isn't it possible for audiences to believe in factors of degree and interplay here rather than to be caught between two absolutes? And isn't it possible (even allowing for more discursive complexity in the production of the referential than might ever become generally realised by audiences) for them to be right? 13

Corner's response stands as a constructive departure from an epistemology of absolutism which makes little, or no allowance for the many 'shades of gray' which exist between the 'black and white' arguments of documentary as a creative treatment of actuality or as reference to reality. Winston's point of view, which depicts documentary as being reliant on reception, and resulting from viewing experience, equates to the literary reader-response theory, whereas Corner is proposing a position which combines reader response with structuralism, where the signification of documentary text is both referential and subjective. This is not to take away from the validity of either of the extremes of the debate, but rather to recognize that a variety of factors influence the way in which a documentary program or film is both constructed and interpreted. To operate at one extreme is either to nullify any belief in the ability of documentary to represent actuality, or alternatively, to create a false illusion of the ability of documentary to reproduce the actual world. Corner's belief that the attitudes of many viewers would occupy the vast gray area that lies between these extreme views is worthy of consideration, in that it reflects a wider move towards pluralism in theoretical debate.

Winston's views also reveal a tendency for critics to dictate terms as to what practice should or should not be used to "preserve" the validity of a genre, in this case documentary. There are two assumptions in this statement. Firstly, validity is a

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The notion that relies on the evaluation of many individuals, both viewers and critics. Many may consider that the referential value of documentary has been overstated in the past or that other issues such as the subject matter of the documentary take priority over the means of representation. On the other hand, many may feel that documentaries require strict adherence to a code of veracity and referentiality. In either case prescriptive critical analysis does little to influence the social perception of the genre. Judgments of validity in the market place of documentary production, viewing and distribution rely on cultural consensus rather than on theoretical analysis by academic (regardless of the beneficial insights that may be gained from such analyses). Secondly, Winston’s stated need to “preserve” validity implies that the natural development of the genre is in need of some paternalistic supervision to protect it from decay. The use of Grierson’s ‘creative treatment of actuality’ appears to be undergoing a renaissance in recent times, even to the point of expanding beyond Grierson’s original intentions, yet the validity of postmodern documentaries is not under siege from society, or the audience, but from critics who seek to dictate ethical guidelines. By defying the classifications which have defined the form of documentary in the past, documentary filmmakers are exploring new ground and discovering new awareness in viewers who expect veracity in documentary, yet are not always naive in accepting documentary claims of evidentiality.

This example demonstrates the tendency of some critical analyses to disallow the capacity of viewers to be selective as to what information they will believe, and to what extent they will believe it. Corner encourages theorists to appreciate that the indexical meanings of texts and the subjective responses to those texts cannot be isolated from each other. By stating two extreme viewpoints and proceeding to adopt one side or the other in the ensuing debate, many critics have overlooked the capacity of both filmmakers and viewers to make allowances for particular situations. A viewer observes the documentary and perceives the images as referential, but also relies on personal experience and social knowledge in the process of interpreting the meanings that exist partially within the text, and partially within the viewer. In one circumstance the veracity of the documentary may come under question, while in another the ‘creative treatment of actuality’ may be required in order to maintain a sufficient level of interest. Attempting to apply unitarian rules to a variety of situations fails to take account of the diversity of individual tendencies in both authorship and viewer response. To impose positivist judgements on the validity of working practices within a particular genre (or combination of genres), demonstrates a tendency to resort to Leavisite elitism, where the critic considers only one point of view to be valid and denies the merit of any alternate opinion. When dealing with ‘hybrids’ which draw from a number of influences, it is essential to bear in mind that it is often the filmmaker’s goal, and the viewer’s imperative, to apply multiple strategies to authorship and interpretation.

Theoretical Absolutism in the Development of Post-Structuralism

The historical development of theoretical perspectives has seen a series of absolute positions applied to preceding theories. Prominent amongst these is the contradiction between structuralist and post-structuralist theory. The structuralism of de Saussure relies on the text as the signifier of meaning, and the structure of the
language system, *la langue*, as the means whereby meaning is held in common from author to reader, and indeed, the structure of which thought itself is comprised. He considers linguistic signs to be arbitrary in their relationship to the signified, relying instead on the contrast between signs within the system. Saussure considers language to be a system of interrelated differences that combine to form a structure that provides the operational system for all meaning and thought. 14 The process of reading under the Saussurean model involved using knowledge of language structure to decode the message, a message that was contained in the structure of language as intended by the author. Barthes responds with claims that the author is 'dead', and that meaning resides in the text and its interpretation, and that the function of the author now exists only in the meanings which are arrived at by the reader. 15

Foucault also questions the assumption that the author is present in the text as a historical figure, and replaces the historical author with the 'author function' as a construction of discourse. 16 This response is absolute in its rejection of the structuralist position, claiming that authorial intention is not intrinsic to the text, and therefore that it could not dictate meaning to readers or control their interpretations. Such absolutism was, however, not universally adopted by post-structuralists. Even Jacques Derrida, amongst the most vehement of the post-structuralists in his rejection of structuralism, did not consider his deconstructionism to be absolutely removed from the author's intent. Although encouraging the imputation of textual meaning which did not correlate with authorial intention, he also recognized the place of authorial presence within the text. Derrida, when discussing the works of Rousseau, referred to "his declared intention" as "inscribed within a system which it no longer dominates." 17 Derrida sought meaning within the text, but did not accept the intention of the author as taking priority over the text. The response of post-structuralist theories is a reaction against structuralist models which portray the reader as a receiver of meaning who plays little part in the construction of meaning.

Derrida chooses to attribute the text with a greater capacity for meaning in the interpretive process than is intended by the author, as Norris observes that:

Derrida's position is one that takes the historical development of epistemology into consideration, making allowances for the multiple influences that come into play.

14 de Saussure, 1974.
16 Foucault, 1979.
18 Norris, op. cit., p.113.
when the interpretation of texts is analyzed. Derrida does, however indulge in his
own particular form of absolutism, most notably his claim that "there is nothing
outside the text," does not allow for the influence of cultural codes and conventions
that will be a significant theme of this thesis. 19

My point here is not to dismiss the awareness that has developed with post-
structuralism, that authorial intention is not the universal vessel which contains and
defines meaning, but rather to examine the relationship between two diametrically
opposed theoretical perspectives. The absolute rejection of authorial intention does
not allow for any combination of influences, but suggests that a unified theory
provides a universal solution. This absolute position excludes the author from any
part in the production of meaning, and from being a participant in the plurality, or
variance of meaning in the text, but seeks to impose a unified theory as a replacement
for the previously preferred theory of authorial intention and hermeneutics. 20

Foucault and Historical Discontinuity

Absolutism in the realm of the theoretical can be observed in the temporal
advancement of theory as it undergoes periodical disruptions. Foucault adopted this
notion in regard to historical awareness in his strategy of discontinuity. Shumway
describes Foucault's approach to history as a search for discontinuity, where "he
looks for ruptures, breaks, gaps, displacements, mutations, shifts, interruptions,
thresholds." 21 The epochs prior to and following these alterations in theoretical
disciplines are referred to by Foucault as distinct and separate, as stated in his
strategy of alterity;

Beneath the great continuities of thought, beneath the solid, homogeneous
manifestations of a single mind or of a collective mentality, beneath the stubborn
development of a science striving to exist and to reach completion at the very
outset, beneath the persistence of a particular genre, form, discipline or theoretical
activity, one is now trying to detect the incidence of interruptions ... they suspend
the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development, and
force it to enter a new time, cut it off from its empirical origin and its original
motivations, cleanse it of its imaginary complicities. 22

Foucault's strategies of alterity and discontinuity accurately describe the tendency of
post-structuralists to supersede and revoke the theories with which they disagree.
Rather than a gradualist view of historical development, Foucault's historical
analysis takes the form of a sudden and significant alteration which acts as a
boundary or delineation between concepts and epochs of critical thought within a
discipline. Moments of discontinuity can be observed in theoretical proclamations
such as 'the death of the author.' Within the field of literary analysis this claim stands
out as a pivotal transformation of linguistic theory, and must be appreciated as being

19 Derrida, op. cit., p.158.
20 The modern understanding of hermeneutics stems from a tradition of Greek and Judeo-Christian
interpreting procedures. Dilthey, 1976, and Ricoeur, 1974, offer relatively recent renditions of the
hermeneutic tradition.
22 Foucault, 1972, p.4.
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written within a defined mode of discourse with relation to the limitations which are applied by the particular expectations and conventions of that particular discourse.

Foucault brought about a significant rupture in the history of critical discourse, refuting the structuralism of his time and offering a theoretical position that recognized the importance of the connections between discourse and its conditions of usage. His notion of the specificity of discourse indicates the position he attributes to all discourse, placing it within a web of other discourses, as statements that are inextricably entwined in relations with other statements:

There is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them; it is always a part of a network of statements, in which it has a role, however minimal it may be, to play ... There is no statement that does not presuppose others; there is no statement that is not surrounded by a field of coexistences, effects of series and succession, a distribution of functions and roles. If one can speak of a statement, it is because a sentence (a proposition) figures at a definitive point, with a specific position, in an enunciative network that extends beyond it. 23

Discourse, according to Foucault, is concerned more with relations, and differentiation, where discourse consists "not of 'things', 'facts', 'realities', or 'beings', but of laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated or described within it." 24 This notion was in sharp contrast to the classical stoics and their theory of the signifier, or the structuralism of Peirce, where the sign was attributed with a referent, the concept, object or individual to which it referred. 25 This liberation of the sign from its referent amounted in itself to a significant discontinuity in the history of linguistic theory.

Foucault's appreciation of the discontinuity of history stands as an example of the transition from one theoretical position to another, and the relations that exist between structuralist and post-structuralist theories. His lament at the reaction to his revolutionary historical methods of analysis reveals a concern for the liberation of the subject from the restrictive conservatism of prescriptive theoretical positions:

The cry goes up that one is murdering history whenever, in a historical analysis – and especially if it is concerned with thought, ideas or knowledge – one is seen to be using in too obvious a way the categories of discontinuity and difference, the notions of threshold, rupture and transformation, the description of series and limits. One will be denounced for attacking the inalienable rights of history and the very foundations of any possible historicity. But one must not be deceived: what is being bewailed with such vehemence is not the disappearance of history, but the eclipse of that form of history that was secretly, but entirely related to the synthetic activity of the subject; what is being bewailed is the "development" (devinir) that was to provide the sovereignty of the consciousness with a safer, less exposed shelter than myths, kinship systems, languages, sexuality, or desire; what is being bewailed is the possibility of reanimating through the project, the work of meaning, or the

23 ibid., p.99.
24 ibid., p.91.
25 ibid., p. 142. Foucault identifies these theories as a possible series of theoretical antecedents to Saussure, but maintains the specificity of each moment of theoretical discourse as an independent discursive formation. See Peirce, 1931-1958, and De Saussure, 1974.
movement of totalization, the interplay of material determinations, rules of practice, unconscious systems, languages, sexuality, or desire; what is being bewailed, is that ideological use of history by which one tries to restore to man everything that has unceasingly eluded him for over a hundred years. 24

Foucault’s approach to history through the analysis of the discursive rules of formation defines the function of discourse as a social determinant, and reveals the connection between language and the laws and relations that operate the realm of discourse, rather than the reference of signifier to signified.

Shumway, when discussing Foucault’s strategy of exteriority suggests that the controlling influence of particular modes of discourse is significant in shaping the content of the text:

Foucault argues that within any system of discourse only certain statements are possible. To describe the conditions of existence of discourse at this level is to seek to understand the range of possible statements that the discourse can produce...On another level, however, the conditions of existence of a discourse are external to it in the sense that they are social conditions. Such conditions include how the right to speak is governed within a discourse, or when it is appropriate to speak in this discourse. These conditions are governed by the role the discourse plays in the relations of power in a society. 27

In recognition of this notion the analysis of film and television actuality employed in this thesis requires an awareness of the same conditions of existence that Foucault applies to all discourse. The relations between film and the surrounding social conditions are also determinants of the content of the film, as Foucault recognizes that power, which is evident in social relations, “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes, their everyday lives” 28

The multi-perspectival approach applied in this thesis demands not only recognition of current postmodern theories, but also the inclusion of adjacent areas of research, such as post-structural, cultural, narrative, historical, sociological, psychological and linguistic theories. The conjunction of the audio/visual text with the actual involves a complex convergence of theories with social practices and textual conventions. The relations between previous and current theoretical standpoints provides a theoretical background for the formation of this thesis that cannot tolerate a total rejection of the prior episteme, yet acknowledges, and participates in a progression by responding to the inadequacies of prior theory, but not necessarily attempting their displacement.

This thesis posits a model that utilizes a number of theoretical positions. It is not delimited by discontinuities in the history of film and television theory, yet it is inclusive of particular aspects of theory from both sides of the structuralist/post-structuralist divide, marked by Derrida, Foucault and Barthes. This is not to say that the signifier/signified relations of the Saussurian, or Levi-Straussian structuralist

approaches will be given equal weight, but that certain relevant notions will be referred to in the course of the thesis. I will endeavor to adopt an inclusive theoretical position that allows for the possibility of taking previous theories into consideration, and bearing in mind the merits of writings that may in some respects conflict with contemporary postmodern theories. This approach will present a pluralist synthesis of theories, a selective application of moments within theory that relate to specific issues of actuality and narrative.

The Foucauldian approach to discourse is one which offers substantial assistance in an analysis of form and genre, particularly in terms of the rules of formation of modes of discourse; for the genre, it will be argued, is a discursive formation that operates according to rules and limitations, and connects with extra-textual socio-cultural milieu. The Deleuzo-Guattarian position enhances, and surpasses the Foucauldian, in that it also recognizes the heterogeneity of the text, and allows for the existence of such rules of formation, yet posits a multiplicity where these rules are flexible, permeable and isomorphic. The connections between discourse and the actual are extended, and are conceived as a continuum, in an elaboration of Foucault's notion of discourse as being determined by social laws and relations of power. 39

Text, Culture, and Viewers

A study of the narrativization of actuality is not confined to the texts, or to the discourse that comprises the narrative, but emerges from the realm of language, art and visual representation into the milieu of the actual, and of the constructions of reality that result from the reading of such representations. In the search for appropriate methodology, the relations between the text, the viewer, and the actual become imperative. The connection of the three distinct elements, the audio/visual text, actuality, and the viewer (as the site of connection), are the subject of this research, and the interchange of influences across these boundaries becomes the primary concern of the thesis.

The articulation of cultural influence in texts, and their interpretations, has become a significant field of research in the area of cultural studies. British cultural studies originated in the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, and came to prominence concurrently with post-structuralism during the 1970s. 36 Cultural studies is concerned with audience interpretation of texts, and the cultural influences and social contexts on these readings; influences of gender, socio-economic class structures, familial activity, sub-culture and ethnicity. In short, the heterogeneity of experience and variety of contexts in which viewers operate in terms of cultural influences, social hierarchies and everyday experience. Interpretive activity is examined through qualitative, ethnographic research into audience response. A major figures in the British cultural studies movement, David Morley, identifies the most important work of (media based) cultural studies as:

36 The Birmingham C.C.S. was originally established in 1964, under the directorship of Richard Hoggart, but gained international prominence under the directorship of Stuart Hall, from 1968 and throughout the ensuing decade.
Morley considers the activities of the audience as a group or groups of individuals, as viewers who are influenced by the culture, to be amongst the highest priorities of research. This view of audience interpretation represents the viewer as inseparable from the cultural influences that form the context of the viewing experience.

Morley opposes an indefinite relativistic approach to the interpretation of texts. Fiske's notion of polysemy, 32 stresses the interpretive freedom of the reader to apply multiple meaning to texts, and to apply meaning to the text that originate from personal alliances external to the text. Morley questions the abandonment of the textual determination of meaning, rejecting the notion of a reading process where meaning is undetermined, and is arrived at by the viewer with an unlimited freedom of interpretation.

The demonstration that theoretically "anything goes," in terms of the potential polysemy of any text, is very different from the demonstration that empirically "just anything" happens when it comes to the actual reading of television texts. Such an approach not only abandons any notion (however attenuated) of the effectivity of the text. It also flies in the face of the empirical evidence we have of the way in which attentions, modes of viewing, response, and interpretation are patterned in observable empirical clusters as between different sectors of the audience. 33

Morley's recourse to the "observable empirical clusters as between different sectors of the audience" as proof that response is not necessarily polysemic in practice, and that the reading of television texts does not take on extra-textual dimensions, raises some significant issues. Firstly, the existence of empirical clusters which reflect groupings of "modes of viewing, response and interpretation," confirm only the fact that a system of categorization has been applied to audiences in order to divide them into groups. The division of the audience into sectors does not necessarily explain the interpretive activities of individuals, but reveals more about the aims and methods of the researchers who have chosen to adopt an empirical approach to audience research. Morley implies that the reading of television texts is measurable by observing the interpretations and responses of demographic groups. His position is that cultural distinctions and socio-economic considerations influence viewing response. He considers social and cultural factors to be a determining factor on interpretive activity.

John Fiske advocates the notion of polysemy, which, although reliant on the text as a partial source of interpretive meaning, allows for resistance, evasion and interpretive modification of textual content.

32 Fiske, 1986.
33 Morley, op. cit., p. 39.
What television delivers is not programs but a semiotic experience. This experience is categorized by its openness and polysemy. Television is not quite a do-it-yourself meaning kit but neither is it a box of ready made meanings for sale. Although it works within cultural determinations, it also offers freedoms and the power to evade, modify or challenge these limitations and controls. All texts are polysemic, but polysemy is absolutely central to television’s textuality.  

Fiske’s approach applies minor limitations to interpretation, in that it disallows a “do-it-yourself meaning kit”, but also rejects the notion of the text as a communication of “ready made meanings”. Polysemy (the potential “anything goes” referred to by Morley), puts forward the meaning of the text as a starting point for interpretation. Textual content is subject to individual evaluation and response according to the preferences, and experiences of the viewer.

The issues that are not accounted for by Fiske or Morley are firstly, the point at which interpretation of the text ceases, and the formation of opinions, characteristics, and cognitive tendencies, or the interpolation of the reading into the psyche of the viewer, begins. Once the response to a text is interpolated by the viewer, “just anything” is indeed a possible interpretive outcome, as unique individual characteristics, in addition to unique cultural and familial circumstances, also become determining factors. The possibility of diversified meanings being arrived at through the conjunction of individual experience and textual content allows for as many interpretations as there are viewers. The interpretation of the text is, to some extent, integrated into the existing schemata of the viewer, forming multiple meanings in variable ways. Morley’s position suggests a defined grouping of such variable and indeterminate multiplicities according to cultural and social divisions, and an analysis of interpretive strategies according to these groupings. Fiske allows for individual readings of the text, but as modifications of textual content according to individual interpretive responses. Morley’s position that there is variation in viewer interpretation, and variation of interpretive devices and strategies, asserts that in polysemic reading the strategies for interpretation are culturally determined, and occur in empirically measurable clusters. Interpretive strategies, according to Morley, correlate with socio-economic and cultural groups. Morley argues that an empirically observable clustering of viewer responses provides evidence that interpretation follows discernible patterns. Such clustering of audience responses stands as Morley’s evidence that although there is a wide range of possible meanings that can be applied to a text, the wide variety of meanings are not necessarily those at which a community of viewers will arrive. Rather, he posits that the cultural influences on the viewer, defined as groupings of social circumstance, determine the type of interpretive strategy that will be applied to the text.

This assertion, based on empirical findings, does not allow for the gradations between the division of audience groups. What may appear to be (hypothetically) three clusters of response may actually involve more random and gradated groupings than is reflected by the division into three clusters. The possible variations which can

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35 See Bordwell, 1985, pp.31-39 for a discussion of the use of schemata in the interpretation of narrative. He states that “the perceiver constantly refines the basic schemata to fit the narrative at hand” p.35.
occur between these clusters constitute a far greater variation of available combinations of meaning if the empirical divisions between clusters are removed and the responses are considered as a whole. This is not to say that Morley’s argument is not partially valid, but that the demographics of interpretation and response may be more successfully grasped when the analysis of viewer response is considered in terms of a continuum.

Deleuze and Guattari provide a model whereby heterogeneity can be defined in terms of intensities, where groupings are not defined by clearly defined, singular boundaries, but that the boundaries between groups (multiplicities), are permeable, and are intersected by a network of connections that reach through boundaries to other multiplicities, in which “the notion of unity appears only when there is a power takeover in the multiplicity by the signifier or a corresponding subjectification proceeding”. Rather than speaking of three strictly divided clusters of response (three unities), it is more appropriate to speak of three intensities, between which there exist sparse areas, forming heterogeneity rather than three unified groupings. When this model is adopted, the ‘absolutism’ of Morley’s argument (and, indeed, all empirical demographic research), is revealed. Dividing the overall continuum of possibilities into clusters reduces the number of apparent variations of response that appear. Although there may be (hypothetically), three areas of response which are plainly dominant in quantitative terms, this does not reduce the spectrum of possible responses when one gives precedence to the number of possible variations in response rather than the quantity of responses within a given (arbitrary) cluster.

Empirical demographic research methodology can be a valid observation of quantitative response patterns, but it does not take into consideration a perspective that applies an alternative research paradigm, one that observes the possible heterogeneity of responses, rather than the delineation of boundaries around homogenous areas of quantitative dominance. In this thesis areas of scarcity between intensities are equally significant, as the observation of heterogeneity in text and interpretation is not necessarily quantitative. Boundaries between quantitative demographic groupings of viewers, between textual genres, and at the frontier of the text itself, become central to the consideration of a topic that itself consists of a flow between two milieus: the actual and narrative. Rather than enforce a regime of positivistic certainty in the thesis, I will adopt an approach that explores areas of uncertainty, of qualitative evaluation, and analysis of moments within texts that subvert the conventions that define the dominant normality of genre groupings. The activity of the viewer will be apprehended as consisting of potentialities of interpretations that are determined by multiple influences: textual, social, cultural and psychological.

**Interpretation: Social Determinants and Desire**

The adoption of multiperspectivalism in the methodology of this thesis is not intended as an avoidance of declaring any theoretical alliance, or an evasion of defining a position and applying theory to texts and their interpretation. This approach does, however, reprehend any position that lays claim to exclusive

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*Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.8.*
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legitimacy. As evidence of this tendency I will now examine the position of Harms and Dickens, who accuse postmodern theory of having "lost sight of the political economic dimensions of communications", 37 and of an avoidance of recognizing the social influences on interpretation:

[F]or postmodernists contemporary media and communication practices decenter subjectivity and authority to clear the way for new opportunities to experience multiple discourses and identities and play with language games. Indeed, most postmodernists celebrate the fragmentation and polysemy of communications and the ability of audiences to actively create and play with meanings. What is grossly undertheorized in this perspective are the social conditions and foundations for creating meaning and communication. 38

Their suggestion that postmodernism has abandoned social influences, and ignored the significance of political and economic factors is problematic, in that postmodernism is not easily limited to a singular subset of conceptual consistencies.

In direct contradiction of these claims, de Certeau identifies the analysis of viewer responses as subsequent to studies of cultural products and the social conditions of their distribution and consumption:

In the wake of the many remarkable works that have analyzed "cultural products," the system of their production, the geography of their distribution and the situation of consumers in that geography, it seems possible to consider these products no longer merely as data on the basis of which statistical tabulations of their circulation can be drawn up, or the economic functioning of their diffusion understood, but also as parts of the repertory with which users carry out operations of their own. Henceforth, these facts are no longer the data of our calculations, but rather the lexicon of users' practices. Thus, once the images broadcast by television and the time spent in front of the TV set have been analyzed, it remains to be asked what the consumer makes of these images and during these hours. 39

This approach indicates that the postmodern concern with consumer activity does not dismiss the cultural foundations of media production and distribution patterns of products, but is seeking to explain areas of media consumption, which have not been accounted for by previous research.

De Certeau's position, however, does not speak for postmodernism as a whole. In fact, no single theorist can stand as representative of a theoretical perspective which is marked by such diversity of opinion and multiple positioning of theories. To attribute characteristics to postmodernism as a whole without specifying theorists is to risk generalization. The postmodernism of deCerteau or Lyotard cannot necessarily be equated to that of Baudrillard's notion of simulation, or Jameson's pastiche. 40 Although postmodernism is accused by Harms and Dickens of being relativistic, of ignoring cultural foundations and of abandoning Marxist economic

37 Harms and Dickens, 1996, p.220.
38 ibid., p.221.
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and ideological positions, it is essential to keep in mind that each of these theorists espouses a particular position. Postmodern theorists are not strangers to the notion of cultural, political and economic influences on interpretive activity. They do not accede to the *precedence* of the socio-economic paradigm, but neither do they totally abandon its significance.

Harms and Dickens approach theory from a particular perspective and their criticisms of postmodernism reveal their tendency to adopt a stance that reflects a 'cultural studies' position to the exclusion of all other possible positions. The aspects of postmodernism with which they take issue are compared to the social determinist position, and dismissed for no better reason than the fact that they do not concur:

Insufficient attention to the social context of communication ... results in a curious paradox for the postmodern perspective. On the one hand it is vehement in its antihumanist assertion that autonomous subjectivity has given way to decentered selves. On the other it posits an autonomous, active audience. In this account of audience reception, the postmodern perspective side-steps the social and makes appeals to the sensuous realms of desire. That is, it views audiences as responding to mediated messages not in terms of socially acquired abilities, but on the non-rational basis of affective desire. 41

The reason offered by Harms and Dickens for dismissing the role of affective desire in interpretation is that "the postmodern appeal to desire is a poorly developed substitute for the difficult task of identifying those social forces that might sustain communities and active audiences within the fragmenting conditions of postmodernity." 42 They fail to justify this criticism, relying instead on the presumed importance of social forces as somehow more significant than the individual experience of desire, and assuming that rational social determinism is preferable to non-rational affective desire as a field of theoretical research. One doubts whether postmodern theorists intended their inquiry into affect and desire as a "substitute" for identifying social determinants.

Harms and Dickens overlook the recognition of social determinants that exists in the writing of many postmodern theorists, with such seminal writers as Foucault, or Deleuze and Guattari clearly outlining the connection between social conditions and discourse. 43 The difference between the approaches of these theorists and that of Harms and Dickens, however, is that social determinants are considered to be *one amongst a number* of influences on the interpretive activities of a viewer, and not the singular, and most significant of these. This position gives Harms and Dickens' call for a "more balanced, comprehensive approach," combined with their admission that "critical media studies of the past often suffered from an overly deterministic

41 Harms and Dickens, op cit., pp. 221-222.
42 ibid., p. 222.
43 Foucault, 1980, p.131., states that "each society has is regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements." Also, Deleuze and Guattari speak of "the abstract machine that connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social field." Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.7.
political-economic emphasis,” a slightly hollow ring. “Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari have taken socio-economic and political determinants into consideration; they simply do not accede to the argument that these determinants are more significant than desire and affect. Harms and Dickens’ call for a multi-perspectival approach to media studies, however, is one that is attempted in this thesis, but not according to the model that they have put forward, where the socio-economic paradigm is given precedence over other determinants of interpretation.

The institutional setting of epistemology demonstrates a tendency for writers adopt an absolute position, one that disallows alternative approaches and reinforces the validity of their own perspective. The practice of absolutism supplants previous theories, and often prohibits the possibility of combining new insights with existing positions. It seeks to replace the prior with the new, but in doing so abandons the prior theories as absolutely incorrect, rather than suggesting new theories as alternate perspectives which respond to the weaknesses of previous theory. To think of contemporary theories as ‘correct’ and previous theories as ‘incorrect’ disregards the progressive nature of advances in theory. Absolutism is a rhetorical strategy that should be recognized as an attempt to advance a field of theory, but should not be accepted as a guarantee of redundancy for the victims of its rhetoric.

1.2 Methodology: Theories of Multiplicity

Deleuze and Guattari, and the Rhizome Multiplicity

The tendency of theory to displace its antecedents has not been openly challenged by postmodern theorists, but the opposite has been the case, with the notion of the radical change from modernity to post-modernity providing the essence of the postmodern turn. It is evident, however, particularly in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, that previous theorists are considered as significant influences on their theoretical position. Rather than suggesting singular solutions to problems, Deleuze and Guattari have adopted an approach that postulates multiplicity. The connections between many areas of human activity: society, cultural groups, economic considerations and psychology are taken into account. They posit a model where boundaries between such areas are constantly breached, where literature, films, television and other narrative forms connect with each other, and with all other social milieus:

[S]emiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status. 45

The reading of a novel or the viewing of a film cannot be described as an aesthetic encounter that exists separate to the world ‘outside’ the text, and the subjectivity of

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44 Harms and Dickens, op. cit., pp. 224,225.
the viewer, but rather as an experience that is a significant factor in developing the cultural awareness of the viewer, thereby forging connections between a viewer, the text, and the society.

The tendency for Leftist Cultural Studies to give Marxist ideology preeminence over other factors, the over-reliance of psychoanalytic theories on Freudian explanations of aberrant behavior, and the structuralist model of signification do not adequately account for all areas of interpretive activity, areas which have, however, been accounted for collectively in a number of alternative theories. Deleuze and Guattari have suggested a theoretical perspective that allows for multiple fields of thought, for connections between territories that are considered to be separate in theoretical discussion. This thesis will apply rhizome theory not only to the distinctions between text, viewer and the social milieu, but also to the articulations of prior theory that can be detected in post-structural theories. The utilization of Deleuze and Guattari does not amount to an unqualified acceptance of every aspect of their theories, but is a recognition of the pertinence of rhizome theory to the issue of the narrativization of actuality.

The theory of Rhizome as posited by Deleuze and Guattari, explains the function of language as being indefinite in its distinction from the activities of everyday life and the interactions of social communities, as opposed to a structuralist view which would subordinate such activities (and the structure of the human mind), to the language system.

Chomsky's grammaticality, the categorical S symbol that dominates every sentence, is more fundamentally a marker of power than a syntactic marker. You will construct grammatically correct sentences, you will divide each statement into a noun phrase and a verb phrase. ... Our criticism of these linguistic models is not that they are too abstract but, on the contrary, that they are not abstract enough, that they do not reach the abstract machine that connects a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social field. A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles. **

Deleuze and Guattari's theories are not limited to the field of language, but apply to a diversity of fields, and have ramifications for any consideration of the interpretation of narrative and its relationship to actuality. Their rhizome model allows for the multiple connections of language with culture and social formations of power, visual narratives, such as films and television programs, and the connections between various spheres of social and cultural activity. Texts interconnect with the world surrounding those texts, and are influenced by those connections in their composition and interpretation.

Connections between the socius and texts are at their strongest when the text refers to the actual, and when the actual is represented by the text. There is a flow between the viewer and the actual which is facilitated by textual content during interpretation. The world becomes both the object of the text, and the social/cultural circumstance of the viewer. Rhizome theory suggests that the differentiation between

**ibid., p.7.
territories should be considered to be a fluid and flexible arrangement of flows and connections that adapt according to the changing requirements of each text, situation and viewer. A rhizomic model points to the connection of fields rather than the differentiation between fields. Felix Guattari has outlined two alternative views of the relations between reality, representation and author, suggesting that they are connected rather than separated:

Everything that’s written in refusing the connection with the referent, with reality, implies a politics of individuation, of the subject and of the object, of a turning of writing on itself, and by that puts itself into the service of all hierarchies, of all centralized systems of power, of what Gilles Deleuze and I call all “arborescences,” the regime of unifiable multiplicities. The second axis (according to which everything that is written is linked to a political position), in opposition to arborescence, is that of the “rhizome,” the regime of pure multiplicities ... the pattern of breaks in reality, in the social field, and in the field of economic, cosmic and other flows. ... An arrangement in its multiplicity forcibly works both on semiotic flows, material flows and social flows. There is no longer a tripartition between a field of reality, the world, a field of representation, the book, and a field of subjectivity, the author. But an arrangement places in connection certain multiplicities taken from each of these orders ... The book is an arrangement with the outside, opposed to the book image of the world: a book rhizome. 47

It could equally be said that a film is an arrangement with the outside, opposed to the film image of the world: a film rhizome. By appreciating the rhizomic functions of films and television programs we can apprehend their connections with the actual and the interconnection of the rhizome, which converges with elements external to the rhizome.

Connections Between the Text and the Outside
To limit Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of rhizome to the field of language would be to deny the possibility of its application to many other fields. Many of the connections that exist between actuality and books are approximated by the connections between actuality and films, or television programs. The connections between narrative and the actual are similar in many forms of narrative, be they written, aural or visual. Systems of hierarchy and delineation (the arboreal), emphasize the contrasts between forms of narrative, but the rhizome model stresses the similarities, articulations and flows which inter-connect narratives with other narratives, and, in turn, with culture, economy, society, state and natural environment, forming an assemblage with the outside of the text.

The differentiation between the representation as signifier, and the object as signified, does not discern the connectivity between actuality and texts. Deleuze and Guattari point out that both signifier and signified can be conceived of as being common to an assemblage:

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If the external pragmatics of nonlinguistic factors must be taken into consideration, it is because linguistics itself is inseparable from an internal pragmatics involving its own factors. It is not enough to take into account the signified, or even the referent, because the very notions of significations and reference are bound up with a supposedly autonomous and constant structure. There is no use constructing a semantics, or even recognizing a certain validity to pragmatics, if they are still pretreated by a phonological or syntactical machine. For a true abstract machine pertains to an assemblage in its entirety: it is defined as the diagram of that assemblage. It is not language based but diagrammatic and superlinear. Content is not a signified nor expression a signifier; rather both are variables of the assemblage. 43

Systems of representation are not separate from actuality, but are constantly engaged in mutable relations with the actual. The signified is not disassociated from the sign, but, to some extent, is continguously connected to the sign, as is posited in (Foucauldian) conditions of possibility that direct discourse, and the functions of language that interact with the actual. Deleuze and Guattari go further than Foucault in connecting the text with actuality, stating that: “an assemblage of enunciation does not speak “of” things; it speaks on the same level as states of things and states of content.” 44 With audio/visual texts and their connections with actuality there is a similar interaction with culture and society. The interpretation of visual and aural images is equally reliant on these connections. Extra-textual connections may differ in their specific operations, as the representational forms utilize distinct media, where one (the book), represents the world through the written word alone, while the other (the film or television program), through enunciation, music, sounds, titles and moving pictures. Yet they each connect with the social and cultural actualities that exist alongside the texts, and become a part of an “assemblage in its entirety.” 50

The audio/visual text and actuality are, therefore, interdependent, and connected. Interpretation of a sign is also connected with the actuality in which the viewer is situated. This is not intended to imply that the sign refers directly to actuality, but that it refers to other signs, and thereby pertains to socio-cultural constructs. 51 Viewers relate the experience of a film to their experience of the world, and to their experience of other films, television programs, books, music, newspapers, and radio broadcasts. Their interpretation of a film narrative is the product of multiple connections with actuality, and the sum of their experience of other texts, that combine to form a network of connections external to the text. An assemblage of enunciation may have multifarious interpretation according to the reading applied by a viewer. Grossberg highlights the post-structuralist recognition of difference and multiplicity in interpretation, and identifies its opposition to the communication model:

Just as structuralism argued that the identity and meaning of any sign depends on its place within a system of differences, poststructuralist theories of difference argue that no element within the field has an identity of its own which is intrinsic to it and

43 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.91.
44 ibid., p.87.
50 ibid., p.91.
51 ibid., pp.113-114.
thus guaranteed in advance. A text can never be said to have a singular meaning, or even a circumscribed set of meanings. Perhaps texts cannot be treated singularly and in isolation: the meaning of a text may depend upon its formal and historical relations to other texts (its “intertextuality”). An audience can never be said to have a singular identity, or even a finite set of identities. Each is replete with multiple and unrelated differences, each is potentially infinitely fragmentable. Theories of difference emphasize the multiplicity and disconnectedness within and between texts and audiences. By erasing the identity of the terms of the relationship, the relationship itself becomes impossible or at least necessarily absent. Communication itself is an illusion which it is the critic’s job to deconstruct. 52

The differences that bring about heterogeneity of interpretation and extra-textual connections highlight the consequences of a viewer’s interpretation of narrative. As the audio/visual narrative is perceived the textual experience is combined with other experiences, and interpreted accordingly. The film cannot be said to simply encode meaning, but, rather, to provide an opportunity for viewers to apply their cultural and social experience to the reading of narrative. 53

The communication model in which the author encodes and the viewer decodes the meaning intended by the author is a linear model in which meaning moves from author to reader. This is in contrast to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of rhizome, which they equate to an “acentred system,” which is in opposition to “arboreal” structures that impose rigid and linear hierarchical systems. Deleuze and Guattari define acentred systems as:

[F]inite networks of automata in which communication runs from any neighbour to any other, the stems or channels do not preexist, and all individuals are interchangeable, defined only by their state at any given moment - such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a central agency. 54

In such systems the articulations, breaks-flows, and directions of flow can alter at any time, and continuous change, or a state of continuous becoming, is the means whereby the system adapts to the requirements of its existent circumstances. There is no strictly defined structure that keeps the system in a particular form, but the system acts as a whole, altering, and adapting to changes in the relations between the system and its environment. A central position of this thesis is that film and television genres function as rhizomes. Film and television texts are the units of which a multiplicity of texts (the genre), is comprised, and themselves also exhibit the qualities of rhizome, being a multiplicity of images, sounds and words that connect with the actual, and with the viewer. Rhizome is characterized by its tendency to break out on all sides, and to form connections with other rhizomes, as Deleuze and Guattari posit that “the rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots.” 55

The film or television genre, it will be shown, functions in this manner, varying, expanding, conquering, capturing, and influencing the establishment of new genres

53 Hall, 1980, also offers a model which accounts for the reading of texts being influenced by the social circumstances of the viewer. These theories are discussed further in chapter 2.
54 Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., p.17.
55 ibid., p.21.
and hybrid forms as ‘offshoots.’ The continually changing nature of texts and genres
is always in relation to the actual, forming connections with the social and cultural
milieus, and forming offshoots between texts (intertextuality), and genres. The
analyses contained in the second part of the thesis will demonstrate these functions of
genre, and the rhizomic offshoots that occur from the text into actuality.

The Audio/Visual Text and Cultural Codes
Speech acts, written texts, and audio/visual images interact with culture. The
immediacy of the relations between enunciation and culture have been clearly
identified by Foucault and de Certeau. DeCerteau’s description of the speech act
and its synthesis with the actual is equally applicable to audio/visual texts:

By situating the act in relation to its circumstances, “contexts of use” draw attention
to the traits that specify the act of speaking (or practice of language) and are its
effects. Enunciation furnishes a model of these characteristics ... These elements
(realizing, appropriating, being inscribed in relations, being situated in time) make
of enunciation, and secondarily of use, a nexus of circumstances, a nexus adherent
to the “context” from which it can be distinguished only by abstraction.
Indissociable from the present instant, from particular circumstances and from a
faire (a peculiar way of doing things, of producing language and of modifying the
dynamics of a relation), the speech act is at the same time a use of language and an
operation performed on it. 57

Although films or television programs do not interact with actuality in an immediate
time frame, as is the case with interpersonal conversation, they do interact with the
world in a less immediate sense, making comment on, portraying, exploring and
examining the culture and circumstances that surround the conception and production
of the text. On the one hand, enunciation consists of direct and immediate interaction
between the self and actuality, on the other, audio/visual images consist of indirect,
temporally prolonged interactions. Recorded audio/visual images cannot react to the
instant, as is the case with direct, interpersonal verbal communication. They are not
immediate interactions between individuals and their surroundings, and yet they are
connected with a “nexus of circumstances,” albeit a more indefinite and general
circumstance than verbal interactions.

Television programs and films address individuals within a society, as de Certeau
states above, “being inscribed in relations, being situated in time”, although with a
reference to circumstance that is less immediate than that of enunciation. They
contain images which are embedded in circumstances, and which speak from a
particular period of time. When removed from that era by the passing of time the

56 See Foucault, 1972, p.91, where social conditions and the “states of things and relations” that effect
enunciation are discussed.
57 De Certeau, 1984, p.33.
58 The exception to this statement is the use of live transmission of images, as is now possible on the
internet. This, however, differs considerably from the construction of narratives in audio/visual form,
and does not enter the domain of this thesis. Immediate response to actuality is an impossibility for a
recorded and edited series of images, although rapid response is achieved in texts as such television
news and current affairs programs.
The immediacy of cultural relevance is diminished, and the interpretation of images is colored by a temporal gap. For example, Humphrey Bogart has become the subject of nostalgia in the 1990s and beyond, rather than being admired and imitated as the cultural icon of his era. Nostalgic appreciation of his persona is in contrast to the reading that prevailed during the era of film noir production. The relations between a culture and its images are reliant on the maintenance of articulations, of the irruption of cultural codes into iconic images, as actuality, cultural circumstances and the interpretation of narrative are continually transformed. Bogart's film noir persona functions in the present as an intertextual reference, but is not relevant in contemporary culture as anything more than a historical allusion. Current texts demonstrate a connection with the prevailing cultural codes of the present, and, hence, direct their meaning towards a particular "nexus of circumstances" that situates the image in time and space. Even films concerning historical subjects adopt a distinct style of representation, and the era of their production are identifiable through the cultural codes that are expressed in the narrative. A recorded medium, however attempts may be made to isolate it from the circumstances of its production, reflects the era and cultural context of its inception. The film or television text is connected with the actuality that exists at the time of its production, and reveals the cultural codes that emerge from the circumstances of its origin. The text, and the genre, functioning as rhizomes, are connected with the culture and the actuality that surround them. The boundaries of the text are penetrable, allowing the flow of actuality into the text, and also altering actuality by the effect of the text on viewers, or, as Deleuze and Guattari define the relations of the text and the world, "the book as assemblage with the outside, against the book as image of the world." This thesis examines the audio/visual text as "assemblage with the outside," and evaluates the efficacy of the rhizome model as a means of accounting for the functions of the audio/visual text.

The content analyses of texts in the second part of the thesis will be concerned with identifying the conventions of genre, and the extra-textual connections that are implied by codes. The conjunction of moments of the text with actuality will be considered in light of the capacity for the text to form a continuum with actuality, rather than the postmodern conception of the text as distinct from 'reality'. The functions of multiplicity in the notion of genre will be observed, and the existence and operation of boundaries between genres, and between texts will be examined. The multifarious characteristics of the audio/visual text require a distinction between portions of the narrative, as entire texts may encompass the conventions of several genres. The analysis of texts will, therefore, be limited to their relations with actuality, and the cultural constructs that influence interpretation, and thereby affect the narrativization of actuality. This approach will highlight the extra-textual connections, and define the pathways by which the text and actuality are conjoined. The use of rhizome as a model by which the text and genre are connected with actuality will enable a conception of narrative, and of the image, as partially corresponding to actuality, but never attaining a complete equivalence. Although connections between the text and actuality are made, they must always be conjoined with the viewer, who becomes the nexus of all connections, and the trajectory of all

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44 Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., p.23.
textual reference. Lying between the text and actuality is a stratification of cultural constructs, conventions of narrativization, and presuppositions that are the consequence of previous textual experience and social knowledge. The conception of actuality amid this heterogeneity requires careful consideration, and the forthcoming section will offer a definition of terms, and delineation between the notions of actuality, reality and truth that are easily conflated.

1.3 Actuality, Reality and Truth

Reference and Mimesis

The introduction to this thesis has briefly explained the use of the term ‘actuality’ in defining the events and existents of the physical milieu, and the distinction between actuality and reality in the formation of an approach that accounts for the functions of narrativization. These terms, however, require detailed explication in relation to their application in the thesis, and the philosophical foundations of the terminology that has been employed. The terms ‘actuality’ and ‘reality’ signify conceptual territories that are implicit to the distinctions that are drawn in the thesis, and provide a model which will become a pivotal analytical tool.

Post-structuralism suggest a relationship between text and reality which differs from that of classical philosophers, in particular the Aristotelian notion of mimesis. 61 The assumptions of classical philosophy have been disputed by Derrida and Foucault, in particular the assumption of a correspondence between signification and external reality has been challenged, as Norris explains:

[W]e need to distinguish the two main concepts of truth (or mimesis) that have governed philosophical enquiry. One is the strictly referential idea of truth as an adequate matching-up, a correspondence between words and the things they can properly be used to represent. The precise nature of these ‘things’ - whether sense data, real-world objects or factual states of affairs - has given rise to a long running debate amongst epistemologists. But they all have at least this much in common: they all assume that truthful statements can be tested or verified as such by determining their ‘fit’ with an outside reality. It is this correspondence-theory of truth ... that is chiefly under attack from post structuralism. 62

The post-structural and postmodern points of view have since become the dominant theoretical perspective in regards to this issue, with the correspondence theory of ‘truth’ now considered naïve. The reader-response theory of Iser and Fish, and Stuart Hall’s work on Encoding and Decoding, assuring that the site of the construction of meaning has been established as existing within the reader. 63

When considering audio/visual texts, however, the reading process becomes a simultaneous viewing of images and interpretation of meaning. The use of the term

'interpretation' in this context is not indicative of an acceptance of the communication model, or of hermeneutic interpretivism, but is intended as a reference to the processes of response to an audio/visual text, as the viewer constructs a reading of the artifact. The interpretation arrived at by the viewer entails connection with the text, which, in turn, establishes connections with actuality.

The status of the distinction between internal perception and external actuality becomes crucial in determining the understanding of 'truth' when applied to audio/visual images and their relations to actuality. The images of film and television bear a more immediate sensory resemblance to the external world than do the written signs of literary texts, or the spoken words of enunciation, and can be considered to be mimetalogical in their method of representation. Although the Platonic notion of diegesis (or, as Bordwell summarizes the notion of diegesis, the "telling" of the narrative), is utilized in the delivery of audio/visual fictional narrative, mimesis is exhibited in a persuasive imitation of visual and aural sensory perception. It is the efficacy of the mimetic that purports to reflect an image of the world, or 're-present' the actual to the viewer. It is the nature of the medium as a form of mimesis that gives film and television its impression of reality. Bordwell's conception of mimesis and diegesis as a binary opposition offers a mutually exclusive model, where the diegetic and mimetic qualities of the text are in opposition. This is not necessarily an appropriate model of the diegetic and mimetic as they operate in the audio/visual narrative. Diegesis functions as the agency of narration, of story telling, with the mimesis of the images themselves, showing the world rather than narrating. Recorded images (both visual and aural), are themselves mimicry of actual sensory perception, where actual spaces, events and persons are recorded as artificial imitations of audio and visual sensory perception. The mimesis of film and television, when compared to literature, amounts to a perceptual mimicry of the world, a 'fooling of the senses' which seeks to imitate the appearance of an actuality, rather than a description of, or 'telling about' a reality. The presence of the narrator, as is clearly discernible in the fields of poetry or literature, is rendered comparatively transparent by the sensory content of the film and television medium. Film and television images are, in and of themselves, mimetic. It is in the design, construction and selection of images that diegesis is achieved. Whereas literature requires prior mediation, composition of narrative and construction of form, it is possible using audio/visual recording media to achieve unmediated, non-constructed representations of actuality that do not entail the intervention of an 'author' in the composition of a narrative.

The notion of mimesis in audio/visual texts applies to the functions of non-fictional film and television, or fictional realism, where the images represent the actual world. Fictional visual narrative, on the other hand, uses mimetic imaging technologies to present a diegesis, yet claims only indirect correlation between images and actualities. This sort of truth is, however, not reliant on sensory perception of external reality in the image, or 'correspondence' with external reality,
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as its point of reference. The connections with the actual that are established in audio/visual fictional narrative are conceptually grounded, rather than mimetic. The mimetic similarities of the image to the actual are a function of the medium, not a code or convention of narrative.

Derrida insists that the relationship between text and reality is complex, and that there is no correspondence of text to reality. He asserts that representations act as mediation, and that texts remain distinct from reality. Hence his famous statement, "there is no 'outside' to the text," 67 refers to the lack of any correlation, between actuality and text. The role of text as mimesis, as a representation of reality, is to Derrida unavoidable. The mediating function of the text as a representation of external reality cannot be avoided, as Derrida claims, without a return to phenomenological notions of the internal production of reality:

Any attempt to reverse mimentology or escape it in one fell swoop by leaping out of it with both feet would only amount to an inevitable and immediate fall back into its system: in suppressing the double or making it dialectical, one is back in the perception of the thing itself, the production of its presence, its truth as idea, form, or matter. 44

Derrida’s contention, then, is that the text stands between the reader and external reality, but does not offer a correlation. He insists that the text is mimetological, but that mimetic representation does not at any stage offer a correspondence with reality.

Derrida’s approach to mimesis is one which relies less on external reality than on the internal awareness of and search for truth, which Norris identifies as Platonic in origin:

[The platonic doctrine of truth as a form of inward revelation, as a ‘writing in the soul’ that makes itself visible to the mind in a state of receptive wisdom ... would be more authentic - closer to the origin and nature of things - than any truth attainable by mere copying of external reality. For it is a cardinal precept of Plato’s philosophy that wisdom consists in seeing beyond the world of material objects and events, the world we inhabit so long as we are enslaved to the predominance of sensory perception. There is a higher reality of essences, ‘forms’ or ideas which are locally embodied in the things we perceive but which can only be known, in their essential nature, through a process of inward seeking-after-truth. This is the concept of truth as aletheia, as the moment of epiphany or inward ‘unveiling’, vouchsafed to the soul through an exercise of reason transcending all forms of sensory perception ... Derrida is far more concerned with this second, distinctively Platonic notion of mimesis as revealed truth. 45]

This platonic concept of truth is more appropriately applicable to the realm of fictional narrative, where truth is a subjective, indefinable and intangible notion, than to that of non-fiction, where truth is evaluated according to the correspondence between the text and the actual. The use of a single term, "truth", is an inadequate means of distinction between the two functions, as one notion of mimesis is

67 Derrida, 1976, p.121.
44 Norris, op.cit., pp.54-55.
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concerned with referentiality, and the other with transcendental philosophical ideals. When considering the referential functions of audio/visual texts, truth becomes a measure of consistency between the actual and the text on one hand, and a transcendent awareness, of moving beyond the actual to a "higher reality", on the other. The concept of 'truth', then, becomes problematic when the two forms of mimesis are not independently defined. For the purposes of this thesis, priority will be given to the Aristotelian notion of mimesis, in which the correlation between the audio/visual text and actuality are in question.

Discourse and Reality

In contrast to Derrida's separation of the text from reality, Foucault sees discourse as being coequal with reality. This is not to say that he suggests a direct correlation between text and reality, but that reality exists within the laws of possibility that can be observed within in the discourse. Shumway describes Foucault's strategy of exteriority as an approach that involves the surface of discourse becoming reality:

Foucault wants to take the surface of discourse itself as the fundamental reality. But by the surface of discourse, Foucault does not mean style or form in any of their usual senses. Foucault continues to be concerned with the semantic aspect of language even though he rejects the search for meaning as it has traditionally been conceived. Foucault's strategy of exteriority is to look for the "conditions of existence" of discourse, "for that which gives rise to the chance series of these events and fixes its limits". 79

Foucault's approach suggests that there is a more direct connection between discourse and reality, whereby the discourse by its content and "conditions of existence" become the reality, where the assumptions, rules and structures of the discourse itself indicate the nature of the reality.

Foucault posits that modes of discourse exist within the restrictions of social structures and power relationships. Shumway's states that a particular discourse will reveal by its 'genealogy' the nature of the social interactions that surround it:

Foucault argues that within any system of discourse only certain statements are possible. To describe the conditions of existence of discourse at this level is to seek to understand the range of possible statements that the discourse can produce. Foucault gives the name archaeology to this project. On another level, however, the conditions of existence of a discourse are external to it in the sense that they are social conditions. Such conditions include how the right to speak is governed within a discourse, or when it is appropriate to speak in this discourse. These conditions are governed by the role the discourse plays in the relations of power in a society. Foucault will use the word genealogy to describe this approach to the conditions of discourse. What makes discourse 'a chance series of events' is that both the structural limits and the social conditions of discourse combine to produce

79 Shumway 1989, p. 23.
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statements such that the goals or motives of individual speakers become irrelevant to Foucault's analysis. 71

Hence the newsreader adopts a particular tone and delivery, the celebrity interviewed on a talk show may be excused for indulgent self gratification, and the scientist making comment on the latest research will adopt serious and formal technical language, an appearance which may be in stark contrast to the modes of discourse which are used in different social situations. The modes of discourse which are employed in these examples indicate the context within which they have been used, and they become the reality. The range of possible statements within the social expectations of that particular mode of discourse, ensure that the social reality is revealed in the discourse.

Jerome Bruner, on the other hand, points out the articulation between discourse and external reality, but emphasizes the effect of discourse on actuality. Bruner attributes discourse with the capacity to effect actuality, even to the extent of creating new realities:

The realm of meaning, curiously, is not one in which we ever live with total comfort. Perhaps it is this discomfort that drives us finally to construct those larger-scale products of language - drama and science and the disciplines of understanding - where we can construct new forms in which to transact and negotiate this effort after meaning. To create hypothetical entities and fictions, whether in science or in narrative, requires yet another power of language that, again, is early within the reach of the language user. This is the capacity of language to create and stipulate realities of its own, its constitutiveness. We create realities by warning, by encouraging, by dubbing with titles, by naming, and by the manner in which words invite us to create "realities" in the world to correspond with them. 72

Bruner also stipulates a strong connection between actuality and texts. In Bruner's theory text operates both in response to actuality and, in turn, as an influence on the world, shaping, constructing and altering, and playing a causative role in society. Rather than identifying the surface of discourse as reality, Bruner posits a model where the reader constructs reality. As evidence of such functions of discourse we see television news and documentary interacting with actuality by disseminating information that alters or affects actual events, with the stock market, traffic and weather reports having direct and immediate consequences in the behavior of viewers, and political news reportage being capable of altering opinion, and thereby modifying actuality. Reality is modified, ordered, constructed and manipulated by the external functions of discourse.

The Distinction Between Actuality and the Cultural Construct of Reality

Discourse is inseparable from reality, and there are connections between the two territories that pass in both directions, from reality into discourse, and from discourse into reality. It is, however, the viewer that provides the flow between text and reality,

71 ibid., pp.24-25.
72 Bruner, 1986, p.64.
Theoretical Perspectives, Cultural Truths and Perception of Actuality.

as it is the actions of the viewer in response to the text that alter actuality. The use of the terms 'reality' and 'actuality,' however, become problematic when one attempts to apply terms to a variety of conditions and circumstances. Bruner points out that the word 'reality,' when applied in various contexts, ceases to have a singular definition, and requires numerous prefixes to specify the meaning intended in a given circumstance. He describes two different realities that must be distinguished from each other:

"[T]he "reality" of most of us is constituted roughly into two spheres: that of nature and that of human affairs, the former more likely to be structured in the paradigmatic mode of logic and science, the latter in the mode of story and narrative. The latter is centred around the drama of human intentions and their vicissitudes; the first around the equally compelling, equally natural idea of causation. The subjective reality that constitutes an individual's sense of his world is roughly divided into a natural and a human one." 79

Bruner's two spheres of reality can be further explicated by considering the range of realities in terms of internal and external milieu. The natural reality is concerned with the physical world, that of movement, objects and events, and exists apart from the motivations, reasons and intentions which may be attributed to them. The reality of human affairs is primarily concerned with intention, and is subject to interpretation as to the reasons underlying human acts. The term 'reality' can therefore be divided into, firstly, a physical, external reality, one in which events, actions, objects and people (in terms of their physical existence as objects, not their internal existence as cognizant beings), are engaged in a world of physical action, of occurrences between physical bodies and objects. Such a reality includes linguistic signs, the sound waves of enunciation, the light emanations of projected or televised images, in their capacity as physical events, but would exclude the attendant meanings, intention, interpretation, understanding, or attribution of significance to those physical forms. I will refer to this physical, external reality as 'actuality'.

Secondly, there is the milieu of human intention, the realm of the psyche as an internal reality. This reality is multiple, subjective, and is concerned with the flows and connections between individuals and cultural groups. Actuality is defined according to the constitution of internal reality: indeed, actuality cannot be entirely separated from a human construct of reality, as all perception is subject to interpretation, and is perceived through the interpolation of sensory data into an existent psychic state. Deleuze and Guattari, however, are insistent that there is no distinction between humanity and nature, maintaining that they are a part of the same reality. 84 There is no man/nature binary opposition, but, rather, a multiplicity of nature, a reality that encompasses the internal and cultural realities of humanity, amongst many other components:

79 ibid., p.88
Theoretical Perspectives, Cultural Truths and Perception of Actuality.

Man and nature are not like two opposite terms confronting each other - not even in the sense of bipolar opposites within a relationship of causation, ideation or expression (cause and effect, subject and object, etc.); rather, they are one and the same essential reality, the producer-product.  

The rejection of a man/nature opposition also indicates the restoration of the actual as internal reality, and the existence of internal realities and cultural realities in unity with the actual world, not separated by concepts of human perception as the exclusive site of consciousness (as, for example in Husserlian phenomenology, in which "all factual existence of every sort reduces itself to interconnections of consciousness").  Actuality is incorporated into the human milieu, interacts with desire and belief, and conjoins with the individual reality. The human milieu, however, is also acting on, participating in and affecting the actual. Consciousness is not isolated from the actual, but is continually connected with and contiguous with the physical and cultural environments. The necessity for distinguishing between actuality and reality should not, however, be conflated with the human/nature distinction. The distinction drawn here, then, is not an impermeable barrier between a human milieu and a non-human realm of 'nature', but, rather, a continuum that includes areas of intensity: a construct, or conception of reality and an actual, physical world that are not disconnected, but that exist as adjacent but adjoining fields. The conjunction of fields is referred to by Deleuze and Guattari as a "Plane of Consistency".  

Individual Subjectivity, Desire and the Social

Desire is especially significant in the construction of the individual reality, experienced as the formation of the subject around the desiring-machines, as Deleuze and Guattari define the subject as having "no fixed identity, wandering about over the body without organs, but always remaining peripheral to the desiring machines". Desire is the landscape around which the subject journeys, and offers it a shape according to the way in which it "can situate itself according to the disjunctions of a recording surface, in what is left after each division". Desire effects the subject by exclusion, and "the subject is produced as a mere residuum alongside the desiring machines". The notion of an individual reality in this thesis is not to be confused with a unified subject. The individual reality is the result of interaction of the desiring machines with the (nomadic) subject, and could be defined as the state of the subject as it encounters various conditions of attraction and repulsion. The subject ceases to have unity, or identity, and becomes a changeable, multiple state of being. Affect and preference are opposed to aversion and antipathy, and from this opposition a variable condition that reciprocates with the actual according to

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7 Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, pp.4-5.
7 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.266.
8 Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.16.
9 Ibid., p.17.
attraction and repulsion defines a notion of the subject, but never in complete isolation from actuality.

The individual in this thesis is considered to be mutable and nomadic, and is connected with the actual, and also with culture, without distinct delimitation between the notion of individual and group. There is, however, the notion of the collective as a multiplicity, that can defined as a mass, as hierarchically determined, or as a pack, without fixed hierarchy, but continually changing. Collective grouping of individuals, shared strategies of interpretation and construction of reality in this thesis will be referred to as the cultural construct of reality. The connection between the individual and the collective within a cultural group is comprised of a reciprocal relation. Cultures are comprised of groups that have beliefs, behaviors, rituals and customs in common. Levi-Strauss defines a culture as:

A fragment of humanity which, from the point of view of the research at hand and of the scale on which the latter I carried out, presents significant discontinuities in relation to the rest of humanity. ... the same set of individuals may be considered to be parts of many different cultural contexts; universal, continental, national, regional, local, etc., as well as familial, occupational, religious, political, etc. This is true as a limit; however, anthropologists usually reserve the term “culture” to designate a group of discontinuities which is significant on several of these levels at the same time. 81

Culture, then, is determined by several common factors shared by a group of individuals that differentiate them from humanity at large. The relations between the individual and culture are, however complex. Individual and cultural constructs of reality are coexistent within an individual. The delineation of cultural and individual realities refers to a differentiation of the formation of particular aspects of subjectivity, rather than a distinction between the social and the individual as separate entities. The individual and the social, according to Deleuze and Guattari, cannot be distinguished or separated, as they are engaged in a continual reciprocation. 82 Both coexist, overlap and interact, so that to delineate a singularity to the exclusion of a collective, or a collective to the exclusion of an individual, is to ignore the fact that the notion of a collective exists within the individual, and that the collective is comprised of individuals.

There are cognitive, behavioral and social areas held in common within cultural groups, but there is concurrently a molecular subjectivity that is resultant of beliefs and desires. Deleuze and Guattari do not adhere to the notion of the distinction between the social and the individual, but refer instead to the molecular and the molar. On the one hand, the molar is expressed in representations that “define large-scale aggregates, or determine segments on a line,” whereas the molecular is expressed in beliefs and desires that form a quantum flow, that “always implies something tending to elude or escape the codes”. 83 The molar, then, is expressed in representation, as the concrete formation of the aggregate, and as overcoding, whereas the molecular consists of belief and desire, taking the form of quantum

83 ibid., p.219.
flows that evade codification and territorialization. The essential qualities of molar and molecular have their expression in both the individual and in culture. The individual is partly affected by the molar, representational milieu, and partly constituted by the realms of belief and desire.

The absence of distinction between individual and social is, however, not a notion that I have adopted without reservation. Rather than assume that the social and the individual blend in an indistinguishable, amorphous multiplicity, I suggest that the individual consists partially of the desiring-machines, and partially the molar cultural aggregates that are interpolated into the individual and considered to be a part of that rather broad category of qualities referred to as the 'self'. It is notable that Deleuze and Guattari themselves make a distinction between types of multiplicities, as "human, social and technical machines". The distinction between multiplicities, however occurs within the individual, as "the distinction to be made is not between exterior and interior, which are always relative, changing and reversible, but between different types of multiplicities that coexist, interpenetrate and change places". 64

The terminology in the thesis, then, refers to multiple elements that comprise the individual, as the individual and the culture interpenetrate. An 'individual reality' is a tendency toward difference, expression of unique characteristics, and contrariety to codes, whereas the 'cultural construct of reality' is a tendency toward similarity, consensus, and the totalizing overcoding of representation. Reality is not a singular term that can be employed without consideration of the processes and influences that determine its particular meaning in a given circumstance. The notion of reality entails the formation of beliefs concerning causal relations in actuality, and interpretation of events that occur in culture and the individual. Conception of reality consists of the connection of molar, molecular, and actual, being articulated as notions of individuality, or 'self' on one hand, and connection with codification and community on the other. The individual, although contiguous with the collective, perceives desire and belief as an expression of individuality, although these are in fact also influenced by the collective. The conjunctions of cultural and individual realities are inseparable from actuality, as the world in which they exist, and to which they are inseparably connected. There is no distinction between 'internal' and 'external', but only a continuum, which is comprised of actuality, the individual and society. There is no finite distinction between actuality, the cultural construct of reality and individual reality, but the three elements have, in past theoretical practice, been conjoined to produce an apperception of the world that has been referred to generically as reality.

The adoption of this tripartite terminology amounts to a recognition of the fact that there is no 'external' reality that exists separately to the 'internal' awareness of reality, but that the actual, and the binary of molar and molecular, converge to form a notion of reality that is not limited to any one of the three constituents. Any assumption of a singular reality overlooks the potential differences between molar representations, and molecular flows that influence the apperception of reality, and the physical milieu of actuality that surrounds and accommodates the other constituents. The cultural construct of reality is a construction of a notion of reality according to the molar, totalizing representation and codification that expresses

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64 ibid., p.36.
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collective aggregates, delimits possibilities, and determines segmentarity. Individual realities are constituted by belief and desire, escaping codes, bringing about interaction and connections, and opposing the overcoding representation. The cultural construct, however, is not 'external' to the individual, but contributes to the formation of the individual through the social knowledge of codification and representation.

Actuality, on the other hand, does not entail interpretation, opinion, or construction of meaning, or any other determination. Actuality is the pure realm of occurrence and physical bodies that have their existence in the world. The constructed individual and cultural realities give actuality form, which designate reason and motivations to events. This is not to say that actuality is in any way separate from the human milieu, but that it encompasses the human, both the cultural and the individual, and reciprocates with them. It is the sum of these three that comprises the notion of reality, but reality becomes a term that is inadequate when specificity is required. Is the term 'reality' in any specific case referring to a physical actuality, to culturally determined understanding, or to a subjective, individual apperception? The differentiation between the cultural construct of reality, individual reality and actuality has been utilized in the thesis in preference to the singular term 'reality' in order to specify the particular aspect of 'reality' that is under consideration with regard to a specific issue or circumstance.

The Overcoding of Actuality

When considering the notion of reality in relation to audio/visual narrative, it is this tripartite notion of reality that enables a distinction between actuality and the processes of construction that occur during narrativization. The audio/visual media provide an example of codification, functioning as a molar representation that expresses a cultural reality. Michel deCerteau has pointed out the tendency of media to expand their sphere of influence by imposing a regime of codification on actuality:

The media transform the great silence of things into its opposite. Formerly constituting a secret, the real now talks constantly. News reports, information, statistics, and surveys are everywhere. No story has ever been spoken so much or shown so much. Not even the ministers of the gods ever made them talk in such a continuous, detailed, and imperative way as the producers of revelations and rules do these days in the name of current reality. Narrations about what's-going-on constitute our orthodoxy. Debates about figures are our theological wars. The combatants no longer bear the arms of any offensive or defensive idea. They move forward, camouflaged as facts, data, and events. They present themselves as messengers from a "reality." Their uniform takes on the colour of the economic and social ground they move into. When they advance, the terrain itself seems to advance. But in fact they fabricate the terrain, simulate it, use it as a mask, accredit themselves by it, and thus create the scene of their law. ⁸⁸

This media created 'reality', despite claims to be delivering actuality to viewers, should in fact be defined as a flow between actuality, cultural and individual realities. As the media "fabricate the terrain", they construct a narrative that overcodes the

⁸⁸ DeCerteau, 1984, pp. 185-186.
actual, imposing a dominant interpretation of actuality within the text, which is then passed on, according to Hall, to the viewer as a preferred reading. The source of this preference is the shared, cultural construct, functioning as the representational overcoding that establishes similar interpretive strategies across a collective.

DeCerteau also points out the growing emphasis on visual perception as a requirement for ‘belief’. The narrativization of actuality in audio/visual media enables contemporary society to demand visual evidence of events. The existence of visual images has become the measure by which reality is evaluated.

This reversal of the terrain on which beliefs develop results from a mutation in the paradigms of knowledge: the ancient postulate of the invisibility of the real has been replaced by the postulation of its visibility. The modern socio-cultural scene refers to a “myth.” This scene defines the social referent by its visibility (and thus by its scientific or political representativeness); it articulates on this new postulate (the belief that the real is visible) the possibility of our knowledge, observations, proofs and practices. On this new stage, an indefinitely extensible field of optical investigations and of a scopic drive, the strange collusion between believing and the question of the real still remains. But now it is a question of what is seen, observed, or shown. The contemporary “simulacrum” is in short the latest localization of belief in vision, the identification of the seen with what is to be believed.

DeCerteau highlights the conceptual link between what is ‘believed’ and what is ‘real,’ and the significance afforded to visual images in establishing that belief. DeCerteau, however, does not go as far as Baudrillard, who posits a displacement of the real by the simulacrum, taking the form of visual representation of reality in which simulations no longer represent reality, but become a reality of their own. The production of visual images, and their distribution to mass audiences, creates a scenario in which a consensual cultural reality is formed through the ‘consumption’ of images. Reality cannot be considered to be an exclusively individual construction in the age of globalization, when globally distributed television images and news reports intrude into localized cultures. Notions of belief in the ‘truth’ of the image are dependent on comparison and consensus within communities of viewers, and take the form of a cultural construct of reality.

Social consensus of reality, is, according to deCerteau, the reliance of one belief system on the many, the connection of the individual reality with the cultural reality. Truth no longer intimates a correlation between the actual and the account, but, rather, a correlation between textual account and social consensus:

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64 Stuart Hall, 1980, p.134, points out that preferred and resistant readings are not textually determined, but that they refer to cultural codes in encouraging a culturally dominant interpretation.
67 DeCerteau, op. cit., p.187.
68 Baudrillard, 1988a.
69 Note the similarities between Baudrillard’s reality of images and the Foucauldian reality of discourse. In both theories it is the discourse that takes on the mantle of reality, and the actual is considered to be extrinsic. Baudrillard’s simulacra, however, posits few connections with the social, whereas Foucault maintains a level of recognition of social determination through awareness of the conditions of possibility of discourse.
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As a television viewer put it, “If it were false, people would have the information.” He thus postulated other social places that can guarantee the validity of what he knows to be fictive, and that postulation permitted him to believe in it “all the same.” It is as if belief could no longer be expressed in direct convictions, but only through the detour of what others are thought to believe. Belief no longer rests on an invisible alterity hidden behind signs, but on what other groups, other fields, or other disciplines are supposed to be. The “real” is what, in a given place, reference to another place makes people believe in. 91

But the range of responses, however, in the complex, multiple strata of global society ensures that individual interpretation cannot be said to conform to unified cultural templates of reality. Connections with a plenitude of social forces, cultural and aesthetic influences, and political and economic formations of power ensure that individual reality maintains its particularity. The conjunction of cultural influences with individual beliefs and desires is evident in the molecular, individual reality acting in opposition to totalizing and overcoding representations. There are also national, supranational and local layers of culture, as Waisbord identifies, that bring about a conflict between local and global cultures, 92 with molecular forces and flows at work in sub-cultures and minority groups opposing global overcoding.

There is a combination of determinants and influences that affect individual responses to audio/visual texts, and the resulting construct of reality: a stratified cultural encoding, working simultaneously on several levels (global, local, and sub-cultural), along with a molecular, individual diversity. The individual connects with the mass via the representational consensus of a society, and the sub-cultures that coexist with the society, inevitably absorbing cultural influences by reading/viewing the representation. This occurs concurrently with unmediated actual experience, as the individual also functions as a molecular component within the mass, forming direct connections extrinsic to the representational milieu.

The connection between individual desire and the actual is evident firstly in the physical action of the human body in affecting other physical bodies, and, secondly, the manipulation of the actual through signification. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that signs are the means by which desire functions within the actual, that human desire is not subservient to the regime of signification, but that desire determines signification.

[T]he sign does not produce fantasies, it is a production of the real and a position of desire within reality... From the moment desire is made to depend on the signifier, it is put back under the yoke of a despotism whose effect is castration, there where one recognizes the stroke of the signifier itself; but the sign of desire is never signifying, it exists in the thousands of productive breaks flows that never allow themselves to be signified within the unary stroke of castration. It is always a point-sign of many dimensions. 93

The source of connection between humanity and the actual is not signification, but desire itself. Signification offers a path of connection, a flow between the actual and

91 DeCerteau, op. cit., p. 188.
the individual that enables alteration of the actual by the individual. Conversely, desire is affected by actuality, through the agency of perception and the influence of cultural factors in the form of signification and representation.

Deleuze and Guattari consider desire to be the drive, emanating from the individual, which provides the substance of society. Desire is prior to the social, and provides the motivation for all human activity, physical, linguistic, political or economic. Their assertion is that:

Social production is purely and simply desiring production itself under determinate conditions. We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire, and that libido has no need of any mediation or sublimation, any psychic operation, any transformation, in order to invade and invest the productive forces and the relations of production. There is only desire and the social and nothing else.  

This position credits desire with being the universal underlying force of the social order. The actual is brought into internal reality through the operation of desiring-machines. The function of desire as it applies to the individual and to culture is that it "constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented."  

The differentiation between actuality, internal reality and the cultural construct of reality is, through desire, shown to be discretionary, as it is transformed from segmented territories into a deterritorialized continuum. Actuality, culture, and the individual become interactive and inseparable parts of a whole. Grossberg illustrates the importance of this model in altering the way we conceive of reality:

What is crucial here is the rejection of the model of culture defined by the need to construct a correspondence between two parallel nonintersecting planes - language and reality. Such a correspondence opens the project of interpretation: language interprets or represents reality, and criticism comments on that interpretation. It is also a rejection of a model of reality as a transcendental whole existing outside of history and practices. Reality here is a structure of effects, marked by a multiplicity of planes of effects and the ways they intersect, traverse and disrupt each other.

According to Grossberg interpretation and representation are displaced when reality is conceived of as "a structure of effects" rather than a separate transcendental whole. Reality is interwoven with representation, and interpretation effects, and is effected by reality. Signification is no longer distinct from the realm of the 'real', but the two converge as constituents of an assemblage.

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*Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.29.
*ibid., p.5
*Grossberg, op. cit., p.48.
Interpretation and the Connections Between Actuality, Culture, and Individual

Rather than reject the notion of interpretation, I would posit an alternative model in which interpretation is, in fact, one of several possible flows between actuality, the cultural construct and the individual, and that interpretive strategies are the means by which cultural construct of reality is formed, and perpetuated within an individual. Representation is an overcoding of reality, which is in itself an interpretation of reality, and is, in turn, interpreted during the viewing of the audiovisual text, and becomes a major influence in delimiting cultural interpretive strategies. Interpretation in this context is the adherence to cultural ‘templates’ of understanding, and is ‘molar’ in its apportioning of boundaries, and restriction of possible connections, potentialities and articulations. Interpretive strategies are the overcoding of the actual by culture, resulting in the cultural construct of reality. Interpretation in this context is not considered to be a hermeneutic exercise, limited to the interpretation of texts, or of authorial intention, but a culturally determined strategy for constructing reality. Its parameters go beyond the textual, and involve the apperception of unmediated actuality.

The perception of actuality is the subject matter of Phenomenology. Husserlian phenomenology calls for the rejection of preconceived notions of interpretation in an attempt to “set aside all previous habits of thought, see through and break down the mental barriers which these habits have set along the horizons of our thinking … to learn to see what stands before our eyes”. \(^7\) Similarities can be drawn between the phenomenological removal of acculturation and the Deleuze-Guattarian notion of deterritorialization, although it is essential to recognize the diametrical opposition of the two theories when dealing with the definition of subjectivity. Phenomenology alienates familiar ‘habits of thought’ in order to establish the relations between the subjective consciousness and the object, or phenomenon. Deleuze-Guattarian deterritorialization, on the other hand, involves the “movement by which ‘one’ leaves the territory,” and embarks on the line of flight. \(^8\) The subject, in the latter case, is not distinct from the object, but is released from territorial delimitation. Acculturation is the consequence of molar representation, and brings about reterritorialization. Despite the obvious differences between the two theories, the methodology of escape from the familiarity of interpretive strategies in order to reappraise the relations between the individual and the actual are held in common.

Rather than assign to the realms of ‘reality’ and ‘language’ the status of nonintersecting parallel planes, between which correspondence must be established, Grossberg’s model of intersecting planes brings to mind occasional convergence of planes with resultant disruptions and intersections. This model retains the image of reality and language as sharply defined and linear, whereas Deleuze and Guattari suggest a more liquid definition of molecular flows in diversity, which is the definition of rhizome. The distinction between the ‘correspondence model’ and rhizome lies in the existence of linear, impervious boundaries between actuality and the individual, or the object and subject. Rather than emphasize the non-correspondence of representation and actuality, rhizome points to the breaks-flows that occur between actuality and the individual, with cultural reality delimiting the

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\(^8\) Deleuze and Guattari,1987, p.508.
diversity of the flows. Rather than differentiating between representation and actuality, applying the model of rhizome accentuates the flows between actuality, the representation, and the viewer. It also allows for the multiple connections between the viewer and culture, the culture and actuality, and the effects that flow through and disperse throughout these territories. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari compare the arborescent model, which is hierarchical, linear, segmented and molar. It reterritorializes and reproduces existing forms, “it consists of tracing, on the basis of an overcoding structure or supporting axis, something that comes ready made,” whereas rhizome constructs a map that has “multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back to the same”. The opposition of the arborescent (tree) model and rhizome is not intended as a dualism, as Deleuze and Guattari posit a pluralism that eludes the apparent duality of arborescence and rhizome:

There are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots ... The important point is that the root-tree and the canal-rhizome are not two opposed models: the first operates as a transcendent model and tracing, even if it engenders its own escapes; the second operates as an immanent process that overturns the model and outlines a map, even if it constitutes its own hierarchies, even if it gives rise to a despotic channel. ... We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models. Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass. Arrive at the magic formula we all seek - PLURALISM = MONISM - via all the dualisms that are the enemy, an entirely necessary enemy, the furniture we are forever rearranging.

The rhizome, then, coexists with the arboreal, as models that often intersect, or undergo isomorphic transformation, where the rhizome can become linear, structural and concrete, taking on the characteristics of the arboreal model, and the arboreal can also send out lines of flight, escapes from the linear, hierarchic and segmented model. The most significant factor here is the differentiation between pluralism and dualism, as Deleuze and Guattari work toward an escape from the restrictions of binary opposition, positing a heterogeneity that accounts for multiplicity, rather than a rigidified contrast of opposing models. Pluralism refutes any limitation or delineation that restricts movements across boundaries, and encourages the dissolution of boundaries, therefore the ‘formula’ [pluralism = monism] relies on the rupture of boundaries.

By suggesting the differentiation between actuality, cultural reality and individual reality, I am not intending to contradict this notion, rather to highlight the connections between the individual, the culture and the actual, and the function of language, texts, film and television in these connections. Language, and audio/visual texts, are not only connections between the individual and culture, but also with actuality. More than this, texts, images, speech and sounds are a major component of the flows between the actual, the individual and culture. Audio/visual texts effect the physical world, the individual and the culture, operating through both molar segmented lines, which create differentiation, and molecular flows which ensure that

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99 ibid., p.12.
100 ibid., pp.20-21.
humanity is not separated from the actual by differentiation, but interacts with the actual.

The representation of actuality through audio/visual texts is not only an articulation of the actual world, it is itself a constituent of the actual. Audio/visual signs and images provide a view of actuality which, despite the fact that it is a partial and subjective view, nevertheless forges a connection with the actuality that is portrayed. The representation does not remain entirely isolated from the actuality, but can affect the nature of the actuality it represents. Such was the case in the Gulf war, when CNN news broadcasts were broadcast in time delay to avoid the alteration of ensuing events by inadvertently providing information of a military nature to the Iraqi commanding forces. The representation is not isolated from actuality, but connects with the actual, affecting the actions of individuals, cultures, institutions and nations. Signification is, therefore, a constituent of actuality as are any other objects or events. They have a physical presence (as previously described; the light of projection or the glow from a television screen, the emanation of sound waves from the loudspeaker, or from the vocal chords in the case of enunciation, the paper and ink of the magazine or newspaper, or the emulsion of a photographic negative). They exist in the actual as a physical presence regardless of our tendency to relegate them to an ‘in-between’ world we name ‘representation’. The actual signs images and sounds do not correlate with the other elements of actuality that they represent, but they do have an existence as actual physical objects.

There is no doubt that images do not perfectly correlate with the actuality they represent, but, on the other hand, there is a strong resemblance, particularly in the case of moving images, between the ‘representation’ and the objects/events which are represented. In recent years the emphasis has been placed on the absence of correlation between reality and the representation, and this has led to an absolutism which overlooks the fact that, despite the subjective point of view of the camera, selection and construction of images, and the imposition of ideology in audio-visual representations, there is, if not a correlation, then at the very least a connection between the representation and the actual. Something of the actual, however mediated, biased or selectively constructed seeps through the representation and flows into the individual. The actuality that exists in the image is, however, affected by the cultural constructions of reality that reproduce themselves through representation, as the segmentarity of cultural reality is duplicated by the conventions and assumptions that are present in the audio/visual text.

With regard to the audio/visual text, connections are not overtly evident in the textual content, but require the viewer to provide the conjunction, and convergence of actuality, culture and individual. The analyses of the selected texts will identify the conventions utilized by the text, and the implications concerning actuality that are inherent in the use of the conventions of genre. The notion of a continuum, on which both actuality and the viewer reside, will be considered in light of the multiperspectival approach outlined in the earlier part of this chapter. The absolutist positions of complete correspondence, as opposed to the postmodern position of the total absence of correspondence, will be appraised through the observation of the methods of narrativization that have been used in the depiction of actuality. Neither

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position will be privileged, but the possibility of the convergence of theoretical positions will be acknowledged. The inclusion of actuality in the audio/visual text will be analyzed by defining the characteristics of the text, the conventions of genre and their attendant interpretive strategies, and the cultural constructs that influence the interpretation of the text.

The theoretical position outlined in this chapter offers a perspective that is not easily definable as postmodernism or post-structuralism, but aims to reconsider the premises on which these broad theoretical classifications are founded, and to suggest an alternative means of approaching the issues of referentiality and representation. The audio/visual text warrants consideration as being unique in its capacity to correspond to actuality, particularly in the similitude between the text and the sensory perception of actuality. It is imperative, therefore, that the codes and conventions, the cultural construct of reality, and the illusion of actuality (or verisimilitude of the text), be accounted for in a pluralist theory that has the capacity to encompass the continuum which actuality, the text and the viewer concurrently inhabit. The following chapter will explicate the conventions of genre, and examine the presuppositions that bring the reader to assume specific relations between methods of narrativization and actuality.
Chapter 2

Narrative as Fiction and Nonfiction

The multiperspectival approach outlined in the previous chapter puts forward a methodology for the analysis of audio/visual texts, taking cultural conditions into consideration, and accounting for the relations between viewer, text and actuality. This approach admits a range of perspectives by which texts can be approached, and by which the connections between text and culture can be ascertained and defined. The forthcoming chapter will investigate the relations between the viewer, the text and the methods of narrativization by which the text is constructed, and by which a viewer applies interpretive strategies to the experience of the text. Narrative has been conventionally classified into two broadly defined genres, those of fiction, and of nonfiction. In this chapter, the underlying presuppositions that accompany this classificatory system will be examined, and the validity of these assumptions will be evaluated. Delineation between genres will be examined in relation to the textual conventions that determine modes of narrativization, and the mythic functions of narrative in relation to cultural determination of interpretive strategies will be analyzed.

The study of the narrativization of actuality requires the enumeration of the processes and conventions that determine or influence the content of texts, and this chapter will identify and appraise these conventions. The presuppositions that influence textual representation of actuality must be identified and defined in order to come to an understanding of the interpretive strategies by which the viewer approaches notions of actuality within the text. The distinctions that are conventionally drawn between fictional and non-fictional texts are also related to the function of myth in the cultural construct of reality. The conventionality of myth affects the strategies by which all representations are interpreted, as the textual depiction of actuality is influenced by the particular readings which are commensurate with the classification of the text.

In order to evaluate the relations between screen images and actuality the distinction between genres, in particular the delineation between fiction and non-fiction will be critiqued. The assumption that fictional narrative is distinct from actuality will be evaluated by implementing a reevaluation of the means by which the genre is defined. A converse approach will be applied to the genre of non-fictional narrative, in which the influence of narrativization and the significance of the imaginary content of non-fictional texts will be considered. The conventions of narrativization that have been utilized in these genres will be identified and evaluated in relation to the comparative claims or references to actuality implicit in the representational functions of texts, and their affect on viewers. Finally, the cultural conception of myth will be explicated, with particular regard to the delimitation of convention on the construction and interpretation of narrative forms. The conventions of genre in audio/visual texts are compared to the restrictive and deterministic affect of mythic conventions on the interpretation of narrative.
2.1 Fiction and Actuality

The definition of fiction as a genre of audio/visual text lies at the crux of the relations between text and actuality. In this case a negative relation is assumed, in which actuality is excluded, or distanced from the fictional narrative. Fiction is considered to be ‘imaginary’, as opposed to ‘real’. The Oxford dictionary defines the meaning of fiction as “feigning, invention; thing feigned or imagined, invented statement or narrative ... conventionally accepted falsehood”. ¹ The above definitions imply that fictional narrative originates from sources other than the actual: ‘feigning’ implying an imitation, ‘invention’ and ‘imagination’ as originating from the mind of the author, and ‘falsehood’ indicating an antithesis of truth. This notion is one that has been considered in the previous chapter, but its relevance to the classification of texts requires a particular application of the notion of fiction as opposed to ‘truth’, a concept which is more appropriately expressed by a notion of correspondence between actuality and the text, as opposed to fictional non-correspondence.

The position I will adopt over the forthcoming chapter will involve a reappraisal of the notion of ‘fiction’, and the setting aside of assumptions as to its definition. In order to re-examine the definition of the broad genre grouping of fiction it is necessary to identify the reasoning that underlies the distinction between fiction and non-fiction. When referring to film and television productions there is a tendency everyday terminology to classify them as falling into one of two categories, as fictional or documentary. This is a historical distinction, deriving from the origins of cinema, when these two forms of film were the dominant genres. The notion of fiction is also derived from literary terminology prior to the inception of film, but this is an area that must remain outside the scope of this thesis in order to give priority to the fields of film and television narrative.

Defining Fiction

The initial task in defining film and television fiction is to isolate the factors that influence the determination of fiction as a distinct and separate classification. A naïve assessment of this distinction may point to the fact that fiction is generally dramatically performed as opposed to the actuality of nonfiction. By implication then, fiction would have to be described as ‘unreal’, or as an imaginary performance of non-existent events, and nonfiction as ‘real’ or ‘true’. But this naïve definition does not stand up to close scrutiny. A film or television program which is classified as non-fictional cannot be assumed to be entirely exclusive of the imaginary. Neither is the distinction between fiction and non-fiction reliant on the presentational style of ‘story-telling’. News reports are non-fictional, but are referred to as ‘stories’. Accounts of historical events may also be referred to as ‘stories,’ as, for example, when a child may ask to hear the story of Scott of the Antarctic. The presence of

story as a narrative structure does not indicate that a narrative is fictional, as the use of narrative structures is equally applicable to the recounting of actual events. The presence of dramatic performance is also no guarantee of fictional content. Many early documentary films and newsreels included reconstruction of actual events by actors, yet this does not lead us to classify these films as fictional. This issue will be examined in chapter five, when documentary forms will be analyzed in greater detail.

What, then, are the characteristics of fiction that set it apart from nonfiction? We could suggest that fiction is a composed and constructed narrative and nonfiction is concerned with accounts of actuality, and this would perhaps bring us closer to defining a distinction. The appearance of imaginary events and dramatic characters as opposed to the actuality of non-fiction is certainly an indication which encourages the classification of a program as fictional. But is this a valid distinction? Many fictional films have placed their imaginary characters within the historical setting of actual events which are reconstructed in much the same way as documentary reconstructs history, and often the fictional characters may in fact bear the names and identities of actual historical figures. The events portrayed in these films are often dramatic reconstruction of actual historical events, whether the stark, historical 'textbook' style of reenactment in, for example, *Mary Queen of Scots* (1971), or the lively rendition of the Wallis history in *Braveheart* (1997). These dramatic reenactments are not conventionally compared, however, to documentary reconstruction, which performs an identical function yet is not conventionally classified as fiction.

Historical reconstruction which is included in documentaries, and fulfills the same function as those films which dramatically reconstruct history, are defined according to the context of the form of the narrative, rather than the relations of the content with the actual. Reconstruction is integrated into the documentary format, and must inevitably include elements which do not directly refer to actuality, due to the presence of actors, the temporal displacement from the actual event, and the possible disparity between actual settings and the location of filming. Even though the setting may be the original site of the actual event, the temporal displacement and presence of actors necessitate the implementation of imaginary approximations of the actual events. Gestures, mental states, the exact chronology of events, and many other details must differ from the original occurrence, and the presence of a camera, crew and actors are subject to directorial control in order to depict the actual event.

The disparities between actuality and reconstruction in documentary are identical in the production of fictional films that represent historical events. Nichols identifies the strategies utilized in fictional film to provide a sense of historical authenticity while manipulating the representation of historical events to suit the narrative structure and conventions of the fiction film;

Unlike fiction, documentary evidence refers us constantly to the world around us. Fiction films, too, may anchor their stories in a historical reality, whether past or contemporary, and many of their elements may be authentic. (In Hollywood cinema, great care is traditionally given to the authenticity of supporting elements like clothing, furniture, weapons, locale, architecture, and so on, while great

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2 The original distinction between fiction and documentary film was not a clear delineation between the two forms. Winston, 1995, identifies the fictional content of the earliest examples of documentary film, particularly Flaherty's tendency to enact events for the camera. Also cf. Barsam, 1973, p. 133.
liberties may be taken with (1) dialogue and language - historical figures of any nationality speak English; (2) motivation - the need of narrative for unity and closure governs motivation; (3) character - established stars always play the central ones, and (4) sequence - the events are rearranged into linear narrative form. Although fiction film employs elements of realism in the service of their story, the overall relation of film to the world is metaphorical. Fiction presents the likeness of actual events, motives, appearances, causality, and meaning. Fiction may well constitute an explanation or interpretation of great power, but the avenue back to the world is always by means of this detour through narrative form. There is a centrifugal pull on elements of authenticity away from their historical referent and towards their relevance to plot and story.  

The re-enactment of actual events in historical fiction film contains a proportion of imaginary content, in that the details of the historical events, the words spoken, the gestures, the exact chronology, the costumes, the internal mental state of the persons involved, in fact, all of the elements of the actual events which are not recorded in historical accounts, are furnished by the imagination of the author/s. The existing historical accounts are augmented by the imaginary fabrication of those details which seem most probable: the insignificant, the unknown and the unwritten. These elements of the narrative are arranged in a form that is considered to be appropriate for the perceived requirements of the narrative.

Clearly the Hollywood tradition gives priority to the narrative over historical authenticity. Nichols’ first and third points (in the above citation), are easily avoided in documentary, nevertheless there is no easy solution to the problems encountered in the second and fourth. Motivation in historical narrative is entirely constructed or deduced when the actual individual in question is unavailable to supply a rendition of their mental state at the time of the events. Similarly, information concerning the precise sequence of events is not always available when representations of history are used in documentary. Historical reenactment, when encountered within the documentary, is not necessarily interpreted as fictional, but rather, as a component of an account of actuality. The inevitable inclusion of imaginary content in documentary reconstruction is overshadowed by the context in which they are viewed and the genre or classification of the text in which they appear. These classificatory determinations are the most significant distinctions between actuality and fiction. Hence, documentary reconstruction could be said to be straying into the realm of fiction, but the appearance of the “fictional” reconstruction within a non-fictional text, which is classified as such, and therefore implies reference to actuality, overrides the presence of imaginary content. A film classified as non-fictional may contain fictional elements, as evidenced by the appearance of imaginary content, yet be apprehended as non-fictional. This distinction is, in fact, the only feasible delineation between fiction and non-fiction. It is the classification by which the text is described that implies a predetermined interpretation of the audio/visual text. Imaginary content in a non-fictional film does not alter the classification of the text, and representations of actual events in a fictional narrative do not counter its fictional classification. The classification, or genre of the audio/visual narrative indicates a particular relation between the text and actuality, and this, in turn, directs the reception of the text.

Actuality Emergent in Fiction

The majority of fictional films and television programs are less reliant on actuality for their content than historical-fictional narrative, and exhibit a far greater reliance on the imaginary construction of events, settings and characters. In examining the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, however, it is valuable to consider how arbitrary the dividing line between the two can become when closely scrutinized, even in the case of texts that have no overt reference to actuality, and that attempt to construct a purely imaginary diegesis.

How effective, then, is the delineation between actuality and the diegesis of fictional film which is apparently unrelated to the actual world, as is the case in the genres of science fiction, or fantasy? Obviously reference to actuality is minimized in these cases, but not entirely absent. Within even the most imaginary of fictional narratives there are references to the actual world. Animated fantasy characters such as Disney’s Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse employ the conventional discourse of their time, and reflect North American cultural conditions. In science fiction film and television texts, cultural traditions, reference to historical events, and the portrayal of future technologies have their basis in the actual world. The original *Star Trek* television series is a valuable example to consider. Although the narrative is set some three centuries in the future and is often located many light years away from earth, the cultural attitudes and technologies of the nineteen sixties are clearly visible to the contemporary viewer. The paternalistic bravado of Captain Kirk appears ludicrous in the light of cultural changes in the three decades since its production. The introductory statement “to go where no man has gone before” has been changed in *The Next Generation* series to “where no one has gone before”, highlighting the move away from gender discrimination in the intervening decades. The portrayal of computer technology in the original series prompts laughter from the contemporary audience, with its clumsy flashing lights and large knobs reflecting the technology of the sixties, just as in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* the sophisticated control panels reflect a more recent technology. Captain Kirk’s regular fist fights with aliens in the original series also demonstrate the intertextual influence, where the style of television programs in the sixties (a decade in which American television broadcasters relied heavily on the western genre, and the fist-fight was a common occurrence), has influenced the narrative supposedly set in the twenty fourth century. The violence portrayed in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is more reminiscent of the crime drama of the late eighties and early nineties, where the traditional fist fight of the western genre has become a rarity, and weapons have become the predominant expression of conflict.  

Fiction, even in its most imaginary forms, can be said to emerge to some extent from actuality, as is evident in the reflection of cultural values in character behavior, and in the locations, studio sets and costumes that denote the era of production. The actuality surrounding the production of the text flows into the text in a rhizomic connection. Roland Barthes in *S/Z* proposes five codes of narrative, among which is the referential (cultural), code. Lesage describes this code as entering “the text through explicit references to the established knowledge of the time, such as science,”

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4 It is worth noting that the direct physical violence apparent in the saloon-bar fist-fight of the western genre has re-emerged in the martial-arts films of Bruce Lee, and later, Jackie Chan.
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medicine, history, literature or the visual arts." She also states that "the artist may also refer to popular assumptions and common sense." Barthes has identified the way in which fictional narrative refers to the actual world and integrates it into text. Cultural reality provides the background for the diegetic world, influencing it through both explicit references and the intrinsic values and behavior demonstrated in the characters and settings. A film narrative emerges from the social conditions which are prevalent at the time of its production, and that exist within the culture from which it emerges. The actuality, which surrounds the conception and production of a film or television program, enters the text. The 'outside' of the film is apparent in the text itself. It is, however, in attitudes, behaviors, conventions and modes of discourse that this connection is most evident, as Lesage contends:

Once we understand how much a film utilizes information and assumptions formulated anterior to the film, it becomes irrevocably clear that what cinema captures is social truth and institutionalized knowledge, not unmediated reality.

Cultural values, technology, the whole body of knowledge, and the conventions and assumptions which exists within a society will inevitably be reflected in the content of the films which are produced within that society.

Fiction, although referring to actuality, utilizes the imaginary to create a diegesis which could be described as a response to, a comment on, or a product of the society in which the author/s exist. According to Branigan the viewer applies a unique strategy to fiction, in which both the internal reading of the narrative and the reference of that narrative to the actual world are understood according to a particular interpretive strategy:

An individual does not mistake a fiction for the real world: fiction is neither an "illusion" nor a "false belief." Rather, fiction seems to require that an individual connect text and real world in a special way, that is, through a different type of logic than is used with, say, a verifiable proposition, inductive statement, or axiom. Experiment, evidence and stipulation are not relevant to establishing the truths (or falsities) of fiction.

The interpretation of a fictional text is, according to Branigan, a different process to the interpretation of non-fictional texts. Branigan goes on to point out that fiction brings about an evaluation whereby viewers simultaneously establish and re-examine their opinions, attitudes and values regarding the actual world, continually adjusting their attitudinal position as new fictional narrative is synthesized. The diegesis becomes a testing ground for attitudes that are also at play in the actual life of the individual. Moving beyond Branigan, however, it is evident that the desires and beliefs that are the underlying basis of affect (as discussed in the previous chapter), and are applied in the interpretative response of the viewer, who reacts to the text as if engaged in a hypothetical world. These virtual encounters with the diegesis are then reflected in the actual attitudes and behaviors of the viewer. This is not to suggest that an audio/visual text always causes an imitation of fictional events in the

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5 Lesage, 1976, p.480.
6 ibid., p.492.
behavior of the viewer, but that there is a convergence of the diegetic and the actual in the viewer, who then becomes the means by which the text influences actuality.

Fiction and actuality are, therefore, connected by an interdependence which involves, firstly, the influence of actuality on the fictional narrative, and, secondly, the influence of the fictional narrative on actuality, an effect which is brought about by the transformation of the cultural construct of reality. In contrast, non-fiction acts referentially, providing the viewer with information, evidence, arguments or opinions which can provide knowledge of, or modify awareness of the actual. Branigan identifies the difference between the functions of fiction and non-fiction as being concerned with the development of attitudes concerning actuality: in the case of non-fiction as a forum for the exposition of an argument or ideological viewpoint, and in the case of fiction as a means of reviewing existing attitudes:

In nonfiction, our purpose is to accumulate evidence to confirm a thesis or topic whereas in fiction our purpose is to discover how the text refers to what we already know. In fiction there is always the possibility that a new referent or description which better fits the text and our presuppositions will be discovered, thus altering its application and truth value. Hence one of the values of fiction resides in its ability to explore the assumptions underlying our presuppositions and to suggest how they could be altered by us to fit, recognize, or create new situations in the world that we deem important.*

The fictional text serves as a hypothetical trial, as a developing ground for the cultural construct, and individual realities (as defined in chapter one). It is in the treatment of existing issues, and the adaptation of responses to the hypothetical situation that the text is reflected in actuality.

Fictional texts on occasions imitate the conventions of non-fiction in order to achieve a more convincing impression of reality in the diegesis. Much of the power of fictional texts lies in their ability to provide a feasible scenario, one which could be mistaken for an actual world (depending on the willingness or desire of the viewer to accept the reality of the diegetic world). The verisimilitude of the text enables the viewer to accept hypothetical allusion to a world which is partially imaginary, and yet which maintains partial reference to actuality. Branigan points out that non-fictional reference is a prerequisite for fictional reference:

A text emerges, then, from a historical situation that presupposes a social consensus about artifacts and biographical authors... Fiction arises out of non-fiction. The truth or falsity of fictional reference is, of course, another matter. The reason that fictional descriptions are "prior" to fictional descriptions in this way is that fictional descriptions do not yet refer, or refer only partially, and one must begin interpreting somewhere; that is, one must begin with at least a reference to the possibility of referring fictionally.*

Branigan tempers his assertion that in some cases "fictional descriptions do not yet refer" by modifying the claim to one in which fictional descriptions can "refer only partially". In every fictional description there is partial reference to the actual, even

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*ibid., p.196.
*ibid., p.88.
though it may be an indirect or incidental reference. The notion of "referring fictionally" as opposed to non-fictional reference, and the analysis of the distinction between fictional and non-fictional reference are central to this thesis. The analysis of the selected texts involves the revisiting of assumptions as to the nature of the distinctions between fictional and non-fictional modes of reference. The method of reference utilized in a fictional text is distinct from non-fictional reference, although it refers to the same actuality.

The distinction between these referential functions is not, however, clear in all circumstances. To take an example, the fictive description of an 'alien life form' in the science fiction genre, although not known to be an actual existent form, may refer to a cultural construction, firstly of other science fiction texts, then of the scientific debate as to the possibility of life on other planets, and perhaps to a myriad of claimed UFO sightings. Although the fictional reference does not point directly to any known actual object or being, it does utilize our knowledge of the actual world, where other science fiction films exist, where scientists scan the universe for signs of sentient life, and reported UFO sightings appear on the front page of newspapers and are also the subject of other ostensibly non-fictional texts. (The question of the validity of such texts is not relevant to this thesis). Without reference to actuality in some form, fictional texts could not refer in any meaningful way, as viewers would not have knowledge of any common referent. David Bordwell points out the role of the viewer in constructing the referential connection between fictional film and actuality:

In making referential meaning, the ordinary perceiver brings into play real-world assumptions about space, time, causality, identity, and so forth. She also makes use of vast bodies of "encyclopedic" knowledge (English cars put the steering wheel on the right end of the dashboard; when Casablanca was released, America was fighting on the side of the Allies). The film's diegesis cannot be wholly other than the world we know. It should thus come as no surprise that the critic must posit some text-world relations in the course of building an interpretation. 11

There is, however, a distinction between fictionally referring to actuality, as described by Branigan, and "making referential meaning" as described by Bordwell. One involves the reference to actual people, events, objects and locations from within the text, while the other utilizes "encyclopedic knowledge" and assumptions about the 'real-world' which occur during interpretation of the text, and involve a conjunction of social knowledge with textual data. In order to justify this distinction it becomes necessary to differentiate between actuality and the social consensus of knowledge concerning the actual world, that is, cultural construct of reality, as defined in chapter one. Given that any reference to the actual world utilizes the viewer's interpretation of the actual in order to identify a correlation between the reference and the referent, the distinction becomes more difficult to uphold. Reference to the actual involves specificity, whereas making referential meaning

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10 As an example, Erich VonDanken's Chariots of the Gods, 1969, incorporates actual archeological evidence and the hypothetical presence of alien life forms throughout history, yet is not considered to be a fictional text, regardless of its dubious content. The subject of extra-terrestrial life and fictional reference is examined further in chapter 8 in the analysis of Contact (1996).

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involves a more generalized knowledge of actuality, or a 'tracing' through which the actual is interpreted. For example, specific reference could be made to 'St. Paul's cathedral on the corner of Flinders Street and Swanston Street, Melbourne, Australia,' which would provide a location and identity to the building, whereas reference to 'a church' involves a general knowledge of buildings regardless of their location or appearance. The fact remains, however, that both references rely on knowledge of the actual in order to assign a meaning to the description. Every reference to the actual, be it image, sound, or written text, requires knowledge of, or a construction of the actual world in order for the reader, listener or viewer to attribute a referent to that reference. The cultural reality of the viewer must correspond to the system of reference in the text to some extent for the interpretive process to make referential meaning.

Fictional narrative cannot be entirely devoid of reference to actuality, although the extent to which actuality influences the narrative is variable. Fictional realism imitates actuality by creating a diegetic world which bears a strong resemblance to the actual world. On the other hand, fantasy, in utilizing the imaginary, attempts a divergence from actuality by minimizing the resemblance between the actual world and the diegetic world, but reference to actuality, regardless of its minimization, is an inevitable component of all texts. Actuality contributes universally to narrative, but in varying degrees.

The element of the imaginary, then, being a component of fictional narrative, cannot be considered to be separated from the actual. Simultaneously, however, the production of fictional audio/visual narratives utilizes cultural constructions of reality in the viewer in order to achieve verisimilitude. The audio/visual representation creates a perceptual illusion which resembles the actual world to a far greater extent than, say, a written text. The imaginary content of audio/visual texts although not always aspiring towards realism in a narrative sense, is by its very nature a realist medium, in that it aims to reproduce the visual appearance and sounds of the actual as sensory data. Christian Metz points out the importance of the perceptual illusion involved in the viewing act:

...A much clearer distinction is needed - even in terminology, where the word "real" is forever playing tricks on us - between the two different problems: on the one hand the impression of reality produced by the diegesis, the universe of fiction, what is represented by each art, and, on the other hand, the reality of the vehicle of the representation in each art. On the one hand there is the impression of reality; on the other the perception of reality, that is to say, the whole question of the degree of the reality contained in the material available to each of the representative arts. 13

According to Metz the cinema is a medium which reproduces the actual in its substance, but not necessarily in its form. Realism as a representational medium, that is, the realistic sensory data projected in the cinema or on television screens, differs from realism as a method of narrative. Metz's notion of the perception of reality, however, requires qualification. The audio/visual recording technology is capable of creating a persuasive diegesis, and yet the awareness of the imaginary content of the narrative is constantly underlined by the very act of sitting in a cinema and watching the screen, or sitting in the living room and watching the television screen. The

perception of reality created by these media involves the viewer in an unspoken agreement, a willingness to accept a hypothetical actual world, which is the diegesis.

The distinction between form and substance, and expression and content, as proposed by Hjelmslev, 13 is crucial in film and television in understanding the relations between actuality and the fictional text. The form of the narrative is, according to Chatman, divided into expression and content, the form of expression being the narrative discourse, and the form of the content being the narrative story components. 14 The substance of expression, however is the nature and capacity of the medium by which the narrative is expressed, and it is in this field that film and television images are particularly powerful in their ability to communicate events due to their ability to represent physical events in an imitation of perceptual data. The substance of content is the representation of people, objects and events. The audio/visual image bridges the boundary of actual and virtual, as the substance of expression is an actual, physical presence of the medium, whereas the substance of content is a representation that is perceptually received as a virtual image of actuality.

The viewer's awareness of the distinction between the medium and the actual in audio/visual narrative is more noticeable due to the similarities created by the perceptual illusions of the cinematic image. The viewer's engagement in a virtual image which resembles the actual is all the more confronting when expectations are defied, in that the expectation of actual experience which is generated by the illusion of actuality is more notably absent when the illusion is at its strongest. The reader of a novel does not react to direct physical stimuli, but to written representations, which must be decoded to a greater extent than the actual light and sound sources of audio/visual narrative. The film or television viewer, however, is engaged in a more direct connection with perceptual sensory data. Metz goes on to identify the unique relations between the imaginary and the perception of reality that cinema combines:

The unique position of the cinema lies in this dual character of its signifier: unaccustomed perceptual wealth, but unusually profoundly stamped with unreality, from its very beginning. More than the other arts ... the cinema involves us in the imaginary: it drums up all perception, but to switch it immediately over into its own absence, which is nonetheless the only signifier present. 15

The stronger perceptual resemblance creates a greater awareness of absence, particularly when the senses may be temporarily persuaded of the actual presence of objects or events, such as an involuntary protective action when perceptually threatened by the rapid movement of an object on the screen, or the disorientation of the viewer when spatial coordination is confused by camera movement, such as a camera shot which depicts a banking airplane or a car flying through the air in a chase scene. This brings to mind an experience of cinema while viewing the car chase scene in Bullitt (1968) in which the camera depicts the view from the front of the vehicle as it careers across the steep hills of the San Francisco streets, on occasions leaving the ground and crashing back onto the road. During this scene I happened to glance along the row of viewers, and observed that as the car in the

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13 Hjelmslev, 1969.
image crested a hill and began its descent, the whole row, almost without exception, swayed back in their seats in response to the visual data they were experiencing. Some of the viewers, becoming aware of this reaction then turned to each other and laughed at their response to the visual image. Such physical reactions demand that the viewer is regularly being reminded of the fact that they are not within the ‘reality’ of the narrative, but seated on a chair and viewing a visual image. The presence of the imaginary is highlighted by the illusion of actuality, most notable in the absence of the physical actuality of the depicted objects, which is emphasized by the perceptual veracity of the medium. The term ‘imaginary’ in film and television texts does not exclude the actual, but, rather, concerns the distinction between actual and virtual. The imaginary film image uses the perception of actuality (substance of expression), in order to escape actuality, in that the elements of actuality are represented in such a way as to create an illusion of the perception of actual existents, with the intention of creating a virtual diegetic world (substance of content).

The boundary between the actual and the virtual is obscured by the imaginary content in fictional narrative. Fictional narrative brings about comparisons with the existing expectations of culture, and must extend, expand or respond to the existing aggregation of texts which have previously influenced the cultural construction of reality. The imaginary does not operate outside the constraints of cultural convention. It is limited and directed by the procedural convention by which culture constructs reality, and imitates the conventions by which other narratives operate.

Deleuze questions the use of the term ‘imaginary,’ and describes as an indiscernible relation between terms, and as a form of falsity which obfuscates truth:

There’s actually a real philosophical problem here: is “the imaginary” a good concept? We might begin with the terms real and unreal, defining them the way Bergson does: reality as connection according to laws, the ongoing linkage of actualities, and unreality as what appears suddenly and discontinuously to consciousness, a virtuality in the process of becoming actualised. Then there’s another pair of terms, true and false. The real and the unreal are always distinct, but the distinction isn’t always discernible: you get falsity when the distinction between real and unreal becomes indiscernible. But then, when there’s falsity, truth itself becomes undecidable. Falsity isn’t a mistake or confusion, but a power that makes truth undecidable. The imaginary is a very complicated notion because it marks the intersection of these two pairs of terms. The imaginary isn’t the unreal; it’s the indiscernibility of real and unreal. The two terms don’t become interchangeable, they remain distinct, but the distinction between them keeps changing round. 16

The imaginary in fictional film and television permeates the boundary between actual and virtual, challenging our perceptions by making the imaginary appear actual. The viewer, however, cannot easily identify the distinction between actuality and fiction, despite the variable extent to which references to actuality are contained in the representation. The identification of this distinction is the deciding factor in the viewer’s understanding and interpretation of the text as fictional or non-fictional.

The theories of Deleuze and Guattari concerning the connections which exist between the actual and the text, between the humanity and nature, and of

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deterritorialization, become all the more relevant when the relations between the actual and the fictional are closely examined. In the act of distinguishing fiction from nonfiction the boundaries between the real and the unreal, and the actual and the virtual, are disassembled. Fictional narrative cannot exist in isolation from the actual world, and relies largely on the actual for its form and content. Actuality is inseparable from the contents of fictional narrative.

2.2 Non-fictional Narrative and Actuality

Having explicated the relations between fictional narrative and actuality, it is now necessary to examine the genre of non-fictional narrative. The assumptions concerning fictional narrative as being imaginary, and distinct from actuality, are inverted when the presuppositions concerning non-fictional narrative are considered. Just as fiction is considered to be imaginary, non-fiction is considered to be detached from the imaginary. A correlation between the image and the actual is assumed to be a prerequisite of non-fictional narrative, indeed, some may go so far as to question the use of the word ‘narrative’ as an appropriate terminology for non-fictional film and television, as it is often associated with fictional texts. Rimmon-Kenan, however, points out the similarities between fictional and non-fictional narrative, stating that:

It is arguable that history books, news reports, autobiography are in some sense no less fictional than what is conventionally classified as such. In fact, some of the procedures used in the analysis of fiction may be applied to texts conventionally defined as ‘non-fiction’.  

Fiction and non-fiction have in common the fact that they are both narrative forms. Non-fictional narrative exhibits many of the same the features as fictional narrative, whether defined as expression and content, ¹⁸ story and discourse, ¹⁹ or Fabula and Syuzhet. ²⁰ the relations between the text and the events which are apprehended by the viewer, whether fictional or non-fictional, are similar.

Non-Fictional Texts as Narrative

Narrative should not be conflated with fiction, as all narrative is not fictional. It is certainly true that all fiction takes the form of narrative, but there are many examples of narratives which are not defined as fictional. Branigan identifies narrative as:

...One powerful framework that poses the connection of objects in time. It allows us to make cause and effect pairs, to connect pairs with other pairs, to construct a

¹⁷ Rimmon-Kenan, 1983, p.3.
¹⁸ Hjelmslev, op. cit.
²⁰ Tomashevsky, 1965

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A linked set of events. One of the purposes of narrative is to demonstrate how certain effects that are desired may be achieved, how desire is linked to possibilities for being, how events may proceed. In this way, narrative acts to draw the future into the present. 21

Fiction, as has been defined in the previous section, consists of the construction of a narrative from both actual and imaginary elements, which are derived (to a lesser or greater extent), from the actual world. Non-fictional texts, as conventionally conceived, provide a narrative that is an account of actual events. In this section I will examine the extent to which these accounts of actuality are constructed, and derived from fictional means of narrativization.

The variable factor between fictional and non-fictional narrative is the perception of a correlation with actual events, rather than the reference to actuality, which is also a component of the fictional text. The actual world is an influence on author, reader and text. This is, of course, true of all narrative, fictional and non-fictional. Non-fictional narrative can be constructed with the intention of convincing an audience of the reality of the text, as is the case with fictional realism, or, alternatively, as a text where the veracity of the content is secondary to the aesthetic value of the content, as entertainment, as story. Chatman divides narrative into two components: story and discourse, in which the discourse consists of narrative structure (form of expression), and manifestation (substance of expression, the physical being of media or performance employed in the presentation of the narrative). The story consists of events and existents (form of content), and the substance of content is defined as the "people, things, etc. as pre-processed by the author's cultural codes". 22 It is the relation between the substance of content and the form of content that is central to the accepted distinction between fiction and non-fiction. A strong correlation is interpreted as realism, or 'reality', whereas minimal or figurative relations between substance of content, and form of content constitute fantasy, or symbolic functions of the narrative. This strength of this relation is nominated in the notion of verisimilitude.

Non-Fictional Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude involves the evaluation of the comparison between the world of the text and the (perceived) actual world. The text is interpreted according to the cultural cartography and individual interpretive strategies of the viewer and then the illusion of a correlation between the text and the actual world occurs. This correlation is an illusion because the correlation that occurs is that of the text with the cultural construct of reality (as defined in the previous chapter), rather than the text with the actual. The cultural construct of reality is perceived by the viewer to be actuality itself, and therefore any correlation of the text with the cultural construct of reality is displaced by the viewer onto their perception of the actual, and received as an indication of the 'reality' of the text. In support of this notion Deleuze and Guattari claim that the substance of content and the form of content are not clearly discernible, stating that "there is no real distinction between form and substance, only

a mental or modal distinction". In the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, then, there is an illusion of actuality that occurs when the viewer conflates actuality with the cultural construct of reality, but is generally unaware of this conflation.

Texts do not completely correspond to actuality, nor are they capable of doing so, despite the fact that the two-dimensional cinema screen provides a persuasive resemblance. What is perceived by the viewer to be a resemblance of the text actuality is, in fact, conformity to conventions of narrative form (genre), by which the viewer is accustomed to constructing a reality. If the text can be easily reconciled with existing codification systems and interpretive strategies it is considered to be a 'realistic' representation, or if it is perceived to be too simple, artificial or contrived (an over conventional application of codification systems), then the text appears to be superficial, and is then adjudged to be a poor representation of the actual. If, however, the text does not conform to existing conventions of narrativization, it will be received as nonsensical, abstract or experimental, not adjudged by its correlation with the actual, but by its conformity to the conventions of genre. The evaluation of the non-fictional text is one in which viewers compare the narrative with their understanding of the customary methods by which narrative represents actuality.

The resemblance between the text and the actual world is assumed, as various cues of narrative construction, and the context of projection or broadcast, inform the viewer that they are watching 'news' or 'documentary' rather than fiction. Therefore, the assumption that the subject matter of the narrative comes from the actual world is established by the information gathered prior to, and during the opening titles of the text. The correlation, therefore, is not between the text and actuality, but between the text and the existing conventions of narrative, where the way in which narrative is described and constructed provides the viewer with cues that suggest that the narrative is non-fictional. This notion is reminiscent of Deleuze-Guattarian 'tracing' as discussed in the previous chapter, in which the codes of representation determine interpretation. The delineation between genres is an overcoding of actuality, by which the relations between the representation and actuality are constructed to conform to cultural codes. This hypothesis is explored further in chapters 5 and 6 when the influence of documentary conventions on viewer interpretation will be analyzed.

Cultural Coding, Hybrid Forms and the Presuppositions of Viewers

Non-fiction filmmakers rely on establishing the confidence of their viewers that the images and sounds are not manipulated in such a way as to give an impression of actuality that could be considered misleading, or false. The genres of news and documentary bear with them the presumption that the representation correlates with the actual world to a greater extent than fictional representations. The non-fictional text, according to cultural codes of representation, refers evidentially, pointing to the actual world. The assumption by viewers that referential non-fiction delivers an accurate and 'believable' message has been established through many years of viewing non-fictional film and television texts as a source of information concerning actuality. Its ongoing acceptance in this capacity has brought about the development of a culture of accountability, where society has enforced a regime of government

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23 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.44.
regulation by forbidding the distribution and broadcast of blatantly inaccurate material. 44

The assumption that "factual material" can be presented "accurately" presupposes a correlation between the image and actuality. There is an implicit evaluative judgment in any decision regarding the 'accuracy' of a visual representation of actual events. Non-fictional texts employ a measure of narrativization in their representational form, and, as such, provide an interpretation of 'factual' material. Actuality is interpreted and re-presented as narrative. Narrative structure, according to Nichols, is not limited to fictional forms, but provides the framework for non-fictional forms of television:

Story telling is television's forte. In addition to drama with its obviously fictional form, news, talk shows, game shows, quiz shows, nature shows, sportscasts, and the recent phenomena of "reality TV" all erect narrative frames around the situations and events they relay to us. Any firm sense of boundary which shows attempt to uphold between fact and fiction, narrative and exposition, story telling and reporting inevitably blurs. Everyone and everything can be ripped from its historical ground and contanined within this televisual scaffolding. 45

Narrative, then, cannot be divided into clearly delineated categories of fiction and nonfiction, but is a "scaffolding" which can accommodate both fictional and non-fictional forms. Divisions and boundaries between types of narrative have become increasingly permeable, allowing for new "hybridized" combinations of genre conventions that have not been previously encountered. Recourse to documentary camera styles and imitations of news footage have become commonplace within the realm of fiction, just as fictional strategies are being included in documentary by way of reconstruction, or personal accounts of non-factual material.

There is a move towards a greater flexibility in combining genres, which have in the past remained distinct, although this phenomenon is not entirely confined to recent times. Jim McBride with David Holzman's Diary (1968) attempted to confound audiences by presenting a documentary format with fictional content. Here the boundary between fiction and nonfiction was challenged, but the convergence of genre manifested as a question of interpretative expectation, as the dramatically enacted events appeared to make direct reference to actual events. Uncertainty arose

44 In Australia this accountability takes the form of both private and public institutions. The commercial broadcasting institutions, under the auspices of The Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations, and the governmental institution of The Australian Broadcasting Authority. They presume an empirical measure of correlation between actuality and the text, stating that: "In broadcasting news and current affairs programs, licensees must present factual material accurately and represent viewpoints fairly, having regard to the circumstances at the time of preparing and broadcasting the program." The regulatory bodies that control the media in Australia exist in order to ensure that the confidence of the audience in the veracity of the content will be maintained. They are assisted by programs such as the Australian Broadcasting Commission's Media Watch, a television program which promptly identifies and censures breaches of journalistic integrity, and reveals incidents which involve manipulation of actual events by journalists, or bias in representation of events. The above citation is from the Australian Broadcasting Authority website, Program content responsibilities: commercial television code of practice. Section 4: News and Current Affairs Programs, Section 4.3.1. http://wwwABA.gov.au/what/program/codes/facts_code4.htm as at May 2000.

45 Nichols, 1994, p.43.
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from the use of camera techniques usually associated with documentary film, and a method of narration that imitated autobiographical film. The closing titles established the existence of actors, but did not clarify to what extent the events portrayed in the film were biographical, enacted, or actual. When considering this film, and the problem of its classification according to genre, it is the entire text which provides a challenge to systems of classification, with the expectations associated with production techniques and modes of address coming into conflict with the 'reality' or fictional nature of the content. The film attempts to confound the viewer by rendering the evidential value of the content uncertain, and provoking an awareness of the interpretative strategies that are associated with particular conventions of production.

*Cathy Come Home* (1966) is a realist television play that also uses documentary filming techniques in order to give the audience the impression of actuality. The main character (Cathy) is modeled on research into homeless families in London. Her experiences within the narrative were a compilation of actual events that were combined to create a composite character. The character is representative, rather than actual, but modeled on actuality. Corner addresses this blend of actuality and dramatic enactment, identifying the sources of its documentary content:

In discussing the documentary aspects of the film, I am here concerned only with the way in which it appears on the screen as images and sounds. There is another aspect of its documentarism, the extent to which the script was based on research of actual cases of homelessness over a period of time. This provides a 'basis' in actuality for what is depicted, but a number of realist-inclined novels, plays and films could claim a similar grounding. The effect of documentary truth, so central to the impact of *Cathy* upon public consciousness and to the film's controversial nature, is largely a matter of its looks and sounds. 24

The boundary between fiction and nonfiction is challenged, but at no time does the program abandon the semblance of fictional realism and present claims of documentary reference. Both of these examples maintain a mode of representation consistently throughout their duration. There is no overt attempt to depart from the realm of realism and enter the referential function of documentary 'truth', but rather, the aim appears to be an illusion of actuality, employing the audio/visual conventions of documentary genres.

More recent challenges to conventional boundaries take the form of sudden leaps between fictional and documentary modes of representation within texts. Such stratagems dispute the traditional boundaries by questioning the relationship between portions of the text rather than challenging the classification of the text as a whole. Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1992), while claiming some referential content within the script, operates largely within the parameters of fictional narrative, yet includes portions of actual footage of the Kennedy assassination. Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1994), concludes with images of the actual holocaust survivors filing past Oscar Schindler's grave. The fictional narrative, although based on the stories of holocaust survivors, does not appear to lay claim to referentiality until this final scene appears. *Forrest Gump* (1994) flirts playfully with actual footage, manipulating and altering its content. (These examples will be examined in greater depth in ensuing chapters 7, 8 and 9). Each of these films treats actuality footage in a unique manner, and raises

24 Corner, 1996, pp.96-97.
questions as to the status of actuality within their narrative structure. Although these films could not be said to challenge the boundary between fiction and nonfiction in terms of their overall classification, segments of actual footage within the fictional narrative demonstrate the variety of relationships that can be observed between actuality and fiction within a single text. No longer is the question of the classification of an entire film paramount in defining theoretical boundaries. Hence the question can be asked of these films; what portions of the film are functioning as fiction, and what portions are non-fictional?

Whereas past excursions into actuality within fictional film have been scarce, such breaches of convention are becoming more commonplace. There is a corresponding tendency within the world of non-fictional film and television to utilize the strategies of fictional film when depicting actual events. The Thin Blue Line (1987), a television documentary by Errol Morris, includes multiple reenactments of a crime, each constructed from the point of view of a particular witness. These dramatic reconstructions question the ability of documentary film to maintain referential accuracy when depicting historical events, and also the validity of interview as a means of presenting supposedly factual evidence to an audience. By re-creating the verbal accounts of witnesses, Morris underlines the subjective nature of interview material, which is presented as merely one point of view amongst many possible views. The ‘truth’ becomes an elusive and inaccessible element that must be extricated from an accumulation of opinions, lies and presumptions. This reflexive approach to documentary highlights the inability to refer to a ‘truth’ when the filmmaker cannot identify a singular truth amongst multiple accounts of an event. Dramatized reenactments, complete with stylized slow motion footage and film noir lighting effects in The Thin Blue Line challenge its definition as documentary, as the program alternates between the conventions of documentary and fictional genre and provides uncertain references to multiple versions of events.

Michael Moore in his documentary film, Roger and Me (1989) alters the chronology of events in order to maximize the impact of the film on the audience, at the expense of historical accuracy. Moore’s justification of this strategy was to claim that the film presented an account of the decline of an industrial complex over a number of years, and that the rhetorical content took priority over accurate historical description. Moore utilized the strategy of historical-fictional film by shaping the chronology of events in such a way as to be of greatest benefit to the narrative rather than preserving historical accuracy. His decision to give the message priority over accuracy brought about a debate over the expectations of referentiality in documentary. The conventions of documentary had been challenged by a successful attempt to reach a larger audience through creating a narrative that gave entertainment pride of place over the accurate chronological rendering of events.

Convergence of Form and Genre

It is not only the boundaries between genre which are obfuscated by the postmodern collage of existing texts, but also theories which attempt to account for evidentiality in documentary, and verisimilitude in fiction. In the cases I have mentioned above, fictional film ceases to appear as diegesis, and becomes

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17 ibid., pp. 165-168.
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momentarily indistinguishable from documentary representations of actuality. The fictional representation moves beyond verisimilitude, becoming more than an approximation or imitation of actuality, but contains images of actuality united with a diegetic world. On the other hand, documentary lays no claim to veracity in all its component parts, as reconstruction is dramatically enacted for the camera and treated with the artistic flair of fictional film. Evidential value is not relinquished, but in an attempt to examine the validity of conventional documentary methods of representation the need for every moment of a documentary to function referentially is abandoned. Hence fact and fiction are combined in a heterogeneity which defies convention and calls for new applications of existing theory.

The non-fictional genres of news and documentary exhibit a convergence of narrative and actuality, combining actuality footage with the processes of narrativization that configure the text. The construction of a ‘story’ is essential to the non-fictional film, just as it is to the fictional film. Silverstone defines the coexistence of the representation of actuality and narrative within the text as ‘story and argument’:

I have suggested, particularly in my work on documentary that the mythic, that is, the strain toward a narrative of systemic logic and heroic chronologic, is ever present, but that there is an equally persistent struggle within the narrative framing between myth and mimesis ... Story and argument are, though by no simple and linear route, the expression of myth and mimesis in the particular individual program. In following a story or an argument (often both at once), the viewer is being guided along paths that draw on and draw in, the mythic and the mimetic. There is a constant tension between the two that each television program must at least make some effort to resolve. 26

Non-fictional narrative, then, consists of the duality of story and argument, that is constantly and concurrently present in the text. Actuality is modeled into story, but this narrativization is tempered by the requirement for argument and evidentiality in non-fictional texts. This double articulation of argument and story occurs in both fictional and non-fictional texts, as the fictional text is equally able to provide an argument or statement concerning actuality, as is the non-fictional text. Indeed, Silverstone’s notion of ‘story’ corresponds closely to Hjelmslev’s ‘form’, and ‘argument’ bears comparison with Hjelmslevian ‘substance’. The relations of fiction to non-fiction are rhizomic (as discussed in the previous chapter), where offshoots from each genre can reappear in the other, appropriating styles, conventions and content that are external to the conventional boundaries of their genre. The examples of such boundary ruptures mentioned above, and the analyses in the last three chapters of the thesis, support the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of rhizome as a valid model for the functions of, not only texts, but also genres.

Non-fictional texts, then, are not easily distinguishable from fictional narratives by means of their reference to actuality, but can employ referential strategies similar to those of fictional narrative. The difference between the two lies in the (Hjelmslevian) form of expression, revealed in the conventions of the genre. Nichols identifies the similarities and contrasts between fictional and documentary narratives, stating that:

26 Silverstone, 1988, p.34.
Documentaries direct us toward the world but they also remain texts. Hence they share all of the attendant implications of fiction’s constructed, formal, ideologically inflected status. Documentary differs, though, in asking us to consider it as a representation of the historical world, rather than a likeness or imitation of it. 28

The difference between fiction and non-fiction is in the way in which non-fiction ‘asks us to consider it a representation,’ rather than a likeness. The classification of the text, and the conventions of the documentary genre, bear with them expectations that effect the interpretive strategies applied by the viewer. Nonfiction, although sharing many of the formal characteristics of fiction, insinuates a confluence of the substance of the content and expression, bridging the gap between the cultural construct of reality and actuality. The substance of expression, that is, the image and sound, demand equivalence with the substance of content, that is, the perceived actuality. It is the distinction between actuality and the cultural construct of reality that reveals the erroneous claims of the non-fictional genre.

If, on the other hand, the model of rhizome is applied to the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, there is the possibility of partial blending between genres, and of the conjunction of actuality with representation. It is the absolutist position of complete correlation between the text and the actual that disallows the possibility of a partial correlation, in which the non-fictional representation does indicate some aspects of the actual world, although never a complete correspondence. A coexistence of fiction and non-fiction, actual and representation, enables a convergence of form and substance that unites the text with the ‘outside world’ that it represents. The conventional distinctions that have been nominated between nonfiction and fiction are the result of a bifurcation of dualistic forms of expression, and can be ex-nominated. It is the cultural codes that nominate and maintain such distinctions between narratives, imposing a regime of predetermined interpretive strategies that are implied by the conventions of genre.

2.3 Narratives as Mythic Accounts of Actuality

In the previous chapter I have defined actuality as the physical existence of objects and events, individual reality as an arrangement of desire and belief with the actual and the social, and the cultural construct of reality as a nexus of the individual with the collective, and of the assumptions that affect interpretive strategies. In this section, the functions and conditions of operation of representation as myth are analyzed, with particular attention to the processes of acculturation that consolidate the interpretive strategies of cultural groupings. Although political and ideological influences play a significant part in determining interpretive strategies, it is the inheritance of narratives and narrative forms, particularly the myths of a culture,

which are collectively utilized in effecting the cultural construct of reality. The complex relations between the individual and the collective are once again encountered in this discussion, as the two conjoin in the acculturation of the individual.

Myths and Culture

The cultural construct of reality is formed predominantly by collective assemblages of enunciation, which, although held in common within a community, are not necessarily indicative of consensus. Rather, physical proximity and social interaction bring about a convergence of individual realities. Historically, cultures were defined by affiliation and alliance, non-geographic societal boundaries that limited flows between cultural groups, and, later, by powers and authorities of state and kingdom which created geographical territorial boundaries. Deleuze and Guattari posit the development of 'The Primitive Territorial Machine' and point out that it was the emergence of the state apparatus that introduced territorialism through geographic delineation: “only the apparatus of the state will be territorial in this sense because, following Engel's formula, it 'subdivides not the people but the territory,' and substitutes a geographic organization for the organization of the gens". Levi-Strauss observes that borders between societies are not an impervious barrier, but permit the passage of flows between cultures:

Communication does not cease at society's borders. These borders, rather, constitute thresholds where the rate and forms of communication, without waning altogether, reach a much lower level. This condition is usually meaningful enough for the population, both inside and outside the borders, to become aware of it. This awareness is not, however, a prerequisite for the definition of a given society. It only accompanies the more precise and stable forms.

Consensus was not the unifying element which created primal cultural unity, but, rather, the molecular flows and connections which were brought about by alliances and affiliations, economic contacts and geographical proximity. The everyday transmission of enunciation and customs such as rituals, objects, stories, images and songs caused a community to share in a collective consciousness, a convergence of individuals that was enabled by a collection of myths.

These myths determined the ways in which the community conceived of actuality, and affected individual reality. The actual was overcoded by an interpretive strategy that acted not only to unify the community, but also to impose a particular understanding of the relations between the individual, the culture and the actual. The actual, when accounted for in myth, is determined by the customs and conventions of a culture. Barthes, when defining myth, points out the relevance of its social function:

Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth, there are no substantial ones.

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Everything, then, can be a myth? Yes, I believe this, for the universe is infinitely fertile in suggestions. 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. A tree is a tree. Yes, of course. But a tree as expressed by Minou Drolet 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.  

Myths produce a particular standpoint on actuality (which equates to Barthes' "social usage which is added to pure matter"), that is defined by cultural depiction of the actual, or, in other words, a strategy for the interpretation of events, actions and matter, and for the application of culturally determined understandings to those physical occurrences and objects.

A myth purports to account for prior (historical) actuality in the form of a current cultural construct of reality, to inscribe the events, actions and occurrences which have influenced the development of communities as a totalizing understanding of the world. It is important to recognize that the functions of myths mentioned thus far are not only those of indigenous cultures that have not encountered the stratified complexities of globalized culture, but is equally applicable to contemporary mythologies. The difficulty in identifying the functions of myth in the present day lie in the transparency of the mythic. The myths of a culture are, at any given time, not overtly classified as myths, but are commensurate with the cultural construct of reality, and are, therefore, transparent within that culture. The formation of cultural interpretive strategies is affected by the content of myths, which are, according to Barthes, accredited by a culture with becoming a substitute for the actuality that they describe:

What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality... A conjuring trick has taken place; it has turned reality inside out, it has emptied it of history and has filled it with nature, it has removed from things their human meaning so as to make them signify a human insignificance. The function of myth is to empty reality: it is, literally, a ceaseless flowing out, a hemorrhage, or perhaps an evaporation, in short a perceptible absence.  

The cultural construct of reality does not appear to manifest itself within its own community, but itself usurps the designation of actuality, by substituting itself for the actual world. It encompasses the naturalization of histories, and communal strategies for constructing accounts of the actual. As a cultural consensus of representation of the actual, myth is preserved from any comparison or evaluation, and becomes a preclusive prescription of accounting for actuality within a culture. This is not to say that cultural reality is necessarily a unified view, but that the myths within a culture provide a collection of available accounts, a lexicon of approaches to the interpretation of the actual and its construction as a cultural reality.

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33 ibid., pp.142-143.
Myth as a Tracing

The cultural construct of reality functions as a mediation between the actual and the individual, serving as an intermediary that suggests templates for construction of the reality as it is integrated into the individual. The notion of ‘tracing’ as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, adequately describes the operations of myth as cultural construct, accounting for the way in which myth continually reproduces its form and imposes antecedent interpretive strategies on contemporaneous discourse. The ‘tracing’ is essentially a reproduction of what already exists, as opposed to the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of a map, a distinction that lies in the fact that the map “is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. It fosters connections between fields”. The map, then, is rhizomic, and the tracing arborial. The individual is not disunited from the actual, but is engaged in conjunctions with actuality, and with the socio-cultural milieu. The connections with the socio-cultural are, however customarily after the order of tracings, in which the cultural construct reproduces itself. Perception of actuality and social interaction result in the application of cultural constructs and conceptions (including myth), modified in order to allow for the conditions of current conjunctions (experience), of the individual with the actual or the social. The cultural construct frames interpolation, providing a template by which the individual overcodes the actual, and consents to the precedents set by the culture. The cultural construct of reality develops as a characteristic of the individual concurrently with an expanding awareness of the culture and its expectations, traditions, rules and conventions, which are partly conveyed by myths in the form of narratives. Cultural reality consists of homogeneity, whereas heterogeneity indicates individual reality.

This view of culture as a delimitation of interpretive strategy contrasts with the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss, which involves an attempt to apply mythic structure to the structure of the human mind, inferring a unity of cultural and individual, and, indeed, a unitary view of all human language and thought. Levi-Strauss recognizes the connection between individual reality, cultural reality and actuality. He demonstrates a structure in which culture, in its relations to nature and humanity, operates according to a singular organizing principle revealed in mythic texts. His attempt to unify the function of myth as both cultural construct and individual cognitive structure, even going so far as to locate the structure of myth in the unconscious, is an erroneous explanation of the structure of human cognitive processes:

We shall be in a position to understand basic similarities between forms of social life, such as language, art, law, and religion, that on the surface seem to differ greatly. At the same time, we shall have the hope of overcoming the opposition between the collective nature of culture and its manifestations in the individual, since the so-called “collective consciousness” would, in the final analysis, be no more than the expression, on the level of individual thought and behavior, of certain time and space modalities of the universal laws which make up the unconscious activity of the mind.

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35 ibid., p.12.
The application of a unified theory to the individual, the unconscious, a culture and its myths disallows heterogeneity, and attempts a synthesis of divergent elements. A positivist and totalizing theoretical approach is thereby applied to myth, and the resulting conclusions are skewed towards a unified theory of myth and language as indicative of the structure of the unconscious. Rather than unify the collective and the individual under the auspices of mythic structures that are to be found within the individual mind, myth is identifiable with the molar realm of representations that impose a unitary overcoding. Myth limits the possibilities of interpreting actuality, and applies a tracing that reproduces cultural strategies of interpretation. Levi-Strauss observes the process of ‘tracing’ in myth, and mistakenly attributes it to the structure of the unconscious. Similarity, collective consciousness and homogeneity are reinforced by myths that provide common structures for the narrativization of actuality, but not structures of the individual unconscious.

Roger Silverstone puts forward a model of television narrative where myth is opposed to mimesis. He describes the Levi-Straussian view of myth as:

... A method that seeks the logic of culture, especially the culture of the other, in an effort to make sense of the practical activities in which human beings engage, above all in the construction of their myths; activities which have as their ambition the creation of order, an intellectual, cognitive order principally, an order that has as its focus the always problematic relations between man and nature.  

Myth, here described as “the logic of culture”, is the overt disclosure of the cultural construct, and is portrayed by Silverstone as a form of mediation between humanity and actuality. Silverstone applies a Levi-Straussian approach to myth in television narrative, positing the mythic function of television as a means of a culture defining its relations with actuality. He distinguishes between myth and mimesis as two opposing, but integral functions of the television narrative: myth as fictional narrativization, and mimesis as a non-narrative representation of the actual.

Silverstone applies the mythic analysis of Levi-Strauss to the operations of culture as a unitary collective. He notes that Levi-Strauss sees the role of myth within a culture as integral in establishing a unified collective identity:

...Myths, despite their manifest implausibilities, are coherent and logical and represent, above all, a culture thinking about itself. They are the product of society as ruminator, masticating the essential categories and contradictions in its way of life through a system of stories that preserve and legitimate its identity. Levi-Strauss’s work forces cultural analysis deep into the texts themselves, in a search for an organizing mechanism, and at the same time away from the texts, in search of a model of the relationship between the myths and the society that produces and receives them.  

The role of myth as formative of collective identity serves to socialize individual realities. Myth produces commonality amongst individuals within a culture, but this

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37 Silverstone, op. cit., p.28.
38 ibid., p.29.
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Commonality functions as a means of overcoding difference, of producing a unifying principle that incorporates groups of diverse individuals.

Myth enforces a site of consensus that is affirmed by the dominant factions of a society, and engages in the process of transforming the site of agreement into a naturalized convention. Adams, in his analysis of fairy tales, recognizes the cultural values that are expressed in even the most naturalized of myths.

What I have shown is that, in the case of fairy tales, this process of naturalization is directed by the story and in fact it is a 'conspiratorial' goal of the text to direct the reader to 'natural' ways of thinking about their problems. The important point is, of course, that these ways of thinking and being proposed by the text are not natural at all but social and accepted and thus 'necessary'.

The development of a collection of myths indicates the institution of a particular cultural reality. The mythic narratives which are adopted and are circulated within a culture indicate the ways in which that culture accounts for and describes the actual, particularly in the events and occurrences that may confront the culture with contradictions that require explanation. How do 'we' explain this occurrence? What meanings does our culture apply to this situation? The myths of a culture play a significant part in tracing the common interpretive strategy which a culture imposes on its members.

Audio/Visual Text as Contemporary Myth

Having established that myth functions as a cultural tracing, and as a predetermined interpretive strategy that operates in the connections between the individual, the culture and the actual world, it remains to establish the position of film and television texts in relation to culture and myth. Traditional myths originally consisted of oral narratives, and, with the expansion of literacy, developed into written stories. Film and television have appropriated traditional mythical stories, and translated them into audio/visual narratives, returning, as Fiske suggests, from the literary form to one that is more reminiscent of oral culture. The mythic function of film and television is not limited to the retelling of traditional myths, but also involves the creation of myths from contemporary events. Television texts utilize the mythic function by providing stories about the actual world (particularly in news and current affairs programs), and by representing the views of a culture, and its interpretations of actuality in fictional narrative. Not only does television participate in the 'myth-making' process, but also in establishing its credentials as an accepted medium for myth, as a feasible alternative to written narrative. Silverstone points out the way in which television seeks to 'break in' to the culturally revered domain of folklore:

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39 Adams, 1986, p.103. Adams also cites Eco on this subject; “Within the framework of a theory of codes it is unnecessary to the notion of extension, nor to that of possible worlds; the codes, insofar as they are accepted by a society, set up a cultural world which is neither actual nor possible in the ontological sense; its existence is linked to a cultural order, which is the way in which a society thinks ...” Adams 1986, p.31. Citation from Eco, 1977, p.61. (The notion of extension refers to the conditions of truth of a proposition, as opposed to intentional, being the conditions of signification).
40 Fiske, 1987, pp.77-80, 105-107.
Television's narratives, however, closely locked, above all in their mythic structure, to the folklore of the contemporary world, nevertheless embody only claims for membership to that world, not membership itself. And it is in the persistence and character of these claims: for attention, for legitimation, for an audience, that television displays itself as rhetoric. 41

The rhetoric in this case is directed at cultural attitudes that grant literature a preferred place in the cultural traditions of folklore. Television, however, provides a medium that differs from written language, just as written language contrasts with enunciation. The self-promotion of television as a viable communicator of myth, although undoubtedly classifiable as rhetoric, originates both from economic forces, and the aim of television broadcasting institutions to achieve cultural dominance, once again, for economic reasons. Television myth is commodified and subsumed by the capitalist ethic, being distributed according to the laws of supply and demand. The nature of the medium demands that the distribution of television texts is controlled by wealthy institutions, which are evidence of Barthes' claim that "bourgeois ideology continuously transforms the products of history into essential types". 42

To limit audio/visual myth to a historical or traditional function is to overlook the ways in which myths are created and continue to circulate within a culture. The Levi-Straussian approach suggests that myths are utilized by a culture as a means of overcoming contradictions. 43 Barthes, on the other hand, introduces a perspective that puts forward an explanation of myth as the naturalization of the ideology of the bourgeoisie. 44 These views of myth points toward an ongoing development of mythic narratives in response to current cultural conditions, and reflective of the concerns which occupy the collective consciousness. Silverstone, who shares the Levi-Straussian view of myth, places it at the site of contemporary cultural expression:

No unambiguous divide separates myth (or the mythic) from other kinds of communication. But then no unambiguous divide separates our society and culture from those that have preceded or lie adjacent to it. The search for the mythic in contemporary society is grounded only in the plausible expectation that we too perforce must find ways of expressing basic concerns, core values, deep anxieties, and equally we must find ways of expressing publicly and collectively our attempts at resolving them. 45

The cultural expressionist view of myth, then, is bound up with the attempt to reconcile the individual and cultural realities, and to provide logical explanations for contradictions. It is, according to Silverstone, "both cultural and social, and it is not just the uttered texts but also the contexts of their utterance which are important." 46 The Deleuze-Guattarian view, on the other hand, is that myth is representation, and

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41 Silverstone, 1986, p.87.
42 Barthes, op. cit., p.155.
44 Barthes, op. cit. p.155.
46 ibid., p.24.
that representation establishes and solidifies the tracings that are hereditary historical overcodings, and are deterministic. According to this position myth imposes interpretive specifications and overcodes the flows between the actual, the cultural, and the individual, creating determinations, imposing interpretive strategies, and creating a 'false unity' in the form of a naturalized (bourgeois, Barthesian), consensus among the community. Film and television texts operate in this manner, particularly in the case of broadcast television, that ensures the mass distribution of audio/visual narrative and collective experience of identical myths. Television offers explanations of contradictions on behalf of the culture, but these mythical 'explanations' also become delimiting representations that prohibit molecular flows and impose unitary interpretive strategies. In film and television texts the Levi-Straussian, the Barthesian and the Deleuze-Guattarian views of Myth can be seen to converge, as the logical explanations of contradictions (Levi-Straussian), are naturalized, become the dominant explanations (Barthesian), and impose a singular representation on the community, one that coerces the community into acceptance of a preferred interpretive strategy, a Deleuze-Guattarian tracing.

Myth and the Individual

Having explored the role of myth as it functions in culture it remains to determine to what extent myth influences the formation of individual reality. As discussed above, Levi-Strauss attempted to define the unconscious according to linguistic and mythic structures. This project had been presaged by Freud's research into psychoanalysis, and the development of the psyche through childhood experience. Deleuze and Guattari challenge the Freudian application of myth to psychoanalytical theory, particularly his appropriation of the Oedipus myth. They posit that Freud's utilization of the Greek myth is a result of his own cultural circumstances, rather than as a valid analogy of the psychology of humanity, and posit that the unconscious consists of more productive, less ordered elements:

But who says that dream, tragedy, and myth are adequate to the formations of the unconscious, even if the work of transformation is taken into account? ... It is as if Freud had drawn back from this world of wild production and explosive desire, wanting at all costs to restore a little order there, an order made classical owing to the ancient Greek theater. For what does it mean to say that Freud discovered Oedipus in his own self-analysis? Was it in his self-analysis, or rather in his Goethian classical culture? 47

Freud's appropriation of Oedipus utilizes the myth as an expression of the structure of the psyche, and the familial relations that occur during childhood. But, despite the common recognition of this notion within the field of psychology Deleuze and Guattari claim that there is little to justify its advocacy as a universal condition of childhood development.

Rather than applying the Oedipus myth to the psyche, they locate Oedipus within the social field, and attribute its intervention on the development of the child to the social investments of the father:

47 Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, pp. 54-55.
Narrative as Fiction and Nonfiction

Oedipus is never a cause: it depends on a previous social investment of a certain type, capable of falling back on family determinations. It will be objected that such a principle is perhaps valid for the adult, but surely not for the child. But in effect, Oedipus begins in the mind of the father. And the beginning is not absolute: it is only constituted starting from investments of the social historical field that are effected by the father ... what is invested through the familial stimuli is still the social field, and a whole system of breaks and extrafamilial flows. 48

Deleuze and Guattari, then, effectively remove the Oedipus complex from the psyche of the child and return it to the social realm, placing the emphasis on the acculturation of the child by the father, rather than accepting the Freudian notion of the resolution of the Oedipus complex as an innate stage of childhood development. Myth, in their view, is a social phenomena, and not an unconscious formation of the psyche; “the myth that does not express but conditions”. 49

Feminist theories also reveal the inadequacy of Freud’s appropriation of the Oedipus myth in order to account for the supposed psychological difference between male and female, and particularly the notion of the female as castrated. Belsey and Moore provide a concise summary of feminist approaches to the Freudian, pointing out that the spectrum of opinion ranges from the radical rejection of Freud, to the cultural understanding of gender definition. They state that psychoanalysis “explains how we acquire sexual identity by repressing desires which are culturally unacceptable; it does not require us to believe that sexual identity is synonymous with anatomy.” 50 The Freudian Oedipus Complex is, according to some feminist theories, either a misogynist depreciation of women, or a mistaken notion that confuses the physiological with the requirements of cultural limitations on behavior. The Freudian application of myth to the psyche is revealed as a culturally determined venture that does not adequately account for the female psyche. Deleuze and Guattari also point out the imbalance innate in Freud’s notion of castration, where “there is finally only one sex, the masculine, in relation to which the woman, the feminine, is defined as a lack, an absence ... the man in his turn lacks what is lacking in the woman, simply in another fashion”. 51 The cultural coding of familial relations as posited by Freud, and reinforced by his appropriation of the Oedipus myth, is a culturally defined and transmitted notion that bears no relevance to the unconscious.

The individual, while being affected by the familial, the cultural, and the actual, emerges from the desires that drive unconscious productive forces. Deleuze and Guattari insist that the unconscious engages in desiring-production, rather than relying on mythic expressions as a model by which the unconscious is measured:

Freud invokes only a sexual argument, which consists in bringing about the union of sexuality and the familial complex, and a mythological argument, which consists in positing the adequation of the productive forces of the unconscious and the “edifying forces of myths and religions” ... If the unconscious is thought to express itself adequately in myths and religions ... there are two ways of reading this adequation, but they have in common the postulate that measures the unconscious

48 ibid., pp.178-179.
49 ibid., p.157.
50 Belsey & Moore, 1997, p.4.
51 Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., pp.294-295.
against myth, and that from the start substitutes mere expressive forms for the productive formations. The basic question is never asked, but cast aside: Why return to myth? Why take it as the model?  

There is no need to construct a connection between myth and the unconscious, but, rather, myth is a product of culture, producing cultural interpretive strategies, and tracing a template for cultural reality. Myth is not a ‘structure’ within the unconscious, but is a result of acculturation. It is transmitted through familial and cultural influences, prescribing the conveyance of the individual from the familial into collective, cultural construction of reality. The individual cannot be considered to be in isolation from culture but is formed by these conditions. The cultural function of myth is to direct the individual in the journey from the family toward the socializing requirements of the culture. Myth enforces the interpretive strategies that are the conventions of a culture in order for the individual to conform to the expectations of a society.

Myth in primitive society is always a collective fantasy, which is expressed in similar forms through various repetitions. It engenders consensus by insinuating systems of ethical and moral values, by naturalizing them, and by establishing them as dominant within the culture. They are always collective, being defined by their acceptance by a culture. Deleuze and Guattari use the relations between the organs and the body as an explanation of the flow from the desire of organs to the primitive socius:

The mythologies sing of organs—partial objects and their relations with a full body that repels or attracts them: ... A Gourma story begins: “When the mouth was dead, the other parts of the body were consulted to see which of them would take charge of the burial....” The unites in question are never found in persons, but rather in series which determine the connections, disjunctions and conjunctions of organs. That is why fantasies are group fantasies. It is the collective investment of the organs that plug desire into the socius and assembles social production and desiring-production into a whole.  

The primitive mythical application of a series that includes body parts of the individual, and connects them with the collective, creates a consensual view which is expressed by mythic accounts of the actual, which connect the individual with the collective, and bring about an enforced unity. The community is unified by the alliance of individuals to common values that are not offered to the individual as optional, but are presented as the singular value system.

The role of myth in contemporary society is not entirely removed from the primitive functions of myth. Rather than referring back to traditional myths, contemporary myth-makers operate according to a similar mythic function, as an exploration of the contradictions encountered by the culture, and seek to provide explanations for its enigmas, a function which is continually adapting to the changing conditions of society. The mythic function makes narratives that account for the connections of the social with the actual and transforms them into dominant interpretive strategies. The difference between contemporary and primitive myths is

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52 Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., p.57.
53 ibid., p.142.
that the primitive myth is enforced as an exclusive, unitary cultural reality, whereas contemporary myths are accepted as possible cultural realities, and the choice between dominant and subversive, or oppositional myths is made practicable by the heterogeneity of global culture. Dominant myths remain, however, a significant social influence in contemporary global culture, and are inscribed in the social structures and institutional powers that promote particular collective awareness, usually under the guise of nationalism, or the maintenance of cultural traditions.  

The mythic factor, with regard to individual subjectivity, connects with the cultural, and directs the determination of interpretive strategies. The subject does not exist as an isolated territory, or as a clearly defined unitary entity, but is the product of a combination of many determinants, and transforms according to the circumstances in which it is required to operate. Guattari affirms this view of subjectivity, identifying the elements that combine to form the subject:

It is no longer a question of determining whether the Freudian Unconscious or the Lacanian Unconscious provide scientific answers to the problems of the psyche. From now on these models, along with the others, will only be considered in terms of the production of subjectivity - inseparable as much from the technical and institutional apparatuses which promote it as from their impact on psychiatry, university teaching or the mass media ... In a more general way, one has to admit that every individual and social group conveys its own system of modeling subjectivity, that is, a certain cartography - composed of cognitive references as well as mythical, ritual and symptomatological references - with which it positions itself in relation to its affects and anguish, and attempts to manage its inhibitions and drives.  

Subjectivity provides an arbitrary totality of the individual reality, defining the relationship between the individual and the actual, with cultural reality providing the "system of modelizing". Although I speak of the cultural construct of reality as if it were a singularity, it consists of many elements and displays many facets, and could perhaps be more accurately described in the plural. These realities consist of many tracings and maps, a collection of interpretive strategies, a multiplicity of models from which the individual can select and compare. The myths of a culture are a significant determinant of the facets of subjectivity, providing a substantial proportion of the naturalized perspectives through which the subject traverses during its encounters with the actual.

Cultural acceptance of a collection of myths merely defines those myths which have become historical and have fulfilled their function in shaping the culture. In contrast, myth is not canonical, but remains active, undefined and dynamic in its relations with the developing culture. It is the production of contemporary myths, which precedes their acceptance into the collection of historical myths, which is constructed within cultures over a period of time. The mythic function pertains to the present, to the struggles of cultural determination of values as new contradictions and socio-economic and political situations are encountered, whereas historical myths provide a record of the struggles which have been resolved, and constitute the existing dominant values of a culture.  


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Technology, Globalization and Myth

The proliferation of film and television images, photographs, sound recording and printed text, has enabled myth to operate in a greater variety of forms, and mass media technologies allow for the rapid distribution of narratives to ever larger audiences. The oral form of myth remains fluid and flexible through time, as each retelling of the myth may vary, and numerous versions of a myth may develop. Audio/visual narrative forms, and written forms, however, are comparatively rigid and inflexible, in that their form is fixed by the permanence of the medium. The circuit of conflict and contradiction, individual response, myth creation, distribution and cultural response has become more rapid as myth becomes technologically mediated. The development of new technologies brings about changes both in the systems of distribution, and in the relationship between the social institutions which distribute narratives and the audiences which receive them. Audiences have access to a greater variety of narratives and narrative forms as distribution technology continues to advance. The resultant proliferation of mythic narratives reflects a multiplicity of responses in culture, and a radiation of sub-cultures away from the central, dominant culture, each adopting narratives which display variations of the mythic function and divergent forms in which the narratives are distributed. Alternative music cultures, racial groups, conservationist groups, the virtual chat-space of internet users, and many other sub-groups of Western culture, are developing sub-cultural value systems which put forward specific views of the actual world, and provide a cultural cartography which deviates from that of the dominant culture.

Mythical narratives have evolved from the historical forms of fairy-tale and legend, with their form and structure now being partially determined by the media in which they are accommodated. There is no longer a re-telling of each myth within a single medium, as was the case with oral culture, but many renditions of myths which have become depreciated commodities in a narrative rich society. The rapid evolution of the style and content of narrative structure, having been brought about, firstly by advances in technology, and secondly, by cultural fragmentation, means that the mythic function is operating at an accelerated pace, as narratives which deal with cultural values and respond to change become more commonplace. The simplicity of historical myth, which provided a singular view on behalf of a defined, unified culture has been replaced by the heterogeneity of multiple sub-cultures and the cross-cultural transfers which are the result of the ready availability of international communication technology, migration and multi-cultural coexistence. Globalization has created inter-cultural flows which include the transfer of mythic narratives, and the gradual conception of a global 'super-culture' in which myths are commodified and traded. As heterogeneous cultural influences proliferate, the occurrences of contradictions within a culture are more frequent and varied, and the production of narratives in response to this multiplicity increases and diversifies. Interpretive strategies from a variety of cultures are combining in a series of rhizomic breaks-flows that bring together the individual and the global super-culture.

\[58\] Waisbord, op. cit., Morley, op. cit.
In order to explain the mythic function as it operates in the contemporary global super-culture, and its expression in narrative form, it is essential to establish the nature of the circuit which begins with the consciousness of a contradiction or conflict, which brings about the creation of a myth, and results in the response to the narrative by the culture. A culture then, either integrates the narrative and accepts the values which it expresses, or rejects the narrative. Herein lies the distinction between narratives which operate as myths, and those which are not: mythic narrative attempts to integrate new interpretive strategies into the cultural reality, or to alter the tracings of a community so as to allow for new territories, or new ways of interpreting the existing cartography. When the circuit of the mythic function is repeated, or, in other words, when the narrative is re-told a number of times, and is accepted by a culture or sub-culture as an integral element of its interpretive strategy, the mythic function is complete and the narrative becomes myth. The narrative, then, has undergone a metamorphosis from an expression of the new interpretive strategy of the mythic function, to the accepted and dominant interpretive strategy of historical myth, and through this continual circuit of response and integration, expresses the temporal transformation of the culture.

The theoretical position as established in the first chapter can be seen to apply to the boundaries between genre and form, as has been ascertained by the analysis of the distinction between fiction and nonfiction in the early sections of this chapter. Delineation between groups of texts is linked to ontological assumptions regarding the texts, and thereby imposes predetermined interpretive strategies that affect the response of the viewer. In the analysis of texts in the second half of the thesis, the opposition of cultural determination of interpretation and individual is significant in arriving at conclusions concerning the narrativization of actuality. The overcoding of actuality engages viewers in a consensus concerning systems of codification, and the meanings that are created by conventions of representation. The interpretation of the text, and the ensuing affects of the text on the viewer, the culture and actuality, are dependent on the cultural codes that shape the interpretation.

There are significant considerations that have been addressed in this chapter that require reiteration. The distinction between fiction and non-fiction is defined by conventions of genre, which are particular narrative forms. These forms are implicit to the cultural schemata, which are partially formed by narrative conventions, and reciprocally form the conventions of narrative. The interpretation of texts utilizes a cultural construct of reality, but this cultural determinant is countered by the molecular, individual aspects of interpretation that defy codification, and react according to unique physiological responses, desire and belief. The delineation between genres is a cultural determination, rather than a feature of the texts themselves. When texts are apprehended as rhizomes the heterogeneity of the contents of the text, and the connections that are made with other texts become plain. The boundaries of genre reflect strategies of interpretation that are cued by textual content, but do not emanate from the text alone. The conventions of a culture profoundly affect the reception of the audio/visual text, and, in turn, act upon the conformation of culture and actuality. There is no absolute division between fiction and nonfiction, or between the actuality and the text, but each connects with and affects the other.

The reception of the text, however, consists of a far greater level of complexity than the overcoding of actuality by mythical narrative. The connections that are made
between the text, viewer, culture and actuality are related to the modes of discourse that occur in interpretation, and the cognitive activities that are incorporated in the experience of audio/visual texts, and these areas will be investigated in the forthcoming chapter.
Chapter 3

NARRATIVE AS DISCOURSE AND COGNITION

The reception of audio/visual texts has been defined as a process of connection in the first chapter, and the conventions of genre and myth have been demonstrated to connect with culture and actuality in the second chapter. The activities of the viewer in the process of interpreting the text, however, have not yet been given due consideration. The cultural codes of representation and the narrativization of actuality are not textually based, but are connected by the viewer in the act of interpreting the text.

The Deleuzo-Guattarian emphasis on multiplicity will now be located within the specific conditions of film and television epistemology, and will posit an alternative approach to the theoretical analysis of film and television in terms of the relations between the viewer, the image, and actuality. The central themes of this research must also be situated in relation to existing theoretical positions, and this chapter outlines the distinction and concurrence between prior and contemporary film and television theory, and the position posited in this thesis. The chapter scrutinizes the various levels of interpretation of narrative from the authorial to the activities of the viewer, and the cognitive activities that occur during the viewing of a screen narrative are defined and explicated. The relations between actuality and the virtual is analyzed with regard to the levels of virtualization that are brought to bear on actuality by the processes of narrativization are reconsidered in light of the theoretical position adopted in the thesis, in which the text, culture, viewer and actuality are connected.

3.1 Narrative as Discourse

The previous chapter has established that both non-fictional and fictional texts are defined as narrative, and that they share some conventions of narrative construction, particularly in the appropriation of conventions across genre boundaries. In this chapter the relations between the author and the viewer are explicated, as the degrees of intermediate variation between the two are identified. Narrative is not limited to the text, but is activated when the text is viewed, and the viewer interprets the audio/visual data.

The Development of Narrative Models

The interpretation of narrative has been posited as a series of theoretical models, increasing in complexity as to the levels, or stages of variation between the author,
text and viewer. This is not to say that earlier theories of narrative were not complex, but, on the contrary, as Russian formalism reveals, the theories often involve intricate detail and complexity in the analysis of narrative structure.

Formalist analysis of narrative looks to the structure of the narrative to indicate cultural traditions which have remained constant throughout the history of narrative. Propp suggests that the form of Russian folk tales is an invariable system of sequences and functions within the narratives, comprising of thirty two morphemes, eight character roles and seven spheres of action. Propp's theory proposes a structure for folk tales which was later extended by his successors to apply to all narrative structures. Fiske challenges this notion, claiming that:

It is difficult to envisage the physiology of the human brain producing thirty two functions in sequence. It is safer not to talk in terms of human universals, originating in human nature, but rather to seek the origins of a common structure in human society.

David Bordwell also denies the relevance of Propp's formalism, with a reminder that his intention was to apply the theory to Russian wondertales (a specific sub genre of Russian folk tales), and that attempts to apply Propp's morphology to contemporary film narrative are misguided. Bordwell also suggests that the morphology could be adapted to apply to any narrative, with sufficient flexibility in the application of the morphemes, stating that "it would be surprising if such an open-ended scheme could not be made to fit." His complaint consisted mainly of the willingness to distort Propp's morphemes in order to apply them to contemporary film narrative.

Seymour Chatman, however, defines narrative as a progression of meaning from author to viewer via the text, an opinion which classical narrative theory has long proposed, in which "narratives are communications, thus easily envisaged as the movement of arrows from left to right, from author to audience." The communication model involves the injection of meaning by the author into the text and the interpretation of the text by the reader.

The communication model proposes a flow of information from the author to the viewer, passing through the narrative devices of the text, and finally being decoded by the reader. Chatman's model includes an implied author (the presence of the personality of the author, which the author reveals within the text), a narrator (the voice or character which tells the story), a narratee (the 'receiver' of the narrative within the text), and an implied reader (the ideal notion of the reader who is ultimately familiar with the stylistic devices of the author and the conventions of the genre).

**TEXT**

| Real Author > | Implied Author | Implied Narrator > Narratee > Reader | > Real Reader |

*Fig. 3.1.1: The model of communication from author to reader, after Chatman (1978), p.151.*

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1 Propp, 1968.
3 Bordwell, 1988, p.15.
4 Chatman, 1978, p.31.
Various developments of Chatman's model have been put forward, Susan Lanser suggesting six levels of narration, and Edward Branigan further expanding this to eight (see fig. 3.1.2). Branigan proposes that the levels of narration are not distinctly defined, describing them as "a position on a continuum rather than as sharply exclusive alternatives". Rather than emphasize the horizontal plane of author to reader, Branigan states that the viewer in the course of their interpretive activities traverses the hierarchy of the levels of narrative, with many factors originating from different aspects of the text influencing the viewing experience:

In general, several levels of narration will be operating simultaneously with varying degrees of explicitness and compatibility; that is, the spectator may describe the text in several ways, all of which may be accurate, each within a particular context and for a particular purpose.

The notion of a continuum allows for the multiple interpretive activities which occur during the viewing experience. Chatman's model implies a movement of meaning in one direction (from author to reader), along a chain of textual constructions of narration. Branigan, however, suggests that the reader is capable of operating on several planes, and with various strategies for interacting with the text.

Notably absent from Branigan's model, when compared with Chatman's, are the stages of the implied author and implied reader. They are replaced by a number of levels of narration; the extra-fictional narrator and narratee, the non-diegetic narrator, and the diegetic narrator and narratee. These levels of narration are encountered by the viewer during the process of interpretation, and are applied to the text by viewers accordingly as their understanding of the text and the role of the particular narrative 'voice' which addresses them at a specific time, and in a specific aspect of the text is constructed. Within a single scene a character's speech, a title on the screen and a voice-over commentary can be simultaneously assigned to various levels of narration. Branigan describes the classical text as one in which the levels of narration are simple and available to the viewer to apply at will. He defines such texts as the 'chameleon text' in which "the text sustains a reading which is generally compatible with whatever we first believe and does not usually demand a unique or counter-intuitive explication." According to this model the classical text fits the various interpretations of the viewer by presenting fundamental content that does not demand elaborate interpretive strategies. Barthes also classifies texts along these lines, however in his classification of readerly and writerly texts, the readerly infers the textual determination of unitary meaning in classical texts, and the writerly text provides opportunities for multiple readings. Eco also categorizes texts into 'open' and 'closed' texts; once again contrasting the openness of multiple interpretations with the singularity of closed texts.

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7 ibid., p.96.
8 ibid., pp.97-98.
9 Barthes, 1975.
10 Eco, 1979.
Fig. 3.1.2: The eight levels of narration, after Branigan 1992, p.87.
Narrative as Discourse and Cognition

According to these systems of classification we are left with contrasting absolutes, Eco's open and closed texts, or Barthes' writerly and the readerly texts. John Fiske, however, suggests another variation, the producerly text, which allows for multiple interpretations of the text. He defines this group of texts as an aggregation of voices:

The "writer" does not put meaning into the text, but rather assembles a multitude of voices within it ... These voices cannot finally be pinned down in a "hierarchy of discourses," for different readers can "listen" more or less attentively to different voices. The reader can make his or her text out of this "weaving of voices" by a process that is fundamentally similar to that of the writer when s/he created the work out of the multitude of voices available in the culture.  

Fiske advocates a producerly television text which is not avant-garde, highbrow or directed by convention, but one that "relies on discursive competencies that the viewer already possesses".  These discursive competencies amount to an awareness of cultural conventions. Fiske's producerly text is one which is defined during the viewing process, where viewers use the levels of narrative or discourse to create a pleasurable experience, interpreting the text according to their individual desires and particular cultural requirements. Branigan's notion of the classical text as one which allows for multiple interpretations through its simplicity differs from Eco's closed text, which works to limit the number of 'correct' alternative readings. Indeed, the absence of a concept of 'correctness' in interpreting a text is the element which separates the open, writerly text from the closed or the readerly. The closed, readerly text determines, or limits interpretations within the text, the producerly allows for a number of equally 'correct' interpretations, whereas the open, writerly text avoids restrictions in interpretation.

Fiske refers to the capacity within particular texts to support multiple interpretations as 'polysemy', stating that both the content of the text and the subjectivity of the viewer determine alternative readings:

Both the text and the subjectivity are discursive constructs and both contain similar competing or contradictory discourses. It is out of these contradictions that the polysemy of the text and the multiplicity of readings arise.

The text, then, engages multiple voices, and also undergoes the complex interpretative 'reading' of the viewer, in which heterogeneous influences are at play. Fiske's emphasis is on the text as the source of meaning which will be read differently by dissimilar readers. According to his model of polysemy the text provides the signs that are then interpreted variously by viewers.

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12 ibid., p.95.
13 ibid., p.67.
Narrative as Discourse and Cognition

Condit, however, questions Fiske’s reliance on the textual content in polysemy, claiming instead that the site of interpretation provides the polyvalence which explains alternative readings:

The term “polyvalence” characterizes these differences better than does the term “polysemy.” Polyvalence occurs when audience members share understandings of the denotations of a text but disagree about the valuation of those denotations to such a degree that they produce notably different interpretations ... it is not a multiplicity or instability of textual meanings but rather a difference in audience evaluations of shared denotations. 14

Condit’s insistence that “instability of connotation requires viewers to judge texts from their own value systems”, 15 identifies the site of difference as being the viewer’s internal value system, and the interpretative activities that occur during the viewing experience.

The viewing process, then, relies firstly on the viewer’s awareness of cultural codes and conventions, or, as Condit specifies, ‘value systems’. But in order to activate this knowledge the text must provide the cues and structures that point toward an appropriate framework for interpretation. Texts manipulate the sensory perceptions of the reader, as the viewer experiences a constructed representation, and observes the diegetic world, being guided by a number of determinants. The textual representation of time offers an example of the way in which audio/visual texts impose narrative form onto the viewer. Firstly, there is the ‘real-time’ of reading or viewing, the time that passes as the text unfolds before the viewer. This is a variable factor according to the medium in question; cinema is projected at a predetermined rate, controlled by the creators of the text. Broadcast television presents texts which are played at real-time, but are interrupted by commercials, breaking the text into segments which are separated by temporal gaps. Video is to a greater extent controllable by the viewer, in that the tape can be paused, rewound or restarted. Literature differs from visual narrative, in that the reader is often in control of the pace of the reading. The reader can repeat a section, speed up, slow down, or even ‘skip over’ parts of the text. Visual narrative then, in general, imposes a more rigid pace of delivery than does print media.

The second temporal frame to consider is that which is presented by the narrative structure of the text. The viewer is guided by the temporal strategies of the text, reacting to the textual cues which identify the temporal relationships which exist internally between portions of the text. Bordwell points out that the viewer actively recreates the temporal sequence of a film:

If the narrative presents events out of chronological order, we must fall back on our ability to rearrange them according to schemata ... The relentless forward march of stimuli in a film puts an extra strain on the spectator's memory and inferential processes. 16

15 ibid., p.107.
16 Bordwell, 1985, p.33.
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Textual cues, then, are interpreted and reconstructed by the viewer, and this reconstruction (which may vary from viewer to viewer), becomes the third temporal frame, that is, the construction of diegetic time in the reading of the text.

The interaction of the viewer and the text in the interpretation of time reveals the extent to which it is the viewer that constructs and determines the diegetic world. The textual content does, however, provide the narrative cues and raw sensory data that are then manipulated, combined and fabricated by the viewer as the text is interpreted. Noel Carroll suggests a twofold function of visual narrative, an erotetic structure of narrative which guides the viewer’s hypotheses, expectations and questioning of the text, and a lower level of visual framing which acts to direct the attention of the viewer and to pose, sustain and answer the questions which are inspired by erotetic structure.

The large-scale narrative coherence of movies derives from the erotetic structure. The questions the film internally pose structure, broadly speaking, the audiences expectations, roughly circumscribing their horizon of alternative possibilities in a way that prepares the audience for what will happen. The small-scale visual narration in movies resides in devices such as, most importantly, variable framing as well as various strategies for directing attention internal to the single shot. 17

Carroll, then, sees the text as a delimitation of the interpretation, which poses, and then answers questions according to textual content. This is in contrast to Bordwell’s notion of fabula and syuzhet, in which he distinguishes between the systems of narrative (syuzhet) and the fabula as “a pattern which perceivers of narratives create through assumptions and inferences”. 18 Bordwell divides the process of interpretation into, on the one hand, a product of textual system and style, and on the other hand, a ‘producerly’ response in which the viewer constructs the narrative from the text, and from ‘assumptions and inferences,’ which result from the viewer’s internal schemata.

The Viewer and the Interpretation of Audio/Visual Texts

To what extent are ‘writerly’, ‘producerly’, or ‘readerly’ qualities contained within audio/visual texts, or to what extent do viewers impose their ‘producerly’ functions whilst they interpret, or reconstruct the text? Can a text prevent the viewer from adopting an unconventional interpretation if the viewer adopts an oppositional stance to a closed, readerly text? Bordwell suggests that the text limits the possible interpretations that can be applied to a narrative by providing explanations and interpretations within the text, thereby closing off alternative avenues of interpretive possibility, or, alternatively, by being left open to viewer interpretation. Here, once again, can be seen the two sites of determination at work, firstly, the text, which provides its own suggestions as to its interpretation, and secondly, the viewer who interprets the text according to the presuppositions and conventions of overcoding.

17 Carroll, 1988, p.207.
18 Bordwell, op. cit., p.49.
embodied in the cultural construct, or according to the unique, heterogeneous molecular flows of the individual reality. The process of interpretation engages several fields of cognitive and perceptual activity. Bordwell describes the various components that work toward the interpretation of text:

While hypotheses undergo constant modification, we can isolate critical moments when some are clearly confirmed, disconfirmed or left open. In any empirical case, this whole process takes place within the terms set by the narrative itself, the spectator's perceptual-cognitive equipment, the circumstances of reception, and prior experience. 19

It is noteworthy that in Bordwell's attempt to list the constituents of interpretation (the terms of the narrative, perception/cognition, viewing context, and prior experience), those that originate from outside the narrative considerably outnumber those within the narrative. The cultural and individual components of interpretative activity bring a considerable weight to bear on the reading of the narrative.

Consider the comparison between the content of the text and the experience of a viewer. The data contained in the text is outweighed by the accrued knowledge of many texts and the awareness of narrative conventions which exists within the 'experienced,' culturally aware viewer. The text is one of an aggregate of texts, and (through the conventions of a culture), establishes its relationship to all other texts in terms of genre, style and such comparative groupings. The classification of texts is brought about by both the characteristics of the text, and the viewer, who is aware of, and applies, conventional boundaries. The recourse to prior experience in interpretation can be attributed to the cultural construct of reality established within the viewer. "Perceptual-cognitive equipment," (cited above), describes the individual reality, the unique patterns of the senses, thought and reaction. Bordwell's "circumstances of reception" describes the conjunction of the actual world with the viewing of the text. The site of all activity beyond the text is the reader, embedded in culture, and actuality.

Reader response theory also places greater onus on the viewer as the exclusive site of construction, rather than the author. Iser, declares that it is the act of reading that 'realizes' the text:

The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized, and furthermore, the realization is by no means independent of the individual disposition of the reader - though this in turn is acted upon by the different patterns of the text. The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader. 20

Iser's proposal is one in which the text relies on the reading process for its existence, and is never in existence without a convergence with the reader. The *individual

19 ibid., p.39.
disposition' of the reader interacts with the text in a 'virtual' act of interpretation, which consists partially of the text, and partially the viewer. Neither the text, nor the viewer is independent of the other, but the convergence of the two creates a nexus of meaning which is united through the 'act of reading'.

The contention expressed in this thesis, however, is that the act of viewing an audio/visual text brings about a convergence of text, viewer, culture and actuality. The viewer is woven into a complex pattern of cultural constructs and actual events which, in the 'act of viewing,' is brought into a virtual unity. There is no impermeable boundary which separates the text from the actual, the individual or the cultural. The text is one component of the interpretative process, which flows into other components, affecting the cultural construct and actuality to provide a composite experience of perception, construction, interpolation and reaction. Once the notion of impermeable boundaries is removed, the text can function as an element of both the cultural and the actual, in which the cultural construct can be modified during and after the viewer's interaction with the text, and resultant actions can bring the text (via the viewer), into a connection with actuality.

As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the concept of an individual disposition cannot be separated from the actuality, and the culture in which an individual lives. The notion of a multiplicity as described by Deleuze and Guattari, was 'created precisely in order to escape the abstract opposition between the multiple and the one'. 21 Not only does this theory account for the conjunction of text, individual, culture and actuality, but can also explain a variety of interpretations being possible for the individual. When embedded in a rich multiplicity of conventions, attitudes, presuppositions and various other cultural constructs, the viewer cannot be limited to a unified reading, as the events which occur in a visual narrative may provoke reactions which are the result of a variety of experiences, and are influenced by often contradictory cultural and individual positions. David Morley concurs with the notion of the multiple facets of the individual, stating that:

The discursive subject is ... an interdiscourse, the product of the effects of discursive practices traversing the subject throughout its history. The important point about this formulation is the distinction it holds between the constitution of 'the subject' as a general (original or mythic?) moment constituting 'a space' - and the (second) moment when the subject-in-general is interpolated in the subject forms (the discursive subject positions) which are provided by the existing complex of discourses that make up the discursive formation (the interdiscourse) of specific social formations. 22

Social and cultural alliances, then, may produce conflicting positions, bringing about internal contradictions during the reading of the text. The individual is capable of adopting contradictory positions regarding a text, usually in response to (and in connection with), 'specific social formations, that is, in alliance with ethical, political, religious or moral positions.

The viewer, then, is immersed in a heterogeneity that connects divergent notions and alliances during the 'act of viewing'. Modes of discourse, both within the text

21 Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.32.
and the prior experience of the viewer, form a network of cultural associations and
alliances that cannot be reduced to a unitary notion of an individual 'subject'.
Foucault recognizes the role of discourse in defining the subject, not as a unified
entity, but as a diverse and complex heterogeneity:

Discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing,
speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the
subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined. 23

The viewer, when considered in this context, becomes the site of a convergence of
alliances and viewpoints which cannot be characterized as occupying any unitary
position.

The dispersal of the subject is significant in the understanding of the interpretation
of texts. The nomadic subjectivity, and the notion of schizoanalysis, as posited by
Deleuze and Guattari, is not limited to singular positions and readings, but is capable
of traversing between several states, and reaching multiple conclusions concerning
texts, or alternatively, not concluding anything at all, but merely experiencing the
text and forming cognitive connections with other experiences outside the text. 24 The
reading of a text becomes a process of connection, in which interpretive strategies are
coexistent with experience, and meaning is not necessarily the end result of the text,
but is displaced by a continual 'becoming' in which the viewer integrates actuality,
textual representations and cultural codes of interpretation and behavior.

The viewer consists of a combination of social and cultural discourses, and
cognitive tendencies, which comprise, respectively, the cultural construct of reality
and the individual reality. When subjected to the almost infinitely variable
combinations of subject discourses, texts are inevitably used by the reader as a basis
for a revision of the cultural construct. Rather than determining the fabula, the text
provides cues which assist in activating the existing interpretive strategies which are
components of the cultural construct. The text becomes a catalyst for the flows and
articulations between the viewer and the actual world. It sustains the unbroken
continuum of the individual, the culture and the actual by providing breaks in
boundaries through which the cultural and the individual can merge with actuality.
The text becomes a fulcrum, a point of articulation which combines the culture and
the individual, the actual and the imaginary. Texts themselves are an implement of
discourse, a means of transference, not from a sender to a receiver, but from a culture, to
its constituent parts; the individuals, and then, in turn, bringing about an effect on
actuality.

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23 Foucault, 1972, p.55.
3.2 Narrative as Cognition

The discursive functions of narrative have, in the previous section, been characterized as a conjunction of culture, individual interpretive license, and the subjectivity of the viewer. Elementary models of communication that assume singular meanings for texts have been demonstrated to be an inadequate means of analyzing the interpretive activities of the viewer, and the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of nomadic subjectivity is revealed as the existing model most capable of accounting for the heterogeneous processes of textual interpretation.

Narrative and Schemata

The viewer, while engaging in the interpretation of narrative, is actively involved in forming associations, opinions and various other 'readings' which establish connections of the cultural construct and individual reality with actuality. The cognitive processes involved in the viewing process construct and revise the ongoing interpretation of the narrative, and also interpolate the narrative into the schemata of the viewer. Cognitive psychology employs the notion of 'schema' in defining the systems of cognition which are implemented in the utilization of information which exists within interconnected fields. A narrative schema is comparable to the notion (referred to in the previous chapter) of an interpretive strategy, where particular methods are utilized in order to reconstruct the reading of a narrative according to prior experience and convention. Branigan stresses that narrative schema cannot be considered separately to the actual world and the cultural construct:

Just as it is people who refer, not sentences, so it is people who judge plausibility, realism, and causal connection. What is familiar and real to an individual depends upon the regularities in that individual's environment which are judged to be important. Causes and effects fit together when they are part of an individual's plans and goals. Actions that occur become trapped within a cultural lexicon of human thoughts and deeds ... A narrative schema, together with a host of related schemata, encapsulates the interest we take in the world as humans. These schemas are a way of working through cultural assumptions and values. 25

The notion of schema encourages a comparison of the strategies of narrative interpretation with the strategies which relate to actuality. One particular component of schemata, constructed as the result of prior experience of texts, is similar to other schemata, which are the result of experience with the actual.

Branigan goes on, however, to point out the unique requirements of applying a narrative schema, particularly concerning the role of the viewer in constructing the diegesis during the reading process. In contrast to the actual world, a diegesis does not exist in actuality, but is built, and continuously revised, extended and refined during the reading of a text.

The multiple disparities of narration break down the impression that a film narrative is a mere photographic record of a real environment. Instead, references are generated which are only partially determined in contexts not yet fully known,

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leaving to the spectator the task of anticipating and constructing the various frames of reference that will be appropriate to an understanding of a world not yet seen. 24

In order to construct a fabula from the incomplete diegosis, the viewer must possess narrative schemata which refer to the experience of other narratives. When the opening scenes of a film present the viewer with images, sounds, text and words which are constructed after a particular convention, the viewer who has developed an interpretive strategy for a 'class of films' will apply schemata that relate to that particular field.

Collins suggests three factors that contribute to the cognitive processing of television content. Firstly, the knowledge of exposition forms, which is "partly a function of age and experience," and involves the establishment of a system of categorization of story forms. Secondly, 'world knowledge', or "general knowledge and expectations about situations", which relies on experience of the actual world, through social encounters. Thirdly, he identifies knowledge of media conventions and formal features: camera angles, musical styles, temporal compression, and many other formal factors which effect the interpretation of audio/visual narrative. 25 It can be inferred from Collins' findings that the maturation of abilities in narrative interpretation (from the ages of 7-8 years through to adolescence), is significantly affected by the development of social knowledge. He finds that the age of children is the most reliable indicator of comprehension levels in television viewing, and notes that the development of advanced comprehension skills utilizes awareness of conventions and expectations that the viewer has of narrative:

...Both younger and older viewers readily recognize common knowledge sequences in programs. In addition, however, older viewers also recognize — and, perhaps, note the potential importance of — events that deviate from common expectations, while younger viewers appear less likely to notice such deviations or to appreciate their unique significance within the portrayal. Prior social knowledge appears to underlie individual, as well as developmental, differences in children's comprehension. 26

The development of "social knowledge" equates with the notion of the cultural construct of reality advocated in this thesis; however, Collins treats this field as separate from the knowledge of "exposition forms" and "knowledge of media conventions and formal features". 27 A principal contention of this thesis is that forms and conventions reciprocate with the cultural construct of reality, and that knowledge of narrative forms is inclusive in the cultural construct through which reality is defined. Therefore, to suggest that social knowledge is required for narrative comprehension overlooks the fact that, conversely, narrative comprehension brings about social knowledge.

The cultural construct of reality allows the individual to engage in active interpretation of narrative, by implementing and combining social knowledge and

24 ibid., p.76.
26 ibid., p.203.
27 ibid., pp.203-204.
conventions of narrative form. The combination of these fields of knowledge occurs cognitively during the interpretation of audio/visual text. Branigan identifies top-down and bottom-up cognition as being employed in order to construct a diegesis.\(^\text{30}\) Top-down cognition requires that an expectation of the stereotypical form of a complete narrative structure be present in the existing construct of the viewer. Bordwell also attributes the assumptions concerning narrative style (from which proceed viewer expectations and hypotheses), to the operation of top-down cognition, stating that “applying stylistic schemata is a top-down process that has become so practiced as to operate automatically.”\(^\text{31}\) The expectations of narrative form, style and structure are templates (or stereotypes), which have been (unconsciously) constructed as schemata, and function unconsciously during the interpretation of texts.\(^\text{32}\) In this manner the cultural construct of reality is reflected ‘downward’ in a top-down cognitive process, whereby texts are interpreted according to existing schemata.

The stereotypical function of schemata is challenged by texts which may defy expectations, therefore demanding modification of the application of existing schemata. Early childhood development of television comprehension takes the form of stereotyped viewer scripts, which increased comprehension of certain television narratives by reducing cognitive requirements, as repetition of form and structure allow the viewer to substitute the stereotyped ‘script’ for the repeated effort of comprehending each individual episode of the narrative.\(^\text{33}\) However, when the text contradicts the expectations of viewer ‘scripts,’ the viewer is required to implement a meta-knowledge which, according to Desmond, is “the consequence of parental or peer mediation” in the child,\(^\text{34}\) in addition to the prior knowledge of the medium. Rather than relying on viewer ‘scripts,’ the viewer learns to modify expectations and revise interpretations in response to the contradictions between the viewer scripts and textual data.

This research supports the notion of a dominant top-down cognition, which is revised in order to account for contradictions between (top-down) viewer expectations and (bottom-up) textual data which brings about revision of existing narrative schemata. The development of narrative schemata begins with experiential bottom-up cognition, but as the viewer matures and gains experience, the top-down revision of existing schemata displaces much of the textual data. As the individual constructs a cultural reality, new texts are categorized, compared and integrated into existing narrative and cultural schemata, which are in turn modified and extended.

The Interpolation of the Audio/Visual Text into the Cultural Construct

The cultural construct is continually infused with textual data, and continually constructed according to the experience of texts (in addition to social, cultural, and familial input), which is then interpolated into the existing schemata. According to Desmond, it is the ability to modify schemata that develops not only with age and

\(^{30}\) Branigan, op. cit., p.115.
\(^{31}\) Bordwell op. cit., p.36.
\(^{32}\) cf. Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.12, and the notion of ‘tracing’.
\(^{34}\) Desmond, 1985, p.345. See also Collins, 1983.
experience, but also requires familial or social interaction. Viewers become aware of
the necessity for alteration of existing schematic forms as texts challenge
conventional expectations, and socio-cultural conditions effect interpretive strategies:

...Scripts or social expectations are knowledge, which develops with age and
experience. When to override that knowledge with a more specialized set of
analyses ... is meta-knowledge. ... These instances of metacognition may not
simply develop with age and experience with the medium, but are also the
consequence of parental or peer mediation. 34

The constant interplay of bottom-up data from the text, and top-down 'scripts', which
correlate with Deleuzo-Guattarian tracings, engages the viewer in a complex process
of interpolation that utilizes social knowledge, and reforms the cultural construct of
reality as new experiences are absorbed. With each moment of interpretation,
bottom-up and top-down cognition combine to compare new data with the existing
schemata, and revise and modify schemata where new data challenges existing
configurations. Meta-cognition utilizes an awareness of the processes involved in the
revision of schemata, and highlights the existence of cultural construct that forms the
existing schemata in top-down cognition.

The formulation of schemata is not specific to the individual, but reflects cultural
values. Narrative form is an implicit component of cultural schemata, and differs
between cultural groups. Rice, in his study of American story schema, finds that the
interpretation of narrative contrasts between cultural groups, and that cultural
schemata are applied to narratives that do not conform to the conventions of a
culture:

...People make systematic modifications of foreign stories in the process of
comprehending and recalling them. Such modifications tend to make the recall of
these stories conform more closely to the form and content that would be expected
of a story if it were to follow the American story schema. The study has
demonstrated that a theory of comprehension based on assimilation to, or by,
cultural schemata can account for the stereotypical or characteristic form of cultural
interpretations of meaningful material... The results suggest that anthropologists
may find benefits in viewing the cognitive component of culture as an information-
processing system based on the principle of assimilation to a system of learned
schemata. 35

The cultural construct includes narrative form, and, most particularly, expectations of
narrative form that are applied to texts regardless of their content. The interpretive
strategies that constitute the cultural schemata are assimilated into existing schemata,
and are, as the research of Collins, Rice and Desmond have demonstrated, a learned
cultural system. It is important to reiterate that this research does not recognize the
part played by narrative in producing cultural schemata. Prior social knowledge
originates from within the bounds of an autochthonous cultural experience, in which
texts, social interchange, and familial influences share cultural schemata.

33 ibid., p. 345.
Assumptions as to narrative form and interpretive strategies are not limited to experience of texts, but are also reflected in actuality.

The notion of schemata, however, imposes delimitation on the potential for heterogeneity in the interpretation of texts. Although cultural schemata influence the interpretive strategies of the viewer they do not produce identical interpretations in individual viewers. Obviously, cultural schemata must be considered to be an influence that sways the viewer towards particular interpretive frameworks, but does not impose rigid control over interpretation. Deleuze and Guattari, as discussed in the previous chapter, highlight the dialectic of cultural conventions as opposed to heterogeneity by contrasting the notions of the molecular and the molar. Cultural schemata are molar in their functions, segmenting and codifying actuality via narrative, and attempting to stifle and direct the molecular flows that enable variance in interpretation. The notion of heterogeneity is overlooked in the bottom-up and top-down cognitive model. Modification of schemata incorporates the molecular to some extent, but only to re-impose and redefine a codified system, however adaptable it may be. Molecular flows, on the other hand, escape codification, and allow for interpretation that is not limited by cultural strategies. Hall’s notion of the oppositional reading, is a reminder that cultural schemata do not uniformly impose a predefined structure on interpretation of texts, but that variance and individual responses to texts and culture are a cognitive process that contrasts with the structural notion of cultural schemata.

The viewing experience, then, is an engagement with culture, and is a continuous modification of the cultural construct of reality. The cultural construct is, however, in opposition to the Deleuzian molecular, which works against the delimitation of interpretation imposed by cultural schemata. How, then, can the molecular be observed in the interpretation of texts? In philosophical terms, the theory that most eschews codification is that of phenomenology.

3.3 Subject and Object, Actual and Virtual

Phenomenology and Subjectivity

Husserlian Phenomenology advocates that cultural schemata be set aside, and that the emphasis be placed, rather, on direct experience of, or consciousness of, ‘the things themselves’. Husserl called for a reappraisal of the way in which perception is conceived, attempting to “set aside all previous habits of thought,” in order to avoid cultural presuppositions. He defines perception as an act of intentionality, involving an internal subjective constitution of the actual world which ‘reaches out’ into the object. Husserl maintains that subject and object are inseparable, that the actual and the subjectivity of the individual are combined, but locates this conjunction firmly within the consciousness of the subject. Husserlian phenomenology highlights the constructive processes of consciousness, and attempts

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to liberate consciousness from the restrictive conventions of culture, and, as Crotty observes, "underline the difference between a reality and any concept we might have of it".  

In terms of audio/visual narrative, phenomenology allows for the direct perception of images prior to the intervention of cultural schemata. The sensory perception that Husserl sought to rediscover in its purity as an intentional object has been complicated by the representation of objects through the medium of visual images. The object of intention is removed from the direct perception of the subject, and requires additional levels of construction, in terms of its conscious apperception, the object ceases to be an actuality, but appears to the senses to be similar to actuality. The 'intentional' engagement with the object has been transformed, from a subject-object relation to an intermediate relation with commodified images, as Tomaluso observes:

Husserl realized that to understand the essence of human experience, one must move beyond looking inward at the workings of consciousness. Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty went even further, insisting that human subjectivity is "always already" situated in and engaged with the outside world of things, other people, and historical events. Today, however, in the midst of a late capitalist era, Husserl's phrase ("to the things themselves!") might be amended to speak of "commodity -things," which have a social life of their own by virtue of their use and circulation in a consumer society.

The audio/visual text is now isomorphic with the actual, becoming the most commonly consumed form of information concerning the actual. The construction of cultural reality, or cultural schemata, in terms of historical and social awareness, relies on textual images as a source of data. The perceived object can not be understood in isolation from any interpretive strategy, as the audio/visual representation itself consists of an interpretation of actuality.

Tomaluso’s inference that Husserlian phenomenology, when applied in contemporary circumstances, points toward the inseparability of the object and the audio/visual text, encourages a perception of images that sets aside assumptions. A phenomenological reading of an audio/visual text would attempt to disregard interpretive strategies, both in the reading of the text, and in the text itself. Texts are consumed in such quantity in present-day society as to prompt Baudrillard’s claim, that the image has become indistinguishable from reality. Phenomenology, however, circumvents the textual construction of reality and attempts a fresh perception of the image as an object in its own right. Such an interaction between the subject and the audio/visual object is also suggested by Stadler, who states:

The impressions of subjectivity or objectivity are not fixed entities but reveal a constantly shifting exchange between various positions (object, character, camera,

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42 See R. Collins, 1986, who establishes television news as the form of information in Britain that is relied on more that any other.
43 Baudrillard, 1988a, p.139.
The representation of subject-object relations in audio/visual narrative is not determined by any fixed narrative schema, but relies on the direct sensory perception of the viewer, who can from moment to moment in a film observe from one point of view, and then shift to another point of view. Interpretation of such visual sensory data imitates the spatial sense of geometry by which we, as bodies in a physical world, define our relative positions in the actual world. This spatial sense is combined with the conventions of narrative (the positions of character, author, viewer, etc.) and the sensory phenomenon is thereby combined with the cultural codification of narrative. The apperception of the audio/visual text as sensory data independent of cultural schemata would connect the experience of audio/visual texts with the experience of actuality. Both are perceived as visual images and audio, but the screen image remains physically inaccessible to the viewer. One cannot enter into the depicted scene, or interact with objects as one can with actual objects and events. The individual response to audio/visual texts, however, is not entirely determined by cultural schemata, but is also a physiological response to sensory data, as opposed to literary representation, which relies on the reader to construct all visual images of the textual content. Phenomenology is, therefore, more suited to the analysis of audio/visual texts that to the written text.

A phenomenology which accounts for the actuality of audio/visual narrative is not necessarily identical to literary phenomenological criticism, which, according to Terry Eagleton "is an idealist, essentialist, anti-historical, formalist and organicist type of criticism".44 Eagleton's major criticisms of phenomenology are that it relies on the solitary subject as the site of the construction of the world, and that this solitary subject perceives objects independently of language. Indeed, Eagleton's derision of phenomenology rests on the premise that "meaning is not simply something 'expressed' or 'reflected' in language; it is actually produced by it." This aspect of phenomenology may be appropriate to the study of literature, which is received in linguistic form, but not the analysis of visual narrative, which often encounters visual imagery in isolation from linguistic content. Eagleton's description of phenomenology as "a head without a world", is, however, a valid criticism of the Husserlian emphasis on the subject as the site of the internal construction of reality. Husserl nominates consciousness as the source of all intention toward the external object. Husserl's concept of language as "purely expressive of consciousness",46 however, comes close to an extra-linguistic subjectivity which is inclusive of visual imagery, an insight which structuralism fails to account for, and has been recently restated by postmodern theorists.47 Husserl's phenomenology does not preclude the social, as Eagleton claims, but simply locates the site of the construction of the 'real world', and, indeed, the imaginary worlds of fictional narrative within the consciousness of the subject.

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44 Studler, 1990, pp.41-42.
45 Eagleton, 1983, p.60.
46 ibid., p.61.
47 Guattari, 1995, p.16 defines the multiple, non-linguistic constituents of "polyphonic subjectivity".
The contemporary phenomenology posited by Casebier, Stadler and Tomaluso, allows for the intention of the subject to be applied to the understanding of the inseparability of the text and the actual. Cognitive interpretive activities, including the construction and modification of schemata, utilize the classification of textual information into categories of imaginary and actual, although they are both externally perceived phenomena. Such distinctions are integral to the perception of the world as a 'reality' as opposed to the ' unreality' of fiction. Stadler points out that the distinctions which are drawn between such schemata cannot be defined as distinct boundaries (as discussed in chapter one), but that the model of continuum is more appropriate:

[A] phenomenological film theory will insist on the very frictional surfaces between "reality" and "fiction." Should one not always be suspicious of an ultimative "either/or" if there might as well be a "more or less"? ... There is a continuum of "realities," some of which are simply less imaginary than others. 48

The site of consciousness of the actual, as outlined by Stadler's phenomenology, renders perception subordinate to the intentions of the viewer. Interpretive strategies, in the form of the cultural construct of reality, encourage a positivist division of 'real' and 'imaginary', whereas they are both grounded in the perception of the actual, and finish in the virtual existence of memory. Given that the temporal paradigm reveals a similarity of origins and destination, the distinction between the actual and the imaginary in audio/visual texts becomes even more tenuous. Whether a textual event is recalled as a 'reality' or as a 'fiction' seems less relevant than its effectiveness as an agent of social change, as a modifier of individual presuppositions, or merely as an aesthetic or sensory experience.

Time, Memory and the Interpretation of Audio/Visual Texts

Husserlian phenomenology conflicts with the Deleuze-Guattarian notion of nomadism, in which the subject is not segregated from nature, but coexists with the actual in smooth space, and on a plane of consistency. 49 In line with the multiperspectival approach outlined in chapter one, however, the emphasis has been placed on the points of similarity rather than conflicts between theories. The 'reaching out' of the subject toward the object as posited by Husserl, and the resulting inseparability of subject and object, presses the Deleuze-Guattarian dismissal of boundaries between the 'thinking subject,' the body and the natural world. There are further similarities between the two theoretical perspectives.

A significant function of the interpretation of audio/visual narrative is the experience of the temporal 'present' and its placement within a constructed chronology. This narrative device utilizes cognitive processes which are similar in function to recollections of the actual world. Perceptual actuality is restricted to the present, and the past is available only through recollections of perception. Once an event is perceived it is framed by interpretive strategies, which are determined by

48 All included in Tomaluso, 1990.
49 Stadler, 1990, p.46.
50 Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., pp.134, 379-381.
existing schemata, which, in turn, effect the cultural construct of reality. The event, then, combines an actual past into a dual construction of a reality/virtual image. The cognitive activity required for the interpretation of fictional or non-fictional textual events is similar, but each bears the name of a genre classification which delineates one from the other. One becomes a memory of an image categorized as ‘fictional’ and the other a memory of an image termed ‘real’.

Deleuze observes that there are two regimes of images, firstly the organic regime, in which:

...The real that is assumed is recognizable by its continuity - even if it is interrupted - by the continuity shots which establish it and by the laws which determine successions, simultaneities and permanences: it is a regime of localizable relations, actual linkages, legal, causal and logical connections. It is clear that this system includes the unreal, the recollection, the dream and the imaginary, but as contrast. Thus the imaginary will appear in the forms of caprice and discontinuity, each image being in a state of disconnection with another into which it is transformed. This will be a second pole of existence which will be defined by pure appearance to consciousness, and no longer by legal connections. Images of this type will be actualized in consciousness, in accordance with the needs of the present actual or the crises of the real. 51

Such ‘organic’ images create a clear distinction between the real and the imaginary within the narrative, despite the fact that the narrative is defined as fictional, and consists largely of imaginary content. This illusion of the imaginary utilizes narrative schemata which identify the laws of causality with reality (or, with the conventions of cinematic realism).

Deleuze contrasts a second regime of images, the crystalline image, with the organic image. The crystalline image reveals the arbitrary nature of the distinction between the real and the imaginary in audio/visual texts:

The crystalline regime is completely different: the actual is cut off from its motor linkages, or the real from its legal connections, and the virtual, for its part, detaches itself from its actualizations, starts to be valid for itself. The two modes of existence are now combined in a circuit where the real and the imaginary, the actual and the virtual, chase after each other, exchanging their roles and becoming indiscernible. 52

The removal of the distinction between the actual and virtual, and the real and imaginary, reveals that it is the conventions of genre and form that provide the cues which activate interpretive strategies and frame the understanding of the images. The crystalline regime of images can be clearly observed in Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998), in which the distinction between the actual and the virtual in Truman’s virtual world provides the crucial enigma of the narrative. The suburban setting, assumed in the earlier parts of the narrative as Truman’s ‘reality,’ becomes the constructed contrivance of a Hollywood television program, where the world in which Truman lives (his perceived reality), is, in fact, a virtual world within an

51 Deleuze, 1989, pp.126-127.
52 Ibid., p.127.
Narrative as Discourse and Cognition

immense television studio. The reality of the early part of the narrative is revealed to be a virtual reality, whereas the (narrative) actual lies outside the walls of the virtual world.

This transition, although it metaphorically expresses the actual/virtual distinction, is accommodated within an imaginary, fictional world. The ‘real’ world encountered by Truman outside the studio remains a virtual world for the actual viewer. The actual becomes more difficult to define when the virtual is excluded from its definition. In defining these relations, Deleuze refers to Bergson, who posits the virtual qualities of all experience that has ceased to be present and has become past:

Our actual existence, then, whilst it is unrolled in time, duplicates itself along with a virtual existence, a mirror image. Every moment of our life presents the two aspects, it is actual and virtual, perception on the one side and recollection on the other ... Whoever becomes conscious of the continual duplicating of his present into perception and recollection ... will compare himself to an actor playing his part automatically, listening to himself and beholding himself playing. 52

The experience of actuality as pure perception occurs only in a perpetual ‘present,’ and all further consideration of actual events is achieved through a continual recollection of the past. Recollection is a virtual image of the past, yet has a relation with another actual, another ‘present’ in which it is recalled. Deleuze describes this relation as “the virtual image which corresponds to a particular actual image, instead of being actualized, of having to be actualized in a different actual image. It is an actual-virtual circuit on the spot, and not an actualization of the virtual with a shifting actual. It is a crystal image and not an organic image.” 54 All perception of the (present) actual is immediately connected with virtual recollection, as the crystal image divides the actual perception into a corresponding virtual recollection image, which then affects the perception of the ‘new present’. Perception of the actual, even in its most instantaneous function, is inseparable from the virtual, as perception relies on the virtual in order to locate it within a chronological context of causality.

To contrast the virtual screen image of film or television with physical perception by referring to the physical experience as actual, and the screen image as virtual, overlooks the virtual component in all experience and perception. Actuality is perceived from within a continual flow of time, in which virtual recollection provides the necessary conditions and context for the perception of the ever-advancing ‘present’. The screen image, then, is a virtual image that is once removed from virtual recollection. The actual is increasingly isolated to a physical ‘present’ that cannot be perceived in isolation from virtual recollection of the past. When the model of rhizome is applied to this condition, it is evident that a distinction between actual and virtual is difficult to justify. Actuality is connected to the virtual, as the virtual is required in order to comprehend, frame or interpret the actual. The screen image could be defined as a metaphorical extension of this process, where the actual is represented virtually, thereby becoming another recollection of actuality.

The documentary image, in particular, makes the distinction between the actual and the virtual difficult, as the events depicted are actual physical occurrences, yet

52 Bergson, cited in Deleuze, 1989, p.79.
54 Deleuze, op. cit., p.80.
are virtually recorded and viewed. The non-fictional image is organic in form, with a
clear distinction between the (absent) 'imaginary' and (existent) 'reality' within the
narrative, but the virtual screen image being difficult to distinguish from the event
that is represented. The relation of the image to the actual is subject to one less
stratum of virtualization than is the case with fictional narrative. The fictional
'actual' is a construction of the text, and contrasts the textual 'present' with the past,
or the imaginary, within the diegetic world of the text.

Fig. 3.3.1: The three strata of virtualization.

The actuality represented in fictional narrative is, in fact, a virtual image that takes
on the status of actuality within the diegetic world. It is an actuality, but a
dramatically enacted actuality, that is, the actuality consists of actors in front of the
camera. The actuality of the non-fictional text, however, is removed from the
physical occurrence only by time and space, and dramatic representation is, if not
entirely absent, then minimized in the non-fictional text. The virtual aspects to be
found in the non-fictional text are partially in its narrative construction as a media
artifact, and partially in the technology of film and television. I propose that there
are, therefore, three strata of virtualization that occur in the interpretation of texts.

55 The issue of performance and non-fictional text is addressed further in chapter 5.
Narrative as Discourse and Cognition

(See figure 3.3.1). Firstly, the initial mental crystallization of the present into actual (present), and virtual (past), secondly the technological recording of sound and light and their reproduction as virtual images and sounds emanating from the screen and loudspeaker, and thirdly, the textual depiction of an actual and virtual realm, utilizing memory ‘flashbacks’, imaginary scenes, dreams, hallucinations and supernatural events in contrast with the diegetic actual. There is a mental-virtual, a technological-virtual and a narrative-virtual that contrast with, and interact with actuality. The mental-virtual engages the actual-present with the virtual-past, as has been described above. The technological-virtual reproduces the past event as an actual, present representation, metaphorically reproducing the mental processes of recollection by reintroducing the image of the past into the present actuality. The narrative-virtual differs from the others, in that it does not directly compare actuality with the narrative-virtual, but creates a substitute actuality within the text, as a narrative-actual that, in turn, is compared with the actual.

**ORGANIC**

- Object independent of its representation.

**CRYSTALLINE**

- The representation is indistinguishable from the object.

**DESCRIPTION**

- Real: Recognized by its continuity, its causality, its actuals.
- Imaginary: Discontinuity, actualizations of consciousness.
- The two are distinct.

**REAL & IMAGINARY**

- Real: cut off from its connections.
- Imaginary: takes on validity.
- The two are indistinguishable.

**NARRATION**

- ‘Truthful’ narration
- Reaction to sensory motor schemata.
- Representation of chronological time.

- Falsifying narration
- Collapse of sensory motor schemata
- Possibilities, probabilities, abstractions of time and space.

**Fig. 3.3.2:** Organic and Crystalline regimes of the image, after Deleuze, 1989, pp.126-137.
In contrast to the above model, Deleuze’s notion of organic and crystalline images obfuscates the distinctions between narrative actual and actuality itself (see figure 3.3.2 below). The delineation between the three strata of virtualization is accounts for the notion of a narrative actual, in that narrative-actual and the actual are conflated during the interpretation of the text. The distinction between reality and the imaginary in the narrative are, then, according to Deleuze, defined in the organic regime by the contrasts between images, and by the laws of causality and continuity that indicate actuality. He equates the laws of causality and continuity within the narrative with those in the actual world. Images that are dislodged from such laws are, through their absence, assumed to be of the imaginary realm.

In the organic image narrative-actuality is a mimesis of actuality, in which the image correlates with the actual through the consistency of laws of continuity and causality, and the characters respond to sensory motor situations in a manner that correlates with actual events, modes of behavior and response to actual situations. When narrative actuality is indistinguishable from actuality, or when the viewer is unable to delineate between fiction and non-fiction, Deleuze defines the image as crystalline, as the viewer is unable to identify a reality or an imaginary aspect of the text. Spatial dimensions, chronological time and laws of causality that refer to actuality are transgressed, having the effect of highlighting the virtual characteristics of the medium. Organic certainty is displaced by crystalline uncertainty, as real and imaginary, actual and virtual are combined in the image.

The crystalline image is evident in *Pulp Fiction* (1994) in which Tarantino complicates the chronology of events, with the opening and closing scenes being identical, but providing an extension of the chronology in the closure. The narrative abandons continuity in its many jumps through diegetic time, leaving the viewer uncertain as to the order of occurrence in any attempt to construct a chronological account of the fictional events. The film falsifies any correlation between chronological time and the non-continuous time of the diegesis. The correlation between the narrative and actuality is diminished by the departure from chronological continuity, and by the abnormal character responses to situations (such as discussing the weather just before breaking down an apartment door to brutally assassinate the inhabitants). There remains some level of correlation between actuality and narrative, but no attempt is made to align the narrative with a completely ‘believable’ narrative actuality. The film conflates the narrative-actual with the narrative-virtual, and is, to employ Deleuze’s terminology, a falsifying narrative. 56

Deleuze does not clearly indicate the importance of the narrative as a virtual representation in itself. The three strata of virtualization that I have outlined above clearly demonstrate the fact that the narrative-actual is contained within a technological-virtual representation. The third strata of virtualization can only be achieved through the second, whether the technology of representation is printed, optical or aural. 57 The mental-virtual is, however, employed in the perception of the

56 Deleuze, 1989, p.130.
57 Oral, or physically produced narrative, such as dance rituals, are the only cases in which narrative bypasses the technology of reproduction, although this is only the case when an account of actual events has been solely orally or physically transmitted, to the exclusion of written or printed text, or of sound and image recording.
technological-virtual and the narrative-virtual in a similar manner to its utilization in the perception of the actual. Each moment of the physical image and sound, and each instant of the narrative, relies on the mental-virtual to be re-actualized in the present, as the screen image is perceived by the physical senses. Each present moment in the text emerges from the recollection of past moments in the text, and, significantly, past moments outside the text, from actual experience and the cultural construct of reality. 58

It is in the interpolation of textual data that the delineation between virtual and actual in their three strata becomes consequential. The viewer attributes relative levels of actuality to the text in terms of the second and third strata of virtualization, and their consistency with the continuity and causality of the actual world. The organic image attempts a correlation between the actual and the virtual that is innate to the technological-virtual, that of the reproduction of a physical actuality recorded by the camera and microphone. 59

The virtual screen image reproduces the audio/visual qualities of actuality, and the narrative delineates between the virtual and actual in the organic regime, and obfuscates this delineation in the crystalline regime. It is, however, the process of virtualization that poses the most challenging questions for the cognitive activity of the viewer. The screen image (technological-virtual), partially reproduces the form of actuality, although never achieving an absolute correspondence. The virtual representation is, however, partially comprised of the form of actuality. The arrangements of the emulsion particles or electrons that produce the image have physically imitated the actual. Bazin insists that:

The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space which govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model. 60

This view, however, overlooks the virtual relations of the two-dimensional screen image to three-dimensional actuality, and the importance of time and continuity, particularly in the editing and montage of film images. Bazin’s central thesis, however, justifies some consideration, as the actual is reproduced in several of its aspects by the screen image. Laws of continuity and causality may be subject to the construction of narrative, but physical appearance, movement, and geometric relations are represented by the screen image with an illusion of reproduction that is sufficient to convince a viewer of the actuality of the representation. Television news reports, although mediated and narrativized, are generally received as actual events in their visual depiction of occurrences, such as natural disasters, traffic accidents or other physical events recorded by the camera. The important distinction in such cases

59 The manipulation of photographic images, and the inception of computer generated graphic images are significant challenges to the organic regime of images, and amount to a crystalline division of actual and virtual within the image. This issue is examined further in chapter 8.
is the one drawn between the technological-virtual and the narrative-actual. The screen image may correlate closely with the actual, but to what extent is it narrativized?

Once again the rhizome model is a useful model for theorizing the virtual/actual bifurcation. It is possible for the screen image to 'contain' some of the actual, while simultaneously to function as a virtual representation of the actual. There is no need to create an absolute distinction between the two theoretical positions. The realm of narrative construction need not counter the connection between the image and the actuality it depicts, as all screen images are a virtual reality, but are profoundly influenced by, and indicative of the actual. This connection cannot be utterly severed by the realization that the screen image does not correspond absolutely or perfectly to actuality. The existence of multiple connections between the image and the actual, the image and cultural reality, and the viewer with the image, enables the flow of actuality through the image, where the data concerning the actual effects the actions of the viewer in the actual. There is no impermeable boundary that divides the actual from its image, but there is, on the other hand, no absolute correlation between the actual and its image. There are connections between the actual and the virtual that do not indicate an absolute isolation, or, on the other hand, an absolute correlation of the two regimes.

The relations between virtual and actual are not limited to the contrast between image and actuality, but also occur in all perception and recollection. Virtualization is a three-fold cognitive function that utilizes memory, image-actual relations, and internal narrative contrasts. The psychic distinction between the imaginary and the 'real' is reflected in narrative as a represented actual, and a represented virtual, but this distinction occurs as the cultural conventions of narrative, and the interpretive strategies that accompany these conventions, are applied. All audio/visual narrative can be considered to operate on three levels of virtualization, and any analysis of actuality and the image must take these distinctions into consideration. The distinctions between actuality and narrative, and between fiction and non-fiction, are not a clear delineation, or an impermeable boundary, but require definitions that encompass notions of continuum between extremes, and of layers of stratification that can be permeated through the plane of consistency that underlies all distinctions. Narrative and actuality, then, are inseparable from notions of form and genre, and are only distinguished through the cultural conventions that overcode and segmentarize the opposition of fictional and non-fictional texts. The distinction between actual and virtual is a more appropriate means of distinguishing the image from the actual, but this distinction, also, is not reducible to a simple binary opposition, as can be observed in the three strata of virtualization. The findings of this chapter, then, can be summarized in the observation that there is no clear delineation of actuality from narrative, and that the two effect each other, both in the text, and in actuality. Narrative and actuality are reciprocally interdependent.
Chapter 4

AUDIENCE EXPECTATION AND THE INTERPRETATION OF NARRATIVE

The previous chapter has considered narrative as discourse, the cognitive processes that are utilized in the interpretation of texts, and the viewer’s apperception of actual and virtual in the text. This discussion highlights the significance of cultural constructs and the conventions of form and genre in the interpretation of texts. Genre and narrative form are identified as influences on the viewer’s attribution of actuality to the representation. Having examined the viewer in terms of interpretive strategies and convergence of actuality with the cultural construct, the definition of relations between the viewer and the audience as a community is now consequential. The significance of the conventions of genre, which are indicative of cultural interpretive strategies (cultural schemata), and the acculturation of the individual viewer is the subject of the forthcoming discussion.

In this chapter the cultural affect on the reception of texts will be investigated. The viewer is not only engaged with the text, but is also situated in a social and cultural context which shapes reception and interpretation. The connection between the individual viewer and community in relation to audio/visual texts, and the consequence of collective reception on the interpretive strategies of the individual require definition in order to thoroughly research the narrativization of actuality. The interpretation of narrative does not, after all, cease with the viewing of the text, but remodels the cultural construct of the individual, in turn affecting the culture.

This chapter will explore the reception of texts by explicating the notion of audience as mass or as individual, and the conjunction of these factors in interpretation. The implications of the viewer being situated within an interpretive community are the subject of the remainder of the chapter. The development of social knowledge, defined by Collins, ¹ in combination with the accumulation of viewing experiences, bring about a maturation of interpretive strategies that will be defined in the second section. The influence of genre conventions on the reading of texts will be considered in the third, and finally, the verisimilitude of the audio/visual text as a determining influence on interpretation will be discussed.

¹ Collins, 1983.
4.1 Audience as Mass or Individual

Modernist Conceptions of Audience

The convergence of media forms and the contravention of boundaries between genre reveal a tendency in production practice which is symptomatic of changes in cultural configuration. New technologies have allowed viewers increased access to screen images, causing a transformation in audience perception, and a shift in the expectations audiences have of audio/visual narrative. When considering the rapid development of media form the response of the audience requires close examination. Firstly the question of what constitutes an audience requires attention. Is audience a collection of individual viewers or a ‘mass’ audience? Are they actively involved in bringing about movements in media form and genre or are they passive observers and consumers of the changes wrought by media production institutions?

For many years the assumption that the audience were passive, vulnerable victims of textual control, being influenced and affected by the ideologies and views expressed by the producers of the film or program, was prevalent. Theorists in the realm of television research described the audience condescendingly, implying that the audience were not only vulnerable prey to the ruthless machinations of producers and television broadcasting institutions, but also that they were a homogenous mass which thought little and responded as one. They were credited with no ability to analyze the content of programs and no individuality in the manner of their reception, and theorized as a multitudinous ‘sponge’ which absorbed broadcast television and film, and were involuntarily effected by the viewing process. David Morley likens this approach to the hypodermic injection:

The first position is most obviously represented by the whole tradition of effects studies, mobilizing a hypodermic model of media influence, in which media are seen as having the power to "inject" their audiences with particular messages which will cause them to behave in a particular way.  

This view of a soporific, credulous audience was not, however, consistent with the conclusions arrived at by those who were critical of popular television.

The most obvious difficulty with the hypodermic model was the contradiction between the view of the audience as passive victims, and that of an audience who modifies their behavior as a result of the viewing process. Morley described the disdain with which viewers were dismissed as either passively ignorant or susceptible to control, and concluded that this approach included inconsistencies in the perceived audience-television relationship:

On the one hand, television is accused of reducing its audiences to the status of “zombies” or “glassy eyed dupes” who consume a constant diet of predigested junk food, churned out by the media “sausage factory” and who suffer the anaesthetic effects of this addictive and narcotic substance ... Television has also been accused

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1 See for example Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979.
2 Morley, 1989, p.16
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of making us do all manner of things, most notably in the debates around television and violence - where it has been argued that the viewing of violent television content will cause viewers to go out and commit violent acts. 4

An audience could not be simultaneously passive and responsive to broadcast television. Television could not be acting as an "anaesthetic" and also to make us "do all manner of things." These inconsistencies in early theories of television audience perception and behavior were the result of an assumption of knowledge by theorists and a lack of substantial research into actual audience response.

Such early trends in perceptions of audience behavior and reception could be seen in the writing of Adorno and Horkheimer, prominent in the Frankfurt School. Their belief that a small minority, an elite group should bear the responsibility for the consciousness of the age resulted from assumptions concerning the mass culture audience which provided some of the earliest examples of the 'hypodermic' model as described by Morley. Docker, however, questions the legitimacy of their conclusions concerning the influence of popular media forms, most particularly Hollywood Cinema, on American audiences. Their assumption that mass audiences involuntarily changed their behavior as a result of exposure to popular film is formulated, according to Docker, without sufficient evidence or foundation in analysis:

The level of evidence for such propositions is, then, not only disturbingly casual and even laughable. It is also complacent, and therefore repellant. 'The Culture Industry' was written in the early 1940s, and presumably represents their reflections on 1930s Hollywood film. Yet while there is an occasional reference to Hollywood stars, no titles of any movies are mentioned: there was no invitation by Adorno and Horkheimer to readers to check the claims being made about Hollywood with any actual examples. In a monologic way, readers are positioned by the Culture Industry essay as passive, as having automatically to accept their totalising judgements. 5

Adorno and Horkheimer's criticism of popular cinema and audience response was not founded on any analytical data, or even on textual examples, but assumed a position of intellectual and cultural 'superiority' in ascertaining the value of American popular culture.

These assumptions were carried on in Adorno's writing on television in the 1950s. Once again the audience were portrayed as passive and gullible victims of television's insidious indoctrination, which subtly altered the consciousness of the viewer to accept the values of the capitalist state. Docker points out that the consistent failure in Adorno's assumed knowledge of audience response is that:

Adorno's TV essay mechanically reproduces the positions of "The Culture Industry", within an overriding modernist assumption, that we saw before in Q.D. Leavis' Fiction and the Reading Public. We can read off knowledge of audience responses and reception - the human condition of the mass of the population - from our (presumed) knowledge of mass culture texts. Knowledge that rarely even encompasses the title of a TV program. 6

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4 ibid., p.16  
5 Docker, 1994, p.41  
6 ibid., p.46
Docker’s comparison of Leavis and Adorno not only arises from a similarity in ideological content, but also from the common position of assumed knowledge, where the theorist arrogantly presupposes the responses and resultant variations in behavior of the audience without verifying these opinions with research, or even reference to a text. Adorno’s views reflect those of modernist literary theorists, who present the audience of mass culture as a singular conglomerate with no allowance for individual, unique or specific responses to popular texts. The approach of the American immigrants who maintained the theoretical perspectives of the Frankfurt school (most notably Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse), was, according to Docker, representative of “the general literary-modernist stress on the power of culture in the modern world”, a power which they identify as an oppressive influence on society.  

Quantitative Audience Research

The introduction of broadcast television brought with it a wave of quantitative audience research. Audiences were categorized, classified and analyzed, firstly in terms of viewing habits, and later in their socio-economic configuration, and political alliances. Although this approach represented the audience in clusters rather than as a singular mass, the subdivisions remained large. The characteristics of the audience were defined according to a series of demographic classifications, marital status, gender, age, and type of employment. The individual viewer remained largely anonymous, designated a social status according to the chosen terms of classification adopted by researchers. Robert Allen highlights the link between the requirements of broadcasting institutions and the collection of empirical data on television audiences:

From the earliest days of broadcasting as an advertising medium to the present, a great deal of the sociological research on broadcasting has been done in direct or indirect response to the needs of broadcasters. In all television systems based on the sale of advertising time by broadcasters and the “sale” of audiences to advertisers, it is vital that broadcasters know the size and constitution of the audiences that watch particular programs in particular locations at particular times. Most of what we “know” about television audiences takes the form of this kind of measurement. 

Such empirical methods reflect a positivism that employs scientific methods to audience analysis, analyzing the demographics of audience without questioning the relevance of such broadly quantitative methodologies to the activities of television viewers.

This research served the purposes of television broadcasting corporations and advertisers, but did not necessarily assist in the investigation of television viewers themselves. Broadcasting institutions are concerned with the marketing and commercial potential of their industries, not with the furtherance of academic inquiry. Ellis points out the conflict of interest between an ethnographic or sociological concern and the industrial requirements of television broadcasting corporations:

7 ibid., p.37.
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For 'audience' is a profoundly ideological concept, that has very little to do with what viewers are doing or how they are interpolated. Broadcasting institutions are not concerned with 'viewers', but they are with 'audience'. Viewers are individuals, people who use TV within their domestic and group social contexts ... Audiences are bulk agglomerations created by statistical research. They have no voices and the most basic of characteristics, they 'belong' to income groups and are endowed with a few broad educational and cultural features. Audiences do not use TV, they watch it and consume it. Broadcasting institutions do not seek viewers, they seek audiences.  

The audience, then, had been described firstly as victims of the 'culture industries' by Adorno, and secondly as merchandise to be sold to advertisers, but in both cases it was not the audience as individual viewers of television texts which was considered, but the audience as a mass of consumers. The mass audience was subdivided and analyzed using quantitative methodology, with empirical research techniques being applied to the analysis of heterogeneous human activity.

The emergence of the 'uses and gratifications' school in the 1970s saw the audience finally credited with the ability to take power over the media, by using it to satisfy psychological needs. Empirical methods remained, however, the methodology applied to this field of research in an attempt to study the behavior of the audience and the uses they made of television. Quantitative research methods and the scientific model were, according to Ang, inappropriate:

In positivist social science, the hypothetico-deductive testing of theory through empirical research, quantitative in form, is cherished as the cornerstone of the production of "scientific" knowledge. Theory that is not empirically tested, or that is too complex to be moulded into empirically tested hypotheses, is dismissed as "unscientific." These assumptions, which are essential to the dominant version of the uses and gratifications approach as it was established in the 1970s, are now contested by a growing number of researchers who claim that reality cannot be grasped and explained through quantitative methods alone. Furthermore they forcefully assert that to capture the multidimensionality and complexity of audience activity the use of qualitative methods - and thus a move towards the "ethnographic" - is desperately called for.  

Such a movement towards the qualitative can be observed in the research of Liebes and Katz,  who are significant in the 'uses and gratifications' school of thought, yet apply qualitative/ethnographic research methods to the problem of audience activity.

Ethnographic research provides an indication of the complexity of cultural and individual responses to television. Not only the choice of program, but also the reaction to program content can be discussed by the viewer, providing researchers with an insight into the interaction between text and audience. Ang recognizes the ability of ethnographic research to explore areas which are inaccessible to empirical methods:

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Ethnographic work, in the sense of drawing on what we can perceive and experience in everyday settings, acquires its critical mark when it functions as a reminder that reality is always more complicated and diversified than our theories can represent, and that there is no such thing as "audience" whose characteristics can be set once and for all.  

The audience, when considered on a qualitative and ethnographic basis, is revealed to be a more complex, random and indefinable area of research than can be concretely defined using quantitative methods. This is not to say that quantitative research is of no value, but rather, that it implies a preconceived attitude towards the audience. Quantitative methods insinuate the existence of a unitary mass which is to be divided into subgroups, rather than individuals who, though they may share cultural and social backgrounds, remain discrete and unique in their response to texts.

The Subjectivity of Research and the Cultural Positioning of Subjectivity

Research methods are affected by the predisposition of the researcher concerning the subject of under research. Findings only become relevant when they are interpreted by a researcher and presented in accompaniment with an explication of the findings which have been deduced from the data. Quantitative research may appear to provide 'hard facts' about the audience, but these facts are not evident unless the researcher arrives at a conclusion as to the implications of the raw data. Statistics concerning viewing habits and socio-economic status do not in themselves indicate anything unless meanings are attributed to them by researchers, who may identify quantifiable patterns or modifications of the viewing habits of age groups, gender groups or social classes. These attributed meanings depend as much on the predisposition of the researchers and the aims of the research project as they do on the collected data. It is possible for dissimilar or divergent findings to be arrived at from the same raw data, depending on the research methodology and the interpretations applied to the data. The peer revue process has been instituted as a means of minimizing the inadvertent oversight of bias or inaccuracy in research, but it is difficult to completely avoid the influence of cultural affinities and prevalent social attitudes when conducting research, as these often result from assumptions that are not consciously adopted by the researcher.  

Qualitative research also requires interpretation of data by researchers, particularly when data collection takes the form of interview which consists of the viewer’s interpretations and observations. Qualitative researchers are more openly reliant on interpretation of data, as the data is experiential rather than empirical and cannot easily be expressed in quantitative form. Questions as to why a viewer selects a particular program, what meanings the viewers have drawn from the program and how the viewers have arrived at their interpretations can be addressed by utilizing verbal responses to the text. This methodology can reveal information which remains unaccounted for when quantitative methods are employed. Ang recognizes the

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12 Ang, op. cit., p. 110.
13 In illustration of this point see the forthcoming discussion of Liebes and Katz (1989), and the inadvertent bias toward American viewers through the selection of an American program for analysis.
inevitability of implementing interpretation in the analysis of data, and the complexity of the data itself:

The collection of data, either quantitative or qualitative in form, can never be separated from their interpretation; it is only through practices of interpretative theorizing that unwrapt social experiences and events related to media consumption become established as meaningful “facts” about audiences. Understanding “audience activity” is thus caught up in the discursive representation, not the transparent reflection, of realities having to do with audiences.\(^{14}\)

The study of media audiences, then, is a process whereby researchers apply an interpretation to data concerning the audience either as a mass to be statistically divided on the basis of program choice, or as individuals whose experiences with the media and society are documented. There is no guarantee of objectivity in quantitative empirical research, and, indeed, it may provide less information to researchers wishing to understand the nature of internal audience activity.

Although the audience consists of multiple individuals interpreting media texts, these individuals cannot be considered in isolation from the culture which influences their opinions and behavior. Each viewer lives in a world where media texts are viewed, and also discussed, debated, recounted and evaluated. The choice as to which media texts are viewed is resultant of the surroundings of the viewer, and the meanings which they attribute to these texts can be influenced by social interaction. Morley’s study of family television viewing habits and cultural power\(^{15}\) suggests that viewing habits are a result of ‘the politics of the living room’ in addition to individual choice, where the conflict of gender, age groups and domestic behavioral traits directly affect the content and context of viewing, and also the interpretive strategies of each individual within the family unit. Ang also alludes to the role of household interaction in influencing the formation of viewing habits:

Because subjects are positioned in different ways toward the set, they engage in a continuing struggle over program choice and program interpretation, style of viewing and textual pleasure. What kind of viewer they become can be seen as the outcome of this struggle, an outcome, however, that is never definitive because it can always be contested and subverted. What we call “viewing habits” are thus not a more or less static set of characteristics inhabited by an individual or group of individuals; rather they are the temporary result of a never-ending, dynamic, and conflict-ridden process.\(^{16}\)

Although individuals may have unique tastes, tendencies and interpretive strategies, these characteristics are the result of social influence both from the family or household, the peer group, and culture. Individual responses are inseparable from societal effects. This research once again concurs with the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2, who propose that there is no distinction between the individual and society.\(^{17}\) Social affect is an integral component of the

\(^{14}\) Ang. op. cit., pp. 104-105.
\(^{15}\) Morley 1986.
\(^{16}\) Ang. op. cit., p.109.
\(^{17}\) Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.219.
cultural construct of reality, which is reflected in the interpretive strategies of viewers.

Individual film and television viewing experiences are not isolated from society at large, but are incorporated into everyday life. Television, cinema, video and cable television play an ever-increasing role in society’s mass consciousness, providing an expansive collection of texts which provide a heterogeneous system of interconnected cultural references. Intertextuality, hypertextuality and the breakdown of boundaries between forms and genres ensure that texts cannot be considered in isolation from the accumulated body of texts, which, in turn, cannot be separated from their culture. Robert Allen describes television viewing as one aspect of a larger cultural field, where all forms of text interact and are discursively connected:

The public or social dimensions of television “reading” are undeniable. The simultaneity of television broadcasts, with millions of sets receiving the same images at the same time, makes watching a television program a social phenomenon even if we are “alone” while we watch. The oceanic nature of television programming, its constant references to other texts, the close connections between television and other forms of textual production, all combine to plug any individual act of television viewing into another network of other viewings and other discourses, and to link us as viewers into the larger culture. 18

The culture, which is a conglomeration of texts, institutions, social conventions, aesthetic artifacts, interpretive frameworks and procedures, provides a context in which a single text takes on meanings that are partly the result of social knowledge, as defined by Collins. 19

The individual viewer, when considered as a participant in a culture, ceases to operate as a distinct entity, and becomes a product of the culture. Hence, the very hallmarks of individuality, being unique responses, the differences between individuals, personal tendencies in interpretive strategies and choice in consumption of texts, can be seen as the result of the cultural affects which have shaped the individual. Allen suggests that these influences are largely unconscious, being internalized and integrated into the personality of the individual reader of a text. He refers to Fish, 20 who also maintains that readers/viewers cannot be considered in isolation from their culture.

What appears to the reader as his or her individual imposition of meaning is actually the result of a system of belief and resultant interpretive strategies he or she shares (usually unknowingly) with a larger community of readers. Fish shifts the focus of literary criticism one step further away from “the text.” According to him, there are no “textual structures” that exist apart from a particular interpretive strategy that looks for and values them; there is no individual reader whose activities might be isolated and theorized; both text and individual reader are social products. With Fish the very notion of a text depends upon an interpretive community that endows this set of marks with that status. 21

19 Collins, 1983.
20 Fish, 1980.
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Given that texts rely on cultural strategies of interpretation, the viewer is therefore not considered in this thesis as an individual who has distinct responses, but as a member of a community which delimits a certain range of responses according to the conventions of that community, as defined in chapters 1 and 2. Conversely, the community is comprised of individuals that ensure that conventions and representations do not completely delimit and govern interpretive response. The individual and the culture are engaged in a reciprocal presupposition in which both are interdependent, yet both are in constant diametric tension. The opposing forces of homogeneity and heterogeneity (also evident in the Deleuze-Guattarian notion of molar and molecular, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2), can be seen at work in these relations.

Rice’s findings that interpretive strategies are influenced by cultural schemata which cause “characteristic interpretation” according to cultural tradition and practice, 22 fails to locate the cultural influences on interpretation in relation to other determining factors. While not denying the existence of such cultural affects, it would be erroneous to assume that they constitute the entire spectrum of influences on interpretation. A culture provides stereotypes for interpretation, but does not impose a regime of identical interpretations. Rice’s research once again provides an example of the researcher’s presuppositions influencing the findings. The occurrence of similarities between versions of foreign stories recalled by members of a particular cultural group is the basis for Rice’s principal thesis. 23 In finding such similarities the researcher has failed to account for the differences of interpretations within a cultural group and the reasons for such variance. Cultural schemata could be described as a major influence, but not necessarily the only, or even the dominant factor in shaping interpretation. Individuals within a cultural group may also vary in the extent to which they have embraced the culture, and also in their responses to the culture. For certain cultural groups the influence of the culture on narrative interpretation may be stronger than for other groups. A text within a culture may be revered by some and disregarded by others, comprehended by some and misunderstood by others, for reasons other than cultural influence. To accede to culture as a primary determinant of interpretation is to disregard the many psychological factors which bring about the complex combination of traits, preferences and peculiarities which constitute the individual, and which are in contrariety to the codified delimitation of cultural schemata.

Heterogeneous Subjectivity and Audience

Societal and cultural influences play a large part in shaping the characteristics of each audience member, but cannot be defined as the exclusive influence on interpretive strategies. The particular subjectivity of an individual cannot be said to be either entirely resultant of, or, alternatively, entirely insulated from their position and situation as members of a community, but rather as engaging in a continual interdependency. The audience exists simultaneously as both mass and individual,

23 ibid., p.164.
with the individual composed partly of culture, the community comprised of multiple individuals that conjoin to modify and define the characteristics of the culture.

The conjunction of the social field and the individual requires a notion of subjectivity that is not unitary, but consists of multiple strands, or facets. The diversity of the social field is thereby reflected in a subjectivity that is, according to Mouffe, heterogeneous:

... We are in fact always multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities (as many, really, as the social relations in which we participate and the subject positions they define), constructed by a variety of discourses and precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those subject positions. 24

Individuals are situated within, and comprised of the 'mass' that surrounds them. Social interaction cannot be considered to be a communication of 'internal' with 'external', or subject with object, but is a connection that implies a continuum between the social and the individual.

Guattari provides a more specific definition, describing subjectivity as polyphonic (in the musical sense), "where a complex refrain plays a dominant role". 25 According to this model of subjectivation, the multiple constituents of subjectivity can be subordinated to a dominant theme, in which "the different components conserve their heterogeneity, but are nevertheless captured by a refrain which couples them to the existential Territory of my self". 26 Polyphonic subjectivity, then, allows for an alterity of the subject, in which a predominant point of subjectivation, at a given moment in time, can be made redundant and replaced as the emergent subjectivity transforms. The multiplicity of social articulation is not, however, displaced by such hierarchical organization of subjectivity, but the dominant subjectivity changes according to the conditions of the moment, and is constantly underlying the ascendant 'refrain'. The subject, then, contains multiple components of the social 'mass', but there is a tendency for the dominance of a particular component of subjectivity, although its position of prominence is transformational.

The notion of 'mass' is also inextricably linked to heterogeneous individuality, or the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of molecular flows. The mass is not, and cannot be limited to any unified notion, but consists of "multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single assemblage, operating in the same assemblage: packs in masses and masses in packs". 27 Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between two kinds of multiplicity, defining the mass as consisting of "large quantity, divisibility and equality of the members, concentration, sociability of the aggregate as a whole, one-way hierarchy, organization of territoriality or territorialization, and emission of signs". The pack is defined as "small or restricted numbers, dispersion, nondecomposable variable distances, qualitative metamorphoses, inequalities as remains or crossings, impossibility of a fixed totalization or hierarchization, a Brownian variability in directions, lines of deterritorialization, and projection of particles." The mass

24 Mouffe, 1988, p.44
26 ibid., p.17.
27 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.34.
contains many packs, and, therefore, is an assemblage of variant components in a hierarchical relation. Packs are multiplicities in which each individual is self-reliant, while simultaneously "participating in the band". The mass, then, is an aggregation of individual, of packs, or sub-groups, and of large, hierarchical social structures. Although the notion of mass is a singularity, it is the heterogeneous diversity of its constituents that ensure that it cannot be easily reduced to statistical, quantitative terms.

Inappropriate utilization of statistical and quantitative methodologies is addressed by Baudrillard, who likens statistical methodology (particularly in relation to opinion polls), to the deterministic effect of publicity. The will of the individual is subsumed by society's obsession with itself, and by the social need to unify the diversity of the mass. He states that "each individual is forced despite him or herself into the undivided coherency of statistics," and that this prompts a "redundancy of the social," in which society "no longer enacts itself". By observing its own condition, Baudrillard claims that society has become confused "with its own control screen". The society, by denying the heterogeneity of its constituents, negates itself by continually observing itself. This negative circuit confirms the Deleuzo-Guattarian model of the mass, in that a denial of its heterogeneous nature brings about a disintegration of its identity. Any attempt to unify a mass is a negation of its status as an assemblage, of packs or sub-groups (after Deleuze and Guattari), and of individuals with will and desire (after Baudrillard).

The mass, as a molar aggregate, delimits the action of packs and individuals through the cultural construct of reality, which is culturally transmitted. Conversely, the individual, the pack and the sub-cultural group act to diversify the orthodoxy of acculturation. Allor summarizes the effects of the postmodern notions of mass on audience research, identifying the areas in which it has brought about changes in analytic methodology and artistic practice:

The "mass" in postmodernism functions as a term that denies the possibility of any collective representation of individuals and as an immense theoretical condensation that allows the theorist to speak at the same time (and in the same way) of individual psychology, class action and social codings. Baudrillard's "mass" has been incorporated into audience analysis in two key ways. The first has been in the elaboration of the general model of the simulation of the masses in the media, particularly television. The second has been in the analysis of new cinematic or televisual forms in relation to their simulation effects on implied viewers.

The notions of mass and of individual, in their theoretical consideration, alter the nature of research and the content of representation. The model of rhizome is once again evident in the connections, flows and articulations that permeate the boundaries between text, actuality, society, individual and even theoretical discourse itself. The reception of texts is consequential in the fields of research and of the production of audio/visual texts, and converges with the cultural construct of reality. These fields

34 ibid., p.33. All of the citations included in this paragraph are taken from page 33. Deleuze and Guattari also cite Canetti, 1963, pp.29-30, as a source of "some of the distinctions mentioned here". (See footnote, Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.521).
36 Allor, 1988, p.227. Baudrillard's notion of mass is critiqued in the forthcoming section.
are connected by the cultural network of textual and discursive practices, and must
be considered in their relational situation.

4.2 Development of Discernment in Audience Interpretation

The audience, as defined above, consists of individuals, packs and sub-cultural
groups, and the individual incorporates the cultural construct of reality, and
interpretive strategies inherited from the culture. In this section viewers as
interpreters of audio/visual texts will be considered in relation to the cultural
conditions in which they live, and a hypothetical advancement of interpretive ability
and awareness will be researched.

Distinctions Between Cultural Strategies of Interpretation

The progress of audience research has seen a continual increase in the
appreciation of the interpretive abilities and levels of comprehension of the viewer.
The mindless ‘dupe’ of early researchers, 31 has been transformed into the
consequential constructor of texts in reader response theory, 32 the manipulator of
texts for their own purposes in cultural studies, 33 and has been granted further
independence as the site of desire and belief in postmodern theory, where the
proliferation of media signs are interpreted according to the desire and belief of the
individual. 34 Liebes and Katz observe that there is a continuous transformation in
awareness of audience interpretive skills:

The status of the viewer has been upgraded regularly during the course of
communications research. In the early days, both major schools of research - the
dominant, so-called, and the critical - saw the viewer as powerless, and vulnerable to
the agencies of commerce and ideology. Gradually, the viewer - and indeed, the
reader and the listener - were accorded more power. 35

The question to be considered here is whether this increasing awareness has been
entirely the changing perceptions of theorists who have granted audiences greater
interpretive skills, or whether audiences have actually become more competent in
their interpretation of audio/visual texts.

The research of Liebes and Katz consisted of interviewing different cultural
groups after viewing an episode of Dallas. With the research being conducted in
Israel, the available groups consisted of American, Israeli, Moroccan, Arab and
Russian migrants. A parallel study involving Japanese viewers was also included.

31 See the discussion on the 'hypodermic' theory of audience, and the Frankfurt school in the previous
section, p.112.
32 Seminal reader response theories can be found in Iser, 1978, and Fish 1980.
34 Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, pp.139, 273, and Baudrillard, 1988b, pp.209-211.
35 Liebes & Katz, 1989, p. 204.
Their findings reveal a considerable difference in the interpretive strategies prevalent in disparate cultural communities:

The several communities differ in the targets of their critical statements. The Arabs and the Russians give greater emphasis to the semantic - to the thematics of the program, its ideology, and its message - while the Americans concentrate on statements about form. The Americans ... give rather more emphasis to statements about the functions of characters in the dramatic construction, showing awareness of the dimensions in terms of which the characters are polarized (good-bad, strong-weak, etc.)... 36

These findings demonstrate that cultural differences have an effect on the strategies adopted by audiences when assigning meanings to a television program. The tendency for the Russians and Arabs to emphasize semantics, and the Americans to observe formal construction seem to originate from cultural traditions, where television would appear to be considered as closely aligned with literary criticism in the Russian culture, while the American culture is familiar with the melodramatic array of characters in the soap-opera, and can compare Dallas with the form of other programs of the genre.

In terms of critical awareness, Liebes and Katz found the Americans to be advanced in their abilities to comprehend intertextual relationships and the 'behind the scenes' business of television production. Their knowledge of the media and its appurtenances revealed an understanding of the interaction between production processes, industry procedures and audience interpretative strategies:

There is no question that the Americans are far ahead of the others in the making of metalinguistic statements of all kinds. They are the only ones who show awareness or interest in the business aspect; they are the most sensitive of all groups about the nuances of genre and why Dallas is and is not a soap opera, and how and why it compares with its several spin-offs. The Russians also show a high level of syntactic awareness but their emphasis is rather more on the formulaic aspects of the story and its valuelessness as literature; they are also more likely to suspect that some sort of propaganda is at work. Kibbutzniks tend to pay more attention to the segmental structure of the program as a sequence of two and three person conversations interwoven through the episode and its never-endingness. 37

The observable differences in critical awareness between cultural groups were even more evident when the non-western groups were compared with the western. The most notable difference was the ability to differentiate between referential and critical awareness.

Liebes and Katz also found that referential understanding of programs was universal, but the ability to operate in the critical sphere was not. An ability to identify textual characteristics and form, as opposed to the acceptance of the text as a reference to 'reality' were considered to be evidence of a superior interpretive ability:

34 ibid., pp.208-209.
37 ibid., p.216.
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The analysis must focus disproportionately on the three western groups who participate most in the metalinguistic realm, but it is important to bear in mind that most of the statements of these viewers, too, fall into the referential realm, and thus that the sophisticated viewer should be seen as a commuter between the referential and the critical, and not just as one or the other. 34

Those from western cultural groups, where long term exposure to media has thoroughly integrated audio/visual narrative conventions into the cultural consciousness, demonstrate some reflexive awareness of the interpretive process, whereas those whose cultures are comparatively inexperienced in media consumption are exclusively concerned with referential interpretation, mentioning only the events and characters depicted in the narrative.

The research methods of Liebes and Katz, however, have provided the American subjects with a clear advantage, in that they have viewed a program which has been produced within their culture. Their awareness of the "business aspect" may be a result of familiarity with the North American culture (particularly the American print media, which gives extensive coverage to the activities of media "celebrities"), and the public discussion of the television industry within that community. Their knowledge of "the nuances of genre," the finer points of soap opera narrative, and the "spin-offs" of Dallas, can be attributed to a familiarity with American media industries, rather than described as metalinguistic sophistication. The selection of a program from the Russian, Israeli, Arab or Japanese cultures may have seen a different comparison between American viewers and the other groups. This area requires further research into the affects of cultural familiarity with media industries and procedures on the interpretation of texts.

The advantage to North American viewers in this research does not, however, negate the disparity between non-American western viewers and non-western viewers. Despite the fact that Dallas is culturally distanced from all non-western viewers there is an observable distinction between the "sophisticated" western audience, capable of metalinguistic perception, and the other groups. The implication of this research is that viewers within a particular cultural group undergo a process of development, where metalinguistic perception is the result of external factors, which bring about heightened awareness of the interpretation of media. 35 Education, viewing experience, socio-economic conditions and various other cultural influences have an effect on the interpretive strategies employed when reading a text.

Oppositional and Negotiated Readings

It can be deduced from the research of Liebes and Katz that viewers from a culture which has undergone many years of audio/visual media experience exhibit more refined interpretive strategies than those which have less experience of media production and consumption. This is the result of an accrual of cultural conventions related to the interpretation of texts. The transition from an audience infatuated with the apparent ‘reality’ of projected screen images, to the contemporary audience

34 ibid., p.208.
which, in comparison, considers images to be disposable and commonplace has involved firstly familiarization with media forms, and, secondly, skepticism concerning the motivations of media producers and institutions.

It is commonplace for western viewers to suspect that media representations are deceptive, and that producers intend to mislead their audience. Viewers usually project these doubts onto others, rather than applying such misgivings to themselves. Corner and Richardson observe the tendency for viewers to suspect that other viewers may be deceived by media texts:

Interpretative discourse, in which viewers predict the likely interpretations of others, we have called displaced reading. It occurred in a variety of forms within our respondent's accounts. Often ... it was associated with anxiety about the production of misrepresentations and, in these instances, it was sometimes linked to a perception of the programme-makers' intentions as manipulative.  

Viewers appear to consider themselves immune to manipulation by the media, but expect that other viewers would be vulnerable. It is significant that the motivations of the producers of media are considered by many viewers to be manipulative. Such a response indicates the ability of viewers to distinguish between representations and actuality, and to attribute intention to media producers while viewing the text.

It is the relations of representation to actuality, and of the implicit values expressed in the program that, according to Corner and Richardson, provide the greatest variance of interpretation:

Differences between accounts emerge, as we have tried to show, when it is a question of articulating the depicted in relation to the real ... and of attributing attitudes to the program itself.  

The interpretive strategies employed by viewers, particularly in relation to the ontology of the image and the ideological positioning of the text, are indicative of the interpolation of textual data, and its incorporation into the cultural construct of reality. The diversity of accounts identified by Corner and Richardson reveal that it is these areas of the most subjectively variable fields of interpretation, and that the viewer works at creating connections between textual data and actuality, and applying culturally defined values to the text. The interpretation of narrative content is less variable than the application of narrative content to the field of perceived actuality and the attribution of attitudinal positions to the text.

This consciousness of the cultural and actual context of the narrative has been exaggerated by a cultural obsession with screen images which has brought about a shift from the cultural acceptance of the media as a voice of authority, to a qualified hesitancy, or at least an 'in-difference' to images that have become commonplace.  
The theoretical assent to diversity of interpretation has accompanied an explosion in the diversity of audio/visual texts. As western cultures have become accustomed to

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41 ibid., p. 155.
an excess of screen images the societies have adapted to the change. With the proliferation of images has come a multiplicity of readings, and increased opportunities for social discourse. Hall (after Parkin), points out that there are preferred readings of texts that are patterned by cultural convention:

Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a dominant cultural order, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested. This question of the ‘structure of discourses in dominance’ is a crucial point. The different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organized into dominant or preferred meanings. 44

The culture imposes a hierarchy of meaning that influences the interpretation of texts, and of actual events. This is another expression of the cultural construct of reality that attempts to segment the diversity of meaning and interpretation, as a Deleuze-Guattarian ‘tracing,’ or as Grossberg suggests, a map of meaning. 45

Hall further describes preferred meanings as being reflective of the ideologies and structures which constitute the social order. A culture imposes dominant readings which result from the conventions and traditions of the culture. Interpretive strategies are dependent on the cultural context in which they exist and operate, and take the form of a hierarchical order of textual interpretations which have been established in the development of cultural conventions:

We say dominant, not ‘determined’, because it is always possible to order, classify, assign and decode an event within more than one ‘mapping’. But we say ‘dominant’ because there exists a pattern of ‘preferred readings’; and these both have the institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized. The domains of ‘preferred’ meanings have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practices and beliefs: the everyday knowledge of social structures, of ‘how things work for all practical purposes in this culture’, the rank order of power and interest and the structure of legitimations, limits and sanctions. Thus to clarify a ‘misunderstanding’ at the connotative level, we must refer, through the codes, to the orders of social life, of economic and political power, and of ideology. 46

In referring to a hierarchy of preferred readings Hall has also posits the notion of oppositional readings which are in contradiction to socially dominant readings. There is, therefore, a spectrum of possible positions that can be adopted in interpretation. As an example of this diversity of possible readings consider the viewers of news coverage of an industrial strike. They could either accept the ‘obvious’ description of events, which would constitute a preferred reading, or could suspect that the coverage had been ideologically colored as an attempt to discredit trade unions, which would constitute an oppositional reading. 47

43 Parkin, 1971.
46 Hall, op. cit., p.134.
47 See also Fiske, 1987, pp.302-308.
Hall also describes *negotiated* readings, which consist of interplay between the dominant reading and the individual, subjective position. The viewer may accept the dominant position, in terms of its relations to the "national interest or to the level of geo-politics". The negotiated reading, however, allows for the dominant social viewpoint to:

Make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules - it operates with exceptions to the rule. It accords the privileged position to the dominant definition of events while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to 'local conditions', to its own more corporate positions. ⁴⁸

Hall’s notion of negotiated readings highlights the deterministic influence of cultural convention, and the complexity of the mélange of cultural influences and individual experiences that come into play in the interpretation of texts. The viewer becomes the site of conflict between textual and subjective positions, and may interpret the text according to multiple ideological/social points of view, applying interpretive strategies which allow for contradictory perspectives.

Fiske points out that oppositional and negotiated readings involve the utilization of conscious resistance in the interpretive strategies of the viewer. Preferred readings entail the acceptance of the dominant social order, whereas resistant (oppositional or negotiated), readings involve alternative viewpoints and contrariety to social convention:

The power and the pleasure of making ones own subculturally pertinent meanings out of television can only exist in recognition that opposing semiotic forces are at work in the text. The process of making meanings out of television involves the recognition of authorial, centralizing lines of semiotic force against which the viewer-produced, decentered, democratic meanings are opposed. ⁴⁹

Within a culture, then, sub-cultural groups apply oppositional readings of texts that contrast a position allied to a particular ideology or perspective with that of the dominant social order. Feminist readings may highlight the patriarchal tendencies of a text, while minority racial groups may contest social views which represent racial prejudice. In addition to sub-cultural groupings there are individual interpretive tendencies which are the result of unique experiences leading to associations and understandings that may conflict with preferred readings. Resistant readings cannot be considered to be isolated from preferred readings, but rather, they are a comparison, where the individuals which are allied to a subculture contrast their particular reading to the dominant, and gain pleasure or power from their opposition to the conventional position. In such cases preferred readings act as a point of reference against which resistant readings are compared, and used as confirmation of identity within the overall social structure. I say "within" because the existence of sub-cultures and resistant readings relies on the existence of a mainstream society, and preferred readings, with which comparisons (and negotiations), can be made, but

⁴⁸ This citation and the citations included in the text above are from Hall, op.cit., p.137.
⁴⁹ Fiske, 1989, p. 71
this does not necessarily imply a separation of the sub-culture from the whole cultural group.

**Oppositional texts, Preferred Readings**

Oppositional readings, according to Condit, require a greater interpretive effort. Minority groups can be silenced to some extent by the "comparatively oppressive quantities of work" which are required by oppositional readings, as opposed to the relative ease with which dominant readings are achieved. She also observes that oppositional readings are usually achieved "where group leadership exists and where audience members have access to counter rhetorics". Condit's view limits the viewer's ability to arrive independently at oppositional readings, and ascribes greater influence to the hegemonic social influences of the texts, the institutions (and the producers), which create them. Condit, however, does not allow for the increasing availability of oppositional rhetoric in the form of oppositional texts. Intertextual awareness allows the viewer to engage in comparison between texts, and programs such as *Frontline* provides oppositional rhetoric which elicits interpretations which, in turn, affect the readings of other texts, particularly (in this case) news and current affairs. Oppositional readings are increasingly a textual phenomenon, which provides the viewer with oppositional 'leadership' in developing social ideologies, which compete with the dominant position. An oppositional text, therefore, has a preferred reading that is opposed to the dominant social order. The discourse of social dominance, then, is not always reflected in the reading of a text as dominant or oppositional, as the dominant (preferred), reading of an oppositional text does not concur with the dominant social order. The positioning of the text does not invariably reflect social dominance.

Resistant reading, metalinguistic capacity and critical self-awareness, then, are the characteristics of a sophisticated and experienced audience. In order to achieve this level of discernment of media texts the viewer must have participated in a culture which has produced media texts over an extended period of time, and have observed the interaction of media and society. Cultural exposure to media brings about a development of audience capacity to comprehend and interpret texts with knowledge of the social and historical context which has shaped the culture. 'Alternative' media texts within a culture, by providing an awareness of the alternative interpretive possibilities, enables audiences to examine their own reading of texts and to recognize the influences which direct their understanding. Steiner, in exploring the oppositional encoding of the 'No Comment' segment in *Ms* magazine, where advertisements, which readers have found to be insulting to the female gender, are published in an oppositional context, reaches the conclusion that:

> We need not so pessimistically concede unitary effects of mass media on mass audiences. Indeed, even if the educational apparatus, reinforced by mainstream mass media, generally favors hegemonic meaning systems, looking at alternative publications may suggest how to teach oppositional and critical thinking.

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50 Condit, 1989, p.110.
The text, then, has the capacity to direct the interpretive ideologies of the viewer. Hegemonic ‘preferred’ readings can to some extent be induced by the hegemonic dominant ideologies of texts. The interpretation of texts which oppose the dominant ideology, however, familiarizes the viewer with alternative interpretive strategies, which, in turn, influence the cultural construct of reality.

The site of the determination of the ‘meaning’ of a text, then, is partially the text and partially the viewer. Morley sees Hall’s theory as spanning the gulf between structuralist determinism and reader response theory:

It avoids sliding straight from the notion of a text as having a determinate meaning (which would necessarily impose itself in the same way on all members of the audience) to an equally absurd, and opposite position, in which it is assumed that the text is completely “open” to the reader and is merely the site upon which the reader constructs meaning. This latter “reader as writer” position seems to unite theories as apparently distanced as those of “uses and gratifications” and many forms of “postmodern” theory. In either case any notion of particular forms of textual organization as constraints on the production of meaning disappear entirely and the text is seen as infinitely (and equally) open to all interpretations. The point of the preferred reading model was to insist that readers are, of course, engaged in productive work, but under determinate conditions. Those determinate conditions are of course supplied both by the text, the producing institution and by the social history of the audience. 53

The text plays a part in the formation of cultural realities and the establishment of interpretive communities (as defined by Fish), 54 which develop the capacity for oppositional decoding, and, in turn, produce texts that express oppositional ideologies.

Potential for Multiple Interpretations

It is my contention that the increasing quantity and diversity of media content has led to greater variance of interpretation, and also to an increase in the critical abilities of viewers. The progressive fragmentation of media content in genre and form has provided greater opportunity for viewers to compare and contrast opinions, ideologies and styles of presentation, and to ascribe a wider variety of meanings to texts. Hall’s hierarchic organization of meanings has been expanded by the abundance of texts, and the resultant increase in extra-textual and intertextual influences on interpretation.

The suggestion that the contemporary western audience is capable of sophisticated and multiple interpretations of texts and images is in direct opposition to some postmodern theorists, most notably Jean Baudrillard, who returns to the condescension of Adorno and the Frankfurt school, assuming that the masses are distracted, deceived and deluded by the electronic media. Martin Allor identifies the central themes of Baudrillard’s approach.

54 Fish, S. 1980.
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Baudrillard locates power at the site of the disinterested viewing of the mass. In the absence of collective identity, resistance takes the form of "hyperconformity": the mass resists in the "fatal" strategy of the recycling of signs. 56

Baudrillard's portrayal of the 'mass' as 'disinterested' is a confusion between political lethargy of the mass, and an increased awareness of the rhetorical function of media images. A failure (or refusal), to politically respond to images does not necessarily indicate disinterest, but could also be indicative of a disillusionment with political procedures in western society, and with the representational functions of images themselves.

Theories of affect, 54 can account for the apparent disinterest of the masses by substituting the affect of the images for the (mistakenly identified) lack of response or 'disinterest'. The viewer's affective involvement with the texts becomes, in itself, the purpose of the interaction, and does not require an ideological/political response. Baudrillard assumes that the lack of a reply from the masses can be attributed to the broadcast media functioning as a monopolistic 'giver', a discourse which "forbids response".

To give, and to do it in such a way that no return can be made, is to break exchange to one's own profit and to institute a monopoly: the social process is out of balance. To make a return, on the contrary, is to break this power relationship and to restore on the basis of an antagonistic recipricocity of the circuit of symbolic exchange. The same applies in the sphere of the media: there speech occurs in such a way that there is no possibility of a return. The restitution of this possibility of response entails upsetting the whole present structure; even better (as started to occur in 1968 and the 70s), it entails an "antimedia" struggle. 57

Baudrillard's definition of response, however, seems limited to the sort of revolutionary rebellion seen in Paris during the 1968 riots, which involves a rejection of the dominant values of western society. Such a theory does not account for viewers being content to make use of media as a source of pleasure and entertainment, and not being concerned with revolutionary response. The (western) masses are, by and large, capable of comprehending the rhetorical sub-texts of media texts, as has been revealed by the research of Liebes and Katz, and of Corner and Richardson, as discussed above. Much of the research provided by the cultural studies movement of the late '70s and '80s was concerned with establishing the existence of negotiated and resistant readings, which comprise an individual response of the viewer which does not require exclusively ideological readings, but indicates an ability to interpret according to the social positioning, and individual tendencies of the viewer. 58

Baudrillard, by abstracting the 'masses' as a unitary body (despite Allor's claim that Baudrillard's abstraction of the masses is inclusive of the heterogeneity of the

54 Allor, 1988, p.227.
56 Baudrillard, 1988b, p.208.

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audience), fails to account for the truly heterogeneous and randomized dispersal of the variety of characteristics of the individuals who comprise the media audience. His assumption that the masses are trapped in an "obscene circularity" in which "the masses have no opinion and information does not inform them" is a pessimistic conclusion to reach. Baudrillard fails to provide any evidence for his claims of audience 'disinterest', ironically reflecting the elitist condescension of the modernist tradition in portraying the masses as helpless 'dopes' of the media, whose only recourse is to refuse response. If one constructs an abstraction of the audience as a singular mass, the resultant conclusions will not reflect the diversity of the audience, some of who attempt political response, and others who are content with the use of media for pleasure. This diversity includes some that are discriminating, and capable of polyvalent readings, others that are willing to accept the 'reality' claims of the media and interpret its texts referentially. Ian Ang reminds us of the diverse and indefinable nature of the actual audience:

"Television audience" is a nonsensical category, for there is only the dispersed, indefinitely proliferating chain of situations in which television audiencehood is practiced and experienced - together making up the diffuse and fragmentary social world of actual audiences. 41

Baudrillard's 'masses' cannot be accepted as a legitimate representation of the assemblage of viewers, as there is no singular body which can satisfy the requirements of such a representation. The realization that the audience cannot be defined should not be met with the response of reconstructing the abstraction of 'the masses', but rather, with theories which can account for the diversity of responses which can be expected from a heterogeneous assemblage of viewers.

The audience does not exist as a definable, quantifiable entity, but only, as Allor states, exists as a discursive notion:

The audience exists nowhere; it inhabits no real space, only positions within analytic discourses. The institutions, individuals, and practices that provoke the questions of the subject as social are only open to our gaze through the lenses of particular problematics. 42

As a purely discursive phenomenon, the audience cannot fittingly be defined by broad generic statements, but must be discussed in terms of multiplicity and heterogeneity. The development of discernment in 'an audience' does not necessarily imply that an entire body of viewers has acquired advanced interpretive skills, but that a significant portion of the community has, through repeated exposure to film and television texts, gained a level of familiarity with the convention and form of these texts, which, in turn, brings about the possibility of interpretive strategies which utilize metalinguistic awareness, polyvalent readings, knowledge of the activities of the media production industries and critical reflexivity. The skills that

41 Baudrillard, 1988a, p.211.
42 Condit, 1989.
44 Allor, 1988, p.228.

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comprise a discerning interpretation of a media text involve more than an awareness of narrative form. An awareness of the surrounding culture, of the processes of construction which occur both in the text, and in the interpretive strategies, are evident in the accrued knowledge of the experienced viewer. Critical analysis of film and television has become commonplace in radio, newspapers, magazines and books, and self-reflexivity in television is becoming more prominent as western culture intensifies its articulation of media texts. As the culture becomes more ‘media-centric’ the knowledge of media production and analysis is reciprocally increased, with the inclusion of media studies in the curriculum of schools and universities assuring an ongoing augmentation of media awareness in western societies. The assemblage of viewers is engaged in an evolving relationship with media texts that results in a continual progression of interpretive strategies.

4.3 Audience Awareness of Genre

Genre as a Classificatory System

The diversity of viewer interpretive skills discussed in the previous section, is observable in the range of texts that are found to be popular with viewers. The condescension of modernist cultural theories towards popular culture is belied by the variety of texts that have been popularly acclaimed. Genre boundaries have become more flexible as the shift from the genre specific popular film of the nineteen seventies, with the light entertainment of the science fiction genre, including Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) contrasting with the challenging social dialogue of the nineteen nineties, most evident in *Schindler's List* (1993), and Stone's *JFK* (1991). The tendency to move beyond the conventional boundaries of genre has been enthusiastically embraced by viewers, and has brought about the expansion of viewer consciousness of genre as a narrative form.

The notion of genre as a means of classifying texts has provided a system by which the producers of film and television texts can establish intertextual connections, making reference to specific texts and genres. The notion of genre is, however, not always an observation of overt contrast between textual styles, but can be an arbitrary delineation of categories according to the theoretical requirements of academics and film critics, as Feuer observes:

Genres are rhetorical and pragmatic constructions of an analyst, not acts of nature ... Although those animals that we label "dogs" and "cats" exist naturally, to label them "mammals" is to construct a category that is not natural but culturally constructed. After all, Spot and Morris have no need to call themselves mammals - biologists do. Similarly, each genre analyst has a reason for constructing the genre categories he or she claims to "discover". 43

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43 Feuer, 1992, p.141.
Although Feuer's claim has merit, it is by no means indisputable. The presence of certain elements or characteristics allows the biologist to classify cats and dogs. Similarly, there are conventions of narrative structure, production procedures and presentation style which identify a genre. The presence of horses, wide brimmed hats, six-shooters and spurs, along with conventions of framing and editing, can be reliably referred to as some of the identifying features of a 'western'. When compared with the dim lighting, shadows, fast dialogue, the setting of urban decadence and prominent voice over narration of the film noir genre, one could justifiably claim that the distinguishing differences between the two genre are equally as 'natural' as the distinguishing features between cats and dogs. On the other hand, the taxonomic classification of species is reliant on the fact that there can not be any permeability of boundaries. A dog cannot become a cat, and cannot mate with a cat to produce a hybrid (although genetic experimentation has recently called such absolute impossibilities into question). Under natural circumstances, however, such a break in biological boundaries does not occur.

The grouping of film and television texts into genre, however, is not as simply defined. Texts can blend elements of multiple genres (as Feuer points out, Oklahoma (1955) is a western/musical hybrid), or can alternate between the distinguishing characteristics of genres as is the case in Luhrmann's Romeo and Juliet (1996), in which the style of the western is contrasted with the surf films of the 1960s and the formal presentation of the television newsreader. The theory of genre, then, is identifiable from textual elements, but is an adaptable means of textual classification, which is not universal, rigid or impervious to transitions between genres.

Feuer summarizes critical explanations of the theory of genre by dividing it into three approaches - the aesthetic, the ritual and the ideological. The aesthetic is defined as "a system of conventions that permits artistic expression", the ritual as a negotiation of cultural consensus, and the ideological as the reproduction of dominant ideologies of capitalism, as genre "positions the interpretive community in such a way as to naturalize the dominant ideologies expressed in the text". 44

Rick Altman points out the connection between the classifications of genre, and their function within interpretive communities. 45 He states that cultural acceptance of genre groupings limits the available meanings which are applied by viewers within an interpretive community, prompting a predetermined interpretive strategy which calls on intertextual knowledge. The characteristic textual features of a genre are accompanied by expectations which have developed in the viewer through the previous experience of other texts which share similar features. Viewer awareness of the conventions associated with a particular genre serve to direct the reading of the text toward an interpretive strategy that is associated with that genre.

The expectations that accompany a genre can, therefore, affect the interpretation of the text. The appearance of a North American Indian in the context of a 'western' genre film encourages the viewer to come to the conclusion that the Indian is likely to return with a band of warlike warriors and attack the white settlers. The Indians are presumed to be the villains, or the aggressors who threaten the 'peaceful' existence of white settlers. The fact that the white settlers were, historically, invading the lands of

44 Feuer, 1992, p.145.
Indian tribes does not enter into the stereotypical reading of the genre. Although this example is simplistic, the same interpretive precedent holds true for other genres. Viewer experience of a genre leads to the utilization of an interpretive strategy through the suggestion of particular readings innate in the cultural perception of a genre. Genre specific readings provide an example of Deleuzo-Guattarian tracing (mentioned in chapters 1 and 2), which impose a predetermined reading on the text. Stereotypical expectations of narrative content are grafted into the reading process, replacing the ongoing interplay of prediction and narrative content, and are modified only as those (genre determined) expectations are challenged by the text. The interpretation of texts which clearly fall within a genre is a process of continuous interchange between an existing template of the genre and the specific instances which occur within the text.

Textual Cues and Genre Templates

The apperceptions of cues which indicate genre specific texts provide the viewer with an indication as to the interpretive strategy which the text is encouraging. To return to Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*, the opening scene of the film presents an image of a television, which is screening an impression of a television news program. The news reader adopts the tone and presentation style of a news broadcast, and the framing, graphics and editing styles adopted for this opening segment combine to encourage the interpretive frame which is usually reserved for television news. Two factors, however, combine to diminish the plausibility of the imitation: firstly the sixteenth century Shakespearean dialogue (although delivered in contemporary American accent), and secondly, the context of the form of media. The television screen appears 'within' another screen (either the 'big screen' of the cinema or the television screening of the video tape or television broadcast), immediately curtailing the viability of the appeal to the conventions of news reportage. Although this use of a 'screen within a screen' is by no means sufficient to persuade a viewer that she or he is viewing an actual news broadcast, the application of the conventions of the genre to a Shakespearean drama provoke a conflict of expectations.

The interpretive template of the news genre is integrated into the schemata reserved for existing Shakespearean films. For the experienced viewer, the two templates have, in all likelihood not been combined in previous texts. The text, in this case, encourages viewers to create a hierarchy of schemata, where the verisimilitude of the text is enhanced by the association of the conventions of television news with the narrative contents of the text. This association is, however, subservient to the interpretive strategy that accompanies the fictional, dramatic and imaginary aspects of narrative. The (imitation) news reader does not convince the viewer as to the 'reality' of the depicted events, but does assist in persuading the viewer as to the (internal) textual viability of the diegesis.

The television screen, the news reader, the Shakespearean dialogue, the contemporary urban setting and the musical score in *Romeo and Juliet* establish multiple connections with the existing cultural constructs of the viewer, connecting interpretive schemata which have, in previous viewing experience, been dis-associated. Fiske points out that the text, the interpretive strategy of the viewer and his or her cultural awareness combine in a 'process of viewing':

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Audience Expectation and the Interpretation of Narrative

The textuality of television, the intertextuality of the process of making sense and pleasure from it, can only occur when people bring their different histories and subjectivities to the viewing process. There is no text, there is no audience, there are only the processes of viewing - that variety of cultural activities that take place in front of the screen. 

The interpretive strategies that are produced by textual reference to genres are inseparable from a viewer's construct of cultural reality. Knowledge of the organizational system of genre templates and the modes of interpretation which they evoke comprise a substantial proportion of contemporary cultural constructs, and the act of reading/viewing a text can form new connections between genres and the expectations which accompany them.

The intertextuality of contemporary cultural awareness is highlighted by Fiske, who acknowledges Barthes' recognition of the absence of boundaries in the interpretation of texts:

Barthes' notion that culture is a web of intertextuality, that all texts refer only to other texts and never anchor their referral in a final reality, sets up a useful framework from which to start. He alerts us to the idea that represented events and characters can be understood only in terms of their intertextual relations, so that a "killing" on a detective show can only be made sense of in terms of its relations with a murder story on the news or in the newspapers, or other representations in novels, films, theatre, fairy stories, and so on. Culture as a web of intertextual meanings recognizes no boundaries of genre or medium.

If, as Fiske and Barthes suggest, all texts refer to other texts, then the reading/viewing process consists largely of applying existing interpretive strategies, that are derived from other texts, to the text at hand. These strategies are applied to texts on the basis of their genre, the medium through which they are presented and the context in which the text is encountered. Textual cues indicate to the viewer which interpretive strategies (or combinations of strategies) are appropriate for particular texts.

The cultural construct of reality, as has been pointed out in previous chapters, consists of schemata that include actual experience, social knowledge and knowledge of other texts. The subjectivity of the reader is partially constituted by prior viewing experience, and the characteristics of genre are a significant factor in the classification of texts. A viewer, then, approaches the text with a predetermined notion of the narrative forms that are representative of a genre, and the interpretive strategies that are appropriate for the genre. Barthes reminds us that a viewer possesses prior textual experience, and knowledge of the codes that are utilized in interpretation:

This "I" which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite, or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost). Objectivity and Subjectivity are of course forces which can take over the text, but they are

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47 ibid., pp. 64-65.
forces which have no affinity with it. Subjectivity is a plenary image, with which I may be thought to encumber the text, but whose depictive plenitude is merely the wake of all the codes which constitute me, so that my subjectivity has ultimately the generality of stereotypes. Objectivity is the same type of replenishment: it is an imaginary like the rest ... an image which serves to name me advantageously, to make myself known, “misknown” even to myself.  

The stereotypical characteristics of genre, and codes, by which texts are interpreted, form a component (or components), of the subjectivity of the viewer, which is, according to Grossberg, and Guattari, even more fragmented, open and ‘nomadic’ than is suggested here by Barthes. The templates of genre are interwoven with the heterogeneity of the viewer’s subjectivity, and the expectations that accompany genre templates are a significant component of the codification that comprises the cultural construct of reality.

Viewer expectations of genre delimit the possible readings of a text. The relations of the text with actuality are determined by the viewer’s prior experience of ‘texts of this kind’ and assumptions as to the referential validity of the text are arrived at by a process of comparison with the existing cultural construct. According to this model, genre is a molar segmentation of the assemblage of texts, and serves to construct arbitrary boundaries according to textual characteristics and narrative form. It is not, however, limited to this field, but overflows into the realm of interpretive strategies by imposing assumptions as to the ontological significance of the text. Textual characteristics associated with news or documentary genres bring about a response that assumes a correlation between actuality and the image. On the other hand, textual characteristics that pertain to fantasy or fictional genres assume a disjunction with actuality, and the categorization of the narrative content as imaginary. If, however there is no impermeable boundary between the viewer, the text and the actual world, and texts are rhizomic and open to connection with actuality (as suggested in the first chapter), then the conjunction of the text with the actual must be accounted for, even though that connection may not function through direct reference to a fixed and final notion of actuality. The relations of the text to actuality in the viewing experience need to be firstly, recognized and, secondly, defined. This task is taken up in the forthcoming section, and again in the analyses included in the second half of the thesis.

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Barthes, 1974, p.10.
4.4 Verisimilitude as Audience Manipulation

The Connection between ACTuality and Audio/Visual Narrative

The notion that reality can be captured by the camera, and reproduced for the viewer as a ‘window on the world’ has been comprehensively refuted by a number of theorists, who establish the status of media images as representations of reality. Having established that reality and audio/visual narrative are not coequal, the problem as to the relations between images and the actual requires further consideration. In the reaction against the naiveté of the institutions and audiences who perpetuated the ‘window on the world’ view of news and documentary, the connection between images and the actual has been problematized to the point where there is apparently no direct correspondence between the two realms, where there is no ‘reality’ in images, but only representations of reality.

The assumption that a ‘representation of reality’ is significantly different from the human experience of that reality needs clarification. Prior to audio/visual media distant or removed events were experienced either as verbal or written accounts. As such, these representations utilized an indirect signification, as reference to actuality was achieved through verbal or written signs that represented actual events, characters or objects. The audio/visual media have enhanced the process of signification through the use of representational technologies that provide a realistic resemblance to actual events by imitating and reproducing sensory data. The composition of accounts of the actual, however, remains within the field of narrative construction, whether visual or non-visual narrativization is utilized. Accounts of actuality are constructions, regardless of the form of media, or the conventions of genre that are employed.

What, then, is the relation between accounts of the actual and the actual world? Narratives which are designated as ‘non-fictional’ are accepted by the culture as having substantive value in describing the actual, and in affecting cultural realities. Viewers, although experiencing a ‘representation of reality,’ are able to make decisions or plans, learn from and react to the events which are represented. Their relations to both the culture and the actual world are altered and determined by the ‘representation of reality’, which provides information which can assist in their interactions with the actual world. A viewer who is about to travel may alter his or her plans if the news media broadcasts a warning of possible terrorist activity in the area of their destination. A documentary film or news report on a food shortage in a region of Africa may bring about a change in economic conditions for inhabitants of that area, through the donations of international viewers. The representation, in such cases, is considered by the viewer to be pertinent to events in the actual world, and is accorded sufficient veracity to bring about an alteration of events in the actual.

Audio/visual narratives construct accounts of the actual (in non-fictional film and television), according to a narrative logic, which, according to Branigan, “is often based on what seems familiar and natural within a culture, within a way of life”.

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70 Most notably Nichols, 1991.
71 Branigan, 1992, p.28.
Cultural conventions set a precedent for the construction of accounts of the actual, and these conventions encourage the assumption by members of a culture that the accounts are authentic. Barthes, in identifying the relations between culture and narrative ties together the notions of narrative logic and verisimilitude:

Narrative logic, it must be admitted, is nothing other than the development of the Aristotelian probable (common opinion and not scientific truth); hence it is normal that, when an attempt is made to legalize this logic (in the form of esthetic constraints and values), it should still be an Aristotelian notion which the first classical theoreticians of narrative have advanced; that of verisimilitude. 72

The difficulty in attempting to define a correlation between the audio/visual narrative and a ‘final reality’ lies in the failure of media theory to account for the distinction between the actual (physical) world of actions and objects, and the cultural constructs of signification, interpretations and meanings. Verisimilitude in audio/visual narrative consists as much of conformity to the systems of signification and meaning of the culture (in short, the conventions of genre), as to the physical appearance of the actual.

The impression of reality in a text, then, is not confined to visual resemblance, which can vary with the form of media. The ‘fuzzy’ image which may be experienced in a moment of poor television reception bears little resemblance to actuality, yet the interpretation of a television news report is not necessarily considered to be any less ‘real’ as a result of this distortion of the image. The distinction between sensory resemblance of the image to the actual must be distinguished from the narrative construction of the audio/visual account. Metz identifies the confusion between the resemblance of the image to perception, and the impression of reality:

A much clearer distinction is needed - even in terminology, where the word “real” is forever playing tricks on us - between the two different problems: on the one hand the impression of reality produced by the diegesis, the universe of fiction, what is represented by each art, and, on the other hand, the reality of the vehicle of the representation in each art. On the one hand there is the impression of reality; on the other the perception of reality, that is to say, the whole question of the degree of the reality contained in the material available to each of the representative arts. 73

On one hand we have the level of sensory realism, partially defined by the technology of the audio and visual systems of media. A small loudspeaker in a television set does not produce as ‘realistic’ a sound as the sophisticated audio system in a cinema. The large cinema screen also provides superior visual resolution to the relatively small television screen. On the other hand, we have the diegetic world of the narrative and its credibility as a representation of a ‘believable’ world. Verisimilitude in film and television entails the establishment of a viable narrative form. Culturally accepted forms of narrative are a deciding factor in the attribution of actuality to the text by the viewer.

The adoption of conventions which are **recognizable** within a culture as authentication of the veracity of the audio/visual account, are comprehended by the viewer as verisimilitude. Conventions of narrative form indicate the validity ascribed to the representation in making decisions or taking actions in the actual world. Verisimilitude is a concept which has been applied to fictional film as a measure of the realism of a narrative. If one is to accept the arbitrary nature of boundaries between fiction and non-fictional genre, then the arguments that pertain to fictional narrative should also have relevance to non-fictional narrative. Stadler refers to the importance of credibility in assessing films.

What is particular about a given film ... is not that it records a reality or creates a fiction - an either or decision - but how it fuses a necessary degree of recognizable reality with a desirable quantity of illuminating illusion. The term that superseded actuality and fantasy in film analysis, as far as epistemology is concerned, is credibility: for any film to be convincing, it must to some extent be realistic; but to be appealing, it has to reveal a certain degree of fictionality. This synthesis underlies, to varying degrees, the majority of so-called fictional narrative and documentary films. Few films attempt to approach the one or the other extreme pole of purity. 74

The synthesis of 'illusion' with 'recognizable reality' combines the viewer's experience of the actual with the cultural construct of reality. Not only must a film or television program visually resemble actuality, it must also adopt conventions which are allied with the previous experience of the viewer in order to convince him or her of its authenticity as a representation of reality or a credible imaginary representation. The interpretive 'templates' of previous reading or viewing experiences are significant in the viewer's (unconscious) assessment of the verisimilitude of the text.

**The Components of Verisimilitude**

There are, then, two elements of verisimilitude in the audio/visual text, one being the illusion of reality which results from the sensory similarity of the image to the actual, and the other the narrative form that renders the image recognizable as reality, in other words, as consistent with the cultural construct of reality. The notion of representation as illusion is addressed by Carroll, who claims a more direct relation between the image and actuality:

I question whether it is logically correct to call realistic representations "illusions." To call them "illusions" suggests that they comport themselves convincingly as something they are not meant to be ... realist representations are meant to be partial proxies within the institution of representation. That is, in our society, realistic images, including film shots, are cultural currency. They are disseminated and recognized as the kinds of proxies they are. In fact they must be so recognized in order to perform many of their cognitive and aesthetic functions. 75

74 Stadler, 1990, p.46. Also cf. Silverstone's notion of myth and mimesis, as story and argument (1988, p.34).
75 Carroll, 1988, p. 94.
Although there is, in this notion, a danger of returning to the naive acceptance of the image as coequal with actuality (as espoused by Bazin), there is also a necessity to re-establish the status of audio/visual images as proxies of reality. Such an approach is only viable if the Brechtian warning against accepting these representations as reality, as 'the way things really are', is heeded. It is possible for images to convey and contain elements of the actual, but it is essential to bear in mind that all representations, no matter how 'realistic', are constructed accounts of the world which have been composed by individuals (and/or institutions), which inevitably express ideological and social positions in the text. Subjective accounts cannot be conflated with the actual, as they present a particular perspective and exclude other points of view. On the other hand, subjective accounts of the actual are all that we have. Our sensory perceptions of actuality are received from a subjective position, and all mediated accounts, whether consciously or not, offer a limited perspective of the actual. If one is not physically present in an actual setting, that actuality can be represented only by proxy, and can be perceived only from a mediated, subjective position, whether that proxy be verbal, written, auditory or visual. The proxy is not commensurate with the actual event, but it provides a surrogate 'indication' of actuality, which reproduces sensory data resembling actuality.

The common error when considering the relations between the proxy and the actual are, firstly to consider the image to be coequal with the actual, and, secondly, to deny all correspondence between text and actuality. The extremes of the correlation/differentiation dualism serve only to draw attention away from the continuum of conjunction which exists between absolute, and absent correspondence. It is in the domain of conjunction that interpretive activity is concentrated, in ascertaining the extent of the textual correspondence to the actual, or, conversely in the attribution of cultural significance to the text. This interpretive function ascertains the way in which the text is then received, and acted upon by the viewer in determining appropriate responses to the text.

The verisimilitude of texts persuades the viewer of the 'full correlation' of the text with actuality, but this interpretive strategy is also reliant on the conventions of genre and the form of media. The format of television news broadcasts, when viewed on a television screen and in the context of the surrounding broadcast programs, will influence the viewer to ascribe a greater level of 'actuality correlation' to that text than to a fictional film viewed in a cinema. Therefore, verisimilitude is partially dependent on cues internal to the text, and also contingent on the extra-textual cues that provide indication as to the social evaluation of the 'actuality correlation' of the text as is implied by the form and genre of the narrative.

Textual cues utilize the awareness the viewer has of cultural conventions and interpretive strategies in order to imply the reading of the text. The formation of the cultural construct of reality within the viewer forms an assemblage of inter-connected schemata, or 'templates', which include existing assessments of realist texts. Textual cues encourage a predetermed response as to the credence which is attributed to the

97 Carroll, 1988, refers to Brecht’s rejection of verisimilitude as an illusion which promotes a "belief that what is enacted is a 'real event', [that] supposedly stuns our critical faculties so that we believe 'that's the way things really are,' with nothing else left to be said," p.92.
text. The suggested responses to the texts, however, are the result of the conventions of genre that ascribes interpretative values to the audio/visual data. The text does not in itself 'determine' the interpretation, but implies interpretive strategies or 'templates'. The viewer is persuaded by the text toward a dominant reading, but an oppositional reading which rejects the implicit suggestions of textual cues, or a negotiation between the two positions are also possible interpretive strategies.

The utilization of culturally established conventions of form and genre are, therefore, manipulations of the viewer. The viewer's interpretive strategies are predominantly an unconscious activity which has, through familiarity and repetition, become a fixed, stereotypical response to textual cues. The determination of interpretive strategies by the text is a habitual response of the viewer, which acts as a limitation of the possible meanings that could be attributed to the text. The viewer may, on one hand, resort to the well-worn paths of response that are the stereotypical interpretive strategies determined by cultural codification, or, on the other hand, engage with the text in a molecular, non-codified experience of the text.

The verisimilitude of audio/visual texts as sensory resemblance to actuality offers an interpretive position that is not bound by convention, but elicits an immediate response to the physical data of the representation. The capacity of the text to consist of actuality lies more in the domain of sensory resemblance to actuality than in the conventions of narrative form, which imply actuality through the viewer's cultural construct of reality. Conventions of form and genre provide the viewer with cultural knowledge, enabling an understanding of cultural notions of reality or fantasy, whereas physiological response to sensory data engages the viewer in a relation with the events depicted, rather than the means of depiction. This position should not be confused with that of Bazin, which conflates the image with actuality, but, rather, the image is proposed as an actuality in itself, where the image, as representation of actuality, takes on the status of 'another actuality'. 74 The light and sound that comprise the image are, after all, actual, though not identical with the actuality that they depict. They are actual images and sounds, and, as such, affect the actual world. They are a depiction that stands in its own right, not reliant on an actuality to which they must refer, but capable of revealing aspects of the depicted actuality. The verisimilitude of audio/visual texts, then, goes beyond 'similitude' and becomes an actuality, or a 'verity' in its own right. The expression 'verity with similitude' would be a more appropriate description of the audio/visual text. The text is itself an (audio/visual) actuality, which bears similarity to the actuality it depicts.

The actuality of the text does not require a referent, as is evident in the creation of animated films, or computer generated imagery. Prince posits the notion of "perceptual realism", in which the fictional image bears a relation to actuality through its similarity to 'real life' experience:

Attributions of realism, or the lack thereof, by viewers will inhere in the way these correspondences are structured into and/or transformed by the image and film. Instead of asking whether a film is realistic or formalistic, we can ask about the kind of linkages that connect the represented fictionalized reality of a given film to the visual and social coordinates of our own three-dimensional world, and this can be done for both "realist" and "fantasy" films alike. Such a focus need not reinstate

74 Bazin, 1967.
indexicality as the ground of realism, since it can emphasize falsified
correspondences and transformation of cues. Nor need such a focus turn everything
about the cinema back into discourse, into an arbitrarily coded reorganization of
experience. As we will see, even unrealistic images can be perceptually realistic. 79

Verisimilitude is not a correlation between actual referents and the representation,
but, as Prince suggests, a correspondence between "the visual and social coordinates
of our three-dimensional world" and the text. The audio/visual text is both
conventionally and physically representative of the actual, but presents itself as an
independent actuality that is not dependent on reference to (extra-textual) actuality
for its existence, or its validity.

Mapping the Connections

The viewer is connected with a social and cultural network of conventions,
attitudes and presuppositions, and these cultural constructs influence the
interpretation of texts. The conception of the audience as mass is aligned with
interpretive strategies that are symptomatic of the collective consciousness, and
impose a codified and consensual reading of audio/visual texts. This cultural
construct is, however, in constant tension with the molecular (evident in the tendency
toward heterogeneity and the manifestation of individuality), and with the ‘pack
multiplicity,’ which roams freely within the mass, appearing as sub-cultural groups.
All representations are not, however, reflective of the dominant social order, and the
text augments heterogeneity by subverting the dominant paradigms of the society.
The manipulation of genre conventions not only challenges boundaries, but
encourages a reappraisal of the delimitation of interpretation that results from cultural
codification.

Interpretive strategies are imposed on the viewer by her or his culture, but viewers
in ‘media-centric’ western cultures are more likely to demonstrate an awareness of
this cultural dominance, and engage in readings that are contrary to the conventional,
or culturally dominant interpretation of texts. The discerning viewer, then, is more
liable to approach texts that contain aberrant narrative forms, or that challenge
preconceived notions of genre. Their readings are also more likely to be oppositional,
as the subservience to convention becomes more evident in a self-reflexive
awareness of interpretive strategies.

The conjunction of textual content and cultural schemata in the act of reading, or
experiencing the audio/visual text highlights the multifarious relations between
actuality, the viewer and the text. If the text is considered to be an actuality in its own
right, its referential function is of minor consequence. It is the conventions of
narrative form that suggest reality in the text, and the resemblance of the audio/visual
sensory data to extra-textual sensory experience that becomes an actuality and affects
the viewer. Neither of these fields require reference to actual events to function, but
utilize sensory data or cultural practice to evoke an actuality that is specific to the
text. Yes, the aliens of Star Wars are actual; they exist as sound and light within the
film or video text. They have no referent, but are more prominent in the cultural

79 Prince, 1996, p.32.
construct of reality than many 'actual' mammals that are not represented in audio/visual texts. Conversely, the image of the murderer's confession in Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* (1989), convinced the police to release an innocent man and convict the guilty. The assumption of the veracity of the image was arrived at through the acceptance of the production conventions of the documentary genre (through which it was produced and brought to public attention), and the belief that the image had not been tampered with or altered in any way, as conforms to the conventions of the documentary genre. The interpretation of the image as providing reference to actuality depends on the codified cultural conventions of form and genre. The image, however, as an actuality in its own right, persuaded the police to take action.

When considered in this light, the audio/visual text becomes a nexus of connection with the actual, the imaginary, the viewer and culture. The technological-virtual, as defined in the previous chapter, has both an actual and virtual function: actual in its physical presence of light and sound, but virtual in its depiction of other actualities. The image is an actuality, but not an object. It can be heard and seen, but not smelt or touched. It is a partial actuality, and, as such, can only contain partial actuality. This distinction, though, must not be irrationally extended to the assumption that the image cannot contain anything of the actual, or, conversely, all of the actual. The narrativization of actuality in film and television, then, is a convergence, of form and genre, of actual and narrative, and of viewer and culture.
PART TWO

Analysis of the Narrativization of Actuality in
Audio/Visual Text
The opening theoretical discourse of this thesis has been concerned with establishing a theoretical frame, around which the analyses contained in the forthcoming chapters can be modeled. The express intent of these analyses as outlined earlier in the thesis, is to apply a multiperspectival approach to the selected texts. The relations between actuality and the audio/visual text are of primary importance in these analyses, as the methods of narrativization that are utilized in the construction of texts are also a cogent influence on the interpretation of texts. The conventions of genre play a significant role in deciding the interpretive strategies that will be applied by viewers, as the expectations that accompany the characteristics of a text (an interpretive tendency discussed in the previous chapter), imply particular relations between the text and actuality.

In applying the theoretical frame outlined in the first half of this thesis, certain aspects of the texts are assumed. Fictional aspects of narrativization are discernible in documentary texts, as has been effectively established by Nichols, and actuality is perceptible in the fictional text, as is confirmed by Barthes' proairetic and cultural codes. The first half of the thesis has determined these relations, but the second half will be concerned with moments of apparent conjunction or convergence of genre and form in segments of the selected texts. The analyses of these texts are intended as a detailed study of the boundaries between genres, and a definition of their form and function. The identification of boundaries, and of the characteristics of genre, is not only concerned with the extrinsic features of the image, but is also an examination of the textual cues, and the interpretive strategies that come into play with regards to the referentiality of the text. The image enters into a specific connection with actuality, and it is the means by which this connection is ascertained that provides the subject of the forthcoming chapters.

Strategies for analysis

Postmodern theorists such as Jameson have changed the understanding of the text by defying the modernist notion of elite texts and declaring that popular culture is not an inferior textual form, but that the pertinence of the text is determined by the pleasure experienced by the viewer in its consumption as a commodity, rather than academic prognostications as to the nature of the ideal text. Postmodern analysis does not privilege one text over another, and therefore analysis should consist of the testing of theories against multiple texts. Realism is no longer a measure of textual merit, and the status of representations as independent from 'reality' is established. The subjectivity of the image assures that all visual representations are engaged in a relativistic relation with culturally constructed reality. Reality itself is a subjective notion, the definition of which is culturally dependent.

Baudrillard challenges conventional ontologies by claiming that the images of the media have created hyperreality, where the images themselves have become reality, displacing previous conceptions of reality. Actual events to Baudrillard exist only as visual images, and are a virtual construction which has become reality for the postmodern capitalist society.

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Deleuze and Guattari put forward a world without boundaries, in which ‘man and nature’ are not considered separate, but are together constituents of a continuum. The audio/visual text blends with reality, the body blends with nature, and the mind also consists of natural configurations. The conventional constructions of socially determined semiotic systems are deterritorialized and reterritorialized, as the psychoanalytically defined notion of the singular ‘self’ is dissolved, and is seen as a multiplicity of selves, a schizo-self which consists of multiple subjectivities. The seclusion of the subject from the world is negated, and the subjectivity becomes a constituent of, and participant in a continuum, rather than an isolated entity of self, disengaged from nature and the other. Analysis under this regime becomes an amalgamation of the cultural, the ideological and the phenomenological. Semiotic systems are considered to be the expression of restrictive cultural schemata and social conventions.

If the Deleuzo-Guattarian approach is applied to analysis, a model whereby the distinction between analytical methods is partially disassembled becomes feasible. The combined influence of precedent analytic methods can be allowed to coexist with the contemporary, rather than being declared mutually exclusive. This is not, however, a ‘free for all’ analysis, but, rather, a freedom to apply theories which may be compatible with certain textual situations. The analysis of a television documentary is congruent with a combined ideological, sociological and cultural analysis, whereas the fictional film may combine phenomenological and post-structuralist analysis. A significant aspect of this approach is to justify the choice of theoretical perspectives in the analyses for particular media form or genre. There is not necessarily any particular ‘correct’ application of theory to analysis, but the selection of approaches is a subjective evaluation of the concurrence of the cultural context of the media form with the aspects of the text, which are likely to be emphasized by various analytical strategies.

In the forthcoming chapters I intend to identify the form of each textual classification, as defined by genre, and to work outward from the textual content, in order to explore the phenomenological, the ideological and the cultural aspects of the texts and their interpretation. Each analysis will consist of a line of flight from the text, and will select and apply appropriate analyses to the text, identify cultural influences evident in the text, and ascertain the interpretive strategies suggested by the text, and employed in the reading of the text.

The particular reading of the audio/visual text is put forward as only one of a multiplicity of possible readings, as is suggested by Fiske’s polysemy, Condit’s polyvalence, Barthes’ multiivalence, or Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of rhizome, in which the signifying system is not delimited by boundaries, but:
...The multiplicity it constitutes is no longer subordinated to the One, but takes on a consistency of its own. These are multiplicities of masses or packs, not of classes: anomalous and nomadic multiplicities, not normal or legal ones.  

The notion of working against the privilege of the elitist text, as put forward by Jameson, is taken into consideration by employing an analysis across a range of texts which involve the narrativization of actuality.  

Rather than using the text as an enclosed, circumscribed entity, I propose to examine the relations between texts, textual methodologies of representation, and beyond texts to the cultural references in the texts. The analyses will be modeled after a “line of flight” as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, being a vector which cuts across linguistic, visual, or physical systems of signification, and, in this particular case, textual boundaries, and delineation of form and genre. The line of flight in this research consists of the narrativization of actuality, a notion that will be explored in relation to genre and forms of media. The analyses will follow the vector provided by the underlying concept, rather than by the boundaries of text, form and genre, and will therefore intersect with a number of texts, in the form of film and television, and across a variety of genres.

The notions of narrativization of actuality, and convergence of form and genre, provide a rationale for the selection of film and television texts. Firstly, the relations of actuality to the text indicate suitability of those texts which deal directly with the actual, such as news and documentary, or other texts which include segments which are not enacted, and the convergence of form and genre suggests texts which breach the boundaries of canonical expectations, by applying a fictional strategy to an actuality, or by inserting actualities within an otherwise fictional representation.

The selection of texts does not condone an elitist aesthetic, but considers the popular narrative to be of equal or greater significance than the avant-garde. In fact, the texts which have been selected accommodate both experimentation with the ontological functions of visual narrative, and the cultural relevance of popular cinema. The emphasis of this analysis rests on those aspects of the text which function as, or suggest, extra-textual articulations, as are indicated by Barthes' referential code, or by the identification of the offshoots and connections of the rhizomic model as put forward by Deleuze and Guattari. These textual components will be observable as movements between genre and form, and as the intrusion of the non-textual into the activated text. The analyses consist of activation (reading), of the texts, which takes into consideration aberrations of conventional modes of representation through the dissolution of customary boundaries.

Barthes pre-empted the Deleuzian model by describing analysis as an escape from the text, opening the way for the referential to be transformed into the articulation, the conjunction of the extra-textual with the text:

4 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.505.
6 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, pp.88-89, 121-123.
7 ibid., pp.3-25.
We are, in fact, concerned not to manifest a structure but to produce a structuration. The blanks and looseness of the analysis will be like footprints marking the escape of the text; for if the text is subject to some form, this form is not unitary, architectonic, finite; it is the fragments, the shards, the broken or obliterated network - all the movements and inflections of a vast "dissolve," which permits both overlapping and loss of messages. Hence we use *code* here not in the sense of a list, a paradigm that must be reconstituted. The code is a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures; we know only its departures and returns; the units which have resulted from it (those we inventory) are themselves, always, ventures out of the text, of the mark, the sign of a virtual digression toward the remainder of a catalogue (*The Kidnapping* refers to every kidnapping ever written); they are so many fragments of something that has always been already read, seen, done, experienced; the code is the wake of that *already*.  

It is this conjunction of the extra-textual with the text which will provide the primary focus of the analyses which follow. The narrative, being encompassed by permeable boundaries which allow for leakage on all sides (but do not blur into non-existence), is inseparable from the culture by which it is surrounded. It is those "leaks" and permeation of the boundaries which give the text its verisimilitude, by appropriating the idiosyncratic and characteristic elements of a culture and depicting them through the agency of a medium, providing a sense of the actual within a virtual representation.

Barthes’ definition of the cultural (or referential) codes, however, is shown to be inadequate by their cultural specificity. His definition presumes a particular (very French), cultural setting, and is therefore preoccupied with European history, literature and art. It reflects, in fact, the cultural references as experienced by Barthes himself, within a defined temporal and cultural circumstance, which provokes a response that is a model of ‘classical’ bourgeois education as applied to ‘classical’ texts. This condescension toward the classical, readerly text stems from the predictability of texts which have conformed to the conventions of a culture, and have become thoroughly familiar in their narrative form and function. The notion of the ‘classical’ text is one which relies on the viewer being accustomed not only with textual devices, but also the extra-textual, cultural situation that surrounds the text.

The analysis which follows is an attempt to define the extra-textual connections which occur between the text and its autochthonous culture. The tracking of cultural references is an extension of the proairetic codes and the referential codes as defined by Barthes, but as applied to the medium of audio/visual texts. The visual representation enhances some aspects of cultural reference which are comparatively insignificant (but not absent), in printed text. Before entering into the analysis, it is imperative that the cultural references be defined, therefore enabling an identification of those references in the films. The following list offers a classification of the extra-textual references that will be considered in the analysis of selected texts:

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15 Barthes, 1974, p.20.
1. HYPERTEXTUALITY
The direct appropriation of a segment of another text (not merely an imitation or stylistic reference).

2. INTERTEXTUALITY
 Appropriation of, or imitation of stylistic devices, particularly those identifiable with a specific genre or form of media (for example, the shadows, dim lighting and mysterious music of a horror film, or the formal commentary and direct-to-camera address of a newsreader).

3. BEHAVIORAL CODES
The encoded meanings of physical gestures, facial expressions, hairstyles, and postures. Also meanings associated with the objects a person chooses to surround themselves with, such as styles of clothing, particular makes of car, houses, jewelry handbags, etc. These codes are particularly significant for visual media, as they are mimetically represented by the image, rather than described by the written word.

4. LANGUAGE CODES
The functions of enunciation, writing, and printed text. This group of codes includes intonations of speech, the bricolage of street slang and colloquialism, implied meanings of style in speech, writing and print (for example, the association between certain typefaces and newsprint), and socio-economic or racial connotations of accent or dialect. These codes are more relevant to the filmic/televisual than to printed texts, as idiosyncratic aspects of speech are not reliant on written representation, but are audible; and print, where present, is not limited to the typeface of publication, as is usually the case with literature. Literary criticism makes reference to the language codes as the written word, whereas to the filmic/televisual it is a reference made to a cultural knowledge which is partially external to the audio/visual text. The language encountered in filmic/televisual texts is predominantly that of enunciation, and what written or printed text occurs is an inscription within an image, an intrusion on the replication of visual and auditory perception which is encountered as is inscription in everyday life, as an occasional merger of inscription with the mimetic visual medium.

5. INFORMATIONAL CODES
An awareness of the “bodies of knowledge” which are transmitted by a culture as educational or ritual learning. Such bodies of knowledge will vary between cultures, but provide a common aggregation of collective knowledge which is reflected in textual references, and acts as an indicator of the culturally ‘initiated’, those who are well trained in the learning of the culture. In contemporary western society the list of disciplines is almost beyond description, with physics, mathematics, psychology, medicine, computer
technology, zoology, etc. In more finite cultures, however, the corpus of knowledge may consist of territorial information, hunting and farming techniques, rites of passage, herb-lore and medicines.

6. SOCIAL-INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge of the institutions and procedures involved in the operation and maintenance of social hierarchies. Government departments, corporate bodies, industries, legal systems, societies, clubs and associations. The awareness of the machinic entities which control and direct society, and the hierarchical systems by which power is disseminated amongst members of a society.

7. SPATIAL-GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

A knowledge of places, cities, towns, buildings and geographical features, and the associated meanings of purpose, proximity and the cultural significance of spaces. This category of cultural reference includes the value system by which a culture appraises and attributes significance to spaces, whether of human fabrication or naturally occurring formations. Hence Uluru (previously known as Ayer's Rock), is admired as a tourist site, being esteemed as the world's largest single mass of rock and an object of natural beauty by European Australians, but to Indigenous Australians it takes on a different significance as a sacred site.

8. TEMPORAL STRUCTURATION

A historical awareness of previous events, and the processes of development of semiotic systems, cultural heritage and social order over a period of time. Implicit in this category of references is the chrono-logic of narrative (whereby accounts of historical events are ordered in relation to the passing of time), and the stratification of cultural antecedents is taken into consideration. As an example, the mention of 'Vietnam' implies a historical scenario of French colonialism, American resistance to communist expansion, the failure of the western powers to prevent the communist victory, and the inevitable atrocities of warfare which, in turn, inspired the anti-war resistance movements of the nineteen sixties and seventies. The temporal ordering of behavioral patterns is also included, particularly in terms of progression within a social order, for example, a soldier is trained before he/she fights, a worker is employed before he/she works, or a student must complete x number of tasks before he/she graduates. This category of references consists of the awareness of structuration of transformations over time, whether cultural, institutional or historical.

9. ETHICAL AND MORAL CODES

Reference to systems of belief and codes of conduct concerning evaluation of rectitude, justice, or religious conformity to a defined code of values. Notions of decency honor integrity and worthiness that influence the actions and
behavior of a community. Such references include belief systems which reject morality or ethics, but are a reaction to awareness of existent ethical and moral codes. Rather than being concerned with the meanings of behavioral codes, codes of morality and ethics are a scheme of appraisal whereby actions are judged.

10. ONTOLOGICAL ORDER
The ontological order is concerned with the belief as to the sources of truth and reality for the members of a community. Metaphysical comprehension of the universe, theological, atheist, humanist or agnostic world views, which actuate cultural conventions and rituals by determining the objectives and purpose of life for communities. Such references may range from the belief in the human spirit, or technological salvation through scientific knowledge (for example the eradication of the aging process through genetic engineering), to the belief in life after death, or the resurrection or reincarnation of the soul. The highest order of structuration of cultural reality according to a belief in a common destiny or future. Attitudes toward life and death, the meaning/s of existence, and the collective human experience are shaped by the ontological order, which is often the source of conflict within or between cultures.

An audio/visual text can create an internal logic of the above cultural references, referring to imaginary events, values, and even textual cultures and civilizations, but references to the external cultural setting which surrounds the composition of the text are inevitable. The text refers to an internal temporal structure, and an internal depiction of a cultural reality, but viewers, who may or may not be familiar with the cultural surroundings of the text, will apply interpretive strategies which originate from their cultural situation. Assumptions in the text as to cultural constructions of reality refer to a specific cultural setting, and it is the references to external cultural setting, and to actual events and spaces which are the subject of the following analyses. The analyses will undertake a line of flight which intersects with a number of theoretical frameworks and textual examples as the multiple articulations of the narrativization of actuality are traced and charted.

Narrativization is not a uniform process, but distinct modes of narrativization are applied to specific circumstances. It is my contention that these modes of narrativization suggest strategies of interpretation to the viewer, proposing levels of veracity, or a hierarchy of textual ontology which is initiated by textual cues, but functions as a viewer response through access to accumulated cultural schemata. Textual ontology is determined by values of verisimilitude, but a verisimilitude which combines the realism of the text with the experience of previous texts and their

relations to the actual. The textual characteristics of a news story once accepted as legitimate evidence of actuality after repeated viewing experiences, becomes the signification of a particular ontological position, and claims an indexical relation, whereby the image represents actuality. A fictional film, on the other hand, by the style and form of its narrative, indicates a contrary ontology, one which accepts the disconnection of the representation from actual events, and applies symbolic and iconic signification. Therefore, modes of narrativization imply a specific ‘truth value’ of the text, inviting the viewer to attribute a measure of referential validity to the text. The analyses will seek to acknowledge, trace and delimit the articulations of the actual and the cultural within segments of convergence in several texts, defining modes of narrativization as particular strategies of representing and integrating the actual within a virtuality.
Chapter 5

DOCUMENTARY CLAIMS OF EVIDENTIALITY

This chapter will be specifically concerned with the genres of documentary film and television. The characteristics of the documentary genre are significant in the analyses of the subsequent texts, as the utilization of documentary techniques or content influences the interpretation of certain selected image sequences which conjoin fictional narrative with documentary images. The theories outlined in earlier chapters will be applied to documentary texts, and the relations between documentary images and actuality will be considered in the light of a multiperspectival approach. The identification of the characteristics of the genre enables a more precise analysis of convergence by establishing the connection between images and interpretive strategies, thereby defining the ontological status implied by characteristics of the image. The subdivision of the genre into historical gradations of referential function also bolsters the analysis of texts in forthcoming chapters, as specific documentary techniques have become commonly accepted by viewers as an encoded allusion to the 'reality' of the text, whereas other characteristics of documentary are associated with particular aspects of the cultural and social fields.

The claims of documentary genres to provide evidence as to the nature of actual events have evolved as the genre has developed throughout the past eighty years. The first section of this chapter addresses the changing modalities of documentary referentiality, and the theoretical and ontological assumptions that have accompanied certain stages of the history of documentary production. The relations between the documentary text and actuality will then be considered, firstly by defining the interaction between the camera and actuality, and the theoretical ramifications of this engagement, and secondly by examining the stages of narrativization that occur with the use of interview in documentary. Finally, the utilization of fictional techniques in documentary texts will be considered, and examples of convergence of genre in the documentary will be identified.

5.1 From the 'Voice of God' to the Voice of Self

The exploration of documentary film and television must be conducted with adequate recognition of the origins and circumstances of the emergence of documentary practice. The historical origins of documentary reach back to the time of silent film, when Robert Flaherty and John Grierson began producing cinematic accounts of the actual. From its inception, practitioners of documentary film have demonstrated that there are many possibilities for stylistic and ideological approaches to the audio/visual documentation of the actual.

Documentary film, being presumed by the viewer through previous viewing experience to correspond with actual events, have historically tended to adopt a mode of address that implies an alliance with social institutions. The 'voice of God'
commentary often asserted a right to speak on behalf of the government or industry, thereby signifying its social position as a political and ideological machination of the dominant social order. The social order of the thirties and forties expressed itself with the rhetoric of authority, and this was reflected in the Griersonian style. His socialist sympathies were aligned with the intentions of the G.P.O. and other public institutions which sought to promote their activities, and were content to achieve this goal through the agency of the representation of their workers as components of an efficient machine. But this was a ‘marriage of convenience’, as Grierson the propagandist achieved the same goals as Grierson the socialist. The voice of Griersonian documentary occupied a dual ideological position, simultaneously achieving the socialist goal of furthering the social standing of the working class, and providing a potent source of institutional and nationalistic propaganda which endorsed the dominant social order.

The Interpretative Assumptions of Cinema Verite

The socially inscribed voice of authority became the preferred stylistic approach of journalistic documentary film during World War II, with the nationalistic fervor of wartime patriotism becoming the unifying force of national subjectivity, a subjectivity which extended to include international alliances. Audiences were told who were friends and who were enemies, why the war was being fought, who was right and who was wrong by voice-over commentaries that directly conveyed the commands of governmental and military powers. The war efforts of Australia, America, Britain and Germany subsumed the film industries of their respective nations, employing the majority of their filmmakers as producers of propaganda for the state.

Wartime propaganda further established the expositional documentary as the ascendant mode of production, as its innate assumption of authority disallowed dissent, and unashamedly enforced state opinions onto the viewer. This style was to dominate documentary production until the inception of the direct cinema, or cinema verite movement in the United States, Canada and France, a movement which became the dominant form of documentary film and television in the sixties. Barnouw attributes the change in documentary style to the development of portable synchronous sound recording equipment, an innovation brought about by the efforts of Robert Drew and Richard Leacock who, while working for Time, Inc., pioneered the wireless synchronization of sound and film, and the wireless radio microphone. This technology provided the means for increased mobility for camera and sound operators resulting the ‘hand held’ camera style and removing the restrictions of post-synchronous sound insertion and the necessity for voice-over commentary. The availability of synchronous sound, however, was not the sole cause of the change in documentary conventions. Richard Leacock expressed an oppositional response to the authoritative voice of the classical Griersonian documentary:

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1 Grierson’s relationship with the aristocratic beuacracy of Britain, however, left much to be desired, and eventually his removal from the G.P.O. film unit could be attributed to his Scottish origin and unacceptability to the entrenched hierarchy of the British public service. See Pronay, 1989, p.236.
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It is when I am not being told something, and I start to find out for myself, this is when it gets exciting for me ... The minute I sense I'm being told the answer, I tend to start rejecting it. ²

The cinema verite movement reflected not only a new freedom for the operators, but also a redefinition of the social position of the documentarist. No longer were non-fictional audio/visual narratives a socially inscribed voice of authority with allegiances to institutional and state powers, but had become a collage of voices which, according to Barnouw, "began to take control away from the director". ³ The new synchronous sound had enabled the enunciation of the documentary subject to (apparently) bypass the intervention of the filmmaker and address the viewer directly, free from distortion, intrusive commentary and presumptuous hegemonic ideological practices. Leacock laid claim to the portrayal of reality, stating that "what we are doing, which has suddenly arisen, which is totally different because this really has to do with reality". ⁴ The debate over the 'reality' claims of cinema verite has taken the form of an extended and thorough denunciation of the naivety with which the early proponents of the movement took on the mantle of being the exclusive providers of reality on film.

Among the most pertinent of the arguments against the movement were not the self-evident selection and construction processes, but, rather, the criticism of their lack of social involvement, of taking the role of impassive observers of political upheaval during a decade which, as Waugh points out, "merely reflected and reinforced a mood which in itself was not enough". ⁵ The impartiality of the 'fly on the wall' approach failed to make constructive social comment on the socio-political revolution of that decade, opting instead to remain unaligned and allowing the images, and the subjects therein, to speak for themselves. Nichols also charges the cinema verite movement with being an inadequate means to impart a social and historical message

...The style seeks to become "transparent" in the same mode as the classical Hollywood style - capturing people in action, and letting the viewer come to conclusions about them unaided by any implicit or explicit commentary. Sometimes mesmerizing, frequently perplexing, such films seldom offered the sense of history, context or perspective that viewers seek. ⁶

Cinema verite did, however, offer viewers freedom from the prescriptive dominant ideologies of the Griersonian era. The break from reliance on the voice-over commentary allowed documentarists the broader parameters of seeking out events which were compatible with visual narrative, rather than verbally constructing the narrative. The cinema verite movement challenged and subverted the traditions which it opposed, and effected a transformation in the dominant form of documentary, despite the unsustainable claims of reality which were made by its

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² See Barnouw, 1974, p.236, for the Leacock citation and reference to synchronous sound developments in cinema verite.
³ Barnouw, 1974, p.235.
⁴ Hall, 1991, p.29.
proponents and the considerable critical assault on its ontological premises. Indeed, if the ‘reality’ spoken of were to be considered in terms of the cultural construct of reality (as defined in chapter one), such claims could be sustained on the grounds that the verite film itself partially shapes that reality, but to claim the reproduction of the actual, the occurrences and events of physical bodies displayed on the screen overlooks the fact that the two states are not corresponding dimensional planes, either in space or time. The debate over cinema verite has, in fact, largely revolved around the capacity of any film or television text to reproduce, rather than represent reality. If the term ‘reality’ is defined correctly as an amalgam of the actual (physical) world and the cultural construct of reality, and if the visual/aural data is recognized as actual in its own right (not entirely corresponding to the pre-filmic actual), then cinema verite can indeed be described as ‘reality at twenty four frames a second’. The relevant question in contrasting cinema verite with other forms of documentary is one of its resemblance to sensory experience as opposed to other forms of documentary that offer a less subjective approach. Cinema verite does achieve a more continuous, less intrusive audio/visual representation than the classical Griersonian notion of documentary. The issue of realism rather than reality, of similitude rather than complete correspondence holds the key to comprehending its popularity and the impression it made on the viewers of the nineteen sixties.

Cinema verite, when apprehended as a style of realism, however, can be appreciated as a period of maturation in the historical development of the representational repertoire of documentary. The mobile camera and synchronous sound evoke a sensory response which results from a persuasive illusion of the viewer ‘becoming’ the camera and experiencing a point of view which, if not coequal to actuality itself, then certainly suggestive of participating in actual events to a greater extent than the mounted camera of the Griersonian style. The moving, handheld camera has become synonymous with a particular viewer interpretation of the actuality of events, and is regularly used in both fictional and non-fictional film and television to denote immediacy, or urgency, where the precise preparation of camera angles and focus are abandoned in the effort to record an event. The cinema verite style has been subsumed into the cultural aggregation of visual styles and their denotations, as a device used to imply the narrative-actual rather than a correspondence with actuality. John Corner points out the distinction between two classifications of realism:

Clearly, film and television’s capacities to render recorded visual likenesses of the physical world and to move a viewpoint through space mark the distinctive semantics of their ‘realism’. They also serve to widen the gap between two different types of realist project. These might be called Realism 1 - the project of verisimilitude (of being like the real) and Realism 2 - the project of reference (of being about the real). In both cases, of course, ‘the real’ in question is at least partly a normative construction and disputable independently of any media representation.

The representational style of cinema verite has been reterritorialized in 90s and beyond, now taking on an altered connotation in the form of fictional appropriation.

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7 For a summary of the arguments of theorists who took umbrage at the claims of cinema verite, see J. Hall, 1991, pp.25-27, also cf. Winston, 1995, pp.159-163.
8 Corner, 1992, p.98.
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of the verite style in order to maximize verisimilitude, and to mimic sensory experience with the subjective hand-held camera. The question of reference as a separate project of realism is debatable, as the verisimilitude of the documentary text is an important factor in engendering the belief and trust in the viewer that the text refers to actuality. It is equally possible to create a documentary that fails to persuade a viewer of its reference to actuality, as it is to fall short of providing a sufficient sense of verisimilitude in fiction. Also, excessive awareness of the presence of the camera can lead documentary (human) subjects to 'perform' for the camera, thereby creating a dramatically enacted reality. The elements which convince the viewer of the reference to the 'real' are those which are concerned with the credibility of human subjects who are capable of the pretense that the camera is not present (in the case of 'fly on the wall' documentary) or, alternatively, those subjects who display characteristics or behaviors which accord with the goals of the documentary (in the case of classical or interactive documentary). Hence, the task of persuading a viewer in terms of their acceptance of the referential credibility of a documentary also requires qualities of verisimilitude which are unique to documentary genres, yet similar to those of fictional realism.

Documentary Modalities

The documentary representation engages in rhetorical persuasion through a variety of methods, all of which have as their objective the assent of the viewer as to the referential veracity of the text, and are created in response to the existing or previous implementations of documentary techniques. The 'invisible' influence of the producer and production crew in cinema verite was a reaction to the dominating presence of the filmmaker in classical documentary. The modes of documentary as defined by Bill Nichols* reflect distinct periods of interpretive awareness: first the expository mode of direct address emanating from the nation-state domination of the thirties and forties, a time when empirical certainty was reflected in the authoritarian voice of the documentary film and newsreel. Second, the observational mode of cinema verite reflecting the social revolution of the sixties, a decade of experimentation and rejection of the rigid structures of the past. The interactive mode, involving a counter-response to the indecisiveness of the cinema verite movement, with a reliance on multiple subject voices in the form of interview, corresponds to a time of social interrogation, the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War providing opportunity for the intrepid journalistic interviewer to 'reveal the truth' through the juxtaposition of interviewee statements.

The correspondence of the documentary modes (as defined by Nichols), to historically delimited cultural interpretive strategies, however, is not universal. The self-reflexive mode of documentary, with the inward looking gaze of the documentalist openly displayed in the text, is not limited to any specific time frame. As the problematic of objectivity in documentary production has been recognized by various filmmakers in different situations and eras the response has been an exploration of the subjectivity of the constructed point of view as expressed in the documentary text. The process of producing a visual record of historical events and

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social actors, according to Nichols, has long been recognized as a constructed social reality:

A few documentary film-makers, going as far back as Dziga-Vertov and certainly including Jean Rouch, and the hard-to-categorize Jean-Luc Godard, adopt the basic epistemological assumption in their work that knowledge and the position of the self in relation to the mediator of knowledge, a given text, are socially and formally constructed and should be shown to be so. 10

The process-oriented reflexivity of documentary production is, however, arguably distinct from the other modes, in that it is an attribute of the producer who demonstrates an awareness of the processes of construction, and who feels a responsibility to reveal the process of mediation which occurs in the conception and production of the documentary film. Nichols’ self-reflexive mode is a stylistic device which occurs in texts which challenge the conception of documentary as corresponding to the actual and attempt to reveal the processes of construction which are utilized in documentary production.

The viewer interpretation of documentary is not limited to pro-filmic actuality, but also encompasses the culturally constructed interpretive strategies which, as they evolve in response to continuing experience of texts, identify inadequacies and become immune to the rhetorical devices of the documentary codes and conventions of a previous time period. Documentary texts arise from, and respond to the cultural construct of reality, which occurs equally in the authorial consciousness and that of the viewer. Producers respond to the existing body of texts as viewers, and adopt an approach which they believe will affect the viewer. Winston asserts that the viewer’s reception of documentary should become the site of its conception, where “the relation of image to imaged depends not on the image’s intrinsic quality guaranteed by science but our reception of it as an image of the real guaranteed by (or corresponding to) our experience”. 11 Corner’s response to this claim is an assumption that this approach brings about a situation where documentary becomes “radically relativised, placing terminal limitations on its role as one of the key discourses of the public sphere”. 12 When one considers the response of the viewer as a continuing engagement with the ongoing development of documentary form, Winston’s assertion becomes more a call for documentary forms which produce articulations of actuality with affective response in the viewer. The means of establishing this connection varies according to precedents in interpretive strategies, with the formation of a cultural immunity, or an indifference to modes of documentary representation which have become commonplace.

The continuance of affective alliances in the viewer depends on the revision of textual forms in consonance with the evolution of interpretive strategies. This is not to say that contemporary documentary should abandon entirely its historical antecedents, but that it is engaged in constant interaction with existing conventions and their efficacy in producing affective alliance in the viewer. Nichols has extended his inventory of documentary modes, including the performative mode a decade after his initial summation. The period from 1983 to 1994 saw sufficient change in the

10 Nichols, 1983, p. 27.
content of documentary to warrant the inclusion of a previously undefined mode, one which veers away from the social sphere of public affairs and explores the realm of individual location and identity.

Performative documentary clearly embodies a paradox: it generates a distinct tension between performance and document, between the personal and the typical, the embodied and disembodied, between, in short, history and science. One draws attention to itself, the other to what it represents. One is poetic and evocative, the other evidential and referential in emphasis. Performative documentary does not hide its signifieds in the guise of a referent it effortlessly pulls from a hat. These films stress their tone and expressive qualities while also retaining a referential claim to the historical. They address the challenge of giving meaning to historical events through the evocations they provide for them. 13

The performative documentary explores the individuality of the documentarist, not only demonstrating an awareness of process (as is the case with the reflexive mode), but also comparing the eccentricities, unique characteristics and personal traits of individuals and their strategies of narrativizing the actual and mental-virtual (personal memory) worlds. 14

The individual engages in multiple connections in the present age of technological complexity. Audio/visual narratives from various international sources are readily available to the individual, and the cultural homogeneity and stability of previous eras has become a heterogeneous aggregation of national and cultural identities. Technological advancement has revolutionized the world of visual communications technology and made audio/visual discourse in Internet 'cyber-space' an alternative site for the determination of the cultural construct of reality. The individual need not rely on mass media forms as a consumer, but can also easily create and exhibit audio/visual media. This change, along with the increased accessibility of video cameras, has brought about a social movement toward the exploration of the individual, in particular defining of the site of the identity of the individual (as creator/artist), submerged in a rapidly changing environment, both physical and cultural. Performative documentary results from a cultural shift in the relations between the identity of the individual and the domination of institutionally produced narratives, which are shaped by commercial and political considerations. The broad historical context of documentary is replaced by a representation of individual realities:

Performative documentary takes up those strategic locations called for by the shifting terms of identity politics and a postmodern disposition for cyborg affinities. By relying on a dispersed, associative, contextualizing, but also social and dialectical mode of evocation, performative documentary is a particularly apt choice in a time when master narratives, like master plans, are in disrepute. They invoke an epistemology of the moment, of memory and place, more than of history and epoch. An altered emphasis, an alternative epistemology, but one that remains open, teleonomic and social. 15

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13 Nichols, 1994, pp. 97-98.
14 The definition of the role of memory in the mental-virtual is defined in chapter 3.2.
15 Nichols, op. cit., p.105.
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The function of memory in performative documentary can also be observed in the performative interviews of the interactive mode, but in that case as an indirect address of the viewer through the agency of an interviewee. The memory depiction of the performative mode, however, is conveyed through direct address, usually from producer to viewer, without any requirement for, or expectation of objectivity, impartiality, or referentiality, but, rather, as an experiential testimony which is communicated a subjective state.

The advent of performative documentary confirms the contention that modalities of documentary emerge from socio-cultural situations. At a time of global uncertainty and relocation of the individual in terms of cultural/global relations, performative documentary reinstates the significance of the individual within the 'super-culture' of global awareness and communication:

This is, after all, a time of multinational if not global capitalism, of a new world order of command and control, of interactive but hierarchically organized communications, of a 'late' capitalism that continues to discover ways to transform and perpetuate itself ... the contrast between its power and scope and the apparent power of identity politics, makeshift alliances, and cyborg affinities may seem dwarfed out of all proportion. This is a perception that performative documentary sets out to revise. By resorting to a sense of the local, specific, and embodied as a vital locus for social subjectivity, performative documentary gives figuration to and evokes dimensions of the political unconscious that remain suspended between an immediate here and now and a utopian alternative.

The performative mode of documentary corresponds to a general transformation of the authorial role in contemporary culture. Computer technologies have opened up possibilities for music, text, photography, sound, visual arts, and moving images to be more readily accessible via the Internet, a development which bypasses the institutional selection of, and control over publishing. The individual has more opportunity to produce and exhibit artistic/textual work, and to express the personal point of view in relation to the global.

Documentary form, then, is engaged in a historical development that responds to social and cultural circumstances, and to technologies of production and distribution. Classical documentary form is no longer received as the authoritative voice of the nation state, and the immediacy of the hand-held camera of cinema verite no longer provokes the assumption that the image equates to actual events. The presuppositions that accompany these textual conventions remain active as connotations of the image, but not as ontological assumptions. The comparative interviews of the interactive mode, and the overt awareness of textual construction evident in the reflexive mode, assure that the naivety of earlier interpretive strategies has been replaced by an awareness of representational construction, and of the capacity for polyvalence in the documentary. The unabashed subjectivity of the performative mode further removes any assumption of absolute correspondence with actuality from the interpretation of documentary texts. The disconnection of the documentary image from its referent is most discernible in the performative and reflexive modes. The theoretical assumption of this disconnection will be a prominent topic in the forthcoming analyses of this thesis.

14 ibid., p.106.
5.2 The Camera, the Microphone and their Relation to Actuality

Rethinking Documentary Modalities

The relations between actuality and the text that have been discussed to this point have not taken the intermediate stages of production into consideration. It is significant that the conjunction of actuality with the audio/visual text occurs with the camera and microphone, as they record pro-filmic events and function as an actual presence in the physical world. There is nothing virtual about the camera, the microphone, and the means of production by which the text is produced. The choices made by the documentarist as to the status of the production processes have been addressed in part by Nichols in his modes of documentary, but the potentialities for the relations of the image and audio to actuality has not been defined in their entirety. The following section offers a model by which the several possible relations of the camera and microphone to actual events, and the modes of documentary, by which these relations can be categorized, are defined.

The modalities of documentary as defined by Nichols are distinguished by the mode of address adopted by producers in order to establish a claim (or, in the case of the reflexive mode an exploration of the validity of a claim), of reference to the actual. John Corner proposes an alternative taxonomy, including predominant use of the title "evidential modes", a term which signifies the referential function of documentary and its veracity as referential documentation. 17 The modalities of documentary, as Corner’s titles imply, consists of the strategies employed by producers in securing the confidence of the viewer as to the merit of the documentary as an account of the actual, and are a device of filmic and televisural verisimilitude (as outlined in the previous section).

Nichols, in his definition of documentary modes, does not consider the audio and visual components to be distinct elements of the documentary, but assumes that they work in conjunction. Corner, however, examines the functions of speech and vision as distinct components in arriving at his “modalities of documentary language”. 18 He classifies four visual, and three speech modes of documentary, treating each modality as capable of operating independently. Hence visual mode can alter while the speech mode remains constant, or equally any other combination of modalities can occur without the requirement for speech and vision to alter conjointly. Corner’s visual modes consist of evidential mode 1 (reactive observationalism): the mode of “minimal directorial intervention in respect of pro-filmic events”, corresponding to Nichols’ observational mode. 19 Evidential mode 2 (proactive observationalism): consists of observation with increased directorial control of the pro-filmic, and “increased management of movement and space as well as shooting”. 20 This mode involves the direction of the actual, in similar fashion to the director of a fictional film controlling dramatically enacted events. Evidential mode 3 (illustrative): is journalistic use of vision as “subordinate to verbal discourses, acting in support of

18 ibid., p. 27.
19 ibid., p. 28.
20 ibid., p. 28.
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their propositions and arguments". The strength of such visual narrative is often lacking, as it is intended as an aid for enunciation. The Associative Mode is “primarily engaged in the making of second-order meanings”, using “connotations and symbolic resonances” in combination with, and to reinforce the meanings of more referential images.

Corner goes on to list three modes of speech in documentary: Evidential mode 1 (overhead exchange) is observed speech “located in pro-filmic action”. Evidential mode 2 (testimony) is interview speech, and Expositional Mode includes full or partial commentary, and presenter direct address. Several questions arise concerning Corner’s definitions of the modes of documentary. His visual evidential mode 2: proactive observationalism, circumvents defining the issue of the disparity between observation and intervention, which is the central tenet of observational documentary, which requires precisely the minimization of intervention. Once the producer of a documentary intervenes, directs and controls the objects, people and events which are purported being ‘observed’, the documentary ceases to be observational and becomes a construction of pro-filmic actuality. The term proactive observationalism is a contradiction in terms, in that proactive direction belies the notion of observation and suggests an interactive relationship between the filmmaker and the pro-filmic actual, which becomes subject to the cultural construction of reality as conceived by the documentarist. ‘Proactive constructionalism’ would be a more appropriate term for this mode of documentary. Despite the fact that many have argued against the possibility of observational documentary being non-constructed, the defining factor, as Corner correctly points out, is the conscious minimization of directorial intervention.

The separate treatment of visual and speech modes also requires evaluation. In the case of speech Evidential Mode 1 (overhead exchange), the speech and vision are combined in an “observed subject”, who, according to Corner’s definition is located in pro-filmic action. The speech and vision of observational documentary are seldom separated, and to define them as separate elements begs the question as to why such a distinction is required. The second speech mode, Evidential mode 2 (testimony), the speech of the interviewee, can occasionally be utilized as commentary in isolation from the image of the speaker, but is generally synchronous with the visual image. The evidential mode 3, or Illustrative mode of vision can provide visual elucidation and embellishment of the interviewee’s statement, and is naturally coupled with both the testimonial and expositional modes of speech. It is the third speech mode, the expositional mode, which requires specific and separate treatment, particularly as the voice-over commentary is not a pro-filmic event, but is an addendum to the recorded visual and audio data.

When considering Corner’s notion of the expositional speech mode, the question arises as to why the associative mode should be restricted to visual narrative and exclude the associative functions of speech. Visual narrative conveys connotative meanings, but this communicative function is not exclusive to visual narrative. Connotation is also achieved by speech. If the division of visual modes is to be

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21 ibid., p. 29.
22 ibid., p. 29.
23 ibid., pp. 29-30.
defined according to associative meaning, a further mode of speech by necessity must also account for the distinction between direct assertion and connotative modes of speech. As a recognition of the independent function of visual and verbal media, Corner's modes take into account the distinctions between the limitations which apply to the verbal and the visual, yet fail to account for the requirement for their simultaneity in the observational and interview-based modes. The associative mode (which corresponds closely with the increased interpretive activity implied by Barthes' writerly texts and Eco's open texts), enables the viewer to have freedom to interpret according to polysemic textual cues, but also undergoes polyvalence through the 'reading' of the text. The associative mode stands as an alternative paradigm to the direct 'classical' documentary style, using associative forms of representation to offer the viewer an opportunity to apply individual interpretations to the text. The associative mode largely does away with the necessity for oppositional reading which occurs when the direct address of classical documentary is the subject of interpretive negotiation. Associative interpretive frameworks can be insinuated equally by either verbal or visual cues, but Corner fails to account for the associative function in his classification of the speech modes of documentary.

A more suitable means of defining the modalities of documentary is to establish the various combinations of sensory data and their modalities at any given time during a documentary. This must include not only vision and speech, but also ambient and musical audio sources. The table below suggests a matrix of modalities which accounts for the variant functions of speech, audio and vision in documentary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documentary Modalities</th>
<th>Verbal Observational</th>
<th>Verbal Constructional</th>
<th>Verbal Direct</th>
<th>Verbal Testimonial</th>
<th>Verbal Associative</th>
<th>Ambient Audio</th>
<th>Appended Audio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual Observational</td>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
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<td>Visual Constructional</td>
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<td>Visual Illustrative</td>
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<td>Visual Associative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graphic Direct</td>
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Fig. 5.2.1: The table of audio and visual modalities of documentary.

This method of defining modalities allows for continuous flux in the representational methods of the documentary. For example, an interview with 'visual direct' and 'verbal testimonial' (an interview with visual image of the interviewee), could (if the content of the interview were to be visually enhanced by illustrative shots, and verbal content became symbolic), then become 'visual illustrative'.

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4 Hall, 1980.
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combined with both "verbal testimonial" and "verbal associative" simultaneously. The "verbal direct" of a commentary could be accompanied by "visual direct" (the image of the commentator on screen), and then become "visual illustrative" as images which provide visual indication of the verbal content are screened over the commentary. The observational and constructional modes, however, usually require simultaneity of audio and vision, with the exception of occasional segments of commentary which may be imposed over the ambient speech. The attempt to represent the actual in observational documentary relies on synchronous vision and sound in order to maintain the illusion of actuality.

The distinction between the observational and constructional modes lies in the recognition of directorial influence and the intended claims of actuality in the production of sounds and images. The "fly on the wall" illusion results from an attempt to observe the actual while giving the impression that the camera and crew are not present, and to convince a viewer that the events which transpire in the presence of the camera are not at variance from those which would have occurred in the absence of the camera. The fact remains that (with the exception of concealed cameras), the production crew influences actual events, and interacts with people and their situations. Any attempt to be "invisible" may minimize directorial intervention, but does not remove it. The social actor in the documentary will enact a "role" as they feel it should be performed in the presence of a camera regardless of any attempts by the crew to be inconspicuous. Actions performed for the filming of a documentary which do not openly recognize the presence of the camera are the result of intervention, as any camera operator who has worked in public places is aware. The "natural" response of subjects is to recognize the camera and direct their gaze toward the crew and equipment. Subjects who have not received previous instruction to ignore the camera are unlikely to do so. Jeanne Hall remarks on the selectivity which maintains the illusion of "invisibility", yet does not entirely overcome the difficulty of avoiding subject recognition of the camera:

Received wisdom has it not that cinema verite filmmakers actually achieved such invisibility, but that all evidence of their inevitable obtrusiveness wound up on the cutting room floor. But in fact, many of the early Drew films feature subjects directly addressing the camera, often referring explicitly to the filmmaking process.

Any pretense that the camera is not present belies the fact that the crew are engaged in an interchange with the actual, where the social actor responds to the presence of the crew (in the observational mode), or according to the instructions given by the director or crew (in the case of the constructional mode). Instructions such as; "Just go on as if we were not here", or "could you do that again for the camera" are sufficient interference to bring about significant alterations in behavior. In such cases social actors cease to behave "naturally" and their actions become performative. The observational becomes constructional, with the construction being formed by the conjunction of the understanding of the social actor as to the requirements of the documentarist, with the intentions of the documentarist.

Rather than accusing observational documentarists of making erroneous claims of filmic reality, I would suggest that they have, in fact, participated in creating and

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"Hall, 1991, p.28."
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extending a cultural construct of reality which is no less valid than other mediated accounts of the actual, and which could be considered more 'real' than some other representational forms, in the sense of 'realism', in that they provide an alternative actuality, the filmic actuality which resembles the unobserved, un-filmed actual. As Bordwell and Thompson have observed:

...Far from being a neutral record of the world "in front of" a camera and microphone, cinema-verite is an active cinematic intervention in the world, another way of handling inevitable choices about form, style and effect. 30

The act of filming interacts with, alters and effects the actual, and therefore it also participates in the actual. The filmic transaction with the actual may modify the pro-filmic world, but this altered 'reality' is no less 'real' than the unobserved. The resultant representations portray the transaction between the camera and the social actor, a transaction which relies on the physical presence of the camera and crew, and results from a predetermined strategy as to the relationships between the social actor and the camera.

The Documentary Text as Actuality

The unobserved actual is, of course, 'unknowable' through media representation, but can be experienced only through direct physical sensation, and it is this apperception which observational documentary seeks to imitate. The actuality which is represented by observational documentary is the result of the conjunction of the act of filming/documenting with the response of social actors to this event. All such conjunctions are to some extent constructed, but the observational is influenced proportionally less by the intentions of the producers, and more by social actors. The constructional mode, on the other hand, is the result of the intentions of producers, who direct social actors (or, in the case of documentary reconstruction, dramatic actors), and manipulate events in order to devise an account of the actual which corresponds with cultural expectations of documentary representation. Pro-filmic events are orchestrated in order to provide content for the audio/visual narrative which the producer requires in order to compose an account of events, events which exist prior to and/or at the time of filming. The constructional mode involves the manipulation of the actual so as to compose a narrative structure, whereas the observational documentarist selects moments of narrative consequence which result from the act of filming. Both modes have as their objective the narrativization of actuality but utilize contrasting stylistic and formal strategies in order to achieve that goal. Directorial influence, from its least intrusive manifestation as the mere act of filming, to the absolute directorial control of reconstruction, modifies the actual so as to render it acceptable to the narrative conventions of documentary film and television.

Although the camera influences actuality, it must be kept in mind that the camera is also a component of actuality. If we consider only the pro-filmic world to be actual we are overlooking the existence and function of the camera as a familiar item in contemporary society. The processes of recording and distributing audio/visual

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30 Bordwell and Thompson, 1986, p.320.
material are, if not an everyday experience, then at least clearly comprehended by the majority of the population of industrialized, media-centric societies. When confronted with the camera, social actors are aware of the fact that they are entering a realm of socio-cultural discourse, and that within that realm certain conventions of behavior are expected. The interviewee understands that they he/she is expected to answer questions, rather than to ask questions of the interviewer, or to enter into a dramatic rendition of a Shakespeare character. Cultural awareness of contemporaneous techniques of narrative construction includes an awareness of the conventions of documentary form.

The processes of narrativization in documentary consist of multiple layering of mediation, as the documentarist and those social actors who are the subjects of the documentary bring their preconceptions of the documentary genre to the text. Alexander Kluge identifies three levels on which the construction of documentary form occurs:

A documentary film is shot with three cameras: 1) the camera in the technical sense; 2) the filmmaker’s mind; and 3) the generic patterns of the documentary film, which are founded on the expectations of the audience that patronizes it. For this reason one cannot simply say that the documentary film portrays facts. It photographs isolated facts and assembles from them a coherent set of facts according to three divergent schemata. All remaining possible facts and factual contexts are excluded. 31

This brief observation of the narrativization processes, however, overlooks some important aspects of the construction of documentary. The following is an attempt to thoroughly account for the influences and conventions which shape the narrative of documentary film and television.

Five Levels of Documentary Narrativization

The narrativization of actuality in documentary form consists of five levels in which the narrative representation of events is separated and distinguished from non-narrative aspects of the actual. At each level the attributes of narrative are more extensively imposed on the representation, progressively shaping the account of the actual into a form which is culturally acceptable. The first level is that of Shared Cultural Convention, where the individuals who are the subjects of the documentary have a particular notion as to the methodology of documentary representation, and alter their speech and behavior accordingly. Their part in the exposition is partially predetermined by previous viewing experience, and by their apprehension of documentary as a specific form of the social recounting of events, or the contemporary site of the narration of ‘true stories’. Expectations of narrative, being a component of the cultural awareness of social actors, cause a circuit to occur, whereby the viewing experience of social actors is manifested in their response to the camera. Their actions are modeled on other social actors observed in previous encounters with media representations, and reflect modes of address and behavior demonstrated in response to the camera. The performative guise of documentary subjects is inseparable from viewing experience and expectations of the genre. This

is not to say that social actors will, when confronted by the camera, recreate the exact actions and words of those representations which they have observed in other texts, but that the general requirements of the recording of events and actions will be influenced by previous examples of a genre. The cultural conception of the genre brings about a replication of its form.

The second level of narrativization is that of Authorial Conception, where the documentarist, when devising the intended contents of the text, select the events, people and objects which are to be included. This requires establishing a system of priorities whereby those events which pertain to the intended narrative strategy and content are filmed, and events that are considered to be peripheral or irrelevant are excluded. The predetermined conception of the narrative provides a guideline for the location and subject matter of the filming, and directs the form of the background research and selection of documentary subjects which occur as a part of the preparation of the production process. Issues and moments of narrative consequence are distinguished from the everyday, the mundane or the extraneous. Winston suggests that the processes, which are involved in the selection of content, be structured according to the requirements of the desired narrative:

For working documentarists, and those teaching documentary production, obeying narrative norms is usually the most challenging task to be faced. The real work of 'the stage of organising' is, in my experience, almost entirely taken up with making one's materials conform as closely as possible to a 'chrono-logical' and dramatic narrative. Documentarists do not, in my view, look for closures on the basis of what they have demonstrated. 31

The documentarist applies the culturally accepted conceptions of narrative to the selection and construction of audio/visual content before the production process commences, setting out to begin filming with a defined intention as to the desired themes and ideals which will be demonstrated by the documentary, and also with some idea as to the narrative chronology, causality or contingency. Indeed, proposals and applications for funding grants as a rule require details as to the strategies which the documentarist intends to employ prior to the decision as to whether the production process will proceed at all.

The third level involves Conventions of Visual Narrative, where the framing, lighting, mise-en-scene, and camera movements are encoded according to value systems; (for example, the connection between the hand-held movement of the cinema verite camera and the notion of unmediated 'reality', or the dark, shadowy image with secrecy, or sinister intentions). Choices as to the style of filming/recording impose a layer of mediation which effects the standing of the image within the visual narrative. The particularities and properties of the image suggest interpretive strategies, which are the result of intentional production strategies which employ connotative meaning. The visual data provides cues for the viewer to apply existing conventions of visual narrative to the interpretation of the encoded representation.

The fourth level is that of Interactivity of Production, where documentarists provoke, influence or suggest particular modes of behavior or speech according to their conception of the narrative. The social actor is directed by the comments,

questions or instructions given by the documentarist or other members of the production crew, and the resultant alteration of events or actions is shaped in order to correspond to the desired narrative form.

The fifth and final level is that of Directorial Construction which occurs subsequent to the recording of actuality, with the inclusion of voice-over commentaries, and the selection and construction of the editing process. The recorded data is combined in an order which accords with the director's understanding of, or intended strategy of accounting for the subject of the documentary. Post-production can also involve the addition of non-diegetic music, enhancement of ambient sounds through the inclusion of pre-recorded sound effects, the use of library, or historical archival footage, and the use of text for titles, or an alternative form of commentary. All of the above post-production processes influence the attributes of the narrative, and effect the form of the documentary. The fifth level could be describe as the most noticeable of the processes of narrativization, providing the surface, or appearance of the narrative, but it is not necessarily any more significant in terms of constructing the narrative account of the actual than the other four levels of narrativization. Winston identifies the construction of narrative form at the post-production stage as an inheritance of the early work of Flaherty:

...How to construct out of (supposedly) observed material a text which exhibits all the material of a fictional drama is Flaherty's major contribution to the cinema. And it must not be underestimated. For he put it together, at the 'stage of organising', out of various discrete elements which he had filmed at different times and in a different order, perhaps even for different story purposes. 22

Despite the strategies of narrativization which are utilized in the construction of documentary accounts, there remains a relation between the actual and the documentary representation which distinguishes the genre from fictional narrative, whilst allowing for the employment by documentarists of techniques used in fictional narrative. A convergence of fictional and documentary genres does not imply the dissolution of boundaries, but an articulation between them, which allows for reciprocal transference of methods and representational strategies.

Actuality (having been defined in chapter one as the realm of physical occurrences, independent of cultural reality), excludes the interpretation of the meanings of actions or events, but encompasses all physical occurrences, including the operation of the microphone, camera, lights and other equipment of the film/television crew. If the enactment of events in response to directorial control, or as the result of dramatic or theatrical motivations, were to mean the exclusion of such events from the definition of the actual, we would, by implication, also be required to exclude all pro-filmic events, as motivation does not define the existence or non-existence of actions or events. The pro-filmic event is always-already a constituent of the actual, with the provision that the events and actions are altered by (and performed for), the camera, and are therefore subordinate to a cultural construct of reality which incorporates the understanding of the camera as a mediating device used for the representation of the actual. Film and television texts both represent and participate in actuality, existing physically as consonant systems of photons and

sound waves, which represent actions, events and objects as does the paper and printer’s ink of the photographic or written representation. All such representations are actual in their own right, being accredited with social significance and regarded as a principal source of social knowledge. The documentary has the capacity to modify the cultural construct of reality and to influence physical events in the actual world. Errol Morris’s The Thin Blue Line (1987), is renowned for having been instrumental in the prosecution of a murderer and the release of a falsely imprisoned man. The murderer indirectly confessed to his crime during the production of the documentary, leading the police to arrest, try and prosecute him for the crime.

The dramatic, fictional performance which is realized for the sake of the camera is also an actual event, but the performance itself is a virtual act, in which identity is displaced. The reconstruction of historical events employing the use of actors involves the filming/recording of a virtual performance by actors, who perform in place of the absent body of the documentary subject. Nichols speaks of the historical fictional film as presenting us with “a body too many” (this body being the body of the actor), and the documentary as “possessing a body too few” (this body being the actual, physical body of the documentary subject). In order to represent the historical body the documentarist must construct a pro-filmic actual which virtually represents the absent body. Photographs, verbal descriptions, amateur film or video images provide a means of bestowing an identity on the absent body, whereas reconstruction substitutes a body for the historical, providing an actual, present, surrogate body which is a replacement for the actual, past, absent body.

Documentary as Cultural Memory

In order to apply the above theoretical discourse to textual material it is necessary to identify the various modalities at work in the context of documentary film or television. Raymond Quint’s Return to Sandakan (1995), is a television documentary which examines the brutal treatment of Australian prisoners of war in Borneo during World War II, and records the recollections of survivors as they return to the site of the camps where they were imprisoned. In the process of constructing an account of the historical events Quint utilizes a number of modalities of documentary representation, and combines dramatic reconstruction with verbal testimony.

The documentary analysis reveals the connections between the social and the individual. On the one hand there is the narrative-actual of the subjects of the documentary: the survivors who are a physical reminder of the historical events, the jungle paths along which the prisoners were forced to march, the archival film and photographic images which show the camps as they were in the 1940’s and the bones of the dead victims as they were unearthed by the Australian infantry at the conclusion of the war. On the other hand there is the narrative-virtual, personal recollections which put forward a number of individual accounts of the forced marches, torture and starvation, and other historical moments which survive only as memories. Deleuze describes the function of memory in Bergsonian terms, as the construction of a virtual mental image which represents the real:

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...The real object is reflected in a mirror-image as in the virtual object which, from its side and simultaneously, envelops or reflects the real: there is coalescence between the two. There is a formation of an image with two sides, actual and virtual. It is as if an image in a mirror, a photo or a postcard came to life, assumed independence and passed into the actual, even if this meant that the actual image returned into the mirror and resumed its place in the postcard or photo, following a double movement of liberation and capture.  

The mental-virtual of recollection becomes an actuality in the mind of the subject, and is written, enunciated or represented through visual arts as if the virtual recollection were actual. Indeed, the virtual ‘images’ of memory are the component parts of our conception of the actual world, with the exception of the fleeting experience of sensory data which is conceived as the continually passing moment of the present. Our construction of the actual relies on the virtuality of memory to build the accrued strata of experience into a unified conception of our ‘life experience’.

The documentary film is a cultural substitution for the process of ‘virtualizing’ sensory experience. The actual, historical event is represented as an audio/visual image which then becomes a technological-virtual, a cultural memory of the actual which records actuality, despite the virtual nature of the depiction of actuality. The use of interview in documentary compounds the processes of ‘virtualizing,’ combining multiple memories into a collection of memories, which are then recorded as images, thereby creating a virtual representation of virtual recollections. The collective memory has been molded into a virtual, which, for the purpose of cultural recollection, or ‘documenting’, act as a proxy for the physical experience of the actual. The individual recollection becomes a constituent of a collective of memories, which are then selected and constructed by the documentalist, and enhanced by illustrative images, music, or reconstruction. The (mental-virtual) memory of individuals is socially inscribed by the (technological-virtual) representation of the documentary, becoming narrative-virtual as audio/visual representations of memories, but becoming actual documentation of social history. The document is actual (that is the videotape, the film, the images exist physically), but its contents, the people and events which it represents, are technical-virtual images. The documentary consists of a chain of virtualities, which take on an existence as actual images. Although the memories may fade, as recorded images they remain inscribed as records of social history.  

The combination of memories, however, creates a mediated and constructed document, which reflects the ideologies and working practices of the documentalist. As a socially and ideologically located individual, the documentalist inevitably injects symptoms of his or her alliances into the text, thereby coloring the text. The rationale for selecting and combining the statements of interviewees is inseparable from the text itself, as Chaney and Pickering have observed:

Documentation is inescapably an expression of the social relationships of its production and reception. This involves questions about those who are institutionally empowered to describe aspects of the 'real world', and about the potential consequences of the descriptive categories and conventions employed.  

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35 Deleuze, 1989, p.68.
36 See chapter 3.3 for a definition of the strata of virtualization.
Documentary Claims of Evidentiality

Regardless of the identity of the documentarist, however, there is also an imposition of ideologies and conventional devices from the social actors which actively affects the account of events, whether or not this is an intentional, or even a conscious process.

Narrativization and the use of Documentary Modalities in Return to Sandakan

The opening segment of Return To Sandakan illustrates the constructional processes of combining the social/historical conception with the supplementary memories of the previously unrecorded voices of the individuals who survived the genocide of Sandakan. The black and white archival footage which opens the program attempts to locate the viewer in the past, as close to the actuality of the historical events as can be achieved by filmic images. The archival footage represents the existing social knowledge of World War II; the public historical awareness of past events as preserved by institutions which seek to retain documentary evidence of socially significant occasions. The effect of combining the historical film with the expositional direct address of the voice-over commentary is to create the impression of classical documentary construction, where the verbal direct and visual illustrative modes provide a point of view which is controlled and sculpted by the documentarist. The significance of the visual illustrative mode in this case is enhanced by the qualities of the images with the black and white film stock indicating the historical setting of the events. Quint establishes a chronological sequence of events, grounding the experience of the Sandakan survivors in the broader historical context, and continually returns to the archival film and voice-over commentary throughout the documentary in order to establish the time frame of the events at the camp in relation to the unfolding historical setting of the war with Japan.

Fig. 5.2.2: Archival film of the Singapore prisoners.
Voice-over commentary:
"With the surrender of Singapore in 1942, thousands of allied troops became prisoners of the Japanese. From this huge force a contingent of Australian and British POWs were sent to work at Sandakan camp in North Borneo. The fate of these prisoners was to prove one of the grimmest of the war. While a hundred and fifty officers were moved away to another camp, of the two thousand four hundred prisoners remaining at Sandakan, only six men would survive to the end of the war."
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The framing of the documentary narrative around the historical chronology of the war is evidence of the first two stages of narrativization: Shared Cultural Convention and Authorial Conception. Quint’s decision to provide a structured chronology around which the experiences of the prisoners could be grounded reflects the status of the documentary as social historical record, not only as a testimony of the prisoners’ wartime memories. As such, the use of archival film reinforces the historical claims of the text, and the verbal summary of the historical context situates the viewer in a chronological construction which continues to provide a temporal framework for the somewhat confusing leaps between the distant past, the recent past and the present on which Quint embarks. The viewer is asked to distinguish between wartime events, dramatic reconstruction of those events, present day recollections, recent and past returns to the site of the camps, and also to distinguish between the ‘borrowed’ film of the prisoners who had returned to Borneo in earlier decades and the current footage of the sites. The archival/historical grounding of the events serves to form the narrative structure of the documentary into a comprehensible linear ‘story’ to which Quint returns after his numerous excursions into present-day events.

The Shared Cultural Convention which shapes viewer expectation of documentary narrative, demands the temporal logic which is provided by the voice-over commentary in order to make sense of the multiple temporal locations which are represented. The process of devising this ‘chrono-logic’ reveals the Authorial Conception which requires the collection of archival footage and the employment of actors, costumes and bamboo cages in order to reconstruct visual impressions of the prison camps. The filming of the recent return to the campsite by prisoners requires foreknowledge of the event, and planning in order to transport the production equipment and crew. The Authorial Conception determines the selection of events and sites which are to be filmed, thereby implementing a primary authorial control over the narrative. The process of conceiving the intended coverage and then collecting the diverse sounds and images depends on prior cognizance of the narrative, and a strategy regarding the devices used to form a narrative from the raw material of the actual.

The documentary is structured in such a way as to alternate between the past of the historical footage and the unfolding stories of the survivors. As the commentary progresses through the major events of the Asia-Pacific war, the stories of the survivors are presented in a corresponding chronological order. Parallel to this narrative chronology is a series of ‘excursions’ from the main narrative thread, which take the viewer to the camp, to visit the Japanese commander and soldiers, and along the route of two forced marches through Borneo. The order of these segments is as follows:

1. Opening - Archival footage over commentary
2. Camp survivors in RSL discuss memories
3. Return to the camp - early memories
4. Japan - soldiers and commander of camp
5. Trek over Borneo mountains
6. The second death march after the bombing of the camp
7. Post-war recovery - relatives comment on the state of the survivors
8. Japan, Koyasan - Japanese and Australian points of view are compared
9. Closing segment - Documentarist’s conclusion
The chronology of the narrative is significant as it represents a ‘re-collection’ and a reordering of the memories, a process that commences with the return to the camp and the ceremony performed there. This ordering of the memories, however, is a narrative construction composed by the documentarist, who has collected various interviews at different times and locations, and then combines them in post-production according to the chronological structure. The effect of this approach to narrativization is to locate the viewer within a representation of collective memory which progresses forward through time, while recalling events from the (filmic) present. This ‘chronologic’ becomes a strategy of narrative construction, but not necessarily a characteristic fictional device. The construction of accounts of the actual according to chronological order is, in fact, prior to fictional narrative, and is inherited from the oral description of the everyday by an observer. It constitutes the primal organizing principle by which events are perceived and memorized. Narrative employs this earliest of strategies in constructing an ‘internal’ chronology of the representation of the events which comprise the text, which is distinct from the ‘external’ chronology of the duration of the text itself. Similarly, the recollection of events by the prisoners in Sandakan is presented in a constructed chronology, not the chronology of the order in which the memories were compiled, or in which the images and sounds were recorded, but according to the documentarist’s placement of the recollected events in relation to other recollections, and to the historical summary presented by the commentary. The internal chronology of the text adheres to the historical chronology of actual events, which is recreated by the ordering of the events according to the recollections of the prisoners.

The segment of Return to Sandakan which raises the greatest interest in the narrativization techniques of documentary is the return to the site of the camp by the former inmate, Owen Campbell, and the strategies which were employed in order to visually represent his recollections of the camp. Several modalities of documentary representation are used in an overlapping sequence which combines observational, constructional, illustrative and direct modes of vision and speech.

Fig. 5.2.3:
Commentary: Verbal Direct: “In July 1995 a group of Australian veterans and their families on a pilgrimage to Borneo arrive at Sandakan. As the only survivor to return, Owen Campbell is the center of media attention, expected to share his memories in public.”

Fig. 5.2.4:
Media Camera Operator: Verbal Observational: “OK, can you just do that again for the...”
Owen Campbell: Verbal Observational: “I'm a survivor!”

Fig. 5.2.5:
Commentary: Verbal Direct: “With his wife Evelyn, Owen visits the site of Sandakan prisoner of war camp, today a peaceful memorial park where it is hard to imagine the horrors suffered here.”

Fig. 5.2.6:
Owen Campbell: Verbal Testimonial: “You see, that's where your camp was, in there, behind there. It's all grown up now, but you can just imagine what it was like. There were no roadways, the only road to town went through down that way.”
Fig. 5.2.7:
Commentary: Verbal Direct: "Sandakan camp was 8 miles inland from the coastal town of Sandakan itself. Here the Japanese brought two groups of prisoners, a total of 2,000 Australians and 500 British to build an airstrip for the Japanese war effort."

Fig. 5.2.8:
Statements of survivors: Verbal Testimonial: "I'd say that for the first twelve months at Sandakan, Sandakan was bearable."
"The camp wasn't well organized, it wasn't escape proof."
"There was a band of us always outside at night stealing food."

Fig. 5.2.9:
Statements of survivors: Verbal Testimonial
"They did shoot one bloke going out at night."
Fig. 5.2.10:
Statements of survivors: Verbal Testimonial
“After the escapes through the wire at night were finished, the diet was very deficient in vitamins.”
“You’d scrounge whatever you could get your hands onto - or you’d get stuff from your neighbors - but if they saw him hand it to you that poor bloke, they’d take him away and shoot him.”

Fig. 5.2.11:
Statements of survivors: Verbal Testimonial: “They had one intention; they wanted to kill you.”

The visual content of this segment demonstrates the variance of modalities employed by Quint in his attempt to represent the recollections of the survivors. The segment opens with Owen Campbell being greeted at the airport by a host of media reporters, cameras and microphones, and a ceremonial greeting taking the form of the placing of a necklace or garland around his neck. The voice moves briefly from verbal direct, to verbal observational mode, as one of the reporters calls out “OK if you just do that again for the.” [camera]. The observational scene is interrupted by a cut to a war memorial, with Owen affirming to the cameras and onlookers; “I’m a survivor”. The use of observational voice contrasts with the predominance of direct and testimonial voice throughout the documentary, although the extent to which it is constructed by the documentarist is uncertain.

The following scene uses artist’s sketches in order to provide some indication of the appearance and layout of the camp, with accompanying voice-over commentary, which is followed by selected statements from the survivors. As these statements continue, the vision cuts from the black and white sketches to a reconstruction of the
prison camp experience. Slow-motion imagery and use of symbolic images of barbed-wire fences characterize the reconstruction segment in order to evoke the atmosphere of prison camp life. The reconstruction is followed by tranquil images of jungle foliage and drops of water falling into a lake, juxtaposing the aesthetically pleasing beauty of the surroundings with the brutality of the events which transpired at the site, a transformation of visual imagery which employs the visual associative mode.

Within two minutes of program time Quint has fluctuated between three verbal, and four visual modes. The changes in verbal mode occur as an ‘overlap’ beneath visual material which remains consistent for the duration of the change, and, correspondingly, the visual mode alters while the verbal mode remains constant. (See figure 5.2.12).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audio:</td>
<td>Verbal Observational</td>
<td>Verbal Direct</td>
<td>Verbal Testimonial</td>
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Fig. 5.2.12: The independent order of audio and visual modalities in Return to Sandakan.

The modalities of documentary as observed in this short segment of Return to Sandakan demonstrate the multiple layering and non-simultaneity of audio and visual modes which can be employed in contemporary documentary. Each modality represents an established and culturally encoded method of representation which has been previously experienced by viewers, and has become an established convention. The relations of the audio and images with actuality are dependent on the interpretive strategies that are applied to the particular combinations of modalities, with the visual associative mode being especially significant in suggesting intertextual readings of the images. The functioning of the modalities of documentary representation are conditional on a viewer’s awareness of the cultural codes and conventions, and the texts utilize conventionalized interpretive strategies as a means of directing the viewer towards a particular understanding of actuality.

5.3 Evidentiality and the Validity of Interview

The Social Significance of Interview

The interview has been used extensively in documentary film and television as a means of providing evidence to support arguments and to establish historical facts through the testimonial accounts of experts in a field, witnesses, participants or representatives of institutional authorities. The use of interview entails a departure from the text in each of these cases. The visual images of the direct visual mode provide no more than a likeness of the face of the interviewee. There is no evidential value to this visual representation apart from the facial expressions of the speaker, which indicate the extent to which the interviewee is genuine, but may also provide.
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the interviewee with a consequent authority, which results from the appearance of the interviewee in the documentary. The choice of the documentarist to include the interviewee insinuates that their testimony is of some interest or value when examining the issues at hand.

The interview originated in the legal pursuit of evidence through interrogation, and was appropriated by journalists as a means of securing information. Winston points out the legal origins of interview:

...The law is the source of a critical documentary technique - the interview. The filmed interview is causally related to Benthamite legal reforms because, almost as soon as the new 'natural' legal interrogatory was in place in the courts, it was borrowed for journalism and, ... for social science, and then borrowed again for radio and the cinema. 39

The interrogatory interview is intended to offer up an account of the unknown actual, and to allow for the comparison of evidence between witnesses in order for a judge or magistrate to reach an understanding of actual occurrences. The appropriation of such methods for journalism and film removed them from the strict rule of law, which demands that testimonial evidence be considered in light of other testimonies which pertain to a particular case. Once removed from such legal restrictions, the evidential value of interview comes under question.

Interview is inseparable from the social structures and institutional hierarchies that determine the production practices of documentary film and television. Similarities to television news and investigative journalism assure that interrogative documentary interview reflects the power relations which are concomitant with political and current affairs interviewing techniques. Nichols underlines the structural functions of the interview in society:

The interview is an overdetermined structure. It arises in relation to more than oral history and serves for more than one function. Most basically, the interview testifies to a power relation in which institutional hierarchy and regulation pertain to speech itself. As such, the interview figures into ... most of the dominant institutions of our culture. 40

Hence the recourse to the expert, the administrator of a relevant government department or civic authority as interviewee. The social order dictates the relative value of the testimony of particular interviewees, and suggests modes of language and representation. The Visual Associative mode would not be considered an appropriate visual accompaniment to the verbal testimonial of a Police Commissioner, as the imaginative and symbolic visual content would detract from the authenticity of the verbal testimony. This is a function of the 'already read,' in the form of the knowledge of conventions of genre. The conventional procedure for interview power relations has become a stable encoding of hierarchical structures, and the more consequential an interviewee, the less likely it is that the visual direct mode will be interrupted by illustrative or associative images.

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Nichols describes the "spacio-temporal configuration between filmmaker and interviewee" as bearing "implications and a potential political charge, an ideological valence." 41 The informal conversational interview, which can reflect the television 'chat show' format implies an egalitarian approach to power relations, where the interviewer takes on cultural power through developing notoriety, and therefore establishing an equality with the 'celebrity status' or social significance of interviewees. Also the "masked interview" where ostensibly natural dialogue is brought about by the questions and suggestions of an off-screen interviewer, who remains absent from the edited version, thereby creating a powerful absence of the filmmaker who directs proceedings without appearing within the film. The common interview presents a more straightforward spatial-temporal relationship, which:

...Normally requires subjects to provide a frontal view of themselves and generally discipline their bodies to oblige the cameras requirements regarding depth of field and angle of view. The individual identity, autobiographical background, or idiosyncratic qualities of those interviewed become secondary to an external referent: some aspect of the historical world to which they can contribute special knowledge. 42

The interviewee in the customary interview is generally required for a historical or social purpose, in order to clarify, and elucidate an issue, or to represent an institutional position. Their enunciation is attributed with relative authority according to their hierarchical status both within the text (in comparison to the other interviewees), and external to the text (as social actors located within a hierarchy).

The interview technique of *Return to Sandakan* consists partially of masked interview, particularly in the opening segment where the survivors in the R.S.L. bar converse about their wartime experiences, obviously for the sake of the camera. But the majority of interview material in *Sandakan* is what Nichols describes as "pseudomonologue", which consists of the "visible presence of the social actor as evidentiary witness and the visible absence of the filmmaker (the filmmaker's presence as absence)". 43 The answers given by interviewees appear to be a direct address to the audience, an impression which is brought about by the removal of any reference to the interviewer. The eye line of the interviewees when addressing the interviewer (who, according to convention, is strategically placed in a position adjacent to the camera lens), is the only indication as to the off-screen presence. The relations suggested by this spatial-temporal arrangement empower the absent documentarist as the authoring agent behind the camera that directs the content of the interview from an absence which is, in fact, a cogent presence of creative control.

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41 ibid., p.51.
42 ibid., p.53.
43 ibid., p.54.


The Textual Hierarchy of Interview

The authorial regulation of interview ranges from the prompting of the interviewee towards subject matter which pertains to the subject of the documentary, and continues in the selection of responses to be included in the edited text. In fact, all five stages of documentary narrativization (defined in the previous section), are involved in the underlying expectations, conventions, conception, production, and post-production of interview. The interview is an exercise in narrativization, not only by the documentarist, but in a more primary sense, by the interviewee, who recollects, frames and constructs the data into a narrative account of events. Causality, chronology and the conventions of story telling are combined in the testimony of the prisoners of Sandakan, as historical events are constructed through enunciation of memories.

The interviewees in Return to Sandakan provide the primary source of the events which occurred in the prison camps. Their testimony is granted the status of historical document in the hierarchy of representations within the program. The historical status of the archival footage and the voice-over commentary provide an overview of the historical setting, but do not deal with the details of events as they occurred in the camps. Nichols’ observation that “oral histories tend to function in historical documentaries as pieces of argumentation rather than as primary source material still in need of conceptual organization,” is contradicted by the imputed authority of the recollections of the prisoners of war. Quint adopts the role of a compiler, as one who sets the interviews in the frame of a broader historical awareness, but does not impose his authority as filmmaker/historian. His commentary provides context, and links disjointed segments of testimony, but allows the testimony to provide the authoritative evidence of historical occurrence.

The treatment of interviewees as primary source material can also be seen in Connie Field’s The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter (1980). The female interviewees’ recollections of their experiences during the Second World War are also granted the status of historical authority, to the extent of becoming the principal information source of the documentary. John Corner, in his analysis of Rosie the Riveter, identifies the requirements of (primary source) interviewees for the documentary as being their effectiveness in providing an evidential, yet accessible representation to the viewer:

...The frequency of appearance of the five women is instrumental to their personal salience and to viewer empathy. One can imagine the film with fewer interviewees, but the problem here would become the familiar one of the representativeness of recounted experience. ... One can also easily imagine it with more interviewees, but then the problem quite soon becomes becomes not only a dispersal of affective viewing relations, but the generation of too much specific information, too many instances, than can be usefully carried forward in the historical shifts which form a primary axis of the film. There is also the problem of repetition - of how many specific (locally various) versions of a more general truth about circumstances a viewer will accept before judging the provision of testimony to be in excess of requirement. 

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44 ibid., p.252.
45 Corner, 1996, p.129.
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Similarly, Quint's use of interviewees encounters an equipoise between over-use of interview testimony, which risks becoming tedious and repetitive, and provision of material sufficient to establish the evidential validity of the testimony as representative, rather than as personalized, isolated experience. Return to Sandakan uses extensive interview material in order to establish the prison camp survivors as the central focus of the documentary, and to establish a representational coverage of the available testimony.

The agency through which the narrative is focalized in documentary involves strategies of narrative construction which are comparable to those of fictional narrative, demonstrating once again the permeability of the fiction/nonfiction delineation. Branigan's eight levels of narrative (described in chapter two), involve levels of focalization which provide viewers with a subject position within the text whereby they can (virtually) participate in the perceptions, actions, thoughts and speech of fictional characters. The interviewee as primary source becomes a focalization of the narrative in the same fashion as the character that provides a surrogate subjectivity for the viewer of a fictional text, particularly where the recollections of the interviewee provide experiential and autobiographical content. This relies on the identity of the focalizing agent being the interviewee, a situation which occurs when the interviewee is the primary source of information, and the primary agent of focalization. Conversely, when the interviewer or documentarist is the agent of focalization the interviewee is presented to the viewer as a secondary source, observed as if through the eyes of the documentarist. The supplementation of the verbal testimonial mode with the visual illustrative and visual associative modes establishes the secondary focalization of the interviewee, leading from the external focalization of testimonial speech, to both the surface and internal focalization of the visual representation. This supplementary focalization guides the viewer from the exterior focalization of speech, toward the interior focalization of perception and thought. The viewer migrates from observational reception to identification with the agent of focalization, which is, in this case, the documentarist. The illustrative and associative visual content corresponds to the primary focalization, representing the documentarist's argument where the interviewee is witness, and the interview is presented as support for the argument put forward by the documentarist. In this case, the use of illustrative or associative visual images during an interview tends to express the themes of the documentary, rather than the experiences of the interviewee. When the interviewee, however, is the primary source, the illustrative and associational images are representative of the internal state of the interviewee, particularly where the content is autobiographical. (See fig. 5.3.4).

Fig. 5.3.1: Primary source interview: the subjectivity of the interviewee reconstructed by the image.
Keith Botterill: “We didn’t know what direction we were going in. Never had a clue”.

This contrast in interviewee status can be observed in Return to Sandakan by observing the use of the visual illustrative content during interviews. When secondary source interviews occur, such as the descriptions of post-war behavior from the relatives of deceased survivors, the illustrative images often consist of photographs of the prisoners, either during the war, or after the war in civilian clothing. The theme of the documentary takes precedence over the experiential testimony of relatives, in that the subjectivity of the (secondary source) relatives is subordinate to the subjectivity of the (primary source) survivors. Conversely, when the interviewee is a primary source, being a survivor of the camp, the visual illustrative images move into representation of experience through reconstruction and the use of the subjective camera, representing treks along the jungle track and experiences within the camp.

Fig. 5.3.2: Secondary source interview: Sue Moxham, Daughter of survivor (now deceased), Bill Moxham.
**Fig. 5.3.3:** Secondary source interview: The visual illustrative images are subordinate to the primary source, as the secondary source illustrative images returns to the subjectivity of the survivors.

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<tr>
<th>Interviewee as witness</th>
<th>Interviewee as subject</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>secondary source</em></td>
<td><em>primary source</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appearing in support of an argument</td>
<td>Providing unique memories and experiences central to the theme of the documentary</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer as focalization:</th>
<th>Interviewee as focalization:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Interviewer as primary conveyor of narrative</td>
<td>Interviewee as primary conveyor of narrative</td>
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<tr>
<th>Visual illustrative/associative represents the interviewer’s perceptions/thoughts (Generalised, driven by documentary themes and returns to primary sources)</th>
<th>Visual illustrative/associative represents the interviewee’s perceptions/thoughts (Experiential, specific to memory and subjectivity)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viewer <em>observation and evaluation</em> of the interviewee, focalization through the interviewer.</td>
<td>Viewer <em>identification</em> with the interviewee, interviewer mediation is minimized.</td>
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**Fig. 5.3.4:** Primary and Secondary Focalization of Interviewees

The evidentiality of the interview, then, can operate either as a focalization through the agency of an interviewee appearing as a documentary ‘character’ (particularly when the interviewee provides auto-biographical material), or, alternatively, as supporting evidence for an argument when the interviewee appears in the role of an expert, a witness or a (non-central) participant in events, in which case focalization occurs primarily through the interviewer. The interviewee in documentary, therefore, can occupy the position of narrator, or that of a focalization.
that is within the narrative, or can be a secondary source, a secondary-focalization, of the evident argumentation of the documentary.

Documentary interview contains elements of fictional narrative in the use of interviewees as 'documentary characters', designating them as storytellers, or, employing their non-fictional observations as support for an argument. The documentary genre cannot be limited to the non-fictional, but incorporates 'true stories' which are the verbal accounts of experience, constructed according to cultural conventions of ordering and describing the actual. The devices of fictional narrative have become entrenched in the methodology of documentary film and television, providing the difference between the chronicling of events and the rhetorical, argumentative or creative portrayal of the actual.

5.4 Conventions of Fictional Film in Documentary

The utilization of encoded visual representations through established conventions are reliant on previous viewing experience, with the 'already seen' of film and television images performing a similar function to the "already read" as described by Barthes. Interpretive strategies exist as the accrued experiences of previous interpretations, whether written texts or visual images. The documentary text at hand is not restricted in its reference to other documentary texts, but engages fictional interpretive strategies in its methods of representation, constructing a pro-filmic enactment which enables an illustration of the absent actuality, a reconstruction of the testimonial memory which no longer exists in physical form. The use of fictional reference enhances the potential of the entire documentary project, by enabling the visual representation of otherwise unachievable subjects. All expressions of recollection consist of reconstruction, whether verbal or visual. The strategies which are employed in order to express these narrative-virtual representations of memory are not the factor which defines the difference between documentary or fiction, but are tools which are available to the documentarist to construct an account of the past.

The camera requires visual content in order to represent the actual/past, and is denied this opportunity if reconstruction is excluded from the documentary genre. The delineation between fiction and documentary impoverishes both genres by restricting the availability of methods by which actuality can be represented. Conventional representational strategies (such as interview and observation), do not provide more substantial evidence of the actual event if the use of reconstruction is disallowed. The evidentiality of the documentary as asserted by the proponents of cinema verite requires the rejection of reconstruction in order to substantiate claims of reality, but this stance limits the documentary to filming present events only. Representations of the past demand strategies of mediation, as is evident in Quint's use of archival film, photographs, and interviews.

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47 Barthes, 1974, p.20.
The Influence of Hollywood on Documentary

The legacy of the Griersonian documentary movement was that of the dramatization of the actual in documentary film. The techniques of the Hollywood cinema were appropriated and applied to the documentary representation of events, regardless of the bias, distortions or subjective points of view that may have been introduced as a result of such techniques. When referring to Grierson's departure from the British G.P.O. film unit, Winston observes the development of dramatization and narrativization under the new regime of Cavalcanti:

That Cavalcanti might have encouraged the 'narrative or dramatic' or 'story' documentary means that he was simply continuing Grierson's agenda in a situation where the group's continuing assurance about working with synch sound was growing. In other words, here again there was development but no schism. Drama was not only already present in Grierson, it is the ontological mark of the Griersonian documentary ... Like Flaherty before him, Grierson did not seek out an alternative documentary-specific code to represent time and space. Both were content with the legacy of Hollywood, not least because dramatization was seen as being essential to the form. *

Grierson denigrated the travelogue, the scientific and nature films and news reels as lower forms of non-fictional cinema, because, as Winston explains, they "all claimed the real, as did documentary, but they did not dramatize. Fiction dramatized but did not claim the real. Ergo documentary was unique in dramatizing the real." 50 Documentary's genesis lay in the dramatic representation of events which were often constructed for the sake of the camera, and which introduced an element of drama into the nonfiction film. Flaherty and Grierson both appreciated the necessity for maintaining a ratio of 'story' content in the 'factual' film. 51 The one questionable aspect of Grierson's claim for documentary, however, is that of being "unique in dramatizing the real". News also adopts story structures around which to construct accounts of the actual (as has been discussed in the previous chapter). This perception of Grierson's reveals his inability to apprehend the 'naturalized' narrativization of newsreels, where viewer attention to the construction of the 'story' is diverted by giving the impression of direct correspondence to the actual, and the cultural acceptance of the news as 'fact'. News has traditionally minimized the apparent narrativization of the actual, preferring to claim transparency, whereas early documentary revealed in overt dramatization.

Location as an Indicator of Actuality

The fictional narrative is once further removed from the actual than the non-fictional, with the distinction being more one of location and identity of the sites and bodies in question than one of 'truth' or the imaginary. One legacy of the cinema verite movement in current documentary practice is the rejection by documentarists of constructed settings, and the adoption of codes of integrity when using

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*ibid., p.54.
50 ibid., p.103.
51 Barnouw, 1974, and Winston, 1995, provide ample evidence of the fictional content in early documentary forms.
reconstruction to represent the actual, such as the inclusion of a small title which informs the viewer that they are watching a reconstruction or re-enactment of actual events. As for the non-fictional claim to be 'real' rather than enacted, the notion of the identity of the body in the image is all that separates documentary reconstruction from interview or observational footage, where the body alters behavior in response to the camera and 'acts' a part, but maintains its own identity. The body here acts, but retains the name by which it is known in 'real life', whereas the actor's body in documentary reconstruction undergoes a further removal from the actual by taking on an alternative identity and becoming a substitute for the actual, historical body.

Location also provides a means of distinction between the fictional and non-fictional representation. The use of original, historical settings partially offsets the substitution of the body of the actor for the historical body, and implies an effort on the part of the filmmaker to establish a sense of integrity and veracity within the documentary reconstruction. In Return to Sandakan it is Quint's inclusion of the original settings which implies authenticity in the image, particularly when portraying the forced marches along the Borneo jungle tracks, and the precise locations of the prison camps. The use of the subjective camera speaks to the viewer of the authenticity of the site, rather than of any other unique qualities which may demand attention. It is the sense of place which is created by the virtual walk on which the viewer embarks that insists on the authenticity of an experience which is removed from the historical event by time alone. Time and space are the greatest hindrance of the documentalist, and an insistence on filming in authentic locations is one less obstruction to the representation of historical events, and one way in which the historical event can be connected within the present.

Fig. 5.4.1: The Jackson film

In 1946 Major Harry Jackson went back to Borneo to reward the natives who had helped the prisoners, and filmed the journey. Quint includes the historical film documentation in his own documentary.
Quint, in *Return to Sandakan*, constructs a narrative, using location as a significant means of authentication. A story is told (both verbally and by illustrative or associative images), and the authenticity of location and identity is by and large valued more highly than the existence of a visual representation of the actual event. Reenactment, dramatization of the actual and imaginary fiction consist of distinct ontological positions, each positing a precise relation between the viewer, the audio/visual text, cultural constructs of reality, and the actual. The variation between these representational forms lies in their disconnection from the actual, with additional levels of narrativization contributing to the construction of fictional and imaginary content, or with fewer levels of narrativization for non-fictional content. Variations of these ontological positions can occur within a single text, with one segment of the text forming a non-fictional, minimally mediated representation (such as observational modes of documentary), and another segment of the text utilizing dramatic techniques of documentary reconstruction, and, still further, representations that consist of enactment of actual persons and events, but are imaginary fictions based on historical knowledge.
Fig. 5.4.5: Reconstruction, the actor becomes a "body too many."

Fictional strategies of narrativization are most evident in the use of documentary reconstruction. The reconstruction, and the ensuing associative symbolism, raises questions as to the requirements of evidentiality in documentary film and television. The presence of an actor presents the viewer with the problem (as previously mentioned), raised by Nichols of "a body too many". Quint confronts this issue by employing tight framing of portions of the body, revealing only the shoulders and face of the actor on one occasion (see figure 5.4.5), accompanied by the strong symbolic presence of the barbed-wire fence, and the Bamboo cage, with only the arm of the actor being framed (See figures 5.4.6 and 5.4.7). The body of the actor is limited to a symbolic function, becoming an archetypal representation of the bodies of all prisoners of war, without identity or function in the actual, historical events, but of paramount importance to the visual narrative of the documentary representation. The body represents the human suffering endured in the camp, the collective experience of two thousand Australian prisoners being personified in the body of one actor. The presence of the body in the image indicates the simultaneity of the constructional and the associative modes, as this reconstruction also takes on indexical reference, as the body, hardly that of an emaciated prisoner (and therefore not iconic), represents bodies to which it bears little resemblance, and from which it is removed by both identity and time. The body of the actor appears as a partial body, and its incompleteness allows it to represent other bodies, as its indexical function contrasts with the barbed wire fence, both symbols of imprisonment.

55 Nichols, 1987, p.10. See also Nichols 1993, p.177.
Fig. 5.4.6: The symbolic image of imprisonment.

Fig. 5.4.7: Limited representation of the body offering a universal, non-specific reconstruction of the prisoners' experiences.

The representation of the body is supplemented by visual manipulations of the image, which offer a distinctive sign of the removal of the images from the realm of realism as seen in the observational and direct modalities. The use of slow-motion footage and lens flare in the reconstruction sequences offers intertextual reference to the stylistic devices of fictional genre. The slow-motion images are distinguished from the likeness of actual experience by the temporal distortion of movement, and in this case suggest the hallucinatory perception of a mind racked by hunger, heat and disease. The change in duration of movement suggests an alteration in the consciousness of the represented subject (in this case an indexical reference to the prisoners, with symbolic connotations of starvation), through the subjective eye of the camera, seeing the world differently. The connotative meaning of slow-motion images in this circumstance contrasts with other usage of slow-motion footage, for example sports images, where the movement is slowed in order to appreciate the intricacy and skill of physical movement. Given the prison camp as a setting, the surrounding context of genocide through torture and starvation insists on a reading of the slow-motion images as an altered consciousness, and as an internal subjectivity of memory rather than a direct representation of the actual.
Documentary Claims of Evidentiality

It is, however, the viewer's previous experience of the conventions of representation which provides the interpretive strategies that guide the reading of the images. The lens flare of the 'glaring sun' has been borrowed from the western genre, and other representations of heat exhaustion, where the desert heat is represented in the subjective shot of the sun's glare, and, once again, the body and mind pushed to the limits of endurance are insinuated by the intertextual association (See figure 5.4.8). The flared image of the sun is an iconic signification of intense heat, with lens flare indicating distortions of sensory perception as a result of the extremities of physical suffering. Such conventions of semiotic systems of meaning originate from fictional genres, and are utilized by Quint in an attempt to represent the internal state of prisoners of war at Sandakan.\(^{56}\)

![Flared Sun Image](image)

**Fig. 5.4.8:** Lens-flared sun, expressing subjective emotional states.

Documentary modalities are more complex and diverse than the modes defined by Nichols, and are not limited to specific documentary conventions, but also engage in the techniques of fictional narrative. The conventions of documentary genres are intersected by fictional genres, and are reliant on a cultural appreciation of a corpus of all texts, documentary and fictional. Documentary convention consists of a particular arrangement of representational relations, in which the actual is correspondent to the image to various degrees, and each modality implies a specific ontological position, both in regard to actuality, and in contrast to the other modalities. The comparison between referential conventions provides an arrangement of gradations that offer an overview of the modalities of the documentary text, both within and extraneous to the genre.

The narrativization of actuality in the documentary genre also involves a gradation that integrates cultural presuppositions with the means and conventions of documentary production. The relations between the documentary text and actuality are defined by conventions of the genre, and the expectations that such conventions arouse in the social actor and the documentarist. The documentary text consists of several levels of narrativization, and employs multiple modalities in its engagement with actuality, but the viewer also engages with these conventions, referring to any

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\(^{56}\) Other examples of this technique in fictional film can be found in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), and *The English Patient* (1996).
previous experience in the interpretation of the text, and evaluating the efficacy of the
text in offering a credible narrativization of actuality.

The findings of this chapter highlight the proportional relations between the text
and actuality, in that distinct portions of the text enter into specific referential
modalities, and, therefore, the relations between the documentary and its referent are
variable according to the measure of correspondence that is implied by the modality
at a given moment in the text. The 'reality claims' of documentary are subject to the
understanding of the codes contained in the text, and applied to the text by the
viewer, who shares an understanding of these codes. Fictional conventions are
utilized in the interpretation of documentary, and the construction of accounts of
actual events, as is achieved in documentary film and television, remains a
construction. The process of constructing accounts of actuality through the use of
fictional narrative is the subject of the forthcoming chapter, in which dramatic
enactment of actuality will be considered.
Chapter 6

DRAMATIC RE-ENACTMENT IN SCHINDLER’S LIST

The conventions of documentary genres of film and television discussed in the previous chapter are a determined cultural convention for the representation of actual events. The boundaries of these genres, however, do not exclude fictional methods of narrativization. The flow between fictional and non-fictional genres is, however, reciprocal, as the conventions of documentary and news genres are also evident in fictional, and historical cinematic narrative. The analyses in the ensuing three chapters disclose the extent of the convergence of form and genre in film narrative by researching the connection between cultural constructs and actual events as portrayed in audio/visual narratives that employ dramatic enactment, rather than documentary recording of actuality. The inclusion of actuality images and documentary conventions in fictional film, however, further highlights the transfer of conventions between genres.

Stephen Spielberg’s Schindler’s List (1993), provides an example of an audio/visual representation of actual events that conjoins conventions deriving from several genres, and articulates cultural accounts of history. Spielberg, the principal director of several extremely popular Hollywood movies claims that this film, which received seven academy awards, has become an icon of the filmic representation of historical actuality. The theories previously defined in this thesis, of convergence of genre, and the significance of cultural constructs in interpretation, can be observed in the many connections that have been formed both in the creation of the text, and in the extra-textual conjunctions with actuality and culture. The connection with actuality is particularly noticeable in the origins of the narrative, and again in the resultant emergence of other texts, and of archival and historical projects that owe their existence to Spielberg’s film, and his further activities that followed on from the project. The Deleuzo-Guattarian model of rhizome is clearly evident in the intertextual and extra-textual intersections of the social milieu with the content of the narrative, and of the references to ethical and spiritual aspects of culture.

The analysis of Schindler’s List is significant as an exploration of the blurring of genre boundaries, as the text undertakes several transformations of intertextual reference, through the adoption of stylistic devices that are clearly identifiable with particular genres, and specific eras of film and television production. As a test of the hypothesis that the actual is (to some extent), a component of the text, this chapter examines the evidence of the influences of actuality within the text, and traces the articulations of the text with the actual world. Schindler’s List utilizes many of the narrative devices of neo-classical realism, and yet appropriates the visual techniques of several screen genres. As such, it is pivotal in exploring the conjunction of the actual world with the text through narrativization.

This chapter will consist of a discussion of the rhizomic functions of the text, and attempt to trace the connection of the text with cultural assemblages, and the development of the film narrative through several stages of prior narrativization.
Dramatic Reenactment in Schindler’s List

Segments of the text will be critically analyzed and the strategies by which the text prompts the viewer/reader will be identified and defined. Schindler’s List is the culmination of an extensive body of sub-narratives, which are combined in a meta-narrative that has assisted in the establishment of the Holocaust as a momentous cultural and historical moment, not only for German and Jewish cultures, but as an ethical and moral statement to all cultures. The text is inseparable from its cultural antecedents, and provides an opportunity to explore the theoretical premises of this thesis in their practical context as an expression of cultural constructs, of mythic function, and of the convergence of form and genre in contemporary narrativization.

6.1 Tracking the Stories: from Actuality to Social Account

Conventions of Representation and Forms of Narrative Account

The first task of this chapter is to outline the progressive stages of narrativization that have been applied to accounts of the Holocaust in the ongoing development of the cultural response to the actual events. The Holocaust has been represented in many forms: as novel, documentary, fictional film or television narrative, and, most recently, on the internet, with the personal accounts of numerous survivors collated by the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Schindler’s List is based on Thomas Keneally’s novel, Schindler’s Ark,¹ winner of the Booker Prize for 1982. The novel challenges the definition of fiction, as it recounts actual, historical events, yet is constructed in narrative form. Perry Middlemiss identifies this confusion of genre, stating that the “novel caused something of a controversy at the time [of its release] as it was considered by some to be more a work of journalistic reporting than a novel of fiction.”² Hence the challenge to genre boundaries existed prior to the film version of the novel, as a result of Keneally’s research and authorship. The content of the novel referred to actual events, as does the film, yet both of these texts reflect the processes of narrativization which Keneally and Spielberg have brought to them, imposing their personal stylistic traits on the respective narratives, and selecting from amongst the many ‘real life’ accounts of Holocaust survivors. The construction of the film narrative has resulted from a chain of accounts, originating from the personal memories of the survivors, the documentation of the liberating military forces, and the cultural records of the Jewish people. Schindler’s List has proven to be a pivotal point in the development of the historical recording of the Holocaust, producing flows that have permeated the boundaries of the text and given rise to consequences which have altered global understanding of the actual events.

Schindler’s List has engendered the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, an organization that was funded by Steven Spielberg with profits from Schindler’s List,³ and had collected (by 1998), 150,000 gigabytes of data, in the form of video recordings of individual testimonies of the survivors of the Holocaust.

¹ Keneally, 1983.
³ The details of the formation of the foundation are available at the website, Kalish, 1998.
Without the film of Schindler’s List this project would never have come into existence. A film text, which was the culmination of several decades of coming to terms with the representation of the Holocaust, has become far more than a text in its own right. It has been partly responsible for the transformation of historical representation, as the executive director of the foundation has pointed out, “it will change the way history is written because every historian relies in some way or another on oral history.” Perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that it has changed the way history is recorded, from written record to audio/visual recording. The historical function of Schindler’s List has not been limited by the boundaries of the text, but has opened a channel which has allowed for the text to interact with the survivors, and through the Shoah Foundation has brought about a database of video testimony, the likes of which has never before been achieved.

This return to orally delivered history also underlines the significance of the ontological relations between the viewer and actual events. The phenomenological reception of the film allows for the emotional impact of historical actuality to be experienced in a virtual, but convincing and engaging reenactment of the past. Armond White recognizes Spielberg’s mastery of emotive representation, as he alludes to the response that is evoked in the viewer by the portrayal of the separation of the children from their mothers:

>200 mothers running after their abducted children belongs to a most powerful artistic vision. It’s a moment in which Spielberg has reimagined the terror of the holocaust in an original way. In that scene the literal rush of emotion kills you without the nicety of taste and “truth.” It is passion made essential, kinetic, made into cinema.\(^5\)

Spielberg has extricated a subject that verges on taboo, that arouses negative emotional responses and that could not be comfortably categorized as ‘entertainment’ in the traditional Hollywood canon, from the realm of the marginal. The films which had gone before Schindler’s List in representing the Holocaust through a sense of obligation, or of uncomfortable placation of the collective conscience, had been displaced by Spielberg’s “genius for connecting emotional purposes to compositional vectors.”\(^6\) The adoption of Hollywood narrative technique to represent this disturbing theme brought about an explosion from within the text, and established a series of intertextual and actual responses that cut across boundaries of form and genre, effecting the actual world with its forceful, emotive impact.

By observing the development of social accounts of the Holocaust, the path from actual event to mythic narrative can be clearly defined. I am not in any way suggesting that the Holocaust did not occur, but, rather, that it has taken on the dimension of religious and mythic significance to Western cultures.\(^7\) The text is the culmination of previous attempts to bring the unpleasant facts of the Holocaust to the attention of the public, particularly those too young to be aware of the historical

\(^4\) ibid., p.1.
\(^5\) White, 1994, p.55.
\(^6\) ibid., p.55.
\(^7\) Myth, in this case, is considered to be unitary interpretive strategy. See the discussion on myth in chapter 2.3.
Dramatic Reenactment in Schindler's List

events, and to include the historical accounts of the survivors in the cultural heritage of the generations to come. The text has paid tribute to its predecessors by the selection of black and white film to represent the era. Spielberg justified this choice by claiming “I have no color reference for that period”, a claim which, as White observes, does not take into account Spielberg’s other representations of the era, such as 1941 (1979), or Empire of the Sun (1987), which both adopt color film as their medium. The black and white images are, however, a recognition of the medium of the time, of the newsreels that first brought images of the holocaust to American audiences, and black and white photographs of the thousands of emaciated corpses which are on display in many Holocaust museums. It is an intertextual reference to the earliest accounts that announced to the world the horrors that had occurred behind the closed gates of the nazi concentration camps. When Spielberg claims no color reference to the period he is describing the associations that exist between black and white images and the existing visual history of the Holocaust.

Fig. 6.1.1: Historical photographs of the Holocaust, some representative examples of the black and white photography of the era.

The early historical images, both filmic and photographic stills, have been accepted as the most authentic, direct and immediate record of the horrors of the Holocaust. Black and white images in this context create an association with the documentary images of the nineteen forties, and by recreating this ambience Spielberg seeks to reestablish the immediacy of an era when images were considered to refer directly to actuality, before the processes of mediation and subjectivity were questioned by their audience.

Rather than explain the choice to use black and white images as an attempt to employ documentary realism, it is, rather, a heightening of the viewer’s awareness of the levels of mediation. The use of Black and white film stock removes the images of Schindler’s List further from a realist portrayal of the actual than would color images, by making reference to the viewer’s awareness of historical news and documentary texts. The viewer first recognizes the media as “out of the ordinary” in its lack of color, and then associates this with the cinema of an earlier era, thereby establishing a chain of reference via historical texts. The authenticity of the documentary images of the nineteen forties, as the documentary images that were the most immediate historical record of the events is, in effect appropriated by Spielberg and his cinematographer, Janusz Kaminski, in their choice to reproduce the tonal

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7 ibid., p.52.
8 Images from the Wiesenthal Centre Museum for Tolerance, http://motlc.wiesenthal.org/albums/palbump/00/a0007p2.html
Dramatic Reenactment in Schindler's List

characteristics of the images from that era. Spielberg confirms this notion when he explains his decision to use black and white film stock:

To people who are going to watch the story for the first time, I think black and white is going to be the real experience for them. My only experience with the Holocaust has been through black-and-white documentaries. I've never seen the Holocaust in color. I don't know what Auschwitz looks like in color. Even though I was there, it's still black and white in my eyes. I think color would have added a veneer of farce. 

Spielberg claims to produce a "real experience" for the audience through black and white 'documentary style' images, but the reality he creates is, rather, an intertextual reference to historical representations of the Holocaust. The 'reality' of the experience is that previous encounters with representations of the Holocaust for most viewers have been black and white images that have been interpreted as the 'actual' images of the Holocaust.

Ethical Codes and Measures of Acceptability

The Holocaust story has been represented several times in film: amongst them Alain Resnais' Night and Fog (1955), Claude Lanzmann's Shoah (1985), Paul Mazursky's Enemies, A Love Story (1989), and Agnieszka Holland's Europa Europa (1991). But Schindler's List stands alone in its popularity as a Spielberg production, a title that carries with it the promotional machine of Hollywood studios and a guarantee of global distribution. The commercialization of the Holocaust had also been experienced on television as the 1978 miniseries (Holocaust), a broadcast event that occasioned extensive discourse on the ethical considerations of depicting such sensitive material in a form that functions as a commercial commodity. It was the inevitable blurring of the somber issues at hand with the trivialities of television broadcasting that offended many, as Shandler observes, "the most common complaint about Holocaust did not concern any aspect of the drama, itself but rather that it was punctuated by 130 advertisements during the course of the broadcast", and that "numerous critics carped about the idea of commodifying the Holocaust much like toothpaste or about unfelicitous juxtapositions of commercials and programming." Complaints of the Holocaust being reduced to the level of soap opera ensured that any future American attempt to represent the event could not afford to disregard the sensibilities of its audience.

The characteristics of Hollywood narrative in Schindler's List can be best observed through a comparison with the Claude Lanzmann documentary, Shoah. Described by Marcel Ophuls as "the greatest documentary about contemporary history ever made," Shoah combines over nine hours of individual testimonies into a monolithic collection of material, eschewing archival footage in preference to contemporary interviews with Jews, Germans and Poles who are, at times, vigorously pushed to reveal their most disturbing memories of the Holocaust. The visual

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19 Shandler, op. cit., p.158.
presentation is plain, unadorned with music or narration, and adheres to many of the stylistic traits of cinema verite. On the other hand *Schindler’s List*, according to Loshitzky, employs Hollywood classical narrative construction, where the individual ‘hero’ becomes a metonym of the greater event, where “the private story is accorded more weight than the public history”, and the history of the Holocaust is packaged as a single episode, with the implementation of anti-Semitic nazi policy providing an introduction and the eventual liberation of the prisoners serving as a point of narrative closure. 

The construction of the narrative is, however, not only a device of Spielberg’s Hollywood affiliation, but also of Keneally’s novel and its selection of characters and narrative configuration. Any criticism of the Hollywood narrative structure of the film which does not acknowledge the influence of Keneally’s *Schindler’s Ark* on the film has overlooked the fact that many features of the narrative were shaped prior to Spielberg’s representation of the events. Spielberg’s narrative stands as an example of a broader genre of popular culture, as is also demonstrated in the literary version of the events, and is not necessarily specific to Hollywood narrative technique.

The categorization of the style of narrative structure that is seen in *Schindler’s List* has been central to critical debate of the film. Hansen identifies the narrative as neoclassicist, and points out the inappropriateness of this form to the broad ranging attributes of the historical occurrence of the Holocaust, a humanitarian catastrophe of a scale beyond the descriptive potential of any single narrative:

A fundamental limitation of classical narrative in relation to history, and to the historical event of the Shoah in particular, is that it relies on neoclassicist principles of compositional unity, motivation, linearity, equilibrium, and closure—principles singularly inadequate in the face of an event that by its very nature defies our narrative urge to make sense of, to impose order on the discontinuity and otherness of historical experience. 

This argument brings forward the problem of representing the Holocaust by using any narrative form. How can events of such scope and diversity be encapsulated in any unified narrative without excluding significant portions of the history? Documentary faces the same challenge, and Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* resorted to the use of extensive material in order to overcome this limitation. But the quantity of material or the breadth of coverage cannot counteract the enormity of the task. No single text can encompass the Holocaust, but a narrative can provide representative examples, personifications and particularization of the broad range of actualities that comprise historical events, and *Schindler’s List* is such a venture.

The mythic status that *Schindler’s List* has afforded the Holocaust has come about as a stage in the development of the narrative account. As the passage of time creates a temporal gap between actual events and the recollected stories, the tendency toward a mythic structure (whereby verbal accounts of an actual event are translated into mythic narrative), becomes more prevalent. Individual memory becomes a collective account that is retold through virtual representations rather than by ‘flesh and blood’ survivors. The popular preference for story over chronicle does not exclude personal

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13 ibid., p.109.
14 Hansen, 1997, p.81.
Dramatic Reenactment in Schindler's List

Fig. 6.1.2: The Holocaust Stories traced from actual events to the present. Testimony, as is represented in Claude Lanzmann’s Shoah, as personal testimony is also verbally narrated as story. But a story that is focalized through the subjectivity

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of characters and which combines the testimony of multiple survivors reconstructs the memories of many Holocaust survivors and combines them into a single narrative.

6.2 The Evidential Value of Research

Reconstruction of Location and Memory
In the analysis of Schindler’s List the actuality of the Holocaust is obtrusively present in any theoretical consideration of the text. The text does not stand alone, as does fictional narrative, but is unavoidably connected with the actual event and evaluated by the efficacy of its representation of actuality. The audio/visual image is subject to the comparison of the actual with the narrative version, and the inadequacies of narrative to depict a tragedy of such magnitude are inevitably mentioned by critics and commentators. The obvious dislocation of the text from the actual event, both temporally and in its two-dimensional, virtual form, is counterbalanced by the astute observation made by Zelizer that the retelling of the event is as close as the viewer can possibly come to the actuality that is depicted. 16 The documentary image can claim a measure of evidentiality, in that the events are, in most cases, occurring in front of the camera, and therefore the visual depiction provides at the very least a gauge of the spatial geometry of events. The dramatic reenactment of historical events, however, deprives the image of any direct reference to the events themselves. The actuality that is recorded by the camera is that of a performance, and of a virtualization of location, time and identity.

The question of representation, evidentiality and the correlation between the audio/visual medium and the actual cannot be diffused by Baudrillard’s notion of the image becoming reality. 17 If the image displaces the ‘real’ we are left with an ‘image-reality’ that does not represent, but itself becomes a ‘reality’. The origin of actuality as a source of narrative content is of small concern in Baudrillard’s view, where the historical, and the socio-political context that has given rise to the narrative are not of consequence to the viewer, but the image itself supplies the material of ‘reality’. This conception of the audio/visual text diminishes any correlation between actuality and artifact, whereas the appeal of historical dramatic reenactment or documentary is precisely this correlation. Although a dramatic performance does not equate to the historical event, the correlation of the text and the historical events are of such consequence in the case of Schindler’s List that to misrepresent, or to trivialize them would be to offend and demean victims of the Holocaust.

There has been extensive criticism of Spielberg’s representational style, and most prominent amongst them Claude Lanzmann, the director of Shoah, whose objections center on the impossibility and inappropriateness of creating a visual representation of the Holocaust. Spielberg in Schindler’s List, however, constructs a collective representation, or, as Loshitzky describes it, “a cinema memory produced and recycled by the movie industry,” and “a collective memory” that “weakens the link

16 Zelizer, 1997, p.30. See the closing paragraphs of the previous section.
17 Baudrillard, 1988a.
Dramatic Reenactment in Schindler’s List

between public memory and personal experience, a link that is so powerful in Lanzmann’s Shoah.” As representations of the Holocaust Schindler’s List and Shoah inhabit opposing ends of the spectrum, as verbal testimony with no attempt to visually represent historical events in Shoah, and as a neo-classical reconstruction of actual events in Schindler’s List. Yet both are the result of extensive research and are attempts to provide an audio/visual text that will provide a means of keeping the memories of the Holocaust alive. Keneally, Lanzmann and Spielberg have one thing in common, however, and that is their tireless efforts in researching the history of the Holocaust.

This analysis will firstly consider Spielberg’s position concerning the approach to research in the preparation for, and the production of Schindler’s List. The research underlying the film was a major factor in the claims of authenticity that were put forward by Spielberg in relation to its historical validity. Both Keneally and Spielberg engaged in researching the Schindler history with great attention to detail. Spielberg’s use of location provided the film with a sense of authenticity, with historical sites being used wherever possible for the reenactment of events. Spielberg expressed his emotional engagement with the actual, the sites, the survivors and the events:

I interviewed survivors, I went to Poland, saw the cities and spent time with the people and spoke to the Jews who had come back to Poland after the war and talked about why they had come back. I spent more research time on this project than I had on any previous film, but of course my films were never based on anything that actually happened. So, I was enthusiastic about going to Poland. I needed to go for inspiration. I only knew Schindler’s List from the novel and now I wanted to know it from the survivors and from the actual historical landmarks. So, I went there for that reason. And I came back as excited as I’ve ever been about a subject that doesn’t excite me, but pains me. I always knew these things happened, but it’s different when you actually see the sign “Pomorska Street,” and you know all the horrible things that happened on Pomorska Street, but there’s the sign and there’s Schindler’s actual apartment, there’s Amon Goeth’s actual villa where he stayed. And to touch history, to put my hand on 600-year-old masonry, and to step back from it and look at my feet and know that I was standing where, as a Jew, I couldn’t have stood 50 years ago, was a profound moment for me as a re-creator of an incident in history: it meant more to me as a Jew. So, I went there the first time to research a movie and wound up researching my own Judaism.

The disconnection of the actual events from the film reconstruction is minimized by the use of authentic location. The strata of virtualization are reduced by the ambiance of the original architecture and the look of the Krakow streets is maintained, with many of the original locations left in a condition similar to their wartime appearance. Spielberg’s affinity with the historical sites and with the actual survivors underlines the efforts that were made to achieve an accurate reconstruction of the verbal testimony, not merely a fictional approximation, but architecturally, spatially and geographically authentic. The physical identity of the protagonists and the settings may have been reconstructed and enacted, but wherever possible the achievable aspects of historical reconstruction were utilized.

Dramatic Reenactment in Schindler’s List

Fig. 6.2.1: The Goeth Villa, with the Plaszow camp reconstructed in an open pit adjacent to the actual site.

Fig. 6.2.2: Liam Neeson enters the Schindler apartment in Krakow

Fig. 6.2.3: The Schindler Enamelware Factory
The attention to detail in research is evident in Spielberg's insistence on using authentic locations wherever possible (see figs. 6.2.1-3). The reconstruction of historical sites at, or nearby their original locations indicates a desire to maximize the verisimilitude of the film. This spatial and architectural authenticity brings the viewer closer to an experience of actuality, despite the obvious limitations of temporal displacement. Spielberg's use of location establishes the physical appearance of the historical setting, providing the only element of the film which did not require reconstruction:

S.R.: The film has a feeling of authenticity that you could never have duplicated by shooting anywhere other than where these events occurred. Which actual sites were used?

S.S.: We had the interior and exterior of Schindler's apartment and the interior and exterior of his offices at the factory. We had the interior of SS headquarters and the interior and exterior of the prison. Most every place was authentic. We only had to reconstruct the camp, Plaszow, because Plaszow was a huge 50-foot monument in one direction and a modern skyline in the other direction, so we couldn't shoot there at all.

S.R.: So, you built that nearby.

S.S.: Right next door, in an open pit.

S.R.: There was a lot of media coverage about your attempts to shoot inside Auschwitz/Birkenau and the resistance you met with. In the end you just shot right outside the gate, right?

S.S.: That's exactly true. It was just outside the gate house, which is exactly as it looks from inside Birkenau. And we just simply showed the other side of the gate and walls, looking back in. That worked fine. 28

This recourse to spatial and architectural authenticity reflects the conventions of historical documentary, which makes use of authentic locations as a means of integrating the actual into the image. Schindler's List reconstructs historical events by using the actual sites to enhance verisimilitude, which is perceptible to the viewer as an impression of authenticity. 21

Spielberg insisted that the research that had constituted the narrative of the novel was the element that gave the story its unique authenticity, setting it apart from fiction. The testimonies of survivors contributed to the construction of the narrative, the names of the survivors were retained and events were reconstructed according to detailed accounts of witnesses. This is not to say that the narrative was an exact replica of actual, historical events, but that actuality has significantly influenced the

21 The use of location as an indicator of authenticity is discussed in chapter 5.4.
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narrative construction. Susan Royal’s interview reveals the respect in which Spielberg held Keneally’s research and authorship:

S.R.: The Holocaust occurred only 50 years ago and yet there are those who deny its existence. In fact, Schindler’s List was given Britain’s prestigious literary award, the Booker’s Prize, for fiction.

S.S.: Keneally thinks that’s one of the most overlooked ironies – that his book won for fiction, not non-fiction. And he was quite amazed at their findings. Perhaps it was because the book was based on interviews and the words “based on” have some sort of stigma.

S.R.: But the book was written in an almost documentary style, with Keneally reporting all sides to the story.

S.S.: That’s what I liked about the book. And that’s why I wanted to do the film, because it was not just another Holocaust story.  

The documentary style of the book, then, was the factor that convinced Spielberg that Keneally’s novel Schindler’s Ark adhered to the actual in a manner that refuted the conventional limitations of fiction. Integration of the recollections of survivors into the narrative challenges the definition of fiction as being of imaginary content. The award of the Booker’s prize for fiction reflects the perception of the genre as a form of narrative construction, rather than as a measure of evidentiality, or correlation with the actual.

The emphasis on research in the production of Schindler’s List has been translated to the immensity of the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, where Spielberg’s research for the film has expanded to encompass an attempt to document the testimonies of all living survivors. Spielberg reveals his preference for the process of recording and distributing the ‘real life’ testimonies that comprise the Foundation’s massive collection:

S.S: It’s a complete lifetime’s work to disseminate the testimonies of survivors, especially to the middle and high schools, so young people can grow up learning how to achieve tolerance,

POV: This is such a wonderful involvement. It must give you a lot of satisfaction.

S.S: Actually for me, I honestly have to say it’s the most satisfaction I really have professionally.

POV: More than your filming?

S.S: Yes, because the Shoah project is a real life project and, even though some of my films - Ryan and Schindler’s List are re-creations of real life history, there’s no

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substitute for live, eye witness testimony to an historical event or to getting that event into schools so kids can learn from these elder statespeople. 33

Spielberg, then, considers the work of the Shoah Foundation to be of greater significance than the production of the narrative representation. In the case of Schindler’s List the research has become the legacy of the film, and the documentation of first-hand recollections has, for Spielberg, displaced historical reenactment. The factor of the film’s popularity has, however, enabled the Foundation to accomplish the massive collection of testimonies. The ‘actual’ testimonies are directly connected with the historical reenactment (the film), that provided the public support that was required to finance such a monumental task. The text is connected intertextually, and with extra-textual actuality, prior to its production with the novel and the testimonies of the survivors, and with other audio/visual records of the events, and again after its production as a cultural icon that has enabled the compilation and distribution of innumerable accounts of the Holocaust, and of further documentary films. 34

Correspondence Between Actuality and the Text

Having now considered Spielberg’s position concerning the film and its significance as social comment, and its authenticity as historical record the analysis will now turn to the evaluation of these claims, and the investigation of the extent to which actuality is ‘present’ in the Schindler’s List narrative. It is important to keep in mind the extent to which the interviews cited above, in which Spielberg outlines his position, are a promotional device in which he is attempting to elicit approval for the film, and for his part in its production. It is apparent, however, that his commitment to the project, and his relentless quest for authenticity are significant factors in the shaping of the narrative. The comment concerning his preference for the ‘real life’ activities of the Shoah Foundation (above), are a reminder that no amount of research can substitute for the interaction with and experience of actuality. The question to be addressed in view of Spielberg’s comments is the extent to which a historical reenactment narrative is capable of ‘containing’ the actuality that it portrays.

The connection between actuality and text is limited by the two-dimensional form of images, but also by the passage of time, as is discussed by Deleuze in Cinema 2: The Time Image. 35 The actual, virtualized in the first level (mental-virtual), as a recollection of events, and the second level (technological virtual), as a two dimensional representation of the survivors, is seen as narrative-actual in Schindler’s List. 36 To briefly recap the earlier discussion, it is only through recollection that past actuality can be experienced in the present. All actuality becomes a virtual representation once it has occurred, which I have defined as the mental-virtual.

34 Spielberg established ‘Visual History Films’ in 1997 as a branch of the Survivors of the Shoah Foundation that draws from the Foundation’s archive of Holocaust survivor testimony to create documentary films, emphasizing foreign languages for audiences around the world.
36 See the discussion on the virtualization of images in chapter 3.3.
Actualy as the viewer perceives it in audio/visual texts, is a contrast within the text between narrative-actual and narrative-virtual. The debate surrounding Schindler's List and Shoah, as to the validity of interview as against reenactment and visual representation of events fails to appreciate the distinction of levels that exist in actual and virtual representation. All past actualy is virtual representation. Memory, the recording of events as text, audio, video or film, and the ritual representation through drama or dance are the only means humanity has of accounting for the past.

The cultural construct of reality can be implied by several means in an audio/visual text: the conventions of genres that imply actualty (documentary techniques), the contrast of visual 'normality' with 'abnormal' visual depiction, and by the extra-textual identification of a text as being of fictional or of non-fictional content, using titles, interviews, promotional material, etc. The images and sounds, which are virtual in the technological-virtual sense, may also be perceived as actual in their narrative context. The actual events which are the subject of Schindler's List can only ever be experienced as a virtual representation, of memory, of image, or of narrative. The argument that Lanzmann levels at Spielberg is that the memory of the Holocaust is the only virtual representation that is appropriate to the events. The requirements of the cultural collective, however, are that the events be retold in a manner that will endure the passage of time. History does have a tendency to live on as myth, rather than as chronic.

In terms of the collective consciousness, the documented audio/visual and written representations produced at the time of the event provide evidential records of the actual. Any representation of historical actualy is reliant on personal testimony or on photographic/cinematic images. It is the extent of research that determines the relations between the representation and the actual by maximizing the correlation between the historical events and the events as retold in the audio/visual narrative. The recorded interviews, photographs, films and written accounts of the Holocaust survivors provide a collective documentation that gives a detailed and comprehensive overview of the actual events as recalled. The text cannot do more than represent the events, but the events are socially inscribed by the representation. Without such representation they would quickly become inaccessible to popular awareness, and survive only in the domain of historical record. Popular narrative, or Hollywood classicism (as Schindler's List has been categorized by many critics), effectively augments the cultural awareness of the Holocaust in a decade where survivors and witnesses continue to decease, and living survivors become increasingly difficult to locate.

The social inscription of historical actualy through audio/visual narrative does not remove such texts from the domain of the "factual", as the categorization of historical narrative texts as "fictional" would imply. Collective testimonies can be combined in long strings of interview, as in Shoah, or, alternatively, the construction of a narrative can combine many testimonies and represent a collective perception of events. The experience of the individual Holocaust survivor cannot provide the overview that is possible through the combination of testimonies. Dramatic reenactment allows for multiple testimonies to be "written in" to the representation, a

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process that conforms to the consistency of historical accuracy yet avoids repetitive descriptions of events from several points of view. This procedure does, however, bring about another level of mediation, as the testimony is selectively combined by an authoritative agent, who, by combining the individual accounts narrativizes the record of events, prioritizing the content. This is a process, however, that is also applied in interview-based documentary such as Lanzmann’s Shoah (as is discussed in regard to cinema verite in the previous chapter), and any claim to the contrary is a fallacious denial of the limitations of audio/visual texts in representing the experiences of a collective.

For the viewer who in every likelihood has no experience of the Second World War and its horrific crimes against humanity, and who does not have direct communication with survivors, the only avenue to understanding the experiences of survivors is through audio/visual or written representations of their recollections. Access to their memories can occur only through recorded verbal testimony, or through dramatic reenactment. The actual is not the film, but the actual becomes the cultural construct of reality via the film. Research brings many aspects of the actual into the text, modeling the text according to the recollections of multiple witnesses, and providing a representation of the actual that concurs with collective knowledge of past events.

The extensive body of research that underlies Schindler’s Ark, the novel and Schindler’s List, the film, does not bring about an equivalence of actuality to the text. After all, can there be an accurate representation of mass starvation and murder without repeating the crimes? The research does, however, provide a narrative that enables the viewer to share in a virtual experience of the locations, events and personalities that comprised the genocide of Polish Jews. The question to be considered is whether reenacted narrative or verbal testimony of actual survivors provides a more adequate representation, or, alternatively, whether there is room for both forms of narrative as historical record actual events. The evidential value of research is not clearly evident in the text, but, in the case of Schindler’s List the viewer is, in many cases, aware of the intensive research through promotional material, discourse concerning the ‘making of’ the film and interviews with the director. The text creates a sense of authenticity through its use of original locations, and the implementation of several conventions of documentary film that create an impression of historicity. What evidentiality is to be detected within the text, however, is not present in the appropriation of the conventions of this or that genre, but in the correlation between the film and other social records (historical, documentary or testimonial), that provide data for the cultural construction of these events.

Spielberg’s claims of authenticity, then, are justifiable in the sense that the audio/visual narrativization of the Holocaust has been achieved with a high degree of correlation of testimonial evidence with the narrative content. In another sense, however, they are not justifiable, in that the ‘impression’ of actuality does not equate to actual events. The use of authentic location, costume, décor and architecture can only provide a narrative-actuality that contrasts (within the text) with the ‘actual’ footage at Schindler’s grave at the close of the film. The authenticity of the text is not decided by the correlation between actual events and their representation, but by the correlation between the cultural construct of reality and the representation. The text
appears authentic, but it is the extra-textual social knowledge that provides the benchmark, by which this authenticity is measured, not the contents of the text itself.

6.3 Dominant Social Accounts of Actuality

The Utilization of Hollywood Conventions in Schindler's List

Schindler’s List challenges the boundary of fiction and non-fiction, but also the boundary of postmodern acceptance of popular culture, and the artistic elitism of modernism. On one hand it conforms to popular, classical Hollywood narrative conventions, most notably by selecting from amongst the human tragedy of the holocaust a story of survival, and of German good will towards the Jews, a scenario that is atypical of the historical events. On the other hand it contravenes Hollywood conventions by proffering subject matter that is catastrophic, distressful, and repulsive. The representation of the Holocaust is inevitably a bleak, agonizing voyage into the dark side of the human soul, with little occasion to employ the optimism that so often characterizes classical Hollywood narrative.

Claude Lanzmann’s complaint, that to depict the Holocaust is to “make oneself guilty of the most serious sort of transgression.” 28 and that such horrendous mass genocide is beyond representation, imposes an ethical censorship on artistic expression, and limits opportunities to immortalize the events in the folkloric medium of popular narrative. The resurgence of neo-nazi right wing politics in Europe and the U.S.A., and the claims of ‘historical revisionists’ 29 that the Holocaust was a less significant event than has been historically reported, have necessitated the establishment of evidential documentation in order to substantiate existing historical records. Sharrett points out that Schindler's List “contends with a revisionism not in Hollywood, but in the culture at large, a bizarre rejection of voluminous data that is gaining credence even in sections of academe”. 30 History is defined in the present, as Sobchack confirms, stating that “today history seems to happen right now – is transmitted, reflected upon, shown play-by-play, taken up as the stuff of multiple stories and significance, given all sorts of ‘coverage’ in the temporal dimension of the present as we live it”. 31 Contemporary views of the past are constructed from accounts and recollections, documentary texts, both visual and literary, and narrative

28 Lanzmann, 1994, p.7
29 Such extreme opinions are commonly published worldwide, for example see Garaudy, 1996, and the extensive controversy surrounding the historical revisionism of David Irving, well documented at: http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/irving-david/index.html
Irving’s public notoriety and extensive publishing reached a peak at around 1990, and caused considerable worldwide debate around the existence of the Holocaust. A list of his published books is available at: http://www.fnp.co.uk/booklist.html
For ethical reasons I have chosen not to include his publications as bibliographic material.
31 Sobchack, 1996, p.5.
accounts. The attempt by right wing extremists, then, to ‘rewrite’ history has brought about a response that not only provides historical detail, but also depicts the Holocaust in popular narrative form, thereby reducing the possibility of it being eradicated from the awareness of contemporary culture. Hansen reminds us that Schindler’s List has removed the historical awareness of the Holocaust from the domain of the historical document and placed it in the realm of the popular:

To dismiss the film because of the a priori established unrepresentability of what it purports to represent may be justified on ethical and epistemological grounds, but it means missing a chance to understand the significance of the Shoah in the present, in the ongoing and undecided struggles over which past gets remembered and how. Unless we take all aspects – omissions and distortions, displacements and possibilities – of public, mass mediated memory culture seriously, we will remain caught in the “compulsive pas-de-deux” of (not just) intellectual history. 32

The notoriety of the director and his Hollywood success have assured that Schindler’s List has been popularly received, and has achieved the aim of publicizing the dominant social account of the Holocaust. Regardless of the ethical concerns raised by Lanzmann, Spielberg’s film has assured the prominence of the Holocaust in the popular awareness of the nineteen nineties and beyond.

The Hollywood classical style has become the most recognizable of narrative structures, with the rendition of the hero playing a significant part in its distinctive constitution, and the escape from danger leading to the enduring ‘happy ending’ indicating the Californian influence on story configuration. Bordwell identifies several textual characteristics that are indicative of classical Hollywood narrative construction. 33 The cause-event continuity that is characteristic of Hollywood style is undoubtedly evident in Spielberg’s rendition of the Holocaust, with spatial and temporal elements of the narrative being clearly defined by the meticulous tracing of individual characters through the dislocation of the Jewish population of Krakow into the ghetto, and subsequently to the Plaszow camp. 34 The classical technique of crosscutting between scenes of parallel action is employed in the Auschwitz scene, where Schindler races to liberate the female workers from the death camp before they are killed. 35 The sequence of images below illustrates the cutting between parallel action, and the heroic role played by Schindler at the climax of the narrative. Classical Hollywood heroism is evident in the structuring of the narrative, as the maidens are rescued by the hero, who arrives “just in time” to rescue them from certain death. A somewhat familiar narrative device!

31 Hansen, 1997, p.99. The “compulsive pas-de-deux” quote is taken from Andreas Huyssen, 1986, p.24, who is paraphrasing Adorno, stating that since the mid-nineteenth century “modernism and mass culture have been involved in a compulsive pas-de-deux.”
33 ibid., pp.163-164.
34 See Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, 1985, p.211.
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Fig. 6.3.1: The train carrying the Schindler female workers arrives at Auschwitz.

Fig. 6.3.2: Schindler, hearing of the mistake goes “to the rescue”

Fig. 6.3.3: The workers are told to remove their clothing...
Fig. 6.3.4: and to enter the shower block...

Fig. 6.3.5: where the jets of water relieve their fears of execution.

Fig. 6.3.6: Schindler negotiates with the Nazis for the release of the workers...
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**Fig. 6.3.7:** bribing the official with diamonds.

**Fig. 6.3.8:** The workers are released...

**Fig. 6.3.9:** but camp guards take the children and Schindler, once again, "comes to the rescue".
Dramatic Reenactment in Schindler's List

Contravention of Hollywood Conventions and Nomadic Subjectivity

The identification of Schindler's List as an example of Hollywood classicism is, however, not straightforward in either narrative structure or the heroic character of Schindler. Bordwell, in his definition of classical Hollywood narrative, states that the "formula of hero versus villain, never too hoary for Hollywood, depends upon the clash of opposed purposes," and that "even when the oppositions are not absolute, characters' goals produce causal chains." 34 In Schindler's List, however, the opposition between Schindler and Goeth is more complex the simple binary opposition of 'good German' and 'bad German' that could be expected from Hollywood classical techniques. Schindler is portrayed on one hand as a complex amalgam of corruption, greed and opportunism, and on the other hand, a compassionate, yet heroic savior of the downtrodden. Bartov identifies the duality of the character, and of Spielberg's ability to go beyond Hollywood stereotype:

Schindler's List subtly (indeed, perhaps quite unintentionally) undermines the Hollywood convention of a cinematic world neatly divided between good and evil. Nevertheless, the film succeeds in remaining within the fold of the genre by simultaneously drawing much of its pathos from the traditional image of the tough, rough, undisciplined, and yet ultimately moral and supremely courageous hero of the classic American Western. Hence Schindler, through Spielberg, manages somehow to straddle these two modes, that of the cynical, pessimistic, corrupt, wholly un-American hero, whose moral qualities can only shine in the midst of evil, and the simple, straightforward, completely incorruptible, truly American hero, who is, however, similarly motivated to action only when faced with truly bad guys. 37

Oskar Schindler's penchant for luxury in the face of the immense human tragedy of the Holocaust distinguishes him from the Hollywood notion of the hero, as he blatantly exploits the oppression of the Polish Jews for his own financial benefit. There is more than a little of the criminal accomplice in the Schindler character early in the film, as he dines and drinks with the Nazi hierarchy and offers only thinly disguised opposition to the slaughter of innocent Jews. His subsequent effort to liberate the workers from inevitable extermination marks a transformation in the character, a departure from Nazi ideology and an acceptance of humanitarian ideals.

At no time in the film does Schindler directly challenge the nazi evil, personified by the camp commandant, Goeth, but studiously avoids this conflict, eventually stealing away from the allied forces in order to escape the punishment that could justifiably have been carried out on him for his complicity with the nazi regime. A classical Hollywood hero would challenge the nazi death machine, with no thought for her or his own safety, being willing to sacrifice freedom for the sake of 'upholding the right', but at no stage does Schindler voice open disapproval of the regime's racist policies and genocidal practices. His instinct for self-preservation appears to have been the motivating factor in his dealings with Goeth and the Nazis in the earlier portion of the narrative, rather than a concern for the Jews. Always the pragmatist, Schindler uses the Nazi ideology to his own advantage when he is accused of collusion with the Jews. When he kisses a young Jewish girl in public, he does not confront the ideology underlying the charge, but uses his sexual attraction to

34 ibid., p.16.
37 Bartov, 1997, p.43.
the girl as an excuse for the action, feigning agreement with the Hitlerian view of the Jews as sub-human.

The transformation of the character is, however, a significant theme of the film, and his compassion is revealed later in the narrative when he orders overcrowded rail carriages to be hosed down in the heat of the day to ease the suffering of those imprisoned within. Once again, however, the notion of the swashbuckling Hollywood hero is absent, and Schindler feigns to the Nazis that this apparent kindness was intended to lull them into a false sense of security before their internment in the concentration camp at Auschwitz. The character of Oskar Schindler, rather than providing the heroic personification of all that is ‘good, honorable and righteous,’ explores the complexity of life under the Nazi regime, and recognizes the pragmatic approach to ethical and moral issues that was required in order to survive the ‘real’ historical world.

Much has been made by way of complaints (an issue addressed by Hansen), concerning the subjectivity created by the film’s narrative point of view, of the portrayal of the massacre of the Jews “almost entirely through German eyes”, and the portrayal of the Jews as “money grubbing Jews, Jew-as-eternal-victim, the association of Jewish women with dangerous sexuality, the characterization of Izhak Stern (Ben Kingsley), Schindler’s accountant, as king of the Jewish wimps.” Such complaints of the German subjectivity, reflect the inadequacies of a theory that does not account for the possibilities of multiple subjectivity in the viewer. The German perspective is present, and strong, in the film, but to deny that the Jewish viewpoint is given adequate observance is to engage in an exclusivity that denies the possibility of multiple points of view. A viewer may observe the senseless massacre of innocent victims through the eyes of the perpetrator without necessarily identifying with him. The subjective camera shot through the telescopic gun sights as the character of Amon Goeth randomly shoots camp inmates does not bring about an unconscious participation with the murder. Rather, it underlines the fact that this inhuman act was committed by one who had become dehumanized to the extent that he could without hesitation pull the trigger and kill Jews as he would animals. Observation of a visual subjectivity does not require accord with that perspective, but merely provides one subjective position among the many which are present in Schindler’s List.

The balcony scene, in which Goeth casually shoots Jews as they go about their work provides an example of the multiple subjectivity that is offered by the text. The initial camera shot depicts Goeth on the balcony taking aim with his rifle. This clearly portrays the point of view of the camp inmates (figure 6.3.10). The following camera position is an over-shoulder view of the camp as Goeth takes aim (fig. 6.3.11). The camera then offers the view of the roaming gun-sight, as it moves across the camp as Goeth seeks a victim (fig. 6.3.12) and then shoots to kill (fig. 6.3.13). The following camera shot is from amongst the camp inmates as they panic and run, capturing the perspective of those being hunted by the commandant (fig. 6.3.14). The

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38 Hansen, op. cit., p.93.
40 Hansen, op. cit., p.83.
41 The unconscious formation of subjectivity through narrative devices is stated by Metz, 1982, pp.48-50, and again by Bordwell, op. cit., pp.21-26.
camera then returns to the over-shoulder view as Goeth kills again (fig. 6.3.15). The camera then shifts to show Goeth's naked lover, who is exasperated at his behavior, although her accusation of his 'childishness' is a further revelation of the inhumanity of the Nazi attitude toward the Jews. Goeth, the cold-blooded assassin, is hardly acting like a child as he murders innocent victims (fig. 6.3.16). Her point of view is then represented, as she sees Goeth casually perusing the panic and mayhem he has created below in the camp (fig. 6.3.17). The final shot of the sequence depicts Goeth standing over the bed holding the rifle, an image which signifies the sexual overtones of the killing, and the sadistic pleasure achieved by Goeth through his brutal domination of the camp (fig. 6.3.18).

Fig. 6.3.10.

Fig. 6.3.11.
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Fig. 6.3.12.

Fig. 6.3.13.

Fig. 6.3.14.
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The short sequence illustrated by the still frames above demonstrates the nomadic subjectivity of the camera, and the relationship between the subjective positions of characters, camp inmates, and the viewer who identifies with the characters in the text. The subjective positions offered roam from the victims, to Goeth, and to Goeth’s lover, but the camera does not enforce an identification with whatever character happens to be providing the visual point of view at a particular moment in the narrative. The viewer can adopt any one of a number of subjective positions, according to ideological, gender based, racial or political alliances. The notion of a subjectivity imposed on the viewer by the position of the camera and the placement of images in the narrative, does not allow for the interpretive strategy of the viewer, who is able to negotiate with the text and adopt a position, or move between several subjective positions within the text.

Apart from the German subjectivity, which is observed in the focalization of the characters Oskar Schindler and Amon Goeth, the character of Itzhak Stern plays an important role in directing the attention of the viewer in the narrative. The character provides a pivotal point for the Jewish perspective, as Hansen observes:

Throughout the film, Stern is the focus of point-of-view edits and reaction shots, just as he repeatedly motivates camera movements and shot changes. Stern is the only character who gets to authorize a flashback.

Stern provides the particularization of the Holocaust Jew, overshadowed by the power and stature of Schindler, yet able to influence his thinking, surviving not through brute force, but through his intellect and ability to be innovative under difficult circumstances. The contrasting subjectivity illustrates Spielberg’s intention to produce a narrative that had significance beyond the individual experiences of the victims.

The screenwriter, Steven Zaillian, reveals the magnitude of interpretation that Spielberg intended for the filmic representation of the Schindler story, stating that “I

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43 Hansen, op. cit., pp.85-86.
felt very strongly that by telling Schindler’s story, we would be telling the story of the holocaust. I felt that was enough. Steven felt that he wanted an even larger picture.”  44 For Spielberg, the Holocaust was representative of all discriminations and persecutions of race, gender, religion or political persuasion, as he claimed, “it’s about AIDS, the Armenians, the Bosnians. It’s a part of all of us.”  45 The stories of the Holocaust had become, to Spielberg, representative of all persecution and massacre, had ceased to be the sacred property of the Jews, and had become a global, universal warning to humanity against genocide. This claim, however, could also be interpreted as Spielberg indulging in self-aggrandizement, and maximizing the significance of his project.

The parallels between the events portrayed in Schindler’s List and the recent circumstances in Kosovo, however, cannot be easily set aside. Global revulsion at the execution of innocent victims has distinct similarities to Nazi ‘extermination’ of Jews, and the determination of the NATO powers to halt Serbian aggression against Albanians are partly attributable to the awareness of Nazi atrocities during World War II. The occurrence of such atrocities, particularly the Bosnian crisis, was a pivotal point in Spielberg’s choice as to the timing of the production of Schindler’s List:

S.R.: Since the Holocaust, there have been other attempted genocides - such as those by Stalin and Pol Pot. Right now there are crimes against humanity being perpetrated in Bosnia. Mass graves, concentration camps - right in Central Europe again. Did this current situation affect you in the making of Schindler’s List?

S.S. Absolutely. In fact, it’s why I made the film this year, not next year. It would have been easier on my schedule had I waited a year. I made it this year because I was so upset about what was happening in Bosnia, as well as about the attempted genocide of the whole Kurdish population. The film really needed to be made right now.  46

Spielberg’s motivations for producing the film (apart from the obvious economic and career considerations) appear to have stemmed from an ethical concern for the avoidance of any repeat of the inhumanity of the Holocaust. The film, when considered in this light, is a direct response to events that occurred outside the text, and this indicates a further connection between the text and actuality.

The objections to the Holocaust being reduced to the level of entertainment overlook the cultural significance of narrative as myth, and the preference of viewers to engage in story, rather than chronicle.  47 The encapsulation of the Holocaust history in popular, mythic form may, to some extent, trivialize the event through its representational style, but it also maintains an awareness of events that are in danger of fading into a past that is recorded only by documentary forms that have little appeal to the viewer. The mythic form of Hollywood narrative convention serves to

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render the 'unrepresentable' history of the Holocaust acceptable, and thereby preserve the stories for future generations.

At the level of narrative construction Schindler’s List demonstrates some characteristics of classical Hollywood narrative structure, but the portrayal of characters cannot be reduced to the straightforward binary opposition of hero and villain. Although Goeth’s character typifies the nazi evil, Schindler is a vacillating, opportunistic entrepreneur who is almost persuaded against his will to engage in humanitarian assistance of the Jewish victims. The representation of the good/evil spectrum in the range of characters functions as a tripartite division, with Itzhak Stern serving as the ‘righteous’ man who persuades the neutral, self-interested Schindler to work against the evil of Goeth and his nazi compatriots. Comparisons with the Freudian division of super-ego (Stern), ego (Schindler), and id (Goeth), are unavoidable, with Stern on several occasions taking the role of the moral and ethical instructor to Schindler, and Goeth signifying an unbridled, uncontrollable evil.  

Although the Hollywood classical style is observable in some aspects of the narrative structure, with the near fatal voyage to Auschwitz providing opportunity for parallel action editing and narrative climax, and the retreat of the German army providing closure, it is arguable that these devices are of a broader origin than Hollywood classicism. Kenneally’s original selection of the Schindler story from amongst the countless narratives of Holocaust survival must be taken into consideration as a major formative influence of the narrative content. The extensive research and historical awareness displayed in the film have their basis in the novel, which, in turn, relies on first hand testimony. The actual has been structured and narrativized, but the selection from amongst actual events for inclusion in this narrative have been made according to the expectations of existing classical narrative forms. From a surplus of tragic and fatal Holocaust experiences, it is the exceptional story of victory and survival that has been selected as the theme of the narrative. One element, however, that clearly distinguishes the film from Hollywood classical narrative form is the documentary-style precision with which the events are grounded in historical actuality. Bordwell asserts that “the classical film makes history unknowable apart from its effects upon individual characters.”  

Although personal causality drives the narrative to some extent, historical context is also emphasized in the film by the documentary establishment, often through the use of titles delimiting location, date and identity. The impression of historical actuality in the film relies on its spatial and temporal specificity, a strategy that strays from the usual entertainment-driven Hollywood style. History in the narrative coexists with the lives of the individual characters, as a concurrent commentary of events and locations provides the framework for the narrative events. History is present in the text as a cogent force that underpins the causality of events and their effects on individual lives.

Throughout the film there is pointed reference to a young girl in a coat who is highlighted from among the crowd by the fact that her coat, in the black and white film, is colored a vivid red. She appears during scenes that depict the institutionalized control of masses, situations where individual identity was erased by the

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48 Freud, 1933.
49 Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, op. cit., p.13.

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transportation or extermination of countless Jews. Much of the negative criticism aimed at Schindler’s List was framed around the fact that, as Bartov states:

... A relatively minor, and quite extraordinary case, has been transformed into a representative segment of the “story” as a whole, obliterating, or at least neglecting the fact that in the “real” Holocaust, most of the Jews died, most of the Germans collaborated with the perpetrators or remained passive bystanders, most of the victims sent to the showers were gassed, and most of the survivors did not walk across green meadows to Palestine ... the film actually distorts the “reality” of the Holocaust, or at least leaves out too many other “realities,” and especially that most common and typical reality of all, namely mass, industrial killing. 56

There is no disputing the optimistic emphasis of the selection of the Schindler Jews as the subjects of the film, but to accuse Spielberg of “leaving out too many other realities” cannot be justified. The most striking example of ‘representative’ characters in the film is that of the girl in the red coat. During the liquidation of the Ghetto, she survives and becomes a symbol of hope amongst the nameless masses. In what is perhaps the most disturbing scene of the film, where the corpses of hundreds of Jews are exhumed and burned, the optimism that was focalized through the earlier survival of the child is dashed, as the muddied forms of the colorless corpses are eclipsed by the flash of color as the red coat appears amongst the victims of the slaughter. The use of classical particularization, of an individual that represents the experience of the many, and is highlighted by Spielberg on the screen by the splash of red amongst the sea of black and gray tones, is representative in this case of hopeless and heart wrenching death, of innocent youth senselessly slaughtered by the nazi military machine. The girl in the red coat stands as a powerful reversal of the Hollywood narrative style, in which the glimmer of hope for a ‘happy ending’ for this child is not perpetuated, but the particularized individual is representative of the brutal mass slaughter. The viewer is encouraged to follow her movements in the early stages of the narrative, and have their expectations of a ‘happy ending’ for the child brutally terminated. This ‘anti-Hollywood’ narrative of the innumerable victims of genocide who meet a meaningless death is juxtaposed with the classical form of the Schindler story at several points in the narrative. The comparison of the two cues in Auschwitz, one to the genuine shower block where the Schindler workers entered, and the adjacent cue, which entered the oblivion of the gas chambers, also illustrates the dual narrative. The classical Hollywood narrative runs alongside the anti-narrative despair of the mass genocide.

56 Bartov, 1997, p.46.
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Fig. 6.3.19: The red coat amongst the gray world of the liquidation of the ghetto.

Fig. 6.3.20: An individual selected from the mass of humanity.

Fig. 6.3.21: Expectations of survival are raised when the child emerges from hiding...
The narrative form of Schindler’s List also shares the characteristics of the popular novel from which it originated. The discursive forms of popular history do not exclude tragedy. The conventions of the entertainment industry are not intended to evade pessimism, indeed there is an expectation that great and tragic historical events will be dealt with by popular culture. Lanzmann claims, however that the Holocaust defies this expectation, as it is a unique case, being a tragedy beyond representation. He states that any representation will appear frivolous in the face of the unthinkable actuality of mass genocide. There are limitations to the endurance of the popular audience, and a film that offers absolutely no hope or optimism in a representation of the Holocaust is unlikely to attract popular support. Spielberg’s dilemma in producing Schindler’s List was to provide a representation that would not undermine the gravity of the Holocaust, and yet would also attract a large viewing audience. The story of the Schindler Jews offered an opportunity to portray the Holocaust, and, simultaneously to recount a compelling dramatization of humanitarian compassion. Spielberg’s position in the capitalist machine of Hollywood film production allowed him the privilege of producing a hybridization of styles, and yet retaining the economic might of the Hollywood distribution system for a venture that would hardly have excited Hollywood executives coming from a less renowned director.

Spielberg’s position within the industry, and his worldwide prominence, combined with the resurgence of neo-Nazi ideology, demanded a text that would remind the Western world of the historical horrors that were being challenged. The socially dominant view of history, that the Jews were indeed the victims of mass genocide, and that the history books in this case had it right, hung in the balance as the prevailing views of the Holocaust were publicly questioned. Schindler’s List was an exercise in dominant narrative forms, in dominant social engineering, especially in its reestablishment of the threatened dominant historical record. Both the narrative style and its cultural aims were reinforcements of a dominant cultural order.

Bordwell’s notion of classical Hollywood narrative form, however, seems over prescriptive in relation to the ensuing postmodern narrative forms that have emerged from Hollywood, particularly in the nineteen nineties. His assertion that “classical style consists of a strictly limited number of particular technical devices organized into a stable paradigm and ranked probabilistically according to syuzhet demands,” is partially verifiable, but this structural appraisal of classicism does not take into account the notion of postmodern ‘pastiche’ as posited by Jameson, in which fragments of classical style can coexist in the text alongside other forms. The classical Hollywood form has been appropriated and made the subject of satirical imitation, has been conjoined with other narrative forms, and has become more difficult to define in rigid, structural terms as derivative forms have come into existence. Schindler’s List stands as an example of a text that is a hybridization of classical Hollywood form with other conventional narrative devices.

Schindler’s List as Rhizome

A Deleuze-Guattarian approach to the text would suggest that the intertextual and social articulations forged by the choice of narrative style and the cultural context of the production of the film, highlight the fact that this film is connected with, and delimited by its cultural origins, and yet deterritorializes notions of genre in its narrative form and use of the camera. Despite its dominant formal characteristics, Schindler’s List also confounds convention by representing an unrepresentable anathema using the conventions of mainstream Hollywood. The text fluctuates from documentary realism to emotionally motivated drama, yet it could never be accused of failing to engage its audience through affect. It relies on traditional Hollywood techniques, but inverts them in order to represent the uncertainty and inconstancy that was the predicament faced by the victims of the Nazi war machine. The connection with the actual, and the viewer’s historical awareness that this Holocaust actually occurred, provides additional motivation for the viewer to suspend disbelief and accept the representation as authentic. This in itself supports the notion that the actual and the representation are not entirely isolated, but that knowledge of actuality exists through the agency of a cultural construct, and that the text itself contains, and defines, some elements of actuality. The viewer participates in the cultural construct of reality through texts, and this historical awareness provides a conception of the actual, however culturally defined and constructed it may be. Schindler’s List utilizes this awareness, combining the apparent authenticity of location, and classical (dominant) narrative form, with the existing conception of history in order to elucidate and fortify the dominant cultural construct of reality.

These observations of the rhizomic aspects of the text in Schindler’s List support Guattari’s notion of machinic heterogeneity, where the machine assemblage consists of many components, acting as a “consolidated aggregate of matters-functions,” that “make the territorial assemblage open onto something else, assemblages of another type, the molecular, the cosmic; they constitute becomings.” The physical ‘matters’ (waveforms of sound, dark, light and color, screens and loudspeakers, film,

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video tape or broadcast signal), of the audio/visual text, converge with the narrative and rhizomic functions of the text, in the connections of the viewer to ethical, moral, racial, political or religious systems. The film is a heterogeneous machine. As Deleuze and Guattari have stated, "a book exists only through the outside and on the outside. A book itself is a little machine." In this case the machinic functions of the book are equally applicable to audio/visual texts. The functions of the Schindler's List 'machine' include conjunctions of genre, gradations of association with actuality through visual styles of representation and extra-textual historical and cultural awareness. The text is inseparable from surrounding cultural influences, such as historical knowledge of the Second World War and the Holocaust, the corpus of visual narrative forms, understanding both realism and the fantasy world of Spielberg's prior films, and the traditions of film making from which this text has emerged. The audio/visual text is a convergence of the actual, cultural, historical and political with the affiliations and experiences of the viewer. Guattari's notion of machinic heterogeneity allows for the variability of interpretation according to the referential cognitive activities of the viewer, demanding a multi-vocal subjectivity that metamorphoses according to textual and extra-textual affect:

For the machine's diverse registers, there is no univocal subjectivity based on cut, lack or suture, but there are ontologically heterogeneous modes of subjectivity, constellations of incorporeal Universes of reference which take the position of partial enunciators in multiple domains of alterity.

The actual as observed through the text (in this case a historical actuality), combines with previous accounts and styles of narrativization, with the cultural inception of the narrative, and finally converges with the text. The text is then diversified and altered by the conjunctions of the text with multiple cultures and individual interpretations. Perceptions of the film continue to change, as discourse and mutable understandings of the function of film as representation modify the reception of the text. The machinic heterogeneity of the text is not temporally limited, but continues to grow and change concurrently with cultural conceptions of film.

The dominant form of postmodern historical record is not that of the traditional historian, whose (ostensibly) 'factual' chronicle fails to engage a popular audience, and whose means of presentation are those of recitation rather than of dramatization and entertainment. Contemporary history is contained in mythic and narrative form, as can be observed in the production of films such as Braveheart (1995), Michael Collins (1996), Elizabeth (1998), and Shakespeare in Love (1998). Although not entirely 'factual', these examples exhibit historical content in narrative form, representing historical knowledge as popular culture. The discussion surrounding Schindler's List cannot avoid recognizing the function of popular narrative as a receptacle of historical content. The logical inconsistency in this debate, as Zelizer points out, is that the insistence on defining the film as either a product of Hollywood (entertainment), or as non-Hollywood (factual), is in error:

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44 ibid., p.4.
45 Guattari, 1995, p.45.
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By evaluating popular culture as history, and on history’s terms, observers in effect underplayed the ability of popular culture to provide both entertainment and historical understanding, both fiction and fact.  

The postmodern popular text, then, can be both an entertainment and a history of actual events that has been narrativized in order to attain both an extensive distribution (for economic benefit), and dissemination of historical knowledge. The heterogeneous text forms connections with the economic, the cultural ‘bodies of knowledge’, and with the desire of the viewer. 

There is confusion between the popular Hollywood narrative, classical narrative forms, and the rational logic of modernist thought. Contemporary Hollywood narrative, as is demonstrated by Schindler’s List, cannot be reduced to prescriptive formulas, but continues to challenge the viewer by redefining its parameters. Hollywood no longer stands for a particular narrative style (although classical Hollywood style remains one of the constituents of the postmodern pastiche), but functions as a megalithic industrial assemblage, as a production and promotional machine rather than as a defining stylistic paradigm. The popular narrative forms that have been derided by modernist critical analysis, are also the foundation of the postmodern recognition of desire and affect. Ina Bertrand points out that conflicting views of narrative logic as an expression of modernism contradict the postmodern position of advocating the merit of popular culture: 

Within a postmodern world of blurred and shifting boundaries, intellectual fashions change rapidly. Currently, narrative – which is seen as a relic of the modernist preference for rationality – is out of fashion, and subject to what I consider to be unnecessarily harsh criticism. After all, popular culture cannot survive without narrative. 

Popular culture, which was the ‘whipping boy’ of modernism and has become the favorite of postmodernism, is not incapable of representing the past. The apparent authenticity of Schindler’s List, however, lies not in a simple recourse to classical narrative, but a complex amalgam of representational forms that combine historical film techniques and documentary styles with contradictory narrative forms. It presents dominant historical perspectives, yet defies Hollywood conventions by disclosing the grotesque and disturbing face of the actual Holocaust, and problematizes the conventional Hollywood ‘hero’ by offering a complex and often contradictory protagonist in Oskar Schindler. 

The discourses of dominance revealed in Schindler’s List are evident in the selection of the novel as a source, as a story that involves survival in the face of insurmountable odds, a classical Hollywood salvation narrative, yet contradicts this by reinforcing the horrific scale of the death inflicted by the Nazis in the Holocaust. The film aligns itself with dominant historical accounts of the Holocaust, and employs dominant modes of realist narrative in order to present its version of history, but despite these conventional practices it also challenges the definition of popular 

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Footnotes:  
7 Zelizer, 1997, p.27.  
44 Adorno, 1975.  
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culture, posing the question as to whether it is entertainment, or fact. It stands as an
eexample of the postmodern text, in that it approaches history, as Jameson suggests,
by “becoming aware of a new and original historical situation in which we are
condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that
history, which itself remains forever out of reach.” 44 The fact of the actuality of the
events, locations and identities, however, challenges the theoretical distance between
the representation and the event, and despite its status as simulacra, the actual is
partially perceptible in the representation. After all, there is no alternative means for
those who were not witnesses or participants in the Holocaust to visually and aurally
experience the sensory perception of life in the ghettos and camps. Without such
narrative representations the historical events are the memories of a past generation,
and can be transmitted only as an oral or written account. Virtual experience of the
historical, although not equal to the actual event, is a significant and powerful means
of representing the past through research and reenactment. The importance of the
actual in Schindler’s List is described by Œmer Bartov, when he compares the
character of Spielberg’s Schindler to Schindorff’s character, Oskar Matzerath, in
The Tin Drum (1979) stating that: “I still prefer Oskar Schindler, the man and the
film, if only because, when all is said and done, the man did save real people, and the
film, in spite of all its faults, made an attempt to represent the evil of the time and the
valiant attempts of one man to oppose it.” 45 The actuality of the historical events is a
cogent force on the interpretive strategies adopted by the viewer.

6.4 The Use of Documentary Techniques to Maximize Verisimilitude

Spielberg’s choices concerning the styles of representation employed in Schindler’s
List has challenged the conventional use of techniques associated with particular
genres. Extensive hand held camera work gives the viewer the impression of a
journalistic or cinema verite style of production. This treatment gives the film the
appearance of authenticity, of a documentary veracity that implies claims as to the
reality of the images. The employment of cinema verite style, however, is not the
only intertextual reference made by the text. The early scenes, of Schindler in the
nightclub are reminiscent of the film noir era, with sharply contrasting black and
white images in a shadowy, nocturnal atmosphere. Loshitzky points out the elements
of the pastiche of styles that Spielberg combines in the film:

These brilliant allusions to chiaroscuro lighting are influenced by the Hollywood
studio film, particularly as realized in the work of Joseph von Sternberg, Orson
Welles, and Max Ophuls. This highly evocative black-and-white is replaced by
grainy black-and-white tonality, embedded with shades of grey (see). in the “more
realistic scenes” such as the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto, or the selection of
running, naked women by the Nazi doctors. These scenes embrace the “aesthetic of
imperfect cinema,” which renounces the perfection of Hollywood products by

45 Bartov, 1997, p.58.
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resorting to the low-quality (but highly authentic) images of newsreels and television news. Other scenes, in particular those representing everyday life in the Krakow ghetto or in Schindler's factory, invoke the style of Italian Neorealism.

The appropriation of stylistic traits carries with it various ontological associations, particularly the scene of the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto, the scene that Loshitzky identifies as being in the style of "newsreels and television news." This impression is created by the use of long duration hand held camera shots that meander through the thronging crowds on the main street of the ghetto as the Nazis assemble and transport the Jews out of the ghetto. To the contemporary viewer this style invokes associations with contemporary television news, but it bears little resemblance to the newsreels of the 'forties, but owes its heritage to the cinema verite movement, where long, 'grainy' and unsteady camera shots were accompanied by synchronous sound, and were the subject of claims of filmmakers as to such images being 'reality at 24 frames per second'. Newsreel and television news styles may occasionally include shaky, hand held images, but rarely long duration images. The reference here is to the minimal artifice in the production of the image, and to the veracity of the image as a reproduction of the actual. The events that occur in front of the camera are unedited, and are represented as they are filmed, or, at least, this is the impression given by employing such techniques. Spielberg's inclusion of this style within the context of filming a reenactment of historical events does not carry with it implicit claims of reproducing an actuality that has occurred in front of the camera, but, rather, intertextual reference to the films that have established this style as evidential. The ontology of interpretation is implicit in the images of Schindler's List, being once removed from the actual, referring via the previous textual experience of conventions associated with a specific genre. Viewing experiences of multiple documentaries and news programs are of a textual content that implies veracity.

Fig. 6.4.1: Classical Hollywood lighting technique.

63 See the discussion of cinema verite in chapter 5.1.
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Fig. 6.4.2: Echoes of Italian neo-realism.

Fig. 6.4.3: Handheld, documentary-style camera.

In fact, the tendency to designate the continuous hand held camera shots of 
Schindler’s List as news or newsreel style overlooks the fact that news footage is 
seldom unedited, and is certainly never presented in black and white. The reference to 
cinéma vérité is one that invokes an archetypal style that has become the stereotype of 
actuality footage, with its rough movement and subjective point of view imitating the 
experience of an eyewitness. Spielberg’s use of this technique lays claim to the 
authenticity of previous texts, and the understanding (particularly in the use of such 
techniques in ‘reality television’ programs), that the style signifies absence of 
manipulation, and direct reproduction of actual events.

Given the circumstances in which a contemporary viewer apprehends the text there 
is little chance that the images could be misconstrued as being actual, as the temporal 
delay between the actual event during the nineteen forties and the Spielberg 
representation is common knowledge. But the associations between these images and 
other images that have been interpreted as being actual intimate evidentiality, with 
stylistic conventions that bring about ontological assumptions, almost against the will

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of the viewer, by way of involuntary association of textual similarities. Having learned to apply a given interpretive strategy to images that display characteristics specific to a style, or sub-genre, the viewer is (almost) persuaded to set aside the awareness that the images are a dramatic enactment and accept them as documentary evidence. This tendency occurs as a result of the customary interpretation of observational documentary-style images as having a correlation with actuality. Verisimilitude is attained not only through the authenticity of location, appearance and quality of acting, but also through the visual style employed in the representation. The conventions employed by the filmmaker suggest a particular frame of reading, a mode of interpretation that is recurrently utilized in films and television programs that represent the actual world.

Spielberg’s use of super-imposed titles over the Krakow ghetto sequence illustrates the extra-textual interpretive associations that are suggested by the conventions of titling images. The use of titles implies a ‘voice of God’ authority of expository documentary. The characteristics of the classical documentary film are displayed by the use of written text as narration. This is revealed in the assumption of the filmmaker’s authority to state historical facts, as if there is no possible question as to the historical veracity of the information. In this case, there is little reason to question the content of the written text, but its inclusion in an ostensibly dramatic reconstruction of historical events does, in fact, emphasize its explicit claims of evidentiality, a claim similar to those commonly made by historical documentary film.

Fig. 6.4.4: The use of text to communicate historical information.

The biographical story of Schindler is transformed into a visual history lesson, with the individual subjectivity of the narrative being temporarily cast aside in favor of a socio-historical perspective that recounts the record of the collective experience.

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44 See Nichols, 1983.
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of the Krakow Jews. The titles are indicative of Spielberg's claims of veracity, and correlation with the actual. For the viewer, they are a cue to an interpretive frame that is inherited from a past (Griersonian), era of classical documentary reception, when the authority of the documentary title reflected institutional and social political and ideological positions, and the textual narration frequently provided educational information.

Intertextual references to the documentary genres, however, not only refer to the texts themselves, but to the cultural constructs of reality that are associated with those texts. Interpretive strategies include assumptions concerning the relations between representation and actuality. The text that is defined as documentary in its content is assumed by the viewer to be concerned with the realm of actual events and people, and their social acts. The characteristics of the text, then, refer to an entire lifetime's experience of audio/visual documentary reception, and the understanding that those events portrayed 'actually happened'. A phenomenology of film, according to Stadler accounts for the integration of previous viewing experience in new encounters with film or television:

... The inventory of everyday experience and previous film experience draws the horizon of understanding and provides the schemata of interpretation for new film experience. The horizon and schemata available determine motivation, expectation and selection regarding new film experience. Viewing a new film ... constitutes a meaningful event ... in that the viewer relates the new and the unfamiliar to established sense schemata and integrates new sense data into the available sense context. As a result, the experiential inventory (the horizon) is expanded, and future expectation, motivation and interpretation will be modified. 65

The titles in Schindler's List complicate the relations between fiction and nonfiction, in that the majority of previous viewing experience of a viewer points towards a definite correlation between documentary titles and historical, non-fictional 'fact'. The use of titles in this context, however, refers to undisputed historical record, and, therefore, performs an identical function to titles in any documentary film. At those moments when collective, historical information is conveyed in Schindler's List, the film is performing a documentary function, and is, in fact, a documentary film. The historical record of the Jewish experience in Krakow provides a general historical setting for the more particular narrative of the Schindler Jews, who are portrayed in the style of fictional narrative. The film fluctuates between the documentation of history, and the particularization of the main protagonists in the narrative.

The reception of documentary has long been a source of contention among theorists, with Branigan, Eitzen, Nichols and Platinga disputing the definitive means of distinguishing (or not), documentary from fiction. 64 Eitzen suggests that the reception of documentary is the moment of its definition, when a viewer asks, "might it be lying?" 67 He goes on to identify the closing sequence of Schindler's List as a moment where the text transforms from fiction to documentary:

65 Stadler, 1990, p.45.
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The ending of Schindler’s List (1993), for example, is clearly set apart as something different from the rest of the film – something special: “documentary.” So, if one wishes to analyze documentaries as an actual form of discourse rather than as an abstract category of text, the real problem is not how to categorize whole texts but how people make sense of those particular moments and elements of films that they frame as documentary – whenever that may be.  

Despite the cinema verite conventions and titles that reflect documentary convention, it is the closing segment, when the actors and the ‘actual’ surviving Schindler Jews file past Oskar Schindler’s grave, which Eitzen defines as documentary. Eitzen’s recognition that “there is a plethora of conventional cues that signal how the discourse is supposed to be framed,” 69 does not allow for the fact that these conventions are clearly utilized in many other scenes of Schindler’s List, and yet it is the establishment of actual identity that triggers, for Eitzen, the shift to documentary.

Ironically, the one moment in the film identified by Eitzen as documentary is perhaps the least authentic in terms of its authenticity. The ceremony at Schindler’s grave is clearly and visibly enacted for the camera, and staged as a direct result of the production of the film. It was Spielberg’s choice to organize and film the event. The scene reveals less about actuality than do many others in the film, where location, chronology of events and the unfolding of political and ideological purpose are explored in greater detail. In fact, the closing scene achieves little in terms of information for the viewer, apart from establishing the identity of the actual survivors and actors, and grounding the narrative characters in actual identity. Eitzen’s question of documentary definition (“might it be lying?”) in this case, appears to refer to two aspects of text/actualty relations; firstly, that of the authentic identity of the individuals who are filmed, and secondly, that of temporal consistency, where the time frame of the recorded action is identified as representing events that have occurred concurrently with the act of filming.

Fig. 6.4.5: The image fades from black and white to color, signifying a shift to actuality in the ‘present’ time.

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68 ibid., p.96.
69 ibid., p.96.
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Fig. 6.4.6: The identity of the survivors is established by the use of documentarytitles...

Fig. 6.4.7: As the actors and actual survivors place stones on Schindler’s gravestone.

The use of documentary conventions earlier in the film are received as narrative realism, as is implied by Eitzen’s failure to cite them as documentary moments in the film. Their function within the text is to convince the viewer of the genuineness of the images, implementing historical accuracy, authentic locations and emphasizing the status of the narrative as a ‘true story’. It is the point at which the viewer experiences the dissolution of the drama and perceives the distinction between the actuality and the enactment process that the reception of the text alters. The audio/visual cues of the text suggest to the viewer that the ontological context has abruptly transformed. The noticeable shift from black and white to color (the only full screen color images of the entire film), also underlines the ontological transformation, as Eitzen observes:
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As the whole film is shot in black and white, this scene—shot in color against the dazzling, bright light of Jerusalem—stands out sharply. It conveys the impression of a “raw” slice of reality, contrasted with the over-stylized, nostalgic, black-and-white of the preceding footage. 70

When juxtaposed with the black and white of the earlier images, the color appears transparent, a statement of harsh realism as opposed to the prior stylistic references to specific eras of black and white film production (fig. 6.4.5). The use of color images and the establishment of personal/actor identity through titles exaggerate the contrast between the dramatic reenactment and the actuality of the final scene (fig. 6.5.6). Such explicit cues indicate a dominant reading of the text, in which the color implies the actuality of the image, and the viewer is encouraged to consider the authenticity of the reenactment in hindsight, particularly as a result of the proximity of the Schindler Jews and the actors.

This assumption of the veracity of the image is partially the result of a comparison that occurs during the viewing of the film. The sounds and images are interpreted in relation to the other sounds and images within the text, and with the horizon of all textual and extra-textual experience. In this case, with the textual cues clearly establishing a contrast with the earlier scenes of Schindler’s List, the viewer is invited to accept the identity of the Schindler Jews as evidence of the veracity of the text. Their appearance at the closure of the film infers that their participation in the film condones the previous narrative content as authentic. The ‘real’ survivors and the actors have, by implication, worked together in creating a representation of actual events. The narrative of the ‘story’ is displaced by the absence of narrative in the slow procession past the grave, as the confirmation of identity reinforces the legitimacy of the enactment, and becomes a metonym of the articulation of the actual through dramatization. The closing segment exhibits the characteristics of chronicle, as opposed to the mythic story conventions of the preceding narrative. 71

The function of actuality in the text is not only to be observed in the veracity of the reenactment, the authentic location of sites and the structure of the narrative account (creating a distinction between actual and virtual within the narrative), but is also dependent on the style of audio/visual portrayal, and the associations between genre and modes of interpretation. The apperception of reality in the text is, most certainly, a cultural construct, and not an equivalence of actuality to the text itself. And yet, there is no justification for claiming that actuality is absent from the text. Knowledge of the Holocaust has been enhanced by the experience of the representation, and has provided a visual image of the sites, and the events that occurred over fifty ago. The image does not equate to the first hand experience of the events, but does provide a virtual experience that enables a viewer to construct a mental image in the form of a mental reconstruction of the actuality, a substitute for the mental-virtual (as defined in chapter 3.3). The text is not an actuality of historical events, but the construction of that particular history could not have become a constituent part of the viewer’s ‘horizon of experience’ without textual representation, either written or audio/visual. A Deleuze-Guattarian understanding of this cinematic perceptual process as rhizome, underlines the potential for a partial

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presence of the actual in the image, in the line of flight that intersects with, and passes through the boundaries of actuality, narrative construction, memory, dramatic reenactment and the celluloid form of the medium itself (naturally, including the video or televisual representations of the images). The actual has, through these instruments of mediation, played some part in the formation of the viewer’s mental ‘image’ of events through the virtual experience of the film.

The sensory perception of the audio/visual text is not identical to that of actual (physical) experience. The contrast between images which are representations projected on a screen, and direct visual experience of events, is plainly evident to the viewer. There are, however, two sites of difference that effect the eventual construction of the text: the source of the visual data (technological-visual screen images or direct visual experience), and the interpretive frame that is applied to that data (fig. 6.4.8). It is the interpretive construction of the sensory data that determines the extent to which it is apprehended as ‘real’ or ‘unreal’. The two sites of difference are not mutually exclusive, in that the virtual image can be interpreted as ‘reality’ (as is often the case with television news and documentary), or physical vision can be illusory (in the case of optical illusions, or misinterpretation of actual perception). Sensory data, then, is not the measure of reality, but the interpretive strategy utilized ascertains the veracity and authenticity of the film image.

Although Schindler's List does not include actual footage of Holocaust events, it may, according to the model outlined above, convey information that is equally pertinent to actual events than images that were filmed during the Holocaust. The actual images were, due to the limited access, filmed almost exclusively by Nazi soldiers or those who held positions of favor within the Nazi regime, and therefore adhered to or sympathized with the anti-Semitic doctrines of Hitler's Germany. 72

The images that resulted from the Nazi ideology portrayed the Jews as subhuman, representing their suffering, and weakest, most degrading experiences in an attempt to visually authenticate Hitlerian theories of race supremacy. The actuality of the images in this case contradicts the ideological ‘truth’ of the historical events through the selection and construction of propagandistic representation. The politically influenced records of Nazi Germany illustrate the point that the reality or unreality of an audio/visual text lies not in the image itself, but in the cultural constructs of reality that are applied to the image. Bartov points out that the contrivance of the equality of image to reality is not limited to dramatic reenactment, but applies equally to images of actuality:

...When evaluating documentary films, we must bear in mind that both the selection of the material and, even more insidiously, the documentary film material itself, can often be just as biased as the “authentic” fiction; indeed, that in many cases, since it has been produced in the service of various propagandistic, ideological, and political ends, contemporary film material may be more biased, as well as more dangerous, precisely because it masquerades as an “objective” depiction of “reality.” 73

72 Several such film documents are included in the television documentary series The World at War, 1971-1975, and particularly the episode entitled ‘Genocide’, written by Charles Bloomberg, produced by Martin Smith.
73 Bartov, 1997, p.54.
The interpretive strategies applied in the viewing of texts, then, are in the end the determinant of the appearance of the 'real', rather than the image or the sensory data. Screen images of actual events can be equally as subjective in their ideological positioning as dramatic reconstruction, and are capable of implying a cultural reality rather than depicting an actuality.

The multiple connections of the film to the 'outside' world are particularly significant when considering the influence of the cultural construct of reality on the interpretation of Schindler's List. Actual events that have been committed to collective memory have ceased to be the sacrosanct property of the survivors, their families and their race, and have been disseminated to all cultures and creeds in the narrative of Schindler's List and the resultant activities of the Shoah Foundation. The stories of the survivors have become components of a collective myth, rather than an individual experience, and the consolidation of personal accounts into a single narrative has provided the world with a virtual experience of the sights, sounds and locations that would otherwise be largely unavailable to 'gentile' viewers. The significance of virtual experience through historical narrative is not that it does not correlate perfectly to the actual events, but that it integrates actual events into the virtual text. The historical events, though not recreated in their entirety, are represented, and thereby shape the mental construct of the event through several stages of mediation and virtualization. The mental-virtual recollection of the text for
Dramatic Reenactment in Schindler’s List

the viewers exists alongside the mental-virtual recollection of life experience. The narrativization of the actual event is an achievable means of experiencing past actualities that are otherwise inaccessible. Actuality is partially present for the viewer in the text, in that it has affected the formation of the text, and modified the viewer’s construct of reality.

Verisimilitude, when considered in this light, goes beyond textual similarity to the actual, and becomes, rather, the actual shaping the text, and via the text, the viewer. The cultural codification of actuality in narrativization is countered by a converse modification of culture by the return of actuality in narrative. Narrative is a rhizome that allows multiple flows, and the viewer is affected by actuality through the narrative. Although the viewer brings meaning to the text through interpretive strategies, so also the text brings a measure of actuality to the viewer, affecting interpretive strategies and the cultural construct of reality. This analysis of Schindler’s List, however brief and inadequate in considering issues of the magnitude of the Holocaust, has highlighted the inadequacies of conventional distinction between fiction and non-fiction, as this film overlaps and permeates that boundary on several levels. The heterogeneity of the text, the actual events, cultural codification and the response of the viewer are conjoined in a rhizome that defies conventional definition. Losshitzky summates the quandary that is created by the multiple connections at work in Schindler’s List:

...Journalistic accounts celebrated Spielberg’s film as the finest nondocumentary film ever made on the Holocaust and Shoah as the best documentary ever made on the Holocaust. Yet these comfortable genre categories should not mislead us. Traditionally, documentaries have been viewed as superior to fiction films because of their pretense to monopolize the market of truth. Yet the cinematic institution’s categories of “documentary” and “fiction” have continuously been thrown into crisis.\(^4\)

\(^4\) Losshitzky, op. cit., p.107.
Chapter 7

DOCUMENTARY RECONSTRUCTION IN JFK

The previous chapter offered an account of the referential functions of the text in relation to dramatic reenactment of historical events, and the utilization of genre conventions in the dramatic representation of actuality. This chapter is concerned with the documentary reenactment of actual events in Oliver Stone’s JFK, and the integration of actuality footage into the film. Dramatic reenactment in historical film narrative strives to achieve authenticity in the representation of actual historical figures and events, but documentary reconstruction appropriates actual identities and provides a representation of the body that is a substitute for the actual identity, minimizing the viewer’s awareness of the enactment. In chapter 5 it was demonstrated that conventional documentary reconstruction avoids disclosure of identity when representing public figures that are recognizable. The integration of documentary reconstruction into Stone’s narrative, however, challenges the viewer to distinguish between actuality footage and reconstruction, and situates both the actuality footage and the reconstruction within a dramatic reenactment. JFK offers an example of actuality images, documentary reconstruction and dramatic reenactment interacting within a single text that is renowned for its obtrusive narrativization of an actual event.

The analysis of JFK will identify the various referential capacities of the audio/visual text, and will establish the importance of form and genre as determining factors on interpretive strategies. The most notable example of actuality images that are integrated into narrative form is the Zapruder film, which is included in Stone’s rendition of the courtroom evidence. The conjunction of actuality images with a dramatic reenactment provides an opportunity to examine the narrativization of the actuality image, and the effect that this particular use of the image has on the interpretation of the Zapruder film. The aims of this chapter are to observe the boundaries within the text, to identify the cultural references made by the text, and to evaluate the notions of rhizome, and the permeability of boundaries (as outlined in the first part of the thesis), as a method of analysis for the convergence of form and genre encountered in JFK.

The analysis of JFK will be restricted to the portions of the film that employ documentary reconstruction and actuality footage, as the implications of dramatic reenactment have been considered in the previous chapter. The first section will examine the functions of the images appropriated by stone in the social realm, and the second will evaluate the evidentiality of the Zapruder film, and the capacity of the image to embody actual events. The notion of rhizome will be applied to the text in the third section, where the function of boundaries within the text will be analyzed. Finally, the use of actuality images to form connections between the viewer and actuality will be considered.

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7.1 Contested History: JFK and the American Institution

Locating the Narrative in History

The actual event occurred on November the 22nd, 1963. President Kennedy, the youngest President in the history of the United States of America, was assassinated while driving in a motorcade along Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. The 'story' was broadcast as a mediated account that was constructed according to the conventions of the journalistic institutions of the time. Little 'live' television coverage was available at the time, but an amateur filmmaker, Abraham Zapruder, was able to film the passing entourage as the assassination occurred. In JFK Stone offers a reconstruction of the assassination as the pivotal motif of the film, combining his reconstruction with the Zapruder film. His inclusion of President Eisenhower's speech at the outset of the film warning against a "military-industrial complex" and its potential danger to liberty, postulates a historical perspective that contradicts the conventional perspective of American military and industrial powers (fig.7.1.1):

Fig. 7.1.1: President Eisenhower's farewell address to the nation.

**President Eisenhower**: We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security alone, more than the net income of all...

**Voiceover commentary**: January 1961. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's farewell address to the nation.

**President Eisenhower**: Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence, economic, political, even spiritual, is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the Federal Government. We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.  

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1 Transcribed from the opening scene of *JFK*.  

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Stone then leads into the film with a montage of images that were pertinent to the political environment of the Kennedy Presidency, integrating home movies of the Kennedy family, television news images and other documentary images of the era. The introductory segment, which runs behind the opening titles of the film, is presented in the style of classical, expository documentary. The 'voice of God' commentary determines the content of the images, enabling the opening verbal essay to give the impression of being an authoritative, institutionally condoned statement of historical fact. The documentary-style preface to the narrative posits a scenario where Kennedy is portrayed as being opposed to the CIA in the Cuban Bay of Pigs invasion, and that Kennedy privately claimed that “the CIA tried to manipulate him into ordering an all-out American invasion of Cuba.” He is also depicted as being less than enthusiastic about the war in Vietnam:

Unless a greater effort is made by the Government to win popular support, I don’t think the war can be won out there... in the final analysis it’s their war. They’re the ones who have to win or lose it.  

Stone’s decision to open the film with this speech instantly launches the ideological hypothesis of the film, that Kennedy was a victim of the self-same military-industrial complex.

Stone’s use of this particular segment of Kennedy’s statement, however, is challenged by Steel, who states that

Stone simply leaves out the next sentence of Kennedy’s statement, in which he added: “But I don’t agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake.”

When Kennedy’s speech at the American University in Washington (where he supports the notion of peace with the Soviet Union), is juxtaposed with Eisenhower’s farewell address, the alleged motivation for Kennedy’s assassination is established as being the threat he posed to the profit-making potential of Eisenhower’s ‘military-industrial complex’. Stone’s introductory commentary skillfully implies a hypothetical, if not entirely accurate combination of political and military circumstances that encourage the viewer to assume some reciprocity between the events portrayed in the documentary introduction and the motivation behind the actual assassination.

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2 ibid.
3 ibid.
4 Steel, 1992.
An analysis of JFK cannot overlook the conspicuous appropriation of classical documentary technique in this opening sequence. The introduction to the film is a documentary, albeit a documentary that posits a left-wing perspective on political events. There is no dramatically enacted content, the identity of the political figures in the images is authentic, and the historical-political commentary is substantially
accurate, although undoubtedly biased toward a particular reading of events (figs. 7.1.2–7). Stone's contention is the suggestion that President Kennedy intended to pull out of the Vietnam War if elected to a second term. This notion has been challenged by Turner, who maintains that Kennedy intended to exit Vietnam only in the case of victory. Kennedy's statement transcribed above tends to support Stone's contention, however Turner cites numerous sources to the contrary.* Stone, however, makes no attempt at objectivity, but is unabashed in positing an unconventional, subjective interpretation of history. Martin Medhurst, in his analysis of JFK, suggests that Stone's history accords with postmodern historical practice. He puts forward two models of history, one, the traditional approach, states that "an external reality exists and it is the task of historians to recreate or reanimate that reality through symbolic means." The second historical approach is:

...Not to reproduce some external reality — as though that were possible — but rather to create that reality through critical engagement with the various symbolic constructions of the past. These constructions are then brought into dialogue with other "histories" in an ever-swelling chorus of voices. History ... is nothing more or less than a rhetorical construction.  

The type of history exhibited by Stone's film is of the second kind, where the presumption of a single interpretation of historical data is critically appraised, or, in this case, contested.

Several media theorists and historians have pointed to JFK as an example of a postmodern narrativized history. Proponents of modernism in the field of history have eschewed the use of narrative as a means of representing actual events, but postmodern theorists have recognized the fallacious claims of objectivity and positivism. White affirms Stone's approach to history as a valid methodology:

... The historical event, traditionally conceived as an event which was not only observable but also observed, is by definition an event that is no longer observable, and hence cannot serve as an object of knowledge as certain as can a present event which can still be observed. This is why it is perfectly respectable to fall back upon the time-honored tradition of representing such singular events as the assassination of the thirty-fifth president of the United States as a story and to try to explain it by narrativizing (fabulating) it — as Oliver Stone did in JFK.  

He then goes on, however to point out the problematic aspects of the representation of events in narrative form:

... The issues raised in the controversy over JFK could be profitably set within a more recent phase of the debate over the relation of historical fact to fiction peculiar to the discussion of the relation between modernism and postmodernism. For literary (and for that matter filmic) "modernism" (whatever else it may be) marks the end of storytelling ... After modernism, when it comes to the task of

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8 White, op.cit., p.22.
Documentary Reconstruction in JFK

storytelling, whether in historical or literary writing, the traditional techniques of narration become unstable — except in parody.

In JFK Stone attempts a conjunction of audio/visual texts that, by implication of their combination, creates a narrative from divergent sources. As White observes, however, this narrativization recognizes the representational function of these texts in the film, and highlights the speculative nature of any attempt to construct a rigid version of a past event. The multiple strains of narrative running through the film, and the impossibility of constructing a cohesive account of the historical events bear witness to the fragmentation of narrative in JFK. Stone’s history becomes one voice in a melange of voices, several within the text, and many in extra-textual discourse concerning the Kennedy assassination.

Stone’s interpretation of history, then, is no less ‘valid’ than an official version of history, one that draws no connections between the Kennedy assassination and a "military-industrial complex". As a rhetorical construction its social validity is not commensurate to the institutionally condoned rhetoric of the Warren Commission, in that Oliver Stone has no governmental or institutional authenticity as a historian, but despite this the film has a measure of authority that originates from the books which provided the inspiration for the film. Jim Garrison was a New Orleans District Attorney, and as such his account of the circumstances surrounding the assassination deserves a measure of institutional recognition, and any rejection of Stone’s account as being “an act of execrable history” does not take the contribution of Garrison to the content of JFK into consideration. The authenticity of any version of history is amongst the more significant questions that are raised by the film. Is a historical record made valid by the social institutions that condone it? Does Stone’s film employ conventions of classical documentary genre in order to create an impression of authenticity to which it has no claim? JFK demands attention as a social document for no other reason than the fact that it poses these questions forcefully, and has instigated a prolonged debate surrounding the right of a Hollywood director to put forward a historical claim that conflicts with governmental accounts, and infringes on the sacrosanct territory of the historian.

The Rhetorical Function of images in JFK

The viewer of JFK is exposed to a hybridized rhetoric that combines Stone’s strident criticism of the military and Government intelligence establishments, as evident in his prior work, with Garrison’s accusations of anticommunist fascism in the highest levels of government. This rhetoric, which is in contrast to the official account of the assassination as a one-man operation, has brought about a contested account of the historical event. The illusion of a unified historical account has been challenged, and this challenge has underlined the uncertainty of all historical texts.

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9 ibid., p.24.  
12 The sentiments of Stone in opposition to U.S.A. government intelligence organizations are particularly evident in Salvador (1986).
Walkowitz posits the ideological and political motivations for such an indeterminate history:

Historians' flirtation with if not embrace of postmodernism gives them some responsibility for the crisis in history. The focus on multiple voices and unstable texts in the postmodern move or linguistic turn undermines the public's yearning for stability. Indeed, I think critics and the press have misread its corollary ... to suggest that the postmodern historian makes no truth claims. Most, I believe, would emphasize the multiplicity and contested nature of historical voices, focusing on narratives as constructed interpretations by historical actors and analysts. Actually, the press and the politicians may fear most the idea that people might question their authority. In practice, particular versions of the past, both in the past and in the present, are authorized simply by those with greater access to power, but that does not make them "truer." 13

Stone's oppositional interpretation of history provides an alternative voice that adopts an air of authority reminiscent of the propagandistic styles that had been utilized by the very institutions that he accuses of complicity in the assassination. He opposes the official history by imitating institutional methods of representation, and by marshalling the vast economic resources of the Hollywood film industry as a means to counterbalance the institutional power of government. Stone turns the conventions of the dominant social order back on itself by adopting an air of omnipotent authority that has been previously associated with governmental and corporate authority. In his introduction there is no acknowledgment of dissent, no discussion of the conventional reading of the history of the Kennedy era that overlooks any conflict between Kennedy and the military intelligence fraternity.

*JFK* deconstructs the myth of the 'great American dream,' in which the government is assumed to be beyond reproach and to have only the best intentions toward the American people. This myth is replaced by the dark and distrustful myth of conspiracy, in which the government works covertly and illegally to assure the economic security of a minority of influential conspirators. In the midst of these conflicting myths, and set at a time in which the trust of the American people for their government was destabilized by a series of assassinations, the film posits a transition from the acceptance of institutional virtue to the suspicion of conspiratorial subterfuge. Stone confirms that he intended the film to stand as an oppositional account of the assassination:

G.S. People took the film to be your version of history, that you literally believed every frame to be The Truth; that in fact you were presenting Garrison's imaginative reconstruction of events.

O.S. I'm glad you noticed. I've always said the film was a countermyth to the myth of the Warren Commission because a lot of the original facts were lost in a very shoddy investigation. 14

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13 Walkowitz, 1998, p.54
Documentary Reconstruction in JFK.

The positivism of Stone’s account is profoundly influenced by the society of its origin. His choices to co-produce and direct the film also reveals a desire to respond to the official social account of the assassination, and the film stands as a potent public rebuttal of the findings of the Warren Commission.

The Kennedy assassination has been exposed to a variety of discursive constructions, with the sub-text of American patriotism never far from the surface, as semi-hysterical criticism of ‘conspiracy nuts’ and attacks on the film JFK as “an act of execrable history and contemptible citizenship” have created an atmosphere of enforced conformity. 15 Loebs goes as far as to equate Stone’s selective quotation of Kennedy concerning Vietnam with a Hitlerian tenet, claiming that “Stone … follows Hitler’s maxim, as stated in Mein Kampf, that ‘the masses fall victim more easily to a big lie than a small one.’” 16 The many connections of JFK with journalism, political debate and sub-cultural fascination with governmental conspiracy are as consequential to the interpretation of the text as is the content itself. In isolation from these extra-textual connections Stone’s film appears to be a restricted, positivistic attempt to delimit the possible explanations of the assassination. When the history of the account and the context of its creation are considered, however, its purpose as a ‘counter-myth’ is clarified. The irony of journalistic criticism of the film, however, is that this obvious ploy from Stone has apparently been overlooked. His mythic reconstruction has been interpreted as a kind of desecration of the ‘American Dream,’ where the apotheosis of American society is momentarily loosed from its position of sacrosanct privilege and must face the hard light of critical scrutiny, as does every other government and institution. Those who would maintain this privilege are offended at the apparently unpatriotic motivation behind criticism of the American institutional hierarchy, and seek to disparage any attempt to challenge the status quo.

Against such a backdrop the film takes on an entirely different meaning. It is a reply to the ‘new conservatism’ of the Reagan era, and an interrogation of the very ideals underlying American culture. Garrison’s (Costner’s), closing speech to the jury highlights the centrality of this notion to the film:

The ghost of John F. Kennedy confronts us with the secret murder at the heart of the American dream. He forces on us the appalling questions: of what is our constitution made? What is our citizenship, and more, our lives worth? 17

There is no justification for the journalistic oversight of Stone’s satirical (and even cynical), parody of American nationalistic propaganda. His historical account mimics the strident tones of the television news and documentary of the Kennedy era, and integrates news reports of the period into the film so as to emphasize this reference. His construction of history is a parody of the positivism of post-war American film and television, and refers to the naivety of the post-war American society that embraced such propagandistic rhetoric.

17 Jim Garrison’s summary speech to the court, transcribed from JFK.
Documentary Reconstruction in JFK

The persuasive rhetoric of JFK is assisted by the apparent positivism of the documentary introduction, and the interpretive strategy that is induced by such classical documentary techniques is attributable to the boldness of the political and economic claims that are present from the outset of the film. This mode of discourse implies defined interpretive strategies as the “supposedly authoritative yet often presumptuous off-screen narration” encourages viewers to accept the claims of the voice of social authority. But in this case, which voice of authority is the viewer to accept? The film stands in direct opposition to the governmental and military institutions that deny any knowledge of conspiratorial activity, branding such theories of the assassination as paranoia, and as Kopkind observes:

Reasonable columnists like Tom Wicker (who was in Dallas that day), cool commentators like Cokie Roberts (whose father, Hale Boggs, was a member of the Warren Commission) and what seems like the unanimous journalistic establishment are ready to burn every print of JFK if they could because of the damage a counternarrative, an alternative paradigm, is thought to do to the national spirit and, I guess, the collective will. Monolithic myths—the manifest decency of America, the infallibility of the church, the existence of historical truth—are more fascistic than any transient leader. In that case, a little narrative pluralism can be truly subversive. Now, it may be hard for some to admit that Oliver Stone, with $40 million per film at his disposal and virtually unlimited media access, can be a subversive force, but he has done a great service by recasting the idols in the heart of the temple.

The viewer with any social knowledge of the Kennedy assassination is left pondering the contrasting accounts of history, and JFK becomes one more chapter in the ongoing accrual of textual data concerning the actual event. The extensive conspiracy discourse throws the certainty of the government explanation of the event into doubt, rendering the inscription of American history ambiguous through the presence of multiple accounts, each claiming authenticity, each providing evidence to support its arguments. The American cultural construct of history has, in this case, been amended and redefined by one historical film and multiple texts contesting the official version of events.

The multiple historical voices that have been discussed above are observable in the combination of content in the documentary introduction. The inclusion of television news reports, family film of the Kennedys and the Zapruder film of the assassination in JFK has challenged the boundary of documentary and fiction by their proximity to the historical narrative of the dramatic reenactment. These segments of audio/visual text are not the result of Stone’s film making activities, but have a textual existence prior to JFK. Their appropriation by Stone for use in this film amounts to a claim of documentary authenticity, with the images evoking a specific interpretive strategy. The opening montage is a multiplicity of political, military, and private images that are combined in one text, and are subservient to the voiceover commentary that conjoins this disparate collection of visual data. The images are, however, not subsumed under the classical documentary umbrella, but

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20 Staiger, 1996, p.48, cites a Washington Post survey in 1991, in which 56 percent of the American population accepted the theory of a conspiracy, and only 19 percent accepted the official position.
maintain a distinct formal identity despite the intrusive commentary. Each image is identifiable by its content, and its form as a home-movie, television news broadcast, or military archive film. The slightly blurred Kennedy home-movie is easily distinguishable from the stark black and white footage of the Bay of Pigs invasion, or of the television news coverage of speeches and public events. Camera movement, frame composition and the modes of address adopted by the people represented in the images identify the distinct genre of each component of the montage.

The formal characteristics of the images indicate their origin as news footage, as archival film or as home movie. The interpretive strategies that are applied by viewers to each of these genres are confused by the rapid transition between styles, and the resulting conflict of interpretive frames has brought criticism from some journalists and film critics. The fast editing between reconstruction and archival footage is, according to White, a device in which “all of the events depicted in the film ... are presented as if they were equally real, or as if they had ‘really happened’”. The reconstruction of the assassination is juxtaposed with the Zapruder film as a means of postulating a particular narrativization of events in the courtroom scene, and this is plainly a visual accompaniment to Garrison’s verbal rendition of his construction of events. The introductory sequence, however, offers no such narrative context, but utilizes documentary conventions and continuity editing to imply cohesion between the disparate images.

Being confused by the ontological variance of images in JFK and accepting the film as a ‘reality,’ however, are two entirely different interpretations of the film. Inherent in the assumption of viewer susceptibility to such manipulation is the inference that viewers are incapable of distinguishing between actuality images and dramatic of enactment or documentary reconstruction. As Staiger observes, the viewer interpretation of the text is the final measure of the ‘power of the text’ to deceive:

It is the variable capacity of viewers to distinguish between actuality images and documentary reconstruction that defines the interpretive frame that will be applied to the image, and in the case of JFK this becomes particularly significant as the hypothetical is situated alongside the “inscription of the original event”. An experienced viewer (discussed in chapter 4.2), is able to identify characteristics of the image that suggest a particular ontological function according to the conventions of genre. A naïve viewer, however, may not have the experience of genre conventions

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11 See White, 1996, pp.18-22, for a succinct summary of articles critical of JFK.
12 ibid., p.20.
13 Staiger, op. cit., p.44.
that would enable identification of image characteristics. It is the characteristics of
the image that allow the experienced viewer to locate the image within a genre
grouping, and apply the interpretive strategy appropriate to that genre. The
combination of genres in close proximity and rapid transition only serve to underline
the contention of this thesis, that the narrativized text is partially composed of
actuality, but that the actuality can never be complete in a textual representation.

**JFK as Cultural Transmission**

By combining actuality images with reconstruction of actuality Stone has adopted
a strategy that is central to all language and narrative. The cultural transmission of
narrative does not consist of the recounting of sensory experiences, but, rather, the
recitation of narratives that have been received from others. In supporting this view
of narrative Deleuze and Guattari state: "We believe that narrative consists not in
communicating what one has seen but in transmitting what one has heard, what
someone else said to you. Hearsay." 24 The important distinction here is between
communication and transmission. Communication assumes that the communicator
has seen an event, which is then communicated to another, whereas transmission
involves a distribution of an account. A narrative is conveyed from person to person,
and is adapted, altered and personalized as it is transferred. Each recounting of the
narrative brings new interpretive strategies to the account, and discards others. Any
re-telling of a story is a response to the interpretive activity of reception and adjoins
the interpretive strategies of the storyteller to the story. To repeat a narrative is to
participate in its construction as the transmitter of the story takes on the function of a
mediator of the account.

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of transmission requires some qualification, in that
there is invariably an infusion of personal experience into the process of
transmission. Narrative does, to some extent, include 'what one has seen,' but this is
more often than not integrated into the transmission of an existing narrative. Whether
transmitting previously constructed narrative, or communicating accounts of a
sensory experience, the process of mediation is influenced by a complex system of
narrative conventions. The communication of personal (sensory) experience also
involves a transmission, not of the content of the account (which originates from the
experience), but of the expression of the account, or the means of narrativization
applied to the experience. Hjelmslev's binary opposition of the linguistic functions of
expression and content separates the composition of narrative from its content,
dividing the method of depicting events from the physical and temporal ordering of
actual events. 25 This demarcates the 'way of telling' from 'what is told,' and this
distinction can be observed in the introductory sequence of JFK through its
construction according to classical conventions of documentary narrative form. In
this case the mode of expression is relayed from previous viewing experiences and
historical precedents of documentary production. The 'way of telling' is transmitted
from other texts partly by the fragments of text that comprise the introduction to
JFK, and by the conventions that are evoked by the classical voiceover. The content,

24 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.76.
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however, bears little resemblance to any content conventionally associated with that mode of expression.

Various accounts of the Kennedy assassination have been transmitted through multiple forms of mediation, and the event has become an archetypal example of transmission of narrative accounts and the social management of myth and history terms of content, the Government account differs vastly from Stone’s, and Garrison: version of events in the documentary introduction. The later scenes of the film... however, demonstrate other modes of representation of the actual. The documentary introduction is followed by a documentary reconstruction of the assassination (which reoccurs later in the film as illustrative images in the courtroom scene, which will be analyzed in the forthcoming section, 7.3).

Following the documentary reconstruction of the assassination, the subjectivity of the film is focalized through the character of Jim Garrison and his experience subsequent to the event. He sees the television report of Kennedy’s death while sitting in a bar, and the viewer is subjectively positioned in order to identify with Garrison’s experience of media reception (see figures 7.1.8-9), with news reports being included as television screen images that are situated within the television frame as ‘a frame within a frame,’ (see fig. 7.1.10), and that occupy the entire frame of the film when Walter Cronkite announces the death of the President (see fig. 7.1.11). The reception experience as portrayed in JFK underlines the significance of response as determined by social experience and affiliation. The character of Guy Bannister, former FBI agent, is portrayed as being elated at Kennedy’s demise, as he proposes a toast in Napoleon’s Bar, and pours his drink on the floor in protest against “all those Cubans that bastard condemned to death and torture.” Garrison, on the other hand, declares that he is “ashamed to be an American” on that day. The catalysts for these varied responses are the snippets of television news that permeate the film and accentuate the part played by the media in establishing the public perception of events. The information broadcast to the public in 1963 concerning the assassination was constructed by television broadcasters. Stone’s contention is that these news reports were a part of an orchestrated ‘cover up’ of the actual events. He includes them as a means of reconstructing the order of information dissemination that occurred at the time:

The whole first 45 minutes of JFK is based on television perceptions of Kennedy’s death at Dealey Plaza. If you look closely at the movie, it’s all television, television, people are reacting. It’s very interesting, because that’s the way we got it back in ‘63. And the rest of the movie is the tearing down of that veil. And the technique of the movie is done in that deconstructionist style – what is reality? Question it. Think for yourself. You never know. Everything is subject to manipulation: your life, country, murder. 26

The inclusion of the televised representation of actuality bears with it an insinuation that the cultural construct of reality is determined by mediated accounts of actual events, and that media can substantially remodel the collective perception of the world. The images in the film progress from a focalization of Jim Garrison’s subjectivity, through a series of television images that increase in size until at the

moment of Kennedy’s death the entire screen is occupied by the television image. The convergence of form and genre is complete at this point. The subjectivity of the film then becomes a collective consciousness, as the television image is used as a device to move through space and time, from one bar room to another, and amongst a variety of viewers. The television image is used in Stone’s film to represent the cultural construct of reality, and is then deconstructed by the fragmentation of images, most notably in the court room scene (analyzed in section 7.3).

Fig. 7.1.8: Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner), watches the television news in a New Orleans bar.

Fig. 7.1.9: Crowds watch the television news in the bar, a representation of Garrison’s subjectivity.
Fig. 7.1.10: Walter Cronkite announces the shooting of the President. The television image is represented within its frame.

Fig. 7.1.11: Walter Cronkite, overcome with emotion at the news of President Kennedy’s death. The image occupies the full screen of Stone’s film.

Fig. 7.1.12: The image cuts to a barman watching television news in another bar. The television frame is used to represent common cultural experience of texts, which is integrated into the dramatic enactment.
Myth Against Myth

Stone's narrative amounts to mediated manipulation of historical images in order to convey a particular version of history. The opposition of a counter-myth against the original emphatic findings of the Warren Commission has taken the form of Stone's 'equal but opposite' retort. Stone's film does not maintain a positivistic approach to history throughout, but complicates the processes whereby historical 'facts' are collected, combined and recorded. The act of narrative construction is overtly displayed in the courtroom scene, as Garrison attempts to piece together an explanation of divergent evidence and eclectic personal testimony into a cohesive, unitary circumcision of the events surrounding the assassination. The evidence does not provide a comprehensive account of actual events, but confronts Garrison (and the viewer), with "a mystery, wrapped in a riddle, inside an enigma." The search for historical proof as portrayed in JFK does not prove to be forthcoming in substantial evidence, but, rather, highlights the inaccessibility of historical data. Witnesses mysteriously die before the trial, others are unwilling to testify, and the notion of historical 'truth' is addressed only in Garrison's courtroom arguments as an attempt to provide a narrative construction of the uncertain conglomerate of actual events and testimony. Here lies the distinction between Stone's film representation, and Garrison's efforts to create empirical proof of political conspiracy. Garrison's concern with having a legal case to be heard, with providing evidence that would convict Clay Shaw, eludes the lack of any conclusive proof of conspiracy, but assumes the validity of the narrative construction of events. Stone, on the other hand, emphasizes the process of constructing of a narrative account. Garrison attempts to prove the existence of a conspiracy, whereas Stone illustrates the impossibility of proving or disproving the conspiratorial claims.

The deconstruction of historical narrative is a prominent theme of JFK. Stone, by not assuming the immediacy of historical reality, but by putting forward an alternative account of history, challenges the way in which this particular piece of history has been socially constructed. Although he clearly adopts the subjectivity of Jim Garrison for the focalization of this account there remains a distinction between the reflexive awareness demonstrated by Stone's insistence on the inability to secure any evidence, and the paranoid search for witnesses and informants that accompanied Garrison's preparation for the trial. Gavin Smith's interview with Stone reveals the extent to which he relies on the character of Garrison as a subjective point of reference:

G.S. I felt that all of the flashbacks and speculative scenarios originate in Garrison's subjective imagination, that we see his visualization of all the accounts given to him by the other characters.

O.S. That's absolutely true. That was the only way I could use some of these speculative facts. I'm not sure that Ruby went to the hospital and got the bullet. Some people say he did, one person saw him, but in the film that was a moment that Garrison was imagining. The tramps also. Garrison was a highly paranoid man by

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27 Transcribed from JFK, spoken by the character, David Ferrie.
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the time this story had unfolded. I thought I had the right to do that, and I thought it
was clearly subjective. 28

The utilization of Garrison’s subjectivity does not, however, absolve Stone from all
responsibility for the inclusion of such tenuous material, factually questionable
assumptions and possibilities pieced together from fragments of hearsay evidence.
Underlying the explicit subjectivity of Garrison there is the implicit subjectivity of
Oliver Stone, and choices of selection, construction of narrative and implications of
conspiracy and paranoia are as much the result of Stone’s decision to include them in
the film as they are Garrison’s, and Marr’s choice to include them in a book. One
cannot simply conflate the subjectivity of filmmaker and novelist, as Nichols does,
by nominating “Stone or Garrison (we cannot always say which),” thereby inferring a
combined subjectivity in the film. 29 It is Stone’s choice to represent the subjectivity
of Garrison, and therefore his creative control over the filmic representation of
Garrison involves an authorial selection of any subjective speculation by Garrison.
The question remains, however, as to what extent JFK is a biography of Jim
Garrison, or a social/political statement by Oliver Stone that uses Garrison as a
character caught up in the paranoia of conspiracy theory. The above citation of
Nichols reminds us that despite Garrison being the prevalent subjectivity of the film,
that Stone decides on the constituents of that subjectivity, and must bear the
responsibility for that representation.

In the search for proof of a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy both
Garrison and Stone are left with precious little to support their theories apart from
one major piece of evidence that contradicts the findings of the Warren Commission.
Another subjectivity, external to the texts of either Stone or Garrison, that of a man
by the name of Zapruder in the crowd that witnessed the assassination that day, the
twenty second of November, 1963, and his film of the Presidential motorcade.
Within the Oliver Stone film, another, embedded text challenges the postmodern
isolation of the image from actuality and reinstates the connection between the film
image and actuality.

7.2 The Evidential Value of the Zapruder Film

Reality in the Image

The inclusion of the Zapruder footage in JFK highlights the complexity of the
relationship between actuality, representation and interpretation in a challenging
conjunction of Stone’s reconstruction of the assassination, with Zapruder’s home
movie that has recorded the moment of the actual shooting. On closer consideration,
the conjunction of apparently similar visual events is, in fact, a fusion of dissimilar
elements. One is a dramatic enactment, the other infused with implications of
evidentiality, being a film that shows us the actions of the authentic bodies at the
historical moment. Reality here remains an uncertainty, as the viewer must attempt to

28 Oliver Stone, interviewed by Gavin Smith, 1994, p.39
29 Nichols, 1994, p.128.
distinguish between the actual and the enacted, or must accept the fusion of realities, the realism of Stone’s meticulous reconstruction, melded with the actuality of the amateur film.

The distinction between the Zapruder film and Stone’s reconstruction that raises the pivotal subject of this thesis. To what extent can audio/visual texts correlate with actuality, and what are the forms of the narrativization to which they are subjected? The Zapruder film raises a number of issues that pertain to this question, particularly in relation to the capacity of the medium to record and replay images of actuality without altering the perception of events. Much has been made of the presence of the camera and its effects (chapter 5.2), with particular reference to the rejection of the ‘reality claims’ of cinema verite (chapter 5.1), but little has been mentioned about the possibilities of the unobtrusive, unobserved personal camera that is capable of capturing unpremeditated and spontaneous images. The Zapruder film is the only film of the assassination that provides images of the impact of the assassin’s bullet. Its value lies in the fact that it is a record of the actual, and not a mediated narrative construction, as is the case with JFK or the television news reports of the event. The issue of actuality in the audio/visual text is epitomized by the inquiry as to the ability of a text to provide evidence concerning an actual occurrence. Do the Zapruder images inform us of the exact constitution of events, or do they provide only an intimation of the physical actuality? The use of these images in JFK has implications for their evidentiality of the actuality image, and obscures its referential function as an indication of the actual event.

The images of the Kennedy assassination encourage a reappraisal of the postmodern approach to reality. Baudrillard offers the consummate relativistic thesis on the relations between reality and the image, claiming that the simulation of reality is indistinguishable from reality itself:

> It is practically impossible to isolate the process of simulation; through the force of inertia of the real which surrounds us, the inverse is also true ... namely, it is now impossible to isolate the process of the real, or to prove the real. *

According to Baudrillard, the simulation and the real are engaged in a reciprocal relation, with simulation being interpreted as reality, and reality being represented through simulation. The simulation, therefore, becomes indistinguishable from reality. The Zapruder film has indeed taken on the designation of reality, as its images are repeatedly referred to as evidence of the trajectory of the bullets fired by the assassin (or assassins, as the case may be). The implications of this unusual piece of film, however, dispute the notion of simulation, as its visual contents, it can be argued, provide evidence of actual events, and therefore indicate a reality. The existence of a celluloid strip with emulsion that has chemically reacted to the light refraction from actual physical bodies gives the image evidential authenticity, boldly challenging Baudrillard’s notion of the unverifiable real.

Film emulsion, then, provides an accurate image of the events that occur as the camera records the action. This fact is, however, also true of enacted film, where the simulation is not of the technological regime, but the simulation of physical bodies

* Baudrillard, 1988a, p.179.
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(actors), assuming identities (roles). In the case of actual events images function as a technological-virtual, with the screen image and audio simulating sensory data. In the case of dramatic enactment or reconstruction, however, there are two strata of virtualization that occur: one, the dramatic simulation of identity and events, which is of the narrative-virtual but in this case occurs prior to the screen image, the other, technological-virtual simulation of sensory data by the moving image and audio of film and television.

It is not the physical correlation of actual bodies with light and film emulsion that provides the appearance of authentic actuality in the image, but the reading of conventions, the cultural transmission of (extra textual) information, and the interpretive strategy adopted by the viewer that determines the reception of the text as it relates to actual events. The determination of the actuality of an image is arrived at through knowing the context of the act of filming, and the public identity and social circumstances of the events, combined with the qualities of the image as an indication of genre. In the case of the Zapruder film, the appearance and identity of President Kennedy is social knowledge that is commonplace, and the status of the Zapruder film as an amateur, 'home movie' is also known to most viewers prior to their experience of JFK. The reading of the sites of simulation in JFK has been partly determined prior to the viewing experience, through cultural awareness of the discourse surrounding the assassination. The Zapruder film, when considered separately from JFK, provides only a technological-virtual simulation, in which the image provides sensory data and there is no dramatic enactment of pro-filmic events. This is not to say that there is no performance, as the presidential entourage is the site of the intersection of social strata, of the president and his wife being on display to the public and acting accordingly, waving and smiling to the crowd. It is not the presence of Zapruder's camera, however, that causes this mode of performance, but a social power relationship. It was this same social power relationship that attracted the presence of the camera, as a tourist with movie camera captured images of the national leader. The context of the filming was not that of fictional film, or even documentary film production, where the actors or subjects are often aware of the camera, but a coincidental convergence of the camera, a public identity and a startling event at one given moment in time.

As such, the film image has a measure of correlation to actual events (in the absence of photographic or digital manipulation). The patterns of color, light and shade on the emulsion tell us something of the actuality that has occurred, providing an indication of the visual data that would have been experienced by an eyewitness. The situation in which the Zapruder film takes on the function of a 'reality' is in the recounting of the event, where those who were physically absent are able to see a virtual simulation of the actual event, to undergo a surrogate visual experience of the assassination, and to form opinions, and make judgements concerning the actual physical bodies that are represented by the film images.

In these circumstances the film image requires a different theoretical approach to that of linguistic signification, with the image in this case providing a view of the 'real world' in an unmediated fashion that challenges postmodern notions of

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31 See the discussion in chapter 3.3 of the three levels of virtualisation.
32 The theoretical implications of the manipulation of images are examined in chapter 8.
representation. The cinematic image is a more vivid likeness than we receive through verbal discourse, has a stronger ‘resemblance’ to the eyewitness experience of ‘being there’ than do written accounts or still photographic images. The cinematic image is more analogous to the actual in terms of sensory perception than other forms of discourse. It provides evidence of the actual event by reproducing the patterns of light refraction as would be perceived by the eye — or, at least, a two-dimensional, ‘framed’ rendition of visual sensory perception. Although there is no ‘guarantee’ of authenticity in any photographic image, the same argument can be applied to visual sensory perception. It is feasible to claim that film images provide a superior means of establishing physical events than does actual sensory data, as the experience of sensory perception occurs at one point in time, and all subsequent reference to that experience requires the function of memory, as ‘re-collection,’ or ‘re-cognition.’ The film image, however, can be re-played (and re-perceived), in order to establish details, and can be slowed to isolate movements. The Zapruder film is capable of revealing more detail of some aspects of the Kennedy assassination than would an eyewitness experience, as it provides a permanent image that can be repeatedly viewed and analyzed.

This enhanced level of correlation between the film image and the actual event is, however, achievable only under unique circumstances: the subjects are unaware of the presence of the camera, the film maker is not directing the action in any way, nor does he have any contact with the subjects, and the chronology of the event is not altered by editing or narrative construction. This is not a subscription to the naïveté of the early views of cinema, as expressed by James Agee when he claimed that cameras were “incapable of recording anything but truth, absolute truth.” The subjective positioning of the Zapruder film is remarkably evident, as the view of the president at the time of the first gunshot is obscured denying a view of the impact of the bullet (which is alleged to have struck him in the head and throat). The ‘truth’ in this case is also obscured as the camera is limited to images that are visible from its position at a given time and space. There is no validity in the expectation that the camera can reveal ‘absolute truth,’ but in comparison to the often clouded or uncertain recollections of an eyewitness it can provide a measure of visual evidence where there is no other physical data. The actual is represented by the image, and the representation is capable of revealing more about the actual than we could know in the absence of a representation. The film image provides additional data that enhances awareness of actual events, but in no way provides absolute truth. It does, however, create a reproduction of the actual event, with actuality being reduced to a two-dimensional and (in the case of the Zapruder film), silent representation. The absence of audio data further highlights the sensory limitations of representation, as the recorded sounds of the actual event may have assisted in determining the number of shots fired. No visual representation is capable of reproducing the sensory data that is experienced by the actual physical presence of a witness, but the validity of a visual representation must be weighed against the sensory experience, which is made less accessible by the passage of time, and the recollection of events which is unreliable. 35

33 The theatrical representation, however, provides a more difficult comparison. See Metz, 1982, p.64. 34 Agee, cited in Winston, 1995, p.137. 35 See Carill, 1999, and Miller, 2000, whose findings confirm the unreliability of event recall.
Fig. 7.2.1: The enhanced and enlarged video release of the Zapruder film, frames 224-228, in which the entourage emerges from behind the road sign which has (according to Garrison), obscured the view of the first shot. Kennedy’s hands are indeed clutching at his throat (top-left of image).  

The visual images of the Zapruder film provide a partial sensory representation, and a single camera position, but this limited sensory data has not been sufficient evidence to prove beyond doubt the exact nature of actual events, in particular of the existence of multiple assassins. On the other hand, it has provided sufficient evidence to cast doubt over the official findings of the Warren Commission. On one hand, the Zapruder film provides images of an inaccessible, bygone actuality, giving some indication as to the events of November 1963, but it provides only an indication of the details of events, revealing only what can be observed from a subjective positioning of the camera. There are no absolute truths in this image, but there is substantial evidence to assist in the construction of a historical account. The obscured camera shot serves as a metonym of the partial actuality of the image, in which the actuality is reproduced, but not in its completeness. The evidential value of the image is never conclusive, neither is it coincident with actuality, but a measure of actuality is transmitted by the image.

It is precisely this venture that Oliver Stone pursues in JFK, with a search for the facts behind the assassination being a major objective of the film. The inclusion of the Zapruder film in the larger text illustrates the difference between the real and the hyperreal as posited by Baudrillard. The massive Hollywood production of JFK dwarfs the diminutive Zapruder film in all aspects excepting one; the actuality of the Zapruder images as opposed to the dramatic reconstruction of Stone’s film. The hyperreality of the ‘larger than life’ Hollywood production style is in complete contrast to the unfinished simplicity of the Zapruder film. Baudrillard uses Disneyland as an example of the hyperreal, with its exaggerated and fantastic architecture and imagery in stark contrast to the bland, featureless concrete of the car park outside. His claim is that the hyperreality of the theme park contrasts with the reality of the ‘outside’ world, that the very extravagance of Disneyland reinforces the existence of an illusory everyday reality.

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Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle. The Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false: it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real. Whence the debility, the infantile degeneration of this imaginary. It is meant to be an infantile world, in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to conceal the fact that real childishness is everywhere. 37

In like manner the contrast between the glamorous Hollywood production style of JFK functions as a heightened imaginary hyperreality, with the 'romantic' Hollywood persona of Kevin Costner far surpassing the reality of an 'ordinary' Jim Garrison. The sophisticated production standards of Stone's film, providing aerial images, detailed reconstruction, high resolution film images and complex montage techniques, is in stark contrast to the raw amateurism of the 'grainy' Zapruder film. The high-budget Hollywood drama plays 'Disneyland' to the 'car park' of the Zapruder film, the contrasting styles highlighting the apparent actuality of the amateur film, with JFK appropriating the realism of the amateur film in order to maximize the verisimilitude in Stone's artifice. In this case the verisimilitude is achieved by the contrast of the narrative-actual, not with the narrative-virtual, but with the undramatized technological-virtual.

Baudrillard maintains that the real is no longer distinguishable from its simulation, and that the contemporary notion of the real is an illusion that reflects a historical notion of the real. He uses "material production" as an illustration of the demise of reality:

What society seeks through production, and over production, is the restoration of the real which escapes it. That is why contemporary "material" production is itself hyperreal. It retains all the features of the whole discourse of traditional production, but is nothing more than its scaled-down refraction (thus the hyperrealists fasten in a striking resemblance a real from which has fled all meaning and charm, all the profundity and energy of representation). Thus, the hyperrealism of simulation is expressed everywhere by the real's striking resemblance to itself. 38

The JFK/Zapruder example, however, throws his conclusions into doubt. There appears to be an assumption in Baudrillard's reasoning that attributes reality to traditional material production, but denies that privilege to contemporary production. In the case of film, there is, as has been discussed above, two sites of simulation: the narrative-actual of the dramatic performance, and the technological-virtual image. The simulation in this case works on both of these levels, with JFK utilizing dramatic performance and technological-virtual image, and the Zapruder film the technological-virtual screen image only. Simulation, then, cannot be considered as a unified concept, as there are proportionate levels and modalities of simulation in film and television. The absence of dramatic performance (itself a variable quantity in most audio/visual images), indicates a minimization of mediation, and a greater

37 Baudrillard, 1988a, p.172.
38 ibid., p.180.
correlation between the actual and the image. The simulation of an actual event through a screen image can be a performance (an actual identity performing for the camera), or an authentic, actual image of an event that is in no way (or minimally), a dramatic enactment. Therefore the non-dramatic technological-virtual image offers a closer correlation to the actual than the dramatically enacted screen image.

Baudrillard’s theory points towards the screen image as a simulation that is indistinguishable from, and is, in effect, a displacement of the ‘traditional’ conception of reality. The Zapruder film in its evidential capacity provides a partial view of the actual, and demands a reappraisal of the relations between the representation and the actual. The representation can, and does, partially verify actuality, but cannot be cited as an empirical certitude when referring to the actual. It is significant to note that in the Jim Garrison investigation it was the Zapruder film that provided the primary evidence of actual events. It is also significant that the legal case failed to prove a conspiracy, but, in fact, cast doubt on the constructed ‘truth’ of the official account. The conclusions that can be drawn from this are conflicting. Firstly, the recording of light on film is in itself holds no guarantee of truth, even when slowed to one twenty fourth of a second intervals. The entirety of the actual cannot be contained in visual images, and, further to this, representation of the actual does not offer any surety of revealing absolute truth. On the other hand, film is capable of ‘containing’ some measure of actuality, as is observable in the extensive analysis of the Zapruder film as evidence of the angle of gunfire. Non-dramatic visual images furnish evidence as to the actual, providing an indication of the actual event by reproducing a representation of sensory data that exceeds the human capacity to recall intricate geometric detail.

The Function of Boundaries in JFK

The application of the Zapruder film in JFK reveals both its evidential value, and its inadequacy as ‘absolute proof.’ The courtroom scene, with the case for the prosecution of Clay Shaw conducted by Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner), presents a hypothetical explanation of the events pertaining to the assassination. Stone combines reconstruction of these hypothetical events with the Zapruder film in order to construct a cohesive visual illustration of the notions that are expressed in the verbal address. It is significant to note the appropriation of documentary techniques in the context of the courtroom scene. The verbal discourse of Garrison’s closing address, when combined with visual images, bears a strong resemblance to the ‘voice of God’ commentary of classical documentary, with one voice presenting a unified and positivistic argument, and directing the visual content. The similarities between Stones use of reconstruction and Corner’s “evidential mode three,” (the illustrative), and the definition of visual illustrative mode of documentary in chapter 5 of this thesis, are cogent. The documentary influence is evident in JFK as the representational modalities in the courtroom scene shift from the dramatic fictional performance of Kevin Costner, to the reconstruction of the assassination location in Dealey Plaza, and the virtual actuality of the Zapruder film. The combination of conventions that Stone employs in this scene is genre specific, and utilizes distinctly

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39 Corner, 1996, p.29, and also see chapter 5.3.
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identifiable shifts in referential modality. It would be inappropriate to designate this scene as a hybridization of documentary and fiction, as there is a clearly defined series of textual 'jolts,' as the conventions of several forms of media are juxtaposed. The Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of machinic assemblage provides an appropriate description of this combination of divergent images accurately. Their depiction of the book as an assemblage equally applies to the extra-textual and intertextual connections made by film and television texts:

As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. A book exists only through the outside and on the outside. A book itself is a little machine. 46

The 'outside' of the JFK machine does converge with other multiplicities: those of documentary production conventions, of courtroom drama films and novels, of subversive political rhetoric, and of historical debate, among the countless other connections that are established by Stone's assemblage of divergent elements in the text. The aims of this analysis are indeed to ascertain "what it [the text] functions with," and not to go down the hermeneutic path of interpretation, but the issue of interpretation cannot be so simply discarded as to proclaim, without justification, that "we will not look for anything to understand in it." The reading or viewing of an audio/visual text requires an understanding of the mechanism of understanding, a meta-cognition of the text and its extra-textual functions that enables the viewer to engage with the text and establish internal and external connections from the text. The emphasis in this analysis is on the interpretive strategies that are applied to the text, rather than the interpretation itself, the experience of the reading in conjunction with the content of the text and the cultural construct of reality. For it is in the experience of the viewer that extra-textual connectivity occurs.

The connections that are established during the reading of any text, be it television, film, print or photograph, are inseparable from the network of existing associations, of conventions and practices that have become entrenched in a culture. Reference has many modalities, and the experience of the viewer is affected by the textual cues that indicate preferred pathways of interpretation, or connectivity. Each shift in referential modality in JFK triggers a change of interpretive function, as the viewer is led through a fragmented aggregation of referential signification. The boundaries between fictional and documentary film are breached on several occasions as the courtroom scene transforms from dramatic reenactment, to reconstruction, and to the referential actuality of the Zappruder film. The breaches of these boundaries do not take the form of an uncertain vacillation between regimes of referentiality, but the contrasting modalities are clearly indicated.

The viewer does not experience a 'blurring' of boundaries, but is placed in three specific interpretive positions: firstly, the reconstruction of historical events that is

46 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.4.
achieved through the use of film footage and television news reports from the Kennedy era. Cultural and technical indicators define the temporal perimeter of the diegesis, with clothing, speech, technology and architecture, combined with the black and white television images and amateur home movies resonating with the culture of early nineteen sixties America. The apparent authenticity of the film is enhanced by its adherence to the conventions of the era, not least of these being the voice over commentary of the introductory montage that adopts the authoritarian tone of expositional documentary, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter. The use of this technique transports the viewer to the Kennedy era as an observer at the depicted time, imitating the textual position of the era, but also invokes interpretive strategies that are associated with the utopian naiveté of North American culture of the late 'fifties and early 'sixties. The viewer is drawn into a receptive position where the film provides a narrative account of the actual, and functions to all intents and purposes as a documentary film. Its substance is reality, and the archival images used to represent the events of the era are the authentic images of the period. During the introduction to JFK the audience is in no doubt that the film they are viewing deals with actuality, albeit a mediated rendition of actuality. This frame of interpretation relies on conventions of genre and time period to suggest the receptive conditions and circumstances of the day, and to encourage a comparison between media reception in that time and the present.

Fig. 7.2.2: The television images of the Kennedy era
Fig 7.2.3: Uncertainty as to the ‘reality’ of the image – is it a reconstruction or an actual, indexical image?

Fig 7.2.4: Home movie or reconstruction? A viewer assumes the former, judging by the characteristics of the image.

The second frame of interpretation follows on from the first, and it occurs when the Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination is included in Stone’s audio/visual reconstruction of the Kennedy assassination. The interpretive implication of the image ceases to be that of an argument about the event, and takes on evidential significance. The actual images of the Zapruder film are the most immediate account that any non-witness to the assassination can experience (being an unmediated amateur film that was not constructed with any particular purpose). It creates a subjective position for the viewer, but only in the same sense that all camera images position the viewer, at a location in time and space. The Zapruder film is not a fiction, in fact it has minimal narrative content, but it is a recorded image of an actual event, with no edits, no commentary, no opinion expressed by the filmmaker, but a chance encounter of a man with a camera filming a historical occasion.

The image does not completely correspond to the actual event, but provides some sensory evidence as to the physical actuality. This frame of interpretation is partial evidentiality, where the image provides an indication as to the physical event, but
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does not equal the event. A viewer cannot observe the Zapruder film at 24 frames a second and draw any firm conclusion, but arguments concerning the event can be based on analyses of the images. A narrative is constructed around the images of the actual events, with meaning being constructed after the event using images as evidence. This is similar to the interpretive mode as affected by Cinema Vérité and Direct Cinema, where the viewer is encouraged to perceive screen images as actuality.

The third interpretive frame is one that is usually associated with historical fiction film, and its inclusion in a film is often cited as a definitive reason as to why it is, or is not defined as a documentary film. It arises from the enactment of actual events and characters in dramatic reconstruction. The production conventions of fictional film can be applied to the representation of actual events in order to recreate scenarios and approximations of historical persons. The viewer is asked to enter into the same 'suspension of disbelief' that is experienced in fictional reception, where the body of the actor is substituted for the actual body. Although all other aspects of the reconstruction may be authentic, the location, the chronological order of events, and the detail of physical actions, it is the identities of the persons that appear in the film that determine our perception of the representation as authentic or not.

From the earliest days of documentary it has been considered acceptable to repeat, or 'stage' events on the condition that they are performed by the authentic subject of the documentary. Nanook of the North (Robert Flaherty, 1927) features an igloo that was constructed as half a dome, in order to admit daylight for the sake of filming 'authentic' interior shots of the Eskimo with his family. A seal hunt was artificially prolonged by Flaherty's pretense to misunderstand the Eskimos' request for him to shoot the bull seal with his rifle. During the filming of Nanook of the North portions of raw footage were viewed, and 'if it seemed unsatisfactory, or if he wanted an additional shot from another angle or distance, the action was repeated.' 41 If the request to "do it one more time for the camera" were to disannul authenticity, there would be few authentic documentaries in existence. It is the appearance of authentic personal identity as opposed to dramatic enactment of an identity that signals to the viewer whether the film should be interpreted as 'truth' or 'fiction.' The film JFK is relegated to the realm of fiction the moment Kevin Costner appears in the role of Jim Garrison. Other films defined as documentary, however, also contain reconstruction of 'real' identities. In the case of reconstruction, and reenactment, the viewer passes momentarily from a literal reception of the image as reality, to the interpretation of the image as a dramatic and fictional representation, that, despite its attempts to represent actuality cannot substitute for the authenticity of identity. Dramatic enactment, however, can function as a tool that assists in putting forward a documentary argument.

There is no blurring of boundaries here, but a crossing from one territory to another, and a return. Rather than confusion between, or a blending of forms, it is a distinct transition from one interpretive frame to another, as the viewer alternates from a fictional reading that requires 'suspension of disbelief,' to perceptions of the real world in evidential documentary images. The documentary film can pass through moments of fiction, and return, just as JFK passes into documentary territories, and

41 Barnouw, 1974, p.38.
returns to historical fiction. The notion of permeable boundaries allows for inclusion of dramatic technique, but in no way challenges the status of documentary as actuality. Even with the use of evidential images of the actual a narrative construction is required to make some sense of the audio and visual data. Screen image and sounds are experienced by the viewer as disconnected from any physical context and it is the narrative that provides explanation of the contextual aspects of setting, extra-textual occurrences and cultural influences. No documentary film manages to depict the actual world without some measure of narrative construction.

The use of dramatic reconstruction does not amount to an attempt to 'lie' to the viewer, but to put forward the argument of the filmmaker concerning 'real world' events, or to enhance the illustration of a historical character that is deceased or somehow unavailable to the camera. Disguising the identity of the actor, with facial features being avoided can also bolster suspension of disbelief and replaced by generic characteristics that may be applicable to the body of the absent subject. The techniques used to represent the absent body provide a cue for the viewer to enter another frame of interpretation which is similar to that used in the reception of historical fiction film, such as Schindler's List. Fictional techniques of representation need not be thought of as isolated from the actual world, but can bring the viewer to a more complete understanding of historical actuality. The use of dramatic representation does not adhere to the ideals of observational documentary, but enables the posing of arguments about historical actuality, which, as has been discussed in the previous section, is subject to multiple narrativization and interpretations. Postmodern documentary filmmakers are generally aware of the processes of narrativization, and that documentary film, according to Nichols, amounts to a narrative construction of evidence and argument put forward by a filmmaker. There is, however, an expectation that the film should relate to the actual, that its subjects should exist in the 'real world' and that any arguments should require change in, or make comment on the 'real world'. The issue here is not whether documentary is 'reality' but how documentary represents the real. JFK, on the other hand, is an assemblage of dramatic reenactment, documentary reconstruction and actuality footage that oscillates between forms and genres. The combination of referential modes brings together the rhetoric of biographical dramatic narrative with the evidential persuasion of the Zapruder film, placing the documentary reconstruction of the Dealey Plaza assassination between these two extremes, and thereby obfuscating the speculative content of the reconstructed scenes. The courtroom setting provides an appropriate scenario for Stone's narrative construction, as the persuasive documentary reconstruction presents a hypothetical case that disallows all other possibilities, providing an occlusive explication of the evidence.

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42 See Eitzen 1995, pp. 81-102. Eitzen suggests that the ability of a film to 'lie' to its audience provides a means of defining the documentary genre.
7.3 The Permeation of Genre Boundaries in JFK

Boundaries, Blurred or Permeable?

The Zappruder film is depicted in JFK as a source of evidence which provides an indication as to actual events. This evidential appropriation of the Zappruder film is, however, synthesized into the several genres that are converged into the text of JFK. To consider the Zappruder film as a text distinct from JFK is to overlook the narrative construction that ties the Zappruder images to the surrounding portrayal of events that Stone constructs. The courtroom scene in JFK is suitably symbolic representation of the assassination debate, with implications that extend beyond the boundaries of the text and, indeed, the actual court case. Its references extend to the representational modes and technologies of Western cultures (as is evident in the distinct technologies observable in the television news footage, the Zappruder images, and the high resolution of the dramatic enactment), to the American people and their trust in Governmental authority and notions of social justice. Stone points towards the assassination as being symptomatic of significant alterations in relations between the social fields of representation and the activities of the state. 44 The Zappruder film, as the primary evidence for the conspiracy theory, functions as a Deleuze-Guattarian machinic assemblage, bridging the gap between genres and bringing about conjunctions between the state apparatus, cultural and representational fields. Stone's appropriation of the Zappruder film adds a layer of mediation by encompassing the actuality of the images within an entertainment medium. The Hollywood production and distribution machine brings the Zappruder film into the realm of popular culture, a move which brings about alteration in the socio-political articulations of the Zappruder film. The Kennedy assassination can no longer be limited to a political debate around the ethics of government and the machinations of intelligence organizations in the U.S.A., but the popularization of the film JFK has moved the debate into areas that exceed the limitations of its genre. 45 This calls for a new interpretation of the notion of genre, and the means of its definition. The Stone film is not documentary, but neither is it entirely fiction. In this section the boundaries between genres as found in the convergence of images in JFK will be analyzed and an alternative approach to boundaries will be posited.

In order to conceive of the breaches of boundaries between genre it is necessary to examine the notion of boundaries, and the universally applicable characteristics of borderlines and territories. There is no hard and fast point at which a territory ceases to be, and another territory comes into existence unless a boundary is constructed through consensus between social groups and communities. In other words, the notion of a boundary is a point of agreement where a culture or cultures accept that a change from one territory to another has occurred. This concept applies equally to boundaries of all sorts: the boundary between man and nature, states and nations, cities, villages, private ownership of land, and all systems of categorization. Taxonomy of animal and plant species, the distinctions between gender, class and race, are subject to an agreement as to where the specific point of transition occurs.

Documentary Reconstruction in JFK

The notion of the blurring of boundaries and of nomadology theorizes a continuum, where division or territorialization is an arbitrary and intrusive imposition on commonality. Deleuze and Guattari posit a nomadology which is modeled on the movement of nomadic peoples across "smooth spaces" such as deserts or oceans. This is opposed to the delimitation of smooth space into "striated spaces," for which they attribute responsibility to the State. Such smooth spaces exist, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "between two striated spaces: that of the forest with its gravitational verticals, and that of agriculture, with its grids and generalized parallels," and nomads are in conflict with the delimitation of striated spaces. But this view, particularly in its attribution of delimitation to the state apparatus, does not take into account the validity of naturally occurring delimitation. Using international boundaries as an example, there are often sound reasons for the declaration of a boundary or border. The nomadic model suggests that ethnicity is not determined by the barriers that are erected between peoples and communities, but this notion is contradicted by the case of naturally occurring barriers to trade or travel, such as rivers, oceans, and mountain ranges. Borders are, in such cases, mere reflections of the actual conditions of the terrain. The continuum is a valid view of the constancy of natural elements, and of ethnic continuity across terrain and breaks in terrain, but to disregard the features of earth and ocean that separate territories is to elude the obvious. Natural boundaries exist, and distinctions between territories are in many cases actual and observable physical barriers that endure, regardless of inter-cultural consensus. This argument can be extended to encompass the realm of film and television genres. The differences between groups of texts are not only a consensus, but reflect actual conditions of narrative form, reference and interpretation.

Genre boundaries are subject to permeation as fragments of texts pass beyond their territorial confines, as the transition between portions of a text may intersect and cross over boundaries, but not dissolve or blur them. Deleuze and Guattari provide models of such interaction between groupings as rhizomic multiplicities and machinic assemblages. Vectors of thought that are unconstrained by semiotic systems and social conventions disregard delineation of territory, undergoing a process of deterritorialization, and become lines of flight which encounter multiple territories as they proceed. Boundaries exist as firm, but permeable divisions, which can be intersected by the line of flight as it passes over the socially determined world. Deleuze and Guattari suggest a conjunction of lines superimposed over the territorialized world:

One is no longer anything more than an abstract line, or a piece in a puzzle that is itself abstract. It is by conjugating, by continuing with other lines, other pieces, that one makes a world that can overlay the first one, like a transparency.

This model allows for the passage across boundaries without signaling their dissolution. The boundaries remain intact (although not permanently fixed), as the line of flight passes over, and enters into multiple territories of genre.

⁴⁷ ibid., p.384.
⁴⁸ ibid., p.280.
The notion of ‘blurred boundaries’ originates from a theoretical reaction against the classical conception of fixed, impermeable boundaries, which was denounced in a postmodern reaction against all things empirical. Rather than a blurring of boundaries, I suggest that boundaries are intermittently breached by quantifiable segments of texts that deterritorialize by permeating boundaries. Film and television genre can be defined as a multiplicity of texts that share certain qualities in common. Deleuze and Guattari are insistent that a multiplicity does not take an indefinite form, but that it consists of a determinable arrangement that is defined according to its contents at any given time:

[A] multiplicity is defined not by the elements that compose it in extension, not by the characteristics that compose it in comprehension, but by the lines and dimensions it encompasses in “intension.” If you change dimensions, if you add or subtract one, you change multiplicity. Thus there is a borderline for each multiplicity, it is in no way a center, but rather the enveloping line or farthest dimension, as a function of which it is possible to count the others, all those lines or dimensions constitute the pack at any given moment (beyond the borderline, the multiplicity changes nature).

This is not to suggest that these boundaries are fixed and impermeable. Rather, they are constantly shifting as newly emerging texts challenge the orthodoxy of genre boundaries. Borderlines of different multiplicities can also overlap, therefore allowing for films that are classified as ‘documentaries’ or hybrid forms. These texts are comprised of conventions stemming from both fiction and documentary. The definition of boundaries, however, does not become ‘blurred’ once the existence of an overlap is conceded. The “farthest dimension” of a multiplicity is a definite limit, beyond which a film ceases to be a component of the genre. The boundaries, then, should be thought of as the ‘outer limit’ of documentary, and the ‘outer limit’ of fiction, rather than the dividing line between the two genres. There are two main challenges to the traditional ‘dividing line’ notion of boundaries. One is the text that maintains a constant mode of reference to the real but inhabits the overlap, exhibiting characteristics of both genres; the other is the text that traverses the boundary, moving between genre. It is the nature of these two challenges that have been christened the blurring of boundaries. Nichols ⁵⁰ identifies reality television, fictional/documentary hybrids and specific amateur video such as the images of the Rodney King beating to illustrate the notion of blurred boundaries. The difficulty here lies in the tendency to consider an audio/visual text as a whole, rather than as an assemblage of segments. The boundary between fiction and documentary does not exist as an obstacle between texts, but, rather, between moments within texts, and in the mutable relations between the viewer and textual depiction of reality. The viewer undergoes alterations of interpretive activity that occur between moments of a text, and manifest as lines of flight that traverse between texts, forms and genre.

The Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of Strata can also be applied to the genre, as a particular formation of multiplicity that delimits. A stratum involves the gathering

⁵⁰ ibid., p. 245.
together of elements into a unified composition. The unified composition is, however, comprised of divergent parts that are combined around a unifying principle:

A given stratum retains a unity of composition in spite of the diversity of its organization and development. The unity of composition relates to formal traits common to all of the forms or codes of a stratum, and to substantial elements, materials common to all of the stratum's substances or milieus. 51

Genres are identified by the commonality of certain qualities that enable the classification of a grouping around those qualities. Strata are separated one from the other by tangible boundaries, but are not entirely detached. The combination of elements from contrasting strata necessitates a model for the perforation of the inter-strata boundaries, and for the cohabitation of elements of multiple strata in a unitary assemblage.

The machinic assemblage as defined by Deleuze and Guattari accounts for the multiple strata from which JFK draws its material, and refers to actuality through its suggested interpretive connections. By drawing from several strata, those of documentary film, of legal argument, of fictional film, of the political 'reality' of the assassination and the findings of the Warren Commission, JFK embodies the heterogeneous characteristics of an assemblage:

An assemblage is necessary for the relations between two strata to come about. And an assemblage is necessary for organisms to be caught within and permeated by a social field that utilizes them... Assemblages are necessary for states of force and regimes of signs to intertwine their relations. Assemblages are necessary in order for the unity of composition enveloped in a stratum, the relations between a given stratum and the others, and the relation between these strata and the plane of consistency to be organized rather than random. 52

The permeable boundaries of the text are reflected by the permeability of other boundaries between strata: of genre boundaries, of boundaries between media forms (especially evident in the use of television images and home movie footage in a Hollywood feature film), and of the delineation between socio-political 'reality' and film representation. The machinic assemblage combines elements of several strata into components of a machine that penetrates boundaries and forms through connections that surpass territorial limitations. JFK combines and conjoins with the political, the aesthetic, the sub-cultures of subversive conspiracy theorists and the mainstream popular entertainment culture of the Western world. There can be no arbitrary separation of the text from the actual, as JFK's impact has transcended the territorial boundaries of entertainment cinema. The articulation of reality with the popular Hollywood film in JFK has brought about a change of cultural consciousness, particularly in relation to the representation of the political sphere. The strata has been ruptured and (re)connected with unfamiliar territories that have been, in turn, effected by the flow across and through the boundaries. In Deleuzo-Guattarian terms the text can be modelized as inhabiting strata, and as a machinic

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51 Deleuze and Guattari, op.cit., p.502.
52 ibid., p.71.
assemblage that draws its constituent parts from several strata, or, alternatively, the model of rhizome could be applied. The rhizome shoots out from the ordered and structural delimitation of the arboreal system, and produces lines that run between assemblages. It embodies the state of becoming, of continual transition that is observable in the evolution of genre. The rigid delimitation of the strata model does not allow for the transitional state of genres, as the flows between genre and form are not always adequately expressed as the (Hjelmslevian) form and substance of content and the form and substance of expression:

... The strata set up everywhere double articulations animated by movements: form and substances of content and form and substances of expression constituting segmentary multiplicities with relations that are determinable in every case. 53

Genres are in many cases not clearly definable, as are strata, but are more appropriately defined by the model of rhizome, as their multiplicity reflects that of the pack (being effectively a 'pack of texts,') and the lack of any defining or central point reveals an arrangement that "has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing." 54 To add to a genre is to change its characteristics, as each text manifests qualities that modify the definition of that genre. The many connections that are formed with other texts, and other realities external to the genre bear out the requirement that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be." 55 The genre, then, as a flexible and transitional multiplicity, cannot be imprisoned by the rigid limitations of strata, but embark on a continual nomadic transition.

The function of mixed genre in JFK is to constitute an aggregation of production conventions and modes of address that combine within the text and provide connections of form with expression. The television images and actuality footage confound any determination of a singular genre for the text, and problematize the distinction between the formal characteristics of film and television. It is, however, this very obfuscation of the determination of form and genre that gives JFK its powerful blend of historical authenticity and narrative cohesion. The conjunction of Hollywood entertainment and political rhetoric attracted an enraged reaction from critics and academics, who mercilessly castigated Stone for his construction of an oppositional version of American history. Walkowitz does not exaggerate when he claims that:

There may be little Stone can do to counter the prevalent public view that he is a crank and a historical misanthrope. He has become a standing joke for editorial writers and cultural pundits. 56

The extreme reaction to Stone's use of classical documentary technique is seemingly a response given in outrage at an individual filmmaker's appropriation of an

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53 ibid., p.72.
54 ibid., p. 8.
55 ibid., p.7.
institutional mode of documentary production, and his rhetorical utilization of classical convention as a means of bolstering the legitimacy of a subversive narrative. Oliver Stone has enraged historians, journalists and politicians with his combination of documentary and dramatic conventions. A large part of the frustration evident in the American reception of the film is the inability to classify the text. If the film could be defined as documentary, it could be comfortably relegated to the dry archival realm of political commentary, if a fiction, it could be discounted as a hypothetical or imaginary scenario, but the curious, fragmented combination of fictional and non-fictional genres disallows either response. Its popularity as a Hollywood narrative has assured it a broad public audience, and Stone's utilization of documentary convention lends authenticity to its rhetoric. The breaching of boundaries of form and genre in JFK has provided a challenge for the viewing public and for film critics, in that the text, as a machinic assemblage, defies definition as either fact or fiction, but boldly inhabits both territories by breaching the boundaries of form and genre within a single text.

Characteristics of the Image as Indication of Genre Boundaries

In order to observe and analyze the function of genre boundaries in JFK, the moments of their permeation must be identified, and the affect on interpretations of the text should be anticipated. The introductory segment, which was discussed in the first section of this chapter, prefigures the later conjunction of generic styles. The initial use of home movies, television footage and archival film signals a combination of interpretive frames that will challenge conventional interpretive strategies (analyzed in section 7.1).

The court room scene, however, provides the most complex combination of genres as the Zapruder film provides a powerful connection between the actual event and the representation. All visual components of this scene, with the exception of the Zapruder film, are dramatically enacted, but the black and white images and the fragmented construction of images around the oration of Jim Garrison (Kevin Costner), gives the impression of documentary presentation. The Dealey Plaza reconstruction also combines the conventions of several genres in a carefully constructed layering of images that implies reality. Stone describes the process of creating the illusion of contrasting forms of media as being the result of conditions at the time of filming:

JFK was very fractured because the nature of the shoot was that we were covering ourselves. You have a situation where you have Dealey Plaza for ten days ... we had four cameras, sometimes we would assign different stocks to each camera and shoot one way to get the coverage we needed, and then we'd reestablish the other way. ... It wasn't a question of reversing so much as sectors. Think of Dealey Plaza as 360 degrees, as opposed to flips, because the sun dictates where you're going to shoot. 97

The disparity between images, then, was an intentional device, in which the event was represented with reference to divergent genre through the use of different camera

97 Stone, in Smith, 1994, p.38.
formats and film stock. The variety of intertextual sources (television news, and super 8 film), was matched by the filming in multiple formats of the reconstruction. This heterogeneity of images and styles creates an impression of multiple points of view, and insinuates a corresponding variation of interpretive strategies. The images differ in content, but it is the expectation that the viewer applies to the visual qualities of the image that produce the 'false reality' that so enraged many journalists and historians.

Fig. 7.3.5: More super8 film of non-speculative reconstruction. Color is used where the images do not represent Garrison's conjectural scenario.

Fig. 7.3.6: A (speculative) assassin's point of view.

Fig. 7.3.7: The reconstruction includes the presence of the camera, implying the forthcoming Zapruder images.

Fig. 7.3.8: The Zapruder film is included in its enlarged format.

Fig. 7.3.9: Stone employs a further enlargement of the image, deconstructing the appearance of actuality.

Fig. 7.3.10: The blurred Zapruder image is imitated in Stone's reconstruction through the use of camera movement.
Fig. 7.3.11: The blurred images are juxtaposed with high-resolution 35mm. film images.

Fig. 7.3.12: The enlarged Zapruder frame 313, which depicts the fatal shot, is included as a full screen image in JFK.

Fig. 7.3.13: After the shooting the Zapruder images are rapidly inter-cut with reconstruction images, high resolution color images ...

Fig. 7.3.14: ... grainy black and white images.

Fig. 7.3.15: ... and low resolution super 8 color film.

Fig. 7.3.16: The historical texture of the images is maintained.
The high-resolution images of the court room scene are contrasted with the black and white reconstruction of the Dealey Plaza assassination (see Figs. 7.3.1-3). The use of reconstruction images over the narration of Garrison is clearly a utilization of the visual illustrative mode of documentary (chapter 5.2), in which the image depicts the content of the oration. The initial use of these images in this context is not, however, a simple illustrative accompaniment to the speech, but the contrasting forms of image that Stone juxtaposes also imply interpretive frames. The speculative argument of Garrison that the assassination was carried out by several 'shooters,' is consistently represented in black and white imagery, and the color images are indicative of factuality (in the case of the Zapruder images), or of a generic image that has no reference to specific events, but contributes to the overall depiction of the setting. The black and white images convey the harsh realism of cinema verite, in a similar fashion to the Ghetto scene in Schindler's List, but the utilization of rapid editing highlights the constructed fragmentation of the narrative. The harsh realism of cinema verite images is dislocated by the multiple perspectives of an indeterminate number of 'shooters' as they prepare their weapons and take aim. The rapid editing of images remains a feature of the courtroom scene throughout, as several hundred visual perspectives are flashed before the eyes of the viewer in the space of approximately five minutes. The grainy black and white is juxtaposed with the blurred color images of the super 8 format (Fig. 7.3.4), which prefigures the inclusion of the Zapruder film (Fig. 7.3.8-9). The use of black and white images to represent the subjectivity of the (speculative) assassins is underlined by several images which depict the crosshairs of a telescopic sight as they take aim at the President (Fig. 7.3.6).

The combination of images to this point is entirely comprised of documentary reconstruction, in which the contrasting format of the images gives the impression of a color 'reality,' which is contrasted with the black and white 'virtual'. The narrative virtual is also observable in the contrast between the reconstruction images and the courtroom, which, at this point of the narrative, becomes the narrative-actual. This relation is complicated, however, when the Zapruder film is observed (Figs. 7.3.8-9). The enlarged enhancement of the film has reduced the resolution of the images to a point where the features of the President's face are almost indistinguishable, yet this
image is the nexus of actuality with the representation, and provides the closest relation of the image to the actual. The indistinct image is further degraded when Stone cuts to a close-up framing of the President’s head for the moments of the final impact of the bullet. The super 8 image, when enlarged to this extent, loses any clarity, and becomes an imprecise amorphous approximation of the human form (Fig. 7.3.12). Actuality in the image has been reduced to the form that least resembles actuality, and yet which is the penultimate conjunction of actual events with the film image. This image, in its context in JFK, provides a persuasive argument against accuracy of reproduction as an indication of actuality in visual images. The similarity of the image to the actual event is reduced to its most minimal congruence, yet the social knowledge that this image is not a dramatic performance, or a documentary reconstruction, diffuses any notion of realism through resemblance, or correspondence.

The moment of impact is the climactic narrative event, as Garrison’s verbal representation is matched by the Zapruder images, and the repeated explosion of blood, and the movement of Kennedy’s head “back and to the left ... back and to the left ... back and to the left,” is replayed several times in order to emphasize the direction of the gunfire. Not only is the Zapruder image used as the primary evidence for Garrison’s legal case, but also the consummate moment of Stone’s film. Of the millions of dollars invested in the reconstruction of the assassination, and the availability of special effects technology that could conceivably have provided a far superior representation of the event, it is the almost indistinguishable Zapruder image that is used at the moment of Kennedy’s death. At this point JFK is functioning as a documentary film, positing an argument with evidence concerning the ‘real’ world, but the documentary value of the argument and evidence is embedded within a dramatic enactment, as the viewer is reminded when the courtroom once again becomes the scene of the visual action.

The depictions of the aftermath of the assassination are once again inter-cut with Costner’s enactment within the court. The contrast of formats and conventions are continued, with the genres being imitated in the image construction techniques applied to each format. Figure 7.3.13 is a conventional Hollywood high-resolution image, with smooth camera movement and clear delineation of foreground (Limousine), mid-ground (the security officer in the black suit), and background (buildings). The black and white images are not as meticulously constructed, usually conforming to documentary framing conventions. The event is of greater significance in the black and white images, with a two-dimensional overhead view of the presidential entourage proceeding along Dealey Plaza combined with medium close-up images of gunmen packing their weapons and escaping the scene of the assassination. The super 8 color images are also constructed in contrariety to Hollywood conventions, maintaining a wide-angle view, without framing a specific subject, but adopting the wandering, almost random movement of an amateur camera operator.

The resemblance to documentary is not limited to the form and genre of specific image sequences, but is also reflected in the inter-cutting of interview material with Garrison’s court summation. On several occasions Stone cuts to brief segments of

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reconstructed interview commenting on the presence of ‘extra bodies’ in windows, and police encounters with secret service agents that could not be explained or verified. This utilization of verbal-testimonial and visual-direct documentary modes, although maintaining the status of documentary reconstruction, interrupts the dramatic enactment of the courtroom scene by breaking the continuity of Garrison’s oration. For the duration of these edits there is no connection between the court room enactment and the audio/visual representation. Interview reconstruction is included as a means of enhancing the argument of JFK as a statement of ‘historical fact,’ contravening the classical Hollywood conventions of continuity editing and causality. The interview images imply an argument that exists alongside that of Garrison’s legal case, that of the filmmaker who refers to documentary convention in order to persuade the viewer as to the authenticity of the argument, rather than the image.

The recourse to ‘amateur’ and documentary styles and conventions produces a disorienting combination of interpretive strategies for the viewer. Each of the genres implies a specific relation between the image and actuality, and when they are conjoined in rapid succession the meaning of the overall text is profoundly effected. The convergence of form and genre in JFK brings images that indicate actuality into immediate proximity with images that infer dramatic enactment, particularly when inclusive of the Hollywood ‘star,’ Kevin Costner. The permeation of genre boundaries that occurs as the text migrates from genre to genre calls for a multiple interpretive strategy that integrates several sub-genres of documentary with the ‘reality’ of the Zapruder film, and Hollywood dramatic reenactment.

The hierarchy of images established in JFK can be defined as an opposition of visual resemblance and the use of genre convention to give the impression of actuality. The high-resolution images of the dramatic enactment bear a far stronger resemblance to actuality than do the documentary conventions and the enlarged image of Kennedy from the Zapruder film. This image bears the least visual resemblance to actuality, but has the greatest significance in the text as an actuality image. The image which is the least constructed signifies the maximum correlation of actuality to the image. The interpretive strategies implied by the grainy black and white documentary images also employ the reduced resemblance between the image and actuality as a device to signify actuality. The conventions of the different genres are, therefore, measurable by their level of visual exactitude and the level of arrangement and construction evident in the image. The immediate spontaneity and low image resolution of the Zapruder film is visually imprecise, and this is exaggerated by Stone’s enlargement of the image. The documentary reconstruction minimizes considered composition of elements in the frame, and the black and white representation is in itself a reduction of the correlation between actuality and the screen image. The narrativization of actuality in JFK engages in degrees of realism through the minimization of image quality and composition. Realism, in this case, is not defined by a resemblance to actuality, but a convention of visual representation that implies an interpretation of the image as depicting actual events.

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41 See chapter 5.2.
42 See chapter 6.3.
Documentary Reconstruction in JFK

The interpretive strategies which, in a conventionally constructed film, would be reserved for each genre in isolation are utilized in rapid succession. Journalistic response to the film is critical of Stone's editing technique, and insinuates that the construction of the text is capable of confusing the interpretive abilities of the viewer. Vogel berates the rapid editing of JFK as a coercive tactic that overpowers the viewer:

Due to the extremely brief duration of most of the shots – a second or less – the image is frequently withdrawn (more accurately, yanked away) from us before it has been fully absorbed or understood. Instead, it is instantaneously supplanted by another, initially often equally mystifying image. Quite a few of the images indeed remain opaque, decipherable perhaps only on a second viewing. ... The outcome of a visual-verbal attack of such magnitude, intensity, and particularly duration is an overwhelmed, shackled spectator, compulsively, helplessly searching for connections, for clarity, for comprehension. ... The tempo of the work precludes mature reflection or comprehension, limiting retention and absorption as well.

This response to the film, however, does not account for any variability in viewer interpretive ability. The discussion of the variable competence of viewers in chapter 3.2 highlights the differing degrees of interpretive ability that a mass audience brings to a text. Vogel's assumption is that all viewers will be confounded by the succession of images, and that the text is capable of "limiting retention and absorption" or that it "precludes mature reflection". The viewer is certainly challenged by the permeation of genre boundaries evident in the images, but this does not bring about a universal response, but, rather, a heterogeneous variability of reactions. The conjunction of a multiplicity of images and genre styles with heterogeneity of interpretive responses cannot be limited to a singular reaction. The significant factor in the response to JFK is the extent to which the viewer accepts the argument of the text as pertaining to actuality, and the referentiality of the images, as against an interpretation that draws no connection between the text and actuality, but apprehends the images as a purely fictional narrative that is limited to the field of entertainment. There are, of course, a variety of responses between these extremes, and any belief in the text as being factual, or fictional, comes from the qualities of the images themselves, in conjunction with the multiple interpretive strategies that are implied by the conventions of genre.

The permeation of genre boundaries in JFK draws attention to the way in which images interact within a text, and the characteristics of the text that encourage particular interpretive frames. This connection between the text and the viewer, however, is enhanced by the direct connection of the image to actuality, and it is this relation of the text that challenges postmodern notions of the image, in particular Foucault's notion of the exteriority of discourse and the Baudrillardian theory of simulation and reality. The forthcoming section examines the relations of the text with actuality, its function as reference or correspondence, and the effect that this relation has on the interpretation of the text.

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Vogel, 1992, p.579
7.4 The Use of Actuality Footage: Beyond Verisimilitude

The previous sections have provided an outline of the interpretive frames and the textual characteristics of JFK, defining the transition between genre groupings and images. In this section the relations of the text and actuality will be considered, with particular attention to the partial correspondence of the image to events, and the implications this has on theoretical approaches to the interpretation of texts.

The Text as Actuality

Stone's JFK highlights the connections that exist between actuality, cultural constructs and textual representations. JFK, as discourse, interacts with socio-political realities, and has intensified an already existing debate as to the integrity of government intelligence agencies. The film represents a social movement of considerable proportions, as Medhurst observes:

Thirty years after John Kennedy's assassination, more than half of the American public disbelieves the conclusions of the Warren Commission. In those three decades, Americans have experienced wars, riots, recessions, more assassination attempts, the dissolution of the traditional family, the breakdown of traditional mores, and epidemic of drugs and violence, and a loss of respect for and trust in government leaders. Most centrally, many Americans no longer believe that they control their own lives. 45

There is little doubting the fact that this film is interwoven with a complex tapestry of discursive formations, governmental, institutional, fascistic, sub-cultural and revolutionary modes of enunciation finding expression in the text. American President George Bush passed the 'President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992', which allowed for the release of all governmental records "except those that greatly compromise national security or a person's privacy," partly in response to the film. 46 The film inspired a social response sufficient to cause an alteration of the legislation of the United States of America.

Stone's appropriation of the Griersonian mode of classical documentary convention had the desired effect of reflecting the propagandistic techniques of the institutions with which he was contending for social acceptance as the accepted historical account. The response to this adopted mode of discourse was an approval of the authenticity of the text, to the extent that the legal and social profile of America was modified. The use of an institutional mode of documentary presentation in JFK brought about a social reaction in the form of the modification of laws concerning government files, a chain of events that supports Foucault's notion of discourse as a material reality:

46 From the Presidential act (note above), cited in Medhurst, 1983, p.140.
Documentary Reconstruction in JFK

Instead of being something said once and for all — and lost in the past like the result of a battle, a geological catastrophe, or the death of a king — the statement, as it emerges in its materiality, appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transferences or modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies in which its identity is maintained or effaced. Thus the statement circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realization of a desire, serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry. 44

Foucault’s observations of the statement also apply to the social dynamics of the film. As a statement of audio/visual narrative JFK has, more than many other films, connected with the cultural and institutional fabrics of the American nation. The exteriority of the JFK discourse, by taking on the attributes of institutional authority in the style of classical documentary, and conjoining with the popular mythic narrative of Hollywood, has impacted with the institutional world it has imitated. The form of the discourse has assured its potency as an agent of social change and its convergence of form and genre have challenged cultural notions of truth, veracity and historical responsibility.

The appearance of authenticity that results from the conjunction of television news images, home movies and the Zapruder film with Stone’s partially fictional and partly biographical narrative, supports Foucault’s observance of the exteriority of discourse as connected to actuality. To apply his linguistic theories to the imagery of JFK involves identifying the elements of the visual image that correlate with enunciative discursive functions. Foucault identifies the material existence of a statement as being inseparable from the statement itself: “A statement must have a substance, a support, a place and a date. And when these requisites change, it too changes identity.” 45 This notion can be seen at work in the images assembled within JFK. Audio/visual images are identifiable with the time, culture and purpose of their production as is evidenced by the characteristics of their ‘surface’ appearance and sound, just as sentences, through their combination of references, forms and structures are identifiable as being of a particular oeuvre, or resulting from a particular social circumstance.

The exteriority of the images is a means of placing the text within a relative positioning of discourses, referred to by Foucault as the historical a priori; “the a priori of a history that is given, since it is that of things actually said.” 46 The images bear the mark of their time and circumstances, and of the discursive practices that have become intertwined in their very existence, as their modes of discourse are connected with the events and occurrences of their times, and utilize the rules of production and discourse that existed in that era. The effect of Stone’s appropriation of these culturally embedded images is to entice the viewer into an illusion of constructive reality, where the textual tools of the cultural construction of reality are re-presented within a text that is removed temporally from the culture of its origin. The subjectivity of the viewer is drawn from the Garrison biographical narrative, into a direct encounter with the historical television news images, and the level of added mediation imposed by the narrative of JFK is temporarily set aside. For those few

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44 Foucault, 1972, p.105.
45 ibid., p.101.
46 ibid., p.127.
Documentary Reconstruction in JFK

moments, the viewer is 'watching the news,' and is experiencing a representation of the actual event, produced at the time of the event, not the reconstruction of the Oliver Stone film. The patriarchal figure of the ABC newsreader Walter Cronkite recalls a time of belief in media authority, when the institutions of the media were trusted and even admired by the viewer. This master narrative lives on in its progeny, as the modes of discourse used in contemporary news broadcasting demonstrate only minor modification in the rules of discourse that determine the content of television news.

The mode of discourse adopted by the newsreader is characteristic of the genre, and carries with it implications of the actuality of the events described. This enhances the realism of the text, and establishes a level of mediation that is distinct from the dramatic enactment. The television news images appear as a text within a text, a non-dramatic construction of actuality within a dramatic narrative construction. The Zapruder film adds a third level of mediation, being a don-dramatic and non-constructed representation of actuality. With the inclusion of each level of mediation the processes of mediation are themselves highlighted, as the shift from the documentary introduction to the biographical narrative accentuates the contrast between the socio-political setting, and the diegetic world of the film. The verisimilitude of the text is maximized by the interpretive strategies that are suggested by the text, and the connections that are implied by the similarities between the surface of the (visual) discourse with previous viewing experiences. It is the interpretive activity of the viewer that places the text within a multiplicity of textual and actual experiences, and establishes connections, articulations and flows between these territories.

Interpretation in this sense is not the hermeneutic search for pure meaning, or attribution of authorial intention, or any assumption of transcendental truth, but simply the connection of one experience, object, event or text with another, and the associations and comparisons that are the result of such connections. The previous experience of television news is one that elicits a belief in the correlation between the image and actuality, and this correlation is not entirely negated by the Hollywood glamour of Stone's film. The connection with previous viewing experience of actuality through television news representations remains intact, regardless of its context as an inclusion in the film. The convergence of form, in this case, refers the viewer to other textual 'actualities,' and encourages a similar sense of assurance, the belief that the representation correlates with actuality.

The connection of actuality with the text is at its strongest with the use of the Zapruder film, and the evidentiality of this image (discussed earlier in this chapter), goes beyond the notion of verisimilitude. Its inclusion in JFK certainly brings an air of verisimilitude to the surrounding images, but this is a product of the conjunction of texts, not necessarily a result of the realism of Stone's reconstruction. The Zapruder film appears in JFK as a recognizable and commodified text with the cultural significance of its images reaching beyond the bounds of its own existence as a 'stand alone' text. The images have appeared in television news reports, documentary films, books that investigate the legitimacy of the Warren Commission findings (most notably the images are referred to in books by Marrs and Garrison that
form the basis of Stone’s film), and in cinema, with its position of prominence in JFK as a central feature of the opening montage and the courtroom scene. This short segment of film has been cited as evidence of the actual assassination on many occasions, and has become a cultural icon of actuality film. Its prior existence as a text has made JFK a more persuasive representation of the actual, as the authenticity of the Zapruder film had been established as social knowledge in the minds of many viewers before JFK had been produced.

The perceived actuality of the Zapruder images, then, is the result of a cultural construct, or a social knowledge of the circumstances of the filming of the image, which results in the (experienced) viewer ‘knowing it is real’. Therefore, knowing the time, location and identity of the act of filming, and of the public identities depicted in the image verify the actuality of the image. The reception of this image results from a series of deductions which derive from social knowledge. Do I know the image? Do I know it is an image of an actual assassination? How have I gathered this knowledge? What are the associated meanings? The image itself is insignificant in comparison with the meanings that are associated with the image in determining its actuality. It is only when the status of the image as an ‘actuality image’ is culturally established that the contents of the image become significant, and the function of the image moves beyond that of verisimilitude and becomes a partial correlation with actuality. In such a case the image is accepted as a cultural record of what has occurred and the contents become pertinent to the investigation of historical actuality.

Partial Correspondence

The move beyond verisimilitude does not entail a return to empirical, objective positivism, where the object/event is proven to be factual by means of the image (which is Garrison’s argument in court), but that the image, given the indisputable authenticity of its filming, and the absence of manipulation of the image, provides an indication as to actual events. The connection between the image and actuality in the case of the Zapruder film has been recognized by the United States Government in their recent purchase of the film for the national archives from the Zapruder family for sixteen million dollars. Oliver Stone paid the Zapruder family $40,000 for the use of the film in JFK. The eighteen seconds of eight millimeter film has been valued at this level not for its narrative construction, or for its visual clarity, but for the authenticity of the image as the only existing visual record of the assassination. Its connection to the actual event provides no absolute indication as to the event, but offers more than verisimilitude in its representation. Although the image is not coequal to the event, it has a partially corresponding physical connection to the event, and this connection is an established cultural certitude.

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Fig. 7.4.1: Frame 313 of the Zapruder film – the moment of impact.  

The relation between the audio/visual text and actuality, as revealed in the Zapruder film and its utilization in *JFK*, is not a positive relation of correspondence, but neither is it a disconnected, relativistic simulation. Postmodern approaches to text/actuality relations assert indeterminacy of the referential functions of the text. Baudrillard in particular posits that representation and reality can no longer be distinguished, and his position weakens the relation of images to actual events, as the simulation is considered to be coequal to reality. The image has an actual presence as a technological-virtual, and the technological-virtual image effects other aspects of actuality. This effect can be observed particularly in the Zapruder film, and its social affect through its inclusion in Stone’s *JFK*. Attitudes, opinions, and relations between the American people and their institutions of government have been profoundly altered by the widespread distribution of the film. The widespread acceptance of conspiracy theory by the American people is also, to some extent attributable to Stone’s film.

This relation between actuality and the text at first appears to confirm Baudrillard’s thesis, that the image has become indistinguishable from the reality. But on closer consideration, this example challenges an underlying assumption in Baudrillard’s reasoning. The representation, as pointed out several times over the course of this thesis, does not offer a complete correspondence to the actuality it represents. Baudrillard’s assumption is that there should be a distinction between

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74 See chapters 2.2, 3.3 and 4.4.
the simulation and reality, but his argument relies on the given fact that reality is distinct from the image, and that the image itself has no validity as a reality. The Zaprodu film, however, stands as a paragon of the relation between the image and the actual. It provides a partial connection to the actual that does not depend on any notion of absolute correspondence, yet cannot be entirely disassociated from the physical event. The film has some measure of actuality in its content, despite its subjective positioning, its inferior image resolution and the lack of sound. This image is not only a simulation, but to some extent a reproduction that provides evidence as to the actual event. By all means, various interpretations of the image will be arrived at, and divergent conclusions will be reached in response to the film, but this is a universal condition that cannot be limited to audio/visual representation. Eyewitness accounts will result in the same diversity of interpretation. The representation is connected with the actual event when social knowledge of the image confirms this connection. The inclusion of an image in a documentary or news program is, in itself, indicative of a connection with actuality. Any attempt to establish this connection as a complete correspondence is doomed to failure, as only a partial relation can be confirmed. Conversely (and this is the central proposition of this thesis), any attempt to completely disconnect the image and actuality overlooks the physical relation between pro-filmic events and the recorded image. The immediate tendency is to respond that the recorded image offers no guarantee of veracity, as the image is subject to manipulation, selection and construction. Indeed, this is the case, but this retort is only valid when applied to a claim of complete correspondence between image and actuality. If the connection between the image and actuality is recognized to be proportional, and to offer no certitude, then the relation becomes clearer. The screen image offers the nearest correlation between actuality and representation that is currently obtainable by available technologies, and confronts the viewer with a persuasive resemblance to physical actuality.

The Baudrillardian position, by denouncing the conflation of reality with the image, asserts that there should be no apperception of reality in the image, as the image does not correspond to actuality. This notion, however, does not account for the possibility of a partial correlation. The image does indicate something of the nature of events that have occurred in front of the camera (in the absence of image manipulation in post-production), and provide an accurate reproduction of that actuality. The dramatic performance of events before the camera is not a function of the image, but a theatrical device that operates at an entirely different level of virtualization, creating a simulation that is prior to the production of the image. The dramatic is a narrative-actual or a narrative-virtual that is presented within the context of the narrative, yet the physical enactment occurs in actuality. There is no doubt that this correlation has been reduced by computer generated images and advanced animation technology and special effects, but dramatic enactment provides the substance of the image in the majority of cases. The images observed in dramatically enacted film are a (technological-virtual) representation of a dramatic representation. This does not detract from the correspondence of the representation with the actual, but raises the awareness of the strata of virtualization, and the

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73 Baudrillard, 1988a, p.170.
74 See note 73.
75 See chapter 3.3.
discrepancies and illusions that can be encountered in screen images, as well as in actual experience. Things are not always as they appear to be, be it on the cinema screen, or in 'real life'. The Zapruder film, and in particular its utilization in JFK, offers an instance of the image that shows the viewer an actual event, but not the conclusive and entire detail of the event, or the complete understanding of the forces at work in the event. 'Reality' is present in the image, but this 'reality' is never a complete actuality. The reality of the image is its power as an artifact in its own right, not its mimetic or referential function. It can, and often does, offer evidence as to actual events, but in the end it is the measure of belief it arouses in the viewer that defines it as 'reality' or fiction. Absolutism as to either the 'detached' or the 'real' image should be tempered with the notion of partial correspondence, and the consciousness of the several strata of virtualization, and the processes of narrativization that comprise the film or television image.

The notion of reality, defined in this thesis as a cultural construct, 28 and actuality, are evident to a degree in the image, as is observable in the ontological analysis of the Zapruder film in JFK. The image becomes part of a rhizome, becoming a component of the continuum of text/actual/culture/viewer, which is separated only by permeable and variable boundaries, which exist on a plane of consistency. There is no distinct separation between text/actual/culture/viewer, but the actual 'seeps' through, and permeates boundaries, and text, culture and viewer also violate conventional notions of boundary. The viewer, as a polyphonic, or nomadic subjectivity is continually formed by processes of subjectivation prior to language in a "zone of intersection" that combines "expressive, linguistic and non-linguistic substances (belonging to a finite, preformed world, the world of the Lacanian Other) and incorporeal registers with infinite, creationist virtualities." 29 To separate image, actuality and viewer is to overlook the capacity of the image, and the viewer to transmit and consist of actuality. JFK embodies the potential of texts and viewers to integrate actuality and the cultural construct of reality in a conjunction of elements. The heterogeneity of the text is analogous to the multiple constituents of the cultural construct, and of the nomadic subjectivity of the viewer. The Baudrillardian declaration of a simulation in which there are "signs which dissimulate nothing," does not allow for the capacity of the audio/visual text to partially correspond to the actual, or of the viewer to experience actuality in the text without requiring an absolute reality in the text. The notions of partial degrees of actuality, and of the permeation of boundaries, account for the heterogeneity of the text, viewer and culture without delimiting the potentiality of the traversal of actuality across textual boundaries.

28 See chapter 1.3.
Chapter 8

CONVERGENCE OF ACTUALITY WITH IMAGINARY CONTENT IN FORREST GUMP AND CONTACT

The previous chapters have been concerned with the strategies of narrativization that are applied to actuality images in documentary (chapter five), and the convergence of form and genre in texts that combine moments of actuality with dramatic representation (in chapters six and seven). In each of the examples discussed the images have remained separate, as discreet segments of one or the other genre or form, and the analysis has concerned the relations between these segments. The ontological analysis of images, however, is incomplete without some recognition of the possibilities that are raised by the union of dramatic representation with existing (and usually historical), actuality images within a single frame. Manipulation of visual images casts doubt on the veracity of the image, and complicates the issue of evidentiality in images.

In this chapter I will analyze the occurrence of combined images, where the dramatic and the actual coexist within a single frame. The actuality image has never been immune from manipulation, as traditional photographic development techniques allow for the alteration and modification of content. In the case of images that combine actuality with drama within the frame this dichotomy is exaggerated, as imagination coexists with actuality. The actual is invaded by the dramatic, and appropriated as a part of the dramatic narrative, usually through the insertion of a character into an existing image, or, conversely, the integration of an actual character into a dramatically enacted scene.

The most prominent exponent of such manipulation in recent years has been Robert Zemeckis, with the appropriation of actuality images in Forrest Gump (1994), and the digitally constructed images of President Bill Clinton in Contact (1996). This analysis is primarily concerned with the effects on interpretive strategies of combining images, and of manipulation of the image, as opposed to the dynamics of divergent form and genre in the juxtaposition of images. The convergence of form and genre is not only an adjacent placement of images, but in this case is a literal convergence of multiple images into a single image. The result of convergent images is a narrativization of actuality that occurs, as the actual becomes narrative, or, alternatively, the fictional narrative is momentarily congruent with images of the actual.
8.1 Combining the Actual with the Act

**Actuality Images in Forrest Gump**

The manipulation of actuality images can be observed in several instances during the fictional encounters of Forrest Gump with figures of public importance and moments of historical significance. Images of public figures engaging in direct conversation with Forrest Gump (Tom Hanks), provide humorous scenarios in which the mentally retarded character stumbles into several scenes of momentous importance. The inclusion of elements of actuality in the images provides the film with a connection to the cultural history of America in the twentieth century and offers the viewer a retrospective account of the changes that have profoundly altered the collective consciousness. Robert Zemeckis introduces actuality footage into the fictional narrative in gradual increments, firstly with historical footage of the Klu Klux Klan as he reveals the origins of the main character’s name, being that of General Nathan Bedford Forrest, the founder of the racist group. This image is used in illustrative documentary mode as an accompaniment to the voice narration. The actuality footage is not visually integrated into the diegetic world of the film, but the verbal message provides the semantic link between the diegetic world of the narrative and the historical film. The narration, spoken by the main character, operates in a similar manner to the voice-over commentary of classical documentary, with the images providing an illustrative depiction of the verbal content.

![Fig. 8.1.1: Historical images of the Klu Klux Klan used as visual-illustrative images over the narrator's voice](image)

![Fig. 8.2.2: The narration claims that this is General Nathan Bedford Forrest, founder of the K.K.K., after whom the character, Forrest Gump was named.](image)

The young Forrest Gump’s ensuing encounter with a dramatic rendition of Elvis Presley, concludes with the young Forrest watching images of the actual Elvis on television through a shop window, and establishes the lighthearted relationship between the non-fictional representation and the diegetic world of *Forrest Gump* that provides much of the humor in the remainder of the film. In contrast to the previous historical footage the Elvis image is integrated into the *Forrest Gump* narrative, as this is a character that interacts with the protagonist.
The television image of the actual Elvis (as opposed to his dramatic rendition), is embedded within the same image, but remains separately framed within that image. This example amounts to an intertextual (or hypertextual), reference, where the existing Elvis image is appropriated by Zemeckis for the fictional narrative. The illusion of interaction between Presley and Gump consists of two separate and clearly distinguishable dramatic and actual images, where the identities of the actor, and the 'real' Elvis are evident to the viewer as a result of the framing of the Presley image in the television screen. The actual has been integrated into the narrative to a greater extent than the initial "documentary style" insertion of an actuality image. The illusion achieved by the transition from dramatic enactment (the Elvis actor), to the actual Elvis (as a television image), provides gradual increments of actuality as Zemeckis introduces the concept of the convergence of actuality and fictional narrative.

The third example of actuality footage in Forrest Gump, however, involves the insertion of the actor within the actuality image, as governor George Wallace addresses the students outside Alabama University concerning his opposition to the
admission of black Americans as students. Forrest appears at his side during the address, but there is no interaction between the figures in the image. Tom Hanks as Forrest Gump appears standing next to the Governor as he delivers his address. There is no recognition by the actual public identities of the dramatic persona in the image.

Fig. 8.1.5: Forrest Gump inserted in the image of Governor Wallace at the Alabama University

The following example of manipulation, however, involves President Kennedy congratulating the All-American Football Team, and shaking Forrest Gump’s hand. On this occasion the integration of the dramatic and the actual is further achieved by the manipulation of voice, as Forrest’s statement, “I’ve got to pee,” brings a brief comment in response from Kennedy. This is the first occasion on which the fictional character (Forrest Gump), appears to interact with the actual identity. The manipulation of the figure of Kennedy, according to Prince, involves the alteration of the image in order to give the appearance of speech:

President Kennedy speaking to Tom Hanks in Forrest Gump resulted from two-dimensional painting, made to look like 3D, according to Pat Byrne, Technical Director at Post Effects, a Chicago effects house that specializes in digital imaging. The archival footage of Kennedy, once digitized, was repainted with the proper phonetic mouth movements to match the scripted dialogue and with highlights on his face to simulate the corresponding jaw and muscle changes. Morphs were used to smooth out the different painted configurations of mouth and face.¹

The image of the President is momentarily a convergence with actuality, seen in the form of his body, and in the virtual movements of his body. The image has distorted the actual event in order to integrate the dramatic event. The movements of the mouth and face are, however, unconvincing in their approximation of actual facial expression.

The encounter with President Johnson, however, provides the most credible integration of dramatic persona with actual identity, as the President engages in a conversation with Gump. The interaction between the image of the president and the inserted actor gives the impression of natural dialogue, with the manipulation of Johnson’s facial expressions being barely detectable. The earlier examples of image manipulation, which demonstrate no attempt to provide a persuasive imitation of actuality, are in comparison clumsy in their technique. Presumably this is an intentional device of the director, who has no need to convince the audience of the reality of the event, but is content to allow the manipulation to remain visible and clearly detectable. The interaction between Johnson and Gump, however, provides a feasible resemblance of actuality, and challenges the perception of the viewer, who must rely on social knowledge, previous viewing experience and comparison with the other manipulated images in the text in order to distinguish between this conversation and other enacted events in the film.

Fictional Appropriation of Actuality

Other examples of image manipulation follow, but none rival the realism of the Johnson scene. The appearance of Forest Gump with John Lennon openly discloses the manipulation of voice, as the lip movements bear little resemblance to the recorded voice, and the brief encounter with President Nixon, where Gump is offered a suite in the Hotel on the night of the infamous Watergate ‘bugging’ scandal, also fails to offer true ‘lip-synchronization,’ as Nixon’s mumbling voice does not correspond exactly to the facial movements of the image.
Fig. 8.1.7: Forrest Gump inserted in the image with President Johnson. A realistic manipulation of images to produce a persuasive dialogue.

The perceptual realism of the image is created by the manipulation of the image in order to imitate the normal facial movements of speech, as Prince observes:

President Kennedy speaking in Forrest Gump is a falsified correspondence which is nevertheless built from internally valid perceptual information. Computer modeling of synthetic visual speech and facial animation relies on existing microanalyses of human facial expression and phonetic mouth articulations. The digital effects artist used these facial cues to animate Kennedy's image and sync his mouth movements with the scripted dialogue. 

However accurate the illusion of a speaking manipulated image may or may not be the persuasiveness of the perceptual illusion created by the images, and the correlation between voice and facial movement are not the issues that require examination in this case. The images combine elements of two divergent genres, firstly the actuality images of public figures that belong in the realm of television news and documentary, or of historical archive, and, secondly, the figure of Tom Hanks in the part of Forrest Gump, a fictional character in a fictional narrative. The convergence of images confronts the viewer with a conflict of interpretive strategies, as the simultaneity of fictional and actual personalities within one frame presents a textual conundrum. The coexistence of actual and dramatic personae deconstructs the referential function of the actuality image, as any credibility of the image in terms of actual occurrence is negated by the presence of the dramatic figure. The fictional narrative, on the other hand, is not negated by the actuality image, but is enhanced by the impossibility of the fictional conjunction of the two images. The imaginary becomes dominant, appropriating the actual in a conversion of actuality into fiction. The presence of dramatic personae transforms the actuality image and integrates it into the diegetic world of the fiction. This process is more than merely a removal of authenticity or factuality from the actuality image, as the image is not left ‘neutral,’ with its veracity absent, but is actively subsumed by the fictional event.

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1 ibid., p.34.
The images of Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon are made imaginary by their conjunction with the image of Forrest Gump. The manipulation of words and movements notwithstanding, it is the convergence of images that indicates the absence of factuality. Alterations of the verbal discourse are not the decisive element in the interpretation of the images as fictional, but, rather, it is the visual manipulation. The cohabitation of the frame by identities removed by time and space creates the illusion that displaces the expectation of authenticity that ordinarily accompanies images of public identities.

Actuality images, when combined with dramatic personae, cease to demand a referential interpretation as the manipulation of the image breaks the expectation of any correlation between the actual world and the image. There is, however, a residual effect of bewilderment at the fictional character conversing with the actual president. The text plays on the viewer’s awareness of the impossibility of the image, and engages the viewer with the contradiction of reality and story, and the interpretive processes that are brought to light by this convergence. The combined image gives the appearance, or approximation of actuality while demonstrating its unfeasibility by the incongruity of its components. The success of these scenes is reliant on the social knowledge of the viewer, who is presumed to be aware of the identities that are portrayed. A less significant or less recognizable actuality image would be overpowered by the diegesis, and would in all likelihood be assumed to be a component of the fictional world. Conversely, the inclusion of an insignificant dramatic character from the diegesis would be subsumed by the actuality, and would (unless specifically identified), be assumed to be an authentic component of the actuality image. It is only the combination of universally identifiable public figures with the principal character of the narrative that the balance of fiction and factuality can be effectively utilized.

The familiarity of public identity and actor is the crucial ingredient for the identification of images which combine actuality with dramatic images. The image not only combines dramatic and actual content, but this convergence implies subsequent connections with social and cultural fields, and utilizes multiple interpretive strategies. The modes of discourse displayed in convergent images demonstrate a Foucauldian exteriority, in which they interact with the social field, and relate comparatively with the discursive formations of the component images that comprise the convergence. The forthcoming section defines the rules of formation that apply to the modes of discourse that are apparent in actuality based images and dramatic reenactments, and the degrees of variation that lie between the two.
8.2 Discursive Rules of Formation of in Film and Television Genres

Interpretation of Manipulated Images

The manipulated images in *Forrest Gump* and *Contact* raise some important questions. Is there evidence in the image, or is there an evidential convention of images? To what extent is an image capable of corresponding with the actual? This analysis will examine the representation of actuality in screen images, and establish a hierarchical model of representation, where the image is partially, but never entirely a correlate of the actual. The images themselves are, of course, inseparable from their interpretation by the viewer, who applies interpretive strategies to the image, and accredits the image with various qualities of authenticity, veracity and verisimilitude. The subject of this investigation is determinants of interpretation, and the convergence of actuality with the dramatic.

The manipulated images in *Forrest Gump* provide an opportunity to evaluate the significance of the conventional representation of actuality in screen images. The departure from an image that is comprised of entirely dramatic representation, or, conversely, entirely representative of actuality, challenges assumptions of referentiality. This subversion of the accepted modalities of representation highlights the referential functions of the actuality image through the absence of correlation between the image and the actual. This absence of correlation amounts to a breach of the normal requirement for veracity (where the subject of the representation is an actual and significant public identity). The conventions or ‘rules’ of representation have been disregarded, as the assumption that a person of social consequence will be represented in a manner that reflects their public position is disrupted by the presence of the dramatic identity.

A viewer generally expects images to represent actuality according to the conventions that exist in other texts, and will tend to apply these conventions to the interpretation of the text unconsciously. Foucault, in his analysis of discourse, identifies the conformity to rules of use as the discursive formation:

> Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a *discursive formation* ... The conditions to which the elements of this division (objects, mode of statement, concepts, thematic choices) are subjected we shall call the *rules of formation*. The rules of formation are conditions of existence (but also of coexistence, maintenance, modification, and disappearance) in a given discursive division.²

The rules of discursive formation imply the interpretive and correlative relations that ordinarily accompany that formation. It is also feasible to apply this notion to the screen image, defining the rules of formation of a screen genre, say, for example, the television news, which demands particular rules of formation in order to be

² Foucault, 1972, p.38.
Convergence of Actuality with Imaginary Content in Forrest Gump and Contact

interpreted as the authentic text that refers directly to actual events. On the other hand, the rules of formation that may apply to the science fiction film indicate a removal of the image from the actual, both through the dramatic representation, and through the content of the text. The presence of dramatic content in a television news format, in the absence of any explanatory commentary from a news reader, would surely amount to a departure from the rules of formation that define the genre of television news. Conversely, a newsreader’s commentary throughout the entire duration of a fiction film would breach the conventions of the rules of formation for that genre. The discursive rules of formation are a significant indicator for the viewer as to the relations between the text and actuality, and how the notion of reality should be applied to the text in the interpretive strategies of viewing. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, the conventions of a genre suggest interpretive strategies, and encourage an attribution of veracity according to the 'reality claims' of the genre.

The assumption encouraged by the manipulated images of Forrest Gump is not the usual fictional or news-documentary interpretation, where the image either does, or does not represent the actual. The depiction of actual public identities is complicated by the presence of a dramatic identity, and the association of such figures with their normal fields of representation is replaced by uncertainty. The interpretation of public identities in film images suggests a direct relation between the image and actual events, merely through the previous experience of this convention in news and documentary images. In order to disconnect a film image of a public identity from the actual it must be manipulated, or generated by other means, such as animation, hand drawing, or the collage of images as seen in Forrest Gump. The presence of a dramatic actor in the image amounts to a breach of the rules of formation that apply to actuality images. The referential validity of the image is dependent on the verisimilitude of its contents, and the blend of fictional and actual content neutralizes any direct reference to the actual in the image. This is not to say that there is no reference to the actual in the image, but it becomes a reference to extra-textual cultural awareness, rather than a depiction of actual events.

Manipulation of the image is commonplace in contemporary film production, with adventure, 'sci-fi,' action and fantasy films extensively employing computer generated effects. Manipulation in this context is considered acceptable, and seen as advantageous as it allows for the creation of images that would otherwise be impossible to produce through conventional dramatic enactment. In the genres of fictional realism, and of documentary and news, manipulation of images is understood to be a form of deception, where the ‘honesty’ of the image is sullied by any alteration. There are, however, exceptions to this rule of formation. Even the genre of documentary allows for the illustration of a point with image manipulation if it is within acceptable rules of formation, for example, the graphic animation of blood cells or other body parts in a medical documentary, or the computer generated

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4 Hartley, 1992, p.83, points out the significance of genre expectations in the interpretation of television news.

5 Recent examples of this technology abound, but are particularly evident in George Lucas’s Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace (1999) and the A. and L. Wachowski film The Matrix (1999).
images of other worlds in the recent television documentary series, *The Planets*. These images are artificially generated, and could not be defined as actuality images, but they are nevertheless useful in putting forward an argument or demonstrating a concept that cannot be represented effectively by conventional methods of filming. The rules of formation of documentary genres allows for the visual-illustrative mode to utilize manipulated images in order to provide a visual image of subjects that cannot otherwise be depicted, or that are most effectively represented by manipulated, or artificially generated images.

The Conventions of Genre and Modes of Reference

The rules of formation offer a cultural assurance that the discourse is operating within the boundaries of a discursive division, in this case, a film or television genre. The characteristics of a genre indicate the ontological status of the image, suggesting to the viewer a mode of reference to actuality that is applied in the audio/visual text. Set out below is a classificatory listing of the modes of referentiality, working from the maximum correlation between image and the actual, in gradation towards the minimum correlation. It is important to reiterate the fact that all of these classifications consist of audio/visual representations, as the image does not equate to the actual, but can be quantified in terms of correlation with the actual.

- The *evidential mode of reference*, in which the image provides detailed information concerning the *actual event* (for example, the Zapruder film). Includes images that manifest actual events, occurrences or actions. The image ostensibly represents actuality without any mediation, apart from the unavoidable subjectivity of the camera. There is no conscious representational activity in the production of the image, that is, the action is not dramatically enacted in any way for the benefit of the camera, but happens to have occurred within the camera’s optical field. Spontaneous response to the presence of the camera is, of course, unavoidable, and does not detract from the evidential value of the image.

- The *indicative mode of reference*, where the image depicts objects, people, or events, as a reference to the conditions of, or testimony pertaining to the subject. An image of a particular individual may be used as a particularization of a general event or activity, or an interviewee may indicate evidential value in spaces or objects. The image depicts the actual, but specific details are not considered to be evidential (for example, the many images of locations in documentary in order to refer to prior events in the space). Veracity is expected and assumed by the viewer, and any departure from veracity is interpreted as a breach of the rules of formation. This mode provides

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7 The presence of the camera is discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.2.

* The analysis of Ray Quint’s *Return to Sandakan* in chapter 5 provides a valuable example of the indicative mode of reference.
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indications of actual events, and attempts to employ all means to represent the event apart from re-construction or re-enactment.

- The imitative mode of reference involves reconstruction of events, usually in authentic settings and costumes, or settings, actors and costumes that bear resemblance to the actual. The imitative mode does not require conscious interpretation of actions, but, rather, a conscious minimization of dramatic interpretation. The event is reconstructed with a minimum of deviation from the known actuality (for example, the Dealey plaza presidential entourage as reconstructed by Oliver Stone in JFK, but not the speculative inclusion of extra assassins). The identities of the original subjects are either copied or eluded by the exclusion of facial features from the image, but a dramatic enactment of the identity is concealed. The imitative mode utilizes reconstruction of the actual that refers to an awareness of the historical event.

- The depictive mode of reference is most commonly found in historical drama, and involves the enactment of actual events. Absolute authenticity in setting and events is not required or assumed, but approximations of the historical events are acceptable in order to give the viewer an impression of the actual. The actual event is secondary to the dramatic enacting of the event, or, in other words, the narrativization of the event is considered to be of greater importance than the historical authenticity of the image, which is constructed through re-enactment of the actual.

- The fictional mode of reference is where the image bears no direct relation to the actual apart from the inevitable inclusion of some aspects of actuality (discussed in chapter 2.1). This mode may involve actual locations, but characters are not actual identities. Various degrees of resemblance to actuality, from realism to fantasy, are possible in the fictional mode, but all are distinct from the actual event. The fictional mode can be divided into many sub-classifications of reference, but when we move away from the narrativization of actuality, the detailed analysis of such modes of fictional reference cease to be relevant to the subject of this thesis.

The discursive rules of formation determine to what extent a viewer will interpret the content of the image as pertaining to actuality, or as fiction. They indicate the extent to which a correlation between the actual and the image will become a component of the interpretation of the text. The referential function of the image cannot be easily defined as fictional, or non-fictional, but as the modalities above indicate, there are several gradations of referentiality. The relations of the text to actuality are a complex interaction of discursive rules of formation with social knowledge and experience of actuality.

Foucault points out that reference is not only a correlation, but that discourse reflects the conditions in which it arises, or to which it refers. The distinction between a statement and a proposition can be likened to the distinction between the evidential mode of reference, and the fictional mode of reference, in that one refers specifically to an actuality, and the other to a state of being, and a field of relations:
A statement is not confronted (face to face, as it were) by a correlate – or the absence of a correlate – as a proposition has (or has not) a referent, or as a proper noun designates someone (or no one). It is linked rather to a 'referential' that is made up not of 'things', 'facts', 'realities', or 'beings', but of laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied within it. The referential of the statement forms the place, the condition, the field of emergence, the authority to differentiate between individuals or objects, states of things and relations that are brought into play by the statement itself. *

The image refers not only to the subject it depicts, but to laws of representation, conventions of narrative, and the complex heterogeneity that is implied by Foucault's notion of the "statement". The extra-textual world that is invoked by the image is far more expansive than the explicit content of the image. The rules and relations that operate in the actual world are also manifest in the image, particularly in the evidential and indicative modes of representation, but also in the imitative, depictive and fictional modes.

The convergence of the fictional and evidential modes of reference, as is seen in Forrest Gump on several occasions, is a playful defiance of such rules and relations, as the fictional character removes the actual (though manipulated), images of public identities from their rules of formation, and applies the less restrictive rules of fictional representation, where the imaginary is free to disregard social conventions and the relations between the fictional and actual identities within the image. One must, however, when considering discourse in a more general sense than the specific audio/visual text, maintain an awareness of the differentiation between enunciation in its immediacy, and the screen image. The interplay between participants in enunciation is a direct and immediate response to statements, situations and referents, whereas the recorded visual image can depict statements, behaviors, events and scenarios that are removed both by time and space from the viewer. The film text indicates the discursive and cultural environment of its inception, but this is not an immediate responsive interaction as is the case with conversation. Film and television images are, however, parts of a broader, more culturally generic discourse, one that intersects with the enunciative realm of discourse through the post-textual responses of the viewer, and one that brings about a modification and revision of the cognitive schemata of the viewer.

When considering the modalities of reference in regard to Forrest Gump and Contact, the viewer's awareness that these 'impossible' images had to have been manipulated, and that the image is comprised of a combination of two images, involves a meta-linguistic awareness of a convergence of the modes of reference. The evidential function of the actuality image is subsumed by the fictional, and the reference to the actual is, although extant, not considered absolute. The contrast between the use of montage in juxtaposing images (as utilized by Stone in JFK), and the convergence of modes of reference within a single image, brings the referential value of the image into question. In JFK each image maintains a unity, separated by the distinct 'cut' between images. The manipulation of images, and the convergence of elements from multiple images, however, demands a theoretical approach that accounts for the possibility of proportional gradation of referential functions of the

* Foucault, op. cit., p.91.
image, and can conceive of the meanings derived from the image as partially interpretive, and partially indexical.

8.3 The Demise of the Indexical Image

The referential functions of the image have been shown in the previous section to consist of a gradated variation between absolutes of the actual and the imaginary. The visual representation is by its very nature separate from its referent, and therefore, as a discrete actuality in its own right, must be related to the subject matter that it depicts by the viewer. The image and the referent are connected by the discursive rules of formation considered above, but are also connected by the resemblance of the image to the referent, not through conventions of representation, but through similitude of sensory perception. The notion of gradated reference is not entirely new, but can be found in the earliest stages of semiotic inquiry. The endeavor of this section is to reexamine the means by which the viewer connects the representation with actuality.

Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness in the Image.

The notion of the indexical image, as suggested by Peirce, and further developed by Deleuze, is a class of images that contain "everything which only exists by being opposed by and in a duel ... exertion-resistance, action-reaction, excitation-response, situation-behaviour, individual-milieu." Peirce posits three attributes of images, firstness, secondness and thirdness. Firstness is a perceptual relation of the image that, according to Deleuze, expresses "qualities or powers considered for themselves, without reference to anything else". The attribute of "secondness," (which includes the indexical), involves the intersection between objects, the binary opposition, and the relations between objects. The cohabitation of the image by the fictional character and the actual identity provides an opposition that extends the notion of 'secondness' beyond the conception of objects within the image that are engaged in a relationship of duality. Certainly, the two personae are seen together, and are opposed within the image, but the indexical relationship becomes more complex when one considers that the dramatic character is digitally interpolated. The opposition moves beyond that of soldier to president, or of stupid to intelligent, and becomes an opposition of the dramatic to the real, or of the actor to the actual. The 'secondness' of the image is combined with 'thirdness', as the opposition extends to become a relation of thought to the duality in the image.

The notion of the demise of the indexical image involves the relations between the actual world and the image, with the screen image representing occurrences and

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12 ibid., p. 98.
13 ibid., p. 98.
people as they exist and function in the actual. Deleuze describes the quality of secondness as:

...The category of the Real, of the actual, of the existing, of the individuated. And the first figure of secondness is that in which power-qualities become 'forces', that is to say are actualised in particular states of things, determinate space-times, geographical and historical milieux, collective agents or individual people. 14

The relations between the actual and the image, the actual and itself (that is, the interaction between forces, things and people), and the interpretive frame by which the viewer perceives actuality in the representation, are made problematic when the actuality image subverts the indexical representation. The image maintains a semblance of the actual, but the correlative relations are dissembled by the manipulation of the voice and image. Any correlation between the image and the actual event, and the laws, interactions and relations between forces in the actual event is obscured by the disparity between the image and actuality brought about by manipulation, and the representation then becomes an antithesis of the indexical image. The indexical function of the image (if considered a positive value), becomes a negative indexical value in a representation that depicts combinations of identity and cohabitation of the frame that cannot possibly be actual. The indexical image gives every indication of being a representation of the actual, but the reversal of the indexical function draws attention to the inadequacy of the interpretive frame that equates actuality images with actuality (that is, the viewer's conception of a correlation between image and actuality). This meta-interpretive activity is the result of an indexical relation that does not denote the actual, but disrupts the denotation of the image by rendering them secondary to the fact that this is an 'impossible image,' and that the meeting of the two identities is artificially constructed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualisign (1.1)</td>
<td>Synsign (1.2)</td>
<td>Legisign (1.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icon (2.1)</td>
<td>Index (2.2)</td>
<td>Symbol (2.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheme (3.1)</td>
<td>Dicsign (3.2)</td>
<td>Argument (3.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 8.3.1: Peirce's table of signification, after Deleuze, 1989, p.287.

The notion of 'thirdness' is expressed, according to Peirce, in the symbolic image, where the objects in the image embody other ideas, objects or relations. According to Deleuze, the relations of thirdness can be delineated into two areas: that of natural relations and of abstract relations.

Thirdness perhaps finds its most adequate representation in relation; for the relation is always third, being necessarily external to its terms. And philosophical tradition distinguishes two kinds of relations, natural and abstract relations — signification belonging to the first kind, and law or sense belonging to the second kind. 15

14 Deleuze, 1986, p.98.
15 ibid., p. 198.
The actual/dramatic images of Forrest Gump clearly provide the viewer with abstract relations, as the laws (conventions), of representation are implicit in the impossible combination of actual identity and actor. The inclusion of the contrasting identities within the images imply more than their facsimiles explicitly display: the awareness of the two milieus from which they have emerged, the temporal displacement implicit in the combined image, and the distinction between the functions of actor, and of public identity. The implication of these images is that the indexical relation between the representation and actuality is not an innate quality of the screen image, but is conditional on the utilization of technology by the filmmaker. The image itself provides no assurance of actuality, despite the inclusion of actual identities and events.

The indexical function of the images in Forrest Gump is displaced, rather than extended, by the symbolic implications of the images, in that the correlation of the images with actuality is made impossible, and the discursive rules of formation overshadow the contents of the image itself (that is, the impossibility of the cohabitation of the frame by actor and public identity outweighs the significance of the events portrayed by the images). The ‘thirdness’ of the image, in this case evident in the convergence of contrasted identities in the frame, makes the indexical function superfluous, as an awareness of the actor/public identity juxtaposition invalidates the referential veracity of the image. The convergence is, however, not alone in negating the indexical function of the image. The actual image of President Johnson, a realistic and authentic image, is rendered unfeasible by the breach of social convention engaged in by the president, as he requests to see Forrest Gump’s wounded buttock in a public place, and in front of the camera. (See fig. 8.3.2) The actual relations between forces, powers and people that are evident in the image (that is, the qualities of secondness), are shown to be artificially constructed and manipulated, thereby removing the legitimacy of the interaction, and replacing the synsight with the legisign (figure 8.3.1). The interplay of forces, individual people and objects in the screen image is overshadowed by the artificiality of the image. The denotation of the two identities is negated by the breach of the rules of formation in the indexical reading, and is overshadowed by the symbolic meaning that is suggested by the meeting of actor and president.

Deleuzian Fourthness: The Time-Image

Deleuze proposes a move beyond Peirce’s thirdness as the integration of the time-image into cinema. The Deleuzian time-image leaves the restrictions of the movement-image, and depicts the awareness of time within opsigns and sousigns (optical and sound signs), that represent occurrences that are not simultaneous with the action of the diegesis. The link between the image and action (the movement-image), is augmented by the time-image. This combines the secondness and thirdness of actualities and relations, with the mental-image, the representation of memory, and the instantaneous conjunctions of time and space that are achieved by montage:
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The sensory-motor link was broken, and the interval of movement produced the appearance as such of an image other than the movement-image ... There was to arise a whole series of new signs, constitutive of a transparent material, or of a time-image irreducible to the movement-image, but not without a determinable relationship with it. We could no longer consider Peirce's thirdness as a limit of the system of images and signs. 14

Deleuze identifies the perception of time in montage as the indirect time-image, which is the temporal jump between shots that depicts time as an absence. The conjunction of shots that represent an altered time and space implies the passage of time indirectly through the change of image. The time that has elapsed is not directly represented, but in order for the differentiation between shots to have occurred in the diegesis the implication is that time must have passed, without it having been displayed in the text. The fictional meeting of Forrest Gump with various public identities, however, provides a challenge to the notion of montage as entirely comprising the time image.

The direct time-image represents time within the bounds of the frame, bringing the concept of montage within the frame itself. Elements within the frame are juxtaposed, implying contrast, as is achieved by Eisenstein's notion of intellectual montage, but rather than a combination of meanings drawn from the combination of shots, a compound of meaning arising from the interaction of elements within the image. Deleuze highlights this possibility, insisting that the direct time-image is capable of providing an internal montage:

It has often been pointed out, in modern cinema, that the montage was already in the image, or that the components of an image already implied montage. There is no longer an alternative between montage and shot (in Welles, Resnais or Godard). Sometimes montage occurs in the depth of the image, sometimes it becomes flat; it no longer asks how images are linked, but 'What does the image show? This identity of montage with the image itself can appear only in the conditions of the direct time-image. 17

The images that combine Forrest Gump with actual identities go beyond this notion of montage within the frame. The frame itself is conceptually divided, as the images are brought together as separate elements that are united only through manipulation. The boundary between the two elements of the montage are distinctly identifiable, as the 'line' around the dramatic identity within the actuality images in Forrest Gump, or the 'line' around the actual identity within the dramatically constructed images in Contact. This amounts to a literal cinematic collage, rather than montage, although the intellectual implications of the conjunction are maintained. The distinction between the elements of the image is thoroughly disguised, unlike the obvious distinctions between elements of photographic collage, but the noticeable distinction in this case is an intellectual divergence between actuality images and the dramatic performance. The actual identity and the actual setting, which are a part of the one image, are intellectually removed from the inserted actor, who is foreign to the image. Once again, it cannot be sufficiently

14 Deleuze, 1989, p.34
17 ibid., p.42.
stressed that it is the interpretive strategy of the viewer that determines the divergence of the actual and the dramatic in the image, particularly through cultural awareness of the identities that are represented. The convergence of the images does not bring about a unity, but a cohabitation of the frame, with the means of determining the boundary existing as a function of the cultural construction of reality, and the division of visual images into categories that accompany this construction. The leap in time and space implied by montage in the case of Forrest Gump occurs within the image, between elements of the image, but is determined through the conjunction of the viewer's cultural construct of reality with the image. (See the analysis of fig. 8.3.2).

![Fig.8.3.2](image): Forrest Gump displays his wounded buttock to President Johnson

_An Analysis of Fig. 8.3.2 according to the Qualities of Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness and Fourthness as stated by Deleuze._

**Firstness – iconic – qualisign - rheme: Deleuzian Affection-image**

- The colors, textures, facial features, clothing and the affect of the qualities - perceptual experience.
- The initial response to the object/person, the image equals the response.
- Johnson’s face (laughter), his stride across the room, the posture of the attendant soldiers, and Gump’s crouching position – the physical occurrence, the actions – bending, walking, standing straight.
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**Secondness – indexical – synsign – dicisign: Deleuzian Action-image**
- The interaction between objects/people/forces.
- The things the image reveals about the state of actuality – what is happening – the actions and interactions represented by the image – a response that combines knowledge of the actual with the occurrences in the image.
- The positive value of Index: Johnson's response to Gump's action, his action in leaving (with laughter), the recognition of the presence of the President in the behavior of the soldiers, and in Gump's willingness to do whatever the president requests. The interactions of forms and powers within the image.
- Negative value of Index: Johnson meeting Gump, fictional character meeting actual identity, the interaction between the diegetic and the extra-textual worlds – the image is in no way a possible representation of actuality. Identities that could not actually meet in the image are visually combined.

**Thirdness – symbolic – legisign – argument: Deleuzian Relation-image**
- The objects/people/forces in the image reveal meanings that relate to other objects/people/forces - the response involves a conceptual linkage of ideas that is usually culturally determined (rules, conventions, association) - Goes beyond the image itself to social knowledge.
- The ramifications of the actor and the actual appearing within the frame together produce symbolic meanings. The appearance of the image implies meanings separate from the components of the image, the implication of the enactment being contrasted with actuality.
- The recognition of authority in the posture of the soldiers, the uniforms that imply a military status, the suit and tie of President Johnson that indicates his status as distinct from the military personnel.
- The ridiculous absurdity of Gump's behavior in a public setting.

**Deleuzian Fourthness: The Time-image**
- The temporal displacement of the image of Tom Hanks from the original actuality image of the President and the other soldiers, which distinguishes the convergent images from the dramatic enactment of the past as portrayed in the non-actuality portions of the film. The past-actual image is combined with the present-enacted image.
- The distinction between two time periods is, in this image, indicated by social knowledge 'outside' the text. Viewer awareness of the status of the former President and the contemporary actor are brought to the interpretation of the image by the previous textual experience of the viewer.
The Connection of the Actual with the Text

Gump's imaginary encounters with actual identities involve the negation of the indexical image, in that each of the public identities are significant figures that have been responsible for shaping the ideological, political and historical environment of the United States of America. The media representation of the actual collides with the diegetic world of Forrest Gump, presenting the viewer with a boundary between genres that exists within the frame of an image, rather than between images. There is no mistaking the distinction between the dramatic persona of Tom Hanks and the manipulated images of the actual public identities. The fact of their cohabitation of the screen implies a boundary that is a cultural construct that is applied to the image by the viewer, but is not identifiable in the image itself. The likely viewer response to the impossible combination of manipulated actual and dramatic identities is to laugh at the absurdity of the actor addressing the president, and the president conversing with the actor (who cannot be 'really there').

The actual and the dramatic are brought together in a single visual image, yet it is an image that contains a gulf between conceptual worlds. The actual and the dramatic are made apparent by their dissimilarity to the surrounding images, firstly, the actuality images (despite their being manipulated), contrast with the previous and ensuing fictional narrative, and, secondly, the actor contrasting with the surrounding actuality image. In the second of these disparities the actor's presence in the actuality image is detectable only through the previous accumulated viewing experience of the viewer. It is our knowledge of Hanks as an actor, in this and other films, and the notoriety of Johnson, Nixon, Lennon and Kennedy in news, documentary and historical images, that informs the contrasting conceptions of the dramatic and the actual personae (fig. 8.3.3). In order to fully appreciate this notion, it is necessary to propose a hypothetical viewer, one who has no knowledge of Tom Hanks as an actor, nor of Kennedy, Nixon, Presley, Johnson or Lennon, one who had no social knowledge to employ in the interpretation of the images. Such a viewer, who would be exceptionally difficult to locate in the age of global media distribution, would surely have difficulty in comprehending, or even noticing the contrast of dramatic and actual identities within the image, and would not appreciate the sardonic humor of the meeting. A change in the texture, and at times of the color, of the image, and a loss of synchronization between the lips and voice would perhaps be noticeable, but the cultural construct referred to by the actual public identities, and the significance of Gump's imaginary encounters would have no interpretive relevance.

The determination of the boundary between actuality images (including news and documentary images within fictional film and television), and fictional or dramatic images (including dramatic images within non-fictional film and television), relies on a cultural construct of reality that designates extra-textual significance to images according to their perceived correlation to actuality. The image of President Johnson is adjudged to be 'actual' merely because the viewer has seen other images of President Johnson. The adjacent image of Tom Hanks is adjudged to be dramatic because the viewer has seen images of Tom Hanks playing the part of fictional characters in other films, or on television being interviewed in his capacity as an actual identity, rather than as an actor. The frame that surrounds the two is adjudged to be a false indication of simultaneity, as the cultural experience of the viewer reveals that the two images originate from divergent times, spaces and genres of
media representation. This apperception is a utilization of cultural awareness during the interpretive ‘reading’ of the film, and a conjunction of a social knowledge of actual events over a period of time, with the representation of the passage of time within a film or television text.

![Image](image.jpg)

*Fig. 8.3.3:* Forrest Gump with John Lennon on a television talk show. The cultural significance of the meeting utilizes social knowledge of historical figures and the meanings associated with them.

The reading of the image cannot be said to be entirely isolated from actuality, or to completely correspond to actuality. It is the experience of the actual, and the correlation of events in the actual world with texts that purport to represent actuality, that images such as that of President Johnson are perceived as being an indicative (though not transparent), reference to actuality. The nature of the texts themselves assures that they interact with the actual world, and that some aspect of the image is a depiction that will inevitably, through interpretation, be equated with aspects of actuality. The images of public identities in *Forrest Gump* connect with actual events, statements, political alliances and cultural movements that are associated with each of the identities. The actual finds its way through the image, and into the awareness of the viewer as a mental-virtual, in the form of recollections and historical conceptions of culture. The manipulation of the images does not negate a viewer’s understanding of the actual, but the reference is indirect, in that the actuality is acquired through the schemata of the viewer, as the cultural construct of reality provides the cognitive material whereby actuality is connected with the image. There are, therefore, two paths by which actuality is experienced by the viewer: one is through the audio/visual image as the partial correspondence of the image with actuality, the other is the extra-textual social knowledge, which is a mental-virtual recollection of actuality, other texts, and conventions of narrativization.

This interpretive process once again highlights the constructed nature of our notion of actuality. The events, words and actions that have occurred in the past are recalled as actuality, but the recollection is often that of media images that purport to represent actuality, rather than actuality itself. The mental-virtual and the
technological-virtual combine in the apperception of actuality in the text. Actuality is invoked to some extent by the prior experience of viewing the image. We do not know of President Nixon's participation in the Watergate scandal through direct experience, but we refer to an accumulated textual construct of reality that has established this event as 'fact' (fig. 8.3.4). The indexical function of the image that represents the interplay of forces, actions and objects utilizes the viewer's prior experience of textual representations in order to refer to the cultural construct of reality. Although the text may refer to actuality, the reference occurs in the viewer, who produces the connection between the cultural construct of reality and the text.

Fig. 8.3.4: President Nixon recommending the Watergate hotel as suitable accommodation for Forrest Gump.

The Actual/Imaginary continuum

Relating these findings to the theoretical perspective as presented in the first chapter, reference in the text can be seen as an interpretive function whereby cultural constructs are ascribed to, or aligned with textual cues, and partial correspondences between prior sensory experience and the image are observed. The film depicts occurrences, actions, events, and the interplay of forces, characters or actual people, but it is the viewer who provides the linkage between the audio/visual representation and the actual world, through identification of perceptual similarities, and through the cultural construct of reality. Peirce recognizes the activity of the interpretant, classifying secondness as the index when an object, as synsign when a representation, and dicisign when interpretation (see fig. 8.3.1), thereby allowing for the divergent function of actuality, representation and interpretation. The representation, however, provides only intimation, or suggestion of interpretive strategies, but the viewer constructs the connections that comprise indexical signification in response to these cues. Although the representational expression of secondness (the synsign), performs a signifying function, it is the interpretive activity of the viewer that determines the application of the text in the final reading.
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The imaginary and actuality form the two extremes of a continuum – at one extreme narrative subsumes actuality (makes it invisible, or transparent, although it is present to some degree), and at the other extreme actuality subsumes narrative (renders it undetectable, by creating the illusion of actuality despite the presence of narrative construction). Neither absolute actuality nor absolute fiction is achievable, as there is always some measure of the opposing value in the images, and in the interpretation of the images. One could be said to take priority over the other, but never to totally displace its presence in the text. It is, therefore, inappropriate to classify an entire text as being at one point in the continuum, as a fictional text, or a factual text, but a more appropriate approach to the narrativization of actuality in audio/visual texts is to identify multiple moments within a text and to define where these can be located on the narrative/actual continuum. Each moment of a text has the potential to establish reference in a particular manner, and with a unique mixture of actuality and imaginary elements (see fig. 8.3.5).

![Diagram](image)

**Fig.8.3.5:** The actual imaginary continuum, with moments of the text occupying different referential zones

The notion of gradated referentiality outlined earlier in this chapter offers a model whereby the two fields of the imaginary and the actual can be accommodated simultaneously. Sensory resemblance and the discursive rules of formation coexist as determinants on interpretation in this model, which does not privilege one over the other but allows for multiple influences on interpretation. Codes and conventions function conjointly with perceptual correspondence of the image and the actual to shape the interpretation of images, and their referential connections with actuality and with culture. The convergence of disparate elements within a single image only serves to highlight the variability of the reference that connects images with the conditions 'outside' the audio/visual text.
8.4 Orders of Verisimilitude in Relation to Genre

Appropriating the Image of the President in Contact

The analysis of actuality and its narrativization in Forrest Gump and Contact in the forthcoming section requires recognition of the differentiation between the interpretive strategies that are implied by genres. The appearance of a rather synthetic President Clinton in Contact, for example, seems out of place in the science fiction genre, requiring that the viewer alter their frame of interpretation to allow for the presence of an actual identity within the imaginary world of the dramatic representation. The inclusion of a president, or a notable public identity, in Forrest Gump, however, is more easily acceptable, as the satirical representation of these figures is subsumed by a fictional comedy that requires no serious referential reading.

The verisimilitude of these texts must be considered in a different light than that of JFK, where the image puts forward a representation that implies actual events. The verisimilitude apparent in Forrest Gump and Contact is a narrative device which gives the impression that an external actuality has entered, or ‘broken into’ the diegesis. The fictional characters interact with actual identities in both films, but the convergence of dramatic with actual within the image becomes an appropriation of the actual by the fictional narrative, rather than a statement, or claim of actuality, as is the case in JFK. The move beyond verisimilitude in the Zappruder film, and the distinction between visual resemblance of the image to the actual, and the conventions of genre, demand a reappraisal of the notion of verisimilitude. In both Schindler’s List and JFK there is an implicit claim of reality, with a distinction between the methods employed to persuade the viewer as to the actuality/text correlation. In Zemeckis’ films, however, the actuality images do not lay claim to the reality of the depicted events, but induce a convergence of interpretive strategies that remains within the milieu of fictional verisimilitude, but permeates the boundaries of fiction by intruding on the imaginary with actual content. The visual resemblance of the image to actuality is once again demonstrated to be independent of the conception of the actuality of the text, with the conventions of genre and the more general discursive rules of formation giving indication of the actual. Verisimilitude is connected with the conventions of genre, rather than the visual exactitude of the image, or the perceptual resemblance of the image to actuality.
Convergence of Actuality with Imaginary Content in Forrest Gump and Contact

Fig. 8.4.1: The image of President Clinton appropriated from actual press conferences and inserted into the Contact narrative.

Fig. 8.4.2: The President’s image is seen in television screen images ...

Fig. 8.4.3: and as digital manipulation of existing images in order to combine them with the actors (Tom Skerritt), within the frame.
The consideration of *Contact* in this chapter will be in the main concerned with the digital figure of President Clinton that is constructed as a character in the diegesis. One must question whether this manipulation of the image in the name of verisimilitude is desirable (or necessary), for this narrative, and one must also consider the nature of verisimilitude itself, and recognize the possibility of a range of verisimilarities that articulate various connections. The verisimilitude of the science-fiction film does not equate to that of a documentary, or a realist narrative. It is a specific verisimilitude that establishes *feasibility* of the diegetic world, and the technological, social, economic and cultural attributes of the imaginary setting. Prominent science-fiction films, such as Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), or Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), are more concerned with establishing the 'other worldliness' of their diegesis, removing the setting from the familiar by displacing familiar elements in time. The familiarity that is represented in these other films is dislocated from its contemporary setting, and relocated in an unfamiliar world, removed by time and space from the world we now consider to be familiar. Such examples can be observed in Kubrick’s use of familiar corporate trademarks, most evident in the Pan-Am ‘gravity shoes’ of the space shuttle hostess in 2001, or the reconstruction of a Los Angeles ‘China Town’ in the futuristic city of Scott’s *Blade Runner*. Familiarity is surrounded with the difference that technological advance and temporal distance have imposed on the diegetic world.

In *Contact*, however, Zemeckis highlights the familiarity of the Clinton identity, dispelling the illusion of the imaginary content and attempting to construct a credible scenario by including the most familiar and identifiable public identity in the year of 1996. The actual component of the image is the digitally recreated figure of the president, and the effect of his presence on the otherwise fictional scenario is to familiarize the diegesis, bringing the actual world into the fictional world of the text. The inclusion of the Clinton image in *Contact*, however, provides an interpretive conundrum that lacks the satirical wit of the combined actual/dramatic images in *Forrest Gump*. The impossible combination of dramatic scenario and actual public identity confers a form of verisimilitude on the text, as the inclusion of the actual identity in the fictional image involves a transference of the actual president into the imaginary setting of the fictional diegesis, as opposed to the intrusion of the (fictional) actor into the actual setting in *Forrest Gump*. The actual identity in *Contact* is in foreign territory, that territory being a diegetic world that remains constant throughout the film, as opposed to the figure of *Forrest Gump*, who provided a constant element while the diegetic setting changes from a fictional to an actual, historical setting. The intrusion of actuality into the diegesis in *Contact* detracts from a viewer’s suspension of disbelief, requiring a new interpretive frame that sets the actual against the fictional, not in jest, as in *Forrest Gump*, but as a component of the diegetic world. The participation of the viewer in the imaginary world of the science-fiction film demands a departure from any notion of the correlation of the image and current actuality, that provides the verisimilitude associated with the documentary image. Its intrusion into the fantasy world of the science fiction genre is incongruous.

President Clinton’s virtual appearance alongside the actors in a film that otherwise explores the extremes of the unknown does, however, serve the purpose of making the fictional setting more familiar, real and believable to the viewer, in effect reversing the relocation of familiarity in a foreign world, as in Kubrick’s and Scott’s
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films, but instead locating the diegesis within a familiar world and relocating the
science fiction in the everyday. The verisimilitude apparent in Clinton’s virtual
appearance, however, is that of the order of news and documentary genres discussed
in previous chapters, which elicits a response that is either one of an acceptance of
the actuality of the image (in which case a viewer is deceived by the image), or,
alternatively, a realization that the image is the result of manipulation, in which case
a viewer no longer suspends disbelief, but is actively engaged in disbelief, and the
chimera of the dramatic moment is disrupted. The viewer is forced into a reflection
that diminishes the immediacy of the imaginary content of the text by inserting an
icon of the actual world. Although this encourages an interpretation that places the
diegesis in the realm of the feasible and the familiar, the remainder of the text seeks
to integrate the unfamiliar, the improbable and the speculative into this familiarity.
This is in contrast to the use of actuality images in Forrest Gump, in which the
convergence is beneficial to the satirical interaction between the dramatic character
historical, actual identities, and the challenge to the assumed actuality of the image
only adds to the hilarity of the narrative. One can conclude from this contrasting
interpretation of actual identities appearing in fictional narrative that there are orders
of verisimilitude that are applicable to specific genres, and that the convergence of
these orders of verisimilitude can, in a particular genre bring about a conflict of
interpretive strategies, while in another it will not.

Orders of Verisimilitude

Textual verisimilitude has been established in the previous two chapters to be an
extra-textual connection with prior experience, and an intertextual comparison. The
appearance of President Clinton in Contact employs an order of verisimilitude that
would ordinarily be associated with news and documentary images, utilizing the
presence of a notable (and actual), public figure. Referential verisimilitude in
fictional narrative integrates actual people, places, events and fields of knowledge in
order to simulate the actual world. This order of verisimilitude is reliant on Barthes
cultural or referential code of narrative, which specifically references fields of
existing knowledge. The social knowledge associated with the images persuades the
viewer as to the veracity of the text.

Imitative verisimilitude emulates the actual world through its setting, mise-en-
scène, dialogue and narrative construction. The measure of imitative verisimilitude is
not the correlation of the image with the actual, but the extent of its capacity to
persuade the viewer as to the similarities between enactment and actuality. There is
no expectation of the text being ‘real,’ but, rather, an evaluation as to the efficacy of
the realism of the text. Does the diegetic world bear resemblance to, or reflect the
qualities of the actual world? Such issues concerning the realism of the text are
paramount in engaging the viewer in the suspension of disbelief.

In the case of science fiction and fantasy genres, however, the necessity for textual
realism is displaced by the notion of verisimilitude of potentialities, of technological
(future) feasibility, and of the difference between the actual and diegetic worlds. To
‘convince’ an audience of its verisimilitude the science fiction or fantasy film must

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18 Barthes, 1974, p.20.
maintain cohesion in its narrative, but simultaneously reveal the cultural, social, technological and even psychic dissimilarity between the diegesis and actuality. This difference provides a temporal leap which must account for any future development, which must correspond to the viewer's assessment of technological potentiality, as opposed to the referential and imitative orders of verisimilitude, where similarity to the (concurrent) actuality is required. In *Contact* Zemeckis combines referential and imitative verisimilitude with the verisimilitude of potentialities, as can be seen in the attention to technological detail, particularly in the inclusion of existing radio-telescope technology, its utilization in receiving the encoded plans for the alien-designed machine, and the feasibility of the exotic machine within the narrative context.

**Fig. 8.4.4:** Doctor Ellie Arroway (*Jodie Foster*), explains the alien plans to government officials. The plans offer a familiar and feasible technological verisimilitude.

**Fig. 8.4.5:** The alien designed machine requires the technological verisimilitude of the plans (above), to be a feasible contemporary construction.
This combination of referential, imitative, and technological verisimilitudes draws the viewer into a dual interpretive frame. On one hand the familiarity of the contemporary world, the actual president (digitally reproduced), the existing SETI project,¹⁹ and the existing form of technical drawings, and radio telescope arrays, all point towards a docu-drama style of actuality, whereas the (fictional) interdimensional space travel of alien technology, the discovery of alien radio signals, the notion of instantaneous time/space travel and existence of non-physical, extraterrestrial intelligent life, all point away from the familiar and the everyday towards a diegetic world of an unexplored and mysterious universe. However unfamiliar this universe may be, the discontinuity between present technology and the potentiality for the represented technology is a difference that is both explainable, and feasible within the narrative, given the description of the alien encounter. The difference in technologies is not necessarily that of future developments in technology (as is commonly represented in science fiction film), but the feasibility of the existence of simultaneous extra-terrestrial civilizations. Indeed, it is the contemporary milieu of the diegesis that Zemeckis seeks to emphasize through the inclusion of President Clinton and the familiar social order.

The most significant order of verisimilitude is that of the verisimilitude of textual coherence, in which the text adheres to conventions that make the portrayal of events accessible to the viewer, and draw intertextual references to previous experiences of

¹⁹ The Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence is an actual project that has received funding from a variety of sources, including NASA, and several private corporations. Further information on the institute can be found at the home page of SETI: http://www.seti-inst.edu/

“The SETI Institute was incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit California corporation on November 20, 1984. The purpose of the Institute, as defined at that time and still true today, is to conduct scientific research and educational projects relevant to the nature, prevalence, and distribution of life in the universe. This work includes two primary research areas: 1) SETI, and 2) Life in the Universe. Concurrent with its research focus, the Institute strives to contribute to mathematics and science education related to these fields of interest. Over its fifteen year history, the Institute has administered over $110 million of funded research.” Cited from the SETI general information and history web page, http://www.seti-inst.edu/general/seti-his.html.
textual verisimilitude. The methods of narrativization are a persuasive form of verisimilitude, particularly in the case of formalized narrative, such as television news, where the format itself is interpreted as an indication of veracity. 30 A significant alteration of textual coherence can disrupt the interpretive strategies of the viewer, bringing about a disruption of the tenuous balance between the willingness of the viewer to, on one hand, suspend disbelief, and, on the other hand, reject a film as unfeasible. The coherence of the narrative, and the style of its representation, are a significant factor in the reception of the text, and the extent to which authenticity and veracity are attributed to the text. Barthes' notion of the proairetic code, utilizing the "already read, seen, done and experienced," 31 indicates a departure from the text that is reliant on the interpretive strategies and cultural constructs that exist in the consciousness of the viewer, and that influence the way in which a viewer enters into the text. The interpretation becomes an interpolation of the text with existing experience, and the apprehension of fictional realism, or non-fictional correlation of the text with the actual, is reliant on the constitution of this interpolation.

The entry into and departure from the text require a nomadic subjectivity that synthesizes not only the text with the actual, but also with the multiplicity of potential subjective positions that can be occupied by the viewer. Verisimilitude of textual coherence can be effectual in relation to one subjective position, and ineffectual to another. The virtual appearance of President Clinton in Contact offers an example of this heterogeneity in verisimilitude. If the appearance of the president is considered in light of the narrative logic of the chain of causality that would require presidential intervention in the case of contact with extras-terrestrial intelligence, then the presence of the president is appropriate, and, indeed, an expectation held by the reader viewer. If, however, the viewer considers the 'virtual president' from the standpoint of a dedicated follower of science-fiction, who is engaged in a flight of fantasy and has no desire to integrate the reality of political alliances or actual identities into the illusory diegesis of the narrative, or have a negative opinion of the president, or of politicians in general, then the interpretive experience is altered considerably, and the viewer is adversely effected by the presence of the public identity in the narrative. The subjective position of a viewer at the time of viewing, or the multiple positions through which a viewer might nomadically traverse, bring about a complex metamorphic verisimilitude, in which the interpretation of the text can involve fluctuation between conflicting positions. From one moment to another the reading can alter according to the variant connections drawn between the text and the other texts, experiences and alliances that constitute the individual and cultural constructs that constitute the subjectivity of the viewer.

The imitative and referential orders of verisimilitude have been encountered in part within the modes of reference defined earlier in this chapter, but referential modalities are concerned with the relations between the actual and the image. 30

Elliott et. al. 1986, p.269, point out that television news adheres to conventions, and "by cementing an image of the broadcasters as politically responsible these help to strengthen claims to autonomy and to forestall attempts to impose more stringent controls on their operations. This framework of constraints, however, produces a form of news which appears as a factual report of events happening in the world, rendered in a style that conceals the processes of selection and decision involved in the reports and allows the least room for comment and argumentation."

31 Barthes, op. cit., p.20.
whereas the orders of verisimilitude are pertinent to the fictional narrative, in which actuality is a circumstance that exists external to the diegesis, rather than being an integral component, as is the case with JFK and Schindler's List. Verisimilitude functions as a paradigm distinct from referentiality, as it defines similarities between enactment and actuality, rather than the technological-virtual distinction discussed in relation to the modes of reference. Verisimilitude in Contact and Forrest Gump is evocative of evidential referentiality, but the assertion of verisimilitude is that of similarity to the actual rather than being evidential concerning actuality.

Verisimilitude in its several forms, then, is a quality of the text that is brought to bear in the interpretive activity of the viewer, and refers to actuality via the prior experience of the viewer. It elicits the acceptance of the viewer as to the authenticity of the diegesis, whereas referentiality functions in the correlation between the image and the actual world. The efficacy of verisimilitude is contiguous with the expectations of the viewer as to the narrative formation of the text, and the appropriateness of its referential functions in relation to its form and genre. The apprehension of actuality in the image relies on the viewer's extra-textual experience of actuality, and the interpretive strategies applied by the viewer.

Evidence of this connection of actual experience with the experience of a viewer can be observed in the use of images, identities, occurrences and music in Forrest Gump that refer to a specific time period. The text is reliant on the social knowledge of a viewer in order to trace the historical development of American culture throughout the period of the life of the lead character. The engagement of the viewer with the text involves a departure from the text, and an obverse articulation of the (past) actual within the text. The narrative is not isolated from the culture of its inception, but neither does it provide an unmediated reflection of that culture. Rather, it amounts to an intensity, where the textual representation, the cultural construct of reality and the actual are united in the act of viewing and interpreting the film. None of these can be said to remain discrete territories, but are connected by flows and permeation of boundaries, as the experience of the text proceeds.

Verisimilitude, then, consists of two significant functions, the first of which is the connection of the text with the actual when a minimum of conflicting values occurs, as the sensory experience of the viewer is aligned with textual data. This is the Bazinian model of the image, and stipulates the correspondences of actuality with the image. 22 Prince points to a contrasting "perceptual realism" in which the perceptual resemblance of the image to actuality is recognized as a distinct function of the cinematic image. 23 The second of these realisms occurs when comparisons, associations and interactions between the image, perceptions of actuality and other images provide an interpretive frame for the viewer in determining the 'value' of the text as an image that evokes a conditional 'belief' in the diegesis.

22 Bazin, 1967.
23 Prince, op. cit., p.35.
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Interpretation and Interpolation: The Comparative Composite

The intertextual reference of the images in Forrest Gump and Contact and the extensive inclusion of cultural ‘landmarks’ in Forrest Gump provide an example of these processes in action. The cultural references assist viewers in constructing a comparison between their conception of history and the textual representation of significant historical moments. One could describe this process as a comparative composite of the text and the actual, where the identifiable stages of cultural development provide an interpretive paradigm that displaces the requirement for the evidential qualities of referentiality. The specific location of the narrative in the stages of chronological advancement promotes a verisimilitude that combines the order of textual coherence, through reference to the form and content of other texts, with the imitative and referential orders of verisimilitude. The orders of verisimilitude, in this case, are not mutually exclusive, but several may be exhibited simultaneously by the text.

The viewer is made aware of the correlation between the textual representation of actuality, particularly in the past experience of television news coverage of the major political events, and the construction of reality that results from the apperception of texts as correspondent with actuality. The manipulated images, by including significant public identities, refer indirectly to the conventions of news and documentary, and this reference highlights the formation of a constructed reality which results from accumulated experience of textual representation, that is then apprehended by the viewer as actuality. Personal experience of the actual is not consciously distinguished from the textually constructed actual, as the experience of the text converges with actual experience in the memory of the viewer.

Reference to the Watergate scandal in Forrest Gump connects with other, often personal, or individual experiences that are cognitively associated with the viewer’s initial experience of the news coverage of the event. The text directs the viewer towards prior textual experience as an index of temporal advancement. The prior textual experience is, of course, satirized by the manipulation of the images, and the inclusion of Forrest Gump in the textual construction of an imaginary history. The recollection of prior textual representations of events, however, is conceived of as an actuality. The manipulated images, on one hand, produce a reflexive awareness of the significance of media texts in the construction of cultural reality, but on the other hand, in a reversal reminiscent of Baudrillard’s notion of hyperreality, the previous textual experience seems more ‘real’ in contrast to the manipulated image. By satirizing the television news image, the manipulated images of Forrest Gump utilize the referentiality of recollected prior (textual) experiences.

The inclusion of a 'digital president' in Contact, however, refers to the social order in America concurrent with the production of the film. The apperception of the president as 'actual' is a contemporaneous intertextuality that defies the conventions of the science fiction genre, and as a result seems 'unreal'. The utilization of a virtual image (in the absence of any physical enactment before the camera), diminishes the indexical value of the other contemporary images of Clinton, reminding the viewer of the capacity of the image to construct an identity using perceptual realism rather than indexical reality. The indexicality of the image is subverted by the social knowledge that the president did not act in the film, but has been digitally constructed from existing images. The image of the president is both literally and figuratively a construct of the other images which depict his identity and social position. The experience of Clinton in the fictional text minimizes the veracity of images external to the text by demonstrating the potential for manipulation of images, and the capacity of computer generated images to present a false reality, rather than to represent an actuality. The implications of the manipulated image reach out from the text and effect the interpretation of other texts.

The relations between the visual image and actuality are dependent on the interpretive strategies adopted by the viewer, which, in turn, are dependent on the experiences that comprise the cultural construct of reality. Prince, in his analysis of digital manipulation of cinematic images, confirms this notion, as he identifies the purpose of the image in suggesting interpretive frames to the viewer, and aligns this process with actual experience:

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24 See Prince, op. cit., p.35.
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An extensive body of evidence indicates the many ways in which film spectatorship builds on correspondences between selected features of the cinematic display and a viewer's real-world visual and social experience. These include iconic and noniconic visual and social cues which are structured into cinematic images in ways that facilitate comprehension and invite interpretation and evaluation by viewers based on the salience of represented cues or patterned deviations from them. 36

In the case of the manipulated images in Forrest Gump and Contact, the suggested interpretive frame is one whereby the represented cues themselves suggest a 'patterned deviation' from the experience of prior interpretations. Manipulation of the images has created visual cues that are in contravention to the conventions of genre, and which, when the extrinsic content of the image is considered, demand a revision of the interpretive assumption of the actuality of the image. The apperception of reality in the image, however reliant on textual coherence, or in reference to actuality, cannot be determined by the image alone, but requires the comparative composition of the image, the sum of recollected experience, and the interpretive strategies that have resulted from the sum of viewing experiences.

The comparison of manipulation in Forrest Gump with that in Contact reveals the significance of the conventions of genre in determining the interpretation of audio/visual texts. The comedic scenario of Forrest Gump allows for a broader interpretive frame, in that elements of surprise, subversion of conventions, and misrepresentation of actuality are themselves characteristics of the genre, and are apprehended by the viewer as an innovative device. The manipulation in Contact, however, is a more challenging disruption of convention, as the notion of reality itself comes under consideration in a narrative that explores the boundaries of reality as conceived in contemporary culture. The conventions of comedy film are far more flexible than those of the science fiction genre, and the breach of the fiction/non-fiction boundary in Contact is an affront to the distinction between the diegesis of the film and the actual.

Film critics reflect the irritation caused by this seemingly unwelcome permeation of boundaries in the reception of the film. Hoberman of the Village Voice states, "while all Contact's performances seem a bit constricted, the most blatantly constructed belongs to our starstruck fearless leader". 37 David Ansen of Newsweek observes that "Zemeckis, using his 'Forrest Gump' tricks, inserts actual Clinton press conferences into the story's context, a distracting device that doesn't feel quite kosher". 38 The intrusion of actuality into the fantasy realm of science fiction films, and the resentment with which critics have received this manipulation of actuality, provides an indication of the influence of genre conventions over the reception of texts, and the extent to which the interpretive strategy of the viewer is disrupted by breaches of convention. As has been exemplified in both Forrest Gump and Contact, the permeation of boundaries through the convergence of actuality and dramatic enactment can be apprehended as either a positive or negative occurrence, according to the particular conventions of genre that are challenged.

36 Prince, op. cit., p.31.
38 Ansen, 1997.
The analysis of texts in the second half of the thesis has established several significant points regarding the narrativization of actuality. The conventions of genre have been identified as the most effective indication of actuality in the text. The screen image bears with it an encoded implication of the degree of actuality that is suggested by the characteristics of the image, and each genre has discursive rules of formation that form particular connections with the actual, and which evoke interpretive strategies that accompany that genre. The several modalities of documentary defined in chapter 5.2 illustrate the multifarious interpretations that can be applied to specific characteristics of image and sound in documentary film and television. The convergent texts that have been analyzed in the last three chapters, however, demand a more specific approach to the referential functions of images.

Convergence of form and genre within a text calls for a new approach to the theoretical appraisal of the image. The analyses undertaken in this thesis have demonstrated the contrasting referential functions of the image, of verisimilitude in fictional narrative, and the partial correspondence with actuality in the documentary image. The so-called 'hybrid' texts, in which the conventions of multiple genres are combined, require an awareness of the gradation of the convergence of genre, and the implications of the permeation of boundaries within texts. The theorist is left with the choice of accepting the postmodern position of the detached image, which bears no relation to actuality, and applying this notion to all images, or to consider the gradation of the relations between actuality and the image. A number of relations have been identified, from the fictional realism that is apprehended as verisimilitude, to the evidential reference of documentary, and the several intermediate stages that lie between the two. Also the perceptual realism of the image, as opposed to the diminished resemblance observable in 'grainy' and 'shaky,' or black and white images influences the interpretation of the text. The measure of actuality in the text has been shown to be predominantly the result of the conventions of genre rather than the perceptual realism of the images, but the sensory correspondence between the image and actuality is inclusive in the viewer's overall conception of the actuality/image relations.

The conventions of fictional narrative locate actuality outside the text, with incidental reference only whereas the conventions of the documentary genre encourage an interpretation that locates actuality within the text, using the image as evidential reference. The texts that have been analyzed demonstrate the inadequacy of the categorization of an entire text according to this system of classification, which is capable only of placing actuality within or outside the text, but does not account for gradation of the apperception of actuality in the image, proportional relations of the conventions of genre as they constitute a text, and the cultural constructs by which such conventions are ascertained and applied by the viewer. The analyses in this thesis have identified several areas that require a reconsideration of current film theory, and a reappraisal of the methodology of film analysis. The importance of conceiving of moments within the text, and the relations between moments, rather than a totalizing categorization of whole texts, is significant in coming to terms with the convergence of form and genre that is increasingly apparent in film and television texts.

The relations between the text and actuality have important ramifications for the fields of film and television research, as the role of the screen image in society
demands both a healthy misgiving as to the 'absolute truth' of the image, and a requirement for the image as an expanding form of communication and artistic expression. The relations of the image to the actual are paramount in the cultural construct of reality, and in the everyday functions of society, in that the representation of actuality also alters the shape of actuality. A clearer understanding of the codes and conventions of the image, and of the perceptual illusions of reality inherent in the media is required, for, as Silverstone observes, the interpretation of texts according to one code can be appropriate, but when apprehended according to another code can be problematic:

...The television text manifests a concern both within its structure and within its content with the need to present reality (and this is equally true of dramatic and fiction as it is of factual programming) and that this concern is a product both of the particular character of the medium and of the various narrative strategies, in argument, and above all in the naturalization of the text as a whole, that define a primary dimension of its ordering. The demands of verisimilitude, much more in evidence as a conscious strategy in the production of a fictional text, become both more problematic and more insidious in the presentation of a documentary text, which by its very existence and label masks the artifices involved. 39

The methods of analysis offered in this thesis suggest a pluralism that accounts for deviations from, and convergence of codes and conventions. The relations between the text and actuality cannot be arrived at through the assumption that the image is of a particular genre, but requires evaluation as to the multiple constituent parts that comprise the text, and the multifarious connections with actuality that are created by moments within the text.

39 Silverstone, 1988, p.33.
The progress toward the objectives of this thesis has been through a combination of theoretical discussion and critical analysis. The narrativization of actuality has been analyzed in its form and genre, with the cultural, individual and actual influences on the text and on interpretive strategies being taken into consideration. The convergence of form and genre, observed in the permeability of intervening boundaries, has been demonstrated with textual examples. There is also much to be said about the multiple theories that have been implemented during the course of the thesis. The multiperspectival approach has allowed for flexibility of analytical procedure, and enabled a breadth of perspective that would otherwise not have been possible. The conclusion will recapitulate the more significant findings of the research, and evaluate the pertinence of the methodology to the field of media analysis. The research process and the attendant unfolding of new awareness and appreciation of theoretical perspectives over the course of the composition of the thesis will be discussed in relation to the chronological development of a position regarding the narrativization of actuality. The possibilities of new directions for research, and the feasibility of applying the methodology utilized in this thesis in future analyses will also be considered.

The Significance of the Research

Understanding the relations between actuality and the audio/visual text have proven to be the most significant challenge of the thesis, with the conflict of structuralism and post-structuralism complicating the analysis of the articulation of actuality in the text. The multiperspectival approach applied to this problem has highlighted the importance of the issue, with the development from theories of signification, as posited by Peirce, to Saussurian structuralism, and the semiology of Barthes, on through the reader-response theory of Iser, toward the post-structuralism of Foucault, and of film theorists such as Bordwell, and Carroll, and the cultural perspective of Hall and Morley. At the apex of this theoretical assemblage, however, Deleuze and Guattari provide a model that allows for flexibility and multiperspectival synthesis. The actual, according to their perspective, need not be considered as a disconnected milieu, but, rather, as a component of a complex weaving that combines actuality, culture and the individual on a plane of consistency. The tension between structuralism and post-structuralism concerning the site of the construction of a text, as a reader-response or as a textual phenomenon, is deflected by the notion of the rhizome multiplicity. Arguments that insist on an absolutist position concerning the site of meaning are set aside by the notion of assemblage, where stratification is no limitation to an assemblage that draws from multiple strata, in this case from actuality, from culture, and from the individual. The division between one stratum and another is permeated by the assemblage, which operates
Conclusion

across a range of strata. The actual, the text and the viewer are participants in a monism that underlies divisions and boundaries.

The major contribution of this thesis concerning the connectivity of the actual, the text and the viewer, lies in the demonstration that the delineation of actuality from the imaginary is resultant of the cultural construct of reality, and its conjunction with discursive rules of formation. The conventions of discourse, and particularly the characteristic devices of particular genre, imply specific relations with actuality, and the image is conventionally interpreted according to these textual inferences. The image, however, is also shown to be affected by actuality, in that a measure of correlation with the actual is reflected in the text, partly through the requirements of verisimilitude, which engages the cultural construct in a comparative composite of experience, cultural convention and sensory semblance. The Baudrillardian notion of simulacra, then, is superseded by the notion of partial correspondence, which does not presuppose an absolute separation of the image and actuality. The notion of partial correspondence enables the text to proportionally indicate the actual to the viewer, without being isolated as a disconnected simulation. The image does not become a substitute for reality, but the referentiality of the image contributes to a cultural construct of reality that consists of codification of the actual.

The second notable finding of this research is that the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of rhizome has been confirmed as a successful means of modeling the multiple facets of audio/visual narrative. This model cannot, however, be considered in isolation from the arboreal model, as the two are engaged in continual interaction and transferal. The text as rhizome can also interact with the arboreal characteristics of the text. Stratification, which operates as an arboreal delineation, functions as an overcoding of the plane of consistency, and are intersected by machinic assemblages or collective assemblages of enunciation, which are the rhizomic multiplicities that overlap divisions of stratification. Audio/visual texts are ostensibly of a genre, or originating from a particular form of media, and according to such delineation are subjected to a stratified overcoding. The rhizomic text, however, reveals the breaks-flows that occur between strata and texts, and the lines of flight that deterritorialize, transforming a multiplicity from one formation to another. The molecular flow is in a continual state of tension between deterritorialization and the social pressure toward a retterritorialization that prevents the line of flight. Multiplicities consisting of groupings of texts, whether defined by genre or form, are continually subjected to these opposing forces, and the resulting changes in the multiplicity are observable as 'hybrid' forms of media that permeate or span existing boundaries, and the resultant pressure to reterritorialize the newly formed multiplicity by generating a newly defined genre grouping. The permeation of genre boundaries is indicative of a rhizomic 'offshoot' from the codified boundaries of conventional genre groupings, and results in the formation of a new multiplicity, in this case being reterritorialized as new 'sub-genres' of drama-documentary, or documentary-drama. The intention of this thesis, however, has been to define the processes of transformation beyond genre boundaries, which are considered permeable, rather than to create new delineation between groups.

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1 See Corner, 1996, p.34 for a distinction between drama-documentary and documentary-drama, in which Corner supports the position of shifting boundaries, but maintains a definite boundary between the two forms of hybrid text.
Conclusion

The rhizome model encourages the awareness of outside influences on both the text and the reader/viewer. Despite the Deleuze-Guattarian notion of the delimiting, overcoding influence of the molar representation, the representation in the form of a film or television program, is also engaged in molecular flows. The text as rhizome forms connections with the outside, and the viewer, who also forms connections while interacting with the text, can transform the overcoded representation into a molecular flow (or to compare the Deleuze-Guattarian model with Hall’s cultural theory), an oppositional reading of that text. 2 The resulting molecular flows that operate in the “realm of beliefs and desires,” 3 and defy all distinction between the social and the individual, illustrate the tension between the arboreal and rhizomic models that is continually at work in representations, and the interpretive strategies that are applied to the text.

Post-Postmodernism

Several assumptions concerning postmodern theories have been revealed during the process of researching the boundaries between genres, and between the narrative and actuality. Crotty correctly observes that the most unique aspect of postmodern theories lies in the abolition of boundaries, and the notion of the blurring of any delineation between territories:

What the postmodernist spirit has brought into play is primarily an overpowering loss of totalising distinctions and a consequent sense of fragmentation. The boundary between elite and popular culture, between art and life is no more. 4

The analysis of the selected texts, however, has demonstrated the existence of several specific relations that can be identified as functioning between territories. The analysis of Schindler’s List reveals a convergence of classical Hollywood and documentary film conventions that imply actuality, and occupy the text in distinct portions, enabling the viewer to experience an easy transition between interpretive frames. The text, however powerful the verisimilitude of the images may be, remains within the field of dramatic reenactment, and its referentiality always consists of a depiction of the cultural construct of a historical event. The analysis of JFK however, discloses a more confronting intrusion of actuality into the text, and of rapid transitions between genre conventions that destabilize the interpretive frame. Genre boundaries remain intact, but are recontextualized by continuous and repetitious leaps between several conventions. The boundaries are in this case intact, but the actual and the narrative are rendered barely distinguishable by the synthesis of images. The most flagrant breach of boundaries occurs within the images of Forrest Gump, when the actuality image and the dramatic concurrently inhabit the frame. The relation established by such images adequately expresses the notion of partial correspondence, whereby the actuality image is demonstrated to be of the technological-virtual order by the intrusion of the imaginary character into the

1 Hall, 1980, p. 138.
Conclusion

actuality image. Boundaries are challenged by such manipulation, but do not entirely dissolve, as the delineation between the enacted and the actual are identifiable. The permeation of boundaries is most puissant in these images, but the convergence of the genres is evident, and the conventions are distinctly assembled from two divergent modes of reference.

The process of researching boundaries has brought about a change in perspective, from a postmodern assumption of blurred boundaries, to the realization that boundaries remain intact as long as the social conventions of boundaries are intact. It is the cultural construct of genres, and of actuality as opposed to the imaginary, that defines the interpretation of representations. Sensory resemblance of the image to actuality may provide a measure of perceptual realism, but the presupposition as to the ontological status of the image is dependent on the viewer as an experienced ‘reader’ of texts. Boundaries can be opposed, subverted or challenged, but while they continue to be designated and named by a culture, they thereby exist for that culture. The conception of ‘documentary film’ ensures the assumption of reality that accompanies the interpretation of documentary film. Boundaries are not blurred, but are an arbitrary construct of a culture, and as such, are subject to revision, rejection, alteration or reinforcement according to the inclination of the culture. The postmodern subversion of boundaries is a response to conventionality rather than to boundaries, and an expression of the need for flexibility and transformation rather than rigidity and intransigence. When boundaries are redefined as the outer limits of rhizomic multiplicities, the requirement for subversion of boundaries will cease, and new fields of revolutionary thought will be unveiled. It remains to be seen whether the subversion of boundaries will result in newly defined territories with rigidified boundaries, or whether a rhizomic state can be maintained in contrast to the arboreal delineation that has previously dominated film and television convention.

The chronological development of a theoretical position has also seen a transformation in the understanding of Deleuze and Guattari, from the initial misconception that the rhizome model, nomadism, and deterritorialization are independent of their respective opposites: the arboreal model, the state apparatus, and territorialism. The notions of the line of flight, of deterritorialization, and of rhizome are reliant on a comparative interaction with conventional (molar) models. It has been a finding of major significance in this research that boundaries (territorialization), and the breaching of boundaries (deterritorialization), are reciprocally interdependent. The development of a more complex appreciation of the Deleuzo-Guattarian position has brought about a reconsideration of the relations between conventional and revolutionary thought.

Despite their claims to the contrary, there is a manifest dualism in the theories of Deleuze and Guattari. On one hand, they claim “no axiological dualism between good and bad”, and on the other they plainly encourage a dualistic preference for one model over the other:

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Deleuze and Guattari, op. cit., p.20.
Conclusion

Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant. Don’t sow, grow offshoots! Don’t be one or multiple, be multiplicities. Run lines, never plot a point! Speed turns the point into a line! Be quick, even when standing still! 4

The preference for one model, and aversion to the other, amounts to a dualism in their theory that is plainly evident in such statements. Their distaste for structure and hierarchy contrasts with a preference for multiplicity. Their insistence on a contrast between the two models contradicts the previous claims of the interdependency of the theories, in which they state that “there are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomic offshoots in roots”. 7 It is the conclusion of this research in relation to the Deleuze-Guattarian position that in order to function, deterritorialization first requires territorial boundaries from which to escape.

Nomadism is a freedom to move across the surface of the earth without boundaries, and to forbear from constructing boundaries. A nomadic approach calls for the active disintegration of boundaries, for an act of revolutionary thought that permeates boundaries and passes through them as if they did not exist. Deterritorialization, however, cannot be considered to be isolated from, or unrelated to reterritorialization:

An organism that is deterritorialized in relation to the exterior necessarily reterritorializes on its interior milieu. ... One travels by intensity; displacements and spatial figures depend on intensive thresholds of nomadic deterritorialization (and thus on differential relations) that simultaneously define complementary, sedentary reterritorializations. ... Deterritorialization on a stratum always occurs in relation to a complementary reterritorialization. 8

The nomad reterritorializes in an interior alteration, resulting from a movement of the external, which is deterritorialized. The question to be addressed here is the status of nomadism in a world where boundaries are entrenched, where segmentarity delimits the plane of consistency, and where the arboreal model is the dominant paradigm. Although nomadic movements occur, they cannot be considered in isolation from the boundaries that inhibit and disallow them. Nomadism in contemporary cultures of European or American origin entails a struggle against the rigid boundaries that have been constructed by conventions of culture and by the state apparatus.

The boundaries of textual genre and form are inclusive in this argument. A ‘docudrama’ is named according to the genre groupings from which it originates, and has not, as yet, absolutely escaped the delimiting restrictions that define those groupings. A truly ‘nomadic text’ can, and should not be defined in terms of genre, and a truly nomadic reading of the text will disregard any conventions that delimit or direct interpretation. The challenge to conventional genre boundaries in textual construction should not necessarily inspire the institution of a new genre, but, rather, the permeability of genre boundaries should themselves be observed through the text, as is especially applicable in Forrest Gump and JFK. The effect of these texts is to encourage the viewer to consider the relations between the actual and the

4 ibid., p.24.
7 ibid., p.20.
8 ibid., p.54.
representation, and the acculturation of images that denote specific identity or location, and therefore cause connections between the actual, the cultural and the individual to be forged across culturally constructed boundaries.

The re-admittance of the actual into the image, and the reconnection of the individual with the actual via the image, restores to the audio/visual text an authenticity that utilizes reference and denotation, but does not propose a false authenticity in which the representation purportedly corresponds entirely with the actuality. By extending the notion of 'reality' to encompass the cultural, the actual and the individual, the reality of the text has not been reinstated unreservedly and completely, but in conjunction with the representational status of the text. Reality is a complex notion that functions across multiple fields and intersects with several strata of textual, actual, psychic and cultural domains, and can be included in the text without excluding the representational functions that express cultural strategies and utilize conventions of narrativization. Actuality and the cultural construct of reality are not mutually exclusive, but coexist as components of the text, and as connections from the text to the 'outside' world. A narrative can be rhizomic, or arboreal, or it can simultaneously exhibit both qualities, but connections with the culture, and with actuality, are universally evident in the text. Although the arboreal text will obfuscate such connections, and the rhizomic text will proliferate in connections, they are, nevertheless, existent in both forms.

Beyond the Text in Many Directions

The movement of theoretical awareness away from a conflation of reality with the image, to the post-structural consciousness of the representation of reality achieved the purpose of overcoming the naivety of the prior position, but has replaced that naivety with a prohibitive and prescriptive delineation which assumes a complete disconnection of the image from actuality. * It has been amongst the more significant outcomes of this thesis to define and demonstrate the connections between actuality and the image, and to amend the postmodern theoretical trend that has posited the presupposed isolation of representation from actuality. The rhizome model does allow for the presence of multiple connections beyond the boundaries of the text, with connections to actuality and cultural constructs of reality coexisting within the text, and for the text, culture and viewer to exist on a plane of consistency. The audio/visual representation is, therefore, not to be caught up in a conflation of representation with actuality, but neither is it to be entirely divorced from the actual. Between these two absolutes there is a realm of partial constituents that form connections beyond boundaries, and that form a heterogeneous multiplicity, rather than a homogeneous unity. A measure of actuality can be present in the text without the text being identical with that actuality.

According to this model the processes of narrativization are engaged in a reciprocal supposition with actuality in the text, and the mediation of the text functions as a filter through which the actual can be perceived, and which varies in its opacity, but which does not entirely exclude the actual from the representation.

* The contrasting theories are best represented by Bazin's position of absolute truth in the film image (1967), and Baudrillard's simulacra (1988a), in which the image is indiscernible from the reality. Baudrillard's position assumes that the distinction between images and reality should be drawn, in that we should be able to "isolate the real," (p.139).
Conclusion

Narrativization does not preclude actuality from the text, but neither is it transparent. Actuality is a presence in the text, and representation involves culturally determined constructions of actuality. Cultural ‘tracings’ of actuality function as narrativization in the construction of texts, and as interpretive strategies for the viewer. Cultural reality is, within the context of the above analogy, the filter which distorts or modifies the textual view of the actual, and applies a template, or tracing to the actual. The resultant textual connection with the actual is never a complete correlation between actuality and representation, but rather, the representational form is combined with the actual within the frame of the audio/visual text. The text, the actual, the individual and the cultural are extracted onto a plane of consistency, and portions of each form flow into the other milieus.

The notion of verisimilitude is profoundly altered when the text is considered in this manner. The similitude observable in the text becomes a continuum with the actual, rather than an imitation, and cultural reality converges with the actual through the text, combining the interplay of forces that shape the text into a rhizome that shoots out on all sides and forms connections with the ‘outside’. Foucault’s notion of exteriority, ¹⁸ emphasizes the external connections of the text, in the rules and conditions of existence for discourse, where the socio-cultural conditions of the text are reflected by the form of the discourse. The text is molded by the outside because it is connected with the outside; there is no impermeable delineation between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of a film or television text, but permeable boundaries that permit flows to pass in many directions and enable the convergence of discourse and actuality. Rather than reflection, or similitude, the text in fact offers a partial experience of actuality and the cultural conditions of its existence. Audio/visual texts are not an isolated, relativistic representation of a disunited ‘reality,’ but are, rather, a presentation of a heterogeneous aggregation of actual, cultural and individual realities, that are assimilated with the codes of narrativization. The audio/visual text and its interpretation are comprised of a convergence of actuality and the cultural construct of reality – part actuality, part narrativization of the text, part interpretive strategies of the viewer (derived from the culture), and part individual response (evident in desire and belief).

The ramifications of this model, in particular for documentary, news and ‘hybrid’ forms, is to liberate the text from the detached isolation of representation from actuality, and restate it as a participatory element of the cultural and actual milieus. The reality of the text is, by all means, a mediated restatement of the actual, providing a more divergent intellection of events than the direct physical experience of unmediated perception. It combines interpretive cultural values with a segmented, selected series of virtual audio/visual samples of the actual. It pre-empts and frames the interpretive strategies of the viewer, thereby engaging them in a cultural dialogue integral to the notion of negotiated and oppositional readings. The audio/visual text becomes an intersection of lines of connection, not a static point of representation, and draws together a range of diverse elements that are activated before, during and after the viewing experience. The documentarist, or fictional film-maker, is not a despot who imposes interpretive strategies on the viewer, but, rather, engages with a rhizome that produces multiple connections. The styles and procedures of documentary narrativization are an inherited cultural strategy, which has as one of its

¹⁸ Foucault, 1972.
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objectives the ability to affect actuality by completing the cycle of the text, so that the text ‘feeds back’ into actuality and the cultural construct of reality, bringing about some alteration in the actual state of affairs or the cultural conception of events or circumstances. The rhizome model lends itself to a socio-political implementation of audio/visual texts, where the text is interactive with people and events, and brings about transformations of actuality. The rhizomic socio-political is, however, not a distinct territory, but flows into other areas: educational, religious, philosophical, aesthetic, and also into the realm of desire, where the viewer is motivated by pure affect. The narrativization of actuality produces a conjunction of the actual with the cultural.

The Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomic and arboreal models highlight the contrast which is encountered in the thesis, that of the totalizing text, the Barthesian readerly, Eco’s closed text, and Hall’s notion of preferred readings (that correspond with the arboreal model), with the writerly, the open text, the negotiated and oppositional readings that exhibit rhizomic features. The revolutionary text, at least as defined in this postmodern era, is the text which expresses and enables heterogeneity, whereas the conventional, classical text delimits interpretation and imposes interpretive homogeneity. The implementation of classical forms of narrativization is evident in the traditional news and documentary forms, and Hollywood narrative conventions. Such forms are reflective of the genre groupings that have, in turn, formed the conventions of narrative by which they are modeled. Hybrid forms of film and television that exhibit convergence of form and genre combine several classical and non-classical forms. Recontextualizing the classical conventions and defying territorial delimitation. The notion of a singular ‘narrativization’ becomes, instead, a multiplicity comprised of ‘narrativizations’. The hybrid text itself embarks on a line of flight that passes through genre boundaries and travels along lines of connection. The rhizomic text, therefore, is openly comprised of many parts and is in contrariety to structural unity. There is, however, a vast spectrum of possibilities that combine these two polarities. Schindler’s List takes on the appearance of classicism, but contains multiple narrative strategies that are subtly juxtaposed in a text that appears uniform, but on closer examination defies classical narrative form, both visually and structurally. In contrast JFK is obtrusive in its sharp leaps from one genre convention to another, yet its radical structure obscures an arboreal tendency to inhibit interpretive possibilities, while simultaneously functioning rhizomically outside the text in its comparative and political connections. Forrest Gump challenges the notion of actuality in the image, but in doing so unites the actual with the dramatic image in a provocative virtual conjunction of past and present.

The connections between the actual and the individual are dealt with as a cognitive function by Bordwell in the formation of schemata – cultural strategies revealed in connections of thought that reproduce tracings of cultural convention. The structure of the psyche as an ordered, schematic linearity constrains with Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of heterogeneity and schizoanalysis. Bordwell’s post-structuralist reading of cinema accounts for the molar, representational and arboreal paradigm more adequately than it does the intricate molecular flows of the rhizomic model. This formulaic approach to cinema runs into difficulty when the heterogeneity of the audience is considered. Bordwell takes viewer response into consideration, particularly in the distinction between fabula and syuzhet, where the narrative that is constructed by the viewer (fabula), is contrasted with the systems
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employed in the narrativization (syuzhet), and the technical manipulation of style. The variability of viewers, and the molecular multiplicities that are connected with the text, however, do not always comply to schematic or diagrammatic overcoding. Molecular flows are created where codified systems of narrativization are experienced by the viewer and transmuted in the interpretation to fit needs, desires and beliefs, and the text becomes malleable as it connects with the heterogeneous world of the viewer.

Acquiring Multiperspectivalism

Adopting a multiperspectival approach has proven to be a challenging task, most notably in the application of a universe of theoretical approaches to a finite collection of texts. Over the course of the three years of research and writing that comprised the composition of this thesis there has been a continual expansion of the theoretical horizon. Areas that at first did not appear to have relevance to the topic offered insights into specific areas, and were therefore included in order to define or elucidate particular points. Apart from a general expansion of theoretical awareness, however, there has been a corresponding focalization of multiple theories on the topic and the selected texts. The many theories that have been encountered in the course of this research have contributed to a variety of magnitudes, some, such as Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari, having a profound impact on the content, and others providing comparison, analogy or alternative rationalization. The many theoretical contributions, however, have been utilized in order to provide a more complete overview of the narrativization of actuality, and the various approaches that have been applied to the issue have enabled a comprehensive overview that takes historical, as well as current theoretical positions into consideration.

As a researcher, my position has varied considerably over the course of time, from an initial postmodern orthodoxy, adhering to the Deleuze-Guattarian, and Baudrillardian perspectives, and assuming that these theoretical standpoints were correct to the exclusion of all others. The absolutist position, however, was quickly revealed to be inappropriate to the research of a topic that has been the subject of several analytical attempts to define the relations of the image to actuality, most notably the Barthesian semiotic venture, and the phenomenology of early French film theory, from Bazin, and Meleau-Ponty. There has been a gradual awakening to the fact that specific theories are inseparable from their antecedents, and that, particularly in the case of Deleuze and Guattari, closer examination of the theories can reveal profound, and relations with other theories that go beyond any initial impression that is given by a brief summarization of the position. Multiperspectivalism has proved to offer a liberation from the restrictions of deterministically aligning ones self with a single position, but has also been beneficial in the opportunity to apply numerous theories to the thesis.

The central organizing principle of this thesis has been to identify and explicate the connections and similarities between theories, and to attribute to such similarities greater significance than the contradictions which also occur between theories. The

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11 Bordwell, 1985, p.49. The notion of fabula and syuzhet originated with Tomashevsky, 1965, but was specifically applied to cinema by Bordwell.

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structural approach of Peirce or Levi-Strauss may not concur with a Deleuze-Guattarian position, but the conjunction of theories provides a spectrum of opinions, revealing a continuum of logical reason as theoretical debates bring about an evolution of epistemology, and provide a range of possible positions applicable to specific situations. Deleuze has no hesitation in using Peirce in Cinema 1 and Cinema 2, and does not discard the theoretical notions that he finds useful because other areas of Peirce’s work contradict Deleuze’s own theories. He identifies the theoretical variance, and then proceeds to utilize compatible notions to build on Peirce’s system of semiotic signification. The comparable themes of the theories are, in this case, considered more consequential than the fundamental differences between structuralist semiotics and postmodernism.

The multiperspectivalism practiced in this thesis allows for conjunctions between theories, but does not insist on the abandonment of a theoretical thesis. Deleuze and Guattari provide a central position, from which the thesis has expanded into several areas, but to which it returns. Each chapter has embarked on a venture outward from this axis, and explored the predominant theories relevant to a text or particular field of research, and has related these theories back to a Deleuze-Guattarian perspective. In hindsight, the theoretical approach of this thesis has been a qualified multiperspectivalism, with particular emphasis on theoretical conjunction as opposed to delineation between theories.

Future Approaches to Classificatory Boundaries

Conventional delineation between a number of textual classifications has been revealed as inadequate by the analyses in the thesis. The distinction between fiction and non-fiction has been demonstrated to be a simplistic reduction of the complex convergence of actuality, genre convention, the cultural construct of reality, and the individual disposition of the viewer. Schindler’s List consists of a conjunction of elements that defies definition in terms of its standing as a fictional or non-fictional text. The intricate relations between the film, historical actuality, and cultural constructs, are an area that requires further research, not for the purpose of defining and classifying additional genres, such as documentary-drama, drama-documentary or mock-documentary, but, rather, to analyze the functions of textual characteristics and interpretive strategies. The imposition of further boundaries, groupings and delineation according to texts as whole units does not suffice in recognizing and accounting for the segmentation of texts in which genre conventions and narrative form can be contrasted within a single text as well as intertextually. Fiction and non-fiction can coexist within a text, and, indeed, can converge within an image, as is evident in the analysis of Forrest Gump and Contact. The referential functions of audio/visual texts are polymorphous according to the cultural constructs that are applied to their interpretation, and it is this arena of research that requires investigation so as to reach an understanding of the way in which a culture defines itself and interprets its own artifacts.

Heterogeneity is not a reason to abandon any attempt to conceive of the complexity of text, culture, viewer and actuality, but should be considered a

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11 Deleuze, 1989, p.31.
Conclusion

recognition of the fact that these elements are conjoined in a network of connections that cannot be reduced to the notion of territories and boundaries. The Deleuzo-Guattarian approach provides a series of models that account for the multiple concepts that must be taken into consideration when attempting an analysis of cultural artifacts and their significance. The viewer is not a disconnected 'island' of subjectivity, but subjectivity is formed in conjunction with the actualities, conventions, alliances and experiences. The interconnection of subjectivity with the collective is at the nucleus of this research. The individual is never precisely an individual, but sees and interprets the world, texts, and all sensory data according to the experience of culture, and the participation in a cultural group. Having traced the 'lines of flight' pertinent to several texts in this thesis, it is worth noting that this approach has opened up a universe of possibilities for furthering this analytic framework. The recognition of heterogeneity, and the rhizome model, enables seemingly endless conceivable paths for tracing the interconnections of texts with the actual and cultural milieus. The notion of continuum provides the means for a reevaluation of the referential functions of the audio/visual text, and reestablishes the connections between the text and the world it describes, be it imaginary or actual.

When apprehended in this light, JFK can be seen to be a work of genius that has forged the connections between actuality, social hierarchies and fictional narrative in an audacious, experimental and revolutionary departure from the accepted boundaries of the time. Stone presents a particular perspective on the history of the Kennedy assassination, but his methodology in doing so has served a twofold purpose. Firstly, in highlighting the power of the conventions of genre to induce particular interpretive frames, and the significance of the visual form of the image that directs the viewer toward a specific mode of reference. Secondly, the distinction between the perceptual realism of the transparent, high-resolution film image as opposed to the conspicuous textures of super 8 film and black and white video and television images. A significant findings of this research is that a reduction in perceptual resemblance to actuality initiates an interpretive frame that attributes the image with a greater measure of correspondence to actuality. The less transparent the image, the more likely it is to be received as actuality, whereas the highly produced transparency of Hollywood cinematic images suggests diegesis, rather than an actuality. The detectable presence of mediation in a 'raw' documentary image implies the absence of the narrative construction of the text, whereas in comparison, the seamless continuity and smooth camera movements of the fictional narrative give the impression of artifice by means of an apparent examination of the mediation of the image.

The dual perspicacity of actuality in the image – the sensory illusion of perceptual realism, and the acculturated responses evoked by the conventions of genre – provoke a reconsideration of the ontological significance of images. Neither indicates absolute correspondence (as there can never be an absolute correspondence of actuality and the image), but the notion of gradations of actuality in the image supersedes a view that posits the duality of either absolute correspondence or disconnected relativism.

By defining the modalities of actuality in the text this thesis has suggested an outline for future film and television criticism in answer to the call for a change in
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theoretical position from Prince. His proposition is that the changes in film technology and computer generated images demands a reappraisal of a dualistic and absolutist theoretical standpoint in regards to the film image. The current 'explosion' of digital technology has significantly altered the presuppositions that influence the interpretation of images, as the technology required to manipulate images is more freely accessible at the present time than has been the case throughout the history of film and television production. The dividing of the general term 'virtual' into its several constituent stages in chapter 3.3 has allowed for a more specific approach to the interpretation of actuality in the image by delineation between the three fields of virtualization. The apperception of actuality in the image has been demonstrated to work on three levels: the mental, the technological and the narrative, and this distinction enables a more precise comprehension of the relations between the image and actuality.

Hybrid Forms and Emerging Interpretive Strategies

The development of new textual forms, as is evident in JFK and Forrest Gump, brings about a corresponding alteration in interpretive strategies. The cultural construct by which actuality is apprehended in the text responds to changes in narrative form and content, modifying the assumptions that accompany conventions of representation. The manipulation of genre conventions apparent in JFK would be unlikely to cause the equivalent uproar from journalists if it were released in the current climate, as these narrative devices have become more commonplace and acceptable. A film can no longer be assumed to consist of a particular genre in its entirety, as several hybrid forms have emerged over the past decade. The texts which have been selected for analysis in this thesis stand as exemplars in their fields, and have paved the way for several antecedents. The use of actual locations to enhance authenticity in Schindler's List has been repeated in the original battle sites in Braveheart (1995) and the use of the Globe Theatre in Shakespeare in Love (1998) itself a reconstruction of a historical architectural icon, offering in a highly credible reenactment of Elizabethan London. The use of documentary techniques in a dramatic enactment, as evident in Schindler's List and JFK, has also been employed in The Blair Witch Project (1999), and the utilization of news footage and archival film is noticeably present in Apollo 13 (1995). The virtual illusions of Zemeckis in Forrest Gump and Contact could conceivably have influenced the integration of the image with virtual reality in Run Lola Run (1999) however the use of significant public identities has not to my knowledge reappeared since Contact, perhaps due to its dubious ethical standing, and politically contentious circumstances.

With such a significant body of texts that permeate the boundary between documentary and fiction, the interpretation of 'hybrid' texts will never be the same for viewers who have been affected by the alteration that these texts have brought about in the cultural construct of reality. Once the boundaries between genres have been permeated, the presuppositions that are a fundamental component of interpretive strategies concerning the relations between actuality and the image are reshaped. The emergence of new texts, which adhere to the experimental precedents

13 Prince, 1996, p.34.
Conclusion

of JFK or Forrest Gump could conceivably result in a new orthodoxy, in which the use of 'cross-genre' conventions becomes a standard feature of a new genre of hybrid texts. Such formations of new multiplicities is consistent with the 'offshoots' of rhizome theory, and also with early genre theory, as Cook notes that "difference between genres occurs in the particular discourses invoked, the particularity of emphasis on and combination of elements that are shared with other genres". The priority of new research directions should, however, be to account for the relations between actual, the cultural construct of reality, and the text with regard to the interpretive strategies that continually transform in response to alterations in genre conventions. A theoretical approach that accounts for the changing characteristics of boundaries, and the implications of these changes, is a superior analytical tool when compared to the delineation of new boundaries and classifications. The model outlined in this thesis emphasizes the connections that permeate boundaries and establish relations between divergent fields, ahead of the delineation of generic groups that are, after all, subject to continual transformation.

Objectives for Future Research

The future directions suggested by this research concern the relations between actuality and the virtual reality that is currently being refined as an art form that may eventually rival film and television. As sensory correspondence is enhanced by developments in the technological-virtual field, corresponding alterations of the narrative-virtual and the narrative-actual are to be expected, and the creation of interactive narrative forms is a potential extension of present film and television media. The investigation and analysis of current experiments in this field is a significant research priority, as the technological advances that have enabled the manipulation of images, as is evident in Forrest Gump and Contact, are applied to the field of interactive virtual reality. The ability for a viewer to become a participant in a narrative scenario, and to interact with 'virtual characters' would further enhance the notion of verisimilitude and perceptual correspondence. The integration of actuality into such a technology is a potential field for further research, and could profoundly alter present notions of narrative.

The move towards computer generated virtual reality is raising the issue of sensory correspondence afresh, and emerging technologies could challenge the boundaries of sensory perception as did the earliest experiences of cinema. It is likely that changes in narrative form will go largely unnoticed in the shadow of a new technological and perceptual phenomenon, but it is important that the potential for an even more persuasive rendition of actuality that the current two-dimensional form does not eclipse the codification that will accompany such an advance. The recent exploration of virtual reality in cinematic form, as seen in The Matrix (1999) offers an early indication as to the possibilities of a new conception of the narrative-virtual/narrative-actual duality. The perceptual realism of virtual reality is a narrative-virtual in The Matrix, which contrasts with the narrative-actual that exists outside the virtual reality world. A similar theme is explored in Alex Proyas' Dark City (1998) but such cinematic ventures into the realm of virtual reality are limited to

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14 Cook, 1985, p.64.
Conclusion

the contrast of narrative-virtual and narrative-actual, and do not engage with the technological-virtual form of VR technology itself.

The relations of actuality to the means of representation, and the implications of this relationship on the cultural construct of reality, provide a field of research that will not be displaced by advances in representational technology. The connection between narrative form, technological form and interpretive strategies is an area that requires continual revision with regard to cultural and technological variations. There is in this field a potential for researching the cultural construct in terms of the elements that influence its conformation: the technology of representation, the narrative form of texts, the actuality in which it is grounded, and the interpretive strategies that are applied to the text. The formation of this theoretical model accounts for the contributions of text, viewer-response, culture, actuality and author/writer. Alterations in technological or narrative form will enable a reappraisal of the processes by which the cultural construct of reality is produced, and ongoing research in this field will encourage an enhanced awareness of the significance of narrativization in the cultural domain.

In Conclusion...

The most significant findings of this research have resulted from the application of a new methodology for the analysis of actuality in the audio/visual text. Textual reference to actuality, and the influence of actuality on the form and content of texts have been demonstrated to consist of multifarious functions. The interpretive strategies brought by the viewer to the image have been shown to connect with the text through partial perceptual correspondence, and by the conventions of genre, which imply specific relations between the text and actuality. The methods of narrativization that are used affect the understanding of the actual event in the text, and the gradation of the extent to which actuality is deemed to be present in the text are subject to the codification of the narrative in which the actuality image is included.

The notion of applying a gradated model of actuality in the text stands as the single most important analytical tool that has been posited by the research. An awareness of the stratification of virtualization enables an analyst to define the levels of mediation, and the characteristics of the image itself, in the textual actuality. The levels of subjective rendition that occur from actuality, to the text, and in the viewer's interpretation, assure that the naivety of the Bazinian position is not adopted in a declaration of absolute correspondence of actuality with the image. A gradation of relations, however, in which the correspondences between image and actuality are variable, provides a suitable means of ascertaining the extent to which actuality has shaped, or contributed to the image, and, conversely, the measure of narrativization that has been applied to actuality. This model allows for the several hybrid forms that have emerged in the past decade, and the texts that have been chosen for analysis reveal the characteristics that have provided the pattern for subsequent texts. This thesis, then, posits a theoretical model that is applicable to the permeation of boundaries, of genre, of the text, and of the presumed delineation between actuality and the audio/visual representation. The narrativization of actuality is reciprocal to an actualization of narrative, and this area has been overlooked in the postmodern recoil.
Conclusion

against the naïve absolutism of earlier film theories. A major theme of this thesis is to redress this imbalance, and reevaluate the extreme polarization between postmodernism and previous positions. There is potential for a model of the interpretation of images and their relations with actuality that does not maintain an absolute separation of the image from its object, and the model posited in this thesis offers a means of accounting for multiple positions, without embracing the predication of any one theoretical perspective.

The direction embarked upon has not been a strictly delineated adherence to a particular theorist, although Deleuze and Guattari have had a considerable influence on the shape of the research. This is due to the capacity of their various models to account for heterogeneity, and for pluralism, rather than enforcing a deterministic approach. In hindsight, the course of the research has been a line of flight that has been a self-reflexive excursion through boundaries, both theoretical and textual, and which has offered the author a sense of being on an ongoing voyage, which is by no means complete at the closure of this particular leg of the journey. The issues that have surfaced in the consideration of the narrativization of actuality have revealed a continuing need for the revision and rediscovery of the changes in text and theory, and the isomorphic nature of the cultural construct of reality. The ongoing nature of this field of research is well described by Deleuze and Guattari, who appreciate the heterogeneous connections and relations of any enunciative assemblage:

Individual or group, we are traversed by lines, meridians, geodesics, tropics and zones marching to different beats and differing in nature. We said that we are composed of lines, three kinds of lines. Or rather, of bundles of lines, for each kind is multiple. We may be more interested in a certain line than in the others, and perhaps there is indeed one that is, not determining, but of greater importance ... if it is there. For some of these lines are imposed on us from the outside, at least in part. Others sprout up somewhat by chance, from a trifle, why we will never know. Others can be invented, drawn, without a model and without chance: we must invent our lines of flight, if we are able, and the only way we can invent them is by effectively drawing them in our lives.¹⁵

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