

The Occluded Subject

Robert Carl Craig

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	Dr. M. Falsetto
Supervisor	_____Thesis
	Dr. M. Allor

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. C. Maillé, Graduate Program Director

November 19, 2010 \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. B. Lewis, Dean  
Faculty of Arts and Science

## ABSTRACT

### **The Occluded Subject**

Robert Carl Craig, Ph.D.

Concordia University, 2012

“The Occluded Subject” is a dissertation about performative documentary. The thesis begins with a personal account of filming a 1991 protest against the police killing of Marcelus François. During this demonstration, I was obstructed from filming something that was not seen at that time, or subsequently revealed to me. This occlusion of the subject marks the beginning of a meditation on documentary representation. The “Representation of a Crisis” chapter describes shifting social and historical contexts of that period in time. This so-called crisis of representation had to do with power relations when discursive parameters were changing, and the contemporary performative documentary emerged. “The Technology Question” chapter describes Heidegger’s views on technology and society, along with concepts like the Ge-stell, destining of revealing, genuine revealing, and the saving power. The chapter “Unfinished Diary” describes *Journal inachevé*, wherein documentarians Michael Rubbo and Marilú Mallet debate praxis. Bill Nichols’ performative modality is described in “Documenting the Performative”. This chapter provides background to performative documentary scholarship in the form of antecedent research by Michael Renov and the initial identification by Susan Scheibler of performativity in documentary. Scheibler explains constative and performative categories and brings forward the notion of a performative documentary referentiality in the interval between signifier and signified. Deviations from positivisms and conventional narrative are discussed, along with pronounced

signifier play, renunciation of mastery, indeterminacy, and the importance of the personal to the performative. Several technological, cultural, historical, and ideological elements are described as well. “History as Memory” is a close reading of Rea Tajiri’s *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*. This documentary effectively illustrates performative operation. As opposed to conceiving authentication of an absent whole, multiple subjectivities, poietic space, and genuine revealing position the spectator within the here and now. While the text connects to contemporary ideation such as postmodernism and poststructuralism, the dissertation considers performative documentary as phenomenological as well.

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## Introduction: Performing Reality

Documentary has changed over the past thirty years. This transformation can be attributed, in large part, to the arrival of performative documentary. Antecedents notwithstanding, the performative first came into view in a definitive way around 1980, when the first of several documentaries appeared. More than a decade had passed when Susan Scheibler first used the performative term to describe Wim Wenders' *Lightning Over Water* (*Lightning Over Water*; S. Scheibler). Perhaps more than any other development, the performative mode has changed the face of documentary, its formal appearance and underlying assumptions. Identification of performative documentary occurred independently in research by Bill Nichols (Nichols "Performing Documentary") and Susan Scheibler (S. Scheibler; S. F. Scheibler), while antecedent research can be traced to Michael Renov (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video"). Since that time, several writers have taken up the discussion. This subsequent discourse on performative documentary falls into one of two distinct groups. Some writers, like Roscoe and Hight (Roscoe and Hight), adhere to Nichols' framework in "Performing Documentary" (Nichols "Performing Documentary"). Others, like Stella Bruzzi, proceed with conceptions that are markedly different from initial scholarship. More recent writers, such as Joanna Page for example, draw on Bruzzi's framework without reference to Nichols' or Scheibler's conceptions (Page). Critical writing on performative documentary is not only wrought by divergent discourses, it is contested as well. Anne Jerslev, in particular, criticizes Bruzzi's conception of a documentary performativity that hinges on documentarian and social actor performance (Jerslev).

Stella Bruzzi suggests that conventional documentary conceals performance elements (Bruzzi 184). According to Bruzzi, the suppression of performance, which abets the illusion of accessing an unaffected referent, has several implications. On one hand, it accounts for its delayed identification as modality. On the other hand, relaxing ideology around performance elements can account for the recent swell of performative documentary, an indicator of positive feedback. In scholarship, as well as production, creation cultivates ideation. Needless to say, its corollary is true: ideation nurtures creation. Therefore, the relative dearth of performative texts had to do with ideology and absence of lexicon. Absence of lexicon had to do with a dearth of texts. Before its identification, scholars did not think along performative lines. Nor did most documentary authors compose documentaries in performative ways. However, when documentarians began expressing themselves in performative ways, scholars were able to identify the modality. As Bill Nichols succinctly put it: “Things change” (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 93).

Bruzzi draws attention to the opaque provenance of the term performative documentary, a conundrum likely to burden its elaboration for years to come. This imprecision results from the prevalence of work by Judith Butler, particularly “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” (Butler "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory") and *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Butler *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*). Butler’s initial use of the term performative came before Bill Nichols’ “Performing Documentary” (Nichols "Performing Documentary"). She published *Bodies that Matter:*

*On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (Butler *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*) around the same time, in the year preceding Nichols' chapter. Daniel Dayan, writing about John Ford, was the first scholar to use the term performative in relation to filmic texts (Dayan 33, 73, 261). It first appeared in print in relation to documentary in a 1989 article by Michael Renov (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video"), although Renov credits the idea of performative documentary to Susan Scheibler, a student at that time.

Nichols used the term performative to describe his new modality without reference to either J. L. Austin or Judith Butler. Susan Scheibler wrote her own application of the term around that time as well (S. F. Scheibler). Again, Michael Renov (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video") had previously introduced the term in relation to documentary, noting Scheibler and Dayan. It is not clear why Nichols did not discuss the term's pedigree. As a result of his silence, the provenance of the term as applied to documentary is indistinct. The absence of reference to J. L. Austin suggests that, despite the context established by Renov in "History And/ As Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video"), Nichols was not applying Austin's conceptions of constative and performative at that time. These referential gaps are best understood in context of time of writing. The most obvious explanation for not referencing Judith Butler would be that Nichols considered her usage of the term unrelated to his discourse on modality. In point of fact, there does not appear to be a practicable connection between Butler's use of the term performative then, and performative documentary as described by Nichols at that time. Furthermore, while



basing her work on J. L. Austin, Scheibler does not reference Butler in her writing on performative documentary either (S. Scheibler; S. F. Scheibler). Therefore, while it may present difficulties, the performative term's opacity must be understood in the context of it emerging at that time.

Reminiscent of Bill Nichols, Judith Butler first employed the term performative without reference to J. L. Austin (Butler "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory"). Butler referred to Austin soon after however, most prominently in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Butler *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*). Furthermore, when Nichols was introducing performative modality, Butler's use of the term focussed on gender and identity. She explained that her purpose was "to examine in what ways gender is constructed through specific corporeal acts, and what possibilities exist for the cultural transformation of gender through such acts" (Butler "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" 521). Obviously, documentary is different from gender, which makes connections between performative documentary and Butler's work inherently unstable. Nevertheless, Butler's ideation includes relevant, even if ephemeral strains of thought. For example, when we read about performativity as "different sort of repeating" or of its inherent subversive potential, one senses ideation that resonates with performative documentary (Butler "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" 519). Consequently, while Nichols and Butler wrote about different subjects, the common etymology of the term ultimately folds back on initial endeavours within documentary scholarship. This commonage has effects on performative documentary's evolving

meaning. In this way, Butler's relevance regarding performative documentary is more unintended and concealed than literal. For that reason, the potential of Butler's discourse may well lie hidden, having more to do with evolving scholarship than initial attempts to understand performative modality.

As a contemporary of Bill Nichols and Susan Scheibler, Judith Butler may well be more relevant than Nichols could have foreseen. Butler's significance can be attributed to her association of performativity with phenomenology and Maurice Merleau-Ponty in particular (Butler "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" 519). Despite the relevance of phenomenology being apparent, and in spite of referencing it with regards to Judith Butler, Merleau-Ponty and ethnographic film (Nichols *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* 164), Nichols did not consider phenomenology in relation to performative documentary. In the meantime, Judith Butler has expanded her conception of performativity over several years, whereas Nichols' lack of writing on the performative following "Performing Documentary" (Nichols "Performing Documentary") may have enhanced Butler's influence. Without doubt, this influence can be detected within discourse on performative documentary. Nevertheless, there remains a voguish danger of construing Butler's writing to tally with documentary. Undue interpretation runs the risk of ultimately detracting from what was initially perceived by documentary scholars Nichols, Scheibler, and Renov. If we are to retain its truth, we cannot lose essential meaning to fashion, excess, or disregard of what came first.

It follows that Nichols' lack of explanation about his choice of the term, when already in use in other contexts, has led other scholars to associations that may or may not have been part of his understanding. Thus, following Butler, Stella Bruzzi calls attention to Austin's distinction between constative and performative utterances, and following Scheibler, applies this dichotomy to documentary. As well, Nichols and Scheibler came up with the term performative more or less concurrently, with Scheibler basing her thought on J. L. Austin and the performative/constative dichotomy (S. Scheibler 140; S. F. Scheibler). As a result of its diverse pedigree, the term performative documentary is apt to remain indeterminate and contested. One can only look at how various authors use the term, bearing in mind its changing use as it evolves over time. For example, whereas Nichols and Scheibler emphasize signifiers and the absent referent, Bruzzi's discourse hinges on the presence of the documentarian and performance of documentary subjects. She describes a performative documentary "built around the intrusive presence of the filmmaker or self-conscious performances by its subjects" (Bruzzi 185). Despite basing her understanding on author and subject, and unstable terms such as intrusive and self-conscious, Bruzzi views all documentary as essentially performative. To Bruzzi, documentary is inevitably performed, with essential meaning provided by "the interaction between performance and reality" (Bruzzi 185).

Like Scheibler and Nichols, Bruzzi stresses performative subversion of a straightforward relationship between sign and referent, an integral constative assumption. And like Nichols, she perceives performative propensities within the documentary institution, as the "logical extension of that tradition's aims" (Bruzzi 186). Not unlike its conventional counterpart, performative documentary strives to represent reality.

However, unlike conventional documentary, the performative is “more aware of the inevitable falsification or subjectification such representation entails” (Bruzzi 186). As follows, Bruzzi is especially conscious of construction of the subject. Distinct from the performative texts that Nichols identified, Bruzzi’s representative texts bear out her attention to subjectification. Whereas Nichols’ choices show play of signification, and Scheibler locates meaning in intervals between signifier and referent, Bruzzi focuses on documentarians as performers. She highlights films by Nick Broomfield and Michael Moore, for example, as emphasizing “means of production” (Bruzzi 186). This could be confusing, because stress on production apparatus is usually indicative of reflexivity (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation" 56). Then again, documentary performativity and reflexivity often go hand in hand. And while Nichols’ examples of performative documentaries also draw attention to authorship and subject, Bruzzi’s emphasis departs from Nichols’ emphasis. This different approach can be seen in Bruzzi’s characterization of performative documentary, especially its stress on subjectification. Accordingly, Bruzzi writes: “A prerequisite of the performative documentary as here defined is the inclusion of a notable performance component, and it is the insertion of such a performance element into a non-fictional context that has hitherto proved problematic” (Bruzzi 186). Presumably, Bruzzi is referring to marked subjective performances by documentary authors. These traits are obvious in works with a conspicuous filmmaker presence such as Broomfield and Moore, authors who act as agents in their own documentary. Then again, she also includes “self-conscious performances” (Bruzzi 185) by documentary subjects as well.

Where Bruzzi draws a line between the “intrusive” (Bruzzi 185) and not intrusive presence of the filmmaker, is impossible to know. The same can be said of self-conscious and not self-conscious performances by documentary subjects. These imprecise concepts make her categorization inherently unstable. Therefore, one presumes that she wants an unstable conception, or to look at it another way, a performative one. A notion that documentary is at various stages of coming into being, but reality performed, underlies this instability. Bruzzi writes: “The film itself is necessarily performative because it is given meaning by the interaction between performance and reality” (Bruzzi 185). She contends that documentary is more honest by virtue of embracing the performative than concealing the “inherent instability” of constative methods and their “utopian aim” (Bruzzi 186). Utopian aim could be interpreted as an endeavour to re-establish the absent signified. Her performative is therefore recognition that “performance – the enactment of the documentary specifically for the cameras – will always be the heart of the non-fiction film” (Bruzzi 186). Bruzzi wrote: “There are two broad categories of documentary that can be termed performative: films that feature performative subjects and which visually are heavily stylised and those that are inherently performative and feature the intrusive presence of the filmmaker” (Bruzzi 186). Works of Broomfield, Moore, and Nicholas Barker fall within her definition. One well-known example is the work of documentarian Errol Morris, which Bruzzi claims is revealed by what she calls “style” (Bruzzi 196), his films’ formal properties. To Bruzzi, Morris’ “style” is reflected in how we “look at and are shown images” and particularly how perception can include “fantasy and prejudice” (Bruzzi 196). These films bring awareness that all knowledge is partial knowledge, an idea reminiscent of Martin Heidegger’s stress on the unknown from which knowing

comes. Heidegger believed that our fixation on the revealed obscures the unknown from which the revealed comes into view (Lovitt 55). This impression of incomplete knowledge is achieved, in part, through what Bruzzi terms “distanciation techniques” (Bruzzi 196). She describes the overall effect this way: “The conclusion from watching Morris’s films can only be that the image and/or the documentary can reveal a truth but not all the truth(s) of a story and one that is, if what we desire from a documentary is an answer to all the questions we might have brought to the documentary before we started viewing, mutable and complex as well as imperfect or incomplete” (Bruzzi 196).

Bruzzi thus describes Morris’ formal methods as bringing to light documentary’s “artificiality” (Bruzzi 196). Emphasis on artifice makes the spectator conscious of its representational properties. Moreover, awareness of representation reinforces the importance of a referent lying beyond representation. And beyond the notion of a referential world, Bruzzi affirms that the documentary subject is apt to be engaged in performative acts as well. The subject as performer becomes just another instance in which the notion of performativity is fundamental to documentary representation of reality. However, Bruzzi also notes an underlying sense of the temporal. According to Bruzzi, “Morris’ documentaries are characterised by a feeling of ‘presentness’, a feeling that we are witnessing the events as they are at the moment of filming, with the suggestion that, had the film been made at a different time, then the representation of these events might have been different” (Bruzzi 196). Regardless of whether that performative is of the subject, documentary author, or spectator, the here and now remains important, the immediacy of perception.

Stella Bruzzi's writing demonstrates how the term performative is used in different ways in a documentary context. Without question, Bruzzi's discourse takes the term performative in a direction that is difficult to reconcile with Bill Nichols' description of a previously unidentified modality. Anne Jerslev, in particular, is critical of Bruzzi's contribution (Jerslev). Jerslev criticizes Bruzzi's conception because she sees discrete ideas presented within Bruzzi's usage of the performative term. Jerslev perceives Bruzzi's performative in two ways. She sees Bruzzi's performative in an ontological sense, as interaction between documentarian and reality. Then, she notes as well, Bruzzi's concurrent signification of a specific documentary type, a particular emphasis on a contemporary subgenre. These include, for example, texts by Nick Broomfield and Michael Moore cited by Bruzzi, documentaries that bring specific attention to performances by documentarian and social actors. Jerslev believes that because the two conceptions are distinct, Bruzzi has conflated separate ideas. This conflation has resulted in her use of the term performative becoming unclear, particularly from an analytical standpoint:

The problem in *New Documentaries* is that Bruzzi is not able to use her terms analytically precisely. If the verb or the adjective is used to define an ontology of the documentary (performing the real), it doesn't make analytical or categorical sense to use the same forms to define formal or dramaturgic elements or a specific routine by a social actor (whether it be a performative act or a virtual performance in Nichols' sense). Performative cannot simultaneously be used to propose a documentary ontology and to describe the specificity of certain filmic elements, certain acts, without it being clear what kind of performativity (or performance) one is talking about (Jerslev 105-06).

Jerslev contrasts Bruzzi's use of the term performative with that of J. L. Austin. Because Austin understands performative in contradistinction to constative, his conception

remains lucid. Jerslev contends that because Bruzzi attempts to apply the term broadly, her discourse ends up lacking specific meaning. Consequently, Jerslev argues:

It seems to me that Bruzzi is actually saying nothing at all about documentary films in particular. It makes just as much sense to call a news item or an episode of a sitcom performative. Using performance in this ontological sense means basically the same as mediation, to perform the act of 'representing' reality in any medium in order to be able to communicate it to an audience. This may just as well go for the pro-filmic reality in fiction (Jerslev 106).

Misquoting Mieke Bal, Jerslev suggests that this difficulty stems from a fundamental difference, unrecognized by Bruzzi, between two terms that do not share common histories or meanings: performance and performative. (Jerslev quotes Bal as having written: "the unique execution of an act in the here and now" (Jerslev 104), when she actually wrote: "the unique occurrence of an act in the here-and-now" (Bal 176).) Jerslev maintains that: "*Performativity* is derived from linguistics, philosophy, and constructivistic ideas (an utterance that performs what it says) and *performance* from aesthetics and performance arts ..." (Jerslev 104). Jerslev also cites *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, where Judith Butler views, in a gender context, performance as a "bounded "act"" and performativity to include expressions of normativity which exceed the performer (Butler *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* 234; Jerslev 105). Considering these distinctions, Jerslev faults Bruzzi for wrongly conflating different concepts within the umbrella performative term. Without question, Bruzzi has used the term in a malleable way. In addition to expressive techniques, she has emphasized performance by social actors and documentarians. She merges a popular subgenre with a nebulous aesthetic model, thus arriving at a conception difficult to reconcile with Nichols' modality. Then again, Jerslev sees a deeper problem



than discursive coherence relating to the critical term's genesis. She believes that Bruzzi's use of the performative term has rendered her discourse confusing and therefore eviscerated its value.

Jerslev asserts that in *Representing Reality*, Bill Nichols "attaches performativity – or rather performance – to his understanding of the way real people in documentary films are constructed as *social actors* in front of the camera" (Jerslev 87-88). Here Jerslev substitutes the term performative with performance, signifying that the two terms are more or less correspondent in Nichols' discourse. Her interpretation is difficult to accept however, given that Nichols has used the term performative in ways distinct from the term performance. His first use of the performative term is in 1994, specifically to do with his documentary modes of representation (Nichols "Performing Documentary"). Before this time, he wrote about performance of social actors, particularly in "History, Myth and Narrative in Documentary" (Nichols "History, Myth, and Narrative in Documentary") and *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*). By substituting performative with performance, as if the two concepts are equivalent, Jerslev conflates Nichols' idea of performative documentary with that of performance by social actors within documentaries. Plainly, performative appears in "Performing Documentary" (Nichols "Performing Documentary") as a separate idea occurring to him only later. Nevertheless, as Jerslev proceeds, she reasons: "In his first documentary book, Nichols is occupied with understanding and conceptualizing how "real people" represent themselves to the camera, whereas in *Blurred Boundaries* the concept labels a subgenre or modality" (Jerslev 89). Obviously, this contention is erroneous because Nichols' performance did

not change to performative. Nichols' two concepts are not only distinct, they are far apart. Except for two references to "sexual performance" in relation to pornography in *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* 201, 15), Nichols uses the term performance in reference to social actors. In contrast, he employs performative in "Performing Documentary" to describe a distinctive form of documentary authorship, a recently identified modality that increasing numbers of documentarians were engaging in around that time (Nichols "Performing Documentary").

Without doubt, performance is an element within the overall makeup of performative documentary. On the other hand, Nichols' performative is about modality and documentary text. His performative term relates to all facets of a text; however, his performative term is not primarily about performance. In contrast to social actor performance, performative modality has to do with authorship, signifier play, and a greater role for the spectator in making meaning. This emphasis does not disregard performance within performative documentary, or question performance as a legitimate object of study. However, the confounding of performance with performative has had unfortunate effect. To produce critical discourse with practical analytical value, the two conceptions would have to remain distinct, just as Bill Nichols kept them. Nichols describes documentary performance this way: "In documentary we have the desire for performance stripped of the training, rehearsing, and directing that normally accompany it" (Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* 121). Or, to cite another example:

I use “social actor” to stress the degree to which individuals represent themselves to others; this can be construed as a performance. The term is also meant to remind us that social actors, people, retain the capacity to act within the historical arena where they perform. The sense of aesthetic remove between an imaginary world in which actors perform and the historical world in which people live no longer obtains. The performance of social actors, though, is similar to the performance of fictional characters in many respects” (Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* 42).

This description, focused on social actor performance, is distinct from Nichols’ description of performative modality. Even so, Anne Jerslev treats the two as one, a transgression for which she faults Stella Bruzzi. All the same, Jerslev is correct in contending that conflation of performance with performative is apt to result in confusion and lack of tangible meaning.

Bill Nichols introduced his performative modality in a concise, exploratory way, which left something of a void (Nichols “Performing Documentary”). This empty space has been filled by distinct kinds of response. Some remain close to his description without significant elaboration. Others expanded on those initial, independent statements by Nichols and Scheibler. At times, original meanings of the term, which focused on textuality and documentary authorship, have transformed in unforeseen ways. The polysemic character of the term performative and its semantic proximity to the term performance is at the root of this phenomenon. Misinterpretations of the performative term are most readily apparent in mixing performative modality with social actor performance. The marginal dissemination of Susan Scheibler’s contribution is another matter. Scheibler’s “Constantly Performing the Documentary: The Seductive Promise of *Lightning over Water*” (S. Scheibler) is but one chapter in *Theorizing Documentary* and her doctoral dissertation “An Enticement to Knowledge: Documentary Spectatorship and a Theory of Performatives” (S. F. Scheibler) is not available online at time of writing.

Consequently, whereas Nichols is usually, although not always cited, references to Scheibler are uncommon. Thus, Scheibler's contribution, even though seminal and substantive, is disproportionately marginal. An analogous case can be made regarding Michael Renov's "History And/ As Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video"). Whereas Renov begins the discussion, he wrote within an antecedent context, before performative documentary's naming. Consequently, the texts that established the critical groundwork have become unrepresented, underrepresented, or misrepresented over time.

Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight's book about mock-documentary displays the other broad tendency (Roscoe and Hight). Here the authors remain faithful to Bill Nichols' modes of documentary representation (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation"), without appreciably deviating from his description of a performative documentary (Nichols "Performing Documentary"). Consistent with what is envisaged here, the authors categorize performative and reflexive as markedly different from other modalities, particularly in their approach to referentiality. Observing performative documentaries' unique and personal formal approaches, they see the performative as distinct from reflexive. Moreover, they point to a particular performative emphasis on subjective accounts of social and historical worlds. Roscoe and Hight describe the performative as "heavily stylized" documentaries that "quite consciously blur the boundaries between fact and fiction" (Roscoe and Hight 35). While often noted, this idea is not as straightforward as it might seem. After all, fact and fiction can be viewed in different ways. For example, the fact versus fiction dichotomy can be seen as formal convention. More commonly, we accept fact and fiction as given, a concept which

proposes fact to be the unequivocal truth of an accessible signified. Quite the opposite, fiction is seen as a signifier construct. However, in this case, the meaning of the term fact is ambiguous. It is unclear whether the authors are describing fact as the signified, or fact as the signifier's claim to truth of the referential world. Therefore, when Roscoe and Hight write that "performative documentary complicates notions of fact and fiction as distinct entities and challenges viewers to consider the possibilities of playing in the spaces between fact and fiction" (Roscoe and Hight 36), it is difficult to know if they are describing the gap between signifier and referent. This distinction is important because Susan Scheibler conjectures that the performative brings forth an essential reality within this interval (S. Scheibler 149). However, it remains that Roscoe and Hight could be writing about a gap between two kinds of signifier, one that signifies fact and one that signifies fiction, a different interval to which Scheibler draws attention. Most likely, the authors are speaking in a wide-ranging way, referencing long-established conceptualizations, habitual assumptions that performative documentary renders problematic.

Roscoe and Hight consider basic questioning of documentary's representational practices fundamental to performative and reflexive modalities. That is why the authors regard these modes as not only alternative, but alike as well. Regardless of differing methods, each brings about uncertainty regarding conventional claims to the signified. Whereas this misgiving can be viewed as challenging documentary's ability to reveal the real, neither places documentary's referential capacity in question. More readily, these modes interrogate how reality can be revealed. Accordingly, just how reality is revealed differently has become central to the study of performative documentary. Roscoe and

Hight draw attention to subjectivity, which can be conflated with the personal (Roscoe and Hight 36). This emphasis on subjectivity and the personal resonates with contemporary thought. And while these authors do not concern themselves with such matters as, for example, poststructuralism or postmodern rejection of master narratives, they describe a refutation of objectivity. This line of reasoning is pertinent because the ideal of objective representation still maintains some currency within what Nichols has coined “discourses of sobriety” (Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* 29), most notably journalism. Nevertheless, it is obvious that much more is taking place within performative documentary, including emphasis on indeterminacy and mistrust of positivism, to refer to some examples.

Without expanding on its epistemological possibilities, Roscoe and Hight emphasize the subjective and personal as performative documentary’s salient points. They describe, in a reductionist way, critical difference between these modalities and conventional ones. The authors write: “By prioritizing the personal and subjective over the pretence of an objective stance, these modes challenge the notion that there is only one Truth to tell, yet they are still able to retain the notion that there is some (small portion) of ‘truth’ to be discovered or revealed by documentary” (Roscoe and Hight 36). While these observations are germane, the authors’ discussion has narrow reach. This superficiality is understandable because they demonstrate cursory interest in performative documentary. While it would be inaccurate to say that they treat the performative dismissively, *Faking it: Mock-documentary and the Subversion of Factuality* tells us how mock-documentary succeeds as radical discourse and where, in the authors’ opinion, the performative falls short. The performative mode thus fulfils a rhetorical function, as

something analogous to a straw opponent. Unmistakably, Roscoe and Hight's concern is mock-documentary, the subject of their book. With regard to the performative, more composite phenomena can be related to the generality they portray. Their subtext suggests conflict, a tension conveyed by performative formal properties which break from dominant convention and evoke documentary's subversive potential. One apparent conflict emerges between the individual and established power, particularly its truth claims. This tension includes, within the performative, expressions of personal empowerment which come about by way of perception.

Similar to what is contended here, Roscoe and Hight perceive an enhanced role for the performative spectator. When faced with performative signification, spectator agency is especially critical in making meaning. And just as performative and reflexive modes raise doubts regarding contiguity between text and referent, these modes also bring forward conceptions of documentary as artificial construct. Within the performative, representational characteristics of documentary are revealed and become accentuated. This highlighting of representation also shows that the referent is distinct from the sign. It follows then, that performative documentary "depends heavily on the interpretive framework adopted by the filmmaker" (Roscoe and Hight 181). These interpretive frameworks can result in exceptionally original formal approaches. And while reflexive and performative modes each take up the problem of referentiality, the authors believe the performative to be more radical than the reflexive. Taking note of its predilection for signifier play, they observe how "playfulness undermines the objective stance taken by documentary, and challenges the audience to move beyond narrow conceptions of truth" (Roscoe and Hight 182). In revealing the real, the spectator is

challenged to shape and form the object. Therefore, while not severing from discourses of sobriety, this modality proceeds differently in accessing truth.

Irrespective of performative documentary's distinctiveness and activist roots, Roscoe and Hight cast doubt on ideas of a radical mode. Their misgiving has to do with the performative not abandoning referentiality and not renouncing access to the historical world. Consequently, the authors reason that performativity amounts to a form of dispensation. It relaxes the rules and moves away from dubious yet entrenched notions such as objectivity, for example. However, in spite of its marginal beginnings, the performative has become increasingly conventional. This normalization process is a typical progression for all manner of innovative, yet uncontrollable ideas that become accepted over time. Nevertheless, according to the authors, performative documentary fails in an elemental way. It does not contend with documentary's core problem of referentiality. In this light, performative documentary seems more like a concession to postpositivism than a genuinely radical modality. Thus, performative documentaries are texts that "openly acknowledge what has always been implicit within documentary: that there are contradictions between its claims to truth and the fact that the filmmaker inevitably and necessarily needs to impose a structuring argument on a documentary text's portrayal of reality" (Roscoe and Hight 182). All the same, performative documentary manifests a great deal more than the authors describe. Roscoe and Hight's discourse on the performative is not a comprehensive treatise, nor is it intended to be. On the other hand, they have clear purposes in writing about mock-documentary. One of these objectives is to portray the performative as an apparently radical modality which, in



effect, fails at being radical. Not surprisingly, the authors posit that mock-documentary succeeds at this task.

Apart from this rhetorical device, Roscoe and Hight make several compelling points. For example, they critique documentary's claim to privileged status in representing the real, at the same time as arguing that mock-documentary is the truly radical response: "While these modes problematise documentary representations of the socio-historical world, they do not challenge what is the essential basis of documentary: that is, its claim to offer a direct referent to the real world. Perhaps the reflexive and performative modes are, in fact, not that radical after all, and do not have mock-documentary's potential to go to the core of the documentary genre" (Roscoe and Hight 182). Along these lines, Roscoe and Hight cast doubt on documentary's claim to independence from fiction, which they see as setting up a privileged status in representing the real. The authors' line of reasoning casts doubt on assumptions about a straightforward relationship between sign and referent. In addition, it brings forward the notion that documentary and not other genres can attain this connection. While the authors present compelling criticisms, they inaccurately state that the performative does not challenge documentary's "claim to offer a direct referent to the real world" (Roscoe and Hight 182). Clearly, performative documentary does take up the problem of referentiality. However, because it does not fully break from the referent, the authors consider the performative unable to assess documentary's critical flaw, its conceit. The authors raise several compelling points; however, their line of reasoning remains paradoxical. According to the criteria the authors set out, this task is impracticable. To

break with the referent would breach the genre itself. In that case, the text would become not-documentary. It would be something else.

Like most writing on performative documentary, this dissertation considers the performative in terms of documentary modes of representation set out by Bill Nichols in *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation") and "Performing Documentary" (Nichols "Performing Documentary"). Most documentaries are hybrid combinations of Nichols' modalities, a list that includes expository, interactive, observational, reflexive, and performative modes. Nichols' modes are fluid in terms of documentary history as well as documentary textuality. Frequently, one mode is dominant within a text and each mode is present throughout documentary history. At times, modality is open to interpretation. The 1929 *Man with a Movie Camera* (*Man with a Movie Camera*), for example, could be considered performative and/or reflexive. Despite its probable presence throughout documentary history, performative documentary only came to light when first identified in the 1980s. During this time, several documentaries caught Bill Nichols' attention as distinct from other modalities, including *Journal Inachevé* (*Journal inachevé*), *Sari Red* (*Sari Red*), and *Tongues Untied* (*Tongues Untied*). The performative documentaries identified by Nichols are taken as the basis for this study, in addition to Susan Scheibler's key text *Lightning Over Water*, along with several others such as *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* (*Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen*), and *passing through / torn formations* (*passing through / torn formations*). The filmography section of the dissertation comprises a more comprehensive list.

I draw on documentaries from the time period between 1980 and 1991, while interpreting and expanding on seminal writing by Renov, Scheibler, and Nichols. To make the study manageable, many documentaries produced during, before and after that time have not been considered. Therefore, the texts under consideration are not intended to be comprehensive, which would be an impracticable task. As the one in which the modality was identified and defined, this historical interval is considered to be critical. During this time, I was working in activist production and, like most, employed conventional formal approaches. In this way, I experienced firsthand the general historical context within which the performative movement took place. Because this production background has influenced and informed my writing, I draw connections to this background. Hence, “The Occluded Subject” chapter brings forward, from a personal point of view, an account of recording a demonstration in 1991 (*Marcelus François Protest*). At that time, I was conducting experimentation with a new video format called Hi8 in association with the National Film Board of Canada (*District 25*). Hi8 held promise as a low-cost, high resolution alternative for documentary production. Testing Hi8 as a rapid response tool for documentary activism, I set out to record a demonstration against killings of black males by Montreal policemen. While the demonstration began peacefully, the mood changed and the protest became unpredictable, particularly around moments of anguished, cathartic release. At one point, an irate protestor assailed our crew, blocking my shot and forcefully pushing me back. The dissertation title describes this personal moment of the occluded subject, presented here as a defining one in my understanding of the shifting representational practices of that time.

Conventional documentary portrays the referent as if accessible through contiguous signification. In this way, documentary has purpose in preserving memory as a direct referent to the past. Without this historical record, memory becomes obscure. While it brought about substantial anger then, the deaths of those citizens can seem obscure in the present day. One of our purposes in being at the demonstration was to preserve a documentary record of the past. As well, independent documentarians have important roles in bringing forth alternative points of view in the near term as well. Without doubt, the purpose of demonstrations is to bring critical issues to the larger public. Given the media's propaganda function, anger against mainstream journalists would have been understandable, whereas hostility against our independent crew was unanticipated. Granting that the question is unanswerable, this chapter reflects on why this may have occurred. Was it symptomatic of how documentary representation of reality had come to be mistrusted? Was this a problem of temporality in the sense that the immediate present was what mattered, and not a potential movie at a future point in time? Was this a condemnation, a judgment against the inherent arrogance and arguably ineffectiveness of our work, documentary's aforementioned conceit? Along these lines, the occluded subject becomes a meditation on documentary representation and power relations, as well as a key concept within this text.

A critical purpose of "The Occluded Subject" chapter is to emphasize the criticality of the personal to documentary production. So too is temporality, and the problem of race and representation figures as well. From my perspective, documentary representation had come to seem excessively problematic. Because I could not conceive in what way I could carry on, I withdrew from conventional praxis altogether, albeit

continuing some years later, experimenting with documentary in performance contexts (Craig *The Specter and the Frame*; Craig *Negative Space*). At the time, I did not make the decision to abandon conventional documentary lightly. Indeed, I had taken up documentary because of a belief that it played a crucial role in social reform. For that reason, I call my withdrawal, with ironic nuance intended, a personal crisis of representation. I put the videotape away without ever viewing the footage, creating a significant temporal rupture between my recording the event and viewing the tape eighteen years later. With fresh eyes, I question my aggressor's motives and maturity. He had determined what could not be recorded and I wondered, if given the choice, the occluded subject would have that decision made on their behalf. Then again, I question my sense of entitlement to determine what can be represented as well. While pointing out that documentary normally structures representation around narrative, I doubt the heroic role in which documentarians sometimes cast themselves and renounce my memory as fanciful. Further questions have to do with power and ethics, questions which come together around context and perception within which reality is revealed. There are considerable differences between my presence there and that of the social actors I was documenting. While I too was in the here and now, I was recording reality for a potential documentary, an existential position with many implications.

In "The Occluded Subject" chapter, I describe from a personal point of view, misgivings regarding my ability to represent reality. However, the occluded subject is not simply about my personal response. This experience is a microcosm, a metaphor for a wider historical context as well. This documentary shoot occurred during a time in which Western epistemologies were undergoing what is called a "crisis of representation"

(Denzin and Lincoln 18-19; Jameson "Foreword" viii). The chapter "Representation of a Crisis" describes this historical context as an important turning point in how we understand representational practices. Most critically, this change comprised indeterminate meaning toward social and historical worlds, closely related to scepticism about the signifier's ability to stand for the referent. There was a general ideological awareness stemming from heightened concerns about powerful forces within Western societies. Taken as a whole, disquiet about the reliability of signification, along with alarm about potential effects of Western propaganda, had led to generalized distrust of mass media depictions of reality. As part of a broad epistemological context, the contemporary performative responds to conditions which came before. These conditions included positivist ways of thinking, desires of objectivity, as well as discredited colonialist ideologies. A desire to delimit and order social worlds, along with thinking that the object of study could remain inert, also fell into disfavour. Narrative came under scrutiny for romanticizing the subject, as did presuppositions that reality is socially structured.

Despite expanding critical views of representational practices, the signifier's ability to stand for the referent had long been considered essential in making sense of the world. Moreover, because it was assumed that elucidating social injustice constituted a major step in resolving social problems, a tangible relationship between sign and referent was viewed as elemental to social progress. However, in spite of manifold representations over many years, persistent problems remained. While anyone can point to progress, signifying social problems does not necessarily generate remedial acts. It requires supplementary action to take matters beyond mere comprehension. As a result, many

documentarians take on advocacy roles. However, additional action can be problematic, as suggested by the occluded subject, which is essentially a problem of representing the Other. Some questioned the effectiveness of traditional approaches. As performative documentary suggests, conventional modalities were sometimes perceived as flawed in elemental ways. Documentary reflexivity is the most direct way in which documentarians confront this problem. As with social sciences, the emphasis fell on representational practices. The author's self-representation and subjectively perceived social worlds came into focus. In performative documentary, the personal became prominent. As with the postmodern, this epistemology did not include master narratives.

Within the crisis of representation one can see oppositional forces to hegemonic tendencies associated with power, as well as a constant and evolving desire for constructive agency. One especially important characteristic of the performative is a greater sense of indeterminacy toward the referent. This indeterminacy is significant, especially considering that documentary evidence is mimetic and replicable, representational properties that evoke straightforward notions of determinacy. In spite of that, it remains that immeasurably complex social worlds include vast arrays of subjective relations which ultimately lead, once again, to indeterminacy. Several interrelated trends stem from the crisis of representation. These tendencies include a categorical renunciation of the detached observer, along with experimentation involving amalgamations of traditionally discrete areas. In addition, one can see activism and participation from heretofore marginalized groups. In many ways, wide-ranging pluralism has been established within social science discourses, at least to a greater extent

than before the crisis of representation. These discourses serve as models of possibility for other epistemologies and representational practices, of which documentary is but one.

We generally think of documentary in terms of representational practice. All the same, documentary is a technology, a technology of representing reality.<sup>1</sup> In “The Technology Question” chapter I bring forward Heidegger’s well-known essay as a theoretical basis to examine documentary representation of reality, particularly performative documentary (Heidegger “The Question Concerning Technology”). While employing several theoretical positions from multiple sources, throughout the dissertation I return to Heidegger’s essay. Heidegger believed that technology had become intertwined with desire for mastery. Beyond criticizing this desire to master reality, and pointing toward technology’s latent potential for truth, several of Heidegger’s positions bring documentary to mind. Above all, Heidegger believed modern technology caused truth to withdraw, a result of what he called challenging revealing and cause-effect rationalism. He called our modern condition and prevalent worldview the *Ge-stell*. Heideggerian scholar and translator William Lovitt calls Heidegger’s use of this phrase “impossible to translate” (Lovitt 52). For Heidegger it signified the appearance of modern reality in its “frenzied movement into endlessness of the setting-up at one with the static unity and bounded-offness of the frame” (Lovitt 52).

While Lovitt provides a consummate explanation of the *Ge-stell*<sup>2</sup>, it is best understood by gleaning Heidegger’s varied contextualization of it. The *Ge-stell* sets in motion what Heidegger called destining of revealing, which has the effect of obscuring genuine revealing. In contrast, he believed poetic revealing could bring about truth.



There are certain parallels between performative documentary and those qualities Heidegger believed bring about truth. These parallels include performative diffidence toward ordering and mastery, along with its inclination to the poietic. Heidegger also connected poetic and artistic endeavours to truth. And while he did not write about documentary per se, Heidegger foresaw several sweeping transformations which have become evident in the present day. Crucially, Heidegger believed that the Ge-stell contained a constructive force he called the saving power. More than other modalities, the performative takes up this saving power, particularly by means of poiesis arrived at through performative documentarians' use of inventive formal expression. These formal approaches reflect Heidegger's idea that humanity will finally confront the Ge-stell within the realm of the fine arts. Because of its artistic qualities and faithfulness to the referent, performative documentary is at the vanguard of what Heidegger believed to be the crucial struggle of our time.

Bill Nichols' initial modes of representation: expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive, established a means of categorizing documentary formal methods in a way that seemed comprehensive at the time (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation"). The performative changed this impression of totality however, by revealing a theretofore undetected alternative (Nichols "Performing Documentary"). Up to the identification of the performative, it was presumed that an elementary purpose of all documentaries is to persuade. It was also assumed that reality could be represented more or less contiguously, that signifiers could stand for the referent, albeit qualified within reflexive contexts. However, this assumption had come into question outside of documentary. Jacques Derrida, for example, called attention to disparities between

signifier and referent, demonstrating that the signifier lacks essential correlation to the signified in what he termed *différance* (Williams 28 45). While documentary is obviously distinct from writing, the elemental line of reasoning holds. Despite its capacity for visual and aural verisimilitude, documentary does not allow direct access to the referent. On the other hand, most documentary does not claim direct access to historical worlds anyway. More readily, conventional documentary resembles postpositivism, in that it takes up various tactics to make persuasive claims about the historical world. While these procedures are obviously meant to convince, they are also understood to be conditional. As public discourse, any documentary assertion is subject to revision.

I look into how performative documentary functions over the two chapters “Unfinished Diary” and “Documenting the Performative”. Ultimately, performative documentary’s distinctiveness stems from its referentiality. By indicating different notions about the referent’s accessibility, performative documentary exhibits uncertainty regarding its subject. As a result, this mode is less concerned with authentication. Signifier play is of greater consequence. So too is the spectator and his or her perceptual processing of the object. Owing to a dearth of certainty in the performative, the spectator takes on greater responsibility in making meaning. Perception follows less from persuasive reasoning and more from creative expression. The viewer is compelled to think in particularized ways, although not in ways that reject other modalities. More readily, the performative encompasses other modalities by inflecting them. Typically, these inflected modalities occur in combination. Although it can inflect just one mode, a performative documentary is apt to be an amalgamation of several inflected modalities.

In this sense, it preserves established approaches, albeit transformed by a performative cast.

Along these lines, the performative resembles, yet moves away from previous documentary paradigms. It can appear extreme when contrasted with analogous discourses, such as journalism for example. On the other hand, it brings documentary in line with contemporary thought, especially in ways that make it distinct from convention. Without much difficulty, performative documentary could be associated with poststructuralism and postmodernism. Performative documentary emphasizes mediative qualities, along with our subjective perception toward those mediative qualities. While determinacy is lacking within performative documentary, it frequently brings about dynamic fields of signification. Reality comes to pass as a phenomenal field. Therefore, the real becomes less external, determinate, and historical. As opposed to another space and time, this reality is of the present. More precisely, performative reality can be found in the field of signification that the documentary author has shaped and formed. This approach generates heightened referential fields within the viewer's perception. To a greater extent, reality becomes of the perceiving subject. This existential positioning enhances the importance of perception in ways that bring to mind Heidegger's idea of Being (Geuss 498).

Heideggerian thought comes to mind in other ways as well. Reminiscent of the saving power, performative documentary responds to Heidegger's conception of modern technological ways of being. This dynamic becomes evident within an observational sequence acted out by two documentarians in Marilú Mallet's *Journal inachevé*. In this

early example of contemporary performative, Mallet and Michael Rubbo debate appropriate methods for documentary to represent reality. The documentarian cum social actors performances delve into documentary epistemology in ways that have to do with narrative and praxis. Whereas Mallet wants to represent poetically, Rubbo upholds a more traditional view which bears more than passing resemblance to conventional historiography. This difference of opinion brings to mind Heideggerian ideas of genuine revealing in opposition to destining of revealing, or poetic revealing nurturing the saving power. Their debate delineates several issues. Bereft of the usual desire to master reality, Mallet is disposed to open-ended ways of representing. And redolent of postmodernism and poststructuralism, as well as certain facets of Derridian thought, Mallet's open formal procedures create a multitude of contexts with no center (Derrida "Signature Event Context" 12).

Susan Scheibler has demonstrated that reduced emphasis on the constative is especially important to the performative (S. Scheibler). A moderated constative means less stress on substantiation and verification. The spectator's point of reference is altered, and his or her role enhanced, especially regarding perception. Ways in which the author relinquishes power are also important. Over and above bringing to mind Roland Barthes' call for reduction of the author's authority, this power displacement makes the viewer the essential source of truth (Barthes "The Death of the Author"). A reduction of stress on verification leads to more emphasis on perception. Reality becomes contingent on the viewing subject, pointing to a connection between phenomenology and represented reality. Performative documentarians make fine distinctions on other modalities, often giving rise to a range of unique, collage-like texts. In some measure, the viewer is

released from the author's authority. This emancipation is consistent with a perspective in which authority is seen as pretense. Consequently, ideas of mastery are abandoned. Performative indeterminacy, which is closely related to rejection of mastery, has to do with the absent referent. More specifically, indeterminacy has to do with signification that would evoke a determinant referent. This relationship to the referent can be understood in relation to Jacques Derrida's notion of the absence of a transcendental signified (Derrida "Exergue" 20), and its converse found in increased play of signification (Derrida "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science" 354). However, even while the transcendental signified is absent and the referent therefore in doubt, the documentary remains accessible. For that reason, the documentary object becomes the critical reality. Along these lines, the performative responds to conventional approaches, while pointing to alternate ways that reality can be perceived. The performative documentary is, like reality, an opening onto perception within a subjective field. In this way, the performative delineates reality in temporal terms as something occurring in the here and now. Performative reality is constituted in perception within which revealing comes about, a reality constituted in Being.

Rea Tajiri's performative documentary *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*) has prompted much commentary. Diverse observation about this text, which has to do with the internment of Japanese in the United States during World War II, has appeared in multiple contexts. However, *History and Memory* was not chosen for close reading because of the discourse surrounding it. Instead, the chapter "Memory as History" is mainly concerned with Tajiri's text as one that brings to light identifiable performative characteristics. *History*

*and Memory*'s range of formal and thematic properties provide an opportunity for analysis and illustration of an array of performative traits. This documentary was selected for close reading because of its pedagogical qualities. It is a documentary that, by its nature, teaches us about performative documentary. Tajiri presents various socially situated observations elaborated within a bricolage approach, an admixture of formal elements which bring about a subjective relativism. She renders social and historical worlds in complex and indeterminate ways that point to the referent as absent. Yet, while the referent is not there, its signifiers certainly are, often in remarkable ways. It is noteworthy that Tajiri brings to light classical epistemological divisions and destabilizes them. With classical divisions like separation between real and imaginary subverted, the spectator is placed in an active position toward the documentary object. Signifier play turns away from normative methods and in this way, Tajiri points toward intricacy in structuring knowledge. It becomes evident that, like any standing as real or imaginary, perception is inexorably linked to ontology. Along these lines, Tajiri reveals a bond between perception, ontology, and epistemology, a salient connection that runs through documentary in general.

Throughout *History and Memory*, Tajiri calls attention to context. Perspectives abound, emphasizing subjectivity in ways that bring to mind Jacques Derrida's notion of the impossibility of a singular context (Derrida "Signature Event Context" 12). In place of a superseding master context, we behold a mottling of subjective relations contingent on manifold possibilities. The result is distinct from typical formal approaches. As opposed to integrated meaning, this textual strategy is more like the dissemination of a signifier complex. The observer is especially critical to revealing, a revealing that comes

about in distinctive ways. Tajiri places several kinds of mediation in proximity so that various discourses are at odds. As a result, claims about the historical world are indeterminate. While Tajiri does not pronounce reality unrepresentable, each approach appears deficient. Then again, each preserves the idea of what it represents. And so, by way of montage, Tajiri illustrates different kinds of simulacra emerging from a variety of contexts having to do with the Second World War internment. With various approaches from multiple contexts within one text, spectator agency is advanced. Dissonance brings about personal and dynamic epistemologies which more congruous and thus passive forms of observation do not demand. In this way, Tajiri causes the spectator to reflect on different ways of representing reality. At the same time, each representational method arrives at something indefinite. Compared with other modalities' persuasive argumentation, this approach places the spectator in an atypical position toward represented reality.

Tajiri represents in ways that call attention to experiential and poetic aspects of perceiving reality. These qualitative approaches take precedence over factuality, persuasion, and pretense of objectivity. At the same time, it promotes spectator freedom and individuated perception leading to independent thought. Consequently, *History and Memory* does not impose persuasive argumentation, or suggest determinate meaning in the manner of conventional documentary. As an alternative, the documentarian sets in motion personal revealing, establishing a free, ontological relationship between spectator and object. In this way, emphasis on perceptual phenomena situates the spectator in the here and now as opposed to the historical world. The spectator, not the author, becomes the ultimate observer, the one who reveals. This source of revealment is consistent with

areas of thought that give emphasis to the individual, perception, and being. For that reason, one can make connections to phenomenology, existentialism and poststructuralism, among other areas of thought. *History and Memory* also departs from conventional points of view which maintain prehensions related to realism, positivisms, and conventional empiricism. Factuality stays within the text however, such as the fact of the Pearl Harbor attack. Albeit never in doubt, it remains that the Pearl Harbor incident is no longer within reach as genuine revealing. Then again, whereas time and space have altered that possibility, signifiers remain. It is within these signifiers, not the signified, that Tajiri situates revealing.

Performative documentaries, especially from that time, demonstrates ways in which documentary had come to be viewed as problematic. Without doubt, the cultural context has changed since the crisis of representation, as has our production and interpretation of discursive objects. Performative documentary is a testament to this historical change. Generally speaking, potential for interpretation hinges on text and the spectator or reader's perceptions of discourse. Anne Jerslev, for example, claims that an inadequately signalled polysemic term performative, which lacks precision, eviscerates the academic value of Stella Bruzzi's work (Jerslev 105-06). On the other hand, how do we arrive at analytical value, or proclaim that value centres on analytical potential? How do we even determine analytical potential, or the value of academic discourse? Must academic discourse perform a particular function? Does this ideological function determine boundaries and obligations? Academics clinging to the traditional period, while facing the crisis of representation, would have thought so. Possibly, the true measure of discursive value lies within the spectator or reader, thus underscoring the



importance of reader agency in arriving at thought. While its seemingly unbounded expression can be liberating or perplexing, depending on one's point of view, the performative ultimately maintains documentary ways of seeing. It retains the objective of representing reality, while expressing this fundamental purpose in dissimilar ways.

## **The Occluded Subject**

On November 11, 1987, Montreal police Constable Allan Gosset shot Anthony Griffin dead. According to reports, the incident followed a taxi driver complaint that Griffin, a 19-year-old black man, refused to pay a fare. Griffin was taken to a police station where he attempted to flee. At first, police denied that he had complied with an order to halt. According to *The New York Times*, police eventually “acknowledged that the youth had stopped and turned around before being killed” (Burns). A police bullet to the forehead killed Griffin. Plainly, Montreal police had put forward an incongruous account. The killing of a citizen and subsequent mystification surrounding the event aroused substantial anger. That Griffin was unarmed compounded that rage, especially among Montreal’s black community. *The New York Times* called the killing of Griffin “a landmark in the troubled history of one of Quebec's forgotten minorities” (Burns).

*The New York Times* reported that the incident “led to an official inquiry by the Quebec Human Rights Commission” as well as a manslaughter charge against Constable Gosset (Farnsworth). Even so, many citizens and community groups did not consider these actions to be determined responses. They supposed that, as part of a greater apparatus of social control, the human rights inquiry was biased. Executive director of Montreal’s Negro Community Center, Ilma Lynton-Holt, gave voice to this scepticism by calling the human rights inquiry a “runaround” (Burns). Many felt that Constable Gosset’s act warranted a more serious charge of murder (Burns; Farnsworth). Nevertheless, public awareness of these events diminished with the passage of time. Even though it once had a profound effect on the general population, the death of Anthony

Griffin seems all but effaced in the present day. The justice system acquitted Constable Gosset of manslaughter and reinstated him following pressure from the police brotherhood (Preville). Whereas a specialized study, such as the University of Ottawa Département de criminologie master's thesis: "Le contrôle de l'inconduite policière : l'affaire Gosset" (Dumont)<sup>3</sup>, can bring extensive information to light, for an ordinary citizen, the death of Anthony Griffin disappeared into obscure processes with vague results.

This situation made me think of a statement by Pratibha Parmar regarding *Sari Red*, her documentary about the racist killing of Kalbinder Kaur Hayre (*Sari Red*). She spoke of wanting to "make a video which would rescue this brave young woman from being yet one more statistic and evoke her life, her dreams and her potential" (Jungblut and Reusch). Parmar's statement evokes tension between realpolitik and ideals. While Montreal's citizenry expressed anger and protest, there was no effective response to concerns about racism and violence. Instead, officials diffused public outrage by employing ineffective processes, with seemingly ineffectual results. It did appear, in the words of Lynton-Holt, like an intricate "runaround" (Burns). On July 3, 1991, history seemed to repeat. Montreal Police believed that they had discovered an attempted murder suspect and a SWAT team closed in on 24 year-old St. Lucia native Marcelus François. Tragedy struck once again, when Sergeant Michel Tremblay shot François dead. According to *The New York Times*, authorities refused to charge Tremblay, or publish its report of the incident (Farnsworth). Once again, a police shooting of a young black man resulted in a backlash from Montreal's citizenry, especially its black community. The

*Ottawa Citizen* reported increased racial tensions in Montreal, beginning that July with the François killing (Rubin and Montgomery).

During that time, I had been experimenting with a new 8mm video format called Hi8 (Barbash and Taylor). I received support from the National Film Board of Canada to explore its potential by shooting a documentary about Montreal's municipal Green Party (*District 25*). While providing economy in production, Hi8 improved on certain shortcomings of lower cost video of the day, especially with its enhanced image resolution. Hi8 video cassettes are small. Like the quieter, shoulder mounted 16mm film cameras in the 1960s, 8mm video cameras were more portable than what preceded them (Ellis and McLane "Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité, 1960-1970" 210). At that time, the new format appeared suited to activist documentary. It held promise of rapid response appropriate to individual or small group action, as well as community-based reaction. Without doubt, Hi8 had potential as a documentary instrument. However, certain limitations soon became apparent. In addition to showing susceptibility to video dropouts, Hi8 did not match Betacam quality. Video dropouts occur when internal camera mechanisms erode magnetic particles from videotape, thus producing scratches devoid of optical information and therefore compromising gains in resolution.

New video formats were particularly interesting because these were difficult times for independent documentary distribution. Broadcasters routinely rejected independents by deploying a nebulous category called production values. On the surface, putatively defective production values had to do with formal properties and style. I remained sceptical however, as I saw this claim as having more to do with controlling content than

aesthetic concerns. I believed that production values were, above all, pretext shrouding ideological objections regarding content. In this way, so-called production values seemed a brilliant diversion, a red herring and readily available grounds to reject ideation it did not like. Furthermore, production values created insoluble problems for independent documentarians. Because of their undefined and mutable nature, production values set up unattainable goals which could not be addressed. Even if media gatekeepers believed their own assertions, the problem was within the realm of ideology. In any case, it exempted gatekeepers from pressure from those people vested in the status quo, in particular, those persons who control the mass media. I am referring here to advertisers and the corporate elite (Chomsky; Herman and Chomsky; Klaehn; Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media). At that time, before the current evolution of the internet, nonconforming points of view were less readily accessible. Mainstream media, along with the notion of production values, worked to keep alternative views on the margins. Unpopular views were relegated to community centres and church basements, in a manner of speaking. Within that technological context, distribution was a problem of ideology and control (Bullert).<sup>4</sup>

While not altogether discredited, arguments citing broadcasting requirements of objectivity and neutrality had lost previous influence. Furthermore, so-called journalistic balance did not provide the remedy its proponents assumed. It had become obvious that all documentaries brought forward a subjective point of view. Questions of representation had become complex and various modes of address were being explored (Iorio). The notion of production values helped maintain the semblance of a free and open mass media, while still remaining restrictive. Hi8 held promise within this misleading context

and shifting consciousness regarding modes of address. Nevertheless, while Hi8 demonstrated clear gains in production, editing remained expensive and distribution was difficult (Barbash and Taylor). Therefore, certain material and ideological impediments remained in place. Independent documentary would remain costly most of the time. In spite of positive effects, Hi8 technological advances would not transform the landscape. The technological context would need to change, and Hi8 would not be the motor. It would take years for more significant technological advances to arrive.

Despite these difficulties, the ideal of documentary as democratizing medium of social change held currency at that time. The National Film Board of Canada's "Challenge for Change" program was not distant memory, but inspiration of recent history (Ellis and McLane "English Language Documentary in the 1970s: Power of the People" 245-47). Notions that documentary could be a driving force for democracy and social change was in the air, especially in Montreal. NFB national headquarters had created a pool of expertise and in a period of budget cuts, several displaced documentarians (Alaton). In addition, Montreal was a center of social activism and politicized citizens, readily evident in dissident movements, noteworthy democratic participation, along with endeavours at political reform (Roussopoulos). Among other documentarians, Magnus Isacson recognized the potential of high quality, inexpensive video as an activist tool (Beauvais and Isacson). Isacson showed interest in the format's promise, especially in terms of rapid response to swiftly evolving situations. Consequently, in the wake of the François tragedy, Isacson proposed that we record a protest march against the killing. Certainly, the public reaction provided the application I had envisioned for Hi8 as an activist tool. The François shooting reflected an ominous

pattern of police behaviour needing urgent response, thus leaving no time to submit a grant application and attain funding. A sense of urgency was in the air. According to the Montreal Gazette, black community organizers initially delayed protests “to ensure calm during the mourning period” (Baker and Mennie). While horrendous, the François tragedy represented an even greater malaise. The public had identified a dangerous pattern and the response was mounting. As a documentary activist, I felt that someone should record its protest, and subsequently we did (*Marcelus François Protest*).

Up to then, I had worked as a director and as a camera operator/director. Working with a director is a different experience. Now I could take direction, and focus on what appeared through the lens. I did not have to switch from choosing compositional elements to composing those elements within the camera. In this way, I could be less conscious of what was around me, and more readily concentrate on critical aspects of cinematography, including technical and aesthetic matters to do with exposure, focus, camera movement, and the like. Magnus Isacsson would assess the proximate reality and direct me in photographing it. Sound recordist Craig Lapp concentrated on the aural dimension. As well, Lapp would spot aspects of reality worth recording and signal either Isacsson or I. In this way, we moved as one, sharing a common purpose of recording critical aspects of the unfolding demonstration. While every protest is unique, observational recording of a peaceful demonstration remains a generalized experience. We encounter the movement of protesters, placards and signs, rhythmic chanting and speeches, along with other sounds. I found it straightforward to negotiate my surroundings while focussing on what came through the camera’s lens. When previously working as a director and camera operator, I exercised judgment about what to record. Now, this consideration belonged to

the director. This judgment included not only questions of critical content, but other matters to do with aesthetics and ethical considerations about what to photograph as well. We recorded the demonstration in this manner when I suddenly sensed a tumult in front of me. I had been following Isacsson's direction and had not yet composed elements within the frame. I was moving to a new position in which I had not yet grasped what was before me. Within that moment, an enraged black man bounded toward me and pushed me back. As Isacsson and Lapp intervened, I was uncertain what had occurred. At that time, I was moving the lens in the direction of something I did not know. I had been aggressed and threatened, while trying to comprehend what motivated the aggression. Having not recognized anything atypical within the frame compounded my confusion.

The Marcelus François protest would be duly reported by mainstream media, and largely forgotten. Perhaps an activist documentary could have helped. After all, I based my decision to participate in documentary production on that conviction. However, that demonstration had become a turning point. I was not welcome at that place, at that time. I had to ask: What right had I to represent? I lacked lucidity about social documentary's function and what role I could take on within it. I saw great problems in representing reality, and my convictions about documentary's societal role would not permit me to overlook these difficulties. The ethical weight of documentary representation had become overwhelming. I no longer felt able to continue. I placed the tape in a drawer and decided not to look at it. At that moment, I abandoned documentary production.

After almost eighteen years, I decided to look at the videotape for the first time. I immediately noted the optical resolution. Hi8 displays a pleasing, luminous quality that



brings forth an agreeable aesthetic. I felt certain that the raw footage would have provided useful material in an eventual documentary. After the demonstration had wound its way through city streets, protestors gathered to hear speeches. I note a change of tenor, a profound sense of emotion and grief, deeply felt by those persons who were present at that time. Raw passion rises to the surface. While not expressing the same feeling, non-black demonstrators appear emotive as well. The mood of a typical peaceful protest had changed and the demonstration began to take on a certain unpredictable volatility. Because looking through the lens narrows perception, one has a different perspective from behind the camera. Attention is skewed in the direction of recording the profilmic. Without doubt, perception occurs differently. As I try to interpret what I see through the lens, Isacsson and Lapp lead me through a crowded space of protest. While several demonstrators are at varied distances, I am not sure what is happening. Protestors seem to react to something, and although I see activity, my view is blocked. There was something, an expression of emotion possibly, by someone I was unable to discern or photograph. I am moving toward this undefined activity when the angry protester approaches me with a determined gait saying: “Yo, yo, yo, just get out of here, just” (*Marcelus François Protest*). I turn off the camera. After rolling the camera again, I hear the sound of my voice, defensive, grasping to apologize for a transgression I do not understand: “I don’t know. I have no idea. We are making a documentary with you guys and we are not media and then. Look, I did not know, I did not know” (*Marcelus François Protest*).

As a rule, protestors want their message communicated. Demonstrations attract cameras and any given protestor can become a social actor in a documentary. The

occluded subject may well have made for effectual documentary which brought their perspective to a wider audience. Possibly, given the choice, the occluded subject would have wanted to be recorded. Who but the subject could say? In any case, the subject did not decide. Another person made that decision for them. So what gave this man the right to determine what cannot be recorded? Perhaps he read the situation lucidly and prevented representation of public display of private grief, to which, given the choice, the occluded subject would not have assented? Of course, this conception is merely conjectural. A similar question can be posed regarding my role: What gave me the right to determine what can be recorded? These difficult questions, which have to do with representation of the Other, lie at the heart of documentary. However, in the face of what was being protested, racism and death by police bullet, these issues seem insignificant. The François tragedy resulted in a thorny problem for police. By this time, they had removed themselves from the immediate vicinity. With growing antagonism and potential of conflict with demonstrators, there was clear motivation if not grounds for withdrawal. The news media had already noted their reluctance to intervene in related matters (Baker and Mennie). Montreal's police force already had bad public relations as a result of killing an unarmed citizen. Probably, they would not want to invite violent reaction. Such fears would be well founded. Without doubt, one could sense the mood had shifted and come to teeter in capricious ways. The *Ottawa Citizen* described racial tensions in Montreal as having arrived at a "boiling point" (Rubin and Montgomery). Organizers called for civil disobedience (Wells), and one speaker alluded to discussions among activists about violent political action (*Marcelus François Protest*).

Even though the confrontation was fleeting, there seemed to be a spillover effect. Almost certainly, demonstrators within the general vicinity saw an altercation, but could not have known relevant facts. They would not have known, for example, that the occluded subject had not been recorded. Possibly, like me, they did not know what had taken place. Perhaps too, the confrontational protester possessed facts of which I am unaware. Under those circumstances we could not record anything of use. Of course, this statement suggests the idea of usable and unusable signifiers. It also shows predisposition toward certain content and formal properties. Maybe keeping the camera running during the confrontation would have made for useable signification. Then again, in this dissertation I have deemed the switched off camera to be useable signification. By this time, most mainstream media had left, along with many demonstrators and non-black supporters. At that moment, I doubted our purpose in being there. With palpable emotion and anger all around, speeches directed anger not toward the white majority, but at institutionalized racism. Nonetheless, one can sense rupture forming within the crowd along racial lines. Protestors look at the lens with reproach, as if our crew were at fault for something. However, it remained that we had not done anything inappropriate. Plainly, it had to do with the mood at that place and time. It appeared that moral and ethical rectitude was being judged according to race. Perhaps the camera was the problem, resentment against the medium itself? Could this antipathy be related to documentary purporting to represent reality? Was it because documentary claims to represent that which cannot be represented? Was it a consequence of documentary's conceit?

Instead of tolerance or disregard, our crew receive a mixture of encouragement and hostility. Perhaps the confrontational protestor's actions altered the group's disposition. It may have to do with race. Then again, while some cast severe glances at my camera, encouragement to carry on comes from a black protestor. It may have to do with representation of reality, and what this practice can do. I have no way to know. A white protestor moves in, and by staring directly into the lens, obstructs the camera's view of a woman exuding rage at the top of her lungs. Because he blocks my shot, I cannot record her speech, which seems incoherent, possibly because of the protestor's obstruction. It looks like he is emulating the antagonistic protestor after his own fashion. But why did he block our recording? Why would he interrupt her discourse? Why would preventing representation of the Other have been a good or necessary thing? Is it to protect the subject? Is this action to protect group interests? Is this act nonsensical and without proper motive? Was this act mere mimicry and mob behaviour? I see broad similarity between this obstruction and the previous intervention of the confrontational protestor: The Other made a decision for the subject that he or she will not be filmed. I wonder if this person could be the same subject. The circumstances make it difficult to assess. Because he blocked my recording and I am only seeing through the lens, I am not able to understand why he decided to do so. One thing is palpable, hostility against our crew has galvanized. This overall mood could be related to mimicry of the confrontational protestor, along with mob behaviour. Then again, perhaps something else motivated this conduct. While some protestors want us to continue, others indicate that our presence is unwelcome. Clearly, my belief that recording this demonstration is a good thing is not shared by all.

As protestors gather to listen to speeches, one can sense catharsis and anger among the crowd. Whereas conventional protest was acceptable to film, in the eyes of some at least, cathartic release was not. At this moment, I sense the importance of immediacy of perception, the significance of temporality to reality. Emotion and anger are palpable in that here and now. One speaker talks about not accepting history's previous paths, like the course of events following the killing of Anthony Griffin. Passion and rage reached a crescendo, with frustration and discontent fomenting talk of resolute action. A speaker advocates violent tactics to the coalescing crowd. Another speaker refers to the news media getting their clips, moving on, and soon after everyone forgets. This attitude and practice marked a distinction between mainstream news and independent documentary. In point of fact, a crucial purpose of social documentary is to counteract this corporatized, institutionalized, mediated ritual of forgetting. Documentary authors provide deeper contexts, and attempt to make issues more enduring, the system and powerful players more accountable in the long run. Nevertheless, questions linger: Are these efforts effective? What value do historical documents have, relative to the here and now? While documentarians are certainly vested in thinking so, at that moment many protestors did not share this sense of purpose. This demonstration had become a place of cathartic grief, a fissure between private and public space. Regardless of our goals, and what good intentions we may have had, to some people the camera had become an incursion. What mattered to those protestors was not some movie in a future space and time. Reality's representation did not matter. Reality is what mattered.

Obviously, police killings of unarmed citizens are wrong. When injury happens repeatedly to an identifiable group, it follows that societal forces are allowing it to take

place. This form of injustice can mobilize segments of the citizenry. Sometimes it can motivate documentary production. However, while repeated killing of unarmed citizens by police is harmful to society as a whole, the issue was part of several broad concerns effecting Montreal's black community in specific ways. Given that we cannot presume to act for others, one may well ask: Did our purpose there have value? Some demonstrators did not think so. From my point of view, misgiving was felt too, a feeling akin to photographing familial distress, leading to a sense of incursion and not belonging. Of course, documentary producers must dissociate from such thoughts. Then again, it is worth considering why we would no longer be welcome. Did those protestors who did not approve of our presence simply not understand? Did we have every reason to be there, or were we deceiving ourselves with a false sense of privileged purpose, when our presence amounted to a form of assault? Had those demonstrators revealed something that we could not discern because of our investment in the documentary process? Did we fail to recognize our endeavour as ineffectual to their cause? At that point in the demonstration, different ways of perceiving separated our crew from certain protestors. Without doubt, they recognized that we held potential power over the subject, probably the underlying reason the subject was occluded. This situation brings to mind certain dynamics of documentary production, especially issues of control and trust. The protestors did not know us, and therefore did not have a particular reason to trust us. Indeed, they had reason not to trust us. After all, social actors are not naïve. They are aware that variables outside their influence can have bearing on meaning, and that their image can be used to establish meaning.

The occluded subject brings forth several questions about documentary representation of reality. Some of these concerns have to do with ethics, power, and control. Context is important as well. Each coalesces around immediacy of perception, the original context within which reality is revealed. While those demonstrators were aware of the possibility of future contexts of representation, there must have been something within their immediate perception they wanted to obstruct from viewing that was yet to come. Therefore, this act points toward the image in a future context. However, the here and now is where and when reality unfolds. Like those demonstrators, I was in the here and now. Then again, I was gathering footage for my own purposes, a potential documentary. I could assume, if not guarantee, ethical controls by way of exclusion of footage, altered context, or destruction of visual evidence. While this issue can be reduced to questions of power and control of imagery, it remains a matter of immediate perception: Why a given object merits inclusion or occlusion, its value as essential truth, its essence before rendering it, by way of formal approach, into representation of reality. There appeared to be something fundamental about reality and truth. Could the essence of reality and its representation lie within immediacy of perception? Then again, most documentary is by convention, constative (S. Scheibler 143). Quite the opposite, the revealing of reality as immediate perception does not evaluate its own correctness or falsity. It occurs before evaluation, and in this way, departs from the constative. It bears greater resemblance to the performative, as coming to presence of revealing. This distinction raises questions regarding constative versus performative approaches. Could it be that constative methods are given to deviate from essential truth which lies within immediacy of perception? Is reality unrepresentable, in

that truth lies within perception, perpetually lost to space and time? Do constative approaches depart from truth in some elemental way? Can what is revealed in space and time be signified in the future, in ways that bring forth what is true?

During that time and its aftermath, similar questions eddied through my mind. Obviously, I had a feeling of being unwelcome. Then again, was my purpose there more important than whatever incursions our recording made? Even before embarking on this shoot, I harboured uncertainty about being there. Certainly, the black community did not own the issue. It affected the entire citizenry. Nevertheless, I thought it preferable that an independent crew recording the event had been black and native to Montreal. Then again, we were the only crew there.

This chapter draws attention to the importance of context, emphasis that will carry into the next one “Representation of a Crisis”. Evidently, in the context of a dissertation, a first person, essayistic account is unconventional. Of course, discursive strategies underlie this unusual approach. By making it the narrative centrepiece, the chapter draws attention to the importance of the personal, particularly in creating documentary meaning. The personal is particularly relevant within performative documentary. The personal stresses not only subjectivity, but reveals the importance of authorship to textual signification. This body of concerns also points to the importance of the personal in spectatorship, of connecting human relations to symbolic ones. Performative engagement with the personal is distinct from certain contemporary documentaries where the author plays social actor and reporter/narrator. Michael Moore used this device to great effect in *Roger & Me (Roger & Me)*. While personal, these documentaries are unlike the



performative mode. More readily, they conform to conventional modalities, while invoking a reporter's narrative of a journalistic quest for knowledge. "The Occluded Subject" chapter emulates this knowledge quest, however in a reflexive way, as perturbed by those conventions' implications. This perturbation draws attention to fundamental documentary issues, questioning whether constative approaches are appropriate to represent reality. Just as the performative focuses our attention on immediacy of perception, temporality is another aspect of documentary emphasized here. Context effects meaning, and temporality is a potent determinant of context.

I bring two distinct temporal registers to this chapter, one from memory of recording the Marcelus François protest, and the other from viewing the footage eighteen years later. One must also consider the actual François demonstration, a particular experience in a specific temporal context, that which activates each register. As the absent presence that is reality to documentary, the referent haunts each reading as well. I represent each context in personal ways, using the essay, a discursive form which reflects back on Renov's prescient article, in which he describes certain desirable documentary characteristics as grounded in the essay (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video"). Without doubt, the François protest recording took place within a distinctive history and culture. The next chapter considers the historical and cultural context within which the occlusion of the subject took place and the contemporary performative emerged.

## **Representation of a Crisis**

While much came before that culmination of events at the Marcelus François' demonstration, countless occurrences followed as well. These many events make it impossible to place the incident in a singular context. There is more to it than facts or any cause-effect rationality we apply. Representations related to the François killing are, for all intents, endless. Accordingly, it can mean a great deal. It can be a continuum of history. It can be a narrative of race or class. It can be a question of history and memory. It can be an object of documentary. It can be a problem of representation. Any number of theories can be applied to it. It can be interpreted any number of ways. Within this dissertation I investigate several issues regarding representing reality during a period marked by what has been called, in differing contexts, a "crisis of representation" (Denzin and Lincoln 18-19; Jameson "Foreword" viii). This turn of phrase points to a watershed in our understanding representational practices. In one sense, it recognizes the problem of indeterminacy in representing social and historical worlds. However, the crisis of representation is also a particularly postmodern crisis in which objective reality becomes unattainable, and its representation unworkable. This state of affairs can be construed to mean an absence of truth and that representation is impossible.

In a chapter of a book about contemporary ideas of utopia and science fiction representations of otherness, Fredric Jameson commented: "In postmodernity representation is not conceived as a dilemma but an impossibility, and what can be termed a kind of cynical reason in the realm of art displaces it by way of a multiplicity of images, none of which corresponds to "truth"" (Jameson "The Future as Disruption"

212). This quotation evokes the proliferation of communications technologies and vast opening out which follows. Evidently, one can interpret this technological upsurge as an end of meaning, as it is sometimes taken to mean. In this perspective, the referent becomes lost in a sea of subjectivities, resulting in loss of responsibility as well. This nihilistic view can be placed in the context of a fundamental uncertainty about the longstanding conviction that the signifier is faithful to the referent. However, the crisis of representation marked a proliferation of representational activities as well. This abundant representational activity suggests something different from nonexistent meaning: the birth of meaning as explosion of meaning (Barthes "From Work to Text" 171). In the subsequent sentence, Jameson comments on the affect of continual and recontextualized production of meaning: "I have argued elsewhere that such alleged relativism offers new and productive paths to history and to praxis; and there is no reason to fear that postmodern Utopias will not be as energizing in their new historical context as the older ones were in previous centuries" (Jameson "The Future as Disruption" 212).

The crisis of representation reflects a loss of faith in the signifier's ability to stand for the referent. Then again, other influential matters resonate during this time. There were, as well, concerns about thought control in Western societies, evinced in Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (Chomsky; Chomsky and Herman *The Political Economy of Human Rights. Volume 1. The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*; Chomsky and Herman *The Political Economy of Human Rights. Volume 2. After the Cataclysm: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology*; Herman and Chomsky; Klaehn; Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media). In the propaganda model, questions center on ways in which news media serve

elite interests. This scrutiny sometimes manifests in mistrust about mediation of reality in general. This scepticism may well have played out when our documentary crew's filming became obstructed. In this example, representation of reality takes an extraordinary turn: Obstruction of representation becomes reality. And in situ, as well as within this dissertation, the obstruction of representation becomes the reality represented. Paradoxically, representing reality became the revealing of that which cannot be revealed. In this instance, certain protestors found something intolerable about reality's representation. It had become more than problematic. In their judgment, filming should be stopped. This desire to stop representation can be interpreted as a sign. Certainly, within realms of theory and praxis, greater matters were unfolding. Many had become dissatisfied with prevalent discourses. For some, this disenchantment had to do with modality. This dissatisfaction manifested when documentarians took up the performative mode.

From my perspective, representing reality was beset with problems. Certainly, I did not expect the occluded subject incident. Out of the blue, social actors we sided with did not want us there. More decisively however, I felt a disparity between my purpose and my ability to realize that purpose. The problem was larger than the occluded subject. It went to the heart of documentary and representing reality. Something about the medium itself seemed central to this difficulty. As a result, I developed a sense of paralysis regarding representation of reality. I could not reconcile these problems and carry on with documentary work. Consequently, I put my camera down for many years. Evidently, other documentarians did not find similarly significant barriers and carried on with conventional modalities. Others found their way to performative documentary.

Without question, what came before influenced us all, mainly traditional modalities and reflexivity. While many recognized the gap between signifier and referent, there was a separate but related quandary. This difficulty had to do with ideologies and politics of representation, generally divided along lines of powerful interests and those rebelling against malevolent manifestations of those interests. While they share similarities, filmic mediation's distinctive nature distinguished documentary from the greater body of social sciences. In this way, writing and film differ. More than written text, filmic representations display mimetic qualities which bring forward impressions of propinquity between signifier and referent.

Because of formal differences and disciplinary boundaries, discourses of knowledge are usually perceived as distinct from each other. Then again, we live in shared historical and cultural contexts. Influences are felt across boundaries and margins remain porous. Without doubt, disciplinary thought reflects vested interests which determine knowledge formation. Other epistemological influences are present as well. The crisis of representation, for example, reflects cultural change within the academy and outside its walls. In the case of the occluded subject, protestors decided that something could not be represented. Because they determined what shall be excluded, this desire to prevent knowledge is similar to disciplinarity. Exclusion of knowledge raises questions about differences between expressions of institutional power and those protestors' actions. Like certain mob behaviours, the protestors' acts may well have been grounded in ethical perceptions. On ethical grounds, one person determined what cannot be represented, and therefore blocked filming. Others followed suit. However, because I did not see what could have been filmed, I could not ascertain on what they based their

actions. Without enough access to the social or historical world, I could not make judgment of this kind. Therefore, I could not decide much. The subject was occluded and therefore I simply determined it to be an occluded subject. Without doubt, to forbid representation is an expression of power, like disciplinary controls, or in the extreme, censorship. One may well ask: What are the differences between preventing representation by using physical force, as opposed to putting forces of institutional power into play? While disciplinarity will not, as a rule, prevent someone from expressing something if they so choose, disciplinarity can make life difficult for people who transgress its perceived boundaries. Correspondingly, corporate and institutional media shape discourse by supporting certain ideologies and excluding others. In that representation has been obstructed, the result is the same. The protestors' determination to occlude the subject came at a particular historical moment, and was made within cultural conditions that are social as well as historical. In addition, they arrived at their decision in relation to documentary representation, which comes with its own history and traditions. Moreover, it concerns technology, specifically that of representing reality. Significantly however, it had to do with representing the Other, an activity documentary shares with social sciences.

The emergence of contemporary performative documentary took place when the crisis of representation became recognized (Jameson "Foreword; Nichols "Performing Documentary; Denzin and Lincoln). In several ways, including a fundamental paradigm shift, there appears to be a connection between this documentary modality and the crisis of representation. Without doubt, broader cultural influences had effects on documentary formal approaches. Jay Ruby, for example, noted the affect of the crisis of representation

on anthropological and ethnographic film (Ruby 4-6), as did Nancy Lutkehaus and Jenny Cool (Lutkehaus). Experienced in a general way across social sciences and humanities, these influences had effect on documentary praxis, as well as perceptions about documentary. In "Paradigms Lost and Found: "The Crisis of Representation" And Visual Anthropology" for example, Lutkehaus and Cool describe these effects: "The "paradigms lost" of our title refers to the "crisis of representation" that beset anthropology and other fields of the humanities during the 1980s. This postmodern, postcolonial, postfeminist erosion of paradigmatic authority posed significant challenges to anthropology – a discipline grounded in the Enlightenment project of rationality and objectivity and intimately bound up in the history of Western imperialism" (Lutkehaus 116). Therefore, the crisis of representation influenced documentary mediation. Furthermore, it conjoined to responses on several fronts, having to do with ways in which representational practices related to power and its reinforcement. This concern with power and representation included a broad based perception of a Western hegemonic undercurrent within various disciplines. At times, this critique led to rereading classical anthropological and ethnographic texts. In *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* for example, Fatimah Tobing Rony discusses ways in which *Nanook of the North* (*Nanook of the North*) and discourses surrounding it, bring light to the character of anthropological knowledge (Rony *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle*). Rony examined Flaherty's film "as a product of the hunt for images, as a kind of taxidermic display" (Rony *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* 100). She saw documentary take on a legitimating role for broader discourses of knowledge and their truth claims. Examinations such as Rony's are consequential because they influenced the

discursive field. Ultimately, the discursive field effects praxis. Within a field in which desire for social justice remains a driving force, documentarians were at the heart of shifting currents. The contemporary performative displays one way in which the representational crisis became manifest.

Fields of sociology, anthropology, and ethnography experienced the crisis of representation profoundly. Not surprisingly, it shows up within visual anthropology as well. Moreover, elements of sociology, anthropology, and ethnography bear resemblances to social documentary as a whole. Corresponding areas of interest include society and societal institutions, as well as individuals and their involvement with those institutions. Documentary incorporates study of societal phenomena including observation of social relations, as well as economic aspects which relate to these phenomena. And like social anthropologists, documentarians investigate humanity and social worlds to better understand environments and cultures. This pursuit of knowledge may involve investigation of a specific people and their interrelations, often entailing representations of groups distinct from that of the author. It may also comprise direct observation and recording of social and historical worlds. Like documentary and its study, sociology, anthropology and ethnography rely on representational practices to convey findings. Evidently, other characteristics separate documentary from those fields. Whereas ideology and persuasion are intrinsic to academic work, documentary can display unabashed emphasis on direct and immediate political engagement, sometimes as overt propaganda. Without doubt, qualitative research has transformed academic fields in various ways, providing insights regarding a changing cultural and discursive environment (Denzin and Lincoln). These greater conditions, along with evolving



perspectives in the social sciences, influenced performative documentary. Finally, qualitative research has had effects on sociology, anthropology, and ethnography, each of which shares commonalities with social documentary.

In a categorization entitled “The Eight Moments of Qualitative Research” (Denzin and Lincoln 14-20), Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln outline the evolution of qualitative research. This taxonomy brings about inexactness and mutability according to interpretation, a discursive strategy which reflects an evolving epistemology. While the authors present these “moments” chronologically, they also suggest that they are not absolute. Various moments can operate within time periods they put forward. The traditional moment, for example, can function within the modernist phase. Thus, their classification is not exactly chronological, but fluid and dynamic, while indicating tendencies and periods in which particular propensities dominate. The initial, most enduring and influential moment, they term “traditional” dates from the beginning of the twentieth century until the Second World War (Denzin and Lincoln 14). While focussing on anthropology and ethnographic fieldwork, Denzin and Lincoln describe several characteristics which reflect aspirations of objectivity, colonialist ideology, and positivist conceptions. We find these intentions in textual formulations and underlying assumptions which support them. While notions of colonialism suggest chauvinism and exploitation, research goals of objective and consistent accounts reflect a principled side to these practices as well. Its subjectivity becomes conspicuous however, owing to historical dislocation. This palpable subjectivity, couched as objective, can make traditional accounts seem naïve.

While traditional ethnographic texts line up with imperialistic objectives and strive for objectivity, one can also point to an underlying condition called “museumification” (Hearne 314, 15). The term museumification describes the containment and organization of the historical world in spatial and temporal ways. An idea that the object of study is not subject to temporality, and thus remains inert for future examination, underlies museumification. It comprises the objectification and aestheticization of human activity in ways reminiscent of what Heidegger criticized, that is to say, challenging-forth and the standing-reserve (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 17). This concept involves the ordering of space, time, and human activity, to be held for further ordering at our behest. Among other things, this ordering leads to profound ramifications for the Other, by conceiving human beings, culture, and civilization as petrified objects brought forth as needed. Clifford Geertz viewed this manner of perception as problematical in another way. Commenting on the “Preface” to *Iphigénie* by Jean Racine and “Preface to Shakespeare (1765)” in *Johnson on Shakespeare* by Samuel Johnson (Geertz "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man" 35), Geertz wrote:

The image of a constant human nature independent of time, place and circumstance, of studies and professions, transient fashions and temporary opinions, may be an illusion, that what man is may be so entangled with where he is, who he is, and what he believes that it is inseparable from them. It is precisely the consideration of such a possibility that led to the rise of the concept of culture and the decline of the uniformitarian view of man. Whatever else modern anthropology asserts – and it seems to have asserted almost everything at one time or another – it is firm in the conviction that men unmodified by the customs of particular places do not in fact exist, have never existed, and most important, could not in the very nature of the case exist. There is, there can be, no backstage where we can go to catch a glimpse of Mascou’s actors as “real persons” lounging about in street clothes, disengaged from their profession, displaying with artless candor their spontaneous desires and unprompted passions. They may change their roles, their styles of acting, even in the dramas in which they play; but – as

Shakespeare himself of course remarked – they are always performing (Geertz "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man" 35).

Geertz illuminates several matters about our representing social and historical worlds as though these representations are tantamount to reality. These questions hinge not only on issues of exploitation, but of temporality, space and place, as well as existence, culture, technology and performativity. Within his discourse lay questions about how to perceive reality accurately, as well as a belief that museumification-like perspectives are not especially helpful in this endeavour.

Denzin and Lincoln document another effect during this time, that of the Chicago School. The Chicago School was influential with its stress on ““slice-of-life”” and “narrated life history approach” which “gave the researcher-as-author the power to represent the subject’s story” (Denzin and Lincoln 16). The authors observe that this narrative tactic can exhibit a romanticizing tendency vis-à-vis the subject. Without doubt, this stratagem can be criticized as dubious, especially where one touts objectivity. All the same, it had practical purpose. It served the ideal of sociology unified with social action. And while Denzin and Lincoln concentrate on social sciences, certain commonalities with representing the real by various means are also evident. This similarity can, of course, have to do with documentary approaches. However, it also relates to broader discursive forms. Social realism, for example, is an especially generalized discursive phenomenon. It can include various artistic expressions which endeavour to represent societal conditions as if referencing the real directly. Steven C. Ward’s description reveals the paradigmatic nature of this representational framework:

While there are many different manifestations of social realism, all forms share the conviction that all or most of reality is, in some manner, social in origin. This may

include the argument that all reality is socially negotiated via symbolic interaction or the conviction that the rules, norms, or economic structure of society determine reality orders. Most forms of social realism also agree that it is possible to study and explicate social reality using standard empirical methods of inquiry, such as field work, surveys, or experiments (Ward 56).

The assumption that the author can use selected empirical processes to discover and describe its consequences buttresses the idea of a socially structured reality. This belief can be seen in various approaches to documentary. This belief is, as well, a key assumption of Denzin and Lincoln's traditional moment.

While the social is viewed as determinant of reality, narrative remains critical to its articulation. Of course, narrative is inherently interdisciplinary. As with anthropology and ethnography, assembly of narrative from empirical observation is obvious within documentary in general. Regardless of several understandings of it, approaches to narrative harbour a general notion of sequentiality. In this sense, narrative organizes perception as temporal sequences. These sequences are arranged as chronological or thematic, and entail cause and effect. Rationalism too is based on narrative, that is to say determined by our perceptions of cause and effect. Genre context can be important as well, especially in that genre conditions our expectations regarding narrative. In addition to being omnipresent, narrative is a formidable tool to bring forward subjective representations (Kohler Reissman 230-31). Narrative and its expression in realism, have served to take up social problems within a range of discursive genres. These endeavours can be fiction or non-fiction, as well as sociological, literary, theatrical, filmic, photographic, and the like. This discursive variety sheds light on the multidisciplinary character of social realism, and how certain commonalities overlap within a considerable range of expressions. This discursive multiplicity may vary from formal staging of the

British Kitchen Sink School, to Italian neorealism and cinéma-vérité, to several others.

While each aspires to depict reality, there is as well, an essential belief in narrative and the accessibility of the referent by way of signification. In addition, a fundamental goal of social reform frequently lies within. One can assume that illumination of social problems, by way of narrative and mimetic practices, lead to these problems' resolution.

Although a considerable assumption, the notion that illumination leads to remedy remains a deeply rooted principle underlying culture. An important part of this history lies within seventeenth century political philosophy, particularly the social contract. In "Social Contract Theory and Its Critics" Patrick Riley describes this concept:

At the heart of social contract theory is the idea that political legitimacy, political authority, and political obligation are derived from the consent of the governed, and are the artificial product of the voluntary agreement of free and equal moral agents. On this view, legitimacy and duty depend on a concatenation of voluntary individual acts, and not on 'natural' political authority, patriarchy, theocracy, divine right, necessity, custom, convenience, or psychological compulsion (Riley 347).

These ideas connect to a commonly held belief regarding the role of the state toward the general population. Owing to consent, which grants the right to govern, those who govern must protect the interests of those governed. In this way, the social contract casts a light on social realism. According to the social contract, to represent social injustice would set voluntary acts of legitimate government in motion. Consequently, certain aspirations of social realism relating to social justice seem practical and realistic. Because government has a duty to protect its citizens' interests, it should therefore do so. Along these lines, the social contract embodies an ethical dimension, as well as suggestion of agency. Since governors are compelled to act in safeguarding the interests of those they govern, it suffices to bring forward social wrongs. The state will, as a matter of course, address

those wrongs. To illuminate social injustice by way of symbolic representation, as with documentary for example, goes a long way in dealing with the problem.

At the historical juncture within which the crisis of representation occurred, this belief had come in doubt. Scepticism resulted from a history in which social justice was often not abetted, in spite of representations. Further dubiety related to propaganda and the ability of the signifier to stand for the referent. Ideals of social contract notwithstanding, within modern technological environments of liberal democracies, signification of social wrongs does not automatically set in motion voluntary remedial acts. To move beyond mere information and knowledge, one requires additional forms of agency. Action is necessary, and grounds for this deduction are evinced in the killing of Marcelus François. In Montreal and Canada in general, there were many representations of the police shootings. Despite that, the killing continued. Presumably then, representations did not bring about remedy of a serious matter of social justice. Absence of change led to political crisis, and the resultant tensions may well have led to the occlusion of the subject. From my position of producing documentary material, several questions arose. A critical question became: Do traditional forms of representation provide something useful and practical? Are conventional formulations a necessary first step in social reform? Then again, are conventional representational approaches ineffective? Are they, in effect, flawed in fundamental ways?

Denzin and Lincoln call the second moment “modernist” (Denzin and Lincoln 16-17). This moment is freely situated after the Second World War to the 1970s, continuing to the present day. Grounded in positivism, the modernist phase preserves much of the

traditional, while exhibiting further elements as well. Along with social realism, characteristics retained from the traditional include the ethnographer as hero. These qualities appear in documentary too, where besides elements of social realism, the documentarian sometimes assumes a heroic role. Along with cultural romanticism, steadfast principles and beliefs appear to be important. While traditional elements remain significant, other stimuli inflect the general framework. These other elements include emergent aspects of feminism, postpositivism, ethnomethodology, and critical theory. More striking influences appear in the third moment positioned between 1970 and 1986, what the authors call blurred genres. They describe the third moment this way:

Theories ranged from symbolic interactionism to constructivism, naturalistic inquiry, positivism and postpositivism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, critical theory, neo-Marxist theory, semiotics, structuralism, feminism, and various racial/ethnic paradigms. ... Research strategies and formats for reporting research ranged from grounded theory to the case study, to methods of historical, biographical, ethnographic, action, and clinical research. Diverse ways of collecting and analyzing empirical materials were also available, including qualitative interviewing (open-ended and quasi-structured) and observational, visual, personal experience and documentary methods (Denzin and Lincoln 17).

During this time, the research culture had not only undergone change, it was transforming as well. Elasticity and diversity characterized the new disciplinary environment. As researchers looked afield for inspiration, previously rigid boundaries became porous. Genres lost formal rigidity, with practitioners using methods of theretofore distinctive fields. In “Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought” Clifford Geertz expands on the concept of blurring:

This genre blurring is more than just a matter of Harry Houdini or Richard Nixon turning up as characters in novels or of midwestern murder sprees described as though a gothic romancer had imagined them. It is philosophical inquiries looking like literary criticism (think of Stanley Cavell on Beckett or Thoreau, Sartre on Flaubert), scientific discussions looking like belles lettres *morceaux* (Lewis Thomas, Loren Eiseley),

baroque fantasies presented as deadpan empirical observations (Borges, Barthelme), histories that consist of equations and tables or law court testimony (Fogel and Engerman, *Le Roi Ladurie*), documentaries that read like true confessions (Mailer), parables posing as ethnographies (Castenada), theoretical treatises set out as travelogues (Lévi-Strauss), ideological arguments cast as historiographical inquiries (Edward Said), epistemological studies constructed like political tracts (Paul Feyerabend), methodological polemics got up as personal memoirs (James Watson) (Geertz "Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought" 19-20).

Other emergent methodologies noted include poststructuralism, neopositivism, and deconstruction. As researchers borrowed, and commitment to traditional disciplinary waned, the field became varied. Among other things, research interaction was interpreted. In place of the expediency of transcendent observation, study focused on the disorder and indeterminacy of contact with social worlds. As with documentary, this disorder and indeterminacy went beyond reflexivity and engaged a multiplicity of methods. Along with plurality and reduced commitment to convention, discursive authority diminished as well.

The authors name the fourth moment situated in the mid 1980s "the crisis of representation" (Denzin and Lincoln 18-19). The epistemological roots of the crisis of representation can be traced to Max Weber having brought notions of reflexivity to sociological discourse. Writing about Weber's thought in "The Methodology of the Social Sciences," James Bohman elaborates:

While general theories can discover and explain regularities of behaviour, these general regularities must also be made intelligible as the product of intentional actions according to agent's purposes and normative self understandings. This requirement of intelligibility, or interpretive adequacy, is made more complex by the reflexive status of the investigator as social actor, whose enquiry has an evaluative significance in a specific cultural situation (Bohman 670).

Even though roots of contemporary social sciences can be traced to an earlier period, work emerging during this moment exhibits distinctly contemporary reflexivity. Matters



of social class, gender, and race became especially prominent. Reflexivity focuses attention on research as a complex enterprise. More specifically, the social and cultural condition of the investigator becomes critical to production of meaning. The crisis of representation also brought attention to notions of internal contradictions and variations between methodologies, as well as particular social and historical contexts:

The problem for the philosophy of the social sciences is thus not merely to leave the tensions among the various and heterogeneous methods and aims of social science in place but to show the possible interrelationships among them in a fruitful research practice that is reflexively situated in and guided by its own specific historical and social setting (Bohman 670).

The crisis of representation signifies movement within these areas. When traditional models lost influence, social sciences opened to new methods of representation.

The crisis of representation indicated that the world had changed. Innovative epistemological directions stemmed from ontological purpose, an altered sense of being in the world. Previously unchallenged assumptions were seen as problematical or defective. Authority moved from pretence of mastery to personal forms of representation. This personal representation often involved alternative means of expression closely tied to the author. Alternative expression did not mean that social worlds could not be represented. Then again, modes of representation and the research artefact became increasingly important. These decidedly subjective artefacts sometimes involved experimentation, fiction, and performance. There came to be particular emphasis within representational practices. Rather than representing an objective world, the text emanated from the researcher's experience. Writing, narrative production, and representation of research became an extension of this experience, and text became self representation. More than representation of the self however, research and its representation became

analogous. The research act became particularly significant and, as follows, reflected recognition of an inherently complex field. Observation and representation were seen as too contingent on the individual to allow for rigid theories and approaches. This complexity manifests, in a straightforward way, a long-standing sense of pluralism in social sciences. And in the postmodern tradition, a pluralistic field and pluralist research contraindicate master narratives. Reflexivity and the subjective experience of research, as well as the enduring purpose of emancipation, evoke the personal. In this way, the personal comes to the forefront in the social sciences as a whole. As will be shown, the personal is fundamental to performative documentary as well.

Where changes altered research directions toward subject-centered discourse, reservations regarding academic alignment with societal power remained. Academic institutions and their researchers were seen as cultivating power interests. Denzin and Lincoln explain this symbiosis along lines of furtherance of empirical science, in combination with epistemologies concomitant with state and capitalist institutions. In spite of that, the research context was changing. Prevailing notions that social science norms produced benign agency did not conform to the shifting context. Even with attempts underway to free social sciences from dominant ideologies, many believed that trappings remained. However, to criticize this relationship to power meant that its converse was present as well, an internal critique about dominant discourses and societal power. As follows, ideology is not monolithic. And even if ideology tends to obscure power interests, to question authority is not new. Questioning authority is a long-established tradition with deep and ongoing epistemological roots. This resistance manifests as refusal of authority-derived behaviours, noted by critical theorist Max

Horkheimer as widespread, even in what he called bourgeois thought. Horkheimer commented that “the mainstream of bourgeois philosophy down to the beginning of the nineteenth century, despite all its internal contradictions, is marked by a recurring rejection of authority-motivated behaviour” (Horkheimer 73). Horkheimer noted this tendency in diverse sources such as Voltaire, John Locke, Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (Horkheimer 73-76). While Horkheimer’s assertion has to do with the Enlightenment, it points toward emancipation as a long-standing ideal. Therefore, while adhering to politics is obviously expedient, desire for emancipation remains significant. Its practical application is another matter. In any case, the emancipation ideal appears to be a constant. It inspired the transformation that Denzin and Lincoln describe. The researcher’s role is therefore not only reflective or reflexive, but may also involve the ideal of an ethically constructive agency, the practical application of which evolves continually.

The social science text came to be appreciated in particular ways. It was understood as not only of the social world, but as production of social experience as well. In addition to the author’s making of text, text became a reflection of the author. This distinction evinces attentiveness of disparity between social worlds and text. It also demonstrates recognition that the signifier is not the referent, and that the text is distinct from the historical world that it represents. With these disparities in the forefront, ramifications have no end. Above all, referentiality becomes an open question. An unstable referent has various consequences. Denzin and Lincoln point to a “legitimation crisis” (Denzin and Lincoln 19), a lack of authority in the product of research. It can also be understood in terms of heightened indeterminacy toward the referent. This

indeterminacy raises questions, particularly about how we think the referent. For example, is research but a form of textuality? Does it follow that text and not referent is the crucial object? If the text is the crucial object, how do conventional ways of appraising research apply? And if we cannot represent social and historical worlds with precision, what is the purpose of research? If the referent can be represented, how can it be represented? And how is this referentiality applied within evolving social worlds? Given the vast pluralities of methodologies, the character of each method is of the essence.

While these transformations can be seen as jumbled chaos, it is more accurately appreciated as evolving epistemology. Social science remains distinctive in certain ways. Particular aspects separate it from physical sciences. Even though physical sciences develop their assertions from contingent relations, physical sciences' assertions lead to the appearance, if not fact, of determinacy. In contrast, what takes place in the social world is plainly immeasurable, indicating subjective relations and indeterminacy. Documentary media is distinct in that one can reproduce visual evidence at will, evoking scientific notions of replicability. This replicability suggests the possibility of determinacy among social relations. Of course, these impressions collapse when one takes into account the complexity of social and historical worlds. Add documentary reflexivity to this complexity and indeterminacy soon follows. Certainly, documentary seems closer to social sciences than the physical. However, the character of social sciences is in flux. With increasing numbers of methodologies in play, researchers become involved in a heightened process. Subject to evolving normativity, legitimacy

became unstable. These changes occur within changing technological and societal environments, the face of which no one can clearly see.

Where a plurality of methodologies and discourses came to the fore, complications followed. Formerly unambiguous disciplinary boundaries became undecided. However, more than disciplinary margins were in doubt. Because of the unstable environment, evaluation and verification became problematic as well. Consequently, evaluation and verification required amendment. Along with discursive practices, evaluation criteria would have to evolve. Evolution of evaluation criteria entailed participation of academic elites, as well as their consensus. Without doubt, elite consensus will shape the social sciences' disciplinary environment. In addition to being a democratizing influence, elite consensus can also be considered a normativization process as well. Critical theory, for example, had looked to reflection as a way to transform practices toward the consensual (Bohman 678). What Max Horkheimer termed interdisciplinary materialism of the 1930s Frankfurt School, was an endeavour to bring together outstanding social theories and put diverse research approaches into practice (Bohman 674). From an interdisciplinary perspective, this practice can be seen as a constructive way to draw on consensus. Then again, consensus and evaluation tends to reinforce existing norms. Reinforcement of existing norms can create obstacles for new methodologies and discourses which, while perceived as radical, may nevertheless play crucial roles in the evolution of thought. With introduction of new and radical practices, normativity is not the purpose. Other matters, including forms of political and social activism, may well be the aim. If not, the objective could be to proceed with discourse in specific ways. These varied objectives reflect typical historical processes. Analogous

conditions existed when authority shifted to reason during the Enlightenment. In this case, epistemological displacement and loss of normativity are consistent with the evolution of thought. For better or worse, this evolution of thought has brought us to where we are today.

Denzin and Lincoln identify the fifth moment as “the postmodern period of experimental ethnographic writing” and the sixth moment, situated between 1995 and 2000, they call “postexperimental inquiry” (Denzin and Lincoln 20). The seventh moment, sited between 2000 and 2004, they describe as the “methodology contested present” (Denzin and Lincoln 20). The eighth moment, positioned from 2005, which the authors refer to as “now, the future” is rife with adverse reactions to developments within the moments noted above (Denzin and Lincoln 20). This eighth moment has to do with ideological constraints stemming from Bush-era political activities within the United States (Willis 156). Together with unqualified rejection of a detached observer and experimentation, participation of marginalized groups characterize these moments. These moments are also marked by hostile response from influential quarters. In preference to master narratives, one sees emphasis on the specificity of the local, as well as the political nature of these activities. The activist character of this eighth moment can be connected to a methodological backlash. Additional experimentation involves intermingling of approaches from social sciences and humanities, together with emerging methods familiar from literature and fine arts. Along with various literary and artistic approaches, this experimentation involves discursive practices that draw into question traditional distinctions between social sciences and humanities. In spite of political opposition, extensive pluralism has been entrenched within social science discourse. More diverse

practical methods, theoretical slants, and textual possibilities became available. Given this extensive pluralism, one may well ask: How is this pluralism practicable within academic perspectives of verification and normative expectations? The transformation that the social sciences underwent has been described by Clifford Geertz in terms of where the value of inquiry is situated:

The refiguration of social theory represents, or will if it continues, a sea change in our notion not so much of what knowledge is but of what it is we want to know. Social events do have causes and social institutions effects; but it just may be that the road to discovering what we assert in asserting this lies less through postulating forces and measuring them than through noting expressions and inspecting them (Geertz "Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought" 34).

Unquestionably, this perspective sits awkwardly within traditional means of evaluation. On the other hand, it is part of a historical process that responds to the social, cultural, and political present, while lurching toward a future that no one knows.

Together with seeking out different ways to represent, various contemporary moments outlined in this chapter show dissatisfaction with dominant ways of representing. Moreover, different ways of representing attract resistance. I have suggested a related dissatisfaction playing out with the occluded subject, when demonstrators attempted to block representation. Then again, that interpretation could merely be a subjective perception around which I constructed a narrative. In this case, it would express my understanding of the dynamics involved, combined with personal affirmation that conventional documentary is beset with problems. In any case, it would be too complex to resolve potential elements in the occlusion of the subject through cause-effect rationalism, at least in any determinant way. The crisis of representation and other moments, point toward contested fields. Disputes have to do with, not only what

can be represented, but how representation can take place. These contestations play out in disciplinary contexts, be that institutional or economic. Critiques of existing ways of representing, attempts at new ones, and related struggles, manifest the political nature of discourse. These politics of representation become heightened in evolving contemporary forms, notably around suppression of discourse. Therefore, while Fatimah Tobing Rony criticized traditional ethnographic documentary, one can contest any discourse. This contestation may have to do with how specific discourses take on a legitimating role for broader discourses and truth claims. These factors mark an ideological dimension. For that matter, contestation seems to centre on ideology.



## **The Technology Question**

Documentary arrives at representation by way of recording apparatus, editing, and various forms of diffusion, all technological. Without question, documentary is a technological medium, a technology of representing reality. While the relationship between documentary and technology may not be crystalline, Martin Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology") provides several insights. Whereas Heidegger saw modern technology as distortion of technology's essence, he did not see modern technology as inert or detached. Instead, he connected technology with ontology and truth. These characteristics are fundamental to documentary representation as well. Without question, Heidegger viewed technology in an original way. Among other things, he believed that the modern conception of technology was bound to a desire for mastery. There are several important connections between Heidegger's take on technology and performative documentary in general. Along lines of Heidegger's dissent from modern technology, the performative departs from other modes, especially with respect to a will to mastery. This break with mastery is but one element that reflects a connection between Heidegger's appraisal of modern technology and the state of the world. Relative to several prevalent worldviews and conditions referenced in Heidegger's essay, breaking with mastery is but one response. The break with mastery is but one commonality of several between Heidegger's essay and performative documentary.

Heidegger advanced an understanding of technology that goes beyond modern day instrumentality. He brought attention to technology's etymological roots in ancient

Greece, especially with respect to how technology can be aligned with poiesis. He contrasted original Greek meaning with modern technological challenging-forth, which gives rise to things set in order, controlled, and held. Along with his critique of cause-effect coherence, this challenging-forth brings to mind documentary in general. Challenging-forth is reminiscent of documentary's ability to bring about a semblance of capturing and holding the historical world, a world assumed to be brought forth at our beckoning. Heidegger supposed that challenging revealing and cause-effect rationalism distorted genuine revealing, making the true withdraw. In contrast, he believed that revealing aligned with poiesis could bring about truth. With diminished commitment to ordering and mastery, along with a predisposition toward poietic representation, performative documentary exhibits certain qualities Heidegger held to affect truth. More specifically, he viewed a compulsion toward ordering as influenced by the Ge-stell, a complex articulation that described the predominant modern worldview. Heidegger found the Ge-stell problematical, especially because it leads to the destining of revealing. The destining of revealing obscures more genuine revealing.

To Heidegger, what remained critical about technology was its manner of revealing. Heidegger connected revealing to how truth comes about, leading to questions of ontology as opposed to technology's instrumentality. He believed that our modern technological way of being had taken us away from truth. In performative documentary, we see analogous movements from cause-effect coherence and destining of revealing in favour of, among other things, creation of poietic space. Poiesis was particularly important to Heidegger. He depicted a correlation between advanced poetic and artistic accomplishments and highly evolved humanism aligned with truth. Heidegger held that

change was in the offing having to do with these questions. He called this transformation the saving power, a latent seed of change within the Ge-stell. The saving power has to do with diverse ways of being and creating connected with poiesis which involve the poetic, art, and techne. Redolent of his notion of Being, Heidegger considered human existence poetic. He believed that artists possessed inherent calling to nurture the saving power, make it grow and confront the Ge-stell. In this way, Heidegger set up a compelling connection between art and technology, by showing technology, art, and the poetic as not only interrelated, but essential to humanity's survival as well.

To contemplate performative modality is to think about technology, poiesis, the poetic and art, several matters that Heidegger discussed. Just as these issues are central to Heidegger's essay, they are fundamental to the performative mode as well. Generally speaking, these elements coalesce and find expression without indulging in aestheticism. This point is critical because Heidegger believed that aestheticism neutralized their effect. Whereas what degree of aestheticism would cause this negation to come about is a thorny problem, the essential point is that performative documentary can never lose sight of the referent. To remain documentary it must reference the historical world. It cannot fall into pure aestheticism without becoming something else. While documentary remains a type of art form, the so-called creative treatment of reality, no other modality takes up Heidegger's saving power in the way that the performative does. His idea of a saving power is in line with his supposition that art will present the most critical challenge to modern technology and the Ge-stell, with the Ge-stell being the most important danger to humanity. Performative documentary is part of the vanguard of what Heidegger deemed the critical struggle of our time.

Heidegger brought light to technology by way of its initial Greek meaning. He supposed that once released from conventional modern understanding, we could connect with technology's initial promise and have a free relationship with it. In addition to modern technology's instrumentality, Heidegger believed that truth had become endangered by a ubiquitous worldview he called the Ge-stell. It became crucial to move away from the Ge-stell, technological ordering, and a will to mastery. By recognizing technology's essence, we could be released from the destining of revealing. Despite the dangerous character of the Ge-stell, Heidegger believed that a saving power grew within it. Significantly, he linked technology with ontology, envisaging concealment, unconcealment, and coming to presence as especially important in safeguarding truth. As well, he connected the poetic, art and techne, to a more genuine revealing. Above all, he considered poetic revealing fundamental in nurturing the saving power. Accordingly, he held that responsibility fell on the artist, anticipating that the decisive struggle against modern technology would take place within the artistic realm. By way of his discourse, Heidegger had set out to release humanity from its greatest menace, modern technology's hold and the primal truth it denied.

Heidegger critiqued the modern definition of technology on several grounds. He believed that our modern conception looked on technology as inert and apart. He associated it with mastery, as aligned with aspirations to attain an outcome. Heidegger also believed the modern conception to be simultaneously human activity and method, giving rise to countless repercussions. In addition, he understood it as connected to a way of thinking and acting on domination and control, while paradoxically retaining notions of lifelessness and detachment from human activity. Nevertheless, while Heidegger

criticized the modern definition as instrumental and anthropological, he did not consider it false. On the contrary, he contended that the instrumental definition was correct. Along these lines, he saw modern technology as accurate fixing on what is pertinent to what is being considered, a method of realizing an outcome tied to standards of prediction and control. While granting the modern conception to be accurate, Heidegger did not believe this instrumentality to be what is essential about technology, thus making a distinction between correctness and truth. To Heidegger, truth is of the essence. Moreover, he considered truth to be what a thing is in its essence. In contrast, Heidegger saw the correct as a form of control, a setting in motion and maintaining of objectives of mastery. He believed that when we are engaged with what is remarkable, truth could not emerge. In this way, he held that we have an inadequate conception of technology. It had become indissoluble from its anthropological bias and our desire to master. Consequently, he sought to go beyond what is remarkable about technology. Heidegger believed that to achieve a transcendent meaning, one must arrive at technology's essence.

Because instrumentality delimits our comprehension, Heidegger thought it necessary to move beyond our modern conception of technology. Furthermore, he believed that instrumentality inhibited our understanding technology's initial meaning. Heidegger held that this original sense of technology is critical because our subsequent activities evolved from that meaning. To get beyond instrumentality, Heidegger believed that we must fashion a caesura from the correct to the true. While he held the instrumental stance to be correct, Heidegger also believed it to be deficient with reference to truth. And yet, while disapproving of the correct, he purported to arrive at the true by way of the correct. While outwardly paradoxical, Heidegger's idea was based on reason.

He did not see the correct as intrinsically true. However, the correct was a means of arriving at what is true about technology. According to Heidegger, to ascertain this truth we must look to the essence of technology. Moreover, he believed that a ubiquitous instrumentality occluded technology's essence, something self-defeating to truth. For Heidegger, the essence of technology has to do with revealing. Heidegger described bringing-forth as a matter of revealing, a transformation from concealment to unconcealment. He noted that within Greek and Roman lexica, revealing is associated with truth. The Greek relates to *aletheia* and its Roman translation is *veritas*. Accordingly, Heidegger perceived revealing as inseparable from truth. In addition, he saw technology as interwoven with a Greek conception of bringing-forth. Heidegger wrote:

It is of utmost importance that we think bringing-forth in its full scope and at the same time in the sense in which the Greeks thought it. Not only handcraft manufacture, not only artistic and poetical bringing forth into appearance and concrete imagery, is a bringing-forth, *poiêsis*. *Physis* also, the arising of something from out of itself, is a bringing-forth, *poiêsis*. *Physis* is indeed *poiêsis* in the highest sense. For what presences by means of *physis* has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (*en heautôi*). In contrast, what is brought forth by the artisan or the artist, e.g., the silver chalice, has the bursting open belonging to bringing-forth not in itself, but in another (*en allôi*), in the craftsman or artist (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 10-11).

Heidegger thus distinguished between an object produced by an artist or artisan and *physis*. *Physis* is progression within the natural world, such as the blooming of a blossom. Along these lines, he held bursting open belonging to bringing-forth of nature to be the ultimate sense of *poiesis*.

Heidegger proposed a link between technology and the poietic. He went about this line of reasoning by way of technology's etymology. Heidegger noted that

technology and technique are rooted in the Greek *technikon*, a general term signifying that within the sphere of *techne*. He also noted that in ancient Greek society *techne* was not limited to the craftsman's procedures and abilities. It went beyond what we think of as skill and expertise, to take in the arts in an all-encompassing way. *Techne* included the fine arts and what Heidegger called "the arts of the mind" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 13). Up to Plato, the wide-ranging meaning of *techne* had to do with knowing. Consequently, he connected *techne* to *episteme*. By encouraging the reader to understand technology as more than a means to an end, Heidegger tried to free us from the anthropological bias of the modern definition. In this way, the meaning of technology moved beyond instrumentality to be expanded and harmonized with bringing-forth and *poiesis*. The reader can view technology as productive, formative, and joined with *episteme*. He or she can connect technology to knowing in the broadest sense.

While *episteme* and *techne* point to expertise, each connotes revealing as well. Heidegger wrote: "*Technê* is a mode of *alêtheuein*. It reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 13). Along these lines, Heidegger saw technology as a mode of truth, as well as a way of revealing. In addition, he believed that modern technology and Greek technology were analogous with regard to revealing. Nevertheless, Heidegger discerned a critical dissimilarity between the two. He saw Greek technology's bringing-forth as *poiesis*. In contrast, modern technological bringing-forth was carried out as challenging. This challenging altered technology's fundamental character. It moved technology away from the *poiesis* that was so essential to the ancient Greeks. Even though it integrated both art and

artisanal works, the Greek conception of poiesis was not necessarily tied to human creation. Poiesis could also include the bursting forth of the thing itself, already noted here as part of the natural world. Therefore, there is considerable difference between the modern meaning of technology and the original Greek meaning. Heidegger supposed modern technology placed an excessive demand on nature, evinced by its exploitation of nature in drawing out energy and subsequently storing it.

To demonstrate this imbalanced claim on nature, Heidegger contrasted differing approaches to technology. In one example, he described a traditional farmer making use of long-established techniques to cultivate crops. Here the farmer utilizes attention and maintenance in what brings forth from the harvest. Heidegger differentiated this conservation from industrial activities such as mechanized food production, coal mining, and uranium extraction. He wrote:

The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing. But the revealing never simply comes to an end. Neither does it run off into the indeterminate. The revealing reveals to itself its own manifoldly interlocking paths, through regulating their course. This regulating itself is, for its part, everywhere secured. Regulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the challenging revealing (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 16).

The challenging-forth Heidegger described gives rise to things being brought into order, controlled and held. Once held, they stand by for further ordering at our behest. This human activity brings about what Heidegger called the standing-reserve: "It designates nothing less than the way in which everything presences that is wrought upon by the challenging revealing. Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer



stands over against us as object” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 17). In this way, Heidegger made a crucial distinction. He proposed that what we typically understand as an object is not an object. To demonstrate this concept, Heidegger described a passenger airplane awaiting takeoff. Even though it may appear as an object, he contended that in essence the airliner is a standing-reserve. The airliner is a standing-reserve because its structure and components are set to function to secure the likelihood of air travel and movement of passengers. From the metal in its turbines to wires providing electrical flow, the airplane is on call for operation, ready as standing-reserve or “the ordering of the orderable” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 17). One does not usually think about an aircraft in those terms. Such technological ordering is, in effect, so ubiquitous to pass unnoticed. Critically, Heidegger considered this technological ordering to arise from the exploitation of nature. Technological ordering pervaded human activities with an oppressive monotony, inculcating us with a devastating deadliness.

Because it can give false impression of mastering the real, Heidegger cautioned the reader against this standing-reserve. Even though human beings are the source of the standing-reserve, we have no power over the real. What Heidegger believed essential to the real is something we do not control, what he called unconcealment. Along these lines, he did not believe the real attends to our wishes. The real does not manifest or withdraw at man’s bidding. The real either presents itself or pulls out. The unconcealment Heidegger considered essential to the real was not something that could be ordered as standing-reserve. Heidegger wrote:

Wherever man opens his eyes and ears, unlocks his heart, and gives himself over to meditating and striving, shaping and working, entreating and thanking, he finds himself everywhere already brought into the unconcealed. The unconcealment of the unconcealed has already come to pass whenever it calls man forth into the modes of revealing allotted to him. When man, in his way, from within unconcealment reveals that which presences, he merely responds to the call of unconcealment even when he contradicts it. Thus when man, investigating, observing, ensnares nature as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 18-19).

In this way, Heidegger understood the real to be a process of being and creating connected to revealing. Challenging nature, ordering, and the standing-reserve were something entirely different. From Heidegger's point of view, challenging nature concentrated humankind on establishing the standing-reserve. And challenging nature structured the real for this purpose of creating a standing-reserve. Significantly however, Heidegger did not perceive the real as a mode of revealing that endeavours to establish a standing-reserve. To Heidegger, the key question was not whether something is real. The critical question was: What are the characteristics of this real? Is this real one that challenges nature to create a standing reserve? Or, is this real one that in Heidegger's idiom, comes to presence "wherever man opens his eyes and ears, unlocks his heart, and gives himself over to meditating and striving, shaping and working, entreating and thanking. . . ." (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 18-19).

Heidegger called this method of challenging nature "to order the self-revealing as standing-reserve," the Ge-stell (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 19). William Lovitt translated Ge-stell as Enframing. Ge-stell or Enframing comprises the technological phenomenon that caused Heidegger apprehension. Heidegger expressed it

this way: “Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 20). William Lovitt elucidated his translation of Ge-stell in “The Question Concerning Technology” as well as in “A Gespräch with Heidegger on Technology” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 19; Lovitt 52-53).<sup>5</sup> Heidegger believed that challenging revealment issued from eighteenth century machine technology to become, in time, modern technology’s essence. He noted that this challenging revealing was not technological at all. Instead, it distorted revealing by setting up conventionality that challenged forth the real as standing-reserve. In place of challenging forth the real, Heidegger favoured revealing allied with poiesis, what he considered unspoiled and linked to truth. The outcome of revealing he associated with the Ge-stell was predestined to appear a certain way. This revealing outcome was destined to be in conformity with its function of creating the standing-reserve. The standing-reserve function is especially relevant with respect to nature, which Heidegger regarded as the most significant source of the standing-reserve. A reader of “The Question Concerning Technology” may well ask: Have we come to understand the real from within a framework delineated by an instrumental conception of technology? And if so, has this context taken us away from truth? As follows, the reader must consider how insidious this challenging revealment of the Ge-stell might be.

Heidegger singled out modern physics. He criticized a widespread belief in exact science, noting how it delimited the way in which the real is revealed:

Modern physics is not experimental physics because it applies apparatus to the questioning of nature. Rather the reverse is true. Because physics, indeed already as pure theory, sets nature up to exhibit itself as a coherence of forces calculable in advance, it therefore orders its experiments precisely for the purpose of asking whether and how nature reports itself when set up in this way (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 21).

Heidegger was at odds with the perspective which presumes physics an objective field of investigation. He believed that modern physics determined reality in advance. Of course, the notion of scientific objectivity has come into question time and again within contemporary thought. For example, science philosopher Paul K. Feyerabend is noted for having argued against science's supposed neutrality. Feyerabend wrote:

It is clear, then, that the idea of a fixed method, or of a fixed theory of rationality, rests on too naïve a view of man and his social surroundings. To those who look at the rich material provided by history, and who are not intent on impoverishing it in order to please their lower instincts, their craving for intellectual security in the form of clarity, precision, 'objectivity', 'truth', it will become clear that there is only one principle that can be defended under *all* circumstances and in all stages of human development. It is the principle: *anything goes* (Feyerabend 18-19).

Physicist Werner Heisenberg noted this subjectivity as well (Northrop). Jean-François Lyotard alluded to contingencies rooted in prevailing social order, in addition to the decisive nature of power in determining scientific knowledge. He wrote: "There is a strict interlinkage between the kind of language called science and the kind called ethics and politics: they both stem from the same perspective, the same "choice" if you will – the choice called the Occident" (Lyotard *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* 8). Imre Lakatos expressed notions of contingency and incertitude when he wrote: "Indeed, the hallmark of scientific behaviour is a certain scepticism even toward one's most cherished theories. Blind commitment to a theory is not an intellectual virtue: it is an intellectual crime" (Lakatos 1). Nevertheless, even if physics is seen as biased, we

likely consider it more detached than most other fields, particularly where subjectivity is in plain view. However, if Heidegger was right in his belief that modern physics governed reality by determining how reality is revealed, the reader may ask: What are the implications regarding more language-based areas of inquiry? Clearly, Heidegger set out to alert his readers to a broad-spectrum predicament of the modern world. That is, certain epistemological limitations comprised a mode of revealing that challenges forth nature to establish a standing-reserve. By reasoning that we set restrictions within which the real can reveal in advance, Heidegger had perceived several epistemological and ontological problems. Then again, even though he was critical of modern physics, he did not disapprove of physics per se. Heidegger still believed experimental physics possible, although to be genuinely experimental, it had to move beyond establishing the physical universe in advance.

Without doubt, Heidegger believed that the Ge-stell had distorted epistemology and obscured genuine revealing. However, in spite of the effects of the Ge-stell, and that the modern definition altered technology's meaning, Heidegger believed the essence of technology still available to us. Albeit from a different perspective, even now one could grasp technology's essence:

Nevertheless, it remains, with respect to its holding sway, that which precedes all: the earliest. The Greek thinkers already knew of this when they said: That which is earlier with regard to the arising that holds sway becomes manifest to us men only later. That which is primarily early shows itself only ultimately to men. 20 Therefore, in the realm of thinking, a painstaking effort to think through still more primally what was primally thought is not the absurd wish to revive what is past, but rather the sober readiness to be astounded before the coming of what is early (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 22) .

Plainly, Heidegger thought that beginnings held more pure meaning to what came later. And yet, standing apart from the outset did not make its essence inaccessible. By approaching original meaning in a meticulous way, our comprehension can, when attenuated by what has transpired since, become more dexterous. Beginnings were not lost to a later time. To the contrary, we think more originally what was originally thought. Heidegger professed singular benefit to disparity between a word's origin and contemporary usage. The passage of time made it more understandable than at the onset. Correctly approached, temporality could hone early meaning. In all probability, Heidegger's idea came to light by way of his etymological work. He believed he could grasp meaning in a more original way at a later time, which led to a state of wonder regarding the beginning. He found this state of wonder to be beneficial. With reference to *techne*, Heidegger believed technology's essence accessible to rediscovery. We experience the essence of technology in an enriched way, despite the instrumentality of the modern definition and the *Ge-stell*.

Condemning it as science determining reality in advance, Heidegger believed that modern physics' epistemology was subject to the *Ge-stell*. Then again, Heidegger considered neither science nor physics unique in that regard. He saw the effects far and wide, a pervasive mode of revealing in keeping with Enframing. Along these lines, Heidegger depicted a broad-spectrum phenomenon in which human activities fall within the *Ge-stell*'s sway. Heidegger wrote:

Enframing is the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets upon man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. As the one who is challenged forth in this way, man stands within the essential realm of Enframing. He can never take up a relationship to it only subsequently. Thus

the question as to how we are to arrive at a relationship to the essence of technology, asked in this way, always comes too late. But never too late comes the question as to whether we actually experience ourselves as the ones whose activities everywhere, public and private, are challenged forth by Enframing. Above all, never too late comes the question as to whether and how we actually admit ourselves into that wherein Enframing comes to presence (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 24).

Regardless of a wide range of human activities challenged forth by Enframing, Heidegger held that modern technology did not determine everything within the human sphere.

Because we have recourse to agency, we can alter our relationship to modern technology.

Modern technology's omnipresence remained however, enveloping humanity at the same time as orienting a particular mode of revealing. This mode of revealing has momentous repercussions, particularly in how we perceive the real. Yet, while our relationship to modern technology is inevitable in certain ways, it is not inexorable. How we choose to act in response to modern technology can be significant. Human beings have free will and can decide a different course. A great deal depends on how we orient with respect to the Ge-stell, a matter hinged on freedom.

With reference to freedom, Heidegger did not emphasize human will, as John Stuart Mill did in *On Liberty* (Mill and Spitz). In point of fact, Heidegger avowed: "The essence of freedom is *originally* not connected with the will or even with the causality of human willing" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 25).<sup>6</sup> Heidegger linked freedom to revealing, looking once again to etymology and earliest meaning. He stated that freedom's original meaning, which he associated with truth, had to do with what is cleared, illuminated, and revealed. His idea of freedom was a multifaceted connection between concealing, revealing, and bringing into the open:

It is to the happening of revealing, i.e., of truth, that freedom stands in the closest and most intimate kinship. All revealing belongs within a harboring and a concealing. But that which frees—the mystery—is concealed and always concealing itself. All revealing comes out of the open, goes into the open, and brings into the open. The freedom of the open consists neither in unfettered arbitrariness nor in the constraint of mere laws. Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose clearing there shimmers that veil that covers what comes to presence of all truth and lets the veil appear as what veils. Freedom is the realm of the destining that at any given time starts a revealing upon its way” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 25).

Several meanings arise from this conception, including a link between freedom and truth.

Heidegger represented freedom as a continuing process of opening and revealing associated with truth. While Heidegger’s comprehension of freedom as revealing is distinctive, its conception of the open is consistent with existential phenomenology.

Heidegger’s idea of revealing and truth comprises a certain mystery and remains enigmatic. His vision of freedom and truth is demanding, as William Lovitt noted in "A Gespräch with Heidegger on Technology":

Whatever a sending of revealment may be and whenever it may happen, there is a danger that it will be misinterpreted. The misinterpretation consists mainly in man’s fixing upon what is revealed, a preoccupation with the immediate which blocks the mystery from out of which revealment is sent and distorts reality as a whole (Lovitt 55).

The risk of misapprehension can be linked to our usual way of perceiving reality as disposed to the Ge-stell. We are occluded from coming into contact with the world poietically. And while he tempers its significance with respect to freedom’s essence, Heidegger’s conception of freedom does not exclude human willing. Instead, it points to essence as overlooked when considering freedom as a matter of will. It also evokes the prospect of freedom where it appears improbable, suggesting freedom’s presence where restrictive circumstances seem to prohibit it. All told, Heidegger’s gist regarding human



willing and freedom in “The Question Concerning Technology” is hopeful. He believed that it could change the course of technology for the better. The basis for effecting this change fell within a path of understanding technology and freedom’s essence and how these essences relate to truth.

Even as Heidegger advised against fixing consideration on isolated examples, he called attention to the importance of questioning. Ironically, this emphasis on questioning educes a question: If not through particular examples, how do we arrive at ways of thinking? Heidegger believed that our ways of thinking come about by way of language. He also held that awareness of language endows us with certain means of comprehending thought. To grasp this idea, we need look no further than Heidegger’s use of Greek etymology to discern the essences of freedom and technology. Even though the *Ge-stell* situates us toward modern technology, Heidegger did not believe this state of affairs resolved. He envisioned our relationship to technology as alterable, especially when we consider technology’s essence:

But when we consider the essence of technology, then we experience Enframing as a destining of revealing. In this way we are already sojourning within the open space of destining, a destining that in no way confines us to a stultified compulsion to push on blindly with technology or, what comes to the same thing, to rebel helplessly against it and curse it as the work of the devil. Quite to the contrary, when we once open ourselves expressly to the *essence* of technology, we find ourselves unexpectedly taken into a freeing claim (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 25-26).

And so, the essence of technology can lead us to experience the *Ge-stell* as the destining of revealing. When we realize that destining is taking place, we are opened to the possibility of genuine revealing. This discernment is crucial because the correct does not make the true appear simply as a matter of consequence. Indeed, Heidegger believed

modern physics calculations can cause the true to recede. Therefore, the correct can have the opposite effect. On the other hand, when we bear in mind technology's essence, something significant is underway. We draw back from the destining of revealing.

To recapitulate, Heidegger supposed that destining of revealing caused the true to recede. On the other hand, when we pull back from destining the true is able to come forward. In addition to the destining of revealing, Heidegger held that cause-effect coherence brought about the true's withdrawal. He believed that cause-effect rationality altered the coming to presence of revealing. Heidegger saw this cause-effect to be in keeping with the destining of revealing:

Thus where everything that presences exhibits itself in the light of a cause-effect coherence, even God can, for representational thinking, lose all that is exalted and holy, the mysteriousness of his distance. In the light of causality, God can sink to the level of a cause, of *causa efficiens*. He then becomes, even in theology, the god of the philosophers, namely, of those who define the unconcealed and the concealed in terms of the causality of making, without ever considering the essential origin of this causality (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 26).

Evidently, Heidegger was not only concerned that modern technological success caused the true to withdraw. He also feared that we had become disoriented by cause-effect coherence. We had lost our sense of the indeterminate and unknown, and replaced it with a misleading sense of control. Heidegger had singular misgiving about the ascendancy of the destining of revealing. He deemed this destining of revealing especially dangerous in the mode of the Ge-stell. A preoccupation with the standing-reserve takes us where we should not go:

As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but does so, rather, exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a

very precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: It seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 26-27).

Heidegger believed that the Ge-stell predisposed consciousness about our place in the universe, consequently distorting our perception. Moreover, he supposed that the Ge-stell's destining and ordering deluded our sense of humanism. As noted, he was concerned that the Ge-stell distorted revealing by transforming it into ordering.

Heidegger wrote:

But Enframing does not simply endanger man in his relationship to himself and to everything that is. As a destining, it banishes man into that kind of revealing which is an ordering. Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing. Above all, Enframing conceals that revealing which, in the sense of *poiêsis*, lets what presences come forth into appearance. As compared with that other revealing, the setting-upon that challenges forth thrusts man into a relation to that which is, that is at once antithetical and rigorously ordered. Where Enframing holds sway, regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing. They no longer even let their own fundamental characteristic appear, namely, this revealing as such (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 27).

In this way, Heidegger posited that the Ge-stell brings about ordering which excludes opportunities for genuine revealing. Where the Ge-stell is dominant, revealing is indicated by control and assuring of the standing-reserve. On the other hand, Heidegger maintained that revealing aligned with poiesis gave rise to truth. What the Ge-stell occluded disturbed Heidegger. Destining impeded poietic revealing, and as a result, occluded truth.

Heidegger's thinking is relevant to modern life in a general way. However, his point of view is especially significant with reference to epistemology. Heidegger

distinguished between approaches that fell on the side of truth and approaches that did not fall on the side of truth. He believed that despite their being correct, certain methods impede truth. Heidegger called this phenomenon un-truth as truth. William Lovitt understands un-truth as truth as connected with our fixation on the revealed. Lovitt noted that our preoccupation with the immediacy of the revealed obstructs the unknown from which revealment occurs (Lovitt 55). Being too immediate and correct cause us to stray from truth. The immediacy of what is revealed obstructs reality's unbounded intricacy. We lose sight of its inscrutability. Heidegger saw various underlying and deep-rooted associations between modern technology and the Ge-stell as firmly in place. We had become entangled, losing a perspective of reality as a whole. Heidegger believed this entanglement a ubiquitous phenomenon, and therefore linked humanity's essence to the essence of modern technology. He understood this loss of perspective to be the critical danger that humanity faced:

The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence. The rule of Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 28).

Without doubt, the history of humanity is fused with technology in far-reaching ways. For that reason, Heidegger considered technology elemental. But with that had come a great hazard. Within the modern context, Heidegger came to believe that the Ge-stell and the destining of revealing had dispossessed humanity of what is fundamental to the true.

Unquestionably, humanity is inextricably bound up with technology. Heidegger was well aware of this interconnection when he pointed to modern technology as harmful

to humanity. Certainly, Heidegger's pessimism is apparent. His perspective on the Ge-stell and destining of revealing make humanity's prospects appear bleak. Nevertheless, while pointing to certain harmful effects of modern technology, Heidegger was not altogether discouraging. Although he maintained that Enframing placed truth in danger, his meaning was admonitory, not reconciled. Indeed, his essay is compellingly hopeful. This optimism was based on a conviction that the effects of the Ge-stell are alterable and that modern technology was not a lost cause. He did not deem truth as untruth, what he called "errance" (Lovitt 55), to be inevitable. While he pointed out that truth had become endangered, he remained optimistic regarding its attainability. Still, he had a greater purpose to set humanity on a different path. He would accomplish this objective through awareness of technology's essence, which he linked to humanity. In this way, Heidegger envisioned a collective undertaking giving rise to a changed relationship to modern technology. This new relationship to modern technology would have important bearing on humanity's essence.

Heidegger found inspiration in the words of German poet Friedrich Hölderlin:

*But where danger is, grows*

*The saving power also* (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 28).

In selecting these lines, Heidegger proposed supplementary meaning for the verb to save. According to Heidegger, in addition to its usual meaning "to seize hold of a thing threatened by ruin, in order to secure it in its former continuance" to save also means "to fetch something home into its essence, in order to bring the essence for the first time into its genuine appearing" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 28). Once again, we see the importance of essence, appearing, and revealing. And once more,

Heidegger demonstrated that he did not believe the Ge-stell had absolute effect over us. On the contrary, he maintained that Enframing cannot obstruct and dictate all revealing. Its ascendancy had limitations. Significantly, Heidegger contended that the Ge-stell contained the seed of its own destruction. Like Hölderlin, he called this seed the saving power. For the most part, Heidegger had developed his perspective on technology by way of Greek etymology. At this juncture in his essay, the source of Heidegger's meaning abruptly changed. Now it stemmed from poetry. Albeit an unexpected or even enigmatic change in method, his approach is articulate because the shift from etymology to poetry is in keeping with what he advocated. Poetry is a form of revealing allied with his understanding of poiesis and freedom. The depiction of a saving power echoed and substantiated the poietic revealing Heidegger favoured.

As follows, Heidegger did not believe that the Ge-stell could obstruct revealing in an absolute way. He held that Enframing can establish conditions in which the saving power thrived. Under certain conditions, the Ge-stell could be fundamental to truth. Before advancing this notion however, one must understand in what way Heidegger understood the verb to save. As noted, Heidegger had a particular understanding of this verb. William Lovitt explains that Heidegger's conception of to save was not to hold something as if fixed in a previous state. More readily, Heidegger's meaning had to do with bringing essence into veritable manifestation. He understood to save in relation to the essence of a thing and true appearance, not preserving something in earlier continuance. Moreover, Heidegger believed that the saving power flourished in conditions in which Being pulled out. He supposed truth situated where Being withdrew, concealed there. Initial revealment resulted when unhiddenness followed the hiddenness

of concealment. However, when we go beyond initial revealment, unhiddenness takes on a different bearing. It becomes misleading and unreliable. With respect to this relationship of concealed and revealed, Enframing, and the saving power, William Lovitt affirmed: "Concealed within the *Ge-stell*, the saving power thrives. To pay heed to the *Ge-stell*, the danger, is in some way to approach the saving power" (Lovitt 56). In this way, Heidegger linked the saving power to freedom, which imparted optimism on an otherwise gloomy *Ge-stell*. Like mystery awaiting revealment, he supposed that which frees to be hidden away, always hiding. From this concealment, truth can emerge:

In what respect does the saving power grow there also where the danger is? Where something grows, there it takes root, from thence it thrives. Both happen concealedly and quietly and in their own time. But according to the words of the poet we have no right whatsoever to expect that there where the danger is we should be able to lay hold of the saving power immediately and without preparation. Therefore we must consider now, in advance, in what respect the saving power does most profoundly take root and thence thrive even in that wherein the extreme danger lies, in the holding sway of Enframing (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 28-29).

Because they have properties that transcend and endure, Heidegger considered the essence of things especially important. Accordingly, he was mindful to distinguish between essence and genus. Heidegger explained it this way: "If we speak of the "essence of a house" and the "essence of a state," we do not mean a generic type; rather we mean the ways in which house and state hold sway, administer themselves, develop and decay -- the way in which they "essence" [*Wesen*]" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 30).

In addition to showing how things essence, Heidegger introduced his conception of enduring. Enduring consists of the Idea, rather than an exemplar or particular set of circumstances. Once again, he utilized the example of a house, this time to illustrate the

difference between Idea and specific case. He held that Idea endures whereas any particular house, or even the possibility of one, does not. A specific house is derived from the Idea. The specific house is a shifting variable which does not endure. In contrast, Heidegger described the Greek comprehension of essence as something that endures:

Socrates and Plato already think the essence of something as what essences, what comes to presence, in the sense of what endures. But they think what endures as what remains permanently [*das Fortwährende*] (*aei on*). And they find what endures permanently in what, as that which remains, tenaciously persists throughout all that happens (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 30).

Therefore, what endures continues all the way through. Heidegger was employing the verb 'to grant' in the sense of admitting the existence, or agreeing to the truth of something. He declared: "*Only what is granted endures. That which endures primally out of the earliest beginning is what grants*" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 31). He believed that the true is found at the beginning, and what endures grants truth. This idea is consistent with his search for transcendent meaning by way of etymology. Heidegger's thinking here is concomitant with his methodology. There must also be some concurrence transcending space and time for enduring to be as Heidegger described it. Something must be true from the beginning to grant. And to be granted, it must be acknowledged at some point in the future. Even though he was at odds with modern technology, Heidegger deemed modern technology's destining to be a granting as well. However, for this destining to be a granting, the saving power must develop within.

Heidegger supposed that truth lies within the saving power. The saving power permitted man to "see and enter into the highest dignity of his essence" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 32). Our watching over the concealment and



unconcealment of coming to presence is especially important to the saving power. Even so, watching over is contingent on what is revealed. For that reason, revealing is inexact, subject to inestimable variation. All the same, Heidegger maintained that revealing is aligned with truth. Not only did he consider watching over revealing of great worth, he saw it in opposition to a compulsive dedication to ordering. He envisaged ordering as informed by the *Ge-stell* and destining of revealing. In this way, the *Ge-stell* cast a long shadow, often overwhelming truth. This notion seems straightforward. But just when Heidegger's way of thinking appears uncomplicated, a paradox appears, rendering it more complex. In this case, Heidegger held that just as *poiesis* is a mode of revealing, so too is the *Ge-stell*. But, Heidegger had previously informed us that the *Ge-stell* blocks *poietic* revealing. William Lovitt accounted for this paradox by observing that Enframing has roots in *poiesis*: "For the *Ge-stell*, the challenging revealment, must be seen to have its origin – an origin which it harbors and retains – precisely in the leading-forth, in *poiesis*. The *Ge-stell* is *poiesis* as the blocking of *poiesis*" (Lovitt 56). Therefore, Enframing is a way of revealing. But as challenging-forth, Enframing is in opposition to *poiesis*. Consequently, the *Ge-stell* is distinctly unlike *poiesis*.

Heidegger supposed the saving power within what he called the coming to presence of technology. This coming to presence of technology was critical because the saving power shielded us from what made us susceptible to danger, our desire to master. He believed that this will to mastery had become self-perpetuating to the point of obsessive and compulsive:

But this much remains correct: modern technology too is a means to an end. That is why the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man

into the right relation to technology. Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means. We will, as we say, “get” technology “spiritually in hand”. We will master it. The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 5).

Heidegger believed that the will to mastery arose from our interpreting technology as instrument. We merely stare at the technological when we should watch over what comes to presence. He held that when “we represent technology as an instrument, we remain held fast in the will to master it” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 32). When we think of technology as a means to an end, we diminish the empirical while omitting technology’s essence. Along these lines, Heidegger ascribed considerable importance to the saving power, linking it to protection of truth. He maintained that the critical question about technology was not of materiality or even instrumentality. The question concerning technology was about “the constellation in which revealing and concealing, in which the coming to presence of truth, comes to pass” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 33). Therefore, the question concerning technology is joined with ontology. When one sees technology and ontology as linked, innumerable effects follow. Above all, humankind is infused with the task of custodian of truth. Accordingly, Heidegger beseeched us to concentrate on where the saving power grows, the danger that is the Ge-stell.

Heidegger contended that a more original revealing should be at the forefront of our awareness. Although it does not readily appear within our modern context, this revealing is not lost. Moreover, this type of revealing would bring the saving power into the open. Even now, we can uncover the saving power within the essence of technology and its origins in techne:

There was a time when it was not technology alone that bore the name *technê*. Once that revealing that brings forth truth into the splendor of radiant appearing also was called *technê*.

Once there was a time when the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful was called *technê*. And the *poiêsis* of the fine arts also was called *technê* (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 34).

Heidegger ascribed his idealism to a Romantic view of historical Greece, including high regard for its achievements in the fine arts. He depicted a correlation between advanced artistic endeavours, *techne*, and a heightened humanism having to do with truth. In those times, art and *techne* were equivalent. Art was called *techne* and each came to pass as poietic revealing:

What, then, was art -- perhaps only for that brief but magnificent time? Why did art bear the modest name *technê*? Because it was a revealing that brought forth and hither, and therefore belonged within *poiêsis*. It was finally that revealing which holds complete sway in all the fine arts, in poetry, and in everything poetical that obtained *poiêsis* as its proper name (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 34).

Once again, Heidegger quoted Hölderlin: “. . . *poetically dwells man upon this earth*” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 34). At this point, he shifted discussion from poietic to the poetic. This change is significant because, although they have similar spelling and are related, poetic is distinct from poietic. His shift implied that varied ways of being and creating, such as the poetic, art and *techne*, all join with poiesis. This meaning is critical if one considers performative documentary a poietic mode that takes up the saving power. Heidegger had perceived the poetic as much more than a civilizing adjunct. He saw something fundamental with far-reaching pedigree and affect. Indeed, he saw our existence as poetic, something taken up in the fine arts. Heidegger regarded artists as unique in that they possess an inherent calling to poetic revealing. He considered poetic revealing critical in nurturing the saving power.

Heidegger succeeded in establishing a compelling link between art and techne. He had shown technology, art, and the poietic as interconnected. In addition, he believed that fostering the saving power would free humanity from the danger of the Ge-stell. This danger included the destining of revealing and cause-effect coherence which brought about truth's withdrawal. Heidegger thought that the struggle with modern technology must occur within an area distinct from yet similar to technology's essence. He considered that fine arts could rouse a different look at what grants, thus advancing the saving power. Accordingly, Heidegger anticipated that conflict with modern technology would take place within the realm of art. Then again, this idea came with qualification. He believed that art must not indulge in aestheticism, because aestheticism ran the risk of obscuring truth. Where aestheticism became excessive, opposition to modern technology would go astray. Nevertheless, he believed that when the danger of the Ge-stell increased, the saving power became enhanced as well. At this point, we begin to question. Heidegger held that questioning should look on our technological pursuit as a crisis, and that this recognition would be established within the realm of art. However, we must not become absorbed in aestheticism. Aestheticism would place our consciousness of art's coming to presence at risk. Similarly, it concerned Heidegger that we would fail to see the coming to presence of technology. On the other hand, he believed that in a world inundated by the technological, technology's essence would eventually come to the fore. Once more, the means lay in questioning. Accordingly, Heidegger concluded "The Question Concerning Technology" with these words: "The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more

questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 35).

While Heidegger’s essay is about technology, he is also writing about modernity in general. Modernity and its technology join to mastery, and include dominant ontological conditions that Heidegger supposed cause the true to withdraw. In particular, he saw obsessive and compulsive ordering. This activity related to the Ge-stell and destining of revealing, is key to the true pulling out. He saw the Ge-stell preventing humankind from relating poietically. By challenging-forth, holding, controlling, and transforming revealing into ordering, the Ge-stell occluded the subject. Finally, Heidegger did not believe true human existence technological in the modern, instrumental sense. Instead, he considered human existence poetic. With its poietic representation and de-emphasis of ordering and mastery, performative documentary runs counter to Heidegger’s modernity.

Heidegger described technology, art and the poietic, as not only interconnected, but crucial to existence. Without doubt, technology and art are critical to performative documentary as well. Moreover, the performative is noted for its poetic and poietic qualities. We see reduction of cause-effect coherence and destining of revealing. Artistic expression is never more apparent than in performative modality. In addition, performative documentary is oppositional, and Heidegger viewed the Ge-stell as an immense oppressive force. Given that Heidegger believed artists called to nurture the saving power, it becomes noteworthy that the performative, the most artistically expressive of documentary modalities, works in opposition to the Ge-stell. Whether one

agrees with Heidegger's views or not, one can see remarkable parallels between performative documentary and the saving power. Do these correspondences mean that we can understand performative documentary as of the saving power? It would be absurd, especially in the face of Heidegger's argument, to frame this question in terms of the *Ge-stell*. Ultimately, these lines are drawn only by the reader. Like the performative spectator, it is the reader who reveals.

## Unfinished Diary

In *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Nichols "Performing Documentary"), Bill Nichols identified a new documentary mode he called the performative. Before this time, Nichols had classified other modes he termed expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation"). With these modes, Nichols set out a system of classification of documentary methods, a basic analytic tool to understand documentary mediation. Even so, his categorization is not always straightforward. One must understand Nichols' modalities in certain ways. For example, while a specific mode can predominate during a given historical period, each is present throughout the course of documentary history. For that reason, one cannot view these modes as an evolution of documentary mediation. Moreover, many documentaries are a patchwork of modalities. While providing practical means of analysis, their critical application is not always clear-cut. Often associated with traditional documentary, the expository mode is perhaps the most familiar. The expository accentuates narration, which usually suggests propinquity between signifier and referent. While omnipresent throughout documentary history, propaganda films produced during the Second World War offer classical examples of this modality. Here voice-over narration explicates the historical world. At the same time as providing averment about the unfolding war, these films had obvious propaganda purposes. In the 1942 National Film Board of Canada production *The Mask of Nippon* (*The Mask of Nippon*), narrator Lorne Greene expounds various justifications for warring against the

Japanese. While characteristic of its historical period, from a contemporary perspective *The Mask of Nippon* is palpably racist.

Observational documentarians typically record with portable and lightweight equipment and then construct narrative by way of montage. They consciously eschew expository techniques, replacing exposition with an axiom of letting events unfold with as little intervention as possible. The observational mode provides an impression of the immediacy of perception, of actions unfolding as they occur. This formal technique creates an illusion that the camera simply conveys events within a temporality corresponding to that which occurred. As Bill Nichols notes however, they are “constructed, to have that very appearance” (Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 113).

*Primary (Primary)*, a film that deals with the 1960 election campaigns of John F.

Kennedy Jr. and Hubert Humphrey, is a notable example of observational modality.

Manifesting certain similarities to the observational, the interactive mode is a variation of the observational. As opposed to dissuading interaction however, the interactive documentarian acts together with subjects, usually by posing questions (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation" 44-56). Here emphasis lies in communications with documentary subjects. A prominent example is Emile de Antonio's *In the Year of the Pig (In the Year of the Pig)*. Whereas the interactive mode's foundation is interaction, observational documentarians normally avoid contact with social actors. The reflexive mode stands apart from these traditional modes. In the reflexive, documentarians emphasize representational procedures by critically examining the documentary apparatus. Above all, we see that documentarians exploit and transform actuality in diversiform ways (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation" 56-75). When Bill



Nichols first identified the reflexive, it consummated traditional modes of representation and thus seemed comprehensive. No other documentary modality seemed imaginable at that time. Nevertheless, an additional modality did subsequently become apparent.

Nichols explains:

The four modes of documentary production that presented themselves as an exhaustive survey of the field no longer suffice. 2 The final mode, reflexive documentary, might be expected to return us to a modified version of the first, expository mode, but this has not proven the case. Instead the reflexive mode as first conceived seems to harbor within it an alternative mode, a mode that does not draw our attention to the formal qualities or political context of the film directly so much as deflect our attention from the referential quality of documentary altogether (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 93).

The newly identified performative mode indicates, in a compelling way, documentary epistemology's inherent mutability.

Most documentary is meant to persuade (Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 2 5 43 80), a documentary impetus that spans Muybridge to Wiseman and beyond. To persuade however, one generally assumes that we represent reality in a contiguous manner, suggesting a coterminous relation between sign and referent. This assumption seems reasonable. After all, why attempt to represent what we cannot represent?

Performative documentary draws this rationale into question. This questioning can seem reasonable too, seeing that the referential assumption is disputed. There is a particular questioning of the relation between signifier and referent within poststructuralism.

Jacques Derrida has pointed out that signifier and referent do not have an essential correlation. We can attach manifold signifiers to a singular referent. Never definitive, the starting point always returns to movement in what Derrida called *différance* (Williams 28 45). While it may hold promise of beholding the referent, documentary is made up of

infinite processes that break up that possibility, an unintended consequence of signifiers presented as straightforward evidence. Viewed this way, categorical evidence is difficult to attain. Moreover, the assumption of a coterminous sign and referent can be viewed as ideological and connected to dominant ways of thinking. Consequently, this documentary assumption is a contested field. On the other hand, documentary rarely claims absolute knowledge or truth. More readily, it makes claims about the reality of the historical world. To some extent, we accept ambiguity in conventional documentary forms.

Bringing to mind postpositivism (Creswell 6-7), conventional documentary modes use diverse aesthetic and rhetorical approaches intended to convince the spectator something about a posited reality. Along these lines, documentaries set up a standing-reserve of represented reality, albeit subject to discourse and revision. This approach describes most documentary. However, the performative mode proceeds differently. Less concerned with persuasive argumentation, it does not share conventional assumptions regarding signifiers and referent. Instead, performative documentary manifests uncertainty about reality and the historical world.

Relative to other modes, performative documentary is less involved with demonstrating and substantiating extraneous reality. Nor is it as concerned with persuasion. Correspondingly, emphasis on methods that assume contiguous referentiality is lessened. With diminished stress on posited reality and persuasion, textuality takes on added significance. Importance shifts to the viewer, emphasizing his or her subjectivity and potential for agency. The historical world becomes uncertain and perceptual processing takes on added importance. Free of persuasion and reasoned argument, the viewer can assume a visceral relationship to the historical world. Along these lines,

performative documentary treats reality as indeterminate. By stressing indeterminacy, the performative documentarian draws truth claims into question. Resultant uncertainty might even include the documentarian's truth claims. Thus, a sense of scepticism deviates from our expectations of tangible contentions with the historical world. Of course, this different approach has effects. It transforms the documentary experience. In addition to individual psychology and existence, added significance takes root in poetics and different forms of perception. Particular elements relating to textuality, authorship, and poststructuralism become evident. Because the performative encourages autonomy, it presents an enhanced ethical dimension to the spectator.

Although one mode or another can emerge as dominant, documentaries do not normally appear in unadulterated form. Most are hybrids including more than one mode. And while a specific mode may well predominate a given historical period, this dominance is not a chronological progression. For example, although created during a period not associated with these modes, Dziga Vertov's 1929 *Man with a Movie Camera* exhibits marked reflexive and performative traits. In this case, Soviet culture and not documentary history is the principle determinant of modality. Without doubt, the performative is exceptional, incorporating all modalities from expository to reflexive. Although modes used in any given text vary, as an interfusion of other modes the performative mode is distinct. For example, the performative may well make use of expository methods, even though we generally associate exposition with persuasive argumentation. Performative use of exposition can seem paradoxical, until one considers how performative documentarians deploy expository techniques. In the performative mode, exposition manifests in ways dissimilar from the usual predilection to persuade.

Performative documentaries proceed with diminished certainty that signification imparts positive meaning. Documentarians realize this strategy by way of manifestly subjective narration. Palpable performative subjectivity diminishes spectator certainty. Instead of following what Nichols calls documentary's "most commonsensical purpose, persuasive argumentation about the historical world" (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 94), the spectator must now shape and form expository discourse. In this position, the spectator becomes more responsible. He or she must think in original ways while engaging discernment within aesthetic mediums through which perception operates. Percipience results not from reasoned argumentation, but from educating inventive forms of expression and thought.

Inventive forms of expression manifest an array of creative methods. In certain instances, performative approaches render representation abstract. This abstraction can affect us in ways that distinguish the performative from most documentaries. Then again, the performative retains customary documentary methods. Expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive modes remain in play, albeit altered by performative sensibilities. For example, with observational approaches the documentarian retains a general notion of capturing and holding profilmic reality for viewing in another space and time. However, performative observation proceeds from a different attitude. This approach is less about standing-reserve and more about the object as duration. Of course, duration is important in classical observational documentary as well. However, we perceive phenomenal effects of mediation differently with performative documentary. While sharing certain characteristics, the performative seems unusual. Techniques accentuate expressive signification, how constitution is brought about by specific filmic

mediums, as well as effects of duration. In this and other ways, the performative mode disassembles the documentary tradition. Then again, this dissimilarity goes only so far. It could not be set aside as experimentation or invention. It is recognized as documentary and called performative. This performative has to do with how the author composes the documentary object and how we perceive signification. We see that the historical world is not treated with comparable certainty. On the other hand, the principle that reality is knowable is retained in some ways. Then again, because we perceive reality subjectively, persuasion is no longer cogent or compelling. In this absence, the spectator is encouraged to take on personalized subjectivity, to shape and form the object as his or her own.

The performative mode relates to numerous streams of intellectual, social, and political life. It connects with certain elements of contemporary thought as well, notably poststructuralism and postmodernism. While several theoretical links can be made, a specific link to Martin Heidegger's take on modern technology is hypothesized here (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology"). I make this connection because documentary joins with technology in several ways. Ultimately, documentary is a technology of representing reality. Observational documentary, for example, evolved from advancements in portable and lightweight recording equipment. Consequently, observational documentary is connected to technology in more ways than one (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation" 38-44). One can glean certain insights from how documentarians adapt observational documentary within performative modality. Traditional observational documentary aspires to represent events as established in space and time. This general tendency can be related to Heidegger's understanding of modern technological instrumentality. In "The Question Concerning Technology" Heidegger

depicted the Ge-stell as a persistent force in modern life. He described it as challenging-forth nature to reveal the real as standing-reserve (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 20). In the Ge-stell, Heidegger saw technological ordering and will to mastery as distorting genuine revealing. Unlike classical observational modality, the performative does not sustain a conception of reality fixed in space and time.

Performative techniques subvert this idea by accentuating mediation and subjective perception. In this way, reality is not captured and held. Reality is brought into being within a phenomenal field of signification, a perspective aligned with Heidegger's genuine revealing. While performative observational techniques may not provide a determinate view on the historical world, the mode does bring about a referential field within the perceiving spectator. This perceptual referential field is analogous to a subtle distinction between a window on reality and a daedal field of signification. Reality becomes, to a lesser degree, the observed object. Instead, it becomes the object observed. This way, reality depends more on the perceiving subject within a referential field.

In the interactive mode, the documentarian takes up a fundamental role within the text. Most noticeably, contact with social actors is put on display (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation" 42 44-56). This contact establishes the filmmaker within the historical world. In addition, it places documentarian and subject in a particularly dynamic field. This dynamic field produces a tangible, albeit mutable lacuna between documentarian and social actors. Individual documentarian and social actors express comparative positions. Consequently, differences between them are perceptible. These different positions bring forward a cogent field of subjectivity. The documentarian's temperament toward subjects and the task of representation compels the spectator to

focus on social subjectivity. An ethical dimension emerges as well. In addition to breaking with modern conceptions of referentiality and objectivity, these elements point to a complex visceral presence behind the genesis of the text. Together with an affective dimension, this conflux of subjective presence and ethical dimension connotes an approach evocative of Heidegger's conception of Being. Spectatorship as Being brings about a primal encounter with the documentary object. Raymond Geuss describes Heidegger's evocation of Being this way:

‘Being’ designates a numinous primordial experience in which subject and object are not yet distinguished, nor are particular and universal, experience and thing-experienced, etc. Being is around us all the time; it is everywhere and nowhere; we understand it, as Augustine says of ‘time’, without being able to say what it is. It is that through which alone we are human and are able to encounter anything in our world (Geuss 498).

Within this representational disposition, performative modality brings forth the importance of individuated moments of perception. For example, Nichols writes: “Performative documentary seeks to evoke not the quality of a people’s worldview but the specific qualities that surround specific people, discrete events, social subjectivities, and historically situated encounters between filmmakers and their subjects” (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 101). Interactivity can help to describe the performative. In the interactive mode, the role of the documentary author is front and center. Then again, interactivity is about more than the author. Its documentary advances knowledge of complex and related phenomena. It alerts us to a multiplicity of influences connected with the constitution of the text. This multiplicity is especially evident in the documentarian’s interactions with his or her subjects. We perceive affective and ethical

dynamics between author and social actors. These dynamics provide a basis from which we are able to take up subjective positioning toward the text.

In the performative mode, diverse perceptions are put in motion. This range of perceptions creates heightened subjectivity which affects documentarian, social actor, and spectator. As a result, performative documentary can appear inventive. This creativity does not mean that other modes are uncreative. All documentary modes exhibit original approaches from time to time. Nor does it mean that traditional modes have not evolved. Documentary history displays an array of formal and aesthetic approaches developing over time. However, separate from this rich aesthetic history, the performative brings forth a deviation in how we approach documentary. In the performative, the real is not subject to capture and ordering as though coterminous with the referent. In one sense, this different relationship to the referent is not remarkable. The continual quest for methods of representing the real is part of documentary tradition. Without doubt, documentarians have confronted this problem throughout documentary history. An array of authors has engaged with this enigma in various ways. Even so, the performative denotes a variation in how filmmakers go about representing the real. We are less likely to comprehend reality's representation as contiguous. Percipience emerges from disparate affective dimensions which stem from the documentary object. In the performative, the real is explored as an unbounded, complex, and excursive field of aesthetic pleasure and signification.

For documentary, this approach appears avant-garde. However, in wider intellectual life, performative documentary is not particularly groundbreaking.



Interrogatories regarding the real, phenomenology, affective knowledge, as well as aesthetic assays are established terrain of philosophy, literature, and art. The tendency to experimentation is also true of other contemporary expressions that the performative displays, such as poststructuralism and postmodernism. In this sense, the performative is not unique. The performative is anomalous however, out of step with prevalent documentary practice. Nor does it resemble other discursive genus that documentary corresponds to, such as conventional historiography and journalism. The performative seems radical compared to these traditions. It strikes at the heart of suppositions governing “discourses of sobriety” (Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* 29; Nichols *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* 47; Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 54-55). More than discourses of sobriety, the performative resembles contemporary thought. In philosophical discourse we expect inquiries about the real. In poststructuralism, emphasis on complexity of textual meanings is fundamental. To propound a fictive dimension to perceptions of reality befits literary work. Aesthetic experimentation and manipulation of film is as old as the medium itself. It is notable however, when these and other concerns come to roost where neither welcome nor esteemed.

In spite of that remarkableness, the performative is of minor consequence to intellectual life. Certainly, performative documentary does not forge obvious philosophical ground. It ministers negligible experimentation to the world of art. Consequently, if performative documentary does not break significant ground, one can question its value. Why would we consider performative documentary important? The answer can be found within the greater documentary context and how the performative

differs from the norm. It helps to look at individual texts, because in the performative mode, text-specific aesthetics are front and center. Nichols observes that the performative brings pronounced affective sentience to the viewer (Nichols "Performing Documentary"). Evidently, this affective dimension is not its only consequence. Its primary contribution lies in difference, apt to result in either contention or marginalization. After all, contrariety toward conventional modalities can be interpreted as remonstrance against realist discourse. However, at the same time as setting up a deviation with respect to documentary appreciation, performative dissemblance has been attenuated by its marginal status. It opens up documentary epistemology to contemporary ways of thinking. This contemporary thought manifests in expressions which emend the viewer's perception of the real. Moreover, it affects various tenets and mores of documentary practice. The spectator's position in relation to the real changes and documentary in general is affected. Therefore, the important epistemological innovation lies within this different experience of documentary. The documentary experience is transformed.

Several differences distinguish the performative from other modes. Perhaps the most critical distinction lies within the performative deemphasizing the constative utterance (S. Scheibler). In this sense, the real is not based on strategies that stress signifier and referent as contiguous. Nor is there comparable emphasis on substantiation and verification, so evident in other modes. Instead, the performative points toward the absent signified. At the same time, the performative is deeply bound to signification and perception. Our orientation toward reality changes as a result of this paradoxical relation to the referent. John Grierson's characterization of documentary as creative treatment of

reality (Low 294, 96), takes on fresh meaning that relinquishes averment about external reality. Instead, the role of the percipient spectator is enhanced. This altered role involves the documentary author dispensing authority to the viewer. More than a fellow traveler in reality's creative treatment, the viewer emerges as the critical locus of truth. For a medium committed to elucidating a demonstrable extrinsic reality, this altered responsibility constitutes scopious wandering. Then again, this altered position has several precedents outside documentary. It effectively resembles certain forms of contemporary thought, specifically Roland Barthes' call for diminution of the author's authority, the death of the author and the birth of the reader (Barthes "The Death of the Author"). With methods and means contrasting other modes, performative reality takes on a protean disposition. This reality is often based on conspicuously deviceful representational methods.

Performative documentary is noteworthy in several ways. For one, it does not advance an impression that reality can be seized, as in prehending an objective world. Evidently, this subjective quality is not unique. Many documentaries, apart from performative ones, stress subjectivities as well. While several dynamics are in evidence, perception is especially critical in the performative. This criticality of perception is also in keeping with contemporary currents of thought which see subjective perception as self evident. With specific regard to cinema for example, Gilles Deleuze has been influential in expounding on the importance of perception (Flaxman; Rodowick). To understand how perception is distinctive in the documentary context, consider John Grierson's idea of creative treatment of reality. While appealing in its generality, it circumvents the inescapable fact that reality is perceived. Given that reality can only be creatively treated

if held in some way, the statement also presupposes a form of attainable reality. While consistent with conventional forms of thought, Grierson's perspective is also comprehensible because modern technological recording apparatus makes it so. With its mimetic capacity for verisimilitude, documentary can work against notions of subjectivity, making objective reality appear within reach. As Roland Barthes demonstrates however, photographic representation is a complex discursive field (Barthes *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*). The performative reflects this understanding of an elaborate field, and the concept of perception becomes all the more critical. This importance of perception can work against documentary's intrinsic technological ordering. Not reality, but perception of reality is treated creatively. The cast of creative treatment comes about during documentary author perception and proceeds through various stages of cinematographic praxis, all involving perception. Given reality's abstruseness and ubiquity, choosing to represent some aspect of reality is to exalt it. In this way, infinitesimal aspects of boundless reality are granted exalted significance. The process begins and ends with an apotheosis of reality. This apotheosis takes place in all modes, just as perception is essential to all modes. In the performative however, remarkably diverse and expressive ways of representing reality are put in play. In this way, perception of reality becomes exalted. Within this process lies a particular conception of reality as a perceptual process.

Documentary representation can embody truth. It has within it things that are revealed. Representation of reality is, after all, but another reality. However, most documentary is a means to an end. As Grierson indicated, important documentary purposes are to educate and disseminate information or propaganda (Grierson). Here

Grierson suggests a documentary instrumentality that is reminiscent of Heidegger's take on technology (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology"). Heidegger believed that modern technological instrumentality stemmed from eighteenth century machine technology and developed into a prevailing force in modern life. Challenging revealing, which is intrinsic to this instrumentality, established a norm of challenging forth the real as standing-reserve. This altering of revealing changed reality's nature, distorting it and resulting in the withdrawal of Being. Documentary too can be seen as a standing-reserve, a standing-reserve of represented reality. To take this idea one step further: Documentary is a standing-reserve of representation of the real which reveals the real as standing-reserve. Without doubt, Heidegger was critical of this modern way of thinking. He preferred a more genuine revealing. He believed that, unlike challenging revealing, poietic revealing connected with truth. Moreover, Heidegger feared that destining obstructed poietic revealing. When we are impeded from connecting with the world poietically, truth became blocked as well. In this way, Heidegger considered poietic revealing fundamental to truth. However, instrumentality and poietic revealing often co-exist within documentary texts. Even so, the performative mode's free signifier play is more aligned with poietic revealing than modern instrumentality's challenging revealing. In a Heideggerian sense, the performative mode aligns with truth.

To undertake representation of reality, one must believe that reality exists and can be represented. Thus, performative documentary acknowledges external reality and proposes that it can be represented in some way. However, what is that reality? Regarding this question of the real, Emmanuel Kant has been influential in distinguishing between the "object as phaenomenon" and "the object as a thing in itself" (Kant 42).

While Kant's view has been criticized, notably by Arthur Schopenhauer (Schopenhauer), I am supposing here that we have no ingress into the thing in itself. Therefore, that we enter into contact with reality as phenomena is given. Reality as phenomena does not mean that external reality could not be known or does not exist. Performative documentary proceeds as if reality can be perceived and duly represented. However, the performative markedly emphasizes phenomena. Documentary actuality is especially contingent on the perceiving subject. In this way, there is similitude between performativity and phenomenology. Regardless of accentuation on perception, the performative does not set forth categorical separation between perceiving subject, phenomenon, and object. In performative documentary, these elements are correlative and dynamic. In documentary in general, the importance of perception is broadly recognized. However, the significance of perception is distinctly pronounced in the performative. The spectator stands alone as perceiving subject. Textual play of determinacy and indeterminacy remains unresolved. Reality becomes profoundly contingent on spectator perception. The performative deviates from other modes, which tend to be constative and presuppose common interpretations among spectators. Furthermore, constative-based modalities suppose forms of transcendent access to the historical world. However, performative percipience results from the alterity of the spectator standing apart from the object. The documentary is seen as an object, and not as the historical world brought into the world. Not merely a phenomenon of consciousness, the documentary object is extant. This altered relationship establishes an apparent paradox. In the absence of a transcendental signified, transcendence can seem possible. But is this transcendence, or mere striving toward the referent? The signified remains

unattainable within the performative mode, therefore the object becomes critical. The referent lies somewhere between. Alterity can be the performative mode's crucible as well as its crux.

Relative to other modes, the performative appears incongruent. Apperception of reality assumes a contradistinctive position at variance with established norms. To go against established norms requires a paradigm shift. Performative paradigm shifts can be far-reaching and consequential. They are also varied, with myriad effects contingent on discrete considerations. As well, performative texts bear scant resemblance to each other, often incorporating several takes on multiple modalities. This aesthetic range results in diverse and distinctive collage-like documentaries. All told, this variety effects reception, making the experience rich and varied. By and large, the performative brings forward ideological deviation with subversive implications, notably to authorship. This subversion has ramifications for the constative, an impulse so pervasive to be imperceptible at times. After all, a sense of authority, stemming in part from pretense of knowledge of the historical world, has become intrinsic to documentary formalism. The performative can free the spectator from this aspect of documentary mediation. In performative documentary, spectator self-determination issues from marked emancipation from authorship. Yet, in spite of everything, the author superintends the text. This state of affairs leads to an underlying question: To what extent does authorship chaperon representation of reality?

Any response to this question depends on manifold factors. For example, in *The Mask of Nippon*, ideological disjunction resulting from historical disrelation makes the

text appear categorically racist. Presumably, to some spectators it did not seem so extreme in its day. In the eyes of a contemporary audience however, *The Mask of Nippon*'s represented reality is undermined by its xenophobia. The performative mode destabilizes representation of reality as well, however wittingly, not as in *The Mask of Nippon*. It does so by design, by way of temperance in regulating perceptions of reality. When the notion of attainable actuality is attenuated, as in the performative, conventional ideas about representing reality are degraded. Also weakened is the author's ascendant position toward actuality. Therefore, we observe a renunciation of authorial control over spectator perception embedded within performative ideation. Conversely, viewer autonomy becomes privileged and heightened. The documentary impulse to domiciliate objects and beings, along with efforts to create an impression of mastering actuality, are renounced. In the performative mode, documentary principles assume elastic form. The customary will to master actuality diminishes, along with several dispositions having to do with social and historical worlds' domestication. This repositioning has extensive ramifications for documentary and our perceptions of it. That said, the performative remains documentary, with many clear and recognizable documentary elements in place.

Because it involves sensory perception and is employed as transcendental signification, visual evidence is related to empiricism. As direct and convincing verification, visual evidence functions in documentary as substantiation of the real. In contrast, performative visual evidence can appear subversive, so estranged from conventional empirical ideation to vitiate it. Therefore, in the performative, tenability of visual evidence is devitalized and rendered problematic. This problematization causes the spectator to question a direct relation between visual evidence and the reality that it



represents. With sensory-based knowledge destabilized in this way, spectator confidence in conventional ideation destabilizes as well. This loss of confidence has several affects. Most obviously, these affects encompass intensified indeterminacy relative to represented reality and the historical world. When indeterminacy is emphasized, the provenance of truth becomes displaced. It shifts from an extrinsic reality to the spectator, bringing immediacy to spectatorship as a phenomenal occurrence of the here and now (Hegel and Baillie; Jameson, Hardt and Weeks 110). This immediacy results in sensory perception, conditions favourable to empiricism. However, performative indeterminacy does not result from sensory perception. This indeterminacy is intellectual, connected to our doubting systems of signification that suggest a transcendental signified. Therefore, for the performative spectator, the source of indeterminacy is not the object per se. More accurately, indeterminacy stems from the absent signified. Nevertheless, just as abstract signification can be considered unreliable, the truth ideal is not forsaken. Despite the absent signified, performative documentary remains a source of truth. Consequently, within the performative context, representation of reality is recovered. Again, reality remains accessible, because incertitude is directed toward the possibility of accessing the real by way of contiguous signification, should that signification be visual or recorded sound or speech. Whereas the signified is in doubt, the documentary object remains available to sensory perception. As a result, the object and its play of signifiers becomes the essential reality. In this way, performative formal approaches respond to how traditional representational systems purport to access the real. It has to do with how reality is transcendent, and how reality is not transcendent.

While representing reality is not discarded as unrealizable, one sees pronounced displacement from customary methods. As with visual evidence, aesthetic formations are deployed differently. They subsist in ways that generate and accentuate a phenomenological extensity within which the viewer can occupy and take effect. Relative to most documentary representation, we are positioned in discordant ways. This positioning is incongruous with the composed cogitation of objective contemplation. Documentary epistemology moves beyond pretence of objectivity and normativity of justification into a highly individuated area. This transformed field of spectator response brings about a visceral connection to the documentary object. Its phenomenological field affords a freedom from which the viewer can combine with the object in an exceptionally individuated manner. This connection can be understood as intellectualization or ideological and aesthetic positioning, or in other ways, depending on the reader's preference. While serviceable in subtending a documentary paradigm shift, such conceptualizations addle what is surpassingly lucid: Like reality, the performative opens to perception. As with walking down a city street, or through a forest glen, the performative is an acute subjective field, phenomenology of spectatorship occasioned by the documentary object and the spatiotemporal dimension it occupies. The performative recreates and emphasizes perception of reality as occurring in space and time, in ways that distinguish it from conventional documentary's delineated subject/object correlation. By breaking down reality's representation, by reconstructing it and assaying to move beyond, the performative endeavours to re-establish the experience of reality in and of itself, as occurring in the here and now as immediacy of perception (Hegel and Baillie; Jameson, Hardt and Weeks 110).

As a result of this reformed relationship to reality's representation, the spectator perceives performative documentary differently. Perception has less to do with applying intellect from a position of objective detachment. Its apprehension as something occurring in the here and now is constituted in Being and the experience of the defining moment. Perception is based to a lesser degree on evaluation, and more on memory and derivational knowledge. This perception differs from that which is commonly brought about by the greater part of documentary representation. Conventional documentary sets the subject apart from the object, in a way that is at once subjective and objective. In contrast to this approach, the performative spectator is given to apprehend documentary representation in an enhanced subjective light. The disrelation of time and space that establishes objective separation is de-emphasized. So too is disquietude brought about by the absent signified. In its place, the documentary object becomes of the here and now. Performative spectatorship is apperceived differently. Its documentary is autonomous and independent, highly individuated perception of revelation.

Without doubt, we perceive documentary subjectively. Then again, the performative seems aberrant compared to most documentary subjectivity. This divergence from the norm manifests in several ways, however the difference is rooted in the performative documentarian's renunciation of persuasive argumentation. This renunciation can be seen as rejection of authorial power with wide-ranging effects. From the perspective of documentarian, it involves repudiation of authority in representing the real. Something less determinate and authoritative stands in its stead. For the spectator, this difference constitutes an absence with respect to prevalent assumptions and conventional roles of documentary author and spectator. It also creates a conundrum: If

representation of reality is not intended to be convincing, wherein lies the reality? Given that documentary represents reality, something must take up the void. If not, performative documentary would be fiction. Within this vacuum the provenance of truth becomes ascribed to the spectator. Concomitantly, it denotes abrogation of authorial power by the documentarian. From the author's renunciation of authority the spectator becomes the constitutive provenance of truth. In this way, the performative spectator takes on a dynamic role in the representation of reality.

Atypically, the performative documentarian relinquishes authority. In this way, pretence of mastery over the historical world is attenuated. This attenuation of mastery makes the performative appear different. However, the mode manifests difference in other ways as well. In all, the divergence transforms documentary's essential character. Most documentary proffers persuasion and argumentation. In spite of this persuasive argumentation tendency, the performative mode abates these qualities. Documentary is reconstructed as a different object with the underlying epistemological building block of persuasive argumentation disestablished. This change is critical because the usual pretence of mastering reality proceeds from persuasion, contention, and expostulation, qualities related to positivism and postpositivism. However, with mastery over the historical world reduced, the documentarian's condition is reformed if not diminished. Because the usual propensity toward authority and control manifests in contention and persuasion, this transformed condition involves radical change effecting documentary praxis and reception. However, the performative author appears to lack ardor for ascendancy over the historical world. Instead of embracing authority, the performative documentarian reacts against modern ways of thinking, particularly as it relates to

technological ordering and the will to mastery. In opposition to these tendencies, the performative confutes methods which aspire to set up beings, objects, and phenomena as destining of revealing.

Thus, the performative bespeaks a documentary turn, movement in reaction to presuppositions inherent in other modalities. This tension is palpable in an incisive sequence in Marilú Mallet's *Journal inachevé*. Here, disjuncture between dictates of narrative and a filmmaker's conflicted yearning to break with its codes is acted out by two documentarians. In an observational sequence that unfolds in a kitchen, Mallet and filmmaker husband Michael Rubbo discuss Mallet's desire to use techniques rooted in self-representation and personal expression. What Mallet aspires to achieve in her documentary involves a compelling diametric to established codes, especially narrative of its time. In addition, the sequence involves interaction related to the formidable problem of representing the Other. Predominantly in two-shot medium shot, the sequence includes three takes with intermittent zooms. Its elaborate signification imparts several polysemous subtexts comprehensible in terms of gender, marital relations, nationality, exile, rationalism, power, control, freedom, fear, repression and revolt. During *Journal inachevé*, Rubbo conveys a prevailing notion that under certain conditions the filmic apparatus can represent the real more or less unproblematically. Before the kitchen sequence, Rubbo stated that one can effectively represent reality either by recording the profilmic event or by exploiting narrative devices summed up as "a story, a plot, conflict, characters" (*Journal inachevé*). In this way, Michael Rubbo appears to have a modern conception of truth which can have to do with revealing, but often has to do with the correctness of an idea. Rubbo's standpoint puts Heidegger's conception of the difference

between classical Greek, Roman, and modern understandings of truth on view. Regarding these understandings of truth, Heidegger wrote: “The Greeks have the word *alethia* for revealing. The Romans translate this with *veritas*. We say “truth” and usually understand it as the correctness of an idea” (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 11-12). In contrast to this notion of correctness, Mallet sees reality’s representation as complex, and has difficulty accepting traditional praxis as requisite. She is affected not only by the precepts and propriety of conventional praxis, but also by her documentarian husband championing its narrative methods as essential. At completion of the sequence, Rubbo consoles a faltering and dolorous Mallet.

As the kitchen sequence unfolds, it becomes evident that a great deal transcends the recording capability of the cinematic apparatus. Plainly, it can reveal more than what it records and exhibits. Michael Rubbo propounds that truth becomes distinct when faced with it, a notion reminiscent of Heidegger’s coming to presence of revealing. Nevertheless, apperception of truth rests within viewer perception. Rubbo’s conception of truth seems related to his judgment of what is rational. Previously, Rubbo declares this conviction toward rationalism: “I believe in rationalism. Life without rationality is chaos, confusion and disorder” (*Journal inachevé*). In contrast, Heidegger believed that cause-effect rationalism altered the coming to presence of revealing. It transformed revealing into destining of revealing (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 26). Thus, in this rationalist desideratum context, meaning which transcends representational intent abounds. As the collaborative creation of two filmmakers cum social actors, this sequence can be contextualized in diverse ways. Some ways could be predicated on judgment of what is rational. Other contextualizing would have little or nothing to do

with such a determination. Rubbo's description of exile and faltering marriage brings Mallet to tears. The overall signification borders on poetic, and Rubbo's enunciation seems at a remove from that of a rationalist. However, considered in another context, his purpose could have to do with a rationalist's objective of getting at truth. Or, one could posit that any judgment regarding rationalism lies within the viewer. Given the plenum of contexts, to reduce this sequence to an idea of rational exposition would be irrational. Potential contexts and their signification are far-reaching and unrepressed.

Without doubt, this improvised sequence brings about diversiform contexts. Redolent of poststructuralism and Derrida's position that there is no context, only contexts "without any center or absolute anchoring [*ancrage*]" (Derrida "Signature Event Context" 12), the sequence provides a multitude of potential interpretations and understandings. Given that the sequence can have several potential meanings, one can speculate about Rubbo's idea of truth. He appears to suggest a truth based on a transcendental signified, a conception described by Jacques Derrida as an absent presence. As Derrida indicated, "there has to be a transcendental signified for the difference between signifier and signified to be somewhere absolute and irreducible" (Derrida "Exergue" 20). Of course, unless the sign is the referent, we have no absolute, irreducible relationship between sign and referent. On the other hand, Rubbo's conception of truth could be more personal and phenomenological. Perhaps he is not speaking of one truth, but many potential truths? Overall, the sequence can be understood in terms of Mallet's awareness of repressive pressures resulting from instrumentality and conceptions of rational thought. As well, it bespeaks the nonobjective in documentary, the elaboration of subjectivities and subtexts contingent on variegated contexts. Mallet

aspires to a personalized narrative that abdicates conventional methods. She strives to attain a personal truth by way of documentary praxis, and she is prepared to move beyond convention to achieve this truth. However, when Rubbo challenges her to represent their precarious conjugality truthfully, she appears overwhelmed. While Mallet does not articulate her thoughts in a rational manner, the sequence abounds with signification. Because of their backgrounds as filmmakers, these documentary subjects are exceptional social actors. Mallet's acting resonates with Rubbo, who provides the ideal foil to her performance. Together, their performances strike at the heart of documentary epistemology.

It is difficult to know where reality ends and fiction begins in *Journal inachevé*. During their discussion, Rubbo suggests that Mallet's representational praxis could be a way of avoiding truth. Certainly, self-representation can be an intricate and problematical practice. Mallet's self-portrayal in *Journal inachevé* is a complex portrayal of exile and integration. However, the decisive point is not one of self-representation. Discussion of praxis between two documentarians is the key. Ultimately, the author must judge how to represent. No one knows Marilú Mallet's experience as well as Marilú Mallet. Certainly, she advocates atypical approaches, particularly for this documentary's historical period. One example is the aforementioned blurring of distinctions between documentary and fiction. Despite his antithetical position, Rubbo promotes something similar. He advocates narrative strategies that are fictional constructs as well. Therefore, the issue is not about avoiding truth by engaging with fiction. Nor can one parcel the debate as fiction versus reality. More readily, it has to do with the documentarians' orientation toward narrative and praxis. Generally speaking, Mallet represents reality in poetic terms,



whereas Rubbo advocates conventional approaches reminiscent of historiography, with an assumption of a reality that exists beyond signification. This position brings to mind Heidegger's conception of genuine revealing as opposed to the destining of revealing. Heidegger considered poetic revealing more genuine, even fundamental to human existence. In "The Question Concerning Technology" he quoted poet Friedrich Hölderlin: "*poetically dwells man upon this earth*" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 34). Heidegger believed poetic revealing critical in fostering the saving power. Intriguingly, in *Journal inachevé* these issues come to light in the mode that purports a direct connection between reality and its recording. The mode acknowledged by Rubbo as a superior means of representing reality, the observational, possesses this capacity for genuine revealing. Even so, the greater meaning here seems to lie with what is not visible, that which lies beyond the observable reality before the camera's lens. Paradoxically, the camera's lens brings forth the invisible within this sequence. We find greater meaning within perception of documentary phenomena, as opposed to the profilmic event.

In an earlier sequence, Michael Rubbo covers the couple's apartment windows with opaque sheeting. Rubbo believed that this act economized about one hundred dollars per month in heating expenses, thus preserving financial resources. As Mallet notes however, there will be distinct disadvantage as well. Instead of looking out on the world with transparency and illumination, the outside world becomes obscured. While covering windows with plastic sheeting may be rational, with predictable consequences measured in energy consumption, it does not account for what is lost. While some of light's properties are observable, a great deal exceeds conscious perception. Nevertheless, it

affects us in various ways. Similarly, while offering the predictability and control of cause-effect rationalism, orthodox representational practices can bring about restrictive views. In choosing to represent this part of her domestic life, Mallet suggests something about representational strategies. Mallet's grappling with how to represent reality is, without doubt, a central theme of *Journal inachevé*. In this instance, the metaphorical connection to documentary is easy to discern. However, it also has to do with limiting practices which effect freedom. Once again, Heidegger's ideation is germane. Heidegger believed that freedom had to do with that brought into the open, illuminated, and revealed:

All revealing comes out of the open, goes into the open, and brings into the open. The freedom of the open consists neither in unfettered arbitrariness nor in the constraint of mere laws. Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose clearing there shimmers that veil that covers what comes to presence of all truth and lets the veil appear as what veils. Freedom is the realm of the destining that at any given time starts a revealing upon its way (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 25).

When Mallet breaks down in tears at the end of the *Journal inachevé* kitchen sequence, she states: "I want to do my way. I want to show the things in a way I want" (*Journal inachevé*). Not only did Heidegger connect opening and illumination with freedom, he also associated this freedom with truth.

Evidently, Marilú Mallet seeks a personal approach to representing reality. She desires to escape constraints of documentary convention. However, throughout *Journal inachevé*, the line between fiction and reality is blurred. The kitchen sequence brings forward observational modality also understandable in terms of interactive, reflexive, and performative modes (Nichols "Documentary Modes of Representation; Nichols

"Performing Documentary"). Open to multiple contexts, what is not visible may well be more critical than what is visible. As with Mallet's experience of exile, *Journal inachevé* brings forward an impression of deracination. In some ways, exile appears to leave her effaced. The text seems uprooted and difficult to define as documentary. Conventional praxis does not allow her to represent as she sees fit. And while Mallet would prefer not to represent herself, she sees no other way. Therefore, while dealing with exile, *Journal inachevé* also has to do with process. We see that Mallet represents in open and undefined ways. She lacks the typical desire to master reality. She could have the sensibility of a poet or fine artist working in the documentary medium. It could also relate to a broader cultural phenomenon signalling the emergence of the contemporary performative. Identified by Nichols as performative documentary, *Journal inachevé* can figure as a performative meta-text (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 93). Without doubt, her film expresses positions which reflect on performative documentary. This approach seems right within contemporary culture. Heidegger considered existence poetic. He deemed artists particularly important owing to an inherent calling to poetic revealing, a critical counterpoint to modern instrumentality. As documentary, Mallet's process is unfamiliar to Michael Rubbo. Rubbo reveals this bewilderment when he states: "The thing is, I do not really understand what you are trying to do with this film" (*Journal inachevé*). While advocating conventional approaches, Rubbo beseeches Mallet: "You have to just have a clear idea of what you are doing, that is all" (*Journal inachevé*). Mallet responds that she does indeed understand her own process, suggesting that Rubbo does not understand what she is doing. Along these lines, something noteworthy takes place in a Montreal kitchen: Poetic revealing opposes the destining of revealing.

Certainly, from an instrumentalist point of view, poetic revealing can appear nonsensical or dysfunctional. Even so, Heidegger believed that a saving power grew within the Ge-stell, and that poetic revealing is essential to this saving power. Because this crucial struggle takes place within the artistic realm, responsibility falls on the artist, the decisive conflict that Heidegger foresaw.

Rubbo's point of view betrays a desire to master reality, a position that is aligned with the Ge-stell. However, he also demonstrates an appreciation for genuine revealing, especially observational documentary. Mallet freely mixes documentary with fiction and appears to oppose the destining of revealing. Conflict with the destining of revealing arises when she transgresses conventional boundaries. This conflict is also evident when Mallet says:

Mais c'est la moitié documentaire et la moitié fiction. Pourquoi il faut définir? Pourquoi il faut définir un sujet? Pourquoi il faut définir la vérité comme ça? Pourquoi il faut définir un film que c'est documentaire ou c'est de la fiction? Pourquoi? (*Journal inachevé*)

Rubbo's sense of rationalism relates to the vast epistemological orientation that Heidegger linked to modern technology. Because the Ge-stell is embedded within modern culture, as ideology it becomes common sense, and therefore difficult to oppose. Even so, Mallet seems at variance with an instrumentalist worldview. She believes that Rubbo does not promote required documentary approaches, but rather his own methods. Whereas Rubbo's position makes conventional sense, Mallet appears on the cusp of the contemporary performative which emerged in years following *Journal inachevé*'s release. Her film reveals certain things about the culture of its time. Furthermore, Mallet takes an original approach, and insists on representing on her own terms:

Moi je veux faire. C'est ma vérité. C'est ma façon de faire le film. Je le fais comme je veux. Et puis, c'est ma culture. Je veux m'exprimer comme je veux. Je ne veux pas être imposé un regard. Je ne veux pas. Et puis c'est ton style. C'est le style Michael Rubbo. C'est ça que tu auras fait. Ce n'est pas ce que j'aurais fait. Moi je fais le film que je veux faire (*Journal inachevé*).

As an accomplished documentarian, Rubbo is perplexed by her process. In response, he challenges Mallet to represent their faltering marriage, saying that she does not want to represent her marital discord because it is “too true” (*Journal inachevé*). Nevertheless, she ends up doing precisely that, by representing their marital discord. The kitchen sequence comes across as genuine revealing, represented in the observational modality that Rubbo advocates. Nevertheless, this modality is but one way of revealing in one context. This sequence invites other contexts as well.

## Documenting the Performative

The roots of the term performative documentary derive from Daniel Dayan. Dayan was the first writer to apply the term performative in a visual media context (Dayan 33, 73, 261). Whereas Dayan is the first scholar to signal performativity in film in relation to narrative fiction of John Ford, Michael Renov was the first documentary specialist to use the term, albeit in a provisional way in “History And/ As Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film and Video” (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video"). Renov’s framing of several questions about visual media brings to mind Bill Nichols (Nichols "Performing Documentary") and Susan Scheibler (S. Scheibler; S. F. Scheibler). As noted, recent writers such as Stella Bruzzi (Bruzzi) and Anne Jerslev (Jerslev), use the performative documentary term in ways that depart from the late 1980s and early 1990s origins of Renov, Scheibler, and Nichols. Then again, the pedigree of the term performative is not crystalline. Renov did not identify a performative documentary per se, nor did he call attention to a performative in documentary in ways that resemble Scheibler and Nichols. From an antecedent position, he discussed the performative as put forth by J. L. Austin, and considered several critical workings that ultimately characterize performative documentary. In addition, he commented on performativity within documentary, when describing the performative in relation to Raoul Ruiz’s *De grands événements et des gens ordinaires* (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 12; *De grands événements et des gens ordinaires*). Though he approached the term with palpable care, and did not categorize a performative documentary, the 1989 “History And/ As Autobiography: The Essayistic in

Film and Video” (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video") occupies a similar position to those positions delineated by Nichols and Scheibler. For that reason, it is a precursor, an important essay related to performative documentary, particularly in setting forth a perspective for the eventual critical term.

Thus, several intellectual currents had come to light before Bill Nichols’ identification of performative modality. The origins of this ideation, shared in distinctive ways by Scheibler and Nichols, follow from Renov’s engagement with contemporary thought. This thought is understandable within rubrics of poststructuralism and postmodernism, as well as Roland Barthes’ discourse on text. It can also be traced to another, largely overlooked quiddity, that of Michel de Montaigne and the origins of the essay. Michel de Montaigne captured this spirit of the *essai* and value of observation when he asserted: “And so the opinion I give...is to declare the measure of my sight, not the measure of things” (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 6). That these seemingly diverse elements can be related, becomes clear in Renov’s conjecture that the constative and performative may well apply to de Montaigne’s discourse on textuality (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 10). While connections to documentary may not be immediately clear, expanding scholarship absorbed these matters, as we see in Scheibler’s consideration of J. L. Austin and Nichols’ emphasis on the personal, for example. Crucially, Renov’s essay highlights strains of thought which held special currency at that time. One can discern connections between Renov’s subject matter and the performative crux: Documentarians producing performative texts at that time. In addition, Nichols and Scheibler endeavoured to explain performative documentary in

critical ways. As Scheibler's advisor on her doctoral dissertation "An Enticement to Knowledge: Documentary Spectatorship and a Theory of Performatives" (S. F. Scheibler), Renov signals their connection within his endnotes: "I wish to thank Sue Scheibler for drawing my attention to Austin's work and its potential applications to the visual media" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 13). This salutation points to an exploratory tenor, while suggesting certain research directions at that time. In addition, it shows that as early as 1989 and likely before, Susan Scheibler thought about J. L. Austin's performative.

Although primarily on the subject of the essay, Renov's article expresses related ideas as well. These ideas include a desire for documentary to adopt a different attitude toward the signified, to be more essayistic. Compellingly, "History And/ As Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film and Video" echoes epistemological and ontological drives manifest in performative documentary. Therefore, the correspondence between Renov's desire for transformation in documentary practice, and certain characteristics of performative modality, is noticeable. His essential paradigm is the essay, a textual form he considers exceptionally malleable. Undeniably, the essay is a uniquely sutured text, its formal composition arrived at through author enunciation and textuality produced in personal ways. Because of the centrality of the personal and observation, the essay is liberated from the disciplining of knowledge. Parallels between the essayistic and the performative become increasingly palpable, from a rejection of preconceived notions of the good object, to an acceptance of the singularity and irregularity that the personal entails. This uniqueness can be valued or not valued. However, if evaluated, one must evaluate it within a context of the personal. Here we



arrive at a sense of the writerly, which works against disciplined ways of representing the signified. Within the writerly essay, we see the plurality of the signifier. We see, as well, text exhibiting inconclusive qualities, as opposed to rhetorical strategies which strive toward determinacy. The writerly text emphasizes characteristics of multiplicity, profusion, and variety. This emphasis addresses reality's unboundedness and our difficulties representing it. Furthermore, in representational terms, unboundedness and complexity leads to indeterminacy. Indeterminacy can be at odds with reason, or the reductionist logic of the destining of revealing.

Renov looks to Michel de Montaigne for his starting point for an essayistic film and video practice. He depicts the Montaignian essay as "the ground upon which the figure of the film/video essay can be constructed" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 7). In this way, Renov identifies his desired textual form, which in addition to personal expression, is based on observation, existence, and reality. Of course, to speak of observation, existence, and reality, is to speak of documentary in general. This generality is the ground from which the performative, as documentary predisposed to the personal, has evolved. Like performative documentary, the essay brings into play circumstances within which enunciation takes place. And like performative documentary, the essay refers to social and historical worlds, along with emphasizing the personal. This form of referentiality has consequences for how we view subjectivity:

For if the subject/object split which underpins Western thought theorizes "self" and "other" as extrinsic positions, the sustained and simultaneous emphasis upon the historical real (the signified) and subjectivity (the signifying agency) which characterizes the essayistic dissolves radical disjunction. Within discourse, "self" and

“other” become enmeshed and mutually defining: the social as representation, always mediated through subjectivity, becomes instead its expression (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 7).

It would seem impossible to disentangle the social, self, and other. Therefore, autobiography seems a fitting expression of these inexorable conditions. By nature, autobiography deactivates an objective stance, for the objective is impracticable when turned on the self. Renov quotes Janet Varner Gunn with reference to autobiography's intrinsic incompleteness: "Instead, it rejects wholeness or harmony, ascribed by formalists to the well-made art object, as a false unity which serves as no more than a defense against the self's deeper knowledge of its finitude" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 7; Gunn 25). Again, we can without difficulty, think of the performative refusing totality suggested by unity. This particular impetus is comprehensible. When it comes to representing reality, unity is not only an intellectual imposture, but an aesthetic one as well. Unity is the principle of the good, harmonious object, from which notions of mastery, as if as a matter of course, come to light.

In structuring an arc from Michel de Montaigne to Roland Barthes, Renov refers to a range of sources, including Paul Smith's *Discerning the Subject* (P. Smith) and Theodor Adorno's *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life* (Adorno and Jephcott). In this way, he reveals elements of contemporary thought regarding the subject and self. For example, Renov brings attention to boundaries and contestation when he discusses Derrida's discourse on Nietzsche's autobiographical text *Ecce Homo* (Derrida and McDonald). Here he writes: "Derrida has suggested that autobiography mobilizes meaning along a dynamic borderline between the "work" and the "life," the system and

the subject of the system (p. 5). This borderline, as in all Derrida's meditations on boundary conditions, is posited as a site of contestation; it is the place where the proper name or signature is staged" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 7). In this way, the subject position changes, moving beyond something composite in form. The subject is impracticable to unravel because it involves so much. This intricacy leads to questions about how we perceive or establish the subject. Derrida's perception of signature, described by Renov as "ruse or masquerade" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 7), resonates along with Roland Barthes' statement in the autobiographical *Roland Barthes*: "In the field of the subject there is no referent" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 7). In referring to Paul Smith's reading of the subject (P. Smith), Renov notes a freeing potential within Barthes' production of the self. The self becomes the impossible subject, "the untreatable, the imponderable that constitutes me" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 9; P. Smith 102), or "l'Intraitable dont je suis fait" (Barthes *La Chambre Claire: Note Sur La Photographie* 153). This element of Barthes' writing having to do with subject, self, and autobiography, finds particular force in *Roland Barthes* (Barthes *Roland Barthes*). Here Barthes expresses subversive potential through a broad-based challenge to representational practice. Renov draws attention to this effect, quoting Smith in that "Barthes oppositional writing project ... is to reveal instances of a new and paradoxical subjectivity where the symbolic's hold is not total" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 9; P. Smith 109).

Bearing this instability in mind, the value of the subject position can be found within its uniqueness. Renov points to Adorno's *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life* (Adorno and Jephcott), for its advocacy of the intrinsic value of distinctive vision. Renov quotes Adorno:

Yet a gaze averted from the beaten track... a search for fresh concepts not yet encompassed by the general pattern is the last hope for thought... He who offers for sale something unique that no-one wants to buy, represents, even against his will, freedom from exchange (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 8; Adorno and Jephcott 67-68).

Like Adorno, Renov endorses individuality and uniqueness of vision. With the benefit of hindsight, further parallels to performative documentary emerge, as uniqueness and individuality are two of its defining features. In this way, Renov perceived a particular cultural trajectory. In addition to anticipating the performative as a critical category, his essay appears to set the tone for this emergent category. Moreover, Renov remains true to the spirit of what he describes. Only as individuals can we approach this problem of subject position, and therefore we are encouraged to think for ourselves. Discourse becomes the starting point for a never established subject position. In this way, the above quotation brings to mind a comparable Adorno proclamation, though not from Renov's essay:

Thinking is not the intellectual reproduction of what already exists anyway. As long as it doesn't break off, thinking has a secure hold on possibility. Its insatiable aspect, its aversion to being quickly and easily satisfied, refuses the foolish wisdom of resignation. The utopian moment in thinking is stronger the less it . . . objectifies itself into a utopia and hence sabotages its realization. Open thinking points beyond itself" (Adorno and Pickford 292-93).

Renov has laid out an intelligible direction. The essay, the individual, and autobiography, is most fertile when open and pointing beyond itself. It follows that temporality would be

an element as well. The crucial element of perception is within the here and now, and therefore immediacy of perception is part of this trajectory. Clearly, Renov looked to ways that elements of essay and autobiography fit within film and video practice broadly conceived. However, in retrospect, several of these elements of contemporary thought apply specifically to documentary as well.

Renov comments on documentary, albeit briefly, presenting pointed criticism toward the conventional, the not-performative, or most documentary at that time. While he obviously could not couch his critique within terminology that had not yet emerged, he may have been lamenting a dearth of performativity in documentary. From that particular historical context, he wrote: "The expressive dimension remains sorely underdeveloped in current documentary practice, the play of signifier held in dutiful harness to the signified. . . . The resistance to the rhetorical, compositional, even epistemological mastery, which is the hallmark of the essayistic, would seem, in the light of prevailing models, antithetical to documentary discourse" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 9). In a significant way then, Renov's essay appeals for change in ways that sound like a call for documentary performativity. However, while desire for change underlies his discourse, Renov maintains a particular research direction. He looked for essayistic and autobiographical qualities within film and video. Taking his lead from literary works and distinctive methods of Michel de Montaigne and Roland Barthes, Renov looked to delineate how filmic texts can be essayistic. He strived to define a filmic essay and identify texts for inclusion within this rubric.

Clearly, Michael Renov did not set out to identify a performative modality. Even so, he used the performative term and described prominent features of what would later be called performative documentary. In this way, he contributed to its subsequent identification from an antecedent position. From literary-derived parameters, in which he looked to establish an essayistic classification, Renov brings to mind Scheibler's and Nichols' performatives. He provides a working description of the "visual essay": "A representation of the "historical real" (digressive, fragmentary) through sound and image in a manner which embroils the subject of enunciation" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 9). Renov explains: "These visual works, like the literary essay form, can be said to resist generic classification, straddling a series of all-too-confining antimonies: fiction/non-fiction, documentary/avant-garde, cinema/video" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 8). In this tenor, Renov produces a register of 25 filmic texts, examples that he would include within his classification (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 8-9). While his descriptions sound like performative documentary, those texts on his list, such as *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* and *Naked Spaces -- Living is Round (Naked Spaces -- Living is Round)*, or *Sans Soleil (Sans Soleil)*, are not on Bill Nichols' subsequent list of performative documentaries (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 93-94). However, with the benefit of hindsight, a case can be made that several texts on Renov's list are performative documentaries. And even though there was significant activity in performative documentary, before and around the time of writing, Renov criticized "prevailing models" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 9), the not performative character of most

documentaries at that time. Then again, he also referred to documentaries outside dominant convention, bringing attention to their difference. Thus, while the identification of texts seems disorderly, historical context is important. No one had published on performative documentary at that time, and the exact term may not have been discussed. What escaped classification as performative then, may well be considered performative documentary in the present day.

Renov's essayistic category has not been embraced to the extent that the performative category has. Conceivably, his essayistic category did not become popular in the same way because documentary was already a visual media classification. As borrowed from the literary, the essayistic lacks this tradition. Rather than set up a new classification external to the discourse, the performative category expands our understanding of documentary. It retains what we ultimately value documentary for, the goal of accessing the referential world. Without doubt, documentary has established firm roots within culture, a privileged status attributable to its many advantages as discourse and propaganda. As a result of its capacity to exploit recorded imagery and sound, documentary represents reality in ways that related forms of discourse cannot. In addition, it sets up a variety of forms of representation that constitute the historical world. Documentary not only creates subject matter that delineates reality, it establishes an apparatus from which we apperceive reality. It establishes not only reality's content, but its structure as well. In spite of its modern technological basis, documentary has evolved from human consciousness' origins. According to Renov, the etymological provenance of documentary is embedded within the Latin *docere*, which means to show or teach (Renov "Introduction: The Truth About Non-Fiction" 5). Consequently, documentary connects to

epistemology and pedagogy. It involves indicia, evidence and averment, mementos which advance cognizance regarding the historical world and the Other. And despite extensive mediation, we assume that the documentary spectator can somehow transcend this mediation to apperceive reality. *Journal inachevé* shows transcendent reality to be contentious and complex. Like Michael Rubbo, many believe transcendence possible under certain conditions. On the other hand, some people do not. The illusion of transcendence can be realized in several ways. These illusions of transcendence involve various forms of gratification for spectators habituated to comprehend certain conventions as connotative of reality.

Recording technologies play a significant role in documentary, especially in that photographic indexicality submits the spectator to visual correspondence that substantiates a reality's existence. Consequently, visual and aural verisimilitude is apt to have persuasive effect. With the impression of negotiating space and time, the spectator senses considerable power as an authoritative observer. This feeling of power creates an attitude of ascendancy over that which shall not be bridled: the historical world. Far from seeming absent, the transcendental signified (Derrida and Caputo 80) can appear as if present. To this end, documentary often deemphasizes the process of signification, which can circumvent that signified reality is not present.<sup>7</sup> Therein lies a key critique of documentary representation, the problematic that the signifier and signified are not coterminous. Documentary can be seen as deviceful and chimerical, a paradoxical gesture in the face of illimitable existence. It bestows controlled morphology on what will not be managed or ordered: existence and reality. It confers mastery over the historical world, to contain and report. To have meaning, documentary embodies an articulation of



essentialism, taking up the conviction that we can convey reality by way of verisimilitude. This conviction presumes the spectator can correctly perceive the object of reality, a notion that is fundamental to its basis as knowledge and authority. Whether a paradoxical undertaking or not, a documentary must first propitiate the spectator into accepting a given representation as of reality.

According to Susan Scheibler, this being of reality is rooted within documentary's structure and design. In "An Enticement to Knowledge Documentary Spectatorship and a Theory of Performatives" and "Constantly Performing the Documentary" Scheibler describes most documentary as a constative event (S. Scheibler; S. F. Scheibler). Scheibler draws her inspiration from unspecified early scholarship of J. L. Austin. Austin advanced theory describing two categories of language he called constative and performative. His terminology demonstrated how two distinct linguistic approaches aver or do not aver actuality. The constative stands on a conviction that discourse can engender actuality. Opposite to the constative, the performative does not advance the evaluation of truth. Performative locution is therefore not predisposed to be provable or authoritative, whereas the constative relates to authentication. Because of the disparity between signifier and signified, authentication requires a leap of faith. What is provable depends on a spectator's confidence of a propinquity of signifier and referent. Any implementation of provability is therefore subject to perception of similitude between signifier and signified; a similarity that the constative assumes. The constative puts forward the idea of consistent, fixed meaning. This fixed meaning is founded on the presumption that language can convey actuality and factuality. Even though spectatorship varies, there is intimation of an established and enduring spectator capable of retaining

stable signification. In this way, the constative brings forward a proposition that we could attain objective reality.

While fostering a different approach, the performative does not forsake the endeavour to represent reality. Reference to the historical world remains. On the other hand, as with the transcendental signified, determinacy is absent. Although a constative element remains, the discursive apparatus reveals and plays intrinsic breaches within its construction. These ruptures break the semblance of transparent reality and places emphasis on signifiers. This mode of signification can appear excessive within a normative framework. Like the referent, the spectator is no longer established, but relinquished to indeterminacy, temporality, and duration. Scheibler quotes J. L. Austin as writing in “Performative Utterances” that the performative serves “not to inform or describe but to carry out a performance, to accomplish an act through the very process of its enunciation” (S. Scheibler 140). In this manner, performative documentary advances artifice and excess, thereby debasing assumptions that evaluation of truth is crucial to representation of reality. Unlike the performative, constative documentary entails the prevailing assumption that filmic representation can command verisimilitude to re-establish reality and existence, to harmonize discrete spatiotemporal events so that they match up. The ontological rationale for this approach stems from photography’s indexical properties. When the spectator accepts disconnected spatiotemporal events as harmonized, an ontological foundation results. The text can then claim the historical world as its field and ontology as its reason for being.

Without doubt, the constative is the more conventional documentary approach. When perceived as lucid and comprehensive, its documentary is ontological, an accepted way of being. We perceive a bond between signifier and referent, as if the filmic apparatus has seized the historical world. Given the palpable discrepancy between sign and referent, this notion is contentious. Therefore, if we take this discrepancy into consideration, it becomes difficult to think that filmic representation can invoke verisimilitude to re-establish reality. In addition, the documentary object has many potential variations. We can think of it as phenomena, the thing in itself, the transcendental signified, or any form of reality conceived to exist. Furthermore, reality is boundless and potential textuality infinite as well. Because reality is unbounded, its representation is problematical. Owing to its immeasurable extent, representing reality seems unachievable. Viewed this way, documentary praxis can seem delusional or chimerical. In that case, what is the purpose of representing reality? The constative and performative proceed on dissimilar paths in relation to this question. Without doubt, we are accustomed to constative discourse, whereas the performative appears atypical. Furthermore, the performative is aberrant, operating in ways that undo established procedures. It seems distinctive relative to dominant discourse. And because the performative is beyond the norm, attention falls on the discursive act. As a result, constative elements within the performative are subject to scrutiny, abating what is ordinarily obscured by continual inculcation. Classical dichotomies such as that between subject and object, fiction and nonfiction, as well as real and imaginary become destabilized. Even so, this destabilization does not transcend or neutralize these dichotomies. More readily, it places the spectator in an active position, undergoing

tensions inherent within their construction and the conceptual hierarchies they evoke.

Thus, while not negating dichotomies of Western epistemology, the performative neither sustains nor dwells within them.

Along these lines, the performative brings about disconnection within the spectator. This detachment predisposes him or her to a dynamic position relative to the seeming neutrality of dominant discourses. The spectator's orientation is altered, notably toward the referent. We do not perceive the referential object as taken in the conventional sense, as in taking a picture for example. In place of the captured referent, we see accentuated signifier play. This signifier play transforms documentary by turning away from bromidic methods that sustain normative acceptance. In conveying referentiality by way of heightened play of signification, the performative is contingent on both author and reader agency. Nevertheless, in documentary, mediation proceeds from the referent. This mediation is almost always in a context of language. Citing Jacques Derrida's "Signature, Event, Context" (S. Scheibler 145), Scheibler notes this importance of language. From the moment of perception, language brings into being and modifies an occurrence. This key component of Derrida's thought sees language as constitutive of knowledge. For that reason, language conveys sublime effect on perception of reality and its representation. Language is fundamental to the performative, as well as the constative. With the possible exception of rare moments, neither constative nor performative takes place outside language. As noted however, the performative operates in ways that move the constative away from normative equilibrium into a destabilized realm.

As an enduring artefact of language and culture, the constative remains within the performative. However, as marginalized within the performative, the constative points beyond itself, to both the absent signified and the presence of signification. Although the constative is not immaterial within the performative, as supposedly contiguous with reality, the constative appears wanting. In spite of that, the constative is far too basic to epistemology to be inconsequential. We can no more move beyond the constative than go outside language. At the end of the day, the constative is entrenched within epistemology and therefore not irrelevant. Even so, the performative reveals the constative as not accomplishing what it sets out to do. Generally speaking, this shortcoming is difficult to see. Because of its fundamental importance to language and culture, we are inculcated by the pervasive constative presence. However, the performative demonstrates that the constative may not be significant in ways we have been indoctrinated to assume. Because the transcendental signified is absent, verisimilitude of documentary photography and sound cannot afford a contiguous connection with reality. Consequently, the performative mode calls attention to the nonexistence of the transcendent spectator. The implications for documentary are far-reaching. Performative documentary suggests that the transcendental object and the transcendent subject are mere artefacts of epistemological convention. Moreover, performative modality suggests that these artefacts are related to a questionable documentary ontology. Within these conditions, particularly with an absent transcendental object, true and false are not determinative. Determinacy recedes at this point, leaving indeterminacy in its wake. Consequently, factuality is not the crucial matter at hand. Overall, these considerations supersede prevailing form and release the spectator to a subject-centered ontology.

The constative plays a central role in social and cultural life. That which makes an utterance true or false, its factuality, is fundamental to the constative. Without doubt, facticity is of great epistemological consequence. On the other hand, apart from this prevailing association between the constative and the epistemological, we have the performative alternative. The performative mode demonstrates that certain documentary meaning runs counter to the constative epistemological predisposition. For example, within *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster*, Svetlana Aleksievich documents oral history stemming from that catastrophe (Aleksievich). In this book, Aleksievich explicates the suitability of performative utterances in documenting the historical world:

I often thought that the simple fact, the mechanical fact, is no closer to the truth than a vague feeling, rumor, vision. Why repeat the facts – they cover up our feelings. The development of these feelings, the spilling of these feelings past the facts, is what fascinates me. I try to find them, collect them, protect them (Aleksievich 236).

Aleksievich thus describes the performative as discourse and archive, essentially what performative documentary carries out. It attaches less consequence to constancy and truth evaluation, and places greater emphasis on free scope of expression. This changed emphasis brings about markedly varied representations of reality. The underlying principle is reminiscent of Michael Renov's reference to Michel de Montaigne, specifically his avowal to "declare the measure of my sight, not the measure of things" (Renov "History and/ as Autobiography: The Essayistic in Film & Video" 6). These attitudes create an open field that performs freely with language, and performs in ways apt to destabilize the constative. However, this performing does not mean that the representational field is limitless. For the performative to be an effective representation of

reality, representation can be taken only so far. Documentary cannot become a form of non-representational textuality. In that case, the referent would be the film object itself. Without reference in the historical world, it would be unrecognizable as documentary. The performative does not become non-representational, rather it engages existing modalities in atypical ways. Consequently, Bill Nichols notes that the performative makes use of other modes, yet carries them out differently (Nichols "Performing Documentary"). The constative predisposition within epistemology and culture informs and shapes classical modes. In the performative however, we interpret these modes in ways that are less engaged with facticity. Accordingly, the performative is related to, while at variance with the other modes of representation. Performative documentarians destabilize constative facticity. Consequently, their texts appear atypical.

Supposition of a stable and obtainable referent underlies most documentary. To the extent that documentary depends on truth evaluation and facticity, the constative fulfills that desire. Even so, some practitioners turn away from this assumption. These documentarians take up the performative, a mode that undermines the stability of the referent. However, most documentarians do not undermine referential stability in performative ways. Atypically, the performative is not composed on the idea of an extractable signified established as true or false. Its composition is based on expression and an aesthetic principle of perception, in which a sensory realm supersedes mastery of the historical world. It dwells within the peripheral, emerging in an array of distinctive forms and finding expression in disparate ways. Because it runs counter to conventional epistemology, practitioners and critics grapple at describing its operation. For example, Svetlana Aleksievich writes about moving from facticity to feeling. Susan Scheibler

describes the performative as turning from “speaking into a way of seeing” (S. Scheibler 146). What these points of view have in common, are movements away from facticity toward an aesthetic principle of perception. At its core lies the idea that the sensory realm supersedes pretensions of mastery. The implications are diversiform. The performative mode turns away from prevailing assumptions, and in this way comprises a critique of the constative. From the performative it can be deduced that the constative cultivates misleading expectations relative to the referent. This negation calls attention to the constative as an endeavour to reestablish an unattainable reality that is lost to space and time.

Regardless of its defects, documentary’s allure indicates profound yearning for what it proffers. As deep-rooted within epistemology and pedagogy, the constative is elemental to documentary. And irrespective of this axiology, the paradox of aspiring to master reality by use of artifice points to the constative as deficient in certain ways. Despite its pervasiveness, there remains a basic disparity between sign and referent. This hollowness at the core of documentary mediation can engender tensions within which the referent is vital. One way in which the performative endeavours to resolve these tensions is by casting doubt on the referent’s reliability. When the referent is no longer constant, the performative invokes what is ordinarily obscured by the constative, the absent referent. At first glance, an absent referent generates further uncertainty. Nevertheless, it raises crucial questions about how the spectator goes about perceiving the destabilized referent. One could reasonably ask: If not the referent, what does the spectator reference? Apparently, the referent becomes signified only when conveyed as such by the signifier. However, the performative mode attenuates the signified. When the performative



amplifies play of signification, and destabilizes notions of a signified, where does the intrinsic referent lie? Susan Scheibler raises the possibility that the referent dwells in the interval between signified and signifier (S. Scheibler 149). If it does reside within this interval, it would make the referent more indefinite and subjective than facticity would suggest. This indefiniteness would render the constative moot. However, the constative is socially and culturally preponderant. It is deeply rooted within epistemology and pedagogy, and by no means moot. Without doubt, the constative remains elemental to documentary.

If Scheibler's idea is correct, in performative documentary the interval between signifier and signified is crucial to making meaning. From an absolute point of view of spectator perception of it, the signified may as well not exist if the transcendental signified is absent. This absence raises several possibilities. Conceivably, the text is the only contemplable reality, making the signifier and signified the same. These conditions would make the documentary object the sole referent, eliminating its basis in the historical world. However, we would not have documentary without the perception of a referent in the historical world. The idea of a signified and the historical world is critical, even with an absent transcendental signified. Therefore, if the gap between signifier and signified is crucial to making meaning in the performative, then indeterminacy must be crucial as well. Distinct from the inaccessible thing in itself, signification lies within spectator perception. In the absence of a transcendental signified, the documentary object becomes, if not the sole referent, then certainly of great consequence. Hence, an additional question arises about the referent. If perception is the salient matter, can we say that the referent resides within representational phenomena? And does crucial

perceptual phenomena, as supposed, lie within the interval between signifier and signified?

Scheibler describes a sliding underway within the performative (S. Scheibler 149). She points to a sliding between performative and constative and from signifier to signifier. There is sliding with respect to traditional dichotomies such as subject and object, as well as fiction and nonfiction. Therefore, the performative does not renounce the constative. More readily, the performative embarks on a glissade. This sliding has many implications regarding how we perceive the documentary object. An important consequence has to do with spectator autonomy. While similitude brings about determining margins within documentary epistemology, freedom can be found within interstices. This perception is important to the performative, as it operates within these intervals, within openings between meanings. An important distinction warranting reiteration is that the performative does not contend to re-present reality from a position of mastery. Instead, the broad-spectrum movement is away from the constative. The glissade and play of signifiers erodes documentary's familiar command of the referent, and whatever determining boundaries this puts forward. In place of mastery, the spectator engages with play of signifiers. As a result, the spectator becomes sentient of documentary not so much re-presenting reality as performing reality. However, it bears repeating that as entrenched social and cultural reality, the constative continues to reside within the performative. Regardless of this persistence, the performative destabilizes the constative, which emerges in the void of the nonexistent referent as a performative. The spectator must therefore contend with what makes the constative intrinsically paradoxical, its attempt to bound and claim as fact what is in truth boundless.

All documentaries endeavour to elucidate circumscribed representations of the historical world. Bill Nichols' documentary modes express this general activity in varied ways. Compared with other documentary however, the performative appears anomalous, a deviation manifest in myriad ways. The performative is recognizable because it differs from the norm. Like its historiography correlate, documentary composes narratives which bestow expostulation about the historical world (Rosen). The methods are familiar. Authors assemble narration out of selected elements conscripted from the boundless intricacy of existence. Narrative is constructed to bring about cause and effect chains that buttress plots and stories set forth as history. One can describe this approach as typical. Narrative is ubiquitous to discourse in general (Barthes "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" 65). Just as the propagandist employs narrative strategies, so do others affiliated with institutional power, evinced in religious, political, and legal discourses. Not only is narrative a foundational method with which we engage the historical world, narrative is also a means to construct representation in instrumental ways. This instrumentalism can take many forms, ranging from institutional power to an individual's conception of the world. Narrative is so ubiquitous to be characteristic of what is generally thought the most objective of discourses: Science (Herman). As Jean-François Lyotard noted: "Scientific knowledge cannot know and make known that it is true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative, kind of knowledge, which from its point of view is no knowledge at all" (Lyotard "Excerpts from the Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge" 85). Certainly, the human framework which brings about science and technology has been denoted by critics of science's imputed objectivity (Feyerabend). Along these lines, Ormiston and Sassower posit that "science, technology

and the humanities develop in concert with one another; they are mutually constitutive of one another and their culture” (Ormiston and Sassower 14). Without doubt, narrative is essential to this interaction. Thus, the expedience of narrative is far-ranging, such that its subjective constitution adulterates even scientific discourse.

In some scientific discourses, narrative is couched to the point of obscurity. In documentary however, narrative is a salient element of the corpus. Thus, documentarians are well practiced in the art of narrative and its procedures (Nichols "History, Myth, and Narrative in Documentary"). This proficiency is especially evident in classical constructions, which tend to display clearly discernible narrative. Without doubt, documentary and narrative are inextricably joined, even in a radical example like *Sans Soleil* (Branigan). However, from this seemingly indissoluble epistemological prescript, an interrogatory follows: Is narrative necessary to represent reality? Then again, is it a matter of convention, the result of culturally-based knowledge formation? Just as it is cognate to culture and ideology, narrative is ubiquitous. Therefore, it may be impossible to position oneself at a remove from narrative to address this question. One would, of necessity, employ narrative to accomplish this goal. Because narrative is normative to communications and knowledge formation in general, we are too steeped in narrative to step outside it. As the performative makes clear however, one may approach documentary representation from outside the norm. Along these lines, it is expedient to conceive narrative differently, to arrive at other ways of attaining truth.

Performative documentary renounces classical strategies in several ways, and one way is to approach narrative differently. The documentarian abnegates not only the

prevalent modalities, but also disassociates from the major corpus of knowledge formation. This disassociation makes the performative stand apart. To some, this separation may be harmful. To others, what the performative advances can seem revolutionary. However, even though the performative mode exhibits characteristics that deviate from tenets of positivism and postpositivism, the performative does not stand apart from ideology and power. Significantly, it positions the spectator as a free and perspicacious individual within pronounced conditions of perceptual freedom. In ways precluded by other modes, the spectator benefits from a particular liberty within which to perceive the documentary object. Whereas conventional documentary forms set the subject apart from object in a way at once objective and subjective, the performative is comprehended with augmented subjectivity. In spite of this increased subjectivity, it does not position the spectator within an attitude of dominance and supremacy toward the historical world and the Other. The performative mode does not resemble documentary's abstracting and sequestering of reality. Nor does it align itself with established power in ways that conventional documentary oftentimes will. More readily, the inflection is on deeply individuated percipience of revealment, the experience of reality in the here and now.

*Sari Red* is a key text that Bill Nichols categorized as performative (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 93). Despite unconventional narrative strategies, the ideological effect of *Sari Red* is cogent. As documentary, it appears radical. And while *Sari Red* is anti-racist, this anti-racism is not the source of its radicalism. Owing to their currency, anti-racist messages are not particularly radical. In fact, anti-racist messages are prevalent with governments desiring civil peace within diverse social orders (Bonnett).

This utility can result in peremptory recitation in which citizens are counselled in a straightforward way (Bonnett 63). However, instruction is not the *modus operandi* of *Sari Red*. The spectator is not instructed that racism is bad. Instead, ideation issues from the spectator in an individuated way. Given that spectatorship is always crucial to making meaning, this statement may seem enigmatic. On the other hand, performative perception is often contradistinctive. A difference lies in unconstrained perception relative to the represented historical world, the play of signification. To the spectator of *Sari Red*, anti-racism does not come not from without, anti-racism comes from within. This form of anti-racism does not derive from responding to a directive, but as individuated perception within a context of spectator agency. Unlike a constative utterance, determination is not brought forward by way of persuasive argumentation. Performative documentary involves a variant approach to representing reality and perception of represented reality. We perceive the performative in personal, individuated ways, wherein ideology issues from pronounced subjectivity. Analogous to other performative documentaries, and generally contrasting other modes, *Sari Red* brings this perception about with diminished emphasis on conventional narrative. After all, reality is not a narrative. Then again, represented reality usually is.

The performative can challenge and transform our understanding of documentary, consequently bringing about a paradigm shift (Kuhn). This transformed appreciation occurs in ways that undermine the documentarian's authority. However, the performative also vitiates conventional representation, documentary referentiality that provides persuasion and argumentation regarding the constitution of the historical world. This distortion of convention has diversiform effects. It reconstructs the documentary idea

while disestablishing the constative, the principal epistemological building block governing the great mass of documentary texts. To subvert the constative is to amend documentary's expression. The illusion of mastering the historical world proceeds from the constative, its persuasiveness, contention, and expostulation. Reduction of authority reforms the documentarian's condition. This affects spectator reception. A change in author/spectator dynamic brings about radical adjustment, not only of representational praxis, but also the material conditions of documentary activities. The performative documentarian lacks ardor for ascendancy manifest in predilection for contention and persuasion. There emerges instead, a repudiation of the prevailing will to master the historical world. With determinacy restrained, the historical world becomes performative. Evocative of Heidegger's trepidation regarding modern technology, the mode manifests as though in response to the *Ge-stell*. It appears as a rejoinder to methods which aspire to establish the bearing of objects, phenomena, and beings, as determinate presence in space and time.

Performative documentary bespeaks a turn, a movement in reaction to disquiet vis-à-vis conventional modes. The incisive *Journal inachevé* kitchen sequence exhibits palpable tensions, with reality represented as intricate and contingent on diversiform spectatorship. Located at the intersection of various forms of address, its modality remains ambiguous. In one sense, the kitchen sequence is interactive. In another sense, the sequence is observational. Mallet and Rubbo debate Mallet's formal approach, along with presuppositions governing documentary in general. Evidently then, this sequence is also reflexive. In another sense however, we see two documentarians interview each other. Then again, it breaks down customary barriers between interviewer and

interviewee. One may well ask: Is Mallet or Rubbo the object of this interview? We cannot say, because Rubbo and Mallet cross examine each other in assertive ways. At the outset, Rubbo attempts to steer interaction on a rational basis, as though striving to seek objective knowledge. Despite this apparent search for knowledge, neither Mallet nor Rubbo are passive questioners. Each one is an impassioned participant competing to influence the other. In this way, the concept of interview comes under scrutiny, although not in the conventional sense of gathering neutral, objective data. Quite the opposite, Mallet and Rubbo's interaction is charged with subjectivity and emotion. The complexity, matchlessness, and indeterminacy of a specific interaction between two individuals are put on display. This singular complexity stresses the event as specific to context, interpersonal politics, and history. A performance emerges in which context and physicality is as important as the content of the linguistic event.

While meaning is produced, conventional roles are blurred. Along with being equal participants, Mallet and Rubbo are documentarians and social actors. There is no onscreen hierarchical relationship between the two. This dynamic emphasizes socially situated interaction in which responses depend on role-playing and managing impressions. While endeavouring to understand each other's referents in English and French, meaning is mutually generated. Authorship is referenced in the context of documentary formalism, but also as text created by Mallet and abetted by Rubbo. The text brings various methodological notions into the open, including alternative approaches. In the end, local experience predominates, as opposed to documentary metatheories which underlie their discussion. Mallet and Rubbo are, after all, of different histories, cultures, and contexts. As individuals, they have their own presumptions and



desires. Awareness of individuality and specificity, along with reverence for truth, is evident throughout. From the existential occurrence of their interaction, the stage is set for epiphanic possibility. Yet, a critical, unstated point remains. Ultimately, Mallet constructs narrative of which Rubbo is but one part. In this crucial way, power and hierarchy remain embedded in the text.

It becomes clear that Michael Rubbo's vision of documentary favours cause-effect rationalism. In this way, Rubbo advocates a certain cast of truth. This semblance of reality involves pronounced manipulation of observable phenomena achieved through various conventions, of which traditional narration is but one. On the other hand, Mallet's approach is possible because she is a novice. Unsullied by convention, she can approach documentary from without. This marginality leads to novel approaches that conflict with conventional praxis. In this way, Mallet can comment on Rubbo's disciplinary approach. For example, discussion about window coverings in *Journal inachevé* is not only about energy conservation. Greater meaning can be found within polysemous metaphor. The veiled window obscures vision and transforms reality of those people within its sphere. Conceivable meanings follow, fragmenting and influencing other formations along the way. These meanings can be far ranging. For example, we could conceptualize the window covering as metaphor for mediated reality: Reality obscured by mediation. Of course, ambiguity and/or polysemic meanings are common in documentary. However, *Journal inachevé* also advances the idea of association between conventional modality and instrumentality, that classical narration imbues documentary with elements of authority and determinism. Instrumentality fashions mediation predisposed to cause-effect rationalism. Coterminous with classical narration, montage brings about

perspectives incommensurable with reality as unmediated occurrence. As reflexive modality endeavours to point out, we are not watching reality. We are watching a movie. However, cinema's representational artifice is only part of the equation. Certain conventional formal elements bring about palpable instrumentalities. These instrumentalities characterize conventional modality as a whole.

While the performative provides alternatives to conventional, instrumentalist modalities, it does not afford a conduit to unmediated reality. More readily, it recasts the way in which represented reality occurs. The performative spectator is not set apart from the documentary object. As opposed to being sundered from extrinsic space and time, the cast of reality is more of the here and now. As well, a dearth of supposed objectivity impels the spectator into a marked perceptual connection with the documentary object. There is not the same spatial and temporal disjunction of the historical world. This way, we experience the performative with enhanced subjectivity. Transmutation of narrative practice is but one bearing of many in a reformed spectatorship. These alterations reorient the viewer away from a standard of instrumentality espoused by Michael Rubbo, among others. This reorientation is a considerable movement. Because documentary praxis conforms to instrumentality, it appears as common sense. With relative lack of instrumentality, performative documentary comes across as unorthodox. This heterodoxy causes Mallet tribulation regarding alternatives to documentary precepts. One can connect her angst to instrumentality and ideology. And just as the performative documentarian is disparately oriented, the viewer is situated with reduced instrumentality relative to the documentary object.

Given the many diverse and iconoclastic discourses, what makes performative documentary exceptional? In the end, the performative is constituent of, yet incommensurable with discourses of sobriety, thus appearing unorthodox within the documentary context. Unwonted within the documentary locus, performative modality becomes distinct. This breach of convention describes a schismatical genus, broadly coalesced around vitiation of instrumentality. Critically however, we cannot characterize the performative by discrete adherents or a collection of practitioners. More readily, its modality can manifest within a variety of circumstances at any point in documentary history. It may also transpire as part of a documentary text primarily made up of other modes. With respect to instrumentality, it tends to be mutable, particularly when occurring within hybrid texts. While we can identify the performative in disparate configurations and diverse historical contexts, Nichols noted several documentaries which emerged in the latter 1980s and early 1990s: *Khush (Khush)*, *I'm British But... (I'm British But...)*, *Tongues Untied*, *History and Memory*, *Sari Red* and *Forest of Bliss (Forest of Bliss)* (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 93-94). While marking significant content, this list is not comprehensive. Several non-inclusions come to mind, including Philip Hoffman's *passing through / torn formations*, Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* and *Naked Spaces -- Living is Round*, two anthropological documentaries which laid seminal groundwork for what came later. *Lightning Over Water*, the key performative text that Susan Scheibler uses, appeared in 1980. Evidently, a complete list would be more comprehensive. However, even without considering how Stella Bruzzi, (Bruzzi) or Anne Jerslev (Jerslev) have used the term in diverging ways, it would still be difficult to establish a precise pedigree of performative

documentary. Nonetheless, it does suggest noteworthy activity, giving rise to the following question: Why does a burgeoning of performative work appear during this time?

The phenomenon relates to several cultural, historical, and economic factors. Before the 1970s, production costs meant that documentaries required significant financial resources. Distribution was limited to those who could access means of distribution. This accessibility was mostly reserved for establishment enterprises related to private producers, television networks, governments and their film agencies. Thus, individuals did not create the major corpus of documentary. Commercial and institutional interests produced and distributed their documentaries according to establishment imperatives. Consequently, commercial and institutional concerns ingrained the documentary corpus with instrumentalities. Given that ideology obscures instrumentalities, within their historical context these instrumentalities may not have been easily perceivable. Then again, as with *The Mask of Nippon* and its mobilization around racist rationales, instrumentalities can become limpid when viewed from an incommensurable historical context. During the 1970s however, conditions of documentary production and distribution transformed. These changes resulted from evolving video technologies, as well as diminished production expenses. Concurrently, artist-run production centers came into being. While international in scope, several Canadian centers emerged. Vidéographe, Main Film, Trinity Square Video, LIFT, and SAW Gallery are prominent examples. Then again, the phenomenon went beyond these examples. According to Monika Gagnon, by 1992 the Independent Film and Video Alliance represented “approximately fifty film and video production and resource centers

across Canada” (Gagnon 53). Even by the 1970s, production facilities became accessible to a greater number of independent documentarians. Extrapolating from the Canadian example, artist-run production facilities had become widespread during the period within which Nichols identified several performative documentaries. Individuals and collectives independent of establishment institutions were equipped for documentary production. This change in material conditions meant that documentarians of divergent character and motivations produced work. By then, authors of disparate circumstances exhibited and distributed independent documentaries.

On the other hand, artist-run production centers were but one element of fundamentally transformed fiscal and material conditions. Although critical to documentary culture, not all independent documentaries came out of artist-run centers. Production centers were but one constituent of ongoing material and cultural transfiguration. Because of myriad technology and societal changes, documentary culture underwent critical transformation. More individuals produced documentaries. These documentaries were created apart from the system which had advanced documentary to then. An important impetus was now present: Independent production begetting further independent production. A heterogeneous *mélange* of independent producers took up documentary praxis in unconstrained ways. Within an environment of self-determination, certain independents engaged in innovatory techniques. At times, their texts evinced ideological perspectives at variance with establishment producers and the mainstream. In this way, the documentary corpus underwent change.

Not all independent documentarians utilized unconventional methods. Barbara Kopple was one documentarian who used well-established documentary techniques in radical texts. For example, the subjective position of *Harlan County, USA* (Harlan County) lines up with that of disaffected Kentucky coal miners. In 1973, Harlan County miners were involved in intense labour strife with the Eastover Mining Company. While her point of view is unconventional, Kopple uses conventional formal methods. Kopple employed lightweight 16mm film equipment, technology which had come into play in the 1960s (Ellis and McLane "Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité, 1960-1970" 210).

Extensive experimentation was unfolding in film and video, along with dissidence, protestation, and resistance apparent in *Harlan County, USA*. Within these cultural loci, resided pronounced disaffection from the presiding culture. Experimentation advanced inventive forms, proffering alternatives to conventional discourses and their standards. Generally speaking, these discrete endeavours evince disaffection from established mores of the time. In particular, we see palpable dissatisfaction with representations that couch elite agendas. Conventional documentary instrumentality affiliated with established power was challenged in distinctive ways. *Harlan County, USA* became a conspicuous display of antipathy toward this established power, its objectives and prevailing discourses.

The preceding paragraph notes certain cultural currents of the 1970s, a period in which significant change was underway. Part of this transformation involved a response to documentary prescripts. This response had to do with extemporization around content and form, which came to pass during a period of eased production expenses and technological conditions more favourable to independent producers. At that time, broad-

based social change was also important. Several performative texts emerged from within this framework of transformation and varied expression. While not performative, *Harlan County, USA* evinces the character of many documentaries made during this period. Ellis and McLane note several elements, including marked political and social change of the 1960s, maturing 16mm distribution and film in higher education, together with a documentary authorship socialized in a world distinct from their antecedents' (Ellis and McLane "English Language Documentary in the 1970s: Power of the People" 228). The emergent video medium, along with a new generation of documentarians involved with social phenomena such as the Newsreel Collective and Challenge for Change, added to this range of elements (Ellis and McLane "English Language Documentary in the 1970s: Power of the People" 244-47). These texts responded to documentary instrumentality in varied and discrete ways.

*Harlan County, USA* evinces certain foundations of the contemporary performative, including dissidence, forthright subjectivity, and radicalism. Contemporaneous with this ideological freedom and expressive impulse was a generative period for documentaries displaying performative traits. Along these lines, Nichols noted a blossoming of several performative documentaries beginning with *Journal inachevé* in 1983 (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 93-94). While Mallet's text is critical, Nichols did not propose a comprehensive list of performative documentaries. More readily, he pointed toward instances of performative documentary. As noted, Renov and Scheibler already wrote about performativity. One year before the publication of "Performing Documentary" (Nichols "Performing Documentary"), Susan Scheibler published "Constantly Performing the Documentary: The Seductive Promise of *Lightning over*

*Water*" in *Theorizing Documentary* (Renov *Theorizing Documentary*). This paper also appears as a chapter in her University of Southern California doctoral dissertation "An Enticement to Knowledge: Documentary Spectatorship and a Theory of Performatives" (S. F. Scheibler). Here Scheibler describes a performative documentary in Wim Wenders' *Lightning Over Water*. Distributors released *Lightning Over Water* in 1980, three years before *Journal inachevé*.

More current writing, such as that by Stella Bruzzi (Bruzzi) and Anne Jerslev (Jerslev), makes it plain that scholars have not arrived at a consensus regarding what performative documentary is. In spite of Bill Nichols' leading influence, critical writing about performative documentary is a contested field, making identification difficult. While there can be no comprehensive catalogue of performative documentaries at this time, production credits in performative documentaries identified by Nichols show that artist-run centers and cooperatives helped produce several texts. Therefore, it appears that artist-run centers have been crucial in developing the contemporary performative. The producers working out of these facilities are a heterogeneous lot, executing a variety of works. However, they are alike in that their work displays disconnect from conventional producers' mores. Overall, their documentaries demonstrate diverse form and ideation. They share neither the presumptions nor material conditions of establishment producers, and frequently delve into formal explorations. Expressions of opinions of disempowered groups around social justice concerns are also common. These voices include women's rights, gay and lesbian rights, racial inequality and rights to housing, for example. Though some documentarians experiment with formal aesthetics while advancing social concerns, they are typically engaged in one element or the other. And although



independent documentarians produce outside artist-run centers, these facilities have generated noteworthy production. While many performative texts may not have been available owing to deficient distribution, artist-run centers have brought a repertoire of distinctive documentaries to light.

Thus, by a variety of means including artist-run centers, independent producers gained access to resources. The inaccessible was no longer unattainable. As a result, independent producers undertook broad spectrum formal approaches. These formal methods provided documentarians with many exemplars to draw from. Nevertheless, because of the prevalence of conventional approaches, many strove to affect social change by enlisting convention. Minority interests, the term minority expressed here in relation to power and not necessarily numbers, were conveyed as dissident perspectives framed around patriarchal power, race, and other concerns. While often effective, it remained that these texts employed representational methods similar to those perceived to have worked against disempowered groups' interests. Behind this problem was the conception that governing discourses had neither equitably attended to minority interests, nor accurately represented them. At the same time, conventional discourses of sobriety were viewed as having marginalized minority groups. This marginalization can be seen as a structural problem inherent to conventional discourse. As previously noted, instrumentality is the effect of accurate fixing on what is pertinent to what is being considered, a method of realizing an outcome tied to standards of prediction and control (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology"). Conventional modalities tend to be instrumentalist, thus reinforcing a much broader system. While many conventional modality documentaries advocate social change, the modalities themselves and their

attendant structures can be seen to reinforce a repressive system. This system and its structures connect to a range of concerns having to do with social change. Prima facie then, independent producers were predisposed to renounce traditional methods of representing reality and extemporize their own. To arrive at greater truth, an essential modality reflecting ideation in keeping with evolving discourse was required. Thus, the contemporary performative documentary emerged from a range of social, material, and cultural conditions.

Without doubt, feminist, queer, and anti-racism movements have been critical in the formation and evolution of contemporary performative documentary. Documentaries such as *Sari Red*, *Tongues Untied*, *Khush* and *Journal Inachevé* reflect these social movements. Then again, several performative documentaries lie outside these movements as well. Therefore, while one can point to a prevalence of feminist, queer, and anti-racist documentaries, markedly individualistic texts such as *Lightning over Water*, *Forest of Bliss* and *passing through / torn formations* demonstrate that the modality extends beyond group interests. In addition, certain documentaries connect with these movements while exhibiting other concerns. *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen*, by feminist intellectual Trinh T. Minh-ha, examines questions of colonialism and race. This film is distinguished for its critical position toward anthropology and constitutes a broad critique of the academic institution. *Reassemblage's* criticism of ideological representations encompasses a great deal, including a distinctly personal approach toward representation of the Other. Classifying this text within a movement runs the risk of drawing up boundaries that delimit its productivity in a reductionist way. In a different vein, Philip Hoffman's *passing through / torn formations* has to do with the personal and

does not fall within these categorizations. Therefore, while several key contemporary social movements are critical to performative documentary, the modality goes beyond them as well.

Performative documentarians exhibit oppositional positions toward power, a quality which accounts for a preponderance of feminist, queer, and anti-racist texts. Nevertheless, even within those movements, oppositional consciousness can take many forms. In this way, we see Pratibha Parmar, a key figure in the formation of performative documentary, discourage being designated. She perceives certain markers as “overdetermined” and consequently disempowering. Quoting Stuart Hall (Hall 103) and Pratibha Parmar (Parmar 5), Gwendolyn Audrey Foster describes this perspective:

As a FILMMAKER, writer, and activist, Pratibha Parmar operates within what Stuart Hall has termed an “oppositional code.” Her films embody a zone of signification where “events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading” (Hall 103). Parmar, a lesbian Kenyan-born Indian Black British activist, describes herself within an oppositional reading. In *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video* (which Parmar co-edited with Martha Gever and John Greyson), Parmar speaks out against overdetermined identity politics that describe her as “marginal,” or “other.” Parmar states, “I do not speak from a position of marginalization but more crucially from the resistance to that marginalization” (5). Parmar’s films move within a sphere of oppositional readings of homosexuality, gender, class, race, color, and a diverse range of issues and identities (Foster “Pratibha Parmar: ‘An Assault on Racism, Sexism and Homophobia’” 73).

Parmar speaks resolutely against her categorization as other: “As an Asian woman I have never considered myself as somebody’s “other,” nor have I seen myself as “marginal” to an ubiquitous, unchanging, monolithic “center”... it has been a constant challenge and struggle to defy those institutions and cultural canons which seek repeatedly to make me believe that because of my visible difference as an Asian woman I am an “other” and therefore “marginal” (Parmar 4-5). Evidently, Parmar’s individuated position is

pronounced, an attitude consistent with performative authors in general. Beyond this individualism, there appears an essential performative worldview against determining the subject. Therefore, to view the performative within a framework of social movements is problematic and potentially counterproductive. To see performative documentary in terms of social movements is at odds with performative documentary's individualistic and indeterminate character, as well as its complexity. These elements discourage generalization. This conundrum brings to light a tension between critical discourse on performative documentary and its practice. Without doubt, classifications serve academic objectives, a form of instrumentality having to do with organizing and categorizing knowledge, which is a constative function. However, ordering knowledge tends to work against more open-ended performative epistemological strategies. This ordering is problematic because the performative constitutes a deep-seated break from established ways of seeing. Its oppositional character is not only an effort to break free of various hegemonies, but also an effort to secede from ways of understanding that exploit the subject. To see performative documentaries within one or another rubric obstructs its primary operation, to foster unique and individuated subject positions.

Within performative documentary, critical positions are expressed in ways that coalesce around several elements, including the individual, agency, and oppositional consciousness. In contrast, categorization can impede the individual from thinking in freeing ways. Bell Hooks captures this concept, albeit in a different context, when she writes of needing to break with "hegemonic codes of seeing, thinking and being that block our capacity to see ourselves oppositionally, to imagine, describe, and invent ourselves in ways that are liberatory" (Foster "Camille Billops" 135; Hooks 2). In the

case of the performative, even though liberatory goals can originate in an oppositional context with political ramifications, they do not stop within boundaries that delineate interest. Because of how the performative operates, it comprises the immeasurably variable ways the spectator perceives Being. This consciousness may stop in terms of gender or race, and other areas which foster opposition to power. Or else, it can go further and comprise more. On the other hand, it may have other concerns. It depends on the text and the individual spectator. However, it appears to begin with the oppositional, an apparent element in Parmar's *Sari Red*:

The films of Pratibha Parmar critique anthropological and white feminists construction of an "Other." They make us review the politics of appropriation and colonization. They resituate who speaks and who listens. Parmar's oeuvre is an oppositionally coded participatory cinema of activism. Her films challenge identity politics and alterity itself. Her performative, heteroglossic, celebratory, confrontational, multivoiced, corporeal, interrogating gaze is informed by her own authorial presence as a woman of Kenya and South Asia, a lesbian of the diaspora. In the words of Alice Walker in a poem for Pratibha Parmar published in *Warrior Marks*, "As we work/together/we begin/to rebuild/the/ shattered/ancient/foundation/of/the/universal/family/of/women" (Walker and Parmar 59). The African and Asian diasporic vision of Pratibha Parmar begins such a project (Foster "Pratibha Parmar: "An Assault on Racism, Sexism and Homophobia"" 94).

The spectator makes this determination of limits and identity to a greater extent than in other modalities. Thus, identity categories can be problematic when applied to performative documentary. Performative documentarians represent in ways that de-emphasize determinacy. As an alternative, performative documentarians accentuate its corollary, indeterminacy. In this light, one can understand performative documentarians objecting to marginalization. Considering these films in terms of classifying the subject, especially as other, can cultivate a hegemonic gaze. This manner of representation enframes the subject and works against the personal, the individual as self-defined. While serving to buttress institutional discourse, categorizations can be counterproductive to the

performative endeavour. They risk exploiting the documentarian in ways that designate alterity and consequently marginalize them. Therefore, while sometimes connected to social movements, performative documentarians like Pratibha Parmar, may reject identity signifiers as overdetermined. This refusal is understandable, because performative documentary works against determining the subject. On the other hand, performative texts do well representing social movements. One sees this representational strength in *Sari Red*, which engages with social movements and identity politics in effective ways, while engendering the spectator as the most important element within.

When the performative appeared the scene in the 1980s, it seemed somehow different. The reasons for this difference vary. More than other modes, the performative displays disjunction from usual presuppositions underlying documentary. It affects a deviation relating to subject and form, producing a latitudinous and poetic dissonance within the documentary corpus. In addition, it elucidates a fundamental renunciation of conventional formalism. Classical documentary approaches couch assumptions that regulate discourses of sobriety. Performative documentaries demonstrate incongruity and dissonance relative to ideology and its attendants. This difference indicates a small, yet revealing vicissitude within the immense and unbounded corpus of discourses of sobriety. No doubt, this divergence prompts detractors. As contradistinctive, the performative can be perceived as pestiferous or problematical. The performative is action-oriented, which can also contribute to a perception of being minacious to the status quo. Its displacement from normative praxis calls for pronounced agency in authorship as well as spectatorship. It also foments salient manifestations of agency, engendering further objects and communications so influenced or inspired.

The performative can be viewed as a disavowal of paradigmatic documentary praxis. This abjuration elucidates a fundamental division between performative and conventional modalities. Conventional documentary pretends mastery over reality in ways that the performative does not. In contrast, the performative represents in ways that renounce mastery of the historical world. This renunciation of mastery suggests that performative representation is at a remove from the actuality it represents. Because reality is not subject to mastery, representation is attenuated in this regard. The source of this inclination is open to conjecture. One possibility is that putative mastery over reality correlates with ministration of power, especially established power. Of course, perceived mastery of reality is instrumental to established power. Associations between mastery and establishment power have influenced documentarians in varied ways. The contemporary performative appears in reaction to this mastery and establishment power. This instrumentality is not necessarily limited to the establishment and its producers. Instrumentality and mastery are aspects of a modern technological complex ministered by abstract signification. Instrumentality, mastery, and signification are concordant with Heidegger's conception of challenging revealing and ordering the real. This challenging and ordering has to do with how revealing occurs. Salient in the performative is the endeavour to abate mastery and instrumentality within filmic representation of reality. However, this abatement of mastery and instrumentality would also vitiate the Ge-stell, in that modern life is subject to its worldview. In addition, it may be understood as a repudiation of ideologies that consolidate around modern technology's essence, a reminder that the true essence of technology opens to rediscovery. As well, it reminds us

that within the Ge-stell the saving power grows (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 28-29).

The contemporary performative is rooted within certain conditions of technology, ideology, and culture. It responds to historical conditions of which the Ge-stell and destining of revealing figure prominently. The contemporary performative also reacts to discourses of sobriety, especially when these discourses are at a remove from human experience. Separation from the human condition indicates a society shaped by instrumentality of modern technology. The lexica of discourses of sobriety include terms such as collateral damage, ethnic cleansing, and corporate downsizing, among others. These terms evince propensities toward mastery and instrumentality. From a humanist or plain rational point of view, such euphemisms can appear tendentious, delusory, and are consequently condemned. Even within the public relations field this use of language is termed "unethical" (R. D. Smith 141). Yet, such language has been widely utilized nonetheless. Related to empiricism and positivism, this language is a form of quasi-objective vernacular derived from lexica of corporate and military power. By way of media relations, journalistic media employs this language, ranging from forthright reporting to ironic and metaphorical treatment, presumably because it can appear absurd and excessive. This lexical phenomena point toward a complex involving abstract signification, establishment power, and marginalization of large constituents of the general population, evinced by the anti-capitalism movement of recent years (Held and McGrew 64-65). Within the ebb and flow of counteractive forces, certain lexica are discarded and new ways of representing enacted. New forms of communication are performed as matter of course, in ways that express difference and autonomy, as well as



culture and power. Within the realm of abstract signification, performative documentary is a coherent oppositional response to this general pattern of power and marginalization.

In spite of diversiform configurations, other documentary modes' audiovisual syntaxes are congruent. In contrast, performative documentary lacks a congruous morphology. With the observational mode for example, the axiom of non-intercession produces documentaries with analogous formal properties. This similar appearance comes about whether non-intercession is scrupulously practiced or not. Critically, it facilitates classification and a cogent textual corpus. In contrast, we lack a commensurately congruent performative syntax. Identification becomes difficult, as indicated by Nichols' delayed recognition of performative modality (Nichols "Performing Documentary"). Performative documentaries do not put forward prescriptive epistemological presuppositions. They confound categorization because they do not maintain the immotility of straightforward and explicit classification. However, a chameleon-like character does not mean that performative documentary is unclassifiable, or that other modes are static. Plainly, the performative has been classified and other modes are mutable. However, the considerable diversity of performative documentaries can make identification and classification difficult. Consequently, the performative is not subject to facile systematization. It can appear nonobjective, conceptualized, fictional, intangible, or not representative of reality. As with any categorization however, descriptions fall short of discrete experience. Critically, performative documentary does not operate as reality's standing-reserve. Its cogency lies within the discreet experience of the object. Emphasis is on immanence, reality experienced within a distinct context of space and time. It is difficult to envisage performative documentary employing

euphemisms in the vein of collateral damage or ethnic cleansing, at least not in the absence of irony or sardonic intent.

At a distinct remove from human experience, euphemistic language such as collateral damage and ethnic cleansing is problematical. It raises several questions, especially ethical ones. For example, in the case of ethnic cleansing we comprehend grave affliction on an immense scale that the language seems to disparage. In certain ways, video transmitted from precision-guided munitions is consubstantial with this euphemism. Michael S. Neiberg describes precision-guided munitions weapons and their imagery, while referencing certain aspects of the lexicon:

Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs) or so-called “smart” weapons can be delivered with little or no risk to human operators. PGMs can take the form of laser guided bombs dropped from an airplane or cruise missiles launched from hundreds of miles away and capable of flying underneath radar systems. Cruise missiles have on-board radar systems that are linked to satellite navigation systems to direct them onto a specific target. Advocates of such weapons praise the ability of PGMs to reduce civilian casualties (called “collateral damage”) by more precisely striking specified targets. A video image of an American bomb falling down an Iraqi air shaft received much television time during the Persian Gulf War. Critics allege that such weapons remove the individual from warfare, making war take on the air of a sanitary video game (Neiberg 91).

Euphemistic language and precision guided munitions imagery are detached from the affliction each represents. The military presents this type of video at briefings that are diffused in the news media. Bosah Ebo notes that like video games, mass media coverage of the Persian Gulf War resemble illusionary entertainment:

Television networks routinely used impressive and entertaining footage from infra-red video cameras mounted on the nose of bombers in their news stories. The footage, extrapolated from the visual icons of video and computer games and easily adaptable to television, perpetuated the notion of recreational violence. In the tradition of television and video game culture, the news media and the public were bemused with the techno-

air campaign because the pleasant video images fit nicely into the motif of illusionary entertainment (Ebo 21-22).

Although often represented objectively in one unedited shot, a contradistinction is immediately apparent. Media agents and the victims of munitions have different points of view. As with euphemistic language, precision-guided munitions videos put forward a semblance of objectivity. Nevertheless, these videos hypostatize an intrinsically subjective and objective confutation toward point of view and the profilmic occurrence. The remoteness of munitions videos points to the materiality of indexical signs (Nichols *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* 18) and deixis (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis), a term borrowed from linguistics meant to stress the importance of referential context in represented reality. The concept of deixis is significant, because in this instance the context of the recorded video is constitutive of its meaning. Other contextual phenomena such as perspectivity are relevant as well (Graumann and Kallmeyer). Despite apparently objective positioning of the apparatus toward the profilmic occurrence, a subjective perspective is apparent. Its referentiality depends on the technocratic intendment of war making presented as objective recording.

The above discussion provides illustrates an intrinsic conundrum in representing the real. This conundrum evinces the Gordian relationship between documentary and ontology. Discerning reality is not achieved axiomatically by positioning a recording apparatus in an objective manner in space and time. The munitions video's indexicality is determined by the contingency of an indeterminate origo, its reference point complicated by instrumentality of war-making. Even ostensibly objective representations are not contiguous truth resulting from empirical observation. Given the indexicality from which

they arise, the instrumentality of war making, munitions videos are not objective. Without doubt, Nichols makes a distinction between indexicality and indexical representations (Nichols *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* xi). But in this case, scientific procedure and military propaganda become one. Therefore, even the most objective representational methods can produce contingent and indeterminate texts. As well, spectatorship is indeterminate by nature. For documentary, an indeterminate spectator is no neoteric matter. Nevertheless, indeterminacy is critical in the contemporary renaissance of the performative mode. In intensified conditions of class struggle with concerns such as international imperialism, democracy, and minority rights, documentary plays a critical role. With pivotal and pressing issues at the forefront, concerns about documentary ontology are bound to be preponderant.

Certainly, documentary and ontology are inextricably bound. If documentary had a single animating spirit, it would be to align us with truth. On the other hand, documentary is often ideological or propagandistic. As a result, apprehension vis-à-vis ontology creates a void in relation to this animus. Around the time of the performative documentaries cited, certain movements were underway. Critics vigorously excoriated discourses of sobriety. News media, above all, were criticized as implements of repression and hegemony. Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman's two volume political economy of human rights are prominent examples (Chomsky and Herman *The Political Economy of Human Rights. Volume 1. The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*; Chomsky and Herman *The Political Economy of Human Rights. Volume 2. After the Cataclysm: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology*). Herman and Chomsky put forward a perspective of Western news media as mercenary

and propagandistic. Following Chomsky and Herman's propaganda model, a progeny of analogous supporting viewpoints attained currency over time (Klaehn).

Contemporaneous with these dissenting counteractions is another broadly accepted perspective: Documentary as capable of imparting truth. Indeed, documentary spectators often express notions of truth. Documentary is, without doubt, an ontological medium. Still, coeval conceptions of documentary as both propaganda and truth impart incongruity within documentary's province. After all, documentary is multifarious and variegated, consequently incongruity can be expected. To those people who aspire to truth however, the explicit question ensues: How does one go about documentary as truth? In addition, one may well ask: within this ontological vacuity, how can documentary be truth?

While seemingly objective documentary evidence, precision-guided munitions videos are noted here to be subjective. Other visual representations at military briefings, those which employ low light and infrared video imagery, are notable as well. These documentary representations are battleground recordings of soldiers positioned as anonymous subjects, ostensibly to occlude their identities. However, Persian Gulf War imagery served another purpose, fostering impressions of illusory entertainment or deadly violence as a form of recreation removed from reality (Ebo). These images are remarkable for their abstraction of machinery and the human form, as well as rich textures that are chance operations of modern recording technologies. Because such images displayed in a different setting could be the work of an experimental videomaker, this practice illustrates the importance of context in filmic representation. It also elucidates the importance of indexicality and spectatorship, two essential elements in constituting a relationship between the reality represented and the representation itself.

Subjective positioning and performance at the textual level, as well as within the spectator, have effect on documentary meaning. In a nutshell, this subjective positioning and textual performance is documentary's vagarious and mutable relationship to reality. Contemporary performative documentaries engage this conundrum in disparate and discrete ways. Along these lines, performative authors and their texts address ontological nihilism emerging from gaps between reality and its representation.

The idea of an ontological void does not assign greater or lesser truth to any particular modality. Just as individual texts can be ontological, each documentary mode can be ontological as well. Ontology and transcendence remain part of the documentary experience. On the other hand, the gap between signifier and referent is integral to documentary. This gap is the source of the ontological void. However, because we make and receive documentaries within particular historical contexts, the meaning of this ontological void varies. We simply do not know how spectators have perceived the separation between signifier and referent across the breadth of documentary history. What is supposed here is imagined in the contemporary context within which several performative documentaries emerged. Because this period is close at hand, its societal conditions are understandable and coherent. Moreover, production and reception experiences are historically analogous. The nihilism referred to relates to how we perceive documentary ontology, and how documentarians and spectators act with respect to their perceptions. Actuality is not immaterial. However, prehension of indexicality is vital to making meaning of the documentary object. Therefore, like the object itself, conception and intellection are critical. The reality represented by the object is crucial as well. Nevertheless, this actuality is never independent of indexicality and modality.

Conventional modalities have been found wanting at times. The contemporary performative arose in response, countervailing this perceived inadequacy.

Without doubt, Frederick Wiseman is responsible for an important part of the documentary canon. His documentaries are widely venerated for their autonomous vision, a particular esteem resulting from the director's independent thought. Along similar lines, Wiseman's observational documentaries provide significant latitude for spectator interpretation. His films bring about independent thinking. In spite of this spectator autonomy, his documentaries set up several limitations. He clearly conducts objectivity within subjective parameters. The director circumscribes these parameters through masterful employment of observational methods. *Titicut Follies* (*Titicut Follies*) is representative. Here exposition is cognate with the filmmaker's object of critiquing the Bridgewater State Hospital. Even though he captures events as they happen, employing observational methods that Michael Rubbo advocates as capable of bringing forth truth (*Journal inachevé*), Wiseman obviously directs spectator perception. The exigency to critique Bridgewater prevails over dehiscent meaning. And because Wiseman directs spectatorship in perceptible ways, spectatorship is also restrictive. Therefore, while the viewer may have an impression of a transcendent ontology, he or she may also have the inconsonant perception that Wiseman's mastery engenders a particular point of view. This perspective predisposes the spectator to regard Bridgewater within parameters delineated by the documentarian himself.

Delimiting elements are familiar to observational practitioners and their spectators. These delimitations have to do with choosing what to photograph, how to edit,

influences on social actors, and so forth. Without question, ethics are critical. Obviously, there are ethical differences between Wiseman's *Titicut Follies* and precision-guided munitions videos. Ideological forces are in operation as well. The crux of these ideological aspects lies in how documentary references the real. Ultimately however, as the prevailing contingency influencing spectator thought, the referent is determining. Whether interaction between social actors, such as doctor and patient in *Titicut Follies*, or a robotic view from a missile nosecone, the referent establishes bounds from which thought ensues. Thought does not proceed as if there is no referent. All the same, we possess immeasurable potential for thought, with interpretations contingent on the viewer. For example, in his or her mind, a spectator could invert the viewpoint of a nosecone video to imagine the perspective of the bomb's victim. Whereas this possibility attests to human capacity for free thought toward the referent, anomalous perspectives are just that: anomalies.

The apriorism of the observational mode is to represent reality by direct recording of actuality as it unfolds. This approach presupposes consanguinity of the documentary object with reality that existed before the lens. In addition, the presence of recording apparatus adapts observational modality. Since observation and recording is the reference to reality, the observational mode is bound to a discrete type of referent, the profilmic occurrence. In performative documentary, reference to reality remains of substance, however in comparison to conventional modes, the referent takes on a subordinate aspect. This subordination of the referent does not imply a meaningless referent. The performative mode does not represent as if reality is chimerical. Actuality remains essential and realizable. However, reality is not obtainable in ways ordinarily supposed,



or by application of conventional methods in unadulterated form. Here, the bearing toward the referent is critical. In contrast to conventional modes, the performative referent is less determinable. In its place are several accentuated elements: ambiguity, polysemy, and various forms of indeterminacy. The avenue to reality becomes contradistinctive, transpiring in disparate ways. In one sense, it comes about in terms of the referent and the referential field. This relationship has consequences for documentary ontology as well as instrumentality.

One difference between performative documentary and conventional modalities lies in how each goes about substantiating reality. Relative to the performative, prevailing modes place greater emphasis on attestation. This constative impulse assumes disparate forms, however representational averment remains fundamental. This averment commonly manifests as photographic evidence of the profilmic object. For instance, a photograph or filmic representation of Jean-Paul Sartre is referential averment of the departed existentialist. Representation of the profilmic constitutes averment of existence, Sartre's existence denoted by illation of photographic representation. Another embodiment of referential averment is yielded by recorded audio of the philosopher's voice. In a different vein, voice-over narration, particularly in the expository mode, is standard averment technique. Along these lines, referential attestations appear as commonsensical and cogent ways of representing reality. They are a culturally embedded induction which resonates in documentary praxis, a positive feedback mechanism of convention and ideology. Yet, while representational averment operates like conditioned response, even perfunctory recognition of documentary and reality's complexity shows this claim to the signified to be wrought with uncertainty. Accordingly, uncertainty and

indeterminacy are significant concerns within theory and praxis. For example, complexity and ambiguity connected to representational averment is critical cogitation of the reflexive. Indeed, the complexity of representation is seminal to reflexive modality. Such concerns reflect circumspection among documentary practitioners and spectators. And with representational averment open to contention, indeterminacy becomes explicit to the documentary experience. Such contentions foster uncertainty. Accordingly, indeterminacy becomes intrinsic to documentary and its experience.

While they share certain concerns and can overlap, performative and reflexive modes vary with regard to indeterminacy. The performative is not defined by emphasis on circumspection regarding representational averment. In the reflexive however, cogitation is focused directly on the recording apparatus and production activities, as well as their effects on the spectator, social actors, and historical world. As intrinsic to the performative, indeterminacy does not engender as much reflection on the apparatus of representing reality. What is more, performative investiture in averment is of two minds. In *History and Memory* for example, performative documentary exhibits pronounced cogitation regarding reality and truth. And while a reflexive text, the greater emphasis in *History and Memory* is on ontology in general. Yet, while substantiation is of diminished materiality, referential averment is not discarded. As opposed to other modalities' cause-effect rationalism, averment operates in a more intuitive manner. It endures, but not in the same way. Averment becomes reminiscent of a not altogether accepted, uncouth habitué. Consequently, referential averment is deterred from becoming inured as fundamental, common sense. Moreover, the ideological status of cause-effect rationalism is diminished. In place of its previous standing, we see an adapted formal and symbolic

logic. Signification is different, and the real arrived at differently. In addition to accessing reality by way of denotation and verification, actuality is represented by way of acute connotation. In performative documentary, the lingua franca is found in unreserved signification that transforms conventional representations of reality. This signification is achieved in atypical and nonconforming ways of the discrete object with distinctive, figurative traits. Not to be misunderstood however, connotation is palpable in all manner of documentary. Without question, all modes exhibit expressive signification. However, among other elements, we see anomalous emphasis on connotation, and this connotation brings about consequent effects.

Emphasis on connotation can bring about several divarications from convention. This deviation can be readily observed in transformed approaches to narrative, a common feature of the performative. For example, with *Sari Red*, Bill Nichols refers to renunciation of master narrative, a postmodern phenomenon evident in performative texts (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 99). *Sari Red* describes the 1985 xenophobic murder of an Indian woman in England, Kalbinder Kaur Hayre. Although documentarian Pratibha Parmar could have opted for conventional indictment, she represents in an atypical way. Significantly, *Sari Red* does not employ conventional narrative as a means of controlling, regulating, and harmonizing reality. Even so, its ethical and moral significance, along with its condemnation, does not abate. *Sari Red* intensifies the viewer's personal involvement. Here the documentarian's objective is apparent. Implicating the spectator is more effective than censure of a transgressive Other. We cannot merely shake our heads, agree and promptly forget. Parmar's aesthetic presentation demands more by way of a certain engagement by the spectator. While

condemnation of the race crime is critical to the text, Parmar's context of ethnic tradition and diaspora within post-colonial Britain renders the event complex. This involvedness compels the *Sari Red* spectator to become engaged in intellectual and ethical ways. This engagement results from representational methods which affect us as discrete phenomena specific to viewing in the here and now. These methods combine formal elements including several expressive sound and imagery techniques. The constative is present, however destabilized by certain performative aspects. Therefore, tension exists between the constative utterance and a form of subjective, performative representation displaying poetic dissonance between imagery and spoken word. The overall effect situates the spectator within immediate perception of the viewing event. This approach brings about a unique spectatorship capable of leaving an indelible mark. It contrasts that of more typical accentuation on denotation of external reality seized from another space and time, an inveterate approach that can seem dull from repetition.

*Sari Red* begins and ends with recitation: "Death against the wall. Blood on the street. Staining, flowing marking. Cannot be erased. Must not be erased. Blood. Cherry red blood. Plum red blood. Sari red blood" (*Sari Red*). This palpable use of poetic voice-over narration brings "The Question Concerning Technology" to mind, especially because Heidegger stressed the importance of poetic revealing. Quoting Friedrich Hölderlin: "*poetically dwells man upon this earth*," Heidegger looked to our existence as poetic (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 34). Besides an effective counterforce to the Ge-stell, he considered poetic revealing vital to nurturing the saving power. Parmar's documentary displays that which Heidegger held important: The imagery and sound emphasize the indistinct nature of the referent, thus occasioning

poetic revealing. While resonating with certain subject matter, *Sari Red* does not display customary propinquity of signifier and referent. Distinct from montage, collage becomes the text's most important formal attribute. *Sari Red* is, in effect, collage comprised of various images and sounds linked to its focal point: Kalbinder Kaur Hayre's assassination.<sup>8</sup>

Quite the opposite of documentary realism, the text includes palpable manipulations. Notably, dissolves and freeze frames set up indeterminate space and time. Reminiscent of conventional documentary montage, collage representations create conditions favouring free intellectual associations. We observe a young woman dressing in a sari, a hand kneading bread, dolls suspended in air, metaphorical representation of blood against a wall, and a shimmering pool of water, sometimes red. We see a handmade Union Jack in flames, a young Indian woman's eyes close-up, council flats, street footage, and the like. Certain images seem related, but in indistinct ways. Some are indistinct in themselves, making the text abstract. While often lacking specific context, images connect by way of thematic encompassing post-colonialism, diaspora, social injustice, and persistent racism. In this way, Parmar fosters signifier play. We hear ethereal sound throughout, along with performative narration. For example: "Invisible wings carrying words of hatred. This was not the first time. They had heard it before. The voices of hatred. The laughter of hyenas. Taking pleasure in our pain, in our blood" (*Sari Red*). At other times, Parmar's narration displays facticity, such as details of the victims' trauma and the November 7, 1985 incident date. While generally performative, some imagery is constative, including photographs of a rally, presumably held in response to

Kalbinder Kaur Hayre's assassination. Then again, in an inexplicit context, we could not be sure.

Compared to other modes, we see greater emphasis on the here and now, immediate perception of the spectator in distinctive space and time. This approach differs from conventional understanding of documentary as creative treatment of actuality, inventive interpretation that conceives the historical world as an absent whole. The performative rejects this conception, and in ways distinct from other modes, immerses the spectator within the existential moment of viewing. This approach can lead one to contemplate performative spectatorship in terms of phenomenology and Being. Of course, there are other, related perspectives as well. Bill Nichols discerned accentuation on spectatorship and humanism, particularly toward ethics, history, and the individual as political. The political dimension emerges from the discrete cast of spectatorship. Referring to the performative concatenation of conception, design, and spectatorship, Nichols invokes the connection between the political and the personal (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 94). Here one might think of Kalbinder Kaur Hayre shouting back in defiance against her aggressors. But the political-personal connection is also germane, as it relates to ideological conditions from which the contemporary performative follows. It also applies to conditions in which performative documentaries operate, in part an effect of performative documentary itself. After all, documentary which compels an exceptionally individuated viewer response is indeed concordant with the idea of the personal as political.

To understand the significance of the personal, it helps to contrast the performative spectator with the collective identification of a group. Propagandistic documentaries, for example, appeal to a group's social character. This approach requires the individual to imagine the totality of collective consciousness, abstract judgment of what ought to be. This judgment bears certain similarities to imagining the historical world as an absent whole, abstraction at a remove from immediate perception. While never free of ethics or morality, the performative spectator is not petitioned to think in these ways. Because performative documentary necessitates a particularly individuated, dynamic spectatorship, it does not cultivate the quiescence that collective association affords. Therefore, collectivity does not absolve the spectator of individual responsibility. When Pratibha Parmar speaks of not wanting Kalbinder Kaur Hayre to become a statistic, she is speaking to a desire for the *Sari Red* spectator to respond as an ethical and moral being (Jungblut and Reusch).<sup>9</sup> She also speaks to the spectator to respond as an individual.

Parmar conceived of a dynamic spectator capable of ethical judgment. Like other performative documentaries of its time, *Sari Red* points to concerns of social justice, autonomy, and citizenship. These are complex matters, and generalizations can be problematical given the vast number of issues that the performative addresses. Then again, the contemporary performative often addresses social justice and resistance, which can render the spectator an active political subject. In addition, as we see in *History and Memory*, *Journal inachevé*, and *Sari Red*, performative texts are products of contemporary ideological conditions. One can also point to generalized ennui regarding discourses of sobriety, along with misgivings about established power. At the time of the

emergence of the contemporary performative, some people had deduced a relationship between mass media propaganda and traditional methods, thus fostering alienation with respect to documentary convention. Given their tradition of dissidence and protest, it follows that some independent documentarians rejected methods associated with institutional power, propaganda, and social injustice. Still, it required considerable dedication, personal sacrifice and forbearance to produce independent documentary during this time. In addition, the performative looked unusual, and for that reason it was not readily received as documentary. This incongruity can lead to difficulties with distribution, thus marginalizing the performative author and text. However, because it involves personal sacrifice and adversity, earnestness and substance often compel independent creation. One requires dedication to sustaining production and dissemination. This dedication calls for a level of commitment at variance with traits and qualities impelling mainstream journalism and establishment-driven documentary.

The contemporary performative is a social phenomenon, as well as a particular textual phenomenon. The signifier is especially important. Bill Nichols refers to semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce, which emphasizes our experiential relationship to signs (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 99). Here, the manner in which the signifier stands for the referent is important. The signifier becomes an object when it ceases to stand for a referent, as in non representational painting for example. When signifiers represent in oblique ways, the sign acts like a referent. These shifting aspects of sign and referent are especially apparent where emphasis on signifiers marks the performative. In *Sari Red* for example, performative signifiers act like a referent at times, becoming immediate and experiential perception. In this way, we can comprehend the performative



as poststructuralist. A dynamic spectator and play of signifiers determine meaning. Also consistent with poststructuralist textuality, essentialist meaning is absent and the transcendental signified cast in doubt. Emphasis falls on the reader and not the author. Uncertain and shifting referentiality destabilizes organization and praxis of reality discourses. At times the historical world is the referent, at other times the signifier is the referent. Ways of thinking that support conventional realist epistemologies falter, their foundations seem as if a chimera. Even so, the real can never be forsaken. To discard the real would mean that it is no longer documentary.

Ideation of seminal poststructuralists like Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida can shed light on how performative documentary operates. In “The Death of the Author” for example, Barthes contended that authorship is not the crux of a literary text’s meaning (Barthes “The Death of the Author”). On the contrary, he depicted the author’s figurative demise. The author’s death signalled the reader’s birth and openings onto heterogeneous textual meanings. This death and birth is analogous to performative emphasis on spectatorship. In his lecture “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science” Derrida discussed the replacement of a concentered intellectual system with play. He stated that “by orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the center of a structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form” (Derrida “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science” 352). This idea is consistent with the performative display of structural coherence and play of elements within. A particular hallmark of Jacques Derrida’s philosophy is metaphor, something he has used repeatedly within his corpus. Then again, his atypical metaphor usage was not always well received. Geoffrey Bennington, for example, observed that Derrida’s invocation of allegory met

with disapproval (Bennington and Derrida *Jacques Derrida* 119-20).<sup>10</sup> Without question, the Algerian philosopher's use of figuration can incite perplexity, consternation, and apprehension. To some, metaphor can enhance philosophical work, although it should never be dominant. They see metaphor's rightful place as a leading element in literature and other fictions of artists.

This contention is reminiscent of differing perspectives in documentary. As with metaphor in philosophy, expressive techniques usually play an adjuvant role in documentary. Although obviously present, allusive techniques are not normally ascendant relative to the referent. When expression or allusion assumes a dominant role, the text can be classified as experimental or fiction. In this way, signifier held to be signified becomes paramount to documentary realism. To counter this standard by emphasizing signification can undermine the transcendental signified, and by extension the conventional documentary text. As Derrida affirms, assumption of a transcendental signified is critical: "There has to be a transcendental signified for the difference between signifier and signified to be somewhere absolute and irreducible" (Derrida *Of Grammatology* 20). Derrida does not believe this transcendence possible. In *Of Grammatology* for example, his belief that there is no transcendental signified is in full evidence (Derrida *Of Grammatology*). In "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science" Derrida expands on its nonexistence: "The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely" (Derrida "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science" 354). From this perspective, the transcendental signified is a castle in the sky built on the false idea that the signified can be attained by way of the signifier. On the other hand, play of

signification remains. A critical implication for documentary is that fundamental disparity between signifier and signified portends that the signifier cannot truly replicate what is elemental to the signified. In spite of that, traditional documentary modes maintain a deep-rooted assumption of a transcendental signified. This assumption is especially true regarding observational recording of the profilmic event. Poststructuralist ideation notwithstanding, one cannot discount this idea. Owing to the unique nature of filmic signifiers, under certain conditions of filmic mediation, transcendence may be possible.

The transcendental signified conundrum is evinced in Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man* (*Grizzly Man*). This documentary employs video recorded by self-styled animal rights activist Timothy Treadwell, until he was devoured by a bear in 2003. In voice-over hand-held close-up of a Treadwell recorded bear, Herzog narrates: "And what haunts me is that in all the faces of all the bears that Treadwell ever filmed I discover no kinship, no understanding, no mercy. I see only the overwhelming indifference of nature" (*Grizzly Man*). Thus, Herzog implies that either Treadwell's perception is transcendent via video, or human-bear contact has objective meaning transcendent via video. In spite of Herzog's insinuation that documentary mediation has the potential of transcendent meaning; there may well be no such transcendent meaning available. As noted in the preceding paragraph, Derrida contended that in the absence of the transcendental signified, signifiers go on unbounded. Evidently, film and video are different from writing. Still, Derrida's line of reasoning about presence and absence does not go away. Treadwell and cohort Amie Huguenard experienced the bear contact, not Herzog. Werner Herzog experienced it as an absent presence via filmic signification. The raw video is a collection

of signifiers culled from Treadwell's annual expeditions in which Herzog was not present. The signified and its phenomenology was that of Treadwell, an extant being at time of recording. Herzog's signified was in viewing the videotape, discrete perception from that of Treadwell. The video is not the reality and Herzog is not Treadwell. Herzog obviously knows this fact. Indeed, he alludes to the complex uncertainty of presence, absence, and documentary subjectivity in the narration that follows: "But for Timothy Treadwell this bear was a friend, a saviour" (*Grizzly Man*). Along with Treadwell's angst-ridden psyche, this absence may well be what haunts this German documentarian the most.

Of course, Herzog could be suggesting that Treadwell was delusional. Alternately, he may well be engaging in rhetoric, pointing to difference between representation and immediate perception. All the same, the assumption of a transcendental signified is widely held. Most documentary is based on assumptions of transcendent meaning, the idea that we can transpose reality across space and time. This notion underscores implicit conceptions about the signified, conceptions which mark a critical difference between constative and performative. The constative, which governs conventional modality, stands on a belief that discourse can bring about reality presumed to be an absent whole. In documentary, reality is engendered by exploiting verisimilitude intrinsic to filmic mediation. Whereas the constative authenticates the signified, signifiers take on different significance in the performative. The distinction depends on whether signifiers are *prima facie* substantiation of the historical world: Can signifiers take on transcendent meaning? For this transcendent meaning to take place, the spectator must perceive similitude between signifier and signified. If the spectator believes certain

signifiers transcendent, then this reasoning is coherent. Metaphor, expressive and allusive techniques then appear as embellishments. While often compelling, such devices also risk detracting from effectual representation, at least within a transcendent signifier context. For some however, there is no detraction because transcendent meaning is in question. The viewer's position relative to signification transfigures, as does his or her overall posture vis-à-vis reality's representation. What may seem embellishment in a constative context, can become essential reality within a performative one.

Jacques Derrida's use of metaphor illustrates a marginal practice within a long-established field. Geoffrey Bennington writes that Derrida "appears to play metaphor against concept" (Bennington and Derrida "Metaphor" 119). Without doubt, Derrida had difficulties gaining acceptance of metaphor in his philosophical work. Documentarians frequently use expressive and allusive techniques. They are accepted, provided they do not disrupt the semblance of authenticating the signified. On the other hand, when inventive methods take on an ascendant position, they run risk of critical reaction analogous to that suffered by Derrida. The performative can be perceived as subversive, minacious, or simply out of place within the documentary corpus. Nevertheless, even if considered schismatic, the initial body of contemporary performative work had minor mainstream influence. In this sense, it had negligible standing within the documentary community. That performative modality is present throughout documentary history, yet recognized later supports this assessment. Even so, customs depend on a variety of affects that potentially transform practices. Epistemology, after all, has not remained unchanged. Over time, the performative has influenced documentary praxis and become

more recognized, accepted, and practiced. Similarly, Derrida's use of metaphor was not disregarded. On the contrary, it became venerated.

Assumptions of transcendent meaning are evident in modes governed by the constative, especially the expository, observational, and interactive. Unless the anticipated effect is irony, satire, or humour, expository methods are impracticable without a de facto correspondence between signifiers and the historical world. The reflexive mode brings about amplified awareness of documentary's inherent complexity. Calling attention to the apparatus and process of representation brings about this enhanced consciousness. Emphasis on structure and means of documentary representation can destabilize faith in transcendent meaning. Yet, while it draws praxis into question, does the reflexive adhere to epistemological convention? Does representing production apparatus set up another form of transcendent meaning? Or, does the reflexive simply draw into question constative conviction that documentary mediation can bring absent reality into being? These contentious questions advance debate. However, they are especially compelling in texts within which both reflexive and performative modalities are active, such as for example, Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen*. Even so, reflexive and performative modalities remain fundamentally different. Greater familiarity with reflexive modus of questioning constative expediency, as opposed to performative immediacy of perception, may well account for Nichols' later recognition of the performative. It may also explain why the reflexive is more readily comprehensible. In addition, it may clarify why performative documentary can perplex even the knowledgeable. At the end of the day, to move beyond the constative is more radical than to bring the documentary multiplex into question. The performative not only

bedevils by disrupting conventional assumptions and beliefs, it can also discompose instrumental objectives, notably the author's. Because we are immersed in the constative, this disruption can amount to a considerable leap.

Performative and reflexive modes show the referent to be absent. This absence raises several fundamental questions. For example, in the absence of the signified, is the real unattainable and documentary little more than invention? And given the absent referent, is reality's representation viable? Without doubt, the performative can destabilize conventional documentary understanding. Even so, the performative remains documentary, and is often effective as such. One may well ask then, how does this continuation of documentary status work? Roland Barthes' figurative death of the author is noted here as marking a fundamental shift within contemporary culture (Barthes "The Death of the Author"). Of course, the documentary author is not deceased. Authorship is alive and well in documentary. Yet, while authorship remains pivotal, in the contemporary performative it operates in dissimilar ways. The performative casts doubt on the author's ability to represent using methods that presume transcendent meaning. It expresses scepticism regarding propinquity of signifier and referent. It openly questions the author's ability to authenticate and master the historical world. While these reservations can appear in any modality, they are fundamental to the performative. And although appearing more recently in poststructuralism, deconstruction, and phenomenology, this questioning relates to a reverberating philosophical discussion on transcendence that predates Emmanuel Kant and plumbs history's depth. Enquiry on how the mind forms objects, difference between objects and perceptual phenomena, along with related questions are valuable research considerations. However, the critical thrust

here has to do with how documentaries manifest contemporary ideation. Indeed, we see compelling correspondences between poststructuralism, deconstruction, and the contemporary performative. Along these lines, performative documentary is an apt expression of contemporary culture.

One may well ask: Where is the author in this? One answer is that the author lives, although differently and with less authority. To carry on with Barthes' figuration, the author may now be depicted as a resurrected apparition of the spectator's thoughts. Like the historical world, the author is but a spectre. And like the absent author, the notion of the absent referent is critical. However, the contemporary performative does not forsake techniques of other modes. It adopts and nuances them, most notably in ways that emphasize expressive qualities. Far from defunct, the performative author is active and inventive. While taking liberty with figuration, I understand that Barthes wrote about readership and critical reception (Barthes "The Death of the Author"). However, within this vision, authorship can still be dynamic and ethereal. In this way, the figurative death of the author breathes life into authorship, making him or her more extant and animate. While a unique type of author, the performative author remains a documentary author, as performative modality is distinct from fiction or experimentation. It does not put forth a field of unconstrained signifiers irrespective of the historical world. It endeavours to represent in ways that evoke and occasion revelation. This representational practice stands in opposition to control, constraint, contention, and authentication. While the performative mode may appear heterodox at times, it remains documentary. As documentary, it is anchored in the historical world. And as documentary, the performative looks different. It can look unusual in manifesting apprehension regarding



constative expressions of transcendent meaning, the historical world transcended by way of representation. In many instances, the performative signified can be seen as its signifiers and its historical world as immediate perception: The here and now.

Performative documentary is not vested in persuasion and authentication in ways that other modes are. Instead, play of signification and interstices that the play of signification makes available are of the essence. Generally speaking, this representational practice brings about spectator activity with critical affect on how documentary works. With lesser emphasis on persuasion and authentication, signifier play is encouraged. This signifier play fosters indeterminacy relative to the reality from which signifiers are culled, so creating destabilized referential averment. And once again, the notion of a transcendental signified is undermined. As a result, the spectator is situated within a distinctive receptivity, thus reconfiguring the focal point of documentary meaning from constative to performative. Play of signification is first performed by documentarian and then, in a different way, by the spectator. This proliferation of signifier play sets up plurality of meaning redolent of Derrida's belief that there is no singular context, only contexts (Bennington and Derrida *Jacques Derrida* 84-98). Moreover, expanded signifier play brings to mind Barthes' notion that the text is to be played. It encompasses Barthes' conception of Text and description of Text as explosion: "The Text is not a coexistence of meanings but a passage, a traversal; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. The plural of the Text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents, but on what might be called the stereographic plurality of its weave of signifiers (etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric)" (Barthes "From Work to Text" 171).

Barthes' depiction of Text's multiplicity and experient make-up portrays the annihilation of a previously stable object. As well, it points to diffusion of meaning leading to various forms of revealment. This formal multiplicity affords an animating and reviving perspective on documentary as Text, because typical elucidations of documentary subjectivity are delimiting. They do not express what Barthes' metaphorical tropology of explosion and dissemination proffers. Nor do they explain the unconstrained qualities of the performative: Multiple traces that linger as wavering memories, engendering indeterminacy and destabilizing averment regarding what is. Moreover, they do not satisfactorily illuminate the performative's unique occasioning of discrete occurrences of revealment and truth. While not writing about documentary, Barthes related a vision of Text and its elusive morphology, as well as its possibility and intrinsic worth. The performative embodies this vision of Text through dissemination of multiple traces objectified as passage and play. Barthes' depiction of Text is reminiscent of performative documentary with its evincive and connotative play of signifiers. This conception is apposite, because it encompasses spectator delectation when screening, or in another sense, playing this documentary mode. Worth mentioning as well is the constancy of Roland Barthes' exposition, which makes it lucid and credible: He did not merely write about his idealized vision of text. He created one as well.

Without doubt, Roland Barthes described a great deal: He depicted propagation of meaning and readership envisaged as passage, as well as the author as inapt figuration. It supposed a way of thinking about culture contradistinctive to convention of the day. While some shared Barthes' idea of Text, he was dissociated from his contemporaries and their presuppositions sustaining the literary canon. Reminiscent of radicalism

underlying the contemporary performative, Barthes viewed textual conventions as manifestations of delusory Western ideology manifest in doxa. He characterized doxa as: “Public Opinion, the mind of the majority, petit bourgeois Consensus, the Voice of Nature, the Violence of Prejudice. We can call, (using Leibnitz’s [*sic*] word) a *doxology* any way of speaking adapted to appearance, to opinion, or to practice” (Barthes *Roland Barthes* 47).<sup>11</sup> At that time, striving was underway to arrive at meaning incommensurate with the notion of determinable text. Whereas the performative proceeds in ways congruous with Barthes’ Text, conventional modalities draw on established assumptions. They exhibit a sensibility that the text and historical world it represents are knowable. Given our rich and diverse documentary history, this perspective has merit. After all, it would be untenable to reject this great body of work. There is too much of significance to reject out of hand. Without question, traditional documentary can be a complex undertaking. It can also be subject to scrutiny and question. For example, documentary reflexivity takes up the problem that documentarians act on and alter reality and its representation. There is prehension that the filmic apparatus is not objective. There also appears recognition that praxis, theory, and narrative can affect social actors and the historical world. Illustration of this conundrum lies in the example of precision-guided munitions video. Here the apparatus has more than just a figurative detonative effect on the historical world and social actors within it.

An exploding video camera and subjects who become munitions victims are obviously not typical documentary. The illustration is employed here for its rhetorical imprint. The crux of the matter is as follows: Regardless of the enigma and manifold problematic of documentary, the presumption that reality can be represented remains.

The performative adheres to this idea while taking on documentary's most critical problem, the absent signified. It addresses this absence by way of alternative methods of representing reality. These methods go beyond the reflexive idea that praxis, theory, and narrative have effects on the historical world. All told, performative documentary brings forth pervasive ramifications. These effects relate to representational methods, as well as the spectator's connection with the documentary object. Along these lines, we see a radical transformation of emphasis. The major shift is from signified historical world to spectator and play of signifiers. As a result, the documentary ascends in importance relative to the historical world it represents. The documentary becomes the signified, the primary object of regard and mediated possession of the historical world. The performative emphasizes evocation and interlacing signification that progenerates dissemination of meaning. The constitutive aspect emerges as the spectator's connection with the documentary, or stated differently, the occurrence of spectatorship. As Barthes wrote, it is a traversal. It becomes comprehensible as phenomenological, Being and duration arising in space and time. This transmutation is a significant epistemological deviation for documentary. Relative to the documentary object, the represented historical world becomes of decreased significance. Significantly however, we remain conscient that performative documentary is based on the historical world. Ultimately, this basis in the historical world sustains the performative as documentary, as opposed to its falling into some other classification.

In "The Death of the Author" Barthes called for elemental transposition of power from author to reader (Barthes "The Death of the Author"). Performative documentary embodies this intellectual stand and brings about a mutation of the genesis of

documentary meaning. Documentary meaning becomes fundamentally transformed from the author's mastery of actuality onto the specificity of text in the here and now. In this way, it moves from other modes' accentuation on the historical world. This movement away from other modes brings about especially subjective, self-referential encounters with the object. Its documentary appears different. It does not exhibit the formal consistency of other modes and their epistemological bases. Significance shifts from author and historical world onto the spectator. The performative mode emphasizes actuality as immediate perception. Its texts are discrete singular objects, variegated attenuations of other modalities. Accentuation falls on what Nichols attributes, in quoting Fredric Jameson, to be the "power and positive value of situation-specific thinking and speaking" (Jameson *Signatures of the Visible* 168; Nichols *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* 105). In this way, the performative deemphasizes metanarrative, what postmodern theory identifies as classical, archetypal histories and stories. This metanarrative includes critical master theories on which knowledge is founded and our existence established and disciplined. Performative documentary emphasizes what lies outside metanarrative. This practice is more than just reminiscent of postmodernism. Jean-François Lyotard once wrote: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* xxiv). What lies outside metanarrative is the world en masse, abstruse, yet comprehensible as discrete, personal experience.

Documentary conceived this way has several salient characteristics. Significantly, conventional narrative is attenuated. As well, spectator response is actuated by representational methods that encourage individuated perception. Also in evidence are

poetic formal approaches and sundry heteroclit techniques. Along with diminished propinquity of signifier and referent, these methods supplant cinematographic replication of reality. This difference reveals a fundamental schism in documentary having to do with our bases of knowledge. Bill Nichols considered this epistemological question in relation to the performative:

Is knowledge best described as abstract and disembodied, based on generalizations and the typical, in the tradition of Western philosophy? Or is knowledge best described as concrete and embodied, based on the specificities of personal experience, in the tradition of poetry, literature and rhetoric? Performative documentary endorses the latter position and sets out to demonstrate how embodied knowledge provides entry into an understanding of the more general processes at work in society (Nichols *Introduction to Documentary* 131).

This embodied knowledge is brought about by variations in formal methods which alter documentary modalities. As a result, the performative can appear experimental, avant-garde, or like fiction or poetry. Despite these qualities, it returns to what Nichols called the general processes of a society. In spite of everything, the performative is still documentary. And perhaps, this enduring as documentary is the most important point.

## Memory as History

In *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*,

Laura Marks provides a concise description of Rea Tajiri's *History and Memory*:

History and Memory attempts to reconstruct Tajiri's Japanese American family's memory of their internment during the Second World War. The tape is both the record and the active process of her struggle to reactivate the past from the fragments of available image. Images exist to corroborate official accounts of the internments of Japanese Americans and Canadians during the war. But the unofficial histories of Tajiri's family's experiences cannot be documented, and the few artifacts they retain from the experience are silent. Furthermore, inexplicably for Tajiri, those who were in the camps seem willfully [*sic*] amnesiac—her mother barely remembers a thing about her imprisonment. It is by bringing together visual and audio images that are inadequate alone and contradictory together that Tajiri is able to evoke scenes and events that can't be reconstructed (Marks *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* 32).

Marks is not alone in her fascination with *History and Memory*. While rooted in the internment experience of Japanese in America during World War II, Tajiri's work has brought about varied commentary. This variety reflects its productiveness, and this productiveness accounts for its appeal to scholars who see an array of contemporary concerns within her text. Accordingly, this documentary has been written about in multiple contexts and discourse about it covers an expansive range. Subject areas of this writing vary from its distinctiveness as documentary, its illustration of childhood and trauma, to its adroit handling of political propaganda.

In a chapter about visual media and construction of personal histories, Marita Sturken discusses Tajiri's opposition to history and exploration of "video as memory" (Sturken 5). To Sturken, essential meaning within *History and Memory* resides in the meeting between production of history and memory. This meaning lies in how history can dominate and eradicate more personally situated memory. She considers this

meeting point especially significant because *History and Memory* “attempts to understand the intersections of personal memory and historical events, specifically the history and memories of the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in the United States during World War II” (Sturken 6). Sturken associates *History and Memory* with creation and healing, even though Tajiri’s video is oppositional and reflects an array of other matters, including “multiple subjectivities, racist images, counter-images, fragments of the past, absent presences” (Sturken 8).

Tajiri utilizes several unconventional methods outside this fragmentary formal approach, including straightforward narrative presentation of the fantastic. In an article exploring the idea of intermutual fantasy and truth, Janet Walker notes similarities between *History and Memory* and *The Thin Blue Line* (*The Thin Blue Line*; Walker). She writes: “In both films the representation of traumatic past events is responsive not only to the reliability of historical memory and material documentation but to the additional qualities of memory including repression, silence, ellipsis, elaboration, and fantasy” (Walker 814). To Walker, *History and Memory* is about silence, loss of voice, memory and forgetting. In certain ways, Tajiri’s documentary evokes other prominent documentaries about the concentration camp experience, such as *Shoah* (*Shoah*) and *Night and Fog* (*Night and Fog*; Walker 816-17). In what Walker calls “history of trauma” (Walker 817-18), the boundaries between history, memory and fantasy become sinuous. In the history of trauma, understanding is not fully achieved by perception because reality is too difficult to accept as true.

Kristine C. Kuramitsu provides several insights into Tajiri’s thought, not regarding *History and Memory* per se, but toward *Questions for My Father*, a Tajiri



installation which brings to mind certain perceptual processes that *History and Memory* activates (Kuramitsu). *Questions for My Father* evokes a desert location like those internment places experienced by the Japanese. This installation included perceptual simulacra such as fans blowing hot air and sand on the gallery floor. In addition, suspended speakers created an acoustic space of interaction between Tajiri and her father, who speaks about life as an American soldier in the segregated 442<sup>nd</sup> Central Postal Directory Team. The installation also included three small video monitors. One played Army Signal Corps footage, while another showed clandestinely recorded David Tatsuno Super 8 film shot at the Topaz War Relocation Center. The third monitor displayed 1988 video by Tajiri of the detritus of the Poston War Relocation Center where her mother was imprisoned. In this way, Tajiri creates a sense of temporality that is especially noteworthy in the participant's feelings of movement between past and present. Despite the considerable weightiness of the internment history, the participant's perception remains rooted in the here and now. As a non-specific space, it has no direct referent. Therefore, within a context of immediate perception, Tajiri prompts the participant to construct their experience from what they can. As with Tajiri's understanding of the internment, this knowing can only be gathered from history and memory.

Reminiscent of performative documentary in general, immediate perception becomes especially important. Along these lines, Tajiri's installation brought about the temporal quality of passage. As an inevitable matter of course, this passage becomes an aspect of the participant's personal history. It relates to his or her memory. The importance of the personal becomes emphasized by the three video presentations. In addition to the participant's experience, these videos demonstrate not only passage of

time, but highly subjective ways within which history is presented. In this context, the referent becomes the here and now of immediate perception. Then again, as with performative documentary, the historical referent is never entirely absent. In the role of video spectator, the participant must confront history as representation. He or she must deal with history's construction according to perspective, experience, and ideology. Moreover, Tajiri steers the participant into an existential position that resembles her own. Kuramitsu observes that Tajiri has spoken about the dominant culture having rendered her formative years acquiescent:

She always felt an observer of things around her; she literally felt marginalized into silence by the dominant society. Filmmaking, installation making, and art production in general-as they are vehicles for the dissection and elucidation of history-are key for Tajiri and others in regaining agency in their individual lives and in extending that reclamation of power to their marginalized communities, such as in *Questions for My Father* (Kuramitsu 650).

Agency and the power that goes hand in hand with it, is the critical point. These elements carry over from her documentary, as agency and empowerment are important components built into *History and Memory* as well. Indeed, agency and empowerment are fundamental elements of performative documentary in general, especially regarding spectatorship. As something which stems from an emancipatory sensibility in general, it would seem that these agency and empowerment concerns constitute a point of intersection between Tajiri's installation and her documentary video.

In "A Deleuzian politics of hybrid Cinema" (Marks "Deterritorialized Filmmaking: A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema"), Laura Marks examines *History and Memory* in relation to Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (Deleuze *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*) and *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Deleuze *Cinema 2: The Time Image*). She considers Deleuze's theory of cinema as consciousness in relation

to a “hybrid cinema or experimental diasporan cinema” (Marks "Deterritorialized Filmmaking: A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema" 244). Marks includes *History and Memory*, along with *Who Needs a Heart (Who Needs a Heart)* and *Calendar (Calendar)* within this rubric. With a certain amount of reiteration, she expands on this theoretical outlook within *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Marks *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*). In addition to Deleuze, she explores hybridity theories, including work by Trinh T. Minh-ha. Laura Marks notes that *History and Memory* considers a variety of World War II era representations from an oppositional position. At the same time, Tajiri strives to access her family’s memory of the camps:

The tape is both the record and active process of her struggle to reactivate the past from the fragments of available image. Images exist, in newsreels and fictions films, to corroborate official histories of the internment of Japanese-Americans during the war. But the unofficial histories of her family's experiences cannot be documented, and the few artifacts they have from the experience are silent (Marks "Deterritorialized Filmmaking: A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema" 248).

While those artefacts are silent, memory is not. Then again, to forget speaks volumes too. Forgetting is most prominent in the case of Tajiri’s mother. Her mother professes only scant memory of a time in which a great deal occurred. Within her formal approach, Tajiri intermixes various representations which seem singular in their perspectives. These dissimilar representations appear incongruous when placed side by side. This juxtaposition creates a spectator consciousness engendered from salvaged fragments of a history that could not be represented, or at least adequately reconstructed in conventional ways.

Marks’ framework is carried out within a backdrop of official discourse as propaganda, contrasted with memory and forgetting. Using the Deleuze-derived phrase

“fossils of events” (Marks "Deterritorialized Filmmaking: A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema" 253; Deleuze *Cinema 2: The Time Image* 113), Marks provides a theoretical context having to do with traces of the past. Establishment propaganda, as well as interviews with people that witnessed events, uncovers these fossils. Marks also notes that Deleuze observed the importance of memory in cinema created by minorities. Collective and individual memory becomes important in conserving histories, especially because minority experiences are often at loggerheads with dominant discourses. Following Deleuze, Marks uses the image term broadly, to include sensory memory of all kinds. Quoting Deleuze, she writes:

A recollection image is like a fossil in that it embodies the traces of events whose representation has been buried. When recollection images cannot be connected to a present situation, they become 'strangely active fossils, radioactive, inexplicable in the present where they surface, and all the more harmful and autonomous'<sup>17</sup> (Marks "Deterritorialized Filmmaking: A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema" 253) (Deleuze *Cinema 2: The Time Image* 113).

Although such traces do not provide much meaning, stories emerge through layering and juxtaposition like that undertaken by Tajiri. Therefore, official history which provides certain traces, does not account for the meaning Tajiri has presented. And while the official archive does not inscribe Tajiri's mother's internment experience, it offers traces nonetheless. While not describing her mother's experience, these archival traces help give it meaning. This meaning compensates for Tajiri's mother's forgetting, a typical reaction for trauma victims. Tajiri's mother's often remarked on forgetting is a normal reaction to an incomprehensible traumatic event.

In the absence of this historical connection that Rea Tajiri views as essential, *History and Memory* evokes Deleuze's idea of the fossil, artefacts that take many forms and transport us beyond original purpose. Given *History and Memory's* oppositional

nature, it is noteworthy that official artefacts within this documentary have to do with repression and control. However, there are other fossils as well, personal artefacts beyond the reach of propaganda, record keeping, and interdictions against recording. Some survive and become connected to history. Marks refers to the “recollection-object” as something “severed from the narrative in order to emphasize its witnessing quality” (Marks *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* 82). Thus, in a way that evokes Deleuze’s “recollection-image” (Deleuze *Cinema 2: The Time Image* 54-55), Marks describes Tajiri’s reclamation of a piece of tarpaper from the Poston Relocation Center. As an object removed from the site, the tarpaper appears decontextualized within *History and Memory*. Its value lies in its materiality, as an object severed from the site of forgotten events. Almost wistfully, Marks proposes:

One could say the piece of tar paper, having been exposed to those events, “photographed” them and just needs to be developed: rectangular and gray, it even looks a bit like an old photograph. Tajiri’s task, with this as with other mute objects in the tape, is to develop images from them (Marks *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* 82).

The recollection-object stands alone, seemingly paradoxical in relation to narrative. Indeed, it can be said to capture narrative’s paradoxical nature. In spite of its basis in narrative, the recollection-object subverts history as narrative. Instead, the recollection-object represents possibility of narrative as something new created from recollections of the past. The archive too becomes a vast repository that cannot account for personal history. However, this personal history is not lost, it resides within a carved wooden bird conscientiously guarded by Tajiri’s amnesic mother, an exquisitely formed object that retains meaning (Marks *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* 128). While not responsible for personal histories, the official archive cannot

completely negate them either, as it holds a photograph of Tajiri's grandmother in bird carving class (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). As personal history, the physical artifact is more important than the photographic record. In this context of loss of memory and a voluminous, though derisory archive, the corporeal link to history becomes crucial. In Marks' words, Tajiri unearths "auratic presence by following the objects back to their source of power"(Marks *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* 141).

Marks argues that Tajiri is able to remember for her mother and create "fictions and silences" (Marks "Deterritorialized Filmmaking: A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema" 262) through her research and representation, to cover gaps created by loss of memory. This representational process not only helps Rea Tajiri attain identity, but assists her family in recovering collective memory as well (Marks "Deterritorialized Filmmaking: A Deleuzian Politics of Hybrid Cinema" 263). Searching for a past extends beyond Tajiri's personal experience, and becomes a collective one of community and a history that many would prefer to forget. Without doubt, Tajiri has made this desire to forget difficult. Beyond having instigated substantial consideration by several scholars including Marks, Sturken, Walker, and Kuramitsu, *History and Memory* is also productive in revealing a range of things about performative documentary. In fact, Bill Nichols recognized *History and Memory* as a performative documentary at the onset of his identification of the modality. The close reading of *History and Memory* that follows allows for contemplation of the meaning of performative documentary, as well as several philosophical properties of the modality in general. As with all performative documentary, this revealing begins with the absent referent, in this case the World War II

internment of Japanese in America. In a certain way, the performative mode resembles history: The signified is absent, whereas frequently, signifiers are not. Unlike forgetting, and similar to memory, the referent is never entirely absent.

Because it touches on many performative themes, *History and Memory* is a paradigmatic documentary. It is a text wherein Rea Tajiri situates herself within a world devoid of objectivity. As documentary author, she is manifestly engaged and personally involved with her subject matter. Observations are socially situated within the text, or as spectatorship. Along the way, Tajiri is guided by personal exploration and judgment about how the historical world is investigated and represented. She uses a multiplicity of methods within performative modality. Adopting a bricolage approach (Denzin and Lincoln 9; Lévi-Strauss), she draws on what is at hand, including aesthetic and material objects and methods. She undertakes several interpretive and representational approaches which provide distinctive insights into subject matter. Often appearing unmotivated from an instrumentalist point of view, various formal elements afford considerable poietic effect. Tajiri makes use of artefacts as well as subjective accounts, including contrasting personal and institutional narratives. This variety of representational averment gives rise to subjective relativism, thus rendering the historical world indeterminate and complex. We see interaction and tension between positivism and poietic representation, one of several elements which set this documentary apart. Specifically, performative modality nuances documentary tendencies along the lines of generally positivist or postpositivist worldviews. In addition, conventional notions of empiricism are broadened and deepened to appear radical.

*History and Memory* brings to mind William James' notion of a radical empiricism (James), a concept he placed in opposition to rationalism. He believed that rationalism accentuated universals ahead of parts. In contrast, empiricism gave emphasis to the individual as source of truth, in which the whole becomes a compilation of parts. As if in response to postmodern concerns regarding metanarrative, the universal is no longer the main point. The universal is but an abstraction. In radical empiricism, representation becomes principally of parts. The whole is of secondary importance to the parts. Reminiscent of contemporary notions of bricolage and collage, James called this approach a philosophy of "mosaic" and "plural facts" (James 42). Continuous temporality is essential to this plurality, an approach related to how the individual comes on truth by way of perception:

As each experience runs by cognitive transition into the next one, and we nowhere feel a collision with what we elsewhere count as truth or fact, we commit ourselves to the current as if the port were sure. We live, as it were, upon the front edge of an advancing wave-crest, and our sense of a determinate direction in falling forward is all we cover of the future of our path. It is as if a differential quotient should be conscious and treat itself as an adequate substitute for a traced-out curve. Our experience, *inter-alia*, is of variations of rate and of direction, and lives in these transitions more than in the journey's end (James 69).

According to James, this empiricism was radical because it "must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced" (James 42). Because the individual observer and act of observation are indissoluble, truth comes about in unique ways. This distinctiveness brings to mind some of Tajiri's representations, such as dream imagery and unexplained phenomena. While atypical in social documentary, these elements are nevertheless included within her text. Generally speaking, these alternative approaches point toward



transformations in representational practices which were experienced in heightened ways around that time and given names like “blurred genres” and “crisis of representation” (Denzin and Lincoln 17-19). This altered discursive environment has been widely noted by postmodern thinkers such as Fredric Jameson, who also refers to a “so-called crisis of representation” (Jameson "Foreword" viii) in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Lyotard *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*). These new representational practices were perceived in contrast to “an essentially realistic epistemology, which conceives of representation as the reproduction, for subjectivity, of an objectivity that lies outside it – projects a mirror theory of knowledge and art, whose fundamental evaluative categories are those of adequacy, accuracy and Truth itself” (Jameson "Foreword" viii).

While the referent seems remote in *History and Memory*, subjectivities are adaptable. This malleable subjectivity is most evident when Tajiri shifts positions in metaphysical ways, thus fostering a sense of interconnectedness between disparate elements across space and time. As well, representation is rendered problematic and the referent distant. For example, in a markedly banal travelling shot Tajiri’s mother can barely recognize traces of the Santa Anita Assembly Center. This lack of recognition is remarkable, given that Tajiri’s mother was held there during the internment of more than 120,000 Japanese in America during the Second World War (Daniels). However, in spite of an absent referent, referentiality takes on renewed signification by way of phenomena of the representational object. To Tajiri, images are paramount. Images and narratives are created, transmitted, shaped and formed by author and spectator. The referent may well

be absent. However, signifiers and their phenomena are present in the here and now, often in compelling and formative ways.

*History and Memory* begins with scrolling text accompanied by audio of chirping birds and rainfall:

December 7, 1961 View from 100 feet above the ground. Street lights and tops of trees surround the view which is comprised of a strip of grey concrete with strips of green grass on either side. Then slowly, very, very slowly the ground comes closer and closer as the tops of trees disappear. The tops of the heads of a man and woman become visible as they move them back and forth in an animated fashion. The black hair on their heads catch and reflect light from the street lamps. The light from the street lamps has created a path for them to walk and argue. (The spirit of my grandfather witnesses my father and mother as they have an argument about the unexplained nightmares their daughter has been having on the twentieth anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the day that changed the lives of 110,000 Japanese-Americans who shortly after were forced by the U.S. Government to sell their property, homes, cars, possessions, businesses; leave their communities and relocate to internment camp (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

Tajiri's voice-over narration begins as the scrolling text ends. Tajiri's text uses poetic evocation to describe something indeterminable as real or imagined. Foregoing typical argumentation about the reality of the historical world, the scrolling text is reminiscent of fictional screenplay. Different possibilities arise regarding this resemblance to fiction. Tajiri may have evoked her parents' disagreement from something that occurred in reality. Conceivably, Tajiri fashioned the quarrel from imagination. Either way, this scrolling text is the first of several references within *History and Memory* to fictional cinema and its methods. Here and elsewhere, Tajiri suggests metaphysical communications and transcendence of space and time. This abstruseness leaves the spectator uncertain if the event occurred, if Tajiri is using a creative device, or if she is suggesting metaphysical transcendence. The introduction ends with Tajiri describing her

mother filling a canteen with water. Tajiri does not know how this image came to mind. Nevertheless, she recounts a memory that should belong to her mother as her own. We cannot know if the memory has been passed from mother to daughter, or if Tajiri imagined it. Its origin is indeterminate, compelling the spectator to establish context. These evocations destabilize the real while calling attention to the classical epistemological division between real and imaginary. Moreover, it demonstrates that this demarcation can be indistinct within performative documentary.

Tajiri's blurring of conventional boundaries brings forward an implicit questioning of our ability to differentiate between real and imaginary. She points to abstruseness regarding knowledge and its formation. She suggests an association between ontology and epistemology, a connection that strikes at documentary's heart. Tajiri's recollection of her mother's ostensible memory of filling a canteen presents a conundrum in relation to the real. If this remembering is invention, an imagined memory, then what is its status within represented reality? Certainly, *History and Memory* has a pronounced autobiographical component. As such, the description is Tajiri's personal reality. Although ambiguous and indeterminate, her description is also reality as text. It could represent oral history as a mother's memory passed to daughter, reflecting whatever reality that contains. Tajiri presents it as real and imaginary interwoven. While perception plays a role, one cannot always distinguish between real and imaginary. Its importance lies more in ontology than any standing as real or imagined. Of uncertain status, it represents reality, even if the real is imaginary. The description has an emotive, haunting quality:

I do not know where this came from but I just have this fragment, this picture that has always been in my mind. My mother, she is standing at a faucet and it is really hot outside and she is filling this canteen. And the water is really cold and it feels really good. And outside the sun is so hot, it is just beating down. And there is this dust that gets in everywhere and they are always sleeping the floors (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

All the same, the question remains: Where does it come from? Is it oral history, creative treatment of something treated creatively? Is it Rea Tajiri's imagination, or is it metaphysical and transcendent? The question is not answerable in a determinate way. There remains but play of signifiers, the creative treatment of whatever actuality it represents.

The subsequent sequence uses documentary reflexivity demonstrating separation between representation and reality. Tajiri's narration describes her sister and a deceased aunt who amassed publicity stills from Hollywood films. In voice-over, Tajiri explains that her sister followed a boy for days before asking his permission to photograph him. Docudrama techniques and visual effects that manipulate temporality dramatize the narration.<sup>12</sup> Because the boy is a reluctant participant, the spectator is compelled to reflect on the gap between his protestations and whatever photographs result. Spectator awareness about how documentary procedures can manipulate and affect the reality it records emerge when Tajiri's sister directs her subject, just as Rea Tajiri must have directed this sequence. In this way, Tajiri establishes a critical position toward representing reality. Although the boy expresses impatience with the process, one cannot know his thoughts. Possibly, Tajiri's sister flatters him, however dignity impels protest. Perhaps, he has mixed or confused feelings. The viewer can reflect on these and other possibilities, but should also consider that these are performances and that the text is open

to interpretation in a mutable way. Without doubt, the sequence has been staged. On closer reflection, the spectator may conclude that there is no reality in the sequence at all. However, the sequence is presented as documentary, not fiction. It is based on reality, the historical world. Its status may be indeterminate, but the sequence is, most pointedly, play of signification.

Within the realm of documentary, the performative is schismatic. *History and Memory* is germane in this regard. It brings several elemental questions to the fore. For example: Is reality's representation a form of self-representation? Can represented reality be understood as ontology, conscious and unconscious acts which consummate the documentary object? How do documentary, ontology, and epistemology connect? What is documentary authorship and what is the spectator's role? These are elemental questions. Then again, this elemental questioning is a crucial aspect of the performative mode in general. Performative documentary brings to light issues that interrogate documentary in fundamental ways. For example, Rea Tajiri shows her sister in connection with visual representation, photographing the boy she pursued. Such representational dynamics are common. Authorship and apparatus are at the forefront of Nichols' interactive and reflexive documentary modes (Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* 44-56 56-68). However, representing reality is depicted here as woefully inadequate. Tajiri's sister is able to represent but an exiguous aspect of actuality and even this representation is delusory. She instructs the boy to express certain emotions. However, Tajiri's sister also references the photographic apparatus by commenting on film exposure. The process is shown to require conformity with technical exigencies and limitations, evoking Heidegger's critique of modern

technology challenging nature to reveal the real as standing-reserve (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology"). Narrating over black and white publicity stills, Tajiri comments: "I often wondered how the movies influenced our lives and I often wondered where my sister's habit of observing others from a distance came from" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). In the sequence's last shot, Tajiri's sister is seated at a table with a notebook examining photographs. Behind her, a chart depicts aquatic species. Movie stills we have previously seen are shown from the sister's point of view. Tajiri's sister demonstrates a fascination with photographic representation, as well as an inclination to observation over interaction. A societal bias toward visual representation, classification, challenging revealment and the standing reserve, constitute a wider context for this proclivity.

Tajiri associates her sister with mass-market Hollywood cinema, observation, recording and ordination of the real. This association allegorizes a widespread and pervasive cultural propensity, explicable in terms of Heidegger's Ge-stell, challenging revealing and ordering the real as if to be held and controlled (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 16). The scene depicts represented reality as contrived. The sister chooses photographing, ordering, and classifying the boy's image over unmediated interaction with him. While this kind of artificiality is well-known to documentarians, here it appears distinctive. On the other hand, manufactured reality does not negate the possibility of ontology. Even when reality is obscured by uncertainty, belief in truth persists, a common thread connecting the performative to the greater documentary tradition. At sequence end, Tajiri returns to the canteen image, while her brother explains his dearth of knowledge about the internment. One generation removed, Tajiri's brother

had limited connection with that time and place. Having experienced the camps, his parents and grandparents would, without doubt, view things differently. Throughout *History and Memory*, Tajiri draws attention to context. We hear fragmentary impressions of mother, father, and brother, representations of grandparents, as well as fiction and propaganda film. Tajiri emphasizes subjectivity which renders a singular context unattainable in a way that is reminiscent of Jacques Derrida (Bennington and Derrida *Jacques Derrida* 84-98). What emerge instead are varying and mutable subjective relations contingent on multiplex factors. The emphasis is on subjectivity and ontology. Fundamentally different from conventional documentary narratives, or so-called journalistic balance, *History and Memory* is not about ambiguity as much as dissemination and interfolding signifiers. Tajiri's documentary is reminiscent of Roland Barthes' idea of Text (Barthes "From Work to Text").

Even though *History and Memory* represents reality, Rea Tajiri freely blurs conventional lines between reality, fiction, and fantasy. The subsequent sequence's initial images are superimposed with titles: "Attack on Pearl Harbor HISTORY 1941 Shot by Capt. Erik Hakannson," "Attack on Pearl Harbor HISTORY 1941 Universal News," and "Attack on "Pearl Harbor HISTORY 1941 View from Japanese fighter plane – captured Japanese newsreel" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). These are archival, handheld aerial views of explosions and burning naval vessels that display abrupt, shifting movements of a camera in the heat of battle. Along with the film's aged texture, these visual characteristics substantiate direct representation of the Pearl Harbor attack. It indicates the camera's presence at actuality's source, reality witnessed by an observer. Tajiri uses burlesque music as an accompanying counterpoint to this footage, imposing

artifice on objective documentary evidence. In voice-over, Tajiri explains: “There are things which have happened in the world while there were cameras watching. Things we have images for” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Along these lines, Tajiri introduces a particular taxonomy of mediation according to the presence or absence of recording apparatus. Her categorization has to do with how things are revealed by the observer in situ, or by the documentary spectator at a later time and place. Several guiding questions can be helpful in appreciating her general meaning. One may ask: Were cameras present which later reveal the profilmic event to the documentary spectator? Was the event recreated for the camera? Or, are there no images at all, only what was revealed to the observer at the time and place of the event? The final condition places emphasis on mental imagery, language, and discourse. In each instance, the observer in situ, or the documentary spectator is pivotal to revealing. In each set of circumstances, revealing transpires in a distinctive way.

The next section of *History and Memory* includes fiction film excerpts. A superimposed title reads: ““From Here to Eternity” HISTORY 1953, Columbia Pictures Directed by Fred Zinneman [*sic*]” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). The title arrangement and word *history* is identical to the previous sequence, suggesting association between the archival and fiction film. However, unlike the archival sequence, Tajiri does not make use of fanciful music. Instead, unmodified original audio is in evidence. As conventional fiction, artifice is explicit. Along these lines, Tajiri suggests correlation between the documentary and fiction films she has selected. Even though each has a certain status as history, neither can provide direct access to history’s reality. Not even the archival motion pictures are contiguous with reality. They may not be



reenactments, however they are mediated nonetheless. Taken as a whole, Tajiri is suggesting several connections and parallels, a general correspondence between archival film, history, narrative, documentary, fiction, and artifice in general. Along with *From Here to Eternity* (*From Here to Eternity*) and *December 7<sup>th</sup>* (*December 7th*), she excerpts images from ““Hawai Mare Okino Senjo Eigwa” [sic] HISTORY 1942, Toho Pictures, Inc. Captured Japanese footage” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).<sup>13</sup> Here, Tajiri is likely referring to Kajirô Yamamoto’s *Hawai Marē oki kaisen* (*Hawai Marē oki kaisen*). Audio from the various films includes realistic aircraft noise, guns firing, bombs exploding, shouting, and radio broadcasts. In voice-over, Tajiri elaborates on her inclusion of fiction film: “There are other things which have happened while there were no cameras watching, which we re-stage in front of cameras to have images of” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

Apart from melodramatic moments and dated special effects, the fiction film *From Here to Eternity* conveys similarity to what took place at Pearl Harbor. As verisimilitudinous, it achieves what documentary cameras cannot, conferring a unique status within the scope of history. The spectator is apt to note differences between Japanese and American films. This difference connotes certain ideological and cultural disparities in how they represent history. With Tajiri placing several types of mediation side by side, conventional distinctions between fiction and reality begin to blur. Moreover, truth claims around representations of history as reality become indefinite. The spectator may well ask: If fiction is like documentary, then is documentary like fiction? This resemblance of documentary to fiction does not mean that reality is unrepresentable. As reality however, each representational stratagem seems wanting.

Then again, each retains the idea it strived to represent. By way of montage, Tajiri demonstrates that multiple contexts with which we perceive and represent a historical event result in varied strategies, different forms of simulacra. While this variation in approach is not surprising, Tajiri advances something else. When multiple contexts and formal approaches are placed side by side, convention is put on display and passive reception is no longer possible. In its place, agency is encouraged, active epistemology by the spectator. This active epistemology brings conscientiousness and an ethical dimension to the forefront of documentary spectatorship.

Tajiri continues her informal taxonomy of mediation with a superimposed title that corresponds closely to the previous ones: “Attack on Pearl Harbor HISTORY 1941 Universal News” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Once again, she emphasizes history, while showing newsreel images of Pearl Harbor’s aftermath. We see people scurrying, a ruptured water main, billowing smoke, stretcher-bearers, and an automobile covered with bullet holes. A witness describes what took place. Tajiri fades out on the witness’ account, cutting to black over expository narration: “There are things which have happened for which the only images that exist are in the minds of the observers present at the time” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). In this way, Tajiri references observation and quasi-perceptual mental imagery that mimics perceptual experience. As we have seen, *History and Memory* includes various forms of representation. Each is different and no apparent hierarchy is indicated. In the judiciary for example, witness testimony is elemental, forging mental imagery in minds of judges and juries. In this instance, discourse, language, and facts are of the essence. Then again, mental images require imagining. As the documentary *The Thin Blue Line* demonstrates,

these mental images are at a remove from actual events. Imagining is central to documentary as well. Without doubt, something analogous takes place when social actors are interviewed. In *History and Memory*, Tajiri employs the performative mode to reflect on several methods of representing reality. In the end, each appears indeterminate with respect to the reality it represents. This indeterminacy contrasts other modes, where a greater value of certain methods is intrinsic. For instance, the observational mode emphasizes direct recording of a profilmic event. This direct recording accords observation greater value than expository narration for example, thus conferring confidence in observation's inherent accuracy. The reflexive and performative modes fall outside this favouring of specific representational methods. The reflexive mode interrogates documentary normativity. The reflexive modality shows the potentially illusory conditions of documentary conventions, as well as the inherent complexity of documentary representation. The performative is apt to use all modalities at the same time as amending them, including the reflexive. No apparent hierarchy is in place in *History and Memory*. Reality remains mercurial and indeterminate in this documentary.

In voice-over, Tajiri makes an enigmatic assertion: "There are things which have happened for which there have been no observers except for the spirits of the dead" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). This statement references two simultaneous, yet contrasting narratives about the disappearance of the Tajiri house. Scrolling text describes her grandfather's spirit witness the house removal. The other account is simultaneous voice-over by Tajiri's father, an American serviceman during the war. He explains that the Government requisitioned the house for Navy use. Authorities denied family members' requests to go there, and it eventually disappeared without trace.

Unlike the grandfather's spirit, the father is a non-observer. He lacks definite images of what occurred. Consequently, he does not know if the house was demolished or removed. The description attributed to the grandfather's spirit is ambiguous or polysemic. It could be straightforward narrative, or point to some metaphysical dimension. Fantastic narrative contrivance does occur within documentary. For example, Tajiri shows clips from Government films with fanciful depictions of the internment, implausible propaganda meant to be credible. The grandfather's description of authorities lifting the house off its foundation is just as conceivable as its demolition. Albeit unusual, within a performative context the phantom observer is illuminating. Despite that, documentary excess can be problematical, particularly to conventional appreciation. While not crystalline in this instance, Heidegger's Greek-derived notion of poiesis can be helpful. Heidegger wanted poiesis understood to its full extent and in its Greek sense. To help explain this Greek meaning, Heidegger quoted Plato: "Every occasion for whatever passes beyond the nonpresent and goes forward into presencing is poiesis, bringing-forth" (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 10). In Heideggerian thought, poiesis conveys the effect of harmonizing Being, duration and matter. It comprises attunement with object and world, shaping and forming that propels the world forward. Generally speaking, Tajiri uses poiesis in ways that broaden typical conceptions of empiricism. The notion of poiesis is contemplated here not only with respect to *History and Memory*, but documentary ontology as a whole.

Atypical formal methods are apt raise questions about a documentary's connection with reality. While distinctive in its representation, *History and Memory* does not proceed as if actuality is nonessential or does not exist. Reality is obviously important

to Tajiri's text. We see an old photograph of her family in front of their house and we understand that this photograph references the historical world. We also see that this documentary is different from the norm. Important difference lies in how it represents in ways that emphasize experiential, perceptual, poetic, and imaginary aspects of reality's perception. Our poetic concinnity with object and world become more important than averment, factuality, and pretense of objectivity. Without elaboration or proof, the grandfather's spirit is made witness to the house's removal. The Tajiri house is certainly gone, though the means of representing its departure is anomalous. That representation notwithstanding, Rea Tajiri advances critical epistemological questions. These questions have to do with the presence or absence of observers. Something takes place and someone observes it. Alternately, there is no one to observe what takes place. All the same, what happened is represented in some way. This line of reasoning brings us to the enigma of documentary and a tacit question within *History and Memory*: How does one go about representing reality? In the case of the house's disappearance, Tajiri employs a narrative that describes its removal. With no physical observer available, a deceased grandfather watches the event unfold. Although plainly not typical historical method, Tajiri has provided a plausible narrative about what happened to the house. Albeit represented in a fantastic way, its design is not that unusual. In certain ways it resembles the omniscient camera in fiction film, or the disembodied voice of an expository mode narrator.

Tajiri blurs conventional dichotomies of Western epistemology. In this way, usual distinctions become obscured. We are no longer confident about differences between real and imaginary, documentary and fiction, and physical and metaphysical, for example.

Reception is affected as well. Along with habitual paradigms, determinacy is undermined. Tajiri's depictions of the missing house are germane in this regard. Uncertainty begins with grandfather's spirit: Is this spirit meant to be real or imaginary? Is this representation documentary or fiction? Is Tajiri making a metaphysical assertion or not? We are not positive because there is no dominant contention about what took place. Instead, we are presented with equally pertinent narratives in which the house was demolished or moved. Tajiri brings about indeterminacy by disseminating incommensurable meanings. One narrative comes to us in scrolling text, another concurrently in her father's voice. The historical world becomes uncertain. In place of convincing argumentation, Tajiri fosters indeterminacy. This indeterminacy vitiates expectations that *History and Memory* will attempt to persuade or tell us what is true. At the same time, it cultivates spectator freedom, individuated perception, and independent thinking. In "The Question Concerning Technology" revealing has to do with movement from concealed to unconcealed, and freedom has to do with the open (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology"). In documentary, revealing is contingent on reality and observation. Indeterminacy veils reality so it can be revealed, thus creating conditions for reality to move into the open. Relative to most documentaries, *History and Memory* provides neither persuasive argumentation nor determinate meaning. In the end, the spectator reveals.

Without doubt, documentary represents the historical world, something having occurred in the past. In the performative, the referent is situated in the past as well. Nevertheless, active spectatorship is critical, with conspicuous stress on the here and now. In this light, the relative lack of persuasion within the performative becomes

explicit. When documentary persuades, the spectator is apt to be swayed. This persuasion process is how documentary normally operates. In the performative however, the author does not endeavour to establish determinate reality. Not so engaged in persuasion, the documentarian activates personal, situated forms of revealing. As opposed to orienting the text to influence a collection of spectators, this personal revealing grounds ontology within the individual. Of course, the individual is addressed by persuasive argumentation as well. However, in endeavouring to establish historical reality, persuasion speaks to a wider group. And like most documentary, the performative is disseminated to an aggregate of viewers. Even so, the performative addresses the spectator in ways that are disengaged from persuasion. This disengagement from persuasion is in keeping with phenomenology, existentialism, and poststructuralism, philosophical views that emphasize the individual, perception, and being. It contrasts perspectives that inform conventional documentary, perspectives with prehensions involving realism, positivism and conventional empiricism. Undoubtedly, individuated forms of revealing are present in all manner of documentary. So too is ambiguity and active spectatorship. However, in *History and Memory*, Rea Tajiri openly devalues persuasive argumentation. Her address is indeterminate and reception requires individuated activity. Along these lines, Tajiri affords the spectator considerable discretion relative to represented reality. What follows is at variance with documentary in the main.

Looked at one way, observational footage of the Pearl Harbor attack appears straightforward and understandable. Documentarians typically draw on this type of shot to make persuasive claims about reality. It is the kind of shot that comprises the unfolding historical world recorded by the camera, representational averment regarding what took

place. While it does serve this purpose, Tajiri's use of this type of shot overshadows this particular rationale. As previously noted, she presents the footage with reference to classifying observation. It is but one method of representing observation, a time when the camera is present to record actuality unfold. In this context, the importance of the shot relative to the historical world becomes attenuated. Its purpose is no longer merely to provide persuasive argumentation about the historical world. Its function is also to illustrate a system of classification. Without question, filmic signification is not so elementary to have unalloyed purpose and effect. Plainly, signification is complex and multifaceted. The reality of the Pearl Harbor attack endures as factual occurrence in *History and Memory*. That Pearl Harbor fact is never in question. All the same, the event is but one part of a heterogeneous wreath of signification figuring represented reality. The occurrence is no longer attainable as reality unfolding, although its disparate signifiers are within reach. Accordingly, Tajiri shows the Pearl Harbor attack to describe several ways of representing reality. She presents the attack not as simple observation, but as performative. Part of this performativity relates to ways in which we observe and represent. Another element pertains to uncertainty that fact, fiction, the real, and imaginary can be divided in unequivocal ways. As such, the observational footage is not taken simply as reality unfolding in a straightforward way.

Continually interwoven with the historical world is Rea Tajiri the documentarian. Consequently, Tajiri's personal history is never far from our consciousness. This history contains multiple familial narratives that are fundamental to her discourse. During the war, certain family members were sent to camps while others served on the American side. In addition, there was the requisition of the family's house and its subsequent



disappearance. Tajiri shows us discrete narrative formations regarding this missing house. We see how observation becomes contingent and indeterminate. Meaning is revealed in fragments as diffusion of meaning. The text becomes a heterogeneous complex of signification performed. Just as there is no master narrative, divisions between subject and object, real and imaginary, as well as fact and fiction are blurred. Along with her own subjectivity, Tajiri emphasizes the viewer's subjective position. The emphasis is not on observable facts, but multiple subjective asseverations based on observation.

As documentary, Tajiri's depiction of her grandfather's spirit is exceptionally particularized. By representing observations of her deceased grandfather, she interfolds the actual with memory and imaginary. Plainly, this joining of actuality with memory and imagination is unusual. How, after all, is a documentary spectator to interpret a representation from out of this world and what could it mean? Is it history as memory, personal interpretation, reflection, or imagination? Consequently, this otherworld representation places the spectator in a decidedly subjective position. Just as Tajiri has made creative treatment of actuality, the viewer is compelled to treat her creative treatment creatively. We can reject it as excess, think about it as metaphor, consider it to blur lines between real and imaginary, take it literally and so forth. In the world of documentary, the observations of a dead person are so idiosyncratic to be tantamount to the author herself. In an analogous tenor, a title in *History and Memory* reads: "Father's voice 1990" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). It does not say filmmaker's father's voice or my father's voice, or any other phrase that separates documentarian from text. In a way distinct from other documentary, it appears as if Rea Tajiri has become the text. It follows then, if Tajiri and the text are one, father's voice is

speaking. Evidently, this is but one interpretation. Then again, regardless of how its atypical elements are construed, *History and Memory* connects with Rea Tajiri in significant ways. She places unusual accent on her own social subjectivity, while consistently constraining notions of objective perception. Because of the text's distinctive subjectivity, personal history and ethical space, we are compelled to appreciate it in particularized ways.

Documentary relies on causality and narrative in ways that resemble historiography. And reminiscent of history, documentary is produced in a different time and space from whence ultimately viewed. Moreover, the referent lies within the historical world, far from the spectator. Along these lines, documentary involves discrete spaces and temporalities that entail multiple positions and subjectivities. Inevitably, connection to the referent is abstruse and can be a source of apprehension. Therefore, difficulty representing history is a central theme of *History and Memory*. In connection with this problem of representing history, Tajiri eschews conventional narrative and causality. Instead, she advances subjective representations, personal history as narrative, and points to ethical space as a way of being. This method bears closer resemblance to memory and oral history, which can appear within a varied array of genres (Tonkin 2-3). In ways unlike conventional historiography, meaning of oral history is contingent on profoundly situational social context, as well as knowledge of particular genre. Inevitably we perform our histories, subjective representations and ethical relations in singular ways. This representing is different from how we organize and regulate history as a formal narrative object. No matter how history is structured however, its abstruseness can frustrate our longing to know. Unlike the here and now, the referent remains apart. Like

all performative documentary, *History and Memory* is distinctive. In certain ways, this documentary is reminiscent of how we go about social life and relate to the Other. In confronting formal expectations, Tajiri's text resembles the idiom of personal expression.

The next sequence introduces an excerpt from a 1942 propaganda film. Here a Government spokesman offers palliation regarding the internment camps. A title discloses its origins: "'Japanese Relocation' 1942, Dept. of War Information" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Another title appears during the spokesman's discourse: "Who Chose What Story to Tell?" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). As a rhetorical question underscoring narrative subjectivity, this question places *History and Memory* in contradistinction with the Government of the day. More generally, the question points to documentary serving political and ideological agendas. Plainly, the War Department assumed that the Government possessed moral authority and behaved responsibly. The spokesman stated:

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor our west coast became a potential combat zone. Living in that zone were more than a hundred thousand persons of Japanese ancestry. Two-thirds of them American citizens. One-third aliens. We knew that some among them were potentially dangerous. But no one knew what would happen among this concentrated population if Japanese forces should try to invade our shores (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

Undoubtedly, the above statement is meant to justify the mass incarceration. However, various other narratives can be derived as well. The spokesman is shown in medium shot, clean-cut, orderly, and thoughtful. He is seated at a desk with books, papers, and bureaucratic appurtenances. Behind him is an American flag. Screen left, a globe rests on a bookcase. In a medium close-up, the screen right flag is close to the spokesman's head, while the globe is screen left. The mise-en-scène is structured to make known a homiletic

authority figure, a qualified explicator of Government actions. Various signifiers suggest that he speaks on the Government's behalf. Other signifiers allude to global geopolitics. He appears supported by knowledge, worldliness, and the trappings of a bureaucrat. Moreover, he seems to be a judicious geopolitical interpreter, particularly regarding domestic security. On the whole, the scene conveys paternalism and moral authority in advocating Japanese-American incarceration. In the *History and Memory* context however, its meaning becomes transformed from serviceable propaganda to political and ideological racism. Nevertheless, its inclusion in *History and Memory* goes beyond exposing the government of the day. It also exhibits social subjectivity as constitutive of representing reality.

The rhetorical question "Who Chose What Story to Tell?" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*), manifests distinct reflexivity. Just as it applies to the Department of War, it applies to Tajiri making *History and Memory*. Regarding the wartime excerpt, one could well ask: Who chose to tell this story? On the face of it, we find no simple answer. The spokesman could be an elected official, a Government employee or an actor. We do not know if he is simply reading, or if he has penned the words he speaks. In addition, the mise-en-scène is charged with signifiers. This unmarked authorship creates a referential conundrum. Who is he? Was this his office or a stage set? Furthermore, he tells us that because some may not be trustworthy, persons of Japanese ancestry must be confined. Evidently, this constitutes questionable ethics. Then again, the provenance of this discourse is not entirely clear. Apparently, the Government is speaking via a military establishment administrator. But government is not homogeneous, particularly in a liberal democracy. It can be subject to internal contention, external

pressures, and caprice. Consequently, the propaganda is more readily political asseveration than determinate voice. Because the Second World War context is not re-established within current settings, historical disrelation occludes its original meaning. Although one can suppose from whence it came, like the signified, the original context is absent. What remains is *History and Memory*. And this context can only be established by the spectator's interaction with the text. Just as Tajiri is one with her text, the War Department is speaking as well, albeit in a different way. Even so, we can only consider it in the contemporary context. As performative documentary, this works well. As Government propaganda, it fails. Once again, we are left with the question: Who chose to tell this story?

Later, Tajiri excerpts *Japanese Relocation* (*Japanese Relocation*) one more time.

Additional context is provided by way of original rolling text:

Following the outbreak of the present war, it became necessary to transfer several thousand Japanese residents from the Pacific Coast to points in the American Interior. This is an historical record of the operation, as carried out by the United States Army and the War Relocation Authority. The narrator is Milton S. Eisenhower, who was director of the War Relocation Authority during the initial period of the transfer (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

We also learn that the film was produced by the Office of War Information Bureau of Motion Pictures. *History and Memory* was released in 1992. *Japanese Relocation* was not easily available at that time.<sup>14</sup> At time of writing however, it can be viewed on the Internet (*Japanese Relocation*). While still historically remote, to be able to view the entire film, as well as see additional credits and information, makes its original context less arcane. This viewing changes the context from exclusive information to information that is readily accessible.<sup>15</sup> The spectator can now readily ascertain that the film was

presented by the United States Government, and distributed under the auspices of the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry. Milton S. Eisenhower, director of The War Relocation Authority, is the writer as well as narrator. In this case, its meaning has shifted from its original production, to quotation in *History and Memory*, to be modified again because of ready availability via the World Wide Web. As Milton S. Eisenhower is the only one credited on the film, Tajiri's question is answered to some extent. Seemingly, Milton S. Eisenhower told the story.

Milton S. Eisenhower was brother to future President Dwight D. Eisenhower, then Supreme Commander of Allied forces in Europe. He was a prominent member of the American establishment, an office holder with several university presidencies during his extensive career (Eisenhower). *Japanese Relocation's* orthodoxy relative to Government policy makes it dubitable in a way that Rea Tajiri is not. Although he clearly takes credit and responsibility for *Japanese Relocation*, to call Milton S. Eisenhower its author would be quixotic. Its web of institutional associations makes the provenance of its authorship all but unknown. The author could be the War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry. It could be the United States Government or it could be the uncredited director. *Japanese Relocation* was subject to the exigencies of several institutions backing its production and distribution. While the various institutions' roles in its authorship are inexplicit, its discourse clearly transcends one man. Eisenhower is a spokesman for something many-faceted, extensive, elaborate, and amorphous. For that reason, Tajiri's question about who chose what story to tell is germane. It bespeaks uncertainty when faced with representation of reality. And yet, despite his questionable message, Eisenhower's performance connotes intellect, knowledge, and a duty-bound

government concerned with national security. Within the tendrils of this discourse, the question who chose what story to tell remains inscrutable. Ultimately, Tajiri's question becomes a rhetorical one.

To a 1942 spectator, the question about who is telling the story would play differently from today. The expository tenor of *Japanese Relocation* suggests Milton S. Eisenhower is knowledgeable and trustworthy. Many of that era, would expect his discourse amounted to truth. While one cannot know the mind of a war era viewer, a contemporary spectator would see it differently. The outmoded propaganda is fettered by present-day questions regarding authorship, subjectivity, and ideology. *History and Memory* performativity is informed by poststructuralist and postmodern thinking, which alters meaning as well. Even by itself, the old style propaganda of *Japanese Relocation* discomposes contemporary reception. However, by interposing who chose which story to tell, Tajiri disrupts propaganda all the more, altering meaning in crucial ways. She connotes subjectivity while demonstrating indeterminacy, notably regarding authorship. One could contend authorship is not the point, because essential knowledge comes from the text. Nevertheless, by interposing written text over propaganda film, Tajiri transforms signification and foments certain perspectives with respect to subjectivity and ideology. This authorship actuates spectatorship in ways more consonant with the birth of the reader than the death of the author. Without doubt, the lacuna between the 1942 spectator and a contemporary one is significant. It has to do with the caesura of historical worlds separated by passage of time. It demonstrates how ontology transcends correctness and factuality. It shows that documentary ontology depends on how revealing is cast as well.

Tajiri cuts from the *Japanese Relocation* excerpt to a musical number from the 1942 Warner Brothers studio film *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (*Yankee Doodle Dandy*). Its initial close-up depicts marching soldiers with an actor resembling Theodore Roosevelt. The American flag flutters behind him, prominent within the screen. The next shot has actors made to look like American workers, marching and singing a patriotic song: “We’re one for all and all for one behind the man behind the gun. And now that we’re in it we’re going to win it” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige; Yankee Doodle Dandy*). Tajiri includes a simultaneous, competing discourse, a family oral history entitled: “1989, Aunt Betsy remembers Pearl Harbor Day” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). In voice-over, Betsy recalls her father inspiring a neighbour, a young Japanese-American soldier home on furlough when Pearl Harbor was attacked. The camera remains on *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, showing the workers amass and become immotile before a tableau vivant of soldiers loading a canon. The flag flies conspicuously behind them. The ensuing shot reveals the tableau vivant from a different angle, now on stage. The curtains close and the sequence continues with tap dancing and showy costumes reiterating the American ensign motif. James Cagney in military uniform dances with supporting female dancers awash in stars and stripes. Taken as a whole, this excerpt embodies several distinct impressions. Significantly, it conveys a broad expression of patriotism intended to rouse support for the war.

*Yankee Doodle Dandy* seems dated within the *History and Memory* context, its dearth of so-called visible minorities forming one conspicuous omission. Several researchers have posited a deep-rooted bias in Hollywood cinema according to a racial order. This bias favours whiteness, a prejudice which amends according to cultural



context and time (Bernardi; Denzin; Guerrero). Exclusion is one way this prejudice operates (Larson 15). In this sense, the nonappearance of ethnic minorities can be considered to reflect ideology and convention of the day. This absence plays in a distinctive way within *History and Memory*. An earlier sequence describes Rea Tajiri's sister's fascination with Hollywood stills. Tajiri commented in voice-over: "The strange thing of course, when I thought about it later, was that the photos were of white people" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Aunt Betsy's oral history describes her father quietly encourage a young Japanese-American soldier fearing discrimination because of Pearl Harbor. In this sequence and what precedes it, racial segregation unfolds as complex and intricate interplay of propagandistic representation, patriotic nationalism, and public policy. This racial segregation is true not only of internment camps, but of that era's representational practices as well. *Japanese Relocation* and *Yankee Doodle Dandy* evince nationalism, propaganda, racial policy, and racism, the germ of a metanarrative about that period in time. Despite that, Tajiri subverts the tendency toward master narrative. Quite the opposite, Aunt Betsy's talk and simultaneous play with *Yankee Doodle Dandy* render history elaborate. By showing reality and its representation as multi-faceted, simultaneous discourses attenuate the impulse toward master narrative. It provides the spectator with scopious discourses while suggesting other potential ones from which revealing can occur. As a result, the cast of revealing becomes markedly personal.

Tajiri fades to black on the *Yankee Doodle Dandy* sequence, fading up on a chalkboard slate within the Salinas Assembly Center. In voice-over, she explains that her maternal and paternal relatives were interned while her father served in the American

military. Rousing *Yankee Doodle Dandy* music runs concurrently with these images. “Salinas Assembly Center #14” is inscribed on one side of the slate, with “Salinas, Scene –14, Take-1, Camera-32” on its opposite (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). In the background, two adult females set in communal quarters with rows of cots prepare to be filmed. The next shot is from the same position, now showing several children previously obscured by the slate. In this shot, we see social actors act in a naturalistic way. This excerpt is identified with titles: “National Archives RG 111 (Relocation of Japanese Aliens), “APARTMENT” 1942, U.S. Army Signal Corps Outtakes” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). The spectator observes a compelling contrast between this sequence and the preceding one. As a militaristic musical drawing on expressive costuming, ostentatious sets, and a choreographed mise-en-scène, the *Yankee Doodle Dandy* excerpt displays conspicuous artifice. In addition to aesthetic pleasure, it expresses an ideological reality of wartime propaganda. *History and Memory* represents this ideological reality by displaying *Yankee Doodle Dandy* as an appurtenant historical artefact. This representation can be seen as historical method, as well as document quotation. Among other things, it demonstrates certain indoctrination practices of the day. As noted, Tajiri’s documentary does not frame this representation within a metanarrative or distinct causality pattern.

The subsequent Salinas Assembly Center footage denotes another way of representing reality. Although the original purpose of this filming is uncertain, it appears to have been intended for propaganda use. While the camera is tripod mounted and predates popular dissemination of the observational mode, it appears to have an analogous purpose. Its studied appearance suggests a propaganda objective. However,

within *History and Memory* Tajiri abrogates any such serviceability. She achieves this subversion by showing an initial outtake of social actors preparing to be filmed. By juxtaposing shots, Tajiri alters meaning. What would have appeared as naturalistic unfolding reality is revealed within *History and Memory* to be a pseudo-event. Furthermore, we cannot know that this is the Salinas Assembly Center. After all, it might be some other location in its stead. The spectator may now consider the dormitory setting to be contrived as well. Nevertheless, the critical point is not whether this image is of the Assembly Center or not. We now understand the setting is staged, and we may speculate that the setting is a stage. In this way, Tajiri has established indeterminacy regarding veracity and signification. We cannot know with assuredness what this reality was. In contradistinction, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* provides palpable citation of wartime propaganda, ideology, and mass indoctrination. Its significance within *History and Memory* is not as represented reality but as historical artefact. It says something tangible about that time. It is what it is. Unlike the Assembly Center footage, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* is not pretending to be what it is not.

We normally understand Hollywood musical and observational documentary as disparate objects. The Hollywood musical is a phantasmagorical representation related to the culture of its time. Observational documentary is a more or less direct representation of reality. However, within *History and Memory* Tajiri unsettles normal reception by interspersing the two. The observational documentary in question shows actors preparing to be filmed, followed by their acting in a naturalistic way. This juxtaposition inverts meaning. The more important signification now lies in the outtake, subjects readying themselves as social actors in a performance destined for propaganda use. At this point,

Tajiri's reflexive scrutiny puts simulated reality on display. Significantly different meaning now lies in the subsequent shot, propaganda depicting internees as well treated and complacent people. Of course, this depiction is ethically questionable. It might be especially disquieting to a contemporary viewer, in contrast to a member of the target audience of the time. Yet, while showing signs of racism, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* brings forward rich connotation as a germane historical artefact. By way of these juxtapositions, Tajiri demonstrates how documentary is sometimes more effectively understood as a historical artefact. It manifests a corporeality that is not present when we consider it contiguous with reality. However, even as an artefact, documentary could not be actuality itself. There is no transcendence. Not the signified, documentary remains reality represented.

Hollywood musical and observational documentary elements within *History and Memory* can be perceived in many ways. As social and cultural figurations that reveal the actuality of the times, each is an artefact. Within *History and Memory*, the distinction between artifice and reality can be abstruse. Viewed as historical artefact, each excerpt engenders something substantial regarding the reality of its day. Then again, this representation is not presented as contiguous with reality in ways we have come to expect. As artefacts, their connection with reality is recondite, though still palpable. For example, Americans in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* are Caucasian. In shots representing the Salinas Assembly Center, except one of a medical examiner, social actors are of Japanese descent. As portrayed here and elsewhere, the American body politic is Caucasian and the acquiescent Other, Japanese. This representation provides the spectator with thought-provoking information. In spite of this materiality, its effect is uncertain. It can seem

significant. Alternately, it can simply vanish from the spectator's mind as just another ideological trapping, racial objectification attached to the war. As elsewhere within *History and Memory*, spectator agency is critical. Furthermore, as evinced by Tajiri's wartime propaganda, this agency is often entwined with history. Together with conspicuous division according to race, this propaganda evinces a consistent ideology.

A contemporary viewer would consider this ideological manifestation intrinsic to its historical context. Still, *History and Memory* is not just about propaganda and ideology. *History and Memory* is about the reality of that time as well. Along these lines, Tajiri problematizes the notion of Japanese as Other by showing it to be a construct. She achieves this effect by layering the audio accompanying the *Yankee Doodle Dandy* excerpt with a recording of Aunt Betsy who recalls her father inspiring a young Japanese-American soldier on leave. In addition, Tajiri points to the irony of her family being interned while her father served in the United States military. Tajiri's expository narration carries into black between the *Yankee Doodle Dandy* and Salinas Assembly Center footage. Apart from forming a connection between these contrastive representations, it confounds the racial segregation these texts advance. After all, their connotations are explicit: Patriotic Americans are Caucasians from all walks of life and support the war effort. Japanese are beneficently administered, acquiescent subjects. By interjecting family history within the propaganda, Tajiri's voice-over discomposes these notions of benevolence and assent. This oral history recounts a warm and candid anecdote, while signifying Japanese-Americans serving the United States during a time that their relations were immured. Apart from exposing wartime propaganda as sciolist, it raises several questions about American minorities' participation in the war. It establishes

this reality as significant, meaningful, and variegated, while engendering curiosity about the internment.

In *Japanese Relocation*, Milton S. Eisenhower declared: “We knew that some among them were potentially dangerous” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). In this way, the *Japanese Relocation* viewer receives an impression of endangerment, even though Eisenhower admits the absence of evidence that specific risk exists. He simply contends conjecture that some Japanese could pose a risk. Therefore, whereas Eisenhower’s statement posits uncertainty, it also suggests a menace. Plainly, speculation that something could happen does not constitute endangerment. Furthermore, speculation does not constitute justification to imprison an entire ethnic group. More plausibly, sequestering was a practicable method of restraining Japanese activities and limiting communications. Internment made surveillance more manageable. Eisenhower’s dictum can therefore be understood as rhetorical propaganda intended to justify the Government undertaking the internment camps. As Milton S. Eisenhower professed, the internment scheme was not based on evidence. The internment was based in speculation and fear. The historical artefacts signify certain things about orthodoxy of the day. By a variety of means in which propaganda plays a critical role, ideology pervades society and its culture, ultimately becoming a part of history. Along these lines, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* portrays the American war effort as uniquely Caucasian. Subsequently, this racist representation becomes quotation within *History and Memory*, as well as subject matter for this dissertation.

While they are disparate forms of representation, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *Japanese Relocation*, and the Salinas Assembly Center footage evince analogous positions regarding racial segregation. Taken as a whole, they characterize the dominant group as steadfast and patriotic, Caucasians giving their all in the war effort. In contrast, Japanese are the untrustworthy, albeit tractable Other. Even supposing this representation to be effective at advancing segregation and holding patriotism in a partisan light, this racism is at a remove from reality. More readily, this representation is ideology, propaganda, and manufacture of consent. *Japanese Relocation* and the Salinas Assembly Center footage in particular, abet the internment scheme. While granting that this representation occurred in another historical context, Tajiri's oral history vitiates this propaganda in a cogent way. Aunt Betsy's recollection speaks of distress among Japanese-Americans following Pearl Harbor. Moreover, references to Japanese-American war contributions contrast assertions of security risk. Japanese-American participation in the war effort signals the viewer that the propaganda is ideological and contrived. Juxtaposition of oral history with propaganda deepens the spectator's consideration of internment, its iniquities and many ramifications. Plainly, Tajiri is critiquing a human rights fiasco, though she is also revealing representation that supported it. Undoubtedly, certain propaganda was serviceable in bringing about the camps. Nevertheless, she does not simply bring their content into question. Their serviceability as propaganda and instruments of mass immuration are immanent within their modality as well. As a documentary mode, this formal structuring is part of what the contemporary performative sets out to address.

A slate shot identified as “Salinas” is followed by observational footage of internees. Two titles appear: “Canteen” and “1989, Mother views footage” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Canteen refers to black and white archival film, in which Tajiri’s mother is heard on the audio track commenting on the footage. The film shows children eating ice cream and adolescents leaning against a service counter. Unexceptional in its original form, Tajiri makes the shot anomalous by way of visual effect. She manipulates temporality with several freeze-frames that punctuate normal duration. On the audio track, Tajiri’s mother is confounded at not being able to recall a canteen. Her voice is mixed with the continuing jingoistic song from *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. The music lingers, mixing with another contemporary discussion, Aunt Yoshiko talking about wartime hysteria. Other video ensues: A Japanese man is fingerprinted, followed by a woman handing a camera to authorities. Varying possibilities relate to these indicia. Given that the mother cannot recall the canteen, the contingency arises that this representation could be a pseudo-event. Alternately, it remains possible that there was a canteen, but she has forgotten it. Elsewhere in *History and Memory*, Tajiri references her mother having repressed memories. Plausibly, footage attributed to Salinas was confused with The Poston Relocation Center, where she does recall a canteen. Regardless of whatever contingency is true, the documentary’s contiguous connection to reality has been destabilized. Because of this destabilization, determinate meaning is not attainable.

The impetus behind Tajiri’s temporal manipulation is uncertain. There are many possibilities. It could be as simple as technical considerations related to shot length. Whatever her representational intent may have been, by moulding temporal duration



Tajiri renders the archival footage conspicuously subjective. With duration ruptured by freeze-frames, there comes about allegorical connotations related to passage of time. More crucial however, any vestige of objective temporality is lost. Visual evidence no longer seems contiguous with reality. The spectator's perception becomes analogous to that of a documentarian: Time and space shaped by the filmmaker. When Tajiri breaches temporal regularity, the image becomes unstable and ephemeral. In this way, she has destabilized the correlation between visual substantiation and reality. As well, represented reality is challenged by her mother who was at the camp. With several contingencies and contradictions attenuating averment, the archival footage takes on an indeterminate aspect. Once intended as persuasive evidence, within *History and Memory* it no longer appears as such. What is signified is difficult to ascertain. The text becomes an amalgam of uncertain meaning. Whereas determinacy is attenuated, the corollary is augmented, an exudation of signification and pronounced dissemination of conceivable meanings. Diversiform discourses mingle and collide, resulting in a multiplicity of voices. The text animates discrete forms of perception. The spectator is impelled to generate meaning from an indeterminate field of signification. In this way, ephemeral meaning is embedded within spectator agency, directed and determined by activity. It is reality performed.

The performative mode often exhibits what Michael Renov calls "documentary poetics" (Renov "Toward a Poetics of Documentary"). As an element of nonfiction film since its genesis, poetics are not unusual in documentary. As a prominent aspect of the performative, we can be tempted to gaze at poetics in isolation. However, not one but several elements give the performative its power. Its poetics are more effectively

understood as one aspect of mutually reinforcing positive feedback. Nevertheless, within this all-encompassing representational context, poetics often manifest in pronounced ways. And while plainly not exclusive to the performative, these poetics can appear particularly salient. For example, poetics are evident within two sequential shots entitled “NAVY DOCTOR EXAMINES BOY” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). These shots fall between the already cited “APARTMENT” and “CANTEEN” outtakes (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). The first shot is a brief overexposed blurry slate shot. We discern vague outlines, what is subsequently revealed to be a doctor and boy waiting to be filmed. As with the Apartment outtakes, this shot indicates that the social actors are not behaving spontaneously. They are performing for the camera. Observational filming is supposed to be unobtrusive recording of subjects not distinctly responding to being filmed. This obscured filming preparation indicates that the second shot, the one intended for dissemination, is not truly observational. Ironically, the obscure slate shot in which they prepare for filming is precisely that, an observational shot. At this point, we must grant a certain excursiveness which applies a contemporary perspective to a 1940s shot. Nevertheless, the shot signals something critical. Despite seeming to disregard the camera, the social actors are addressing the camera. Tajiri’s play of concealment and revealment brings performance to the fore. At the same time, the unfocused image affords a distinct reflexive expression of the filmic apparatus. It makes for an unusual documentary shot, partly because of its opacity, but also owing to its non-concrete compositional qualities that evoke avant-garde cinema aesthetics.

During the subsequent shot revealing the doctor examining the boy, Tajiri employs several freeze-frames. Almost subliminal, these freeze-frames are so brief and attenuate that they could pass unrecognized. Nevertheless, the freeze-frames are perceptible and express a great deal about temporality, duration, and filmic representation. The freeze-frame shot and the preceding opaque one embody poetics that positions the viewer in a particular way. Instead of representing with conviction, or issuing determinate meaning, the imagery situates the spectator within poietic conditions. Perhaps most familiar in certain works of fine art, these poietic conditions can attune perception and cerebration in distinctive ways to do with temporality and existence in the world. The documentary cadence is deflected from the referent to the spectator's interaction with the film object. This interaction with the object is poiesis' marrow. Instead of being about reality, poiesis is of reality. The illusion of contiguous connection to the historical world has been interrupted and rendered chimerical by the freeze-frame effect. In this instance and within the performative in general, the signified becomes indeterminate, particularly as the signified relates to temporality and duration. Indeterminacy forms a critical aberration relative to the other modes, and the spectator is impelled to shape and form representational material. This dynamic is actuated when the text does not exhort a determinative signified, or alternately, undermines suggestion of one. Reality is not revealed in a candid way. As with poiesis, reality is transforming and continuous.

The navy doctor shot gives the impression that internees are given qualified medical care. However, other shots suggesting social actors performing, as well as the mother's inability to recall the canteen, attenuate this impression of compassion.

Asseveration loses conviction, becoming contingent and indeterminate. In addition, there is temporal manipulation. Because social actor performance has become perceptible through slate shots, the actuality of other observational-like footage within *History and Memory* becomes uncertain. In spite of conspicuous symbols of military authority and the medical profession, the navy doctor's identity becomes contingent. We may wonder if this man is a doctor or an actor. Given such uncertainty, Tajiri reading her uncle's letter becomes more persuasive than pretended medical care. The uncle's allusion to being wounded as an American soldier, as well as the history of the Japanese-American 442<sup>nd</sup> Regional Combat Team (Duus; Masuda, Masuda and Bridgman), contrasts the compliant boy. In effect, the uncle's description makes the Government footage seem ironic. After all, his words arise from unmediated existence, whereas the medical care appears staged. Granting that aural signification usually carries less authority than visual, the relative cogency of each is transposed. The aural becomes persuasive, the visual less so. Still, as documentary poetics, the freeze-framed navy doctor examining boy shot has extraordinarily powerful effect. It captivates while deracinating assumptions regarding medical ethics and authority. It has within it the beautiful and sublime, poignantly revealing opprobrium connected with human rights in a democratic society. Contrary to its initial propaganda design, the imagery brings about a nihilistic impression. In contrast, the uncle's personal history bespeaks ontology linked to specific subjective experience. Because his discourse is grounded in life lived, his personal history eclipses the doctor and boy.

Historical method is a salient leitmotiv of *History and Memory*. This recurring theme is brought about by way of tensions between historical method and documentary

avermment, between representing the historical world and undermining its representation. The question who chose which story to tell, addresses fundamental questions of subjectivity to historical method. This question also draws attention to an attempt to establish a history by way of political propaganda. In this way, Tajiri highlights manufacture of social subjectivity while demonstrating the palpable subjectivity of truth claims. Within the ambit of this representation, ethics are never far behind. Authorship is axial, and Tajiri takes up the authorship question in relation to documentary. Historical artefacts are especially germane to her text as well. In *History and Memory*, these artefacts tend to be indeterminate, evoking poststructuralist play of signifiers and the absent signified. In addition, there is the performative predilection for the personal. In contrast, establishment discourses seem contrived and propagandistic. While these establishment discourses constitute averment, they have more to do with ideology, propaganda, and the pseudo-event than truth per-se. They retain the status of historical document, yet pale compared to personal, experiential accounts. In this way, the apartment shot loses cogent meaning as observational documentary. We cannot think of it as contiguous photographic representation of life in the camps. Nevertheless, the apartment shot is telling as propaganda, especially about authorship. Now, meaning can be found in relation to political discourse, or who chose which story to tell. From the point of view of authorship however, it is vacuous. In a significant way, ontology has shifted onto the viewer. Unadulterated propaganda, like *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, continues to stand as an object of history. However, within *History and Memory* propaganda's righteous and naïve message becomes attenuated. It seems alien, an enigma of history and passage of time.

Bill Nichols maintains that the performative does not put forward reality that is exclusively of our mind, but is “a felt tension between representation and represented” (Nichols "Performing Documentary" 106). The materiality of historical events is given within *History and Memory*. More critical to the performative is the accessing and representing of reality within formations of signification and perception. At its crux are unfolding perceptions within a wide range of representational practices. Without doubt, we are presented with visual and aural verisimilitude in documentary. However, if verisimilitude is documentary's strong point, it is its medusa as well. This contradiction becomes apparent when pseudo events abet the manufacture of consent. While Government footage in *History and Memory* does not show internment camp life, it clearly displays Second World War propaganda. Even so, Tajiri does not simply relegate this propaganda as misinformation. Propaganda's status to reality may be uncertain, however it still pronounces on history. Accordingly, Tajiri's emphasis is on various kinds of discourse and dissemination of textuality. All manner of things are at work within *History and Memory*, and classification tends to be irresolute. Representation is structured as strata of performance enfolding history, memory, and actuality. Within the propaganda are vestiges of pseudo events performed by social actors. However, we see contemporary activities as well, such as performances by Tajiri's mother and aunt. This range of representation can make reality seem at a remove, as something that relies on our imagination. While reality may well inhabit consciousness, it is not simply a perceptual artefact. At no time is the attitude solipsistic. Reality is extant, yet of perception and subject to diverse discursive possibilities.

Without doubt, the performative looks different. It alters other modes and transforms them by way of vagrant and mutable techniques. While this transforming can be expressive, at other times it can seem excessive. Tajiri's manipulation of temporal duration by way of freeze-frame is a case in point. By alternating still and motion photography, she transforms the appearance of the world. It brings about poietic transfiguration, duration, and continuation of the historical world. Auditory representation in *History and Memory* can seem unreserved as well. In one example of expressive auditory representation, Tajiri fashions a soundscape by combining Aunt Yoshiko's colloquial discussion with *Yankee Doodle Dandy* music. In one shot, a conservatively attired Japanese male is fingerprinted by a man in uniform. Following this shot, a Japanese woman hands a camera to men seated at a table. Over these shots are titles: "1988, Aunt Yoshiko" and "POSSESSION OF CAMERAS AND RADIOS PROHIBITED" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). The first title refers to a coffee shop-like acoustical space in which Aunt Yoshiko discusses that period of history. Alongside visuals of disciplinary controls such as fingerprinting and interdiction of photographic and radio equipment, Aunt Yoshiko describes a generalized anti-Japanese mind-set that suggests disintegrating human rights conditions. This point of view is reinforced by archival footage of Government discipline and control of the Japanese subject. At barely audible levels, Tajiri interweaves *Yankee Doodle Dandy* music with Aunt Yoshiko's testimonial. In this way, jingoistic musical discourse combines with oral history and photographic documentation. It affects a composite weave of signification connoting nationalism, racism, and control. This signification reaches a crescendo of portentous drumming when Aunt Yoshiko describes mass delirium

following the Pearl Harbor attack. This formal intricacy renders *History and Memory* difficult to divide into constituent parts, or comprehend in terms of conventional modality. The documentary whole, in other words, becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

Like a fugue, *History and Memory* has a multiform counterpoint structure. Because the text is protean in this way, to reduce it to integral components is problematical. To consider the text's constituents in isolation excludes the overall textual phenomenon with its synchronic visual and aural inputs. Each input is contingent on other inputs for contextual meaning. As follows, the overall phenomenon imparts more than any particular component. Reductionist criticism eliminates what is essential to the text. Therefore, in *History and Memory*, comprehensive conditions bring about a dissemination of contexts. Instead of being objectified or analyzed, represented reality is perceived ontologically. We are not impelled to treat reality as a standing-reserve. More accurately, we become immersed in phenomena that subsume the object. This orientation creates conditions consonant with experience of reality from the perspective set out in *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant). Here, Immanuel Kant set forth that things in themselves are not accessible:

Supposing that we should carry our empirical intuition even to the highest degree of clearness, we should not thereby advance one step nearer to a knowledge of the constitution of objects as things in themselves. For we could only, at best, arrive at a complete cognition of our own mode of intuition, that is, of our sensibility, and this always under the conditions originally attaching to the subject, namely, the conditions of space and time; -- while the question -- "What are objects considered as things in themselves?" remains unanswerable even after the most thorough examination of the phenomenal world (Kant 36).



According to this view, the world exists as our experience of it. The critical distinction regarding the performative is that perception is not of the represented thing in itself. Reality is, more readily, phenomena of the representational object. Even supposing this true of all documentaries, the performative is exceptional in how it embodies this ideation and embraces it as well.

Representational phenomena are evident in various forms of artistry, and these expressive elements are obviously present within all manner of documentaries. Poetics in all documentary modes are testament to this expression. So too are various forms of hybridization wherein documentaries freely mix modes of address. Nevertheless, deviations are what set the performative apart. This deviation arises from the phenomenal object and how the object affects the spectator. Although this dissertation endeavours to explicate these phenomena, what occurs between subject and object within contexts of space and time will always remain unique. There is caprice in representing with written text, alterity that could not be represented. Written text cannot bring about the experience of immediate perception, described here as Being of spectatorship. Therefore, in relating the importance of the here and now to the real, do I simply add to the standing-reserve? Without doubt, dominant aspects of culture can be difficult to get away from. Along these lines, the Ge-stell can seem enveloping, as though impossible escape. Heidegger understood the continual creating of standing-reserve to take us away from the real. He saw the real as a process of being and creating connected to revealing. Challenging revealing interfered with revealing by challenging forth the real as a standing-reserve. Taxonomy and interpretation can seem as if challenging forth the real as a standing-reserve. Yet, while interpretation has its place, textual reality remains within the here and

now of spectatorship. Critical analysis is obviously distinct from the here and now of spectatorship. Certainly, how the author orients spectatorship affects the spectator-object nexus. Spectatorship within *History and Memory* is characterized by openness and indeterminacy. Perception is obviously crucial to this spectatorship. Significantly, perception is not completely controlled by epistemology and ideology. Perception can be removed from the classical subject-object dichotomy, and not just in a subliminal state. In a liminal or supraliminal state, there can be opening in which this dichotomy is disrupted.

In the performative mode, the visual does not dominate through decided subject-object dichotomy. Consequently, within the distinctly visual medium of documentary, this form of ocularcentrism is subverted. When the eye cannot control the object of its gaze along conventional lines, perceptual hierarchy is undermined. When the visual is no longer hallowed, the body becomes integral to perception. The text no longer operates effectively as persuasive argumentation. Accentuation on the ocular and aural as preponderant within hierarchy of perception yields to the body as percipient organism. With emphasis on the body, conventional perceptual hierarchy is devitalized. Although pivotal, the visual is not exalted. Other liminal and supraliminal sensations acquire purport, brought about by visual and aural stimuli intrinsic to documentary. For example, drum beating excerpted from *Yankee Doodle Dandy* elicits sensations within the body. As a primal form of instrumentation, percussion is connected to physicality. Albeit barely perceptible, this percussion is not simply an aesthetic accoutrement. It brings about a multiform dissemination of meaning. Its original *Yankee Doodle Dandy* connotation was intended to rally war support. However, in the *History and Memory* context percussion connects with memory, human rights, and cessation of liberty. The drumming is no

longer a call to conform. It has been recreated as a subversive act: War drumming experienced of the body, with memory and history marching side by side. Then again, the greater enigma is how history and memory endure within the body. Accompanying this mystery are expansive questions about memory and how history operates beyond narrative: How does history function as imagery as well as discourse, written and oral? More critically, how does all this work within the instrument of perception, the human body?

Using distinctive methods, *History and Memory* examines several unconventional historical intricacies. This methodology includes the use of atypical subject matter, such as oneiric imagery and propaganda outtakes. More fundamentally, spectatorship becomes oriented differently. Tajiri's modus operandi is anomalous. Her text eschews orthodox perspectives along with conventional empiricism, ratiocination, and hierarchy of perception. Instead, spectatorship is oriented toward extant perception. She achieves this perception by using methods more consonant with exposition of phenomena than application of reason. Disassociated from the customary documentary envelope, the spectator experiences the text in distinctive ways. While demonstrating certain distinguishing aspects of the performative, *History and Memory* candidly proffers relevance on esoteric perception. Tajiri suggests that unknown aspects of space, time, and existence operate within perceptions of reality. While conjectural and contingent on the subject, these phenomena lie beyond normal reason. They could not be elucidated owing to inherent limitations of conventional knowledge. For example, in rolling text accompanied by audio, Tajiri explains that while exploring detritus of the Poston War Relocation Center, she sensed precisely where her mother had stayed:

I decided I would search for the spot where her barrack had been, through intuition or some kind of internal divining rod. Later, I discovered I had indeed found the spot. I showed a map of the area to my mother asking her to point to where her barrack had been. Sure enough, it was where I had been standing (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

In this and other ways, Tajiri suggests metaphysical and transcendent phenomena within a certain schema. Although we perceive and apprehend these phenomena, their mechanics could not be grasped. Even if they are of reality, and not merely of our consciousness, they lie beyond our ability to understand their workings. In a nutshell, these are inexplicable, yet relevant occurrences in reality's perception. Since they are perceived, yet unknowable, Tajiri introduces a conundrum relating to documentary's customary empirical worldview.

When a Japanese man is fingerprinted in *History and Memory*, it appears that culpability is coterminous with race. This association of guilt with race can bring about an emotional state within the spectator: One can feel opprobrium and offense accompanied by want of action, however abstruse and distant the perpetrators may be. Within the tenets orthodox activism, Tajiri misguides the spectator. After all, documentaries concerned with social justice are calls to action. What have transcendent phenomena to do with concentration camps in a Western democracy? And what role do esoteric matters have in effecting social change? Granted, this questioning is the parochial reaction of a straw opponent. On the other hand, it exemplifies one notion of appurtenant discursive forms: The documentary author should respect certain disciplinary margins. As well, it elucidates the import of freedom to the contemporary performative and its fellow traveler, social activism. Within activist documentary, remedial prescriptive methods can prelimit freedom of expression. Paradoxically then, a

prescriptive approach advances the discrimination social activism would address: curtailment of liberty. This loss of liberty is palpable in *History and Memory*, where the freedom of Japanese people has been removed.

Presumably then, given a prevailing object of freedom, representational methods should condone liberty as well. We see the performative address this objective of freedom by way of its atypical lack of restrictedness. This openness is consonant with generalized goals of freedom, including Heidegger's notion of a complex of concealing, revealing, and moving into the open (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 25). Here, perceptual experience is accentuated. This disposition is elaborated within *History and Memory*, where even though we understand that the object-world exists, it remains elusory and unknowable. Therefore, it does not function as a standing-reserve. However, despite the object-world's enigmatic nature, one can still perceive and have knowledge of it, even by transcendent means. In *History and Memory* accentuation is on perception per se, as opposed to perception of that which has already been perceived. This emphasis on perception is recognizable as a phenomenological approach: We cannot disengage from the world to bring about consciousness of the world. We are perpetually of the world and therefore our consciousness is immersed in the world. Ergo, consciousness does not emerge from endeavouring to disengage ourselves. Consciousness transpires from being in the world. Accordingly, history and memory is rooted within the body as instrument of perception. The body as perceiving instrument differs in sensibility from that which would disengage from the world and intellectualize it. Instead, we are orientated toward a phenomenal field of perception.

The performative prepossession to the personal accentuates discreteness and individuality. Each spectator is destined to respond in singular ways contingent on individual constitution and locus. Of course, uniqueness of individual spectator reception is true of all documentaries. However, performative spectator response can be intensified. Whereas most documentary tends toward perception of something perceived, the performative is not so directly of the historical world. Dissociation from the phenomenon is not effortless, as when the historical world is plainly the intended object. In contrast, performative phenomena can become the proper object. This emphasis on performative phenomena establishes optimal conditions for what Maurice Merleau-Ponty called primacy of perception:

By these words, “the primacy of perception,” we mean that the experience of perception is our presence at the moment when things, truths, values are constituted for us; that perception is a nascent logos; that it teaches us, outside all dogmatism, the true conditions of objectivity itself; that it summons us to the tasks of knowledge and action. It is not a question of reducing human knowledge to a sensation, but of assisting at the birth of knowledge, to make it as sensible as the sensible, to recover the consciousness of rationality (Merleau-Ponty and Edie 25).

The moment of perception then, is a critical juncture when an aggregate of essential elements constituting human consciousness become one. Merleau-Ponty envisaged this moment of perception as commensurate with objective conditions removed from dogma. That is not to say that he intended to reduce knowledge to a sensory perception. More readily, Merleau-Ponty saw this moment as an apex of knowledge or a nascent point critical to rationality. The moment of perception is a determinative pullulation of objectivity, rationalism, knowledge, and action, concepts significant to documentary in general. As always, much is contingent on context and the diverse ways in which perception operates. For example, Tajiri recounts memories predating her birth,

memories that transcend usual ways of comprehending space and time, memories that should not be her own. Within a rationalist framework, logic and deduction determine truth. Just as logic is crucial to rationalism, there are no apparent logical criteria to evaluate Tajiri's claims. She has gone beyond a rationalist worldview. Without specialized knowledge, one can only accept or discount her memory claims.

Of course, these peculiar memories are but Tajiri's assertions of what she has perceived. Moreover, her attestations are multifaceted and atypical. She claims memories that predate her lifetime. She propounds an indeterminate reality, while connoting that knowledge can emerge from lucid empiricism. Plainly, what Tajiri puts forward is not a conventional view of reality. Accentuating perception may well evoke Merleau-Ponty. However, it also brings to mind conceptions of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. In his introduction to Werner Heisenberg's *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science*, F.S.C. Northrop describes the absence of neutrality that Heisenberg brought to light:

An analysis of the specific experimentally verified theories of modern physics with respect to what they say about the object of human knowledge and its relation to the human knower exhibits a very rich and complex ontological and epistemological philosophy which is an essential part of the scientific theory and method itself. Hence, physics is neither epistemologically nor ontologically neutral. Deny any one of the epistemological assumptions of the physicist's theory and there is no scientific method for testing whether what the theory says about the physical object is true, in the sense of being empirically confirmed. Deny any one of the ontological assumptions and there is not enough content in the axiomatically constructed mathematical postulates of the physicist's theory to permit the deduction of the experimental facts, which it is introduced to predict, co-ordinate consistently and explain (Northrop 25).

As with the performative, indeterminacy is an essential aspect of Heisenberg's principle.

Indeed, certain conceptions of the uncertainty principle state that there is no reality

independent of the observer, particularly popular ones like “*the observer changes the thing observed*” (Lindley 7). In *The Man Who Wasn't There* (*The Man Who Wasn't There*) for example, actor Tony Shalhoub plays a prominent lawyer, Freddy Riedenschneider, who makes a speech to clients Ed and Doris Crane, played by Billy Bob Thornton and Frances McDormand. Riedenschneider questions our ability to make determinate observations of reality:

They got this guy, in Germany. Fritz something or other. Or is it? Maybe it's Werner. Anyway, he's got this theory, you want to test something, you know, scientifically -- how the planets go round the sun, what sunspots are made of, why the water comes out of the tap -- well, you gotta look at it. But sometimes, you look at it, your looking changes it. You can't know the reality of what happened, or what would've happened if you haddn a stuck in your own goddamn schnoz. So there is no 'what happened'. Looking at something changes it. They call it the uncertainty principle. Sure, it sounds screwy, but even Einstein says the guy's onto something, Science, perception, reality, doubt, reasonable doubt. I am saying that sometimes the more you look, the less you really know. It's a fact, proved fact. In a way, it's the only fact there is (*Yankee Doodle Dandy*).

While this speech plainly satirizes the vulgarization of the uncertainty principle, it demonstrates that an essential understanding has become embedded in culture. There is no reality independent of the observer: The observer changes the thing observed. Tajiri emphasizes the essentiality of the observer to represented reality as well. However, Tajiri's emphasis on observation is not to be taken as if there is no reality outside the observer's consciousness. While not a solipsistic position, Tajiri's observer determines reality nonetheless. In *History and Memory*, a witness to the Pearl Harbor attack reports: “I ran out on the Lanai and saw immediately there were Japanese planes and there was this fellow standing next to me and said: ‘It certainly looks real doesn't it?’ and I said yes I am afraid it is” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). In this seemingly



banal exchange, the observers have infused a disordered and chaotic world with determinacy. They have ascribed a status of real. Therefore, the observer and reality are not mutually exclusive. Without the observer however, reality is exanimate. The observer and reality are inextricably linked.

Therefore, the observer is elemental. Without the observer, reality could not be represented, it could only be ascribed. However, observation in documentary is a varied and navigable concept. It can take many forms. In *History and Memory*, Tajiri delineates the materiality of imagery, construing the camera to watch as an observer would. In voice-over, she states: “There are things which have happened in the world while there were cameras watching. Things we have images for” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Following a brief montage of newsreel footage and shots from *From Here to Eternity*, Tajiri continues: “There are other things which have happened while there were no cameras watching, which we restage in front of cameras to have images of” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). In spite of Tajiri’s suggestion of a world in itself, a conception that is intrinsic to documentary worldviews, the observer remains integral to documentary reality. The integrality of the observer is reflected in various documentary modes of address. For example, the observational mode contrives to make the viewer an observer of an unfolding historical world. The observational mode creates the illusion that the observer is occupying the camera’s position in space and time. Obviously, this observational mode is but one of several approaches to representing reality. Tajiri notes that with no cameras present, events can be re-created. The absent camera is substituted with contrivance, in this way establishing observation. Without doubt, re-creation can appear less extant than more lineal forms of observation, resulting

in an adjuvant status. Nevertheless, re-creation can take manifold forms, some of which do not appear secondary or incongruous. Docudrama is, after all, an established and prevalent technique (Rosenthal). Indeed, re-creation is intrinsic to documentary, a notion evinced by the word *representation* in documentary representation and representation of reality. This phraseology presupposes something constitutive of representation: the de facto observer, or in other words, the spectator. However, a crucial question regarding re-creation concerns the whereabouts of the real: If re-creation predicates manufactured reality, wherein lies the real?

Tajiri's videography of the Poston detritus can be interpreted in discrete ways: It can be regarded as re-creation of the internment era or as observation of the ruins as they are. Previously, Tajiri showed us outtakes of social actors preparing to be filmed. These shots altered the meaning of related footage, revealing observational recording to be a pseudo-event. Under scrutiny, our understanding of modalities such as observation and re-creation can break down. With meaning lost in this way, it helps to consider essential function. Generally speaking, documentary attempts to shape immeasurable and complex data into something comprehensible about reality. All manner of artifice are used to this end. Thus, documentary is more about the mind than a reality distinct from consciousness and perception. Reality exists, however the spectator and representational phenomena exist as well. Even if perception does not always reveal the real, our knowledge emerges from perception. And even given an independent of the mind world in itself, there can be no re-presentation of reality without an observer. A priori truths notwithstanding, empiricism remains elemental. The observer and reality are inextricably linked. Moreover, reality's effect on the observer's perception is paramount. While each of these

elements matter, a fundamental question arises. Who is the observer? Oftentimes the spectator is the observer, and the historical world is the observed reality. However, the observer can take other forms, or the observer could be interpreted in different ways. For example, the documentarian who conceives the object is an observer as well.

Without doubt, the observer determines meaning. Reality determines meaning as well. However, reality can seem illusive in performative documentary. By moving away from persuasive argumentation and rendering reality indeterminate, the performative breaks from other modes. In documentary where actuality is more straightforwardly of the referent, we tend to overlook the documentary object as a form of reality. Therefore, when we look on documentary phenomena as reality, our perception is affected. The historical world can seem mediated and distant. There is less emphasis on transposed space and time. The transcendental signified is absent, and along with this absence, certainty regarding the referent is diminished. In *History and Memory*, Tajiri conveys a historical world wrought with complexity and uncertainty. With documentary phenomena as the existing reality, the spectator becomes the de-facto observer. The real is then oriented as a phenomenon of documentary object and spectator-observer. This orientation is consistent with several contemporary expressions regarding textuality, most notably poststructuralism. Connote with vitiation of the transcendental signified, this orientation is also consistent with uncertainty that reality can be justly represented using prevalent methods. Instead, it turns inward, at times exalting in signifier play. In another way, it turns outward as a form of consolidated spectatorship. The observer, reality's cast, and how these elements are positioned relative to each other are bound to influence meaning.

In moving beyond prevailing modalities, performative relativity unfurls documentary representation as perceptual phenomena. Performative reality is here and now.

While persuasive argumentation is supplanted, the performative spectator experiences phenomena that guide a personalized response. Along these lines, performative authors use diverse methods to situate the spectator and reality. These expressions of authorship are multiform as textuality itself, a phenomenon evident in one particularly cogent example of dense signifier interplay in *History and Memory*. Here, Tajiri intercuts still photography and videography of Second World War era and contemporary Poston, along with imagery of the town of Parker. There is archival photography and film along with excerpts from *Bad Day at Black Rock* (*Bad Day at Black Rock*), *Come See the Paradise* (*Come See the Paradise*), and a Department of the Interior War Relocation Authority film called *The Way Ahead* (*The Way Ahead; History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Finally, there is scrolling text, family images, and a re-created motif of Tajiri's mother gathering water from a well. Tajiri's weaves voice-over narration with mother and father interviews, in addition to voices of aunts Helen and Mineko. Along with audio from excerpted films, we hear a train running on tracks, water flowing, and other sounds. There is narrated historical information with oral history regarding the Poston Relocation Center. Poetic and personal narration is also included, some denouncing historical representations of the internment. The overall effect is a dense and complex web of signifiers. The plethora of signification deters persuasive argumentation that would explicate history. Consequently, it becomes difficult to engage reason in constituting the historical world. As a result of this profusion of stimuli, we perceive the text as diversiform phenomena. This extirpation of narrative results in

absence congruous with what Tajiri sees in history: “Kimoko’s disappearance from Black Rock was like our disappearance from history. His absence is his presence. Somehow I could identify with this search, the search for an ever absent image and the desire to create an image where there are so few” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). This desire to create an image does not lead Tajiri to expound reason, or formulate master narrative. Instead, it results in a profusion of signifiers unfurling around Tajiri’s mother gathering water from a well, the most lasting image she creates.

Tajiri’s videography displays several distinctive aesthetic renditions. Her images of Poston and Parker, for example, are especially incongruous next to highly formalized Hollywood films like *Bad Day at Black Rock*. One of her methods is to position a camera inside a moving automobile, resulting in a blurred landscape. This approach forsakes customary photographic morphology by obscuring potential indexicality were it shot with realism in mind. This representational style is noticeable, if only because deviations run counter to documentary realism, a mutable amalgam of conventions that cultivate what appears to be contiguous representation of reality. Within a documentary context, even minor deviations from documentary realism can appear anomalous. Of course, Tajiri is not alone in challenging documentary realism. Countless formal approaches have been used by all manner of documentarians over the years. Indeed, documentary realism’s boundaries can seem capricious. Moreover, there is difference of opinion about how realism functions in documentary. R. Bruce Elder, for example, characterizes it in an austere way, stating that documentary realism is “associated with consciousness alienated from the dynamics of reality” (Elder 138). There is, without doubt, a generalized dubiety reflected in widespread deviations from documentary realism. These deviations are

especially conspicuous within the performative. Then again, the performative mode is an alternative approach. As Susan Scheibler contends, most documentary is constative (S. Scheibler). The constative advances sign and referent as conterminous. This suggestion of contiguity is brought about using formal approaches working with indexicality immanent to recorded sound and image. As constative, documentary realism propounds authority and authenticity. In this way, it announces veracity.

Tajiri countervails the constative impulse throughout *History and Memory*. Rather than use documentary realism, she embraces abstraction. Instead of formal approaches suggesting a conterminous sign and referent, she draws these assumptions into question. Tajiri's videography seems precarious and this perturbation often obscures the profilmic. Hesitant and uncertain, her camera lacks constative connection to the historical world. Her imagery can seem unstable or erratic, abecedarian, or even stuporous. For example, a halting automated zoom inside a derelict building appears to be the product of an inexperienced operator of a low-cost camera, or simply a bad take. Alternately, it could be the work of a visionary. Ultimately however, the quality of camerawork does not matter. Tajiri's expertise or mastery is not the object, and therefore camera skill is not particularly germane. The crucial element is how the documentary apparatus is performed, and what ultimately appears in the text. Accordingly, videography is neither exclusively of the mind and intellect, nor of aesthetic principles. It has to do with the body as instrument of perception and representation. This emphasis on the body as perception affirms the importance of phenomena beyond documentary realism. With Tajiri obscuring the referent, we cannot access the historical world in ways posited by documentary realism. On the other hand, this work is not merely avant-garde or

experimental. It has meaning as documentary. One expression of this modality is Tajiri's landscapes. Although these landscapes can be perceived, details could not be discerned. Bereft of indexicality, the imagery is of indeterminate form. Signification becomes a phenomenon of photographic artifice and the represented object. Instead of an immutable object plucked from space and time, signification becomes maculation of contour, lineation, and colour, a mutable thing of the present. The landscape is mediated, a singular spatiotemporal event and the primacy of perception thereof.

Neither textual coherence, nor the author's objectives, constitutes what is most significant about *History and Memory*. Free play of signifiers and the affect of this signifier play on the spectator are more essential to its textuality. Tajiri emphasizes indeterminacy, and as with all documentaries, reality is tied to observation. As Tajiri points out, there are several kinds of observation that can assume different forms. Observation can take the shape of witnessing, such as when the camera operator observes a profilmic event. Observation can take other forms, the interview being one prominent example. Even when witnessing is re-presented observation, such as oral history or recounting Pearl Harbor, the viewer is the ultimate observer. Regardless of its many variants, documentary observation ends with the spectator. In the case of *History and Memory*, free signifier play grants a certain perceptual freedom that calls attention to observation. Never static, the signifier play is related to documentary phenomena and entails agency. With an indeterminate referent, spectator observation becomes especially active. Observation effects perception of actuality, if not reality itself. Belief systems can be especially consequential. For that reason, popular conceptions are as important as any scientific bases within which observation operates. And even then, as noted by

Heidegger, F.S.C. Northrop, and others, scientific principles are not independent of their own preconceptions (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 21; Northrop 25). Consequently, documentary observation remains complex and inscrutable. While calling attention to how fundamental observation can be, Tajiri makes the spectator the definitive observer.

The performative does not emphasize persuasion and argumentation in ways analogous to other modes. Nor is there comparable accentuation on what Michael Rubbo summarized in *Journal inachevé* as "story, a plot, conflict, characters" (*Journal inachevé*). With an indeterminate referent, the historical world is a different object of knowledge. While the observer is axial to documentary in general, the performative spectator has an uncommon bond with the object. Spectator observation assumes a fundamental importance with a different hue. It becomes critical to knowledge formation in ways distinct from assumptions on which classical modes are based. These assumptions encompass our supposed ability to undergo a transcendent experience of the referent, or gain access to the signified thing in itself. For their representations to be viable, traditional documentary assumptions circumvent several epistemological barriers. Albeit implausible, we accept this circumvention because they are veiled by overwhelming reiteration of those assumptions. In spite of that, epistemological foundations based on transcendental access to the historical world are questionable. Without doubt, the text is not the referent. In spite of that inexorable fact, these practices remain practicable. Achievements of the documentary medium and its great body of texts are testament to this practicality. Nevertheless, the question lingers: What if it is all illusory? However, if we think that way, the significance of documentary work becomes



diminished. It therefore follows that one should use alternative methods to maintain documentary, yet re-establish it on an ontological footing. This rupture which divides performative from constative may well be the motor that drives the contemporary performative: dissatisfaction with what is.

An ontological footing emerges during the moment of perception, that time which precedes putting judgment into operation. Distinct from most documentaries, a marked disinclination toward objectivity sets up the performative reception experience. Although it precludes neither objective distancing nor spectator judgment, performative reception emphasizes perception. This moment is critical because a certain freedom can be found before judgment. This freedom is like what Martin Heidegger described as bringing into the open both as poesis (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 10-11), and in the sense of freedom itself (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 25). At the moment of perception, when concealment gives over to revealing, receptiveness is greater. Even so, performative documentary is still documentary. Within the fullness of time the text will be open to argument, elucidation, and interpretation. However, significance can also be found in the propinquity of the spectatorship occurrence. In ways not generally intended for reflection and deliberation, performative authors consign particular prominence to representational phenomena. These phenomena are perceptual, corporeal, and of the here and now. Because performative aesthetic and formal choices are not as limited by convention, potential phenomena are unbounded. *History and Memory* bears this limitless potential out. At this point, we can come to understand Susan Scheibler's deliberation on the indeterminate referent, and the importance of those

interstices between signifier and signified (S. Scheibler). This moment is the critical one in which perception occurs.

In travelling shot, we see several indeterminate objects. These objects appear to be stones, tubing, wood, foliage, and concrete. Tajiri had previously noted a Japanese proclivity for turning uncultivable land into fertile soil (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Hence, these abstract objects are within a certain context. Although there is no explicit referent, we can relate the objects to irrigation and gardening, and interpret them as signifiers of Japanese accomplishment and culture. This signification is followed by a close-up tracking shot of camp records. Because we see names and dates, this shot contains a good deal of information. However, context and perspective remain unclear. In this sense, the referent is inscrutable, therefore losing constative meaning. Yet, beyond providing evidence of procedures long past, this straightforward shot suggests broader human rights issues and modes of social control rooted in history. One might, for example, think of disciplinary procedures and Michel Foucault describing the naissance of the prison:

The prison form antedates its systematic use in the penal system. It had already been constituted outside the legal apparatus when, throughout the social body, procedures were being elaborated for distributing individuals, fixing them in space, classifying them, extracting from them the maximum in time and forces, training their bodies, coding their continuous behaviour, maintaining them in perfect visibility, forming around them an apparatus of observation, registration and recording, constituting on them a body of knowledge that is accumulated and centralized. The general form of an apparatus intended to render individuals docile and useful, by means of precise work upon their bodies, indicated the prison institution, before the law ever defined it as the penalty *par excellence* (Foucault *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 231).

Such procedures were conventional methods applied to the problem of disciplining and controlling the Japanese population within the United States. At this point, it becomes

apparent how, by diminishing the constative, the text functions as a performative. The reception experience becomes open and free. The text might bring to mind observations of Hannah Arendt regarding rights violations during the Second World War. In particular, it might call to mind how Adolf Eichmann misapprehended directives of the Nazi hierarchy with a Kantian conception of moral duty, or more broadly pronounced: The banality of evil (Arendt 135-37). This phenomenon can be discerned in shots of internees being processed, as well as a nephew's movie review of *Come See the Paradise*. In voice-over, Tajiri's nephew reads: "I was thinking of throwing in some impressive facts. Like about the memo President Franklin Roosevelt received before creating the camps that explained why they weren't necessary. Or about how no Japanese were ever convicted of anti-U.S. sabotage. But I thought they might bore you. Did they?" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

After the camp records, we see a close-up of a carved wooden heart against a black background. This wooden heart fades to black. The black is followed by a rapid zoom onto a sheet of tarpaper from the Poston Relocation Center. The zoom ends in extreme close-up, causing the tarpaper to appear as an irregular mottling of color and form. The zoom de-familiarizes a determinate object, thus mimicking nonfigurative representation. In this way, Tajiri transforms a discernible artefact into something that could not be discerned. The referent is obscured and the revealed signified is concealed within its own object. However, even in extreme close-up, the imagery is not altogether non-representational. As an object revealed and subsequently concealed, it remains documentary. During these shots of camp records, wooden heart and tarpaper, Rea's

mother discusses dreams rooted in her internment experience. Even with determinateness obscured, Tajiri references internment and an artefact related to the camps.

*History and Memory* performativity entails intricate combinations of diverse elements. One example occurs when Tajiri intercuts *Come See the Paradise* with black and white documentary footage from the U.S. Army Signal Corps. This crosscutting appears over her nephew's movie review. In addition to mawkish piano music and muted audio from the Hollywood fiction film, we see still photographs of Japanese posing in front of an oversized United States flag. There are also white titles on black background, some similar to *Come See the Paradise*: "During World War II over 100,000 Americans were interned in concentration camps. In America" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). While this statement may be jarring, there are other contrasts as well. These contrasts include juxtaposition of color and black and white, mainstream and oral history, commercial cinema and its evaluation, Hollywood representation and archival footage, as well as still and motion photography. All told, Tajiri brings forth many forms of representation. These diverse signifiers create fissures, openings fundamental to the performative, often appearing as a sliding between conventional dichotomies (S. Scheibler 145, 48-49). In this case, there are several within a brief time frame. While Tajiri does not treat *Come See the Paradise* in her nephew's dismissive way, she brings attention to the film's factual basis by way of its resonance with archival footage. Nevertheless, this rapid and intermittent quotation is without much context. Hollywood representation comes across as artificial and clichéd, as extraneous to history. This impression seems right. *Come See the Paradise* could be seen as irrelevant. Then again, it raises awareness about certain facts in a mainstream Hollywood cinema context, and

therefore has relevance in terms of mass dissemination of ideas. This inherent value of facts brings to light the constative endeavour to maintain factuality when factuality is without end. At the same time, it calls into question the correlation between factualism and ontology that underpins constative thinking.

While the archival footage in *History and Memory* grants more compelling impressions of reality than its Hollywood counterpart, it is not presented as if an unmediated window on the past. Instead, the archival footage is perceived within a performative context. Conspicuously, Tajiri manipulates its duration, altering the film's characteristics. This temporal manipulation renders perception distinct, at a remove from profilmic reality. Moreover, temporal manipulation makes policing searches appear rhythmic and choreographed. This representation is a cadence apart from what must have been invasive and demeaning at the time. The documentary takes on gossamer, transcendent quality, more otherworldly than the contrived Hollywood film. The temporal manipulation of archival film is, unquestionably, mediated artifice. Tajiri makes these constructions perceptible by employing match cuts between luggage searches in the U.S. Army Signal Corps footage and *Come See the Paradise*. The match cuts reveal these two forms of representation as incongruous. This inconsistency is apt to cause the spectator to reflect on artifice, representation, and the historical world. Given that incongruity abounds within *History and Memory*, we are left to speculate on the historical world it represents. Artifice eliminates the illusion of a transcendent referent, placing reality in a particular cast and putting weight on spectator perception. Thus, even when Tajiri privileges oral history, she is manifestly prepossessed to the here and now.

Accordingly, she is not averse to casting doubt on oral history, even when that history is close to her own.

Tajiri challenges her nephew's palpable cynicism by displaying archival footage of a serviceman carrying an infant, apparently having come to the aid of an internee. The deportment of the servicemen exhibits a certain banality. There is certainly no indication of moral duty envisaged by Adolph Eichmann (Arendt 135-37). Nor does one see evidence of hostility or brutality. Quite the opposite, the servicemen's demeanour appears ill at ease and measured, and for that reason at variance with the Government's undertaking. Even in those feverish times, in the absence of effective formal opposition, there was not absolute concurrence with the mass incarceration of Japanese-Americans (Ng 28-29 99). Albeit muted in that wartime context, the internment likely brought about dissent among Americans, probably acutely felt by those persons charged with carrying out its policy. Therefore, in *Come See the Paradise* we see expressions of political disagreement, in addition to displays of xenophobia and racism. Apart from the ostensible candidness of the archival footage however, uncertainties regarding these representations remain. For example, were the servicemen's actions governed by pretence? Are we seeing a veneer, what the U.S. Army Signal Corps and the Government of the day wanted us to see? Why is a woman being taken into incarceration cheery and smiling? Do the servicemen's temperate behaviours have more to do with performance intended for propaganda purposes than less adulterated events?

Not being there can cause the observational documentary spectator uncertainty regarding the profilmic reality represented within the *mise-en-scène*. This uncertainty

evokes several issues about documentary representation of reality. For example: Did the presence of the filmic apparatus alter what transpired? What part did production personnel have in recording decisions? What interaction did social actors have with the director? Answers to these kinds of question are impossible for the spectator to know. However, certain things remain unalterable: The viewer has no direct access to the historical world. We cannot determine to what extent a social actor's conduct was disposed by the camera's presence. We cannot identify what particular synthesis of camera presence and other effects bring about certain behaviours. Nor can one say how these dynamics influence our observation. Ultimately, we have but impressions.

Regardless of the historical context in which they are viewed, the internment camps were a breach of human rights on an immense scale. The fundamental breakdown of democratic values that they represent may well be revealed within the archival film, in kinesics of servicemen carrying out assignments. I believe this kind of revealing possible because of something analogous within my own history and memory. To this day, I can readily recall the mortified expression in an observational shot of a police officer in my 1988 documentary *Overdale*, following the battery of housing rights protestors (*Overdale*). Several viewers have noted something hauntingly truthful within his ignominious countenance. Here, the coming to presence of revealment is unambiguous and spectator uncertainty effectively absent. It appears to be outside language. It appears to be transcendent. Nevertheless, its apparent truth is also a matter of documentary modality, and modality is a matter of ontology. One may well ask: Is the intrinsic ontology of this archival footage better revealed as constative or performative? For the documentarian, the response may well come down to how ontology is best served.

Tajiri's shooting style is marked by distinctive aesthetics, above all an unsteady camera. Within formal limitations of documentary realism this wavering camera can seem undesirable. From a constative standpoint, her camera operation appears unmotivated and detracting from what it represents. However, the destabilized referent is entirely consistent with the performative. With image distorted, we can no longer see the signifier as stand-in for the referent. In its place, the documentary itself becomes the primary referent. This altered referentiality does not automatically detract from the relation between author and historical world. That relation remains important. In addition however, the documentary object becomes a more critical reality, and the spectator the definitive observer. In this way, the performative emphasizes phenomena and spectator as the locus in which an essential reality occurs. To some extent, this altered essential reality is realized by representing the historical world as indeterminate. An indeterminate historical world results in an especially distinctive relationship between the viewer and reality's representation. Unlike the intellectualization of a constative utterance, reality's representation is more readily perception in both conscious and unconscious aspects. This is individuated experience, reality as discreet perception of documentarian, subject, and spectator. Whereas Tajiri's mother does not remember, Tajiri is haunted by ghosts as real as photographs created by cameras smuggled into the camps. Like Tajiri, as spectators we are sensitized to matters at a remove from our existence. Standing apart in space and time, the documentary object is our immediate connection. In *History and Memory*, the object and its phenomena are prominent as reality itself.

Several insights can be gleaned from "The Question Concerning Technology" wherein Heidegger described the real in terms of being and creating connected to



revealing (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology"). In opposition to this being and creating stood what he called challenging revealing. Heidegger believed modern technological ordering distorted reality by challenging forth the real as standing-reserve. The nature of the real, and not the real itself, was most significant to Heidegger. This distinction has to do with how we act with respect to the real: Are we challenging revealing to create a standing-reserve? Or, are we truthful and open within the real coming to presence? Heidegger looked on object movement from concealed to unconcealed as critical. When applying this idea to documentary, we are apt to think of spectator perception. At this point, emphasis falls on the viewer and the representational object. As opposed to the referent, the spectator/object interface becomes the elemental source of reality. Consequently, the object's prominence is amplified relative to the historical world it represents. Reality's salient basis shifts from the referent onto the object's coming to presence. This shift emphasizes gaps between signifier and signified, particularly where more muted convention gives way to expressive methods, and we observe the sliding to which Scheibler refers (S. Scheibler 149). This emphasis on the representational object does not imply that expressive techniques are exceptional. In point of fact, these expressive techniques are common in all manner of documentaries. Nevertheless, they are especially conspicuous within the performative. The representational object becomes more tangible, and the referent seems less straightforward and accessible. The historical world is not treated in customary ways. Along with spectator subjectivity, reality's composition becomes the documentarian's actuation of a range of signifiers. The accent moves from referent onto signifier play and our perception of documentary phenomena. This change in emphasis creates conditions

in which we can be open within the real coming to presence. These conditions are fundamentally different from that of challenging revealing to create a standing-reserve.

To appreciate how this opening within the real coming to presence operates, consider the following: During a montage of family pictures, Tajiri explains in voice-over that cameras were prohibited within the camps. As a result, few photographs were taken. This interdiction was overlooked at times, and for that reason Tajiri is able to display a montage of family photographs along with a life study entitled “Uncle’s Drawing of brother Jim in Poston” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). The camera prohibition tells of images concealed and later revealed as rare film and photography. In a similar vein, lyrical 8mm footage from Dave Tatsuno’s *Topaz (Topaz)*, conveys shaping and forming, in this case as history by the viewer. In stark contrast, Tajiri’s grandparents’ identification cards evince photography used to classify the resident alien subcategory. On the audio track, natural sounds fashion a temporal connection between the present day and the internment era. We learn that Tajiri’s grandmother carved a wooden bird inside a camp classroom. We also know that several decades later, granddaughter Rea incorporated bird sounds within the documentary we are watching. For several reasons then, the chirping birds form a poignant link between reality and its representation. Tajiri cuts from camp photographs to a black backdrop that fills the screen. In the middle of this darkened frame is a distant object, only just discernible as a bird-like shape. A zoom-in follows, with a similar shot repeated later. Because the bird object is surrounded by black, the image falls outside a conventional spatial context. As a result of this void, one can readily grasp the allegory of revealing and poesis put forward here.

Normally we orient a filmed object relative to other objects within the frame. The object's meaning varies according to its position relative to the other objects. From this variable reference system we derive spatial cognition. However, with Tajiri's carved bird there is but one object surrounded by black. The bird expands within the frame, an illusion brought about by a lack of reference points from which to orient the course of the zoom. This shot demonstrates the importance of spatial cognition and visual context in making meaning. Beginning with the nebulous bird shape, Tajiri removes context and spatial orientation. This technique isolates revealing and puts it on display. At tail end the zoom momentarily stops and we discern the carved bird. From vague form to carved artefact, the bird-like object emerges. In expository voice-over, Tajiri describes how war revealed the Japanese to America: "There was a change in the attitude toward us. Nothing outwardly hostile, just a kind of curiosity, wondering what was going to happen to us. Whereas before we were mostly ignored and slightly out of focus, the war brought us clearly into view and made us sharply defined" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). If Tajiri's zoom were simply an image devoid of audio, its meaning would be open-ended. However, this is not the case. The video and audio display discrete forms that evoke Heideggerian ideation, in this case a bird carving and Japanese in America moving from concealed to unconcealed.

The audio connects imagery to a belief among Japanese-Americans that war altered perceptions about them. This part of the documentary has to do with history and reality exposed by way of interplay of signifiers, perception, and documentary object. However, it also has to do with revealing. Revealing, along with shaping and forming, is central to Heidegger's notion of poiesis. Bird carving is revealing through shaping and

forming, shaping wood to form a representational object. Tajiri reveals a connection between her mother, grandmother, and the carved bird. We see a small, black and white photograph of a Japanese woman, center right on an otherwise grey screen. This shot is followed by a fade-in that reveals the woman to be one of several internees at a long table. Tajiri narrates:

My mom used to have this bird, this little wooden carved bird that was inside her jewellery box. I used to ask her if I could play with it but she kept saying no, no, no, grandma gave me that. Put that back. Twenty five years later I was sitting in a room inside the National Archives going through a box that contained hundreds of pictures. Suddenly I came across a picture of my grandmother seated in a classroom, taken while she was in camp. I turned it over and the caption read: Bird Carving Class Camp 2, 1942 (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

In this way, Tajiri describes a photograph and fact revealed that she reveals to the spectator: Object movement from concealed to unconcealed, from documentarian to spectator. Following this photograph, there is a quick cut to black. This black is followed by a rapid fade and shot repeating *History and Memory*'s opening, a Japanese woman crouched before water pouring from a spigot. Due to varying contexts, this recurring image reveals differently each time. Consequently, it imbues *History and Memory* with manifold meaning.

After the carved bird, we see a rapid montage of archival images. These images include camera confiscation, fingerprinting, and Japanese social actors in Government film. This archival image montage is followed by a zoom onto Tajiri's grandfather's alien identification card. These shots call to mind repression, exploitation, and disciplining of subjects by way of a technological system of classification. This amalgam of actions against the subject can bring to mind Michel Foucault's idea of "'docile' bodies"

(Foucault "Docile Bodies" 138). Fingerprinting and photographing, for example, show regulatory procedures to do with racial ancestry. Tajiri draws particular attention to the interdiction of cameras, prohibition to control information and communications. Taken as a whole, she exposes modern technological instrumentality intended to segregate, incarcerate, and delimit contact. Whereas the imprisonment was clearly wrong from a contemporary perspective, or almost any perspective, the internment was supported within the zealously anti-Japanese Second World War context. Wendy L. Ng, for example, maintains that the Pearl Harbor attack and supposed military necessity was not the sole impetus for the West Coast internment. Ng writes: "The removal of Japanese was a consequence of anti-Japanese sentiment from the early part of the twentieth century" (Ng 13). Then again, anti-Japanese bias would not have been a unanimous sentiment. While there was not much in the way of formal opposition to the internment scheme (Ng 28-29), as a gross human rights violation the internment fostered muted dissent. For example, Dave Tatsuno's 8mm work could not have been realized in the absence of complicity. Indeed, Tatsuno's experience points to compassion among the general population. Wendy L. Ng cites Sandra C. Taylor (Taylor), who describes Tatsuno's positive experience:

He had rented his home to Caleb Foote, a sympathetic Quaker who published articles in favor of Nisei before the war. Foote invited Tatsuno to stay with him as he explored the possibility of moving back to San Francisco. Tatsuno was impressed by the friendliness of the African American businessmen and bankers who had settled in the former San Francisco Japantown. He decided to bring his entire family back from Utah, and they were able to start their family store with a small amount of savings they had managed to keep after their last store had been liquidated (Ng 99).

The internment experience was multifaceted and complex, entailing numerous realities and spawning countless histories. Tajiri proceeds in her own way, concentrating on

human rights and social justice. At this point in *History and Memory*, modern instrumentality and disciplining are especially conspicuous. Tajiri conveys a heightened distinction between the disciplinary power of modern technological instrumentality and Japanese inventiveness, a predilection for creativity apparent in her grandmother's wood carving. This Japanese creativity is also evident in camp imagery and *History and Memory*'s distinctive aesthetics. The carved bird's refined aestheticism is redolent of Heidegger's notion of freedom occurring where it does not seem possible. Tajiri sets instrumental technology and dreary discipline in opposition to freedom and aesthetic beauty, antitheses which coalesce within the photograph of her grandmother. In the same space and time, repressive technologies come together with dialectical opposites. The bird object brings about revealing from its creation to Rea Tajiri, and finally the spectator.

There is an air of mystery surrounding the nature of reality within *History and Memory*. This impression of enigmatic reality becomes apparent when Tajiri attributes significance to that which could not be known. For example, Tajiri claims to have divined the exact location of her mother's Poston 2, Unit 11A, Block 213 living quarters, forty years after that time (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). By referencing this unexplained phenomenon, Tajiri suggests a metaphysical link to events long past. More than just inscrutable musing about enigmas of space and time, Tajiri brings forward a concept uncharacteristic of traditional documentary: Indeterminacy. Indeterminacy is atypical in the sense that documentary usually represents the world as fundamentally explicable within conventional ways of thinking. Conversely, documentary is not inclined to expound on the inexplicable, or delve into recondite thought. Whereas the

indeterminate and unknown can be freely contemplated as esoterica, the unknown could not be persuasively argued in a conventional way. For that reason, the indeterminate is generally not treated as subject matter, a limitation symptomatic of documentary's connection to photographic realism and its implied congruity between referent and text. However, as already noted, by the 20th century indeterminacy had become integral to understanding reality, even in theoretical physics.

Bill Nichols notes that documentary has not readily assimilated contemporary ideation. Instead, it relies on long-established ways of thinking that predate 20th century thought (Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* 115, 57). In this regard, the performative is markedly different. A contemporary impetus is a fundamental way in which the performative departs from the greater preponderance of documentary work. Instead of ignoring or rejecting contemporary influences, the performative comprises contemporary thought, including advancing the notion of indeterminacy. This indeterminacy can seem problematical from a conventional documentary standpoint. Because we are accustomed to persuasive representation, the unknown is apt to appear antithetical or out of place. Moreover, because indeterminacy destabilizes the *raison d'être* of persuasion, it brings fundamental questions regarding documentary epistemology to the surface. Nevertheless, indeterminacy is elemental to the performative. It is perceptible in apparent gaps between signifier and referent, as well as the “sliding” involving traditional dichotomies noted by Susan Scheibler (S. Scheibler 149). Given the prevalence of persuasive representation in documentary as a whole, indeterminacy remains incongruent. And while indeterminacy may be elemental to the performative, the mode does not reject the idea of extrinsic reality. Nor do discernible

gaps between signifier and referent mean that indexical connection has been renounced. Gaps between signifiers and referent are not always present, and extrinsic reality as well as indexical bonds, remain in play. The performative mode retains traditional aspects of documentary and blends these traditions with contemporary ideation.

Like all documentary, *History and Memory* is derived from the historical world. Documentary attests that specific events have transpired. These events can be monumental, like the attack on Pearl Harbor, or less so, like Tajiri's family history in relation to a carved bird. Plainly, Tajiri has not forsaken actuality. Attestations and proofs remain throughout *History and Memory*. The carved bird is one indexical proof she puts forward. So too is the carving class photograph. External reality and the historical world are fundamental to the text. Straightforward signification is elemental as well. However, this kind of referentiality is not what makes *History and Memory* idiosyncratic. As noted, Tajiri uses techniques that call attention to indeterminacy. These techniques include the aforementioned sliding, as well as disparities between signifiers and referent. This approach to representation can make reality seem ambiguous. Then again, textual ambiguity is not the crucial point. The spectator's orientation toward the text is more essential than ambiguity. The critical question becomes where reality occurs. In most documentaries, reality is understood to be of the historical world. The documentary text is oriented toward this assumption, often in an uncomplicated way. However, in the performative, reality assumes a different aspect. It becomes more of the here and now, the spectator/observer and his or her agency.



To conceive documentary reality as of the here and now requires a modified epistemology. This paradigm shift is one of several that make the performative appear contemporary. In contrast, outmoded epistemological assumptions can make conventional documentary seem naïve. Yet, by and large, the complexity of representing reality has been widely recognized. This complexity is apparent in reflexive work where assumptions behind straightforward representation are met head-on. Representation is shown to be complex and multifaceted, and straightforward signification is drawn into question. In certain ways, the performative is at variance with the reflexive. The reflexive mode intensifies awareness regarding the documentary apparatus. However, the performative advances a dynamic, temporal connection of the here and now. This immediate perception diminishes reality's foundation within the historical world whilst emphasizing the documentary object. More specifically, it calls attention to where the spectator and object meet. This is the space within which the spectator/observer shapes and forms reality. In this way, the performative advances poietic actuality, reality shaped and formed, perception and creation connected to boundless possible contexts. These contexts vary according to the interface between viewer and documentary text. With connection to the historical world blurred, conditions come to resemble what the observer facing the extant world encounters. As opposed to standing in place of a former reality, the text becomes essential reality.

The poietic ebbs and flows in *History and Memory*, sometimes manifesting in a dynamic way, at other times attenuated. Even so, the historical world does not cease to exist. It remains as reality's foundation, anchoring the text with signifiers and indexical referentiality. This awareness of the historical world combines with impressions that

delineate our perceptions. Without doubt, time and space thwart our direct access to the historical world. Whereas time and space is indistinct by nature, reality is inescapably of the here and now. Consequently, the performative impulse is cogent. All the same, performative texts operate in distinctive ways. Therefore, the reader must exercise caution interpreting archetypal assertions, including those assertions put forward here. Moreover, modes are rarely unadulterated in any given documentary. Documentary texts typically entail a combination of modes, of which the performative is one. The performative makes use of all modes, including the reflexive, although other modes appear in ways that alter their modulation. These modes become, in a superseding way, performative.

Spectators generally assume that documentary is able to realize reasoned, fact-based discourse by representing reality more or less directly. This belief is based on a conviction that discourse can bring about reality by way of evaluation of truth. For that reason, conventional forms endure, in spite of how problematical documentary representation can be. Along with other performative works, *History and Memory* is noteworthy in that it operates apart from such popular supposition. It challenges conventional assumptions while introducing poietic space in radical ways. Poietic space is a Heidegger influenced idiom employed by Krzysztof Ziarek (Ziarek *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event*; Ziarek "Radical Art: Reflections after Adorno and Heidegger"). Ziarek describes "poietic space" and "poetic thinking" this way:

Together with his work on poetry, Heidegger's idiosyncratic employment of language and philosophical terminology is motivated by the desire to disrupt these calculative

and objectifying patterns of rationality and to accentuate the nonsubstantive moment of thinking – its poietic space in which thought lets its object be “before” it proceeds to grasp and represent it.

In Heidegger’s view, poetic thinking is a response to the historical circumstances confronting modern society: the development of mass culture and its progressive rationalization, together with the effects these processes have had upon being (Ziarek *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event* 158).

Poietic space and poetic thinking alters the documentary dynamic by bringing in conspicuous shaping and forming, so that each viewer and each viewing generates distinctive signification. Of course, poietic space and poetic thinking is not unique to the performative. Poietic and poetic elements exist within all manner of documentaries. They are manifest when we shape and form documentary reality before falling back on dominant, instrumentalist ways of thinking. In spite of that widespread presence in documentary, poietic space is integral to the performative in ways distinct from the other modes. It emerges as a matter of course, as reality shaped and formed. It is perception and creation within unrestrained contexts. This poietic space presents junctures outside prescribed traditions, a conventionality which does not view representing the historical world as especially problematical. That is not to say that the performative scrutinizes representation in the vein of the reflexive. More readily, it has to do with shifting emphasis within a medium constrained by tradition. This change in emphasis can make the performative appear radical. Indeed, the contemporary performative documentary exhibits documentary’s time-honoured radicalism. Then again, performative radicalism is not carried out by way of instrumental methods, or forceful ideological statements. Reminiscent of poststructuralism, performative radicalism results from the reader/spectator shaping and forming in ways that transcend the specificity of the historically rooted text. In this way, its potential lies beyond the historicism and

instrumentalism of the modern era. Performative documentarians create these conditions by activating viewer agency. This viewer agency is motivated by, among other things, indeterminacy and gaps between signifier and referent.

Poietic space fosters conditions distinct from Heidegger's notion of the Ge-stell. These conditions bring forth poietic revealing, a form of revealing which occurs prior to judgment and return to instrumentalist thinking. Poietic revealing is redolent of what Ziarek sees within performativity and avant-garde art:

The attentiveness to the performativity of the instant of the unfolding of a world – to its becoming present – requires a departure from the system of representation which has dominated both artistic sensibility and forms of expression. Unlike previous art and literature, Lyotard claims, avant-garde works no longer purport to represent the world or manifest its truth, whether real or ideal, but instead examine the occurrence of the world's unfolding, the temporality of its constitution. The focus on the event and its temporality displaces our thinking about art and literature in terms of structure and representation, accentuating instead the instability and heterogeneity at play in the unfolding of language. In a sense, then, the avant-garde work of art locates itself “before” representation, signification, meaning and truth, and preoccupies itself with the very “element” in which representing and signifying become possible (Ziarek *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event* 155-56).

Indeed, revealing is the performative connection to truth. Performative truth is truth of the here and now. In this sense, poietic space can be connected with ontology and truth. What is more, poietic space interrupts rationalist ways of thinking. Heidegger believed that because the Ge-stell revealed the real as standing-reserve, more genuine poietic revealing became eclipsed. When it can be brought forth however, poietic revealing withdraws from what disfigures genuine revealing: modern instrumentality. In this way, poietic space provides openings from within the Ge-stell. Heidegger held that, within modern technological culture, we understand the real in terms of the standing-reserve. However, this form of revealing has certain disadvantages. To serve the standing-reserve

continuously imposes utility on the object. In addition, we lose a certain depth of perceptual experience when predisposed this way. At the same time, our critical powers are hindered. We can no longer supersede dominant ways of perceiving. While Heidegger was certainly not alone among his contemporaries in having a decidedly critical view of modern culture, he offered his own perspective on the importance of disrupting modern forms of perception. Heidegger believed poetic thinking, as distinct from poietic, to be capable of disrupting modern technological perceiving.

Throughout *History and Memory*, Tajiri presents several photographic proofs that signify various realities. In most cases, we are likely to accept these proofs as factual. After all, photography can constitute a form of visual evidence. Filmic representation within *History and Memory* avers that something of great magnitude and consequence transpired at Pearl Harbor, for example. These images are not from the realm of the imaginary. We see the bombs and explosions. Just as there was a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, we accept that Tajiri's grandmother was held in an internment camp. There she created a wooden bird her granddaughter later photographed for her documentary. That certain events took place has been determined. However, what these facts mean has not been determined. Because events transpired in a place and time apart from our own, those realities remains elusive. We must imagine the historical world to imbue facts with context and meaning. At that moment, the dividing line between real and imaginary becomes indistinct. The classical Western dichotomy does not account for this confluence. The parameters within which we understand representation of reality are delineated by this division. However, this dichotomy between real and imaginary does not answer for representational strategies and how we perceive them. Our basic

epistemology lacks the lexis to describe it. Tajiri emphasizes sliding between real and imaginary, a representational approach that creates rupture. This rupture is tantamount to potentiality as poietic space.

We know that certain events occurred in the past. Even so, this reality in *History and Memory* remains elusive, at times enigmatic. On several occasions, Tajiri suggests transcendence to events long past. She claims metaphysical connections to historical reality of family members, as though these relations ripple across space and time. Tajiri employs several devices to represent these notions. Narrative about discovering her grandmother's photograph in the National Archives is one. Chirping sounds of birds and crickets which form a link between past and present is another. The carved bird unites Tajiri with a history discovered in the photograph. This transcendence is through an object which connects grandmother's past to granddaughter's present. For Tajiri, the photograph triggers childhood memories. Complex associations of imagination, memory, and personal experience mingle with compelling proof of the historical world. For the spectator, this transcendence across time and space can only be imagined. This perspective is consistent with poststructuralism, which sees signification as a variable, not unequivocal system. In spite of that, and right where it does not seem to belong, Tajiri suggests the possibility of transcendence for the signified.

Tajiri follows the recurring dramatized motif of her mother filling a canteen with an unsteady shot of a train station. As with similar camera technique in *History and Memory*, the unsteady video suggests our ability to access history is unstable. In voice-over, Tajiri describes a personal quest: "I began searching for a history, my own history.

Because I had known all along that the stories I had heard were not true, and parts had been left out” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Tajiri seeks this history out by way of artefacts and oral history. The carved bird and carving class photograph are among certain artefacts related to this past. Between images of the wooden bird and her grandmother in carving class, the latter seems more persuasive. Photographic evidence of grandmother has more weight than the object she created inside the camp. On balance, this evaluation seems correct. We are apt to afford greater value to profilmic events represented with a camera. After all, the carved bird could be video of any carved bird. On reflection however, the photograph itself does not constitute substantial proof either. If not for expository narration, we would not know that this photograph shows a camp class, or that the grandmother is among the participants. Similarly, we would not be aware that the bird object is part of her history. Expository narration is therefore needed to signify this photographic evidence. Its relative status as real reflects our faith in oral history and voice-over narration. Even with direct photographic evidence, as Tajiri points out, parts will be left out. Without expository narration, the photograph provides little more than video of a group of Japanese people engaged in some task. The status and meaning of each image is delineated by subjective exposition.

In view of the class photograph and carved bird examples, it seems that we are apt to attribute greater value to certain forms of representation. This valuation appears rooted in positivist cultural bias. However, each instance of documentary representation is a complex of narrative and context. Just as there are diverse narratives, there are many contexts. There are contexts within the text, just as there are spectator contexts. There is no objective hierarchy wherein one type of evidence proffers more reality than another.

Reality becomes elusive and Tajiri continues searching for a history. While this searching is a personal mission, searching is part of the human condition as well. According to poststructuralism, the individual generates meaning in consequence of situation and self. With regard to the artefacts cited in the previous paragraph, the more substantive qualities exist as a result of contextualizing oral discourse. This contextualizing is true within the text, as well as when discourse persists beyond the text. The spectator might well ask: Which artefact presents more value to the internment history? Which artefact offers the greatest truth? Is it discourses surrounding these objects that determines the greatest referential value, or is it something else? What would determine this referential value? Evidently, Tajiri's quest for history is not governed by authoritative discourses. Like the author, the spectator generates meaning. Indeed, *History and Memory* displays a maze-like variety of signification. History becomes an attempt to determine the undeterminable. With the signified remote, the text becomes more immediate and discourse becomes a continuation of history. Still, for Tajiri the historical world is not relegated to the imaginary. It remains as revealing and ontology. *History and Memory* displays Tajiri's personal connection to the Japanese internment. She does not simply observe history. She participates in it as well. Tajiri's quest for history is history.

Without doubt, specific forms of representation tend to dominate particular documentary modes. For example, direct recording is privileged in the observational mode. The interactive mode prefers interaction between documentarian and subject. In the performative however, there is no particular foundational method of representing reality. All manner of representation and modality are put to use. In *History and Memory*, Tajiri puts forward a particular taxonomy of visual evidence. She describes images taken



before the camera, re-staged images, and images exclusively of the observer's mind. She even describes images seen by spirits of the dead. Each is potentially truthful or deceptive. No one image in particular is privileged. Along these lines, the performative is apt to mix documentary approaches freely, often in nuanced ways. *History and Memory* comes to resemble a quilt of varied, yet interconnected representations. More than montage, collage and the work of a *bricoleur* come to mind. In this way, her approach suggests the following description of interpretive bricolage:

The product of the interpretive *bricoleur*'s labor is a complex, quiltlike bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage - a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations. The interpretive structure is like a quilt, a performance text, a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole (Denzin and Lincoln 9).

The performative documentarian is apt to supersede montage in favour of bricolage, with effects of sliding and the creation of poietic space. Joe L. Kincheloe observes that Denzin and Lincoln's take on interpretive bricolage follows Claude Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (Lévi-Strauss), noting that bricolage "can also imply the fictive and imaginative elements of the presentation of all formal research" (Kincheloe 680). He goes on to argue that certainty and constancy are no more, and following the principle of Levi-Strauss, "research bricoleurs pick up the pieces of what's left and paste them together as best they can" (Kincheloe 681). Evolving from historical moments, various elements within *History and Memory* intersect and perform. There are no foundational criteria to be read in a simple, linear way. Tajiri situates subjects in reflexive ways and text becomes context. Emergent from personal and ethical positions, expressive representations come to the fore. Whether one is sympathetic to its positions or not, the text remains open.

Accordingly, Tajiri introduces a host of elements. Within this performative context, dramatic reenactment has no lesser status than the recording of a profilmic event.

The shot depicting Tajiri's mother filling a canteen recurs several times during *History and Memory*. Tajiri explains its significance in voice-over expository narration:

When someone tells you a story, you create a picture of it in your mind. Sometimes the picture will return without the story. I've been carrying around this picture with me for years. It's the one memory I have of my mother speaking of camp while we grew up. I overhear her describing to my sister this simple action: Her hands filling a canteen out in the middle of the desert. For years I have been living with this picture without the story, feeling a lot of pain. Not knowing how they fit together. But now I found I could connect the picture to the story. I could forgive my mother her loss of memory and could make this image for her (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

Most obviously, the image is a reenactment of Tajiri's mother in camp. Then again, expository narration contextualizes the image in other ways as well. Created for her mother by Rea Tajiri, the image is a recorded profilmic event. It can therefore be considered observational. However, as observational documentary its composition is unclear. The woman filling the canteen could be Tajiri, or she could be an actor. Tajiri could be directing, acting, filming, or some combination of these tasks. In addition, we could consider it self-reflexive, imagery depicting the documentarian engaged in an autobiographical process. Tajiri's contextualizing expository narration has rendered the image's modality and meaning polysemic. Regardless of how we view it however, expository narration is essential to the image's meaning. Depending on how one interprets the image, it has a distinctive ontological status, neither more nor less meaningful than the alternative. Consequently, its modality is pluralist. Each modality provides unique ontological potential. Then again, this plurality eviscerates foundational

criteria with which we can read the image in terms of one modality or another. In this way, the idea of modality breaks down.

While we are free to attribute modality and meaning, as a result of its ambiguity the image remains uncertain. When Tajiri states that she is able to connect it to a story, she is speaking about creating narrative to endow the image with meaning. In a related idea, she describes a feeling of absence when the image lacks narrative. While this sentiment expresses clear desire for narrative, she favours that formed by the individual, as opposed to master narratives of history. Without doubt, this image of Tajiri's mother remains indefinite. In addition to uncertain modality, its status as object is indeterminate. It will be interpreted differently, depending on whether we see it as reenactment, profilmic event, self-reflexive gesture, or rhetorical device. Meaning depends on how the spectator references the object, what status we afford it. The image is therefore contingent on spectator formation in relation to it. By creating a broad aggregate of possible interpretations, Tajiri invites the spectator to create his or her own narrative.

Without doubt, documentary is delineated by culture. Perception is shaped by the spectator's connection to the object, our disposition at time and space of viewing. The spectator is influenced by numerous factors. Although we could not be conscious of all that is in play, spectatorship still involves hermeneutics and agency. Nevertheless, the distinction between conscious and unconscious perception can be obscure. For example, let us say that we interpret the canteen and water image as reenactment of Tajiri's mother in a camp. This interpretation is correct in relation to Tajiri's description of having this image in mind. However, by concentrating fully on what is indicated as applicable in

what is under consideration, we exclude other possibilities. Reminiscent of the modern instrumentality Heidegger criticized, the documentary is having an effect toward prediction and control. Then again, was our decision to view the image as dramatic reenactment conscious or unconscious? I may have made a conscious decision with unconscious ramifications. I consciously responded to Tajiri's challenging revealing that this image is dramatic reenactment. This response is coupled with the unconscious decision to exclude other modalities such as observational and reflexive. By being correct, I failed to recognize other aspects essential to the image. It would be difficult to say what unconscious aspects of instrumentality and ordering come into play. If, as Heidegger argued, we are immersed within the Ge-stell, a great deal may go unrecognized. Then again, as with the reflexive, because the performative mode operates in especially perceptible ways, representation is often at the forefront. As a result of her attention to representation and process, Tajiri's challenging revealing does not eliminate other possibilities. She subverts the tendency to correctness by rendering the image problematical and inviting the spectator to form his or her own narrative. This invitation to narrative promotes active spectatorship relative to representation, making unconscious aspects of modern technological instrumentality more visible. Active spectatorship shifts emphasis to a more personally situated reality.

History and memory are two sides of an unstable coin. Each is subject to vicissitudes of space, time, and the subject's inner world. Tajiri suggests that the unconscious is influential in the ephemeral construction of these unstable objects: "I remember having this feeling growing up that I was haunted by something, that I was living within a family full of ghosts. There was this place that they knew about. I had

never been there, yet I had a memory for it. I could remember a time of great sadness before I was born. We had been moved, uprooted. We had lived with a lot of pain. I had no idea where these memories came from. Yet I knew the place” (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). This personal narration describes how boundaries between the conscious and unconscious mind are indistinct. They fuse in ways we cannot explain. Tajiri intimates that unconscious processes are at work within memory. This confluence of conscious and unconscious cannot effectively place memory within conventional positivist frameworks. However, memory is real to the subject, and for that reason memory is essential to reality as we perceive it. It has to do with observation and being in the here and now. While memory fragments under the yoke of its inherent instability, it remains an objective experience of temporal duration. Accordingly, Tajiri considers memory not only subject matter, but integral to representation of reality as well. Consequently, she explores memory in her expository narration. What is more, she seeks formal aesthetics that represent memory as visual experience. This visual representation of memory becomes an aspect of her documentary’s syntax.

Montage of Dave Tatsuno’s 8mm footage from within the Topaz, Utah camp accompanies Tajiri’s voice-over description of enigmatic memory (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige; Topaz*). Tatsuno’s shots depict internees involved in manual labour, discussion, ice-skating, posing, and hamming for the camera. The film has an ethereal, dream-like quality reminiscent of 8mm film in general, often associated with ephemeral qualities of memory. Poignant aesthetics notwithstanding, Tatsuno’s shooting appears as straightforward recording. His footage is that which was, it is the historical world experienced as duration. While no narrative is provided, its documentary qualities

are evident. We can only imagine contexts and realities from which these images emerge. Aside from showing fragmentary views of life within the camp, the Tatsuno montage has little context outside that we create. In this way, the montage is memory-like. As with the not being there of memory, it fosters uncertainty. We can but imagine the historical world it represents. Moreover, the film's texture is unlike most documentaries, usually composed in video or 16mm film. Within the classical division of real and imaginary, and owing to home movies and mass-market cinema, 8mm film is associated more with memory than documentary reality. Within *History and Memory*, its status becomes ambiguous and undecided. While documentary, this 8mm film triggers reflexivity about its standing. We are left feeling ambivalent about whether Tatsuno's footage is more like history or memory.

The Tatsuno footage is cinematic compilation, devoid of contiguous editing. While it forms indelible impressions, its ambivalence leads to reflexivity, particularly as this reflexivity relates to memory, reality, and the imaginary. The social actors' familiarity with Dave Tatsuno is particularly important. This intimacy creates privileged relations that play out in their rapport with his camera. We experience this rapport in ways that evoke seemingly transcendent qualities of truthful observation. Nevertheless, these distinctive representational qualities raise questions: For example, if this is pure observational mediation, how can it seem as though wrought from dreams and memories? Is this truth, or do certain conventions of mediation condition our response? Of course, this questioning touches on broader issues having to do with transcendence. It reflects Tajiri's quest for history experienced and formed in personal ways. She does not defer to conventions that impede personal discovery and knowledge formation. At the same time,

she values transcendent moments that bring about certain qualities that conventional stratagems do not. These transcendent moments that seem to fall outside language, convey scepticism of orderly boundaries between alterity, memory, representation, and reality. The Tatsuno images are ethereal, as if indeterminate flux. These images remain indeterminate, as do epistemologies that would govern their status. However, this cinematic compilation is no inchoate muddle. Like *History and Memory*, the Tatsuno footage functions in ways that evoke poietic qualities. These poietic qualities are embodied in performative acts of social actors, the cameraman, documentarian, and ultimately spectator. In the end, poiesis grants meaning and form.

In its original form, the Dave Tatsuno footage is silent (*Topaz*). Within the *History and Memory* context however, accompanying sound is critical. This sound transforms the imagery. In voice-over, Tajiri states:

I began searching for a history, my own history. Because I had known all along that the stories I had heard were not true and parts had been left out. I remember having this feeling growing up that I was haunted by something, that I was living within a family full of ghosts. There was this place that they knew about. I had never been there, yet I had a memory for it. I could remember a time of great sadness before I was born. We had been moved, uprooted. We had lived with a lot of pain. I had no idea where these memories came from. Yet I knew the place (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*).

Plainly, Tajiri's narration is intended to evoke notions of memory, space, and time. In addition to this expository narration, she interweaves disconcerting, haunting sounds that are difficult to identify. Like wind striking a cord against an abandoned flagpole, these sounds could not be attributed to any specific space or time. Nor do they have an identifiable place within the historical world. In addition to her voice-over narration, Tajiri excerpts fragments of dialogue from *Bad Day at Black Rock*. The Spencer Tracey

dialogues that Tajiri samples, reference a film about anti-Japanese racism following Pearl Harbor. This racism is portrayed as collective guilt resulting from the assassination of a Japanese-American farmer. In one instance, Robert Ryan's character Reno Smith says: "Kimoko uh? Sure, I remember him, Japanese farmer. Never had a chance. He got here in '41, just before Pearl Harbor. Three months later, they shipped him off to a relocation center. Tough" (*Bad Day at Black Rock*). This hate crime metaphor makes it apparent that there was a broad sense of moral culpability about the internment within popular consciousness. This moral culpability is apparent in *Bad Day at Black Rock*'s popularity, as well as in notable creative efforts behind it.<sup>16</sup> Like a nightmare revealing shadowy guilt, the history of the internment was active within the greater American consciousness at that time. What form this collective guilt took beyond repressed memory is not apparent. *Bad Day at Black Rock* makes that history seem like a hidden body within a bad dream.

We may well attribute Tajiri having remembered a time before she was born to various cultural traces, such as those ones we see within *Bad Day at Black Rock* and the Tatsuno footage. On the other hand, we could attribute it to more immediate familial consciousness revealed throughout the course of her life. Yet, despite the cultural and historical sources, and manifestations of social and familial consciousness, Tajiri points toward complexity that could not be limited. Even discounting suggested metaphysical dimensions and vagaries of the unconscious mind, we are left with the enormous complexity of those tissues of history, memory, and culture brought forward in the text. We are left with conditions of being: Reality is vast, reality is not quantifiable. If we expand this immense, immeasurable idea with the vicissitudes of perception, individual



psychology, and space and time; then history, memory, and representation of reality may become understandable in performative terms. Within this view, Being of spectatorship, space and time, as well as the immense complexity of history, memory, culture, and the unknown, describes a vast meta-text within which the text is experienced. Yet, even taking a portion of *History and Memory* in isolation, as with Tajiri's treatment of the Tatsuno footage, the reality of the historical world remains by and large untold. It can only be imagined.

At the documentary's completion, Tajiri returns to the recurring image of her mother filling a canteen with water. This image is superimposed with a pan shot of an expansive, uninhabited landscape interrupted by a highway and electrical lines. In this way, Tajiri brings her imagined mother together with a topography associated with her journey to the detritus of the Poston camp, or the landscape around the camp in general, depending on how the imagery is interpreted. We hear a multilayered mix of running water and birds, in combination with indeterminate sounds reminiscent of an idling locomotive. The overall effect is to blend past with present, imparting a certain regard on history and memory. At this point, Tajiri states in voice-over: "For years I have been living with this picture without the story, feeling a lot of pain. Not knowing how they fit together. But now I found I could connect the picture to the story. I could forgive my mother her loss of memory and could make this image for her" (*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*). Tajiri's mother departs frame left, her image dissolving as she goes. Her mother no longer present, the viewer is left with a desolate landscape accompanied by natural sounds.



## Conclusions: History Lost Memory Found

Documentary texts can be complex. However, in spite of this complexity, the underlying concept is simple. Documentary brings forth a notion of knowing. This knowing includes the idea that the documentarian can have knowledge of historical worlds. Moreover, the spectator presumes that the documentarian can make these worlds known. Desire for knowledge motivates documentary practice and reception, promising pleasure for author and spectator alike. As Susan Scheibler explains, within documentary, basic ontological and epistemological desires are joined with pleasure (S. F. Scheibler 1). At the end of the day, we seek knowledge of the referent. Consequently, the referent is the object of desire. However, to strive toward this kind of knowledge can also mean power over the subject. This power can have many effects, particularly on documented social worlds. As already suggested, this possibility of power over the subject may well have been an element in the occlusion of the subject described in “The Occluded Subject” chapter. Certain protestors did not want our crew to have this power. Instead, they wanted to exert their own power by preventing representation. The problem of power over the subject is central to the crisis of representation as well. Many commentators remarked on this inequality of power in representational practices, notably toward ethnographic and anthropological works. Accordingly, Trinh T. Minh-ha states in her *Reassemblage* narration:

Scarcely twenty years were enough to make two billion people define themselves as underdeveloped.

I do not intend to speak about

Just speak nearby (Trinh 96)

While Trinh T. Minh-ha speaks to the problem of representing the Other, we can draw from her speech questions about ontological and epistemological desires as well. One could ask: What lies behind these yearnings and what are their consequences? Are ontological desires as multitudinous and varied as human beings are? Is this desiring, a longing for connection to social and historical worlds, a way of relating to culture and the Other? Or, is this desiring more stark in effect, just another cog in a greater system of domination and control? Ontological and epistemological desires appear interwoven, and each works within documentary as a whole. Certainly, epistemological desires motivate documentary production and reception. In effect, epistemological desire appears to be the main reason we involve ourselves in these activities. On the other hand, ontological desire, which has to do with pleasure and being, motivates us as well.

Rationalism is based on knowledge, and knowledge is essential to claims of rationality as well. Without doubt, the Enlightenment task of reason was founded on knowledge claims. Given that the Enlightenment has set up much of our present day orientations, our current predicament can be traced to desires having to do with knowledge and reason. Knowledge of social problems interconnects with perceptions of reason, for example. This knowledge and reason sets off interwoven chains of events and social problems become identified and addressed in certain ways. At times, this arrangement appears self-serving. As Trinh T. Minh-ha observes in *Reassemblage*, problems are not only identified, but produced as well:

First create needs, then help

Sitting underneath the thatched roof which projects well beyond the front wall of his newly built house, a Peace-Corps Volunteer nods at several villagers who stop by to chat with him. While they stoop down beside him and start talking, he smiles blankly, a pair of headphones over his ears and a Walkman Sony cassette player in his lap

“I teach the women how to grow vegetables in their yard; this will allow them to have an income” he says and hesitates before he concludes: I am not always successful, but it’s the first time this has been introduced into the village

The first time this has been introduced into the village (Trinh 97-98)

Here we see rationalism interconnected with epistemological and ontological desires.

This self-serving rationalism stems from knowledge of social and historical worlds as objects of desire. However, one may well ask: What pleasure does this knowledge bring? These pleasures are not merely to do with knowledge. They connect with a will to power, as well as a desire for mastery. Without doubt, epistemological desires are related to power. This power can have myriad consequences on social worlds. Irrespective of whether that knowledge stems from will to pleasure or from will to power, we desire knowledge.

Documentary is a powerful medium. It establishes this power in many ways, notably by way of claims to demonstrable, referential reality. Because of documentary’s mimetic qualities, this claim to reality is compelling. Filmic representation tenders that which appears extant. Social and historical worlds seem attainable. Then again, this demonstrable reality is presented within textual forms that conform to restrained codes and modalities. Moreover, these textual forms bring forth highly structured accounts. This structured formalism of codes and modalities evokes Heidegger’s conception of the Ge-stell, as well as the impulse to ordering and challenging forth that he described. For that reason, one may well think of the standing reserve and the Ge-stell (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 19-20) in relation to documentary, together with other

conceptions such as museumification (Hearne 314-15) and ethnographic taxidermy (Rony "Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography" 100). Within these discourses lies fundamental questioning which confronts certain ways of ordering and structuring reality. With documentary, this questioning has to do with whether conventional modalities can summon forth social and historical worlds. However, something else underlies this ordering and questioning: A longing to access the signified. In this manifestation of epistemological desires, we can comprehend documentary as a transcendent medium. However, this perception can also lead to disillusionment. If moments of transcendence exist in documentary at all, they are rare. Nevertheless, a conundrum remains: If the medium takes up persuasive argumentation about the reality of the historical world, it is not without basis. Therefore, even though certain documentary approaches are illusory, there still must be some means to take up the referent. However, when the accessibility of the referent becomes disbelieved, our relationship to documentary changes in a fundamental way and further questioning follows.

With the referent absent, it follows that considerable meaning lies within the realm of signification. Without doubt, performative documentary manifests conspicuous signifier play. On the other hand, because of the absent referent, a critical question follows: What reality is attainable then? Evidently, considerable meaning lies apart from represented historical worlds. In the performative, revealing and immediacy of perception become especially important. As opposed to accessing a transcendent world, attainable reality lies within our experience of representation. Along with an enhanced ethical dimension, reflective awareness becomes critical. This awareness brings forth ramifications about how the spectator receives documentary, implications hinging on our

expectations of text. In this regard, we have come to expect persuasive forms of representation. On the other hand, with the emergence of the performative, certain fundamental questions become inexorable. For example: Is it essential for documentary to bring about persuasive representation? The question is critical, because perceiving documentary as persuasive or transcendent may well constitute a barrier to reception. Expectations of persuasion or transcendence can divert our attention from other paths of appreciation. Then again, documentary is always determined by the referent. One expects documentary to render social and historical worlds. The referent is never entirely out of our minds. One can see that conventional documentary modes posit an ability to attain the referent in some manner. This intentionality makes it difficult to see documentary as an object. However, if the documentary object is taken for the fundamental reality that it is, the spectator is freed to come on it in different ways. The text becomes a form of actuality that matters. These conditions prepare us for genuine revealing and a particular kind of reflective state.

The emergence of the contemporary performative has had radical effect on documentary mediation. While it has altered the dynamics of representation, it has also influenced a transnational social politic. Susan Scheibler depicts this general effect as awareness and potential activism: “political efficacy in the sense that it reminds us that ideology is composed of imaginary relations which serve the dominant order....” (S. F. Scheibler 10). Presumably, Scheibler believes that when signification becomes pronounced, ideology becomes less proficient. Not subject to illusory relations, the spectator is capable of greater sentience toward social worlds and the Other. However, Scheibler introduces a caveat in the second part of her statement: “There is a danger in

overturning the hierarchy, in privileging the signifier over the signified, celebrating the endless play of signifiers and losing history in the process” (S. F. Scheibler 10). This qualification is reminiscent of Heidegger’s admonition about aesthetics, where he warned that excessive aestheticism hindered the saving power (Heidegger "The Question Concerning Technology" 35). This concern that we must not become enraptured by the signifier is comprehensible. On the other hand, Scheibler’s statement with reference to “losing history” is enigmatic. Evidently, one cannot lose history. Presumably then, she is referring to a loss of history as narrative. If not, she could be alluding to master narratives becoming lost to aestheticism.

As Rea Tajiri made clear, history is unstable. Like the referent, we yearn for but never possess history. Plainly, the performative does not act as if the historical world does not exist. Nor does performative documentary abandon the referential object. Therefore, the question is not whether history becomes endangered or not. The question has to do with how we orient ourselves toward history. In the performative, the importance of temporality manifests as revealing and immediacy of perception. This revealing and immediacy of perception comprises the past and human potential through reflective self awareness. Thus, history is always present. However, how we go about accessing history is another question. Do we access history by way of narrative? Do we access history as though transcendental? Or, do we access history as immediate perception within which history remains connected to perception as memory? Our orientation toward the object also applies to critical reception. This question of accessing history includes conventional modalities too. Do we come upon Robert Flaherty’s world of the Inuit hunter Nanook (*Nanook of the North*) as museumification (Hearne 314-15),



ethnographic taxidermy (Rony "Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography" 100), or in some other way? Do we, for example, approach *Nanook of the North* poietically, by moving beyond instrumentalism and embracing our unique social, cultural, and ideological contexts? As a result of its distinctiveness, the performative has implications beyond mode of representation. Indeed, performative modality points toward ways to transform reception. These changes depend on indeterminate relations and ways of thinking that attribute great responsibility to the perceiving subject. The spectator must possess enough self-confidence to transcend master narratives, as well as the *bête noire*, the metaphorical master. Its modality points to a way of reception not occupied by a desire to master historical worlds. Nor is it colonized by social contract thinking. In this sense, at least, history is not lost. In another way, memory is found.

The Trinh T. Minh-ha documentaries *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* and *Naked Spaces -- Living is Round* exemplify performative traits. In addition to pronounced efforts to counteract master narratives, in these films we perceive contingency among indeterminate relations. Most palpably however, the author achieves disruption of conventional aesthetic harmony. This disruption is compelling, particularly relative to conventional documentary formalism. In effect, she reminds us that classical approaches are not connate forms of consciousness. Instead, traditional techniques are but artifice we have been conditioned to recognize as connate. Along these lines, her methods work against our normal conception of a cohesive object. We receive the films as fragmentary, contingent, and non-totalizing. Moreover, the palpable break with classical techniques works against mastery of the Other.

In certain ways, Trinh T. Minh-ha's formal approaches constitute a forthright response to conventional praxis. These approaches run counter to usual documentary methods, as well as tenets of anthropology and ethnography of the day. This antithetical stance is especially true in the sense that those conventions attain mastery of the subject. There is not only a conscious effort to break with conventional patterns of representation, but an endeavour to bring about self-reflection based on the viewing experience as well. We are compelled to see these films as conscious acts of spectatorship, as opposed to more passive viewing that conforms to our expectations. Therefore, one of Trinh T. Minh-ha's objectives may have been to bring about more unified states brought forward by consciousness of difference. This general effect is realized in various ways, understandable in terms of immediate perception, revealing, poetics, and poiesis. It is also comprehensible in Heideggerian terms of the saving power, as well as the Dasein, in that the Dasein involves self-reflection and striving toward being (Heidegger "Exposition of the Task of a Preparatory Analysis of Dasein"). Moreover, it creates space for the Other, so that he or she may be perceived in terms of potentiality and striving toward being as well. Taken as a whole, it creates oppositional conditions to a generalized state of affairs variously described as the Ge-stell, museumification, and ethnographic taxidermy, to refer to certain examples. Therefore, while sustaining ontological and epistemological desires, it sets up productive terms for the self-reflecting spectator who does not seek mastery.

Many viewers appreciate Trinh T. Minh-ha's films for her foregrounding of filmic techniques. As noted however, these films are performative as well. This combination of performative and reflexive is not surprising, given certain links between the two

modalities. Some texts, Trinh T. Minh-ha's included, integrate the two such that the performative functions in reflexive ways and vice-versa. In the extreme, reflexivity can make the documentary object the primary referent. This shift in referentiality brings up the following question: In that the object becomes the referent, can one consider performative documentary to be a form of reflexivity? Considered this way, the bond between performativity and reflexivity becomes apparent. Trinh T. Minh-ha's emphasis on technique points not only to reflexivity and performativity, but to being there as well. This being there can be seen in her subjective relations vis-à-vis the object of study, evinced by her distinctive techniques. Undoubtedly, Trinh T. Minh-ha's methods have had radical effect, especially on ethnographic film. Compared to conventional ethnography, these films free the spectator from the totalizing effect of the putatively objective eye. While this freedom renders subjectivity less structurally and aesthetically cohesive than documentary texts generally are, it can be related to a relative absence of desire for power over the object of study.

Trinh T. Minh-ha's techniques stand out against those who objectify; documentarians who hold and control the subject, as if they have captured it. This objectifying tendency sets up a situation in which we hold the Other up for examination. Several commentators, Fatimah Tobing Rony among them, have examined this problem (Rony "Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography"). Above all, this objectification creates an impression of mastery of social and historical worlds. Albeit based on fleeting and fragmentary representations, documentary lays claim to determinate knowledge. Without doubt, this is an expression of power over the subject. This power over the subject has often been seen in, although is not limited to, corporate and institutionally-backed

documentaries. Consequently, epistemological and ontological desires could be linked to colonialist and hegemonic objectives. Because we associate these representations with commercial and institutional structures, at times they appear to be little more than ideological attendants. Given that documentary is frequently driven by desires of social reform, these power relations came to be galling. As Trinh T. Min-ha demonstrates however, ontological and epistemological desires are not necessarily bound to aspirations of dominance and mastery. Quite the opposite, these desires can be freeing as well.

Trinh T. Minh-ha explains that, in making documentary, she became aware of this problem of power: “It was when I started making films myself that I really came to realize how obscene the question of power and production of meaning is in filmic representation” (Trinh 112-13). Even though weighty, “obscene” is an apt descriptor, especially given the effect representational work can have on social worlds and the Other. This power problem has to do with reducing human beings to a form of instrumentalism. The Other is rendered at the service of the author and text, and by extension, those power structures which relate to textual production. In this way, much is produced. Nevertheless, much again is absent. Trinh T. Minh-ha elaborates on her documentary approach:

What seems most important to me was to expose the transformations that occurred with the attempt to materialize on film and between the frames the impossible experience of “what” constituted Senegalese cultures. The resistance to anthropology was not a motivation to the making of the film. It came alongside with other strong feelings, such as the love that one has for one’s subject(s) of inquiry (Trinh 113).

Clearly, her empathy for the subject is consequential, as is her refusal to go along with anthropological tenets. While she does express sympathy in profound terms, empathy toward the subject is not particularly remarkable within documentary in general. Then

again, Trinh T. Minh-ha's application of critical understanding, along with her ability to undermine convention, surely was. In this way, expressions of empathy come to be more significant. Trinh T. Minh-ha's subversion destabilized dominant approaches and replaced these with alternate methods. These alternate methods produce a different range of effects.

Because conventional formal properties exhibit similarities that she has undermined or avoided, these documentaries are markedly different from the norm. Of course, those conventions constitute a formidable force within documentary creation. Techniques become like acquired behaviour for practitioner and spectator alike. We see repetition in formal approaches, resulting in expectations regarding textual elements that they produce. This repetition leads to similarities that both reassure and constrain. To put it succinctly, we receive what we have come to expect. This derivative and delimitative state of affairs has profound effect on the discursive environment. Trinh T. Minh-ha describes how these conditions come about:

It is common practice among filmmakers and photographers to shoot the same thing more than once and to select only one shot – the “best” one – in the editing process. Otherwise, to show the subject from a more varied view, the favored formula is that of utilizing the all-powerful zoom or curvilinear travelling shot whose totalizing effect is assured by the smooth operation of the camera (Trinh 115) .

One can judge the so-called best shot in several ways. It can be selected for informational content, technical properties, aesthetics, or just how the shot fits within the overall montage. The notion of a best shot can affect both recording and editing processes. Certain profilmic events attract the director or camera operator. Discernment regarding aesthetic properties and compositions enter into this selection. In the editing process, filmmakers endeavour to delimit discursive possibilities by containing the subject in

various ways. These decisions are dictated not only by aesthetics, but by ideological questions and discursive potential as well. If these techniques and decisions result in a totalizing effect, as Trinh T. Minh-ha believed, they then have extensive consequences. When persuasive argumentation is a fundamental purpose of textual formation, it follows that documentarians delimit discursive possibilities. Opening up discursive possibilities, as Trinh T. Minh-ha has done, works in opposite ways. It does not abet persuasive argumentation. Quite the reverse, it opens up discursive potential.

Within anthropological and documentary contexts, *Reassemblage* and *Naked Spaces -- Living is Round* constitute uniquely dissenting actions. Along with the intellectual challenges that they brought about, the opposition that they presented made these texts prominent. Without question, Trinh T. Minh-ha's formal approaches have had subversive effects. Each text destabilizes determinacy and countervails our ability to arrive at a consolidated view of the subject. For that reason, these documentaries can be viewed as inimical, just as they were perceived at that time. Much of this anti-documentary impression stems from Trinh T. Minh-ha's camera not taking up established positioning. And because of the camera's pluralized points of view, the spectator cannot take up a decided position either. In its place, the documentarian takes on an indeterminate attitude. She refuses to engage in the position of the ethnographer who sets out to establish the Other within a limited range of subject positions. Instead, the Other may occupy multiple positions contingent on a host of possibilities. Social worlds become rife with ambiguous and contingent relations, resulting in the conception of a polysemic and indeterminate historical world. Because subjectivity is no longer the ethnographer's imposed subjectivity, objectivity and subjectivity become

interchangeable. In its place, subjectivity falls on the spectator/observer. The radical nature of this subjectivity is readily apparent, given that documentary techniques typically set out to establish reductionist subjectivity. If not endeavouring toward reification, these reductive strategies support persuasive argumentation. The Trinh T. Minh-ha's documentaries, on the other hand, subvert this effect by unsettling those desires and opening up discursive potentiality. This approach brings the spectator into a pragmatic position toward represented reality, the documentary as object. Of particular note, notions of dichotomy between subjective and objective states no longer seem possible. Instead, these states can be viewed as multiple subjective positions or, multiple objective positions if you like.

Without doubt, Trinh T. Minh-ha disrupts the smooth functioning of documentary. Her texts throw convention into disarray and bring attention to the documentary object. While montage and sound disrupt convention, she employs techniques that draw attention to the camera. This awareness of the camera, manifests a sense of being there that reminds that we are not there. Consequently, her documentary is often seen as reflexive. In particular, it draws attention to recording technology, along with the cinematographic apparatus of anthropology and documentary. As noted however, it can be considered performative as well. Indeed, its performativity is likely the more significant contribution to the overall documentary syntax. This performativity resides within the indeterminacy of the object and Trinh T. Minh-ha's destabilizing formal operations, a feature of performative documentary in general. While multiple subjectivities point toward the apparatus, they also manifest within the absence of a consolidated subject and totalizing view. These multiple subjectivities appear to arise

from the body; or more precisely, a connection between body and apparatus. Trinh T. Minh-ha explains: “The exploratory movements of the camera – or structurally speaking, of the film itself – which some viewers have qualified as “disquieting,” and others as “sloppy,” is neither intentional nor unconscious. It does not result from an (avant-garde) anti-aesthetic stance, but occurs, in my context, as a form of reflexive body writing” (Trinh 115). Accordingly, the body is critical to the politics of this operation, reminiscent in certain ways of the kinesiology of a painter. Instead of following codes of convention, the documentarian incorporates her body within camera operation in ways that supersede dictates of formalism. Along these lines, Trinh T. Minh-ha continues: “Its erratic and unassuming moves materialize those of the filming subject caught in a situation of trial, where the desire to capture on celluloid grows in a state of non-knowingness and with the understanding that no reality can be “captured” without trans-forming’ (Trinh 115). Deference to “non-knowingness” is more forthright than consolidating techniques which promote reification and persuasive argumentation. In this way, Trinh T. Minh-ha’s attitude is reminiscent of Heidegger’s position that awareness of the unknown is a critical form of consciousness (Lovitt 55). Approaching what Heidegger believed necessary for humanity, she shifts attention from the illusion of control and what is revealed, to the unknown from which revealment occurs.

Whatever it may be, the unknown from which revealment occurs is certainly not narrative. On the other hand, represented reality generally is. Like other performative texts, the Trinh T. Minh-ha documentaries display diminished emphasis on the cause-effect rationalism that marks the great body of documentary texts. As a result, she situates the viewer in less instrumental ways. This diminished instrumentality responds to



perceptions that traditional modalities support the source of dissent. In other words, instrumentalities buttress the greater structure, understood here as the Ge-stell. This method of diminished instrumentality is distinct from formally conventional documentaries like *Harlan County, USA*, which promote social change by way of traditional techniques. In spite of securing constative gains, from a performative perspective these techniques reinforce the greater structure. Such methods are therefore rejected as ontologically impracticable. This perception of ontological failing is critical. A perception of ontological inadequacy helps to explain why the contemporary performative emerged in the first place. Without doubt, the performative has brought about radical formal transformations, a significant rupture within the documentary corpus. However, while effectively subversive, performative documentary still has negligible standing within conventional discourses of sobriety. When the viewer understands performative modality as documentary, it is seen to be anomalous. In the greater scheme of things, its subversive consequence is more subtle than direct. At the same time as providing alternate discursive models, it has a corrosive effect on conventional praxis. In fact, its corrosive effect has marked the documentary landscape. In this sense, performative documentary resembles a steady trickle more than a flood.

Foundations of the contemporary performative reside within particular technological, ideological, and cultural conditions. Heidegger's Ge-stell and destining of revealing play significant roles within these conditions. So too do general reactions to abstract signification, perceived as controlling and at a remove from the human condition. These general reactions respond to hegemonic forces, as well as societal conditions wrought within modern technological instrumentality. Certain lexica are underscored

here as symptomatic of a significant malaise. This malaise manifests in discontent and fundamental changes to discursive practices. Dubious terminology like collateral damage, ethnic cleansing, and corporate downsizing are symptomatic of social management with goals of mastery over social worlds. The performative response can be difficult to discern. Indeed, it was present for some time before Susan Scheibler and Bill Nichols wrote about it. This delay in recognition is in part because of its diversity, but also because the performative relates to conventional discourses in fundamental ways. Nichols, Scheibler, and Renov's insights connect with the cultural and historical context within which they worked. All the same, the performative mode remains distinctive. Most of all, performative documentary does not function as if, *ad libitum*, one can call on a standing-reserve of reality. The performative orients more within the discreet experience of the object in the here and now. This immediate experience of the documentary object may well be an escapable feature of reception in general; however, the performative spectator becomes oriented this way as the primary means of reception. This spectator orientation stems from a contemporary conception of effectual ways of dealing with power within modern technological environments. From a Heideggerian perspective, this could be seen as the saving power arising from within the *Ge-stell*.

At that point in the early 1980s, during which several performative documentaries emerged, the Western news media came under increasing criticism for disseminating propaganda. And while associated with truth, documentary, like the mass media in general, can also be linked to thought control. Consequently, two conflicting views of documentary exist: Documentary brings truth and documentary brings propaganda. These concurrent and conflicting ideas produce incongruity within the documentary realm. This

schism can be linked to intrinsic subjectivity from which documentary meaning follows. Precision-guided munitions videos, and Persian Gulf War imagery, have been noted here for their subjective qualities within putatively objective contexts. Yet, while presented in this seemingly objective light by military officials, they are obviously nothing of the kind. This contemporary war imagery demonstrates the significance of context, along with the criticality of indexicality and spectatorship to meaning. These aspects, together with signifiers, establish a correlation between the actuality represented and the actual representation. Recall that Susan Scheibler resolves the problem of documentary referentiality by positing that the referent lies within the interval between signifier and signified (S. Scheibler 149). Performative emphasis on signifiers and immediate perception brings light to this interval. It is an approach to signification that establishes conditions in which we can shape and form the referent from within the pronounced ontological void. Contemporary performative documentaries create these conditions using disparate and discrete methods. In this way, it becomes clear that documentary meaning is contingent on textual performance. This performance is by spectator as well as by author.

Despite meaning becoming contingent on performance, actuality remains of the essence. Moreover, apperception of indexicality remains essential in making meaning as well. Consequently, several elements are critical. These elements include the documentary object and the reality that it represents. This object and reality distinction establishes an ontological void that the spectator fills through conception and intellection. Fulfilling this void involves shaping and forming, just as it involves striving toward being. The referent establishes that from which thought follows. Relative to conventional

modes however, the referent is not of the same consequence. Signifier play and the resultant gap between signifier and signified, take on greater importance. In this way, reality is still attainable, although in different ways than we are accustomed to accept. While constative substantiation is diminished, averment is not abandoned. Then again, cause-effect rationalism is no longer so elemental that it forms the same kind of ideological impetus. Given opportunities created by performative openings to the referent, other ways to think about things arise. Accordingly, spectator agency is significant. This potential for agency is further evinced by renunciation of master narratives, along with the spectator taking possession of and responsibility for narrative as his or her own. *Sari Red* has been cited here as an example. Because of phenomena of immediate perception rooted in expressive formal elements, the spectator is bound to intellectual and ethical engagement. While the constative remains, it becomes destabilized by the performativity around it. In fact, interplay between performative and constative is a familiar tension within performative modality. Pratibha Parmar's poetic dissonance of imagery and sound accentuate the interval between signifier and referent, thus bringing about poietic space from which revealing can occur. At a remove from the referent, this opening of poietic space plunges the spectator within immediate perception.

Parmar represents in ways that position the spectator as a moral and ethical being. In similar ways, she brings attention to our ability to respond as individuals capable of social and political action. While not essential to performative modality, activism is not out of the ordinary either. Social and political activism is consistent with the dynamic spectator. As oppositional to power, we often see performative documentary take up social justice in activist ways. Activism also harmonizes with a deep-seated impulse

underlying the contemporary performative. This impulse relates to jadedness and apprehension about conventional methods, approaches that have fostered alienation with respect to documentary convention. Given the tradition of dissent among documentarians, it follows that some would have discarded methods associated with propaganda and injustice. It also follows that alternate techniques would be sought. In place of conventional constative methods, came greater emphasis on varied ways in which the signifier can stand for the referent. This emphasis on varied signification is consistent with certain contemporary ideation. Above all, the basic disparity between signifier and signified indicates that signifiers cannot reproduce an essential signified. In spite of this inability to reproduce the signified, traditional methods suggest that documentarians have, in spite of everything, maintained the assumption of a transcendental signified. When, as in *Sari Red*, signifiers represent in implicit ways, the sign acts like a referent. The sign that acts as a referent results in more immediate perception. This kind of perception resembles unmediated perception of reality. Then again, the play of signifiers is always toward a referent, or at least the idea of one. An actively positioned spectator is needed for meaning to be revealed within these conditions. We see these effects in *Sari Red*. At times, the historical world is clearly referenced. At other times, the signifier is the only apparent referent. Critically however, performative documentary can affect ways of thinking that sustain realist epistemologies, causing them to diminish and lose their previous lustre.

Several connections between seminal poststructuralist ideation and performative documentary have been noted here. While difficult to disregard, these connections remain enigmatic. For example, Roland Barthes' description of Text as explosion of meaning

(Barthes "From Work to Text" 171), or Jacques Derrida's declaration of the absence of a transcendental signified (Bennington and Derrida *Jacques Derrida* 78-79), were made outside the documentary context. Moreover, owing to the exceptional nature of filmic signifiers and their capacity for verisimilitude, the transcendental signified is not so easily dismissed. However, while feasible, transcendent occurrences are fleeting and rare. They are outside language and rooted within genuine revealing. Of course, this idea is contestable. Lest it seem absurd however, consider that the assumption of a transcendental signified is widely held within the documentary locus. Not only predominant, this assumption denotes an important distinction between performative and constative. The constative relies on the conviction that discourse can bring about an absent whole. However, despite its great authority, this notion's absurdity is readily apparent. Even if we disregard that the whole does not exist in reality, there must be an absolute correspondence between signifier and signified to bring about the absent whole. This impracticality notwithstanding, the assumption manifests where the constative is dominant, especially within expository and observational modes. What is more, when the constative is ascendant, expressive techniques function in an adjuvant way. When transcendent meaning is in doubt however, things change. First, the spectator's bearing toward signification is transformed. What served to embellish the constative becomes essential within the performative. The reflexive and performative are fundamentally different from other modalities. However, the reflexive can still question documentary ontology while remaining within the constative. The performative is more radical because, by its nature, it takes us away from the constative.

Without doubt, the performative mode creates uncertainty within the viewer. In particular, we sense uncertainty about the documentarian's ability to access social and historical worlds. This uncertainty conveys scepticism regarding an essential bond between signifier and signified. When this bond is in doubt, so too is our faith in the author's ability to master those worlds. Significantly, performative methods undermine documentary's usual purpose of persuasion. However, while nonconforming within the conventional documentary context; the performative is consistent with contemporary ideation. Connections with poststructuralism, postmodernism and deconstruction are evident. Links to Heidegger's views of modern technology and its future direction have been brought forward here as well. For those reasons, one can say that the performative expresses contemporary culture. By representing traces, as opposed to endeavouring to signify an absent whole, performative documentary establishes plurality of meaning. This plurality calls to mind several contemporary views, including Jacques Derrida's conviction that there is no context, only contexts (Bennington and Derrida *Jacques Derrida* 84-98). Moreover, signifier play and dissemination of traces evokes Roland Barthes' idea of Text (Barthes "From Work to Text"). Generally speaking, this notion of Text points to a fundamentally altered emphasis in documentary representation, a perceptual shift from the signified historical world onto signifiers and the phenomena they create. Indeterminacy, and the unknown from which signifier phenomena emerges, are critical as well. One could say, in a way, that the documentary object becomes the signified. But in another, equally important way, the historical world remains as the signified. While the documentary object and what it represents are two critical objects of desire, neither can be seen as the veritable referent. As Susan Scheibler attests, the true

referent resides in the opening between them (S. Scheibler 149). Therefore, the constitution of documentary meaning can be found within neither one, nor the other object of desire. Truth lies within the spectator's intersection with the object and its referent. To interpret Roland Barthes' view, Text is a traversal that becomes ontological, our being in space and time.



## Filmography

*Forest of Bliss* (dir. Robert Gardner, 1986)

*History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (dir. Rea Tajiri, 1991)

*I'm British But ...* (dir. Gurinder Chadha, 1989)

*Journal Inachevé* (dir. Marilú Mallet, 1982)

*Khush* (dir. Pratibha Parmar, 1991)

*Lightning over Water* (dir. Nicholas Ray and Wim Wenders, 1980)

*Man with a Movie Camera* (dir. Dziga Vertov, 1929)

*Naked Spaces -- Living is Round* (dir. T. Minh-ha Trinh, 1985)

*passing through / torn formations* (dir. Philip Hoffman, 1988)

*Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* (dir. T. Minh-ha Trinh, 1983)

*Sans Soleil* (dir. Chris Marker, 1983)

*Sari Red* (dir. Pratibha Parmar, 1988)

*Tongues Untied* (dir. Marlon Riggs, 1989)

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I use the term technology in two specific ways. For example, when discussing Hi8 technology I use the word in the typical modern sense defined in standard dictionaries. *The Oxford English Dictionary* describes the meaning of the noun technology as "4. a. The branch of knowledge dealing with the mechanical arts and applied sciences; the study of this. ... b. The application of such knowledge for practical purposes, esp. in industry, manufacturing, etc.; the sphere of activity concerned with this; the mechanical arts and applied sciences collectively. ... c. The product of such application; technological knowledge or know-how; a technological process, method, or technique. Also: machinery, equipment, etc., developed from the practical application of scientific and technical knowledge; an example of this. ... 5. A particular practical or industrial art; a branch of the mechanical arts or applied sciences; a technological discipline". "technology, N." Def. 4 and 5. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Third Ed. 2012. Oed Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 11 April 2012. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* provides the following definition: "1 a: the practical application of knowledge especially in a particular area: engineering <medical ~> b: a capability given by the practical application of knowledge <a car's fuel-saving ~> 2: a manner of accomplishing a task especially using technical processes, methods, or knowledge <new technologies for information storage> 3: the specialized aspects of a particular field of endeavor <educational ~>". "----" Def. 1, 2 and 3. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. 11 Apr. 2012. Distinct from the modern sense, I use the word technology in the Heideggerian sense, as described in "The Technology Question" chapter. Because of its instrumentality, Heidegger believed that the modern definition misrepresents technology's essence. He saw this modern definition as challenging forth, as setting things in order to be held and controlled. He connected this concept to a desire for mastery. To Heidegger, technology's importance did not reside within instrumentality. His idea, which looked to Greek etymological roots, described how technology relates to poiesis. Technology's significance lay within its manner of revealing. He believed that revealing aligned with poiesis could bring about truth, whereas the challenging revealing and cause-effect rationalism of the modern technological definition distorted genuine revealing, causing the true to withdraw. Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology." Trans. Lovitt, William. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977. 3-35. Print.

<sup>2</sup> In "A Gespräch with Heidegger on Technology" William Lovitt wrote: "The term "Ge-stell" is impossible to translate. It gathers together (*versammelt*)<sup>16</sup> all the modes of challenging revealment which are built on the verb *stellen*, such as *vorstellen* (to represent), *feststellen* (to fix or establish), *bestellen* (to order or command), *nachstellen* (to lie in wait or set a trap for), *sicherstellen* (to insure, secure), *berausstellen* (to

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expose), *verstellen* (to block), etc. etc. . . . *Gestell* in everyday modern German means frame or stand; Heidegger believes that it names the way in which all reality presences itself for men of today. Surely we, non-German born, cannot fully know the shudder that the German experiences when and if he sees that the name by which he names his book rack or his skeleton names all reality as well.<sup>18</sup> Again, beyond the eery is the sheer nonsensical, which seems to issue forth from the obscure depths of some insanity, for there is no way for us to conceive or to represent the frenzied movement into endlessness of the setting-up at one with the static unity and bounded-offness of the frame. This is causality shrunken into simultaneity. This is the levelled security of our lives together with the anxiety of maintaining it. Yet, Heidegger tells us, the word “stellen” in *Ge-stell* should also preserve tonalities of that “other *Stellen*, ...from which it stems,” that placing and presenting (*herstellen* and *darstellen*) that reign in *poesis*”. Lovitt, William. “A Gespräch with Heidegger on Technology.” *Man and World*. 6.1 (1973): 44-62. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Annexe 3 provides an overview of events between Griffin’s death on November 11, 1987 and October 4, 1996. Dumont, Marie-Pier. “Le Contrôle De L’inconduite Policière : L’affaire Gosset.” MA thesis. l’Université d’Ottawa, 2001. Print.

<sup>4</sup> B.J. Bullert provides additional context for this portrayal of conditions for independent producers around this time. Bullert, B. J. “Four Basic Types of Independent Producers.” *Public Television: Politics and the Battle over Documentary Film*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997. 12-14. Print. In a related vein, Trinh T. Minh-ha makes the following statement: “Too often a binary opposition between subjectivity and objectivity is perpetrated in the claim that one makes subjective documentary – as if anyone can produce such a thing as objective documentary.... It is as if the acknowledgement of the politics of the documentation and the documenting subject disturbs because the interests at stake are too high for the guardians of norms” Trinh, T. Minh-ha. *Framer Framed*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

<sup>5</sup> In footnote 17 of “The Question Concerning Technology” William Lovitt wrote: “The translation “Enframing” for *Ge-stell* is intended to suggest, through the use of the prefix “en-,” something of the active meaning that Heidegger here gives to the German word. While following the discussion that now ensues, in which Enframing assumes a central role, the reader should be careful not to interpret the word as though it simply meant a framework of some sort. Instead he should constantly remember that Enframing is fundamentally a calling-forth. It is a “challenging claim,” a demanding summons, that “gathers” so as to reveal. This claim *enframes* in that it assembles and orders. It puts into a framework or configuration everything that it summons forth, through an ordering for use that it is forever restructuring anew”. Heidegger. “The Question Concerning Technology.” Print.

<sup>6</sup> What follows conveys a connection between free and the open, which is more straightforward in German. William Lovitt’s footnote 23 notes: ““The open” here translates *das Freie*, cognate with *Freiheit*, freedom. Unfortunately the repetitive stress of the German phrasing cannot be reproduced in English, since the basic meaning of *Freie* -- open air, open space -- is scarcely heard in the English “free””. ---. “The Question Concerning Technology.” Print.

<sup>7</sup> Reflexive and performative modalities are notable exceptions.

<sup>8</sup> I have chosen collage over montage to describe *Sari Red*. Brian Henderson distinguishes between collage and montage: “Montage fragments reality in order to reconstitute it in highly organized, synthetic emotional and intellectual patterns. Collage does not do this; it collects or sticks its fragments together in a way that does not entirely overcome their fragmentation. It seeks to recover its fragments *as fragments*. In regard to overall form, it seeks to bring out the internal relations of its pieces, whereas montage imposes a set of relations upon them and indeed collects or creates its pieces to fill out a pre-existent

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plan". Henderson, Brian. "Toward a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style." *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*. Ed. Nichols, Bill. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976. 422-38. Print.

<sup>9</sup>Parmar is quoted as saying: "I wanted to make a video which would rescue this brave young woman from being yet one more statistic and evoke her life, her dreams and her potential". Jungblut, Christiane, and Wera Reusch. "Identities, Passions and Commitments: An Interview with the British Filmmaker Pratibha Parmar." *Lolapress*. Web. 10 April 2012. <<http://www.lolapress.org/artenglish/parme12.htm>>.

<sup>10</sup> Bennington writes: "It is not difficult to see why a tradition ordered around the value of presence would be wary of metaphor, which speaks obliquely, exploits lateral connotations, insinuates things without really saying them, suggests ideas without making them explicit. And if we do indeed find many metaphors in the texts of philosophy, in principle they are reducible to the status of inessential ornamentation which helps the reader to traverse the hard pages of conceptual argumentation, a slightly risky detour the better to recuperate meaning in the end. . . . This secondary position of metaphor with respect to conceptual propriety is linked just as obviously to the value of seriousness (cf. LI *passim*), responsibility and truth established against seductive and hence irresponsible games, the fictioning of artists. So long as artistic writing remains in its place, in literature, philosophy admires it and draws examples from it, even recognizing that poetic intuition can give a visionary access to a truth the philosopher would need much work to achieve: but as soon as it appears to demand an *essential* privilege, as such, in thought, then the danger of irrationalism is denounced and the frontiers are tightened". Bennington, Geoffrey, and Jacques Derrida. *Jacques Derrida*. Religion and Postmodernism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Print.

<sup>11</sup> "Leibnitz" [sic] appears to refer to German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

<sup>12</sup> It is not clear if these are actually Tajiri's sister and/or the boy that she photographed. They could well be actors playing the parts.

<sup>13</sup> *December 7<sup>th</sup>* is regarded as a docudrama, *From Here to Eternity* is considered to be a drama or melodrama. Captured footage from the fiction film *Hawai Marē-oki kaisen* is purported to have been sold to Movietone News Corporation and presented as if actual footage from the Pearl Harbor attack.

<sup>14</sup> *Japanese Relocation* was available in 16mm film format in 1942 from the National Audiovisual Center in Washington. It became available in Umatic video format in 1980 from the National Audiovisual Center and in VHS format in 1984 from International Historic Films of Chicago. While *Japanese Relocation* has been available in these formats since 1942, internet distribution makes it readily available. *Japanese Relocation* is available online at the Internet Archive URL: <http://www.archive.org/details/Japanese1943>.

<sup>15</sup> There is, of course, other information about *Japanese Relocation* available, such as that within "Melodrama, Realism and Race: World War II Newsreels and Propaganda Film". Higashi, Sumiko. "Melodrama, Realism, and Race: World War II Newsreels and Propaganda Film." *Cinema Journal* 37.3 (1998): 38-61. Print.

<sup>16</sup> In addition to the 1955 *Palme d'Or*, *Bad Day at Black Rock* was nominated for several 1956 Academy Awards. At the Cannes festival Spencer Tracey received the best actor award.