Interview-Work:

The Genealogy of a Cultural Form

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INTRODUCTION

I. THE OBJECT OF STUDY

Over the last twenty years, amid the proliferation of all forms of media production,

there has been a marked explosion in the production of interviews across the entire

range of media. These interview projects are often aligned with a version of "left"

cultural critique and the belief in a liberal democratic use of the media in which "people's

voices" function as a critical and popular response to "elite" and hegemonic forms of

representation.[1] The history of this cultural form is also implicated in the development

of sociological studies, questionnaires, and the discipline of anthropology; the growth of

demographics, focus groups, and consumer-audience analysis; and police and military

interrogations, surveillance, and torture.[2] Interview and talk show formats on radio and

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[1] Emblematic examples of this marked explosion include: the work of Jeremy Deller, Oliver Ressler, and Omer Fast within the context of the museum and gallery; National Public Radio & David Isay's *StoryCorps* on radio; and *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* on American television and Alexander Kluge's *10 to 11* on German television. In addition, alongside the commercial success of documentary films by Errol Morris and Michael Moore that rely heavily on interviews, recent historical narrative films, such as *Kinsey* (2004) and *Frost/Nixon* (2009), have depicted sociological and television interviews and employed the documentary interview form as a tool for exposition. In the realm of new media, David Lynch's *Interview Project* is available on the Internet. Amy Goodman's news program, *Democracy Now!*, provides an example of an interview program that crosses media formats. The program began on radio in 1996, and it started broadcasting simultaneously on the Internet, television, and radio in 2001.
[2] J. Bourdon, "The Growth of Opinion Polls in French Television, 1958-74," in *France and the Mass Media*, ed. Brian Rigby and Nicholas Hewitt (London: Macmillan, 1991),

television have been crucial to the construction and circulation of celebrity culture.

Using the interview as their primary means of production and presentation, these

programs not only showcase various "personalities," from stars to politicians; they also

make pundits out of scholars and media stars out of ordinary folks. As this list of

appearances suggests, the interview form is found across diverse histories, media, and

projects. To a large degree, the ubiquity of the interview means that it is

simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, operative in all fields and thus specific to no

one discipline or practice. But rather than take up the impossibly huge problem of

organizing or classifying interviews across various disciplines and practices, this

dissertation analyzes symptomatic moments in the history of the media interview as a

cultural form.[3]

Cultural forms emerge within and respond to a range of forces within a social and

political totality.[4] Raymond Williams uses the term "cultural form" to describe the

social character of various modes of communication.[5] Tracing the relationship between

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177-194; Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[3] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *On Ideology* (New York: Verso, 2008), 33. By considering the interview as a cultural form rather than reading a series of interviews, I am working toward a theorization of "the interview," much in the way that Althusser distinguishes between theorizing ideologies and producing a theory of ideology. For example, by looking at the interview and its relation to what I will call interview projects, the significance of the relation between the particular and the general to the operational logic and deployment of this cultural form becomes visible.

[4] Karl Marx, "Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology: Part One*, ed. C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 2004), 124-151.

[5] This synopsis draws from Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, (London: Routledge Classics, 2003), and Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

the social conditions out of which new cultural practices emerge and the shape that those practices take, Raymond Williams put forth the term "cultural form" as a way to call attention to the complexity of social forces, dynamics, and needs that contribute to the development of various modes of communication, from literature to television. Framed within this broader set of determinants, technology becomes one among many factors that contribute to the operational logic of modes of communication, rather than the primary determining factor. By calling the interview a cultural form, I am choosing to emphasize the historical specificity of the interview's emergence and its social function as defined in and through its representation across different media.

In order to read and analyze the interview as a cultural form, it is crucial to understand the inter-relation of the interview as a means of production and as a form of representation. The word "interview" is both a noun and a verb; it refers to a method, an event, and a media object. In order to address the significance of this polyvalence, I have chosen to describe my object of study as "interview-work." I use this term to signify the linkage between the activity of "interviewing," the "experience" of an interview, and the interview as a text. [6] Using the umbrella term "interview-work" enables me to distinguish between these different signifieds in my analysis. But it also allows me to call attention to the way in which the textual result of the activity and event is a representation of a process that has been made into a product. Interview-work is produced through the discursive activity of two or more people who are talking

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[6] One of the premier theorists and practitioners of oral history, Alessandro Portelli, focuses his attention on the significance of the interview as an event. He writes, "[e]ach interview is an *experience* before it becomes a text." Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), xiii.

and listening, exchanging questions and answers. But this "work" takes a shape in the process of inscription and editing; it becomes a formal and material object that can be consumed by a wider audience and public, having a life that extends beyond the time and place of the "event." Interview-work circulates because it has form. The contents produced by the labor involved in conducting an interview and being interviewed are represented by this form.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies two historically distinct definitions of the interview as a noun. The earlier meaning of the interview is described as "a meeting of persons face to face, esp. one sought or arranged for the purpose of formal conference on some point."[7] A second meaning of the word "interview" that is "specific" and "in more recent use" is delineated as "a meeting between a representative of the press and some one from whom he seeks to obtain statements for publication." According to this early definition, the interview is primarily an event before it is a media form. And the difference between an interview for publication and a face-to-face conversation or meeting resides in the intention of the journalist to publish the proceedings of the meeting. The *OED*'s definition of "interview" as a verb further reinforces this emphasis on the interview as an activity. The *OED*'s first definition of "interview" as a transitive verb is "to have a personal meeting with (each other.)" The definition of "interview" as an intransitive verb is "to meet together in person." These definitions highlight the

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[7] *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), s.v. "interview," 1:1470. All subsequent references to the *OED* in this chapter refer to this edition and page number. This edition reproduces the complete text of the original *OED* that was completed and published in 1933. I date this definition at 1900 because the portion of the "I" section in which the definition of "interview" appears was completed and published in October 1900 ("Historical Introduction," *OED*, 1: x).

significance of physical presence and the experience of spatial and temporal simultaneity to the early meaning of the interview.

Coming after the emergence of mass printing, the "more recent" definitions of the interview demonstrate the significance of the advent of "publication" to the transformation of conversation and social exchange. To a great degree, this emphasis on publication dovetails with the way in which the discourses around the public, publicity, and newspapers were linked to national identities and the nation's role in the formation of the political and cultural sense of the public and the people.[8] But it also situates "the interview" in relation to "publication": to the history of journalism as a profession, the rise of commercial newspapers, the material and textual inscription of the activity in a specific medium, and the development of mass media. The *OED*'s more recent definition of the verb reads: "To have an interview with (a person); spec. on the part of a representative of the press: To talk with or question so as to elicit statements or facts for publication." In this definition, the goal of interviewing is to produce content that can circulate, extracting "statements or facts" from "a person" in order to make them public.

A third definition of "interview" is missing: the one that identifies the interview as a form, as a representation of "a personal meeting." A media text, this "interview" is not merely an abstract or transparent vehicle for "facts" or "statements"; it has a materiality that varies according to the context of its use, the media in which it appears, and the historical conditions of its deployment. This "interview" has a history that is implicated

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[8] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983, revised 2006).

in the political, economic, and ideological operations of mass media as well as the development of modes of production and class relations. The term interview-work suggests the relationship between all these definitions and histories—that is, it emphasizes the process by which the discursive and relational activity of the interview (and interviewing) becomes represented, regularized, and commodified. Not simply a method for producing content, the interview is also a form of representation whose shape has social, political, semiotic, and ideological significance because it represents the process of its production.

Over time, particular formal conventions have developed with respect to the deployment of the interview in various media. The relationship between conventions and the "form" itself are crucial to this study. According to Williams, as a cultural form emerges, the dominant or hegemonic uses of the form come to appear as the essence or meaning of a given mode of communication. In the case of the interview, formal conventions have developed, particularly in the realm of television, that have come to dominate the representation of this dialogical mode of inquiry. But these conventions have been determined by social forces and material conditions; as such, they embody the logic of the form at the same time that they reproduce material and ideological shifts in society more broadly.

Considering the relation between specific representations of the interview and more general formal conventions, I trace the historical development of the form of interview-work as it appears in a range of different media: in British newspapers from the 1840s, on American television in the 1970s, in political documentary films from the 1950s and

1960s, and on the Internet in 2012.[9] The interview projects that I have chosen to highlight deploy this means of production and form of representation for a critical social function. As a result, this genealogy investigates the ideological and political work that the interview does and demonstrates how history exerts a force on the formulation and function of this practice as it gets articulated with the development of particular media forms, new modes of production, and changing social relations.

II. A FORM IN THE AGE OF CONTENT

By focusing on the interview as a form of representation, I situate my dissertation within the tradition of Marxist criticism that Fredric Jameson outlines in *Marxism and Form* (1971). In this book, Jameson argues that the productive tension between form and content is the central problematic addressed within the dialectical analysis of literature (and I would add cultural production more broadly) because relations between form and content model the dynamics of knowledge production and history itself. According to Jameson, Marxist criticism has traditionally focused on form in its effort to interrogate matters of social content. He writes, "inasmuch as the cultural is far less complex than the economic, it may serve as a useful introduction to the real on a reduced, simplified scale."[10] For Jameson and Georg Lukacs (from whom he draws), form operates as an index to and a means for grasping material conditions: social, economic, political, and ideological.

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[9] Due to limitations of space and time, this current study does not treat interview-work on the radio.

[10] Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 10.

Relying on a dialectical conception of form allows me to focus on the significance of the ways in which form and content are inextricably linked in the representation of interview-work. For the purposes of this study, form refers to both the logic of a cultural practice and the "visible or outward" shape that it takes[11]. In the case of interview-work, the relation between the "essential shaping principle" [12] or activity of an interview and what we read, see, and hear in a given media text constitutes the structuring problematic of the representation of an interview. A product and a representation of the process of production, interview-work not only embodies "the contradictions of form," but it also offers those contradictions up for scrutiny.[13] From this perspective, the interview form is not simply reflective but also productive of social contradictions. Interview-work performs the mediation of content by form; it represents and enacts the ways in which the content of social relations gets worked through at the level of culture and ideology.[14]

For Jameson, the interview "can be identified as a form of reification." But rather than see this as interview-work's "structural flaw,"[15] I assert that the logic of the interview's representation of content constitutes a productive contradiction. Interview-work enacts a process by which subjectivity, speech, embodiment, experience, feelings, ideas, and social relations are transformed into "content," manufactured through and represented

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[11] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 138.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ellen Rooney uses this phrase to describe Williams' gloss on form in *Keywords*. Ellen Rooney, "Form and Contentment," in *Reading for Form*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Marshall Brown (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 45.

[14] Jameson argues that form "is the working out of content in the realm of the superstructure." Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 329.

[15] Fredric Jameson, "Introduction: On Not Giving Interviews," in *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 4 and 6.

in a form that can circulate. When identified with the interview, reification can be understood as a description of a particular relation between form and content, one that is emblematic of the relations of production. Seen in this way, the interview can be shown to animate and inhabit the problematic of form in a way that highlights the processes of commodification: processes of abstraction and objectification that color all aspects of life and shape subjectivity under capitalism.

As a means for the production of knowledge, interview-work also represents and enacts a model of inquiry and social critique. As a form, interview-work is composed of questions and answers. It is, by definition, a form of dialogue. The history of the association of the dialogue with the production of critical thinking begins with Plato. Celebrated by philosophers like Hans-Georg Gadamer, dialogue has been conceived of as a form through which truth can be produced.[16] Dialogue is also held up as a form through which different voices can be registered, as in M. M. Bakhtin's commitment to the literary representation of the polyvocality of culture through what he calls dialogism.[17] Describing the dialogue as a tool for political transformation and human emancipation, Paulo Freire opposes an ideal form of interaction to the exchange of content. He writes:

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[16] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

[17] Bahktin's attention to the materiality of discourse is distinct and an important framework for this study. Less concerned with the "idea" of dialogue, his literary analyses interrogate the traces of a real that appear in literature as the evidence of difference and social antagonism. A Marxist critic, Bakhtin always emphasizes the productive capacity of dialogue; for him, social reality and language are produced through dialectical and dialogical interaction. See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

> [s]ince dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and actions of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's "depositing" ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by the discussants…. It is an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialoguers; it is the conquest of the world for the liberation of humankind.[18]

In another passage, Freire writes:

> Finally, true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking—thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them—thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity—thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved.[19]

Freire's descriptions of the political potential of the dialogue reveal the importance of the category of the social and "reality" to the idea of the dialogue as a liberatory means of interaction. Dialogue is lauded as a "creative" activity through which experience can be interrogated and analysis can be elaborated, in which reflection and action are intertwined. In these passages, the mediation of this form by reality is understood as conceptual, a matter of its content. As a result, a dialogical encounter also has the potential to be a site of domination, to become articulated with the very forces that Freire seeks to oppose. This risk is one of the structuring contradictions of interview-work as a form of dialogue. As a form, it is shaped by the dynamics it represents. It is not simply susceptible to different uses; the form is shot through with the very contradictions it has the potential to illuminate.

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[18] Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2000), 88-89.
[19] Ibid., 92.

To a great degree, these contradictions, and the ensuing ambivalence towards the interview and its uses, are most evident in the history of documentary practice and studies. The early British Documentary Movement associated with producer John Grierson was explicitly tied to progressive aims, and the filmed interview was used towards those ends from its outset, as evidenced by the first filmed interview in John Elston's 1935 film, *Workers and Jobs,* a state-sponsored educational film produced for the unemployed.[20] But over time, a greater suspicion of the dialogical form of interview-work arose. In the 1980s and 1990s, the interview was derided by documentary scholars and filmmakers. Consciously moving away from the liberal associations with conventional, mainstream, and television documentary, 1970s and 1980s documentary studies emerged in relation to (and in an effort to highlight) a more radical tradition of political films. Within that turn, the interview was often identified as a "problem."[21] A few feminist critics pushed back against this dismissal, but, for the most part, the ubiquity of the derisive term "talking head" to describe most interviews evidences a basic mistrust, suspicion, and dismissal of interview conventions, understood to be simultaneously self-evident and a necessary evil.[22]

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[20] Simon Baker, *"Workers and Jobs,"* in *Land of Promise: The British Documentary Movement 1930-1950* (London: British Film Institute, 2012), 14.

[21] Bill Nichols, "The Voice of Documentary," in *New Challenges for Documentary,* ed. Alan Rosenthal (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 55.

[22] Julia Lesage, "Feminist Documentary: Aesthetics and Politics," and Barbara Halpern Martineau, "Talking About Our Lives and Experiences: Some Thoughts on Feminism, Documentary, and "Talking Heads,"" in *"Show Us Life": Toward a History and Aesthetics of Committed Documentary,* ed. Thomas Waugh (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 223-251 and 252-273. I treat the work of Julia Lesage in some detail in Chapter 3, see pp. 174-76.

Documentary studies' critique of the interview was based on the argument that, as Bill

Nichols puts it, "interviews are a form of hierarchical discourse deriving from the

unequal distribution of power, as in the confessional and the interrogation."[23] This

conflation and confusion of the process and the product of an interview cast the entirety

of interview-work into the realm of ethics—suggesting that, as a means of production

and form of representation, it posed primarily ethical questions, ones that were limited

or containable within the inter-relation of two people (or an assessment of the ways in

which interviewer and interviewer were two representatives of larger social

assemblages). To a great degree, this criticism stems from an analysis of the interview

as what Michel Foucault calls "a discursive practice."[24] Viewed through Foucault's

analysis of the confession, the interview is seen as offering a diagram of the

microphysics of power relations that are produced through the proliferation of discourse

and the inducement to talk about oneself.[25] This analysis is useful for understanding the

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[23] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 47.
[24] According to Gilles Deleuze, one of Foucault's finest readers, Foucault's conception of a discursive practice is "audio-visual," composed of ways of seeing and saying. Gilles Deleuze, "A New Cartographer," in *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 34. Foucault defines a discursive practice as "characterized by a delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories." Michel Foucault, "History of Systems of Thought," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 199.
[25] For Foucault's discussion of the confession, see Michel Foucault, "The Incitement to Discourse" and "Scientia Sexualis" in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 17-35 and 53-73. The volume of television scholarship that relies on Foucault's work as a basis for the analysis of interview-work and the proliferation of discourse or "talk" is extensive. Notable examples include: Jon Dovey, "The Confessing Nation," in *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 103-132; Joshua Gamson, *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Mimi White, *Tele-Advising: Therapeutic Discourse in American Television*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Jane Shattuc, *The Talking Cure: TV Talk Shows and Women*, (New York: Routledge, 1997). In the

ways in which the interview shapes what constitutes knowledge within various

disciplines and the processes of subject formation, disciplining, and self-regulation that

are enacted through this means of production and representation. But Foucault's

discursive analysis cannot account for how the production of "personal" statements

becomes articulated with other modes of production, namely mass media; how the

"representation" of talk and discourse serves a range of economic, social and political

purposes; and how the form of "talk" has a distinct relation to its ideological content and

its ability to circulate.[26] These are questions of form; they concern matters of

materiality and mediation.[27]

In contrast, this dissertation considers interview-work as a historically determined and

ideologically laden form that does not simply instantiate asymmetries of power but

rather enacts and represents the fundamental contradictions of social relations that are

evident in the conceptualization of the individual and the social as well as divisions of

class and labor conditions. Paying close attention to the significance of the form's

adaptation to different media, I investigate the development of the logic of interview-

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discipline of sociology, the most notable example of scholarship that relies on Foucault is: Paul Atkinson and David Silverman, "Kundera's *Immortality*: The Interview Society and the Invention of Self," *Qualitative Inquiry* 3 (1997): 304-25.

[26] Two examples of studies which focus on the articulation of discourse with the economic regime of television are: Julie Engel Manga, *Talking Trash: The Cultural Politics of Daytime TV Talk Shows* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Bernard Timberg, *Television Talk: A History of the TV Talk Show* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

[27] Theodor Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993). I am invoking two aspects of Hegel's conception of mediation (as elucidated by Adorno). The first aspect concerns the historically determined character of all objects of knowledge (the sort of mediation which Foucault does address in his own way). The second aspect relates to the determination of all modes of thought and practice by material conditions (the Marxist re-interpretation of Hegel as understood and elaborated, and re-thought by Althusser and Jameson with respect to the interrelation of culture, ideology, and thought with modes of production).

work as a cultural and social form that is central to the production and representation of knowledge and value.[28] In the present study, the examples I examine are all *documentary* interviews in so far as they are concerned with offering an account of the "real."[29] But my focus in this dissertation is not on defining the ways in which changing deployments of interview-work across different decades and media articulate the semantic shifts of documentary as a term.[30] Rather, this dissertation constructs a genealogy of the media interview as a form of representation in which the various media in which the form exists are crucially implicated in the ideological functioning of the form itself. Grounded in an examination of historical conditions and the particularities of each medium, my close readings examine the ways in which representations of interview-work have been articulated with social analysis, class consciousness, commercial journalism, liberalism, feminism, ideology critique, and political activism/movement building.

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[28]Leger Grindon, "Q & A: Poetics of the Documentary Film Interview," *The Velvet Light Trap* 60 (Fall 2007): 4-12. Until recently, the interview as a form in itself has received sporadic critical and theoretical attention in both documentary and media studies. Leger Grindon's "Q and A" is one of the more recent essays to focus exclusively on the form. Grindon offers a historically grounded sense of the "options" for makers of documentary films, but these options are explicitly divorced from a sense of context or content. The basic premise of his argument is that the interview is a matter of "design." As a result, he offers a "poetics" of the interview, constructing a taxonomy that can be used to read interviews formally. In contrast, my interest is in the aesthetics of the interview: the logic of the interview as a form of representation that shapes content and the relation of this logic to historical conditions.

[29] Philip Rosen, "Document and Documentary: On the Persistence of Historical Concepts," in *Theorizing Documentary*, ed. Michael Renov (New York: Routledge, 1993), 59.

[30] Ibid., 66-67.

III. THE VALUE OF INTERVIEW-WORK

In *The Human Condition* (1958), Hannah Arendt develops an analysis of the difference between work and labor. In that text, Arendt argues that the Greeks distinguished between work and labor in a way that has been lost within the tradition of Marxist scholarship (and within Marx's own work). For Arendt, this distinction relates to the problem of reification. Labor refers solely to a process and activity, whereas work refers to both an activity and the ends of such a process. Since the Greeks, however, the slippage between these conceptions has grown, and the meanings of these terms have multiplied—a reflection not only of the breakdown between the public and private realms that grounded these distinctions in Greece, but also an indication and expression of the development of new economic, social, and cultural formations.[31] The definition of the category of work extends from an occupation and vocation to a product, project, or art-work. In contrast, labor as a category is explicitly tied to production, a critical category distinguished from consumption by Marx. For Marx, labor produces all of society; labor produces every form of value.

With these distinctions in mind, I have chosen to refer to my object of study as interview-work in an effort to call attention to the representation of labor as "work" in

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[31] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Contained in the realm of politics, art, speech, and law, work refers both to a vocation and a product, a product that can ensure the immortality of "the worker." Labor, on the other hand, is a category of activity that is associated with the domestic sphere in which slaves "labored" to reproduce life (doing the activities that sustained life, cooking cleaning, farming). Unlike work, labor can outlast neither the laborer nor the time of laboring.

media interviews.[32] Interview-work plays an important role in shifting understandings of the relation between cultural production and economic production, between immaterial and material labor. Looking at the mediated character of interview-work and its relation to commodification reveals the importance of the category of exchange value to the logic of interview-work as a form of representation. "Interviewing" has come to be recognizable as labor; composed of "talking" and "listening," the labor of interviewers and interviewees is primarily linguistic and affective (as well as intellectual and/or immaterial). It produces "content" for television and various media outlets, content that takes a particular material form. Because interview-work appears as a "media object," a product, it can acquire an exchange value and become monetized. But considering the interview form as a representation of labor and an aesthetic form or "work" that partakes of a supposedly different realm of value than just the economic categories defined by Marx raises fundamental questions about the relation between value and meaning under capitalism. By arguing for a conception of interview-work as something that both produces value and meaning and is the representation of that process, this dissertation treats media production as a site through which to consider the role of labor in the production and representation of subjectivity, understood as the social *experience* of capitalism.

Looking at specific interview projects from the 1840s to 2012, I argue that the interview form is not just a neutral instrument for various modes of research and media-work, but that the form is centrally implicated in the production of "value," understood in both

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[32] While ahistorical and fundamentally antithetical to a Marxist analysis of the role of labor in society, Arendt's reassertion of this distinction is useful in so far as it helps to articulate a tension that is crucial to the logic of the interview that I identify in this study.

economic and semiotic terms. Aligned with the function of the mass media within the liberal bourgeois public sphere, the history of interview-work indexes changes in the social function of media over time. In addition, its role in the production of images of the social registers a structuring limitation that animates both the form itself and liberal thought more generally: the category of the individual. The development of interview-work charts the ways in which information and politics have come to be framed in terms of the personal, taking shape as opinion, experience, and expertise. Seen in this way, interview-work is a symptom of and a source for the containment of knowledge and politics within the realm of the personal based as it is in the one-on-one and the inscription of individualized experience. The form's ubiquity speaks to the structural character of individualized knowledge production, but this prevalence also suggests the urgency behind the need to consider the political stakes and ideological problematic of the form itself.

IV. THE PRESENT STUDY

What we have come to recognize as "a media interview" emerges in England and the United States in the period between the late 1840s and the 1860s. Historically and socially determined, this practice and form arises amidst the development of the newspaper as a means of publication through which information, news, and political opinion are disseminated. The spread of the interview as a practice and form coincides with the growth of journalism as a profession and an industry. In comparison to the analysis of newspapers more generally, there are relatively few books and articles about

the emergence of the interview as a particular form in journalism.[33] The scholarship that does exist focuses on identifying the "first published" interview with a notable person or politician.[34] In this analysis, the interview becomes simply a chapter in the history of the profession of journalism.[35] But the question of why the interview emerges as a means of production and form of representation is not investigated.[36] The present study seeks to remedy this aporia by constructing a genealogy of interview-work that situates this form of media representation in relation to the social and economic forces that shape the development of media production

The first chapter of this dissertation examines a project that is *avant la lettre* of the use of the term "interview" to describe a media form. Begun as a series of letters to the newspaper, *The Morning Chronicle*, in 1849, Henry Mayhew's "Labor and the Poor" offers a counter-example to the narrative of "first interviews" with individual politicians

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[33] The one exception is Philip Bell and Theo van Leeuwen, *The Media Interview: Confession, Contest, Conversation* (Kensington: University of New South Wales Press, 1994). The instructional literature about methods of interviewing is too extensive to list. An analysis of the ideological character of this discourse on method requires further study.

[34] See George Turnbull, "Some Notes on the History of the Interview," *Journalism Quarterly* 13 (1936): 272-279; Nils Gunnar Nilsson, "The Origin of the Interview," *Journalism Quarterly* 48 (1971): 707-713; Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States* (New York: Harper, 1872): 563, Henry W. Grady, "On Interviewing," *Atlanta Constitution*, August 16, 1879: 1; James E. Pollard, *The Presidents and The Press* (New York: Macmillan, 1947): 413-428.

[35] Michael Schudson, "Question Authority: A History of the News Interview," in *The Power of News*, 72-93.

[36] Charles Briggs, one of the premier theorists of the sociological interview, has raised this point twice. In his more recent essay, Briggs suggests that a political economy of the interview's history is necessary to ensure that the interview does not continue to "extend and naturalize social inequality" (922). Charles Briggs, *Learning How to Ask A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Charles Briggs, "Interviewing, Power/Knowledge, and Social Inequality," in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002), 911-922.

and public figures.[37] Starting with a project aimed at the investigation of the working and living conditions of the poor, I argue that specific economic and social conditions in the U.K. in the 1840s and 1850s play a vital role in the interview's emergence. Specifically, I explore the ways in which this form of representation is determined by the labor conditions and class relations that it seeks to document and to which it responds. Connected with the rise of journalism as an industry and profession, Mayhew's project reveals how the intention of publication shapes and conditions the representation of statements about personal experience by individuals. Looking closely at the form of the letters that Mayhew wrote about his face-to-face meetings with working people, I identify the logic by which narrative accounts of method and process, visual description, and reported speech come to represent interview-work as a novel means of production and form of representation.

My second chapter charts the emergence of the interview as a commodity form on American commercial television in the 1970s. Looking at the use of the formal convention of shot-reverse shot editing to represent interview-work on one signature program, *60 Minutes*, I examine the ways in which "the dialogical interview" works within the flow and segmentation of American television. Focusing on a series of interviews with Richard Nixon, including the historic interviews between David Frost and Nixon, I show how the dialogical form of interview-work relies on the discursive character of the cultural form and technology of television. I also argue that the dialogical interview is naturalized in this period as a vehicle through which the "critical" function of television news can be demonstrated and branded.

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[37] See Philip Bell and Theo Van Leeuwen, *The Media Interview*, 28-3; and Michael Schudson, *The Power of News*, 72-74.

In my third chapter, I turn to the emergence of group interview-work in three political documentary films from the 1960s and 1970s: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Comizi D'Amore* (1963), San Francisco Newsreel's *The Woman's Film* (1971), and Mariposa Film Group's *Word is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives* (1977). In contrast to the commercial deployment of interview-work to produce and circulate representations of "public figures" as seen in the previous chapter, the three films that I treat in this chapter use interview-work to represent multiple speaking subjects, working against the "individualizing" logic of the form. I argue that the critique of the ideological problematic of the interview form is a pre-condition for the representation and production of social critique in these films. In addition, I establish the historical context for the association of interview-work with the slogan "the personal is political" by exploring the analogies and connections between interview-work and the feminist consciousness raising groups that grew out of the American women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

My conclusion turns to the contemporary moment and the deployment of interview-work on the Internet in 2012. The assertion of the conclusion is that the formal conventions for the representation of interview-work become intensified on the Internet. Further, I explore the articulation of the form with the web's modes of "publicity" and "interactivity." The dissertation ends with an examination of the intersection of interview-work with the supposedly democratic and anti-hierarchical character of the Internet. Looking at the webpage of Left Forum 2012 in some depth, I show how the interview's dialogical form has re-emerged as a *model for* the production

of knowledge, social exchange, collaboration, and political participation. Drawing an analogy between "the talking head" and Marx's notion of the commodity that speaks, I argue the importance of tempering this re-assertion of the critical capacity of the form with a recognition of the way in which the form represents and enacts the mediation and domination of subjectivity by capitalist social relations.

CHAPTER 1

Henry Mayhew's Interview-Work: "Laying Bare the Sufferings of the Class"

I. INTRODUCTION

> *I will endeavor to reproduce the scenes I have lately looked upon—and I will strive to do so in all their stark literality. It is difficult, I know, for those who are unacquainted with the misery hiding itself in the bye-lanes and alleys of the metropolis to have perfect faith in the tales that it is my duty to tell them. Let me therefore once more assure the skeptical reader, that hardly a line is written here but a note was taken upon the matter upon the spot. The descriptions of the dwellings and the individuals I allude to have all been written with the very places and parties before me; and the story of the people's sufferings is repeated to the public in the self same words in which they were told to me. Still it may be said that I myself may have been imposed upon—that I may have been taken to extreme cases and given to understand that they are the ordinary types of the class. This, I am ready to grant, is a common source of error; I will therefore now explain the means that I adopted, in this instance in particular, to prevent myself being deluded into any such fallacy.[1]*

So begins the sixth letter to *The Morning Chronicle* written by "Special Correspondent"

Henry Mayhew as part of his investigation into "Labour and the Poor" in the

Metropolitan Districts of London.[2] A sparkling example of reflexivity, this passage

demonstrates the range of criticisms and objections that the interview had to defend

against in order to become "well received" in 1849. But to a large degree, this defensive

explanation also indicates the novelty of the material that Mayhew is offering his

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[1] Henry Mayhew, "Letter VI: Tuesday, November 6, 1849," in *The Morning Chronicle Survey of Labour and Poor: The Metropolitan Districts,* 6 vols. (Sussex: Caliban Books, 1980), 1:110-111. All citations of Mayhew's "Labour and the Poor" refer to this edition. Hereafter, citations will include the number and date of the letter, followed by volume and page numbers.

[2] Mayhew, "Letter I: Friday, October 19, 1849," 1:40.

readers and the originality of the method he is using to gather such accounts and information. Looking back, we can assert that Mayhew is using interview-work to investigate the conditions of workers and poor in London and to ascertain the cause of such conditions. Mayhew's innovative means for investigation and presentation not only confirms the findings of other investigators; it also produces a complex picture of the social structure and dynamics of capitalism. Mayhew's interview project connects economic conditions with social ones through the compilation of long passages of quotations that include statements of fact and descriptions of opinion and experience. These passages are coupled with Mayhew's narrative accounts of his process alongside descriptions of what he sees and thinks as well as numerous charts and figures. As a result of the inclusion of the words of the people about whom he is reporting alongside his own descriptions and data, this interview-work exposes the human costs of capitalism and the contradictions and conditions of class antagonism and consciousness in a way unlike anything before.

Focusing on Henry Mayhew's "Labour and the Poor," this chapter investigates the logic of this form of representation in its historical specificity, exploring the ways in which the novelty of the form, the subject matter, and the historical conditions all contributed to the shape that Mayhew's work took. Mayhew's project begins as a series of letters published in *The Morning Chronicle* in an effort to investigate the status of the wage and the living conditions of the working and poor in London. The newspaper's survey includes areas outside of metropolitan London, but Mayhew contracts other writers to collect data and accounts in those other cities and villages. Published weekly, Mayhew's accounts address the reader directly as he describes details of what he sees and hears in

the course of his investigations. Throughout his project, from the first letter to *The Morning Chronicle* to the compilation of his accounts in the four volumes of *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopedia of the Conditions and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work* that is published in 1861 and1862, Mayhew's explanation and integration of descriptions of his method are crucial to the shaping of this form of publication and to his approach to his subject.

The passage above is particularly telling in the way it combines a typical journalistic address to "readers" and a quasi-scientific concern with avoiding fallacy and proving the credibility of the evidence on offer. For Mayhew, and, one assumes, his readers, his physical presence during the act of interviewing is the guarantee of the validity of his findings. Indeed, communicating a sense of "being there" is essential to Mayhew's description of the activity of interviewing. The information he gathers is produced through "being present." Not meant to be a record of historical events, his interview-work presents things that are happening "lately," and as a result, their significance derives from their relative immediacy, their proximity to the reader's own temporality. The regularity of each of Mayhew's installments establishes the ongoing nature of the sufferings that he describes. And this timeliness also confirms that the situations that he describes are contemporaneous with the moment of publication. This asserts the value of the newspaper as a medium for information that can be consumed and used immediately. Presenting "the story" of people's suffering, Mayhew's project demonstrates how the narrativization of "information" and its delivery distinguishes this form of research and representation.

Mayhew's attention to the process and method that produces this study is central to the representation of his findings, the content of the project.[3] But it also registers an acute sense of the public to whom the project is addressed. Later interviews with politicians, celebrities, and public figures that emerged in the newspapers of the 1860s in the U.S. and U.K. do not suffer the weight of explanation and justification that Mayhew's project does. In some ways, this is proof of the ease with which the form can claim to capture *one* person's opinion, but it also calls attention to the unique character of an interview project that aims at articulating or representing classes of people. The very premise of Mayhew's investigation of "Labour and the Poor" is to record "the story of the people's sufferings," in particular, looking at the wage, the living conditions, and people's opinions about their circumstances. But this is not merely a scholarly project; it is undertaken with the purpose of circulating information that might be used in efforts to ameliorate these sufferings.

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[3] There are many projects that come after Mayhew's survey that demonstrate the continued concern with this "content," the effects of increasing and unregulated economic competition on workers. Two efforts at documentation stand out: John Thomson's "Street Life in London" (1877), a photography project, and Charles Booth's survey into "The Life and Labour of the People in London" (1886-1903), a sociological project that involved many people in an effort to collect and combine interviews, detailed descriptions, elaborate statistical reports, and maps of London's poor. See Richard Ovenden, *John Thomson (1837-1921): Photographer* (Edinburgh: The Stationery Office, 1997); Thomas Prasch, "Photography and the Image of the London Poor," in *Victorian Urban Settings: Essays on the Nineteenth-Century City and its Contexts*, ed. Debra N. Mancoff and D. J. Trela (New York: Routledge, 1996), 179-90; Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London* (London: Macmillan, 1902-1903); Rosemary O'Day and David Englander, *Mr. Charles Booth's Enquiry: Life and Labour of the People of London Reconsidered* (London: Hambledon, 1993); and Kevin Bales, "Charles Booth's Survey of Life and Labour of the People in London 1889–1903," in *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880–1940*, ed. Martin Bulmer, Ken Bales, and Kathryn Kish Sklar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 66–110.

Having this function, Mayhew's interview project is *not* aimed at the circulation of individual statements or portraits, but rather at the representation of classes of people. Mayhew states this explicitly in Letter VII published on Friday November 9, 1849. He writes: "If anything is to come of this hereafter, I am well aware that the end can be gained only by laying bare the sufferings of the class, and not of any particular individuals thereto."[4] Quite a departure from later deployments of interviews for the promotion of celebrities, pundits, and public figures, this early example of interview-work lays bare more than just the sufferings of the class. It exemplifies the use of this means of research and representation for liberal and progressive ends. It articulates the relationship between those ideals and the development of mass media. It also reveals the bourgeois character of those associations and the centrality of subjectivity and what Luisa Passerini calls intersubjectivity to the comprehension of labor and social relations under capitalism.[5] Contemporaneous with the development of modern news journalism and the proliferation of proto-sociological or scientific inquiries into the roots and causes of poverty and class inequality, Mayhew's interview-work relates to shifts in what Marx calls the modes of production, the interaction between the means of production and relations of production. Not merely a new means of production in the realm of journalism, the interview is also a form through which social conditions— working and living conditions—become visible. Through a combination of description and reported speech, these *class* conditions are given a shape that makes them both comprehensible and capable of circulating.

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[4] Mayhew, "Letter VII: Friday, November 9, 1849," 1:127.
[5] Luisa Passerini, "Introduction," in *Memory and Utopia: The Primacy of Intersubjectivity* (London: Equinox. 2007), 1- 12.

For a clear statement of what I mean by class, I return to the work of E. P. Thompson.[6]

Thompson famously defined class as a form of historical relation in his foundational

work, *The Making of the English Working Class.* Thompson's book employs a range of

documents (from literature, first-hand accounts, and letters to early papers and radical

pamphlets) to demonstrate the ways in which the working class was active in creating

its own forms of culture based on a recognition of their status as workers in struggle

against their employers. Thompson's use of pamphlets and early newspapers reminds

us that working-class culture emerged before the rise of commercial journalism, though

it was tied to print with the advent of radical pamphlets and publications. But

newspapers came to play a particular role in the further articulation of a working-class

consciousness—especially as the Chartist movement declined and the self-

representation of workers was suppressed. Thompson demonstrates how the

development of the working class forces newspapers and the ruling-class elite to adapt

the operations and function of the press. Thompson ends his study with an account of

the 1820s and 1830s and the decline of the Chartist movement immediately after the

highest point of foment in 1841. He entitles this section, "Class Consciousness,"

arguing quite convincingly that this period of time saw the growth of "working people's

consciousness of their interests and of their predicament *as a class*."[7] Like Mayhew's

"Labour and the Poor," Thompson's study is not simply about worker's self-activity but

it also concerns itself with the radical and not-so-radical ideas that people hold about

their conditions and how to change things.[8] In this way, Thompson documents "the

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[6] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 10.
[7] Ibid., 711.
[8] David McNally, "E. P. Thompson: Class Struggle and Historical Materialism," *International Socialism Journal* 61 (1993): 75-89.

dimension of human agency and the context of class relations,"[9] establishing an analysis of how ideas, hopes, and aspirations of real people "make" society and contribute to the construction of a class consciousness. His book spans the time period before the emergence of the interview and the work of Henry Mayhew, but it also offers a historical framework in which to understand the dynamics that led to Mayhew's project and the journalism that follows it.

Rather than an empirical designation or description, Thompson emphasizes that class is a "historical relationship" and can be studied only as such: not in a snap shot but over time. In this way, Thompson famously argues that class is "not a thing"—it "is defined by men as they live their own history."[10] But class also concerns the moment or event wherein "some men, as a result of their common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs."[11] From Thompson's perspective, the cohesion of class (and class consciousness) relates to the site of production and the identification of antagonism and differing interests. For Thompson, class is an explicitly dialectical category in so far as it is both historically specific and because it concerns dynamics of social antagonisms and cohesion. These operations of difference are productive of meaning, categorization, hierarchy, social structure, and, most importantly, *value*—in the multiple senses of personal, social, political and economic value.

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[9] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class,* 205.
[10] Ibid., 11.
[11] Ibid., 9.

As defined by E. P. Thompson, class is a structure of relation that connects experience and consciousness. Seen from this perspective, interview-work is particularly disposed to the capture of class relations, explicitly suited to their articulation and representation. Mayhew's interview-work illustrates how class is a "historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness."[12] Emerging within a context in which working-class consciousness itself is becoming legible, Mayhew's "Labour and the Poor" illustrates how interview-work is a means by which information about class, economic conditions, and politics is produced and disseminated, uniquely capable of representing shifts in the *experience* of labor, class, and politics and the role of mass media in those transformations.[13]

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: FROM STATISTICS TO "FULL DESCRIPTION"

Henry Mayhew's project emerged at a point when there was direct relation between "pure news reporting" and empirical inquiry.[14] At the time of Mayhew's project, there had already been thirty years of statistical inquiries into the conditions of the poor— both official inquiries and "statistical societies" that amassed information for temperance crusades, population control, and other ideologically driven goals. Throughout the early

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[12] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 9.

[13] Ibid., 9-10. Ellen Meiksins Wood, "The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class: E. P. Thompson and His Critics," in *Studies in Political Economy* 9 (1982): 45-75. Thompson's conception of class as a translation of "experience" into cultural terms grounds my assertions. Ellen Meiskins Wood's article situates and defends Thompson's notion of experience from the numerous criticisms that it has received.

[14] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into A Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Berger (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1991), 182.

1800s, the corralling of information became a way to attend to the "people." In the

context of newspapers, this practice translated into the deployment of newspapers for

the circulation of ideologies and opinions to supplement these facts. Mayhew conceived

of a new method, practice, and form to assess the changing economic conditions and to

answer the questions that he posed and that society faced. His "Labour and the Poor"

constituted a qualitative jump from the kinds of statistical surveys that began under

Royal decree—the infamous "Bluebooks" established as the statistical papers that

provided information for the House of Lords and the Monarch's decision making.[15]

In response to increased poverty and political unrest throughout Europe, the British

ruling class began to recognize the need to attend to the conditions of the poor and the

working class. Following on the democratic revolution in 1789 in France, the

popularity of the ideas of democracy, liberalism, nationalism, and socialism grew. And

as a result, the elite felt the pressure of new movements and agitation. The political

context for the widespread inquiries into the "conditions of the people" of England

coincided with the Chartist movement that began in 1838 and ended in 1850. The

Reform Act of 1832 extended suffrage to some middle class men. But the Chartist

movement was the first British working-class movement that asked for the extension of

suffrage to all working-class men. This movement was one of the first attempts to find

a political "voice" for the working class. The movement was an expression of the

burgeoning of a mass class interest that could stand in opposition to and conflict with

Parliament and the ruling class.

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[15] Eileen Yeo, "Mayhew as a Social Investigator," in *The Unknown Mayhew*, ed. E.P. Thompson and Eileen Yeo (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 51-95. Yeo summarizes the reports from the Royal Commissions and Select Committees that are collected in the Parliamentary Sessional Papers, known as the Bluebooks.

Like many other papers, *The Morning Chronicle* responded to these new conditions. The

paper was produced for the use of its ruling-class readers; it served to inform their

various reform projects. As Thompson describes it, "a philanthropic and evangelical

conscience" pervaded the paper.[16] The other "reports" published in *The Morning*

Chronicle are less-readable, or, as Thompson puts it, "the columns do not make pleasant

reading. Column after column deals in detail with the causes of sanitary reform: sewage,

water supplies, the choked burial grounds of the metropolis."[17] But Mayhew's project

signals a qualitative shift in the paper's practices and coincides with an expansion of the

readership and "the public" addressed by newspapers more broadly. In his first

published letter, Mayhew introduces the basic premise of his work. The interview

process is an attempt "to collect facts and to register opinions."[18] Mayhew combines

description and observation with direct quotations from various representatives of the

poor (and even sought to compare and contrast their accounts with that of their

employers and also of other laborers). Combining facts with more subjective accounts,

Mayhew seeks to offer "a complete picture" of the conditions of the poor and the

working. In this way, Mayhew's project anticipates and contributes to the emergence of

both "literary journalism," which used the newspaper as a carrier of public opinion, and

commercial journalism, which combined and circulated advertisements alongside the

commodity form of news and editorial pieces.[19] By compiling facts and opinion,

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[16] E. P. Thompson, "Mayhew and *The Morning Chronicle*," in *The Unknown Mayhew*, ed.
E. P. Thompson and Eileen Yeo (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 20.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Mayhew, "Letter II: Tuesday, October 23, 1849," 1:52.
[19] See D. P. Baumert, *Die Entstehung des Deutschen Journalismus. Eine Sozialgeschichtliche
Studie* (Munich: Duncker and Humblot, 1921). Cited in Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural
Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 181-183.

Mayhew's interview-work produced a form through which a liberal analysis of capitalism could circulate.[20] It provided a context and narrative shape alongside the evidence and testimony provided by the victims of the system.[21]

In the fall of 1849, Mayhew was hired as a correspondent to produce surveys for *The Morning Chronicle.* He continued to publish his letters through January of 1850. One participant called this project "the greatest, most original and expensive project ever attempted by one single newspaper."[22] There were a number of correspondents hired to perform this investigation of both urban and rural workers and poor. But Mayhew's reports were of a different caliber than any of the other "reporters"; he offered descriptions and accounts that are informative and engaging. Mayhew built a broad portrait of the conditions and the relations that produced the poverty and misery that he saw. His interviews are coupled with observation and other forms of research, cross-checking, and comparisons between the accounts of wages and living conditions. As Eileen Yeo notes, Mayhew's analysis of the various connections between the individual accounts developed significantly over the time of his research.[23] In addition, Mayhew's

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[20] Jurgen Habermas, "The Bourgeois Public Sphere: Idea and Ideology," in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 89-140. Habermas's discussion of the variants of liberal political ideology and practice as they relate to the development of notions of the public sphere and the newspaper provides the framework for this assertion.
[21] Mary Ann Doane and N. Katherine Hayles both discuss the relation of media technology to the development of statistics and "information" as genres of knowledge. See Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, and the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Hayles, "Text out of Context: Situating Postmodernism within an Information Society," *Discourse* 9 (Spring/Summer 1987): 25-36.
[22] Angus Bethune Reach, "London Letter," *Inverness Courier*, December 5, 1850.
[23] Yeo, "Mayhew as a Social Investigator," 57-76.

relation to his audience changed as the author's analysis and experience developed and as the format of the publication changed.

The advent of the "project" to which Mayhew's correspondence contributes coincided with the sharp rise in incidents of cholera, the collapse of the Chartist movement, and the European Revolutions of 1848.[24] The paper announces the survey on October 18th 1849; and the first installment refers explicitly to the fever of revolution and makes it clear that this "full description of the conditions of the poor throughout England"[25] aims at what Thompson calls "social reconciliation."[26] All of the reports in the series take the form of "correspondence to a newspaper." In doing so, they addressed an audience larger than that of the statistical societies or even official "researches." However, Mayhew's careful attention to his audience distinguished his project—especially later when he spent quite a bit of his time responding to the many questions and queries about his accounts. The sheer volume of the letters to the paper about Mayhew's accounts suggests that the interview format made information accessible to interrogation. Mayhew's reports produced a lively debate about what "must be done."[27] And as such, they illustrate the way in which the interview form was immediately and summarily functional in terms of public discourse, providing a means through which statements of fact and opinion could contribute to and constitute a public sphere.[28]

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[24] Thompson, "Mayhew and *The Morning Chronicle*," 21.
[25] Editorial, *The Morning Chronicle*, October 18, 1849.
[26] Thompson, "Mayhew and *The Morning Chronicle*," 22.
[27] Editorial, *The Morning Chronicle*, October 18, 1849.
[28] Habermas describes the process by which "public opinion" came to stand for the liberal bourgeois conception of the "public sphere." Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 89-102.

III. "AN UNASSUMING FORM"

The editorial introduction that precedes Mayhew's first letter describes the project as "appearing in an unassuming form."[29] The "unassuming" aspect of the form of appearance of the interview was, one assumes, meant to highlight the significance of the information that this method of research produced. From the outset, the form of interview-work was meant to be over-looked; it was deemed unimportant in the paper's effort to produce and present this content. But fascinatingly enough, Mayhew's reports take a distinctive enough shape. Their literary character shapes the content and ensures the acceptance and circulation of the information that he gathered. The form that Mayhew's interviews take in print are a necessary form of appearance, helping to assert the veracity of the accounts and their usefulness.

Working to remedy "the want of trustworthy information as to the facts," the paper undertook and published a "careful and minute inquiry into physical and mental conditions" of the poor in an effort "to solve or settle the great social problems of our day, and to ascertain whether (and what) legislative measures can be adopted to improve" those conditions.[30] *The Morning Chronicle* sets the goal of the project quite high:

> Our sole object is the elucidation of questions which have embarrassed the wisest and the best. We may fail, as our predecessors in the same aspiring attempt have failed; but we shall most assuredly succeed in making very valuable additions to the general stock of knowledge, in dissipating many dangerous errors, in paving the way for the reception of some important truths, in laying the groundwork of an improved system

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[29] Editorial, *The Morning Chronicle*, October 18, 1849.
[30] Ibid.

of government, in promoting a better understanding between rich and poor, and in accelerating the progressive amelioration of mankind.[31]

Mayhew's letters to the paper are shaped by these aspirations: the production of knowledge, the correction of falsity, the assurance of being read and "received," and the establishment of a groundwork for the promotion and acceleration of progressive and liberal reforms.

As suggested in this passage, Mayhew's project is distinct from his "predecessors'" attempts to answer the social questions facing Great Britain in the 1840s. In contrast, Mayhew sought to get to "the bottom" of the structure that was continuing to produce the typhoid epidemic and immiseration. Mayhew's interview-work connects two activities: visual "inspection" is combined with the transcription of statements from various individuals. He visited the workers' dwellings in order to "learn by close communion with [his subjects], the real or fancied wrongs of their lot."[32] For Mayhew, this was a "documentary" project that had the aim of being accurate and credible before all else.[33] The "careful and minute" character of his method enabled him to produce images of people and modes of existence that had been mostly invisible to the ruling class and the growing bourgeoisie. In one of his early letters, Mayhew contrasts the

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Mayhew, "Letter I: Friday, October 19, 1849," 1:41.

[33] My assertion here relies on John Grierson's "original" definition of documentary as a "creative treatment of reality," a description that clearly applies to Mayhew's masterful weaving of commentary and quotation. Grierson [The Moviegoer, pseud.], "Review of Robert Flaherty's *Moana*," *New York Sun*, February 8, 1926. But the value of "Labour and the Poor" does not emerge because it is entirely "free from the trammels of the subjective." Rather, Mayhew's project proves valuable because it interweaves subjective and objective elements in its attempt to portray and communicate an account of "reality." Grierson, "Flaherty," in *Grierson on Documentary*, ed. Forsyth Hardy (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1966), 141.

London he sees from afar, from atop the steeple of St. Paul's Cathedral with the "London seen every day below in all its bricken and hard-featured reality." [34] From this perspective, the sublime ideal of London appears as a hazy illusion that derives from "the very inability to grasp the whole of its literal reality."[35] The novelty of Mayhew's practice stemmed from his desire to investigate the literal reality, to examine the "solemn look" of the people and the poor, to catalogue "how they live" and "on how little they subsist."[36] Combining visual accounts and passages of reported speech, Mayhew sought to expose the causes of poverty through the accumulation of data and narrative accounts; he aimed at "reality" and specifically the reality produced by the status of wages.

Mayhew's interviews with street workers, prostitutes, and "precarious"[37] workers have received the most attention in popular and literary criticism.[38] These comprise a large part of the accounts included in the publication, *London's Labour and London's Poor*, which ultimately came to four volumes. But his letters to *The Morning Chronicle* began with attempts to investigate various trades to establish wages and living conditions, and to consider the causes of and potential remedies for London's widespread immiseration.

[34] Henry Mayhew, "Introduction: A View from St. Paul's," in *The Unknown Mayhew*, ed. E. P. Thompson and Eileen Yeo (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 98.

[35] Ibid. With respect to his interest in understanding the social totality and his concern with the concrete, Mayhew's method invokes Marx's method as described in Karl Marx, "Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy" in *The German Ideology*, ed. C.J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 2004), 140-148.

[36] Mayhew, "Letter I: Friday, October 19, 1849," 1:41.

[37] Throughout his letters and accounts, Mayhew uses the term "precarious" to describe the instability of the labor market, and the absence of any "job security". He first uses the term to describe the "living" of dockworkers. Mayhew, "Letter III: Friday, October 26, 1849," 1:68.

[38] Yeo, "Mayhew as a Social Investigator," 51, 95. See also Anne Humpherys, *Travels into the Poor Man's Country: The Work of Henry Mayhew*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1977).

He introduces the categories of possible causes that could account for the increased

poverty: "the privations of the industrious classes admit of being referred either to (1)

low wages, (2) high prices, or (3) improvident habits."[39] Mayhew chose to focus on the

first possible cause. Following his first letter, in which describes the "general" picture of

London and class disparity, Mayhew's second letter presents the focus of his actual

investigations: the wage. In this letter dated Tuesday, October 23, 1849, he states that

he intends "to devote myself primarily to the consideration of that class of poor whose

privations seemed to be due to the insufficiency of their wages."[40]

An elaborate example of what Mary Poovey calls "classifactory thinking," Mayhew

divided his subjects into three main categories: Those Who Can Work, Those Who

Cannot Work, and Those who Will Not.[41] Within these categories, Mayhew defined

his subjects in terms of occupation, and, within that, according to the different classes

and strata within each trade, and then according to gender, talking separately to men

and women in the professions that employ both. The accounts of particular groupings

or classes often extend over more than one letter, especially in instances where Mayhew

sought to investigate the employer's version of the wage versus the accounting of the

workers. These segmented accounts were compiled and printed together when

Mayhew issued the bound volumes of *London's Labour and London's Poor*. Organized

and re-titled according to occupation, the list of the various jobs and classes of people

that Mayhew interviews is fascinating in and of itself because it demonstrates a

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[39] Mayhew, "Letter II: Tuesday, October 23, 1849," 1:51.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Mary Poovey, "The Social Constitution of "Class": Towards a History of
Classificatory Thinking," in *Rethinking Class: Literary Studies and Social Formations*, ed.
Wai Chee Dimock and Michael T. Gilmore (New York: Columbia University Press,
1994), 15-56.

particular kind of social imagination. In his effort to give as full a picture of London as possible, Mayhew sought to capture a wide range of strata and to document life from below. For example, in Volume Two and Three, under the category of "The Street-Folk," Mayhew presents interviews with twenty one different groupings of people: "Street—Sellers of Second-Hand Articles;" "Street-Sellers of Live Animals;" "Street-Sellers of Mineral Productions and Natural Curiosities;" "The Street-Buyers;" "The Street-Jews;" "Street-Finders or Collectors;" Chimney-Sweepers;" "Crossing-Sweepers;" "The Destroyers of Vermin;" "Street-Exhibitors;" "Street-Musicians;" "Street-Vocalists;" "Street-Artists;" "Exhibitors of Trained Animals;" "Garret-Masters;" "The Coal-Heavers;" "Ballast-Men;" "Lumpers;" "The Dock-Labourers;" "London Watermen, Lightermen, and Steamboat-Men;" "London Omnibus-Drivers and Conductors;" "London Cab-Drivers;" "London Carmen and Porters;" and "London Vagrants." Under this heading in both volumes, he also includes chapters entitled "Meeting of Ticket-of-Leave Men;" as well as accounts of "The Streets of London;" "Cheap Lodging-Houses;" "The Transit of Great Britain and the Metropolis;" and an excursus on "Skilled and Unskilled Labour."[42] While unsystematic by current "sociological" standards, this list attests to the scale and breadth of Mayhew's vision, his ability to classify and detail, and his interest in classes of people rather than individuals.

The problem of the wage was central to Mayhew's project. For Mayhew, the wage was a site of debate; it was not obvious or immediately discernable. Rather, Mayhew's entire project was an attempt to establish the actual amounts that workers receive for their

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[42] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopedia of the Conditions and Earnings of Those That Will Work, Those That Cannot Work, and Those That Will Not Work*, 4 vols. (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1861), 2:vi, 3:vi.

work. As he writes, his entire interview process aims at ascertaining from the "subjects themselves" what their wages are and "their opinions as to the cause of the depreciation in the value of their labor."[43] The wage provides an "objective" determinant through which Mayhew can assess how conditions have worsened over time. Focusing on labor as the means by which men and women live, Mayhew needs both the "personal" accounts of wages and his own experience of their living conditions to assess how well the sale of their labor provides for them. To a great degree, Mayhew's attempt to uncover the real cost of labor for the worker required interview-work, an amalgam of subjective and inter-subjective research to establish "objective" facts. The task set by the paper for "Labour and the Poor" required detail and specificity, especially since the very nature of what he was attempting to document was "generally" unknown. He writes, "I am unable to generalize, not being acquainted with the particulars—for each day's investigation brings me incidentally into contact with a means of living utterly unknown among the well-fed portion of society."[44] As a result, Mayhew's letters also chronicle the development of his method and practice.

Mayhew's second letter, published on Tuesday, October 23, 1849, treats an emblematic example of workers whose wages were inadequate—the Spitalfield Silk-Weavers.[45] Concentrated in a small section of London, this group of workers provided Mayhew a sample trade that he believed he could adequately grasp within a short time frame and with a limited number of interviews. The notoriety of their "privations" and the contradiction between the nature of their work and the conditions in which they lived

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[43] Mayhew, "Letter II: Tuesday, October 23, 1849," 1:52.
[44] Mayhew, "Letter III: Friday, October 26, 1849," 1:65.
[45] Mayhew, "Letter II: Tuesday, October 23, 1849," 1:51-63.

and worked contributed to his decision to start the project with these workers. In this letter, Mayhew offers a short history of the silk-weavers in London, situating them with the context of the movement of weavers from France to England in the 1600s. He also offers general statistical information about the industry—derived from "Royal Commission on the Hand-loom Weavers" from the *Parliamentary Sessional Papers* from 1840. But most important to this description is the combination of details of his method, his portrait of the living conditions, and the series of statements from the workers he interviews. In this way, Mayhew's accounts of his findings exceed the previous collections of data. Calling attention to and justifying his method, Mayhew demonstrates interview-work's ability to humanize the data and provide a context for information that makes it more accessible, readable, and, he hopes, useful.

Mayhew uses the storyline of his own investigation to structure his letter. Describing each of his steps for the reader, Mayhew pays special attention to the contexts in which he places himself and in which he finds his interviewees. This narrative frame offers insight into both his method and the living and working conditions of those he interviews. Mayhew's commentary supplements and fills out the evidence offered in quotation. In the case of the first Spitalfields weavers, he chose one specific street and interviewed "the first six weavers' houses that we came to."[46] By "interviewing the weavers at their homes," he has the opportunity to offer a description of their place of work. His descriptions of their homes are vivid illustrations of the disparity between the finery that these workers produce and the squalor in which they toil. Mayhew sets

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[46] Ibid., 1:56.

the scene of a visit to a "case of destitution in the trade, which might be taken as a fair average of the second and third-rate workman"[47] with a detailed description:

> A backless seat was placed at the foot of the old weaver's bedstead; and when the fresh lamp was lighted, I never beheld so strange a scene. In the room were three large looms. From the head of the old weaver's bed a clothes line ran to a loom opposite, and on it were a few old ragged shirts and petticoats hanging to dry… Behind me on the floor was spread a bed, on which lay four boys, two with their heads in one direction and two in another, for the more convenient stowage of the number. They were covered with old sacks and coats. Beside the bed of the old man was a mattress on the ground without any covering, and the tick positively chocolate-coloured with dirt.[48]

While many of the descriptions in Mayhew's later letters are more shocking, Mayhew's elaboration of the visual context for his conversation with this informant provides proof that Mayhew visited the spot. It corroborates the information given to him by his informant and interview subject at the same time that it establishes a narrative structure in which the statements of his interviewees are naturalized and Mayhew is portrayed as an active agent in the construction of the report.

Central to Mayhew's description of the wage is its relation to lived experience and location within historical context. Eileen Yeo has stated that Mayhew's study captures capital at a moment of transition from "regulation" to "intense and savage competition."[49] And so, Mayhew's interview project captures a moment of change and transition in the history of capitalism by "listening" to the objects and subjects of the change. A wage statistic is inadequate for Mayhew's project without a sense of how it fluctuates, what has the power to change or improve it, and then, even more

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[47] Mayhew, "Letter II: Tuesday, October 23, 1849," 1:60.
[48] Ibid., 1:61.
[49] Yeo, "Mayhew as a Social Investigator," 51-95.

importantly, how that wage translates into the possibility of a livelihood: what it costs to live, to reproduce, to sustain and thrive. Towards this end, Mayhew asks his subjects how their current wages compare to the wages they received ten years prior. In almost every single example, the subjects describe the drop in wages and its devastating effects on their lives. The old man who Mayhew found beside the dirty mattress responds to Mayhew's inquiry with a rhetorical question.

> I should like to ask a question here, as I sees you a-writing sir. When is the people of England to see that big loaf they were promised? That's it—the people wants to know when they're to have it. I am sure if the ladies who wears what we makes, or the Queen of England was to see our state, she'd never let her subjects suffer such privation in a land of plenty. Yes, I was comfortable in '24. I kept a good little house, and I thought as my young ones growed up—why I thought as I should be comfortable in my old age, and 'stead of that, I've got no wages. I could live by my labour then; but now, why it's wretched in the extreme. Then I'd a nice little garden, and some nice tulips for my hobby, when my work was done. There they lay, up in my old hat now. As for animal food, why it's a stranger to us. Once a week, may be, we gets a taste of it, but that's a hard struggle, and many a family don't have it once a month—a jint we never sees.[50]

This passage provides a vivid picture of the impact of the drop in wages on one particular family. But it also begins with a clear indication of the reciprocal character of Mayhew's interview-work. Aimed at registering "opinion" as well as collecting "facts," Mayhew's questions and demeanor and approach appear to encourage this man to articulate his own sense of outrage at the apparent lack of concern and material support from the government, the ruling class, and his own customers. In this instance, the weaver suggests that the reason for this injustice is ignorance. Including this exchange in the passage, Mayhew presents the weaver's detailed description of his change in circumstances and prospects for the future as an attempt to enable "the Queen of

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[50] Mayhew, "Letter II: Tuesday, October 23, 1849," 1:62.

England" and "the ladies who wears what we make" "to see" his suffering and the suffering of the whole class of people who are in need. A telling passage, the contrast of the weaver's invocation of "the tulips" with Mayhew's earlier description of the man's dingy surroundings makes clear the importance of the category of the visual to this interview-work. In addition, the anger and outrage of this individual who speaks as one of "the people of England" registers a sense of class-based antagonism and national sentiment.

As part of his attempt to describe this first class of workers with whom he speaks, Mayhew fell into a group of weavers who "entertain violent political opinion": Chartists. The choice to include this group indicates Mayhew's burgeoning sense of working-class consciousness. Workers' assessments of the system as a whole, their attitudes towards their employers, as well as opinions about reform are essential to his compilation of both "facts" and "opinions." In this instance, the workers indict the employers for their privations.

> We think there is a desire on the part of every manufacturer to undersell the other, and so get an extra amount of trade into his own hands, and make a large and rapid fortune thereby. The public, we are satisfied, do not derive any benefit from this extreme competition. It is only a few individuals, who are termed by the trade slaughterhouse men—they alone derive benefit from the system, and the public gain no advantage whatever by the depreciation in our rate of wages. It is our firm conviction that if affairs continue as at present, the fate of the working man must be pauperism, crime, or death.[51]

This is an example of one of the many statements within Mayhew's accounts in which the speakers use the second-person plural. In this instance, the very notion of the individual is contrasted to the mass of working people. Individuals are the ones who

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[51] Mayhew, "Letter II: Tuesday, October 23, 1849," 1:60.

profit—but the working class, the people, do not benefit from the way in which labor conditions and wages are worsening. Such a consolidated political ideology is not typical amongst Mayhew's interviewees, but the willingness to speak about the "class" as a whole is uniform. In this way, a burgeoning sense of working-class consciousness is clearly evidenced; amongst the working poor, the individuals that Mayhew interviews recognize the similarity of their circumstances to those around them. These sorts of indictments, statements of opinion, personal expression, and outrage were part of what set Mayhew's project apart from the statistical reports, and they contributed to the popularity of his accounts. But they also work extremely well within the purview of Mayhew's own intentions—for it was precisely this sense of social subjectivity, this assessment of "the class," that Mayhew aimed at through this novel means of research and representation.

IV. FORM & METHOD

As the project developed, Mayhew's method became regularized and his narration of each of his encounters became more expansive. His own experience of the process of interviewing began to provide him with greater clarity about the significance of this project. A sense of the growing circulation of the series and its political impact also emboldened Mayhew, and his direct comments to the reader grow into detailed explications that serve to justify his practice.[52] In the beginning of Letter X, published on Tuesday, November 20, 1849, Mayhew offers an elaborate description of the way in which he established the information regarding wages:

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[52] Thompson, "Mayhew and *The Morning Chronicle*," 23-45. Thompson documents the many controversies that Mayhew and his project produced.

> My first inquiries are into the particular branch of the trade under investigation upon which the workman is engaged, I then request to be informed whether the individual has his or her work first or second-hand; that is to say, whether he or she obtains it direct from the employer, or through the intervention of the some chamber or piece-master. If the work comes to the operative in question second-handed, I then endeavor to find out the prices paid for the work itself to the first hand, as well as the number of workpeople that the first hand generally employs. This done, I seek to be informed whether the work of the individual I am visiting is piece or day-work. If day-work, I learn the usual hours of labour per day, and the rate of wages per week. If it be piece-work, I request to be made acquainted with the prices paid for each of work seriatim, the time that each particular article takes to make, and the number of hours that the party usually works per day.[53]

The account goes on for another 1250 words. The detail of this explanation functions to defend against accusations of inaccuracy, but it also serves to explain the formal structure that Mayhew developed to assess the wages. The passage demonstrates the importance of Mayhew's own sense of a generic and somewhat clinical approach to his subjects. This generic formula exposes Mayhew's own process of coming to understand the data he was collecting and the character of the work and lives that he was investigating. But the detailed abstraction of this passage also reveals one of the central challenges that Mayhew laid before himself: how to elicit information from individuals in an effort to represent a class of workers. This account is meant to demonstrate to the reader that "every means are adopted to insure an accurate result."[54] And this passage makes Mayhew's careful process clear. Disclosing this rubric of questions, Mayhew reveals the dialogical process that he engaged in order to ascertain this information. To a great degree, this passage is proof of the complexity and sensitivity of the task that Mayhew set himself, something that Mayhew indicates in part through his choice of verbs. Mayhew's description of the caution and deliberateness with which he gathered

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[53] Mayhew, "Letter X: Tuesday, November 20, 1849," 1:199-200.
[54] Ibid., 1:202.

his information indicates his recognition that he is wandering into un-chartered territory at the same time that it explains some of the formulaic repetitions in the letters. But, even more importantly, it registers the significance of process to interview-work and how representing that process is an important aspect of the presentation of the data, one that serves both to corroborate the information and to justify Mayhew's method.

Rather than present his findings in charts and graphs, Mayhew frames the answers to his questions as the products of conversation. Emphasizing the receptivity of his "subjects," Mayhew represents his exchanges as dialogue. In Letter IV, published on Tuesday, October 30 1849, Mayhew describes his visit to a lodging house to investigate the "sufferings" of dockworkers:

> I found them ready to answer my questions in a more courteous manner than I had expected. There were 29 people in the shed, and about a fourth were occasional dock labourers. "I worked at the docks half a day this afternoon," said one," and all yesterday, and half a day on Monday—three days last week, and never above two or three days in the week these last nine weeks." This one appeared to have been about the most successful of the number; and when I asked the rest what they did when they were wholly unemployed, the answer was, they were forced to walk the street all night, and starve. "There are plenty of us," said another, "who have to walk the streets of a night, though 'the bunks' (beds) are only two pence here, and there's no other crib so cheap anywhere near." I asked those who spoke of having walked the streets all night till daylight what they had for food? "I've been two days, " cried one, "without taste or sup;" and one in the corner, with his head down, and his chin resting on his chest, cried, "I've been three days without food—haven't had a bit in the world." "Ah! It's plaguy hard times, in the winter time with us, that it is," said a youth who could not have been more than 17."[55]

The sequencing of quotations gives a sense of the duration of these meetings. It provides an account of how these interviews and conversations unfolded and it shows

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[55] Mayhew, "Letter IV: Tuesday, October 30, 1849," 1:91.

that the information is a product of a specific moment and social event. In this way, Mayhew's findings are worked into a storyline. In addition, this narrative technique emphasizes the way in which these facts and figures are attached to actual people, individual speaking subjects, who are engaged in an inter-subjective exchange.

Recounting his interview with pickpockets in Letter V, Friday, November 2, 1849, Mayhew's use of the list provides a sense of the overwhelming amount of data that Mayhew collected.

> The question that I put to them after this was, how long they had been engaged in thieving, and the following were the answers: -- One has been fifteen years at it one fourteen eras, two twelve years, three ten years, one nine years, one eight years, two seven years, one six years, two five years, three four year, and one three years; one eighteen months, one seven months, two six months, and one two months. Consequently there were, of the half-hundred and odd individuals there assembled, thieves of the oldest standing and the most recent beginning.[56]

Passages constructed around these simple questions provide the more objective groundwork that balances the longer and more detailed statements of individuals that conclude almost all of Mayhew's letters. This introductory documentation confirms that this survey was meant to provide a representation of a class of workers, but the novelty of the recitation mirrors the experience of Mayhew's research and in this way charts his own growing awareness of the commonalities between these workers, an awareness that Mayhew hoped reading the letters could awaken in his readers.

Varying his presentation, he introduces another one of his fact-heavy passages about the dockworkers with another question. Followed by a list of quotations, this paragraph

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[56] Mayhew, "Letter V: Friday, November 2, 1849," 1:106.

establishes the group context of the interview, at the same time that it differentiates among the speakers, maintaining the particularity of each individual's statement.

> I asked them how much money they had got "I've got 4d." cried one, "I've got 1s.3d." Cried another. "I've got just enough for em bed." "I've got three-halfpence." "I've got 1d." "I haven't one half-penny," said the man at the end of the room. "No more have I," cried a second. "There's another one here hasn't got one," exclaimed a third. "Ah, if you was to come a here tomorrow night, you'd find half of us had not got any – half full." [57]

This passage recreates the process of discovery that Mayhew himself experienced when he encountered these men. Enabling and encouraging comparison, Mayhew's grouping of answers also establishes the collective character of the experience of deprivation and immiseration. Even as he differentiates between individuals and classes of workers in each trade, Mayhew's accounts are evidence of the similarities in "directly experienced historical reality," which Eric Hobsbawn argues are the basis for the class consciousness that emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century.[58] To a great degree, "experience" is precisely what Mayhew explores, documents, and represents. Distinct from mere data, this "subjective" material requires a different form of presentation than charts and graphs—a form that begins to take shape as the interview. Intertwining the content of his findings with the process of its discovery further underscores the careful navigation between the subjective and the objective that Mayhew's survey represents; it serves to substantiate the validity of his assertions and descriptions.

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[57] Mayhew, "Letter IV: Tuesday, October 30, 1849," 1:92.
[58] Eric Hobsbawm, *Workers: Worlds of Labor* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 18.

V. FACTS & OPINIONS

Anticipating criticism and skepticism as to the veracity of his accounts, Mayhew assures his readers that "the truth will be given in its stark nakedness" and that he "has a rigid determination neither to be biased nor prejudiced by my own individual notions."[59] But through his letters to *The Morning Chronicle*, Mayhew registers his own shock and dismay at the conditions that he witnesses with great consistency. To a large degree, the indications of his own emotion, his own sensibility and affective response to the "facts" operate both to establish an identification with the reader and to verify and emphasize the significance of the information he is uncovering.

Mayhew's display of emotionalism confirms the validity of the information and descriptions that he presents; his direct commentary provides evidence not only of his ethical and political intentions but also of his "being there" to witness to the privations described. This affective guarantee is bolstered by Mayhew's determination to be unbiased. In his second letter to *The Morning Chronicle*, he specifies "the precautions adopted to arrive at a fair and unbiased estimate as to the feelings and condition of the workmen in the trade."[60] Asserting his intention and corroborating his presence are therefore central to Mayhew's representation of his work; these elements produce and ensure the "documentary value" of the project.[61] As his project continues, however, the depth of Mayhew's own reactions to the scenes becomes more and more important, a

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[59] Mayhew. "Letter II: Tuesday, October 23, 1849," 1:52.
[60] Ibid., 56.
[61] In contrast to Grierson's sense of documentary value, Mayhew's production of documentary value was not tied to the indexical character of his medium. Rather his description of his own method and labor served as the documentary guarantee and created the value accorded to his findings.

model of his own growing and developing consciousness of the extent of the impact of the capitalist system on people.

In some of the early letters, however, Mayhew chose to counter-balance his own sympathies in an effort to establish the "factual" basis in and against his own emotionalism. In Letter VIII, Mayhew begins with this statement:

> The facts that I have set before the public in my present communication are of so awful and tragic a character that I shall not even attempt to comment upon them. The miseries they reveal are so intense and overwhelming that, as with all deep emotions, they are beyond words.[62]

To a great degree, this preamble demonstrates that, in order to "tell this story," Mayhew cannot rely on *his* words. Indicating the extremity of his own reaction to the dramatic tales of poverty and its consequences for women workers, in particular, Mayhew relies on the "very self same" words of his subjects. "The poor creatures shall speak for themselves," he writes.[63] Coupled together, these introductions cue the reader to the extreme nature of the information that has been compiled "upon the spot," in situ.[64] They frame the long block quotations in a way that encourages the reader to keep reading past the detailed accounts of the rates of pay towards the more subjective and narrative sections of each of the interviewee's statements. In this case, the dramatic introduction functions as a preview and a model reaction, one that is immediately followed by a series of charts and citations from Government Reports that detail the prices paid for each article of clothing produced for members of the army. Aiming at "as

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[62] Mayhew, "Letter VIII: Tuesday, November 13, 1849," 1:151.
[63] Ibid., 1:159.
[64] Mayhew, "Letter II: Tuesday, October 23, 1849," 1:52.

matter-of-fact a manner as I can," this data leads directly into versions of the same information told in narrative form.[65]

Mayhew provides a chart of the amount of money allotted to the army for clothing. He follows that up with a chart that is entitled "Estimate of the annual cost of clothing, caps, and accoutrements for a regiment of Infantry, for 1832; viz. clothing delivered to the solider 1st January 1832 to be worn til 1st January, 1833." This chart details the amount of profit that the colonels make off the difference between the cost of the clothing they purchase and the army allotments. Furthering bolstering his analysis, Mayhew provides a chart of the dropping costs of the clothing that was provided in the Government Report. Beginning in 1792 and running through 1833, this table documents the price fluctuations, providing material evidence that corroborates the statement that Mayhew cites from the report, that "the price of the suit in 1832 was 17 per cent. less than that of 1815."[66] These three charts are followed by the statements of seven different "slop workers" who make the clothing from which the colonels profit. The charts that Mayhew provides construct a framework through which the reader can compare and integrate the data with the narratives of the workers.

A typical beginning to the long quotations that Mayhew offers, one needlewomen's statement begins with a "laundry" list of the prices paid to her for each type of work.

> I make moleskin trousers. I get 7d. and 8d. per pair. I can do two pairs in a day, and twelve, when there is full employment in a week. But some weeks I have no work at all. I work from six in the morning to ten and night; that is what I call my day's work. When I am fully employed, I get 7s. to 8s a week. My expenses out of that for twist, thread, and candles

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[65] Mayhew, "Letter VIII: Tuesday, November 13, 1849," 1:151
[66] Ibid., 1:153.

are about 1 s.6d. a week, leaving me about 6s. a week clear. But there's coals to pay for out of this, and that's at the least 6d. more, so 5s 6d. is the very outside of what I earn when I'm in full work. Lately I have been deadfully slack; so we are every winter, all of us 'sloppers' and that's the time when we wants the most money. The week before last I had but two pair to make all the week; so that I only earnt 1s. clear. For this last month I'm sure I haven't done any more than that each week.[67]

This passage establishes the literal material ground that informs the more "human" picture that follows. This interviewee goes on to explain how this small amount of income colors her life. A deliberate contrast to the charts and graphs of statistical analysis that began the letter, Mayhew includes these sorts of passages to provide a fuller description of the data. In this particular example, the young woman goes on:

It is of course impossible for us to live upon it and the consequence is, I am obliged to go a bad way. I have been three years working at slop work. I was virtuous when I first went to work and I remained so till this last twelve month. I struggled very hard to keep myself chaste, but I found that I couldn't get food any clothing for myself and my mother; so I took to live with a young man. He is turned 20. He is tinman.[68]

The speaker contextualizes her own experience by referring to how other women encouraged her to turn to prostitution and comparing her wages to that of other women: "I work at the same place as the other woman works at, and for the same prices. I earn, like her, taking one week with another, about 3s. 4d., and taking off the candles, about 3s. every week."[69] Including these sorts of references, Mayhew uses the testimony of the interviewees to establish connections between the accounts, corroborating and reinforcing the veracity of the description of the wages.

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[67] Ibid., 1:159
[68] Ibid., 1:160.
[69] Ibid., 1:163.

In addition, Mayhew uses individual accounts that move between the registers of the individual and the class, between the "I" and the "we," in order to indicate the representative character of each of his interviewees. This needlewoman ends her statement with an explanation of her personal experience and how it connects to the experience of others in her class:

> If I was never allowed to speak no more, it was the little money I got by my labour that led me to go wrong. Could I have honestly earnt enough to have subsisted upon, to find me proper food and clothing, such as it necessary, I should not have gone astray; no, never. As it was, I fought against it as long as I could—that I did—to the last… But noone knows the temptations of us poor girls in want. Gentlefolks can never understand it. If I had been born a lady, it wouldn't have been very hard to have acted like one. To be poor and to be honest, especially with young girls, is the hardest struggle of all. There isn't one in a thousand that can get better of it. I am ready to say again, that it is want, and nothing more, that made me transgress. If I had been better paid I should have done better. [70]

A clear articulation of the relation between one woman and her circumstances, this account depicts the ethical consequences of depressed wages. Recognizing the enormity of the forces against her, this woman frames her life choices as determined by her poverty. Her testimony demonstrates how her material circumstances divide her against herself and her own desire to be "virtuous." Speaking in the conditional, she contrasts what might have been with what happened to her. In this way, the structure of her account establishes the duration of her experience. In this example (as in many others), providing the back story, a narrative description of the process by which one individual comes to arrive at a particular place, a literal location and social situation, serves to contextualize and corroborate the scale of her suffering and the cultural and moral impact of low wages. The repetition of "I" in the passage dramatizes the relation

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[70] Ibid., 1:161.

of this individual to the logic of the system that actively ate away at her ability to survive. It provides "proof" of her personal lack of agency at the same time that it expresses a perspective on the situation of an entire class of women. She is depicted as a *speaking* subject, whose assessment of her own experience leads her to situate herself within a social context.

In the next installment of his survey, Mayhew continues his investigation of the conditions of the Needlewomen of London. In the Letter IX from Friday, November 16, 1849, Mayhew describes a meeting with one spokesperson from the "class of needlewomen whose misery and privations must be more acute than all … distressed gentlewomen."[71] Unlike the aforementioned needlewoman quoted in the Letter VII, this woman had been born a lady. Mayhew writes:

> I could see by the proud expression of the gentlewoman's features that she felt the privacy of her poverty had been violated by my presence, and was some little while endeavouring to impress upon her that I had not come to her with the mean object of publishing to the world the distress of *individuals*, which I was well aware was made doubly bitter from the fear of it becoming known, even to their friends, much more to the public in general. At length I informed her that whatever she might communicate to me would be given to the public in such general terms, that it would be impossible to recognize that she was the person alluded.[72]

Given this "assurance," the women volunteers a wealth of information and an extensive narrative despite her concern about the impact of publication on her reputation. This passage highlights how the explicit intention of publication colors all aspects of interview-work, distinguishing interview-work from other face-to-face conversations during the process of its production and in its final form. But Mayhew's preamble also

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[71] Mayhew, "Letter IX: Friday, November 16, 1849," 1:189.
[72] Ibid., 1:190.

differs slightly from other assertions of his disinterest in individuals qua individuals. In this case, Mayhew does not restate that he is seeking to portray "the sufferings of the class" rather than the distress of individuals. Instead, he promises that she will remain anonymous.

The way in which Mayhew frames his answer to her calls attention to the different publics that interviews have the potential to traverse, from the intimate to the "general." Publicity, in this case, is something that is contrasted to privacy, determined by this woman's and Mayhew's shared sense of a different set of stakes for the publication of information.

> "You won't put that in the newspaper, will you?" she asked me. I told her I would insert nothing that she wished to keep secret. She said, "I am afraid they will guess it is I. I would rather starve than it should be known who I am. I do not wish to be made a public spectacle of. I am not ashamed to be poor, understand—for I am so through no fault of my own; but my friends would be ashamed to have my poverty known." I told her I would do as she wished, and I assured her that I had come to alleviate rather than to aggravate her distress. After a little hesitation she consented to the publication of what she might communicate to me.[73]

She fears the shame that might befall "her friends" if her personal story and the details of her poverty are made public. Mayhew comforts her by reassuring her that his intention is to "alleviate rather than to aggravate *her* distress" (emphasis added). Placed within an extensive project aimed at social reform, this "ethical" exchange demonstrates the novelty of interview-work as a form of representation and a means by which expressions of experience and subjectivity could circulate publicly. This speaking subject is afraid that the representation of her will make her an object of ridicule. Concerned with maintaining her individuality and her privacy, she tells Mayhew: "I

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[73] Ibid., 1:193.

would rather starve than it should be known who I am. I do not wish to be made a public spectacle of." Offering a dialogical depiction of this woman's experience, Mayhew's interview-work portrays her as a subject who is conscious of how she is defined by her social context. This consciousness is made more acute by the spectre of publicity, the opportunity to have her statements circulate in a newspaper alongside Mayhew's descriptions. In this instance, the material circumstance of the subject is quite different from her own sense of her class position; she *is* on the verge of starving, something that she recognizes as being beyond her control. But she believes that the way in which she presents herself and her social status *is* something she can determine. The exchange between Mayhew and this gentlewoman highlights how the prompting of an interviewer and the prospect of publication work together to condition the way in which subjectivity is represented, drawing out the structuring tension between social subjectivity and individuality that characterizes all interview-work.

VI. THE CLASS CHARACTER OF MAYHEW'S INTERVIEW-WORK

Mayhew's interview-work emerges in response to an intensifying division between classes and the consciousness of such inequity. Mayhew's interviews represent attempts both to understand and respond to these new conditions. As a result, his interview-work functions as a means of representation through which consciousness of class divisions becomes accessible and visible, to the reader and to Mayhew himself. According to Eileen Yeo, "Mayhew's ability to see poverty in the round, as the product of an economic system, with devastating moral and social consequences and yet varied cultural manifestations, amounted to a unique and short-lived moment in middle-class

consciousness."[74] Importantly, the ways in which Mayhew presents his own process

and awareness of class relations also serve to make that class-consciousness more

available and explicit.

After his detailed description of the way in which he calculates the wages of his subjects

in Letter X, Tuesday, November 20, 1849, Mayhew offers an editorial statement as to

the truthfulness of his informants.

> As a class, I must say the workpeople that I have seen appear remarkably
> truthful, patient, and generous; indeed, everyday teaches me that their
> virtues are wholly unknown to the world. Their intemperance, their
> improvidence, their want of cleanliness, and their occasional want of
> honesty, are all that come to our ears. As I said before, however, I doubt
> very much whether *we* should not be as improvident and intemperate if
> our incomes and comforts were as precarious as theirs.[75]

This statement articulates Mayhew's awareness of his own class position. Associating

himself with the readership of the paper, he speaks as a member of the "we" who have

judged and condemned the behavior of the poor. According to Mayhew, his interview-

work "teaches" him, revealing the disparity between his experience and the assumptions

of the ruling and burgeoning middle class of which he is a member. Seeking to correct

this mis-apprehension of workpeople, Mayhew offers his assessment alongside the

words of his informants, both results of his "direct communion" with classes of

individuals. By foregrounding his own class position, Mayhew reveals the ways in

which his interview-work is necessarily subjective. But he is also explicit that *his*

subjective assessment is the product of interaction, an experience of intersubjectivity

that he is attempting to communicate and represent for his readers. To a great degree,

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[74] Yeo, "Mayhew as a Social Investigator," 88.
[75] Mayhew, "Letter X: Tuesday, November 20, 1849," 1:201.

Mayhew's assertion of the virtues of his subjects is meant to encourage and ensure that his findings are accepted and that action will be taken to alleviate the sufferings of the class. He admits that his interview-work is not only colored by his bourgeois perspective but also a procedure through which he has been made aware of his class privilege. He does this in an effort to convince his readers of the significance and veracity of his findings (and assessments). Even though his statement of opinion is qualified—they *"appear* remarkably truthful"—Mayhew uses the form of a comparison to indict the reader and to suggest that the reader extend the same courtesy and respect to his accounts of the subjects of his study that he has extended to his interviewees in the process of his interview-work.

Further justifying the utility of his interview-work and his attempts to provide a "full description" of the conditions of "Labour and the Poor," Mayhew contrasts the willingness of the poor to answer his questions with the dishonesty of their employers. In Letter IX published on Friday, November 16, 1849, Mayhew's indignation surfaces:

> Wherever the labourer is worse paid, and there is consequently the greater necessity for the amount earned to be made public, *there* …. do I find the greatest indisposition on the part of the employers to afford me the least assistance; as yet, I must, in truth say, I have only found a disposition to mis-state and mislead. However, the subject, I am well aware, is of far too great an importance in a national point of view to be thwarted by individuals whose interest it is to keep the price of the labour market secret. The proprietors of *The Morning Chronicle* have undertaken to obtain, for the first time in this country, an account of the earnings of the workpeople of the metropolis; and if they fail, why, it shall not be for want of energy or zeal.[76]

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[76] Mayhew, "Letter IX: Friday, November 16, 1849," 1:170.

Mayhew's account of his attempts to seek information from the employers reveals how the experience of antagonism affected him and bolstered his commitment to the project of making his findings public. Most of Mayhew's descriptions of his dealings with employers are narratives of having been turned away. But in this instance, Mayhew offers a summary that re-asserts the central aim of the project and its central problematic. Navigating the tension between the individual and the social, he sought to present "an account of the earnings of the workpeople" that is too important to be "thwarted by individuals." Seeking to represent "the sufferings of the class," he offers a range of statements from individual members of the class. Later in the letter, he writes: "[a]ccordingly finding it useless seeking for any information from the employer in this particular branch of business, I made the best of my way to two workpeople, who had been engaged at the business for upwards of twenty years."[77] The absence of "truthful" or "honest" statements from employers produces Mayhew's sense of outrage; it convinces him of the importance of his investigation and the divide between employers and employees. But even in his summary judgment here, Mayhew falls back on a moral or ethical indictment of the bourgeoisie and ruling class. They are dishonest and secretive individuals. Any sense that they are mutually constituted, that their antagonism does not just define or determine the lives of the workers, is left to the side. So while Mayhew's attacks register a sense of class solidarity and his project represents class divisions in exacting detail, he does not, in this instance or at any point in "Labour and the Poor," present an analysis of the function of class contradiction.

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[77] Ibid., 1:171.

Registering an acute awareness of his readers (and their shared social position), Mayhew introduces many of his letters with a preamble that narrates his own shock and emotion in the face of the situations that he had "lately witnessed."[78]   In one such passage, he writes:

> I had seen so much want since I began my investigation into the condition of the labouring poor in London that my feelings were almost blunted to sights of ordinary misery. Still I was unprepared for the amount of suffering that I have lately witnessed. I could not have believed that there were human beings toiling so long and gaining so little, and starving so silently and heroically, round about our very homes. It is true, one or two instances of the kind had forced themselves into police reports, and songs and plays had been written upon the privations of the class; still it was impossible to believe that the romance of the song-writer and the fable of the playwright were plain, unvarnished, everyday matters of fact—or even admitting their stories to be individually true, we could hardly credit them to be universally true. But the reader shall judge for himself.[79]

This statement speaks to the absence of objectivity in Mayhew's project of "interviewing." But it also speaks to the novelty of interview-work as both a practice and a form of representation. Mayhew counterposes his form of representation to various other accounts of the poor. Distinct from "songs and plays" and "police reports," Mayhew's interview-work is a cultural form that derives its value from its proximity to "the everyday matters of fact" and its having demonstrated the "universally true" character of the stories it presents. Structured through comparison and with a clear sense of his audience, Mayhew's narratives present a picture of class

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[78] Mayhew, "Letter VI: Tuesday 6, 1849," 1:110
[79] Ibid.

conditions and antagonism through his visual accounts, his descriptions of his method and experience, and, most importantly, passages of reported speech.[80]

VII. AFTER MAYHEW

Approximately twenty years after Mayhew's project, the first deployments of the term 'interview' to refer to the practice of interviewing and the media form appeared within newspapers in the U.K. and the U.S. The occurrences noted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* chart the process by which the interview went from being a "new" activity to a recognizable form in the period between the 1860s and 1880s.

Though he never calls his method "interviewing," Mayhew does refer to his meetings with the workers as "interviews," relying on the older sense of the word that signifies a face-to-face conversation.[81] In one such passage, Mayhew describes a scene in which he shared his findings with the very people he had "interviewed." He writes: "Having read to them the report in last Tuesday's *Morning Chronicle* of my interview with them on Saturday, the 26th ult., they were much delighted at finding themselves in print, and immediately arranged themselves on a seat all round the room."[82] This passage is included in Mayhew's accounts of the labor and living conditions of the dockworkers. It demonstrates the participatory and reflexive nature of the project. It also documents the importance of "real time" and immediacy in Mayhew's process as well as the

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[80] Yeo makes the important point that "[t]hrough his evidence Mayhew came to use the crucial idea that economic change was refracted through a cultural lens." Yeo, "Mayhew as a Social Investigator," 84.
[81] Mayhew, "Letter V: Friday, November 2, 1849," 1:104.
[82] Ibid..

significance of the serial form to the development of Mayhew's analysis and to his ability to gain the trust and confidence of his informants. But most of all, it registers the impact of the publication of reported speech; it illustrates how the interview came to signify a form through which the contents of a discussion could appear "in print" and become available to be shared amongst groups of people, to circulate publicly as a material object or thing.

This coincides with the *OED*'s emphasis on publication in its definition of the "more recent" usage of the interview as a practice and a form that emerges in the 1860s that I discussed in the Introduction. The citations that the *OED* uses to justify its definition of the interview as "a meeting between a representative of the press and some one from whom he seeks to obtain statements for publication" chart the emergence of the interview as a recognizable form.[83] They outline the process by which the interview goes from being a term surrounded by quotation marks to one that stands on its own. According to the *OED*, the 'interview' appeared first in the *Nation* in 1869. Quoting an article entitled "Interviewing," the citation reads: "The 'interview', as at present managed, is generally the joint product of some humbug of a hack politician and another humbug of a newspaper reporter."[84] The quotation marks signify a different meaning for the word historically used to designate a face-to-face conversation. The quotation marks indicate the novelty of this usage and practice, a novelty induced by the process of publication, by the transformation of conversation into a media text that could

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[83] *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), s.v. "interview," 1:1470. All subsequent references to the *OED* refer to this edition. This edition reproduces the complete text of the original *OED* that was completed and published in 1933.
[84] E. L. Godkin, "Interviewing," *The Nation*, January 28, 1869, 66-67.

circulate within mass media. Prior to 1869, the term interview occurs with great

frequency in many newspaper articles, novels, and documents. It is a term used to

designate a face-to-face meeting of any kind that was an occasion for conversation

between two people. After 1869, the word "interview" comes to signify a "recognizable

practice and a published form" that connected a journalist, a politician, and a relation to

a public audience. But we should also recognize that this means it comes to signify the

reification of a commonplace, the transformation of conversation and dialogue into a

commodity form that could circulate via commercial newspapers.   The process of

formalization that made the face-to-face meeting commonly known as an interview into

the "interview," a recognizable and saleable thing, demonstrates how the rise of

journalism coincides with the transformation of the relations of production and the

emergence of new means to make these relations public.[85]

A type of labor and commodity, interview-work exemplifies mass media's role in the

development and representation of social and class relations under capitalism. Henry

Mayhew's interview-work in "Labour and the Poor" made the class character of society

more visible; he used this form to publicize the labor and living conditions of the poor

for the growing bourgeoisie as well as the ruling class. Before the advent of "reporting,"

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[85] Habermas charts the political and ideological significance of the interrelation between
capitalism's growth and the development of the commercial press. Habermas, *The
Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 19-23. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge
identify an important component of the public sphere that Habermas's analysis neglects:
the "public sphere of production," a mode of cultural production in which criticism of the
system becomes fully instrumentalized and neutralized by the market. Interview-
work's role within the "public sphere of production" deserves further study. Oskar Negt
and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Towards an Analysis of the Bourgeois
and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi et al., (Minneapolis: University of
Minnesota Press, 1993), 12-18.

many papers operated as amalgamations of citations from other publications.[86] *The Daily News* consisted almost entirely of citations from other papers rather than original "reporting." The very conception of "reporting" was associated with correspondence, with the literal act of writing a letter to the editors of the paper. Changing from a material practice to a vocation, the advent of reporting as a form of labor was concomitant with the emergence and recognition of interview-work as a media practice and form that is determined by publication. Offering a representation of reporting as a type of labor, interview-work is implicated in the rise of journalism as a commercial industry.

The early discourse about the "interview" within the British and American press, as cited in the *OED*, evidences a negative association with the form that impugned the individuals and institutions that engaged in interviewing for newspapers. The citation from the *Nation* illustrates the lack of respect for the form or those who engaged in it. Clearly, aspersions were cast on "the humbugs" and "hacks": the interviewers, the editors of the interviews, and finally those politicians who submitted to being "interviewed." This aura of suspicion reveals an important association of the interview with scandalous and sensational papers that no longer aimed at the ruling class but catered instead to a growing class of people who had the ability to read (or to be read to).[87]

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[86] George Boyce, James Curran, and Pauline Wingate, eds., *Newspaper History: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (London: Sage Publications, 1979), 247-267.
[87] In great part, this suspicion of speech was an indication of the class bias in the gathering of information; those who can write down their comments and publish them are of a different class than those who thoughts and comments must be remembered or reported by others.

Another citation from the *OED* provides further evidence of the way in which the interview was the harbinger of a new kind of journalism that was viewed with skepticism by the established press. "A portion of the daily newspapers of New York are bringing the profession of journalism into contempt, so far as they can, by a kind of toadyism or flunkeyism, which they call 'interviewing'."[88] The full article, originally printed in the *Chicago Tribune*, illustrates how the interview intersected with the growth of journalism as a profession. The editorial continues:

> We are bound to say, however, that the *Sun* "interviews" with judgment, and in the main, seeks news and not gabble. But the *Herald*, *World*, and *News*, as if "interviewing" had become the *sine qua non* in journalism, use it as a means of gathering up the "opinions" of any and everybody relative to matters in general.[89]

According to this editorial, the interview's capture of "opinion" violates the high standards of journalism, making the paper and the profession disreputable. Distinct from "news," the *OED* defines an opinion as a "judgment resting on grounds insufficient for complete demonstration."[90] Presented differently than Mayhew's interview-work, columns composed of "interviews" did not include the extensive explanations of method that Mayhew included to justify and explain the connection of the opinions that he collected to various facts. And yet while the *Tribune* may have come out against "opinions," the tide was rising elsewhere in favor of a newspaper giving prominent place to subjective opinions.[91]

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[88] "American 'Interviewing'," *Daily News*, December 17, 1869.

[89] "Interviewing," *Chicago Tribune*, December 1, 1869.

[90] *OED*, s.v. "opinion," 1:1997.

[91] Two American editors credited with the earliest "interviews" are James Gordon Bennett, editor of *The Sun* in the 1840s and 1850s, and Horace Greeley, editor of *The Tribune* from 1844-1850. Both of these editors are credited with the endorsement and development of "personal journalism," guided by opinion. See Dan Schiller, *Objectivity and The News: The Public and the Rise of Journalism* (Philadelphia: University of

One of the people most clearly associated with this more generous appraisal of the political possibilities of the interview was W. T. Stead, whose editorial in his paper *Pall Mall Gazette* is one of the only "positive" statements included in the citations that bolster the *OED*'s definition. Stead writes extensively about journalism and was one of the only British editors to celebrate "the acclimatization of the 'interview' in English journalism."[92] He believed that the function of the newspaper was both to aggregate and influence public opinion.[93] And as a result, Stead champions the interview precisely for the "democratic" way in which it could include opinion in the press. Stead's endorsement of the interview as a medium for the collection and reproduction of opinion was grounded in his belief that the political function of the newspaper is to support liberal bourgeois democracy. In addition, Stead's desire to embrace this American form as something of an advance and not a corruption of the field of journalism coincided with his belief that the press is integral to the operations and flourishing of a balance between opposing voices. Stead's very conception of journalism is particularly appropriate to the possibilities of the interview. In "Government by Journalism," he writes:

> The Press is at once the eye and the ear and the tongue of the people. It is the visible speech if not the voice of the democracy. It is the phonograph of the world. On its columns are printed the spoken words of yesterday, and it is constantly becoming more and more obvious that the importance of a spoken word depends chiefly upon the certainty of its getting itself printed.[94]

Pennsylvania Press, 1981); Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

[92] W. T. Stead, "Editorial," *Pall Mall Gazette*, December 31,1884.

[93] W. T. Stead, "The Future of Journalism," *The Contemporary Review* 50 (November 1886), 663-679.

[94] W. T. Stead, "Government by Journalism," *The Contemporary Review* 49 (May 1886), 653-674.

But Stead's views on the relation of the newspaper to democracy (and specifically to government) ignore the economic realities that came to determine the interview and journalism. In his writings, it is as if the interview and journalism exists in a political sphere outside the demands of the economy.

Contrasting these views with Mayhew's project, we see that the *OED* citations and Stead's editorials present a narrative of the interview that completely sidesteps the material basis out of which the form developed. According to the discourse in the newspapers of the 1860s and 1880s, the interview was used only to investigate and document politicians and men of note.[95] Mayhew focused on the actual material conditions that society was facing and that subtended the necessity for development of the practice of the interview. This omission or elision demonstrates how distinctive Mayhew's deployment of interview-work is in the history of commercial journalism. As Mayhew's project reveals, the interview emerged at a time of great change and activity—of economic transformation and transition in the UK. But these political and economic aspects of the interview are only barely legible within the *OED*'s definition of the form. By adding Henry Mayhew's "Labour and the Poor" to the history of the interview, it becomes possible to read the complex ways in which interview-work is implicated in the shifts in modes of production and the development of commercial journalism.[96] And a thorough examination of this project also reveals the important

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[95] The editorials of Bennett, Greeley, and Stead refer to "interviews" with public figures.
[96] Gerald Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).

role of the form in the construction of images of the social. It also provides an early instance of interview-work's association with liberal and progressive ideas and practices.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In the case of "Labor and the Poor," the proto-sociological interest in economic and social conditions and the journalistic were uneasily conjoined. The contradiction between the two, as well as the particularity and popularity of the project, exceeded *The Morning Chronicle*'s ability to meet demand and its political outlook. Mayhew's project sat uneasily within the framework of the newspaper in which it first appeared, and for this reason, Mayhew's project suggests that his interview-work participates in something larger than just journalism. To a great degree, it is implicated in a kind of true liberalism, a faith in the power of information, knowledge, and investigation that is most often used to celebrate the political power of the press as a democratic institution. "Labor and the Poor" is not simply journalistic; it constitutes a mode of knowledge production that combines research and publication. It investigates phenomena from a variety of perspectives in its attempt to provide an empirical account of the variety of experiences associated with the decrease in living standards in London and to transform them.[97]

Mayhew's choice to talk with people and then to do more than simply let the words of each individual speaker stand was a function of a kind of vision that combined social and

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[97] According to Eileen Yeo, Mayhew's work qualifies as "empirical research." But her perspective derives from an attempt to rescue Mayhew from over-identification with the "sensational" aspects of his accounts (namely his interviews with prostitutes and thieves). Yeo, "Mayhew as a Social Investigator," 51.

scientific investigation. His method indicates a shift towards understanding that there

are no simple or objective facts when it comes to economic conditions, class, and labor.

And Mayhew's interview project demonstrates a commitment to new modes of

empirical analysis at the same time that it complicates and undermines the belief in pure

objective fact. Mayhew's anatomy creates something far beyond a statistical project.

The project requires a new form to quantify and qualify experience. It offers an astute

exploration and representation of class relations, an investigation that demonstrates the

role of opinion and consciousness—subjectivity—in the function and significance of

social facts.[98]

Mayhew's sense that he needed to interview various sides of the story makes his

investigation significant. Mayhew's project is "moving" and alive to his readers because

he presents voices of experience that are not isolated but connected to one another in a

legible format. The logic of the project derives from the opposition between employers

and employees and Mayhew's difference and distance from the experience of his

subjects. These demonstrations of intersubjectivity produce a representation of class

antagonism. A critique of capitalism from the standpoint of labor, Mayhew's detailed

accounts chronicle the exploitation and privation that people in London experienced

with a kind of precision that makes the facts and figures that he collects come alive. As

Yeo and Thompson have noted, the conclusions he derived from his research are less

compelling, determined as they are by the ways in which Mayhew's class allegiance

disables him from identifying with the people that he interviews. Considering his

interviewees as victims of history rather than "subjects," Mayhew's "Labour and the

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[98] Mayhew, "Letter VIII: Tuesday, November 13, 1849," 1:151.

Poor" documents and produces a form of class-consciousness. But this is quite distinct from a class-based analysis. To some extent, Mayhew's interview-work is doubly *about* class relations in so far as it represents and enacts them. A practice through which documentation of the increasing distance between the rich and the poor was presented in order to help ameliorate growing class inequity, this interview-work documents burgeoning working-class consciousness through intersubjective means, determined and shaped by the "middle-class consciousness" of Henry Mayhew.   In addition, "Labour and the Poor" points to the role of class difference in the development of the industry of journalism, simultaneously charting the rise of a professional class of "journalists" and "interviewers" and the emergence of "mass media" aimed at a new class of readers.[99]

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[99] The interview is also essential to the development of the disciplines of social science that study labor and workers—the working class itself. For two different critical views on the centrality of the interview to the discipline of sociology, see Jennifer Platt, "The History of the Interview" in *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2002), 33-54; Pierre Bourdieu, "Understanding," in *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu, trans. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 607-626.

CHAPTER 2

Dialogical Interview-Work: *60 Minutes* from 1968 - 1977

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter charts the standardization of the television interview form as an aesthetic

and ideological object of exchange on American commercial television in the late 1960s

through to the early 1980s. It looks at the audio-visual character of the interview on

television and how that relates to the flow and segmentation of television. Specifically,

this chapter focuses on the way in which discourse and dialogue are represented and

narrativized in the interview and how this functions within the economic and ideological

operations of the televisual medium. Examining the importance of the temporal

dimensions of an interview to its formal construction on television, this chapter argues

that the form of the interview on American television plays a crucial role in the

commodification of discourse and the production and circulation of value.

Given television's emphasis on "liveness," "reality," and "being there," the interview is

central to TV and can be found across a huge number of programs. Amongst these

programs the long-lasting *60 Minutes* stands as a prototypical example. Indeed, the

sheer proportion of *60 Minute*s' segments that are grounded in interviews make it a

logical choice for an examination of the deployment of the interview on television.

With over 4,000 episodes and counting, *60 Minutes* offers a significant site to explore the formal character of this means of production on television. In fact, *60 Minutes* carved out its own particular "format," one that proved to be extremely successful and profitable once it found the appropriate location within the television schedule. *60 Minutes*' very longevity and popularity contributes to the dominance of the interview on TV. Foregrounding its own role in the mediation of its stories helps to situate the *60 Minutes*-style dialogical interview within the TV schedule. In addition, *60 Minute*'s use of the interview as a narrative device contributes to the branding of *60 Minutes*.[1] The logic of branding permeates the show as the signature dialogical interview not only serves to promote individual "guests" and personalities within each story but consolidates the celebrity status of the correspondents who do the interviewing on camera.

The interview as a form exists almost entirely within the rhetorical register of what Emile Benveniste refers to as *discourse (discours)*.[2] Distinct from *history (histoire)*, in which the source of the enunciation may be effaced, the plane of discourse includes "every utterance assuming a speaker and a hearer."[3] As a result, the interview works particularly well within the cultural form of television that relies on the model of

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[1] The interview is not just associated with the brand of *60 Minutes*. Rather, the interview-form facilitates "brand" construction more generally, especially in the case of talk shows, e.g. *Oprah* and *Charlie Rose*. For more on branding, see Celia Lury, *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[2] Emile Benveniste, "Tense in the French Verb," in *Problems in General Linguistics* (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1971), 206-215.

[3] Employing "all the personal forms of speech" (I, you, and s/he), discourse also includes the tenses of the present, future, and perfect. These characteristics of the plane of discourse are in direct contrast to the historical mode of utterance that relies on the third person and is restricted to verb tenses that produce a narration of the past. Emile Benveniste, "Tense," 209.

discourse to structure many of its genres of programming, from news and talk shows to commercials, game shows, and "reality TV." In all of these forms, television presents itself as operating in the "here" and "now" and as speaking to "you," the viewer. Likewise involving a call to "you," the interview as a means of production depends upon the interviewee's direct address to the interviewer. The structuring logic of this form of media production relies on the fact that this dialogical exchange is also intended for other viewers and listeners, for publication. As such, the recorded form represents the conversation between the interviewer and interviewee *as* a representation of a dialogue: what Benveniste calls *indirect speech*, a mode of utterance that transposes discourse onto the historical plane.[4] But the footage from a filmed interview is also used to make both the interviewer and interviewee appear to be speaking to (and for) the viewer. The formal conventions that allow a filmed interview to be presented as both discourse and indirect speech developed extensively on television in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, the formal presentation of a television interview became a convention much in the way that *60 Minutes* became a standard on television.

This formal regularization, as demonstrated by the history of *60 Minutes*, facilitates the process by which the interview circulates as a commodity in Marx's sense.[5]

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[4] For Benveniste, indirect speech is "a type of utterance in which discourse is reported in terms of an event and is transposed onto the historical plane." Benveniste, "Tense," 209.

[5] Guy Debord's critique of the "spectacle" and Jean Baudrillard's critique of the political economy of the sign and the fetish of production also help to illuminate how the form of appearance of the television interview operates. Both authors consider the role of media and the image, in particular, in the transformation (and comprehension) of social relations based on the commodity form. But due to limitations of space, I do not incorporate their critiques into my analysis. See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 2006); Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production* (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 1975); and Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 1981).

Simultaneously a means for the production of "stories" and a result of that process, television interviews provide much of the "news" content needed to fill various time slots in between advertisements and commercials for other commodities. But like the general commodity form that Marx spends over 100 pages of Volume I of *Capital* unpacking, the television interview's form of appearance simultaneously reveals aspects of the means of its production and mystifies the source of its value.[6] As such, it offers a complicated instantiation of the ideological structure that obscures the abstraction of cognitive and discursive labor on commercial television.

On American television in the late 1960s and 70s, the representation of the interview settled into particular formal conventions that played a crucial role in the mobility, versatility, and ubiquity of the form. The first section of this chapter explores the ways in which interviews operate within the flow and segmentation of television. In particular, I focus on the convention of cross-cutting within interviews and the combination of interviews with narrative framing and voice-over—conventions that allow interview programming to fit smoothly into television's over-all regulation of time, discourse, and narrative.[7] Then, I examine the dialogical interview conventions that rely on classical cinematic narrative editing techniques to give prominence to the interviewer as well as the interviewee. Finally, I turn to the re-circulation of interview footage, the ways in which interview-work gets re-worked and re-presented (re-run and re-purposed). By distinguishing these different forms of appearance, I am attempting to

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[6] Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume I,* trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), 125- 226.

[7] Bluem uses the term "testimony" to designate the "product" of an interview. A. William Bluem, *Documentary in American Television* (New York: Hastings House, 1965), 71.

complicate the conceptualization of the form of the television interview as simply a delivery system for content.[8] Rather than being merely a way to present information in time, offered by individual speakers, the TV interview form helps constitute what we even consider to be "information," "time," "offerings," and "individuals." At the conclusion of this chapter, I argue that the naturalization of the form of the interview enables the representation of discourse as a critical site for the interrogation of timely events in American political and social life.

II. Interviews in the Early Years of *60 Minutes*: 1968 – 1970

CBS News played an important role in making the interview central to television news and documentary features. As an inheritor of the work of Fred Friendly and Edward R. Murrow, *60 Minutes* extended the use of the interview beyond the context of the muckraking tradition of the long-form documentary feature so as to involve something more "popular" and inevitably profitable. Beginning with *See It Now* and *CBS Reports* and culminating in *60 Minutes*, CBS programs highlighted the role of television itself in the delivery of information, placing television as the central subject of enunciation, the provider of context, and the means for the production and dissemination of stories. But *60 Minutes* used the interview to create a new category—one that not only employed the interview as a mode of production but also made that mode of production part of the narrative structure of the stories. For this reason, *60 Minutes* is exemplary in its

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[8] I am referring to the use of the term "talking head" as a short hand for the interview's form of appearance on television (and documentary film). I discuss this term briefly in the Conclusion (pp. 187-194). I argue that this ubiquitous description of the interview form is symptomatic; it naturalizes the form of appearance of the interview that it names and downplays the cultural, economic, and ideological significance of the interview's representation of discourse.

contributions to the development of the television interview. Indeed, *60 Minutes* offers an ideal site in which to explore how the interview operates in relation to the cultural form and technology of television and the ways in which the form becomes articulated with the material determinants and ideological problematic of American commercial television.

60 Minutes premiered in September 1968 and has continued to air every week on CBS to the present day, making it the longest running program on television. In the early years of *60 Minutes,* the interview form operated as one strategy among other formal strategies in the construction of a program that was consciously situated as a "newsmagazine," a hybrid of news, documentary and talk show.[9] From the outset, *60 Minutes* offered a sampler of televisual strategies alongside its explicit invocation of print and cinematic media.[10] Over the first few years, when the program was finding its

[9] In his collaborative biography, Mike Wallace describes the idea behind the program:
> If the evening news was the television equivalent of a daily newspaper—the electronic front page, as it were—and documentary was comparable to a nonfiction book that thoroughly examined one subject, then the program [Hewitt] envisioned could properly be described as a magazine. It would be a weekly or biweekly broadcast consistently of several stories on a wide range of topics—from politics to the arts, from interviews with world leaders to profiles of movie stars, in-depth reports on the latest crisis at home or abroad to light features on scuba diving and health spas.

Mike Wallace and Gary Paul Gates, *Close Encounters: Mike Wallace's Own Story* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1984), 96-97.

[10] The metaphor of the newsmagazine is made literal in the early episodes; a set piece that represents the open pages of an oversized magazine folio is placed behind the two anchors who are seated in the blackened sound stage. Early television practitioners often categorized these "new forms" through a comparison with print journalism, despite the fact that American television developed out of radio practice more explicitly. In addition, some of the most important early television criticism considers how television news is distinct from print journalism, often focusing on the audio-visual aspect of television and what that changes in the operations of journalism. See Margaret Morse, "The Television News Personality and Credibility: Reflections on the

footing, audience, and position within the television schedule, *60 Minutes* relied heavily on different forms of interviews before settling on its "signature" dialogical interview. From observational documentary footage filmed on location to "cross-cutting" and shot-gunned interview segments and direct address commentary by the anchor/correspondents to the viewer, *60 Minutes* utilized a range of approaches to social issues, human-interest stories, and "the news." This range is emblematic of the typical use of the interview across television programming. From nightly news, talk-shows, and documentary features/special reports, such strategies are employed to emphasize the importance of television itself as the medium for the delivery of "news."

On *60 Minutes*, this range of deployments illustrates how television interviews share a similar logic with respect to the naturalization of television's flow and segmentation and its representation of discourse.[11] One of the unique characteristics of *60 Minutes* is the prominence of the correspondents, who serve as anchors, narrators, and field reporters. This multi-tasking produces a continuity that smoothes over the disjunction between the various segments. Direct-address lead-ins also provide transitions from the commercials and a framing for each story. But importantly, the visual presence of the correspondents within each of the segments serves to foreground the dialogical character of the interviews used to provide the content for the show. By showing how its journalists are central to the production, representation, and delivery of information,

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News in Transition" in *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modelski (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1986), 55-60.
[11] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2003).

60 Minutes' interview-work promotes the program as a source for the analysis of current social and political phenomenon.[12]

During the early years on *60 Minutes,* observational filming and interview techniques were both forms of representation that engaged in "showing" and telling, emphasizing television's abilities and representing the labor of the correspondents, producers, and editors in a way that was distinct from the labor of the "subjects" they represented. The premiere episode opens with two segments that feature direct cinema style observation of the two presidential candidates: Richard Nixon in his hotel room watching the Republican convention's nominating process and Hubert Humphrey watching the Democratic convention's returns in his hotel room. The "behind the scenes" footage is an almost direct quotation from Robert Drew and D. A. Pennebaker's *Primary* and thus aligns itself with a particular form of intimacy which is achieved through the use of a mobile mode of shooting that uses smaller cameras and portable sound and light equipment.[13] Just by borrowing this strategy alone, Don Hewitt, the original executive producer and mastermind behind the program, distinguished *60 Minutes* from the long-form documentary news programs like *CBS Reports* that deployed Mitchell studio cameras (what Fred Friendly called "The One-Ton Pencil") to present a more fixed and

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[12] Richard Campbell, *60 Minutes and the News: A Mythology for Middle America,* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 25- 42. The development of the show as a place for interrogation, exposition, and examination came shortly after.
[13] In describing what he calls the observational mode of documentary, Bill Nichols asserts that the "fixity" of the camera's presence "suggests a commitment or engagement with the immediate, intimate and personal that is comparable to what an actual observer/participant might experience (without unrestricted recourse to the dynamization of time and space that cinema allows)." Bill Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 40.

staid relation to its "subjects."[14] Not an interview, but similar in the way that it brings the camera, and thus television, to a subject, this footage provides the evidence of both the presence and the capability of television as a medium invested in "liveness" (even though this footage itself was *not* live).[15] It also illustrates an interest in the story behind the story, an approach for which the interview is the best device, and which from the outset *60 Minutes* sought to cultivate. If Friendly and Murrow's long documentary special reports used the interview to take on social issues and ask "why" a particular story happened, *60 Minutes* carried this further, investigating appearances, relations to fact, and emphasizing "stories" rather than the delivery of "actualities."[16] From its inception, *60 Minutes* was therefore invested in the creation of narratives and television's ability to shape reality, to process and re-present the real in ways that were entertaining, dramatic, and lucrative as well as informative.

The use of different formal strategies within a single program also serves to highlight the novelty of *60 Minutes'* approach to the construction of an hour-long time slot. Unlike a long form documentary program or special report, each episode treats three or more different topics; and unlike news items, each of these stories receives somewhere between eleven and thirteen minutes of un-interrupted airtime. These segments address various matters related to the contemporary moment. Rare are the stories that treat historical subjects; rather, the segments cover issues that are current and timely, not merely immediate. Along with, and constitutive of, this sense of temporality, the

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[14] Thomas Whiteside, "The One-Ton Pencil," *The New Yorker*, February 17, 1962.
[15] Jane Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology," in *Regarding Television*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Frederick, MD: AFI, 1983), 14-15.
[16] Charles Montgomery Hammond Jr., *The Image Decade: Television Documentary 1965-1979* (New York: Hastings House, 1981).

thematic segmentation of the hour-long program is crucial to its operations. Each story has a duration that is uninterrupted by commercials, though framed by them. This allows for a seemingly endless variety of contents to fill the three story slots in a way that mirrors the interchangeability of the commercial advertisements that separate each segment. Together the segments and the commercials fill the "sixty minutes" allotted to the program in different ways each and every week.

Aired two months before the 1968 Presidential elections, the premiere episode features the aforementioned segments on Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon watching their convention nomination results on television, a series of interview-statements from international journalists commenting on the upcoming American presidential elections, an extended piece on the status of the police in contemporary society, and finally a part of a formally experimental animated film by Saul Bass entitled "Why Man Creates." In between each story, the correspondents Morley Safer and Mike Wallace comment directly on the topics of the segments, the shape of the show, and the vision that the correspondents and producers have for the program going forward. Safer explains that the show "will report reality" with "quite a range." However, in this first broadcast, it is possible to read some thematic coherence even though the segments are quite different formally and in content. Taking on the central questions raised by the primary races and the events of the Republican and Democratic conventions, this inaugural episode explores the nature of the political and economic divisions in the United States and the potential for violence both within the US and abroad. The topical cohesion of this early episode is mirrored by the fact that Alpo, the dog-food company, served as the episode's sole sponsor and advertiser. Their advertisements punctuated and divided the segments,

but the continuous voice-over and similar images of different dogs within green fields in each of the commercials tempered the novelty of the broadcast and complimented the flow produced by the anchor-correspondent lead-ins and commentaries.[17] As the series became more popular and weekly, the segments began to be interchangeable, unrelated, and re-broadcast.[18] In addition, *60 Minutes* stopped having to rely on direct sponsorship as its popularity grew and the structure of television ad buys changed.

These early episodes are explicit in situating *60 Minutes* as a locus of social analysis and interrogation; reliant on the interview, the program literally offers *time* for inquiry and the representation of discourse and critical dialogue. During the premiere, the second segment features taped commentary from three international print journalist-commentators. These figures address the viewer in their response to the narrated questions of the reporter/anchor Harry Reasoner. They furnish their "international" perspectives on the prospects of the American Presidential election (and the consequences for world politics) in a series of close-ups and mid-range shots, the framing of which varies slightly. Every sequence includes a wide-angle shot that reveals each journalist seated in an informal context. Different from a string of talking heads placed within a static frame inside the mise-en-scene of a news broadcast set, this

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[17] These bucolic images of dogs and their owners in "natural" settings also offer a soothing counterpoint to the program's investigation of political division, tension, and violence.

[18] The first episode to feature a re-run of a segment was broadcast on July 8, 1969. A mark of the end of the first season, the following episode (July 22, 1969) ran three segments that had been broadcast previously on separate dates. In August 1970 and June 1971, *60 Minutes* marked the end of its "seasons" with "special anthology editions" that featured excerpts from the interviews with the "memorable personalities" from the previous season. December 24, 1972 marked the first mid-season deployment of a segment that had aired previously. Starting in 1973, the practice of using one previously aired segment with two new segments became regularized.

segment shows more than just heads and shoulders. These images take up the whole

screen, and the speakers speak directly to the camera, appearing as if they are

responding to Reasoner and the viewer. These direct answers to the questions of the

correspondent/anchor are similar to the operations of TV news, as analyzed by critics

like Margaret Morse and Jane Feuer, in which the anchor operates as a relay who

grants a secondary correspondent or expert the opportunity to address the public

through them.[19] But in this case, the dialogical set up involves alternation between the

anchor and the obviously edited sequences of statements from the other correspondents.

The international pundits are meticulous and precise in their insights; they do not

stumble or ramble, and their comments are conversational and professional, speaking as

one journalist to another. Yet for all that sense of conversation, these interviews are a

post-production construction made in an editing room, something that the progression

of slightly different shots of each foreign correspondent underscores. The result of

"sending our cameras to Europe," these exchanges extract value from the temporal and

physical distance that separates the interview footage from the apparent presence and

immediacy of the correspondent. Edited in ways that "live" footage could not be and re-

assembled to simulate a conversation, these "re-constructed" answers are animated by

Reasoner's performance of questions posed from the space of the television studio, a

location that is more closely associated with the temporality of the television broadcast.

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[19] This is a variant of "the monitor logic" and relay structure between the anchor and
the street/ on-location/foreign correspondent that Margaret Morse identifies in
"Personality and Credibility." It also derives from the very first *See It Now* programs in
which Murrow demonstrated the power of television "technology" by offering "live"
images of correspondents within the context of a monitor screen in the control room.
In *60 Minutes*, the formal presence of the monitor frame disappeared in favor of a full
screen address. In this case, the anchor/correspondent sits in a darkened studio room in
front of an enlarged image from each story displayed as a bill-board-like magazine page
spread. See Margaret Morse, "Personality and Credibility," 69-74; and Jane Feuer, "The
Concept of Live Television," 12-22.

Whereas the spatial and temporal conjunction of televisual "liveness" is often used to demonstrate television's ability to bridge all sorts of distances, in this segment, the disjunction or delay in time between the recording of the interviews and their airing is also used to emphasize *60 Minute*'s particular social utility.[20] Distinct from "instant analysis," the program is associated with something more akin to timeliness.[21]

Taken together, the edited interview footage and the direct address of the anchor-correspondents rely on and exploit the discursive character of the medium and the dominance of direct sound in television news.[22] As has been remarked by Richard Campbell, it has always been possible to listen to a *60 Minutes* broadcast without seeing the images and still follow the story.[23] This coincides with the significance of sound to the operations of television as it developed historically, an aspect of the cultural form that lead Raymond Williams to refer to television as "visual radio."[24] But this has been particularly true for *60 Minutes* because of its reliance on the interview and the legacy of radio in the development of CBS News.[25] The filmed interview is entirely dependent on direct sound and "the persuasive illusion of real people speaking real words" for its

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[20] Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television," 17-18.
[21] David L. Paletz and Richard J. Vinegar, "Presidents on Television: The Effects of Instant Analysis," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 41 (Winter 1977-1978): 488-497.
[22] For more about the importance of sound to television, see Rick Altman, "Television/Sound," in *Studies in Entertainment*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 39–54.
[23] Campbell, *60 Minutes*, 39.
[24] Williams, *Television*, 45.
[25] Radio veterans Fred Friendly and Edward R. Murrow were largely responsible for the growth of CBS News. Mike Wallace, Harry Reasoner, and Andy Rooney all began their careers on the radio. The primacy of the audio-soundtrack has been a consistent characteristic of the program. Since 1980, the program has been broadcast on television and radio simultaneously. *60 Minutes* was the first program to employ such a cross-platform approach to increase its audience-reach.

efficacy.[26] Relying on sound and image that are recorded simultaneously in the same location, a filmed interview's image track works to ground the audio track in a way that is associated with documentary modes. These modes are ideologically motivated in different ways than Hollywood's separation of sound and image and the construction of synchronization that conditions the viewer's experience of spatial and temporal continuity.[27] *60 Minutes* draws on this association with documentary strategies explicitly in the first "direct cinema"-like segment and through its deployment of direct sound in its anchor segues and interviews. Relying on the appearance of direct sound (reproduced by the basic convention wherein image and sound double one another), television interviews produce and confirm a sense of the medium's ability to provide "direct" access to a variety of speaking subjects. But on *60 Minutes*, the primacy of the audio also works to suggest that the program's interviews are a means through which to investigate the disjunction between "how the world *is*" and "how it looks," to penetrate deeper into the events of the day through the recording, representation, and circulation of dialogue and discussion.[28]

Through its interviews, *60 Minutes* demonstrated its ability to contribute to the national "conversation" about contemporary American social and political life.[29] Taking "sort of a new approach," to quote Harry Reasoner's narration, the premiere asserted the program's ability to investigate the relation between public opinion and news. Delving

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[26] Rick Altman, " The Evolution of Sound Technology," in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 47.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Mary Ann Doane, "Ideology and the Practice of Sound Editing and Mixing," in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 58.

[29] Williams, *Television*, 73.

into a range of perspectives on the role of the police in the United States, for example, the segment entitled "Cops" was attributed to Ramsey Clark "as told to Mike Wallace."[30] Clark was U.S. Attorney General at the time, and a single interview with Clark serves as the narrative spine for the entire segment. Not quite what Bill Nichols refers to as a "masked interview" in which the interviewer is entirely off-screen and absent, the segment features only three short shots of Mike Wallace listening to Clark's answers.[31] In moments, Clark's audio provides a voice-over for stock footage, but it always returns to Clark's image and to the recording of Wallace's questions. Rather than using the footage and audio from this interview to construct something akin to a monologue, the whole of the segment relies on the structuring referent of a series of off-screen interlocutors. And the exchange between Wallace and Clark is just one of the interactive encounters produced by interviews that the segment features.

The "Cops" segment is a prime example of "cross-cutting," a technique pioneered by CBS in *See It Now* and *CBS Reports*. This approach to interview-work involves "recording many interviews at great length and in considerable detail—a certain way to achieve the conviction that Murrow and Friendly sought—and then fragmenting them into a series of shorter segments to be "shot-gunned" throughout a program."[32] Crosscutting is a strategy that creates a drama out of the representation of opposing

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[30] This interesting attribution of authorship to the subject of the segment/interview came to be replaced by giving priority to the role of the reporter journalist who provided the lead-in and voice over narration for a given segment (and appears in the interviews on screen). In addition, the production "credit" for each segment also came to appear on the opening screen image.
[31] Bill Nichols, *Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1981), 281-83.
[32] See Bluem, *Documentary*, 96-104; Hammond, *The Image Decade*, 165-170; Campbell, *60 Minutes*, 256-257.

opinions, experience, and social positions. In addition to Clark, "Cops" features single-camera interviews with interviewees who occupy distinct social positions that are often hostile to each other; citizens are posed against police officers, and, even more significantly, the perspective of the Attorney General is contrasted with the descriptions of experience provided by beat cops. The cross-cutting between single-camera interviews with these people produces the impression that there is an active public debate about the role of police in communities and the role of police brutality and violence in dealing with the political, racial, and class "divisions in society."

In this particular segment, all of the shots of interviewees frame the face and upper-body of each of the speaking subjects; they are cropped closely enough to offer focus and detail but not too intrusive or obvious as close-ups. This conventional framing of interviewees is not used to present subjects who seem to speak without being spoken to. This sequence is not presented as a string of monologues. Instead, the camera is angled in such a way that every single interview subject appears in conversation with someone just out of the frame. This formal device allows all of the interview footage to be edited into a sequence in which the speakers appear to be speaking in response to each other. As a result, the range of interview footage is exploited for its ability to suggest the appearance of a dialogue and conversation, underscored by the audibility of the interview questions. The visual uniformity also works to highlight the differences in opinion that each clip offers. At the same time, it also creates the semblance of a debate in which oppositions and differences between citizens and police officers as well as within the Department of Justice are represented.

But these shot-gunned interviews are accorded a different status than Clark's interview, audio from which serves as the voice-over that accompanies b-roll footage. While Clark's general statements *about* public opinion and the status of the police flow into and over various images of police, arrests, neighborhoods, police stations, and interrogation rooms, the interview footage of anonymous cops and people on the street is always paired with visual images of the speaker. This demonstrates the significance of the visual record to the meaning and usefulness of these filmed interviews. In this way, the interview is not used merely as a tool for the capture and manufacture of statements and quotations; but the single camera interview also produces visual evidence, affording statements a certain narrative value and credibility.

In the case of the "Cops" segment, the array of images of faces synchronized with the audio of the voices supplement Clark's more conceptual and measured assessment that the problem of police brutality was a central but open question for society at that historical crossroads. Garnering the opinions of beat cops and citizens works to represent the "responses"—the range of public opinion—to the broader and more politic assertions contained in Clark's voice over. At one point, Clark even acknowledges that his managerial perspective is quite different from the experience of the rank and file police officers, when he responds to Wallace's question about what the beat cop's view of society is. This sample of crosscut footage from single camera interviews with "people on the street" is, however, neither a scientific sampling nor a political representation, but rather a display of "representative" perspectives on the current situation in the United States. The "interchangeability" of these interviews makes this an effective strategy for the representation of polysemy and polyvocality, creating the

appearance of inclusion in this construction of a composite image of the public as an aggregate of people.[33] This "democratic" representation of public opinion and the different "sides" of public debate provides an oblique way to approach the events that surrounded the 1968 Democratic convention. Footage of the clashes between protestors and cops appear in the segment, but the confrontation is not directly addressed. In this way, the shot-gunned interviews with ordinary folks and Ramsey Clark's testimony situate the violent clash that happened at the Democratic convention within a larger sense of the divisions in society. Treated as condensations of opinion, the edited single-camera interview clips are the details that fill out the whole of the story. They serve as a chorus that is combined with a more "in-depth" interview—the process of one official telling his story to a network correspondent.

The interview's versatility, its ability to capture the statements of all segments of society, from working people to singular personalities, celebrities, millionaires, and politicians, fit perfectly into the ideological functioning of American television in its attempt to create coherence and relation across difference—or at least to appear to capture public opinion in order to sell it to the public.[34] The representative function of the interview fuses identity with quotation and appearance. In this way, the television

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[33] See John Fiske, "Television: Polysemy and Popularity," in *Critical Studies in Mass Communications* 3 (December 1986): 391-408. See also M. M. Bahktin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press), 259-422.

[34] For Raymond Williams, this representation of "argument and discussion" is "an apparently public form … in which there is reactive and speculative discussion of a decision-making process which is in real terms displaced or even absent." This "apparently public form" is one in which "a public process, at the level of response and interrogation, is *represented* for us by television intermediaries. Not only the decisions and events, but what are intended to be the shaping responses to them, come through in a prepared and mediated form." Williams, *Television*, 48.

interview extracts public opinions in order to emphasize television's role in providing access to minority and majority opinions, represented as two sides of an issue.[35] In order to appear to do this, these "quotations" have almost no trace of the process that produces them, except in terms of where they look. The eye-lines address an off-screen interviewer. This mode of address does not undermine the "credibility" of the speakers, because in this instance, credibility is provided by the simultaneity of the sound and image. That is, in this segment that I have been elaborating, the interview form is used in two ways: it is a narrative and unifying device and it is deployed as a tool for the extraction of a variety of opinions and perspectives. Relying on both formal strategies, this segment replicates the very same structure of flow and segmentation of the institutional form of U.S. television as a whole.

Using extracted and de-contextualized statements attached to images of anonymous faces to build a story was a typical strategy for documentary (and was used through out *CBS Reports*). But in the context of this segment of *60 Minutes*, the distinction between who was named and who was not registers class and political difference.[36] Even though the segment seems to want to bridge social divisions, both to represent divisions and to overcome them through editing, it still continues to reproduce a hierarchy, and thus it concretizes those very same social divisions through the difference between the formal treatment of Clark's interview and the anonymous interviews. But the shared mode of

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[35] This role of the press (and the debate about the cops) is further abstracted in two sequences each entitled "Digression" that frame the segment. These sequences feature two silhouetted figures who are facing each other and debating the material of the segment.

[36] It is interesting to note that *60 Minutes* rarely uses name cards to introduce its subjects—this relates to the emphasis on the audio-track, but it also coincides with the program's portrait of itself as "in-depth" and investigative, interrogating all of its subjects rather than taking what they say "on face value."

address in the shot-gunned interviews, Clark's interview, and Wallace's introduction provide a continuity that smoothes over those formal and political differences. Much in the same way, the edited interview footage of the international journalists and the direct address of Harry Reasoner both rely on and exploit the discursive character of the medium in order to provide a temporal cohesion for those pre-recorded interviews.

"The ideology of liveness" that suffuses news programming unifies *60 Minutes* in the direct address of the reporter-anchors' narration between each segment.[37] But the broadcast also combines a number of different temporal registers.[38] The stories themselves do not conform to the apparent immediacy of the broadcast time. This distinctive approach to the news is made explicit during the premiere when Harry Reasoner states in his description of the vision for the program that "good content lasts." Providing more than "breaking" news, the good content of the broadcast derives from the selection of topics that can outlast short-term news cycles and warrant longer time investments on the part of the network. By foregrounding the difference between the time of broadcasting and the time of each segment, *60 Minutes* sought to elevate the status and significance of the stories, the correspondents, and the program itself. The interview strategies also contribute to the construction of this *60 Minutes* style "in-depth" and "quality" approach. By displaying the role of their correspondents in the interviews that comprise each episode, the program emphasizes the amount of time needed to capture and produce the material in each segment. By using the same correspondents to introduce each segment, the different time registers are linked in a

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[37] Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television," 16-18.
[38] Mary Anne Doane, "Information, Crisis, Catastrophe" in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990): 222-239.

way that consolidates the program, bringing all the various modes of temporality together into one stream. The significance of this temporal cohesion became crystallized in the signature stopwatch that has introduced the show and punctuated every transition between commercials and segments since *60 Minutes'* third broadcast.

The stopwatch has appeared since the early episodes, outlined within the border of the magazine "cover," tilted slightly to its side, the motion of the hands audible and resonant. This shot introduces a visual and auditory representation of the measure of value and material on television; it marks the time-slots for stories and commercials. A tool for the accurate measurement of time, the exacting device refers to itself and to the work, expenditure, and duration that it times. This is the case of all television representations of face-to-face conversation and discourse, but it is particularly true for the interview.[39]

The transparent mechanism of the stopwatch lays the temporal structure of the program, and of TV more generally, at the forefront of the program, highlighting the dominance of the television schedule in the determination of the significance of a program. It puts an apparatus used in editing and production in the spotlight.[40] Placing this tool in the opening of the program suggests an attempt to discipline and regulate as well as an attempt to approach objectivity and exactitude. The stopwatch promises to keep the producers of *60 Minutes* "honest." It is a clear admission of the quantification of time on television for advertising purposes at the same time that it instantiates their

[39] Morse, "Personality and Credibility," 61.
[40] This opening image addresses an activated viewer/ an interested consumer who is more than simply a passive recipient—but rather someone who is watching carefully and actively judging—like a coach timing an athlete.

commitment to present stories in a timely manner—efficiently and regularly. The stopwatch also lends an air of drama to "ordinary time;" it literally dramatizes the time of the show, making a television hour into an event and something worthy of careful attention and calculated observation. It literally surrounds and structures the transitions between the commercials and the segments—in a way that appears simultaneously content-less and yet affect-full. But in addition to creating an environment defined and dominated by various regimes of temporality, the stopwatch serves a dramatic function and thus, it helps to define the *brand*.[41]

III. The Dialogical Interview

Unlike a logo, the stopwatch serves a dramatic function much in the way that the signature *60 Minutes* interview dramatizes the very process of research. In the case of *60 Minutes*, the use of dialogical interviews contributed to the construction of the program brand as connected to the ability to produce "content that lasts" through extensive and in-depth research into current events and issues. As such, the interview was and is the means through which it becomes possible to make a story out of getting a story. This aspect of all filmed interviews was exploited by the producers of *60 Minutes* to great effect, and to great criticism, especially when it is a technique used with reticent subjects to demonstrate and dramatize their resistance to speaking up, commenting, or being caught on tape. But this dramatization has another relation to the more usual circumstances when an interviewee submits to the interaction. The production of an

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[41] Celia Lury defines the brand as "a set of relations between products in time." She argues that a brand is "not immaterial;" as a result, it has a particular relation to objects and is itself "an object of the economy that is already a matter of value." Celia Lury, *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*, 2, 1, and 6.

interview-meeting between the correspondent and the subject operates as the central

indexical referent in most every segment on *60 Minutes*. And like the stopwatch, the

interview is an event that is reflexive and contained, serving the purpose of presenting

both a historical truth and the drama and entertainment that characterizes *60 Minutes*.

As *60 Minutes* developed, the visual and audio presence of the correspondent within the

interview segments became more prominent.[42] The formal presentation of the

interview as a dialogue between an interviewer and an interviewee has existed across

the whole of the television schedule, beginning with Edward R. Murrow's *Person to*

Person and developing into various "talk-show" formats and news programming.[43] But

what became distinctive on *60 Minutes* is its use of the two-camera interview as a

narrative and structuring device within its segments. The two-camera interview makes

the exchange between the interviewer and interviewee visible, emphasizing the

dialogical character of the interview at the same time that it transforms that dialogue

into a form of reported speech and narrative. As such, what I will call "the dialogical

interview" becomes crucial to the construction of the different stories that the program

presents each week. In a dialogical interview, the interviewing-process is not simply a

means to amass statements or "information" as products. On *60 Minutes*, the two-

camera interview is also a representation of that very means of production, a signifying

element that works with and augments the other discursive aspects of the program.

All three categories of segments on *60 Minutes* utilize the dialogical interview: "World

Leader/ Political Figures," "Newsbreaking, General News and Features," and

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[42] Bluem, *Documentary*, 96-104; Hammond, *The Image Decade*, 165-170.
[43] Bluem, *Documentary*, 71.

"Celebrity/Personality—Profiles."[44] Grounding almost every segment from 1970 onwards, the dialogical interview operates both as a plot element and a spine around which the segment is organized. Making the procedure and process of an interview visible, the dialogical interview is the explicit and visible motor-event for making each story and segment into "good television." Literally dramatizing the retrieval and extraction of information in the form of discourse, these interviews present images and audio of exchanges that often provide the foundation and denouement for a story or portrait. They capture moments of interaction and expression that are usually erased in the presentation of footage from a single-camera interview focused solely on the interviewee. Enabling an interview to provide much more than an edited quotation or sound-byte, these dialogical interviews reveal the discursive labor of the interviewer that is made invisible when one-camera interviews are used in the production of a television segment or documentary film. They also foreground the interview as a means by which significance and value are produced. The value produced in these dialogical interviews accrues to the interviewee, interviewer, program, network, and television itself.

On *60 Minutes,* the use of the dialogical interview designates the significance of a subject at the same time that it stresses the role of the correspondent and the status of the program itself. In the second episode that aired on October 8, 1968, *60 Minutes* featured a dialogical interview with then presidential candidate Richard Nixon. This segment

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[44] Frank Coffey, *60 Minutes: 25 Years of Television's Finest Hour* (Los Angeles: General Publishing Group, Inc.: 1993), 238-241. Published by CBS News in 1993, this coffee table book is a commemorative text that presents an "official" representation of the program and utilizes the same categories that the producers and editors used in the production of the show.

was not presented as a story that was "told to Mike Wallace" in the way that Ramsey Clark's interview was. Rather, this segment, entitled "The Nominee," was attributed to Mike Wallace and produced by Don Hewitt himself. This was the only time that Nixon was interviewed on *60 Minutes*; though he was the subject of many episodes over the following nine years, and sections of this interview re-appear in an episode entitled "The Nixon Years" that aired on August 11, 1974. Relying on classical cinematic editing of shot-reverse shot editing, the formal conventions established in this early interview segment have continued to shape and define the thousands of dialogical interviews that have aired on the program since 1968. In shot-reverse shot editing, two cameras frame each subject separately and provide two distinct perspectives on each of the subjects, enabling the alternation of mid-range, close-ups, and "over-the-shoulder" shots in the editing of the dialogue. These are often supplemented with shots from a third camera that places both speakers within the frame, locating them within a single space in a way that coheres the scene and establishes both spatial and temporal continuity and unity.

In this interview, Richard Nixon is seated at one end of a long couch, and Mike Wallace sits at the other end of the couch. Both interviewee and interviewer are nestled in each corner, angled out towards each other. Featured in many *60 Minutes* interviews, the couch and living room context provides an important contrast to the sparseness of the *60 Minutes* blackened sound stage. The living room space of the interview operates in many ways as an extension of the viewer's living room, and the camera framings of Nixon and Wallace on the same couch work to emphasize this. Positioned at a 45-degree angle from the couch, one camera faces Nixon directly, situating him in the exact middle of the frame. This camera provides mid-range shots; close-ups in which the

space is evenly divided between his head and his upper body; and more extreme close-ups in which Nixon's face fills seven eighths of the frame, with only a little shoulder and the wallpaper behind him showing. In the majority of the close-up shots from this camera, the camera is positioned slightly above Nixon in a way that works to emphasize the depth of the shot, leaving the background and even Nixon's hands slightly out of focus. In these shots, the perfect symmetry of the shot is tempered by Nixon's hand movements in and out of the frame, along with the shifting angle of his eye line and his head that often extends slightly out of frame. This provides a subtle contrast to the shots of Mike Wallace, whose eye lines are always directed to the left of the frame (towards Nixon). Shot only from a mid-range, the camera places Wallace in the right side of the frame, often capturing part of the empty space in the middle of the couch between Wallace and Nixon. This mid-range shot presents Wallace at a measured and consistent distance from the camera (and Nixon).[45] The images of Nixon vary, beginning with many mid-range shots and a few close-ups mixed in with reaction and question shots from Wallace and ending with a sequence of close-ups. This visual presentation suggests a dialogue between equals, elevating Wallace slightly in an effort to "balance" the conversation and to highlight the novelty of *60 Minutes'* approach to election coverage.

The segment begins with Wallace's introduction: "No man, least of all a politician, likes to make a public confession of what he's done wrong. But a candid Richard Nixon has catalogued the various mistakes he made in his campaign for President eight years ago." This reflective tone permeates all of Wallace's questions and comments, which comprise

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[45] Campbell, *60 Minutes*, 36-37.

one third of the airtime of the interview. Many of these questions are accompanied by

images of Wallace asking his questions, but others are accompanied by close-ups of

Nixon looking down or up, apparently "listening" to Wallace's thoughtful and probing

queries. The image track alternates between shots of Nixon and Wallace, but the audio

of the conversation appears un-interrupted, with the fiction of continuous time produced

by the use of the "listening" images of both Wallace and Nixon to cover the audio edits.

The narrative cohesion of the segment culminates in a long self-conscious exchange

between Wallace and Nixon about "style and charisma" and the importance of the press

and television, in particular, in the construction of a candidate's public image. Distinct

from a press conference in which different reporters pose individual questions, the

dialogical interview allows more time for the exploration of issues and the person *behind*

the public image. For politicians and celebrities alike, an interview presents an

opportunity to represent and circulate different "sides" behind their public persona. In

the case of a presidential candidate, this is a strategic political context through which to

garner publicity by circulating sounds and images that are products of "direct"

contact.[46] This interview represents a collegial interaction, one in which Nixon appears

to find in Mike Wallace someone who is sympathetic to his suspicions and distrust of

"contrivance," "public relations," and the press more generally. Within four years of this

interview, however, the network's relationship with Nixon deteriorated to the point

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[46] The "image" of a president is a significant political form; it signifies electoral, domestic, and international power. By the late 1960s, television interviews with presidential candidates were standard. But it was only after Nixon's resignation that sitting U.S. Presidents have submitted to television interviews, beginning with Gerald Ford.

where "Charles Colson told CBS President Frank Stanton that the Nixon Administration would bring CBS 'to its knees.'"[47]

On *60 Minutes,* dialogical interviews are usually reserved for people of note, but they are also used in order to elevate someone to the status of a public figure. In these segments, the dialogical interview is most often the culmination of the story, an addition to the observational footage and voice-over that helps to introduce "the subject" and to provide the context and framework for the dramatic encounter of a dialogical interview's in-depth analysis. In the episode that aired on April 28, 1970, there are two segments that feature people who are neither celebrities nor political figures: "Mr. Williams Needs a Job" and "Who is Bernie Cornfeld?" The first of these segments tells the story of an unemployed couple from Wichita who are representative of a "new class" of workers without jobs: middle-class and skilled workers. This story includes interviews with the couple, Mr.Williams' union representative, and the president of Cessna, the company that had laid Mr. Williams off. Harry Reasoner provides the voice-over that dominates the episode, and his voice is also audible in the interview with the couple that ends the segment. The second segment of the April 28, 1970 episode entitled "Who is Bernie Cornfeld?" presents a portrait of a mutual fund director. The segment is dominated by Mike Wallace's narration, but the final minutes feature a dialogical interview. The dramatic deployment of an actual interview serves as an antidote to the long sequence in which Wallace's voice-over accompanies various shots of Cornfeld in his jet, at dinner parties, and at his company's annual meeting. The final interview between Cornfeld and

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[47] Frank Coffey, *60 Minutes: 25 Years,* 37. The hostility of the Nixon administration to the press is legendary and has been well documented. See Robert J. Donovan and Ray Scherer, *Unsilent Revolution: Television News and American Public Life, 1948-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 108-135.

Wallace is not much of an interview, providing little additional information or insight into this portrait of a CEO. That is, it adds little by way of content, except that it does establish that Wallace and Cornfeld have, in fact, met. In this short scene, the only cutaways are to Wallace. Unaccompanied by any additional footage, the scene of the interview maintains the synchronization of the sound and image in a way that establishes a continuity of both time and space. The interview thus provides indexical proof that Wallace has talked with Cornfeld directly, that they have spent time together in the same space. In this way, the interview-form serves to verify the statements, appearance, presence, and interactive-performance of the personalities, celebrities, and public figures that are its subjects.[48] The dialogical interview demonstrates both the "uniqueness" of the subject and the presence of the correspondent, attributing significance and importance to both.

This dialogical form depends on particular filming and editing techniques. A crucial cinematic form, the shot-reverse shot has been theorized as a basic unit of narrative cinema. More than simply an arrangement of perspective or point-of-view shots, this technique is central to the ideological "economy" of a classical narrative film, situating and placing the viewer in relation to the filmic text, to the chain of signification in process.[49] Likewise, shot-reverse shot editing is particularly important in television interviews because it offers an entirely naturalized cover for edits, for the excision and elision of parts of each interview that are necessary in order to fit the interview-material

[48] Interestingly, this is in contrast to the portrait of Mr. Williams that precedes this segment. An early episode, the shot-reverse shot signature interview, in this case, is unnecessary in the case of Mr. Williams because the entire episode deploys observation footage with sync. As a result, there is no need to supply an indexical-synced interview image to establish the veracity of the story.
[49] Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 397.

into the structure of a story and specific time slots. But it is also crucial in the establishment of the viewer's relation to the interview as a text.

In classical narrative cinema, the oscillation between subjects engaged in dialogue serves to ensure that the viewer is not aware of her position as the non-speaking subject. In television, this ideological function is even more important because television interviews, by definition, are produced *for* a participant-observer. They are explicitly predicated on the presence of a "non-speaking" viewer. Drawing focus away from the "non-speaking" aspect of the role of the viewer is crucial to maintaining the fiction of television's discourse and direct address and the construction of the viewer's agency as a consumer with a "job" or purpose for watching. Positioned on both sides and in front of a dialogical interview, the viewer is a judge of the interviewer, the interviewee, and the interview as a whole. The repetition of the alternating shots binds the viewer into a sense of the cohesiveness of the interview as a "real" event, lulling the viewer into a kind of inattention to the framing and camera placement, in order to focus attention on the "content" and presence of the subjects. But the conventions of shot-reverse shot also work to contain any desire for the extraneous, for images of other scenes or for other questions.[50] At moments, this desire appears, though, and b-roll is necessary to confirm and sometimes contrast the statements of the interview-subject. But mostly, in dialogical interviews, other non-interview footage is used to surround and supplement the interview, reserved for segues and transitions into voice-over

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[50] This, of course, is disrupted or extended in the case of talk shows where the status of questioner is extended to "studio audience members," who are shown speaking, often accompanied by the host, in alternation with the guest's responses. Telephone callers and email comments are only heard. On *60 Minutes*, the audience is included in the presentation of the program through the visual representation of text excerpted from viewer's letters.

narration. In this way, the fiction of the interview-event is preserved along with the

unity of space and time that the shot-reverse shot editing constructs.

To some extent, this cinematic trope operates on television in a privileged status due to

its association with narrative film.[51] In addition, this technique for heightening drama

and suspense includes the viewer in the "unfolding" of the information, a literal

dramatization of storytelling and, even more importantly, of the work of reporting and

television journalism. The shot-reverse shot approach to the dialogical interview has

rarely been used in documentary film. In *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in*

Documentary, Bill Nichols does not mention a single example of an "interactive"

documentary film that employs what I am calling the dialogical two-camera interview.

Instead, he discusses a category of interview that produces "a more structured

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[51] My argument is that the shot-reverse shot form of the dialogical interview is
particular to television. There are documentary films that deploy the so-called pseudo-
dialogue but do not use shot-reverse shot editing. Instead they employ one camera to
capture both the interviewer and interviewee within the frame of a single shot (e.g. Jean
Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer* (1960); Gregg Bordowitz's *Fast Trip,
Long Drop* (1994); and Gregg Bordowitz *Habit* (2001)). The one-camera dialogical
interview is also used in television reporting, and in particular on *60 Minutes*. But like
the shot-reverse shot dialogical interviews, these one-camera interviews fetishize the
interview itself as content, emphasizing the importance of the reporter and television's
role in delivering access to a subject or situation.
    In the case of the segment entitled "Inside Afghanistan" broadcast on April 6,
1980, Dan Rather's account of his trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan to talk with the
Mujahadeen relies on a single camera. The segment consists of scenes that capture
Rather, his interpreter, and his subjects as they travel through camps and mountains
both looking for and hiding from skirmishes with the Soviet backed Afghanis. The
point of the story is to find an answer to one question: what were the chances for the
success of the Mujahadeen without American support? Rather spends the first half of
the segment trying to find out where their guns came from (and how antiquated they
were)—and he spends the second half documenting the refugees and the need for
external support. In this instance, the one-camera interview format creates a unified
message and demonstrates how this representation of "dialogue" and exchange could be
used towards explicit ideological ends, with Rather representing both the ability of the
press to expose injustice, the possibility of American support, and the liaison for the
American people to gain access to the needy.

interaction between filmmaker and social actor where both are present and visible may give the impression of 'dialogue.'"[52] He concludes that this "form of exchange might be termed 'pseudo-dialogue' since the interview format prohibits full reciprocity or equity between the participants."[53] In his list of examples, he includes "the types of discussions conducted by Barbara Walters or Bill Moyers on American television."[54] Earlier in the chapter he refers to the methods used in Ted Koppel's *Nightline* as evidence of the ways in which the interviewer's power over the interviewee and interview context are used in service of "constructing a good program."[55] In both of these examples, Nichols uses television as a limit case to suggest the extreme "control" of televisual modes of representation and the creation of an "impression… that disguises the degree to which such exchanges are, in fact, highly formalized."[56] And yet the "formalization" of the interview is precisely what enables this representation to circulate and operate within the narrative and commercial economies of television.

The conventional form of appearance of a dialogical interview dramatizes the "interaction" exchange, the interview-process, and the various "styles" and personalities of different interviewers and interview subjects. The narrative-character as well as the content-character of the interview overshadows the ways in which the conventional formal operations of the interview structure a relation between the viewer and the

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[52] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 52
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 46.
[56] Ibid., 52.

television text.[57] The conventional editing of shot-reverse shot "sutures" the viewer into the storyline.[58] The jockeying of the viewer's point of view through the editing serves to produce a representation of an exchange, understood as such. Using these narrative techniques, television "conversations" draw viewers into a dramatic exchange and enable the content of each "interview" to be emphasized and fetishized. In a dialogical interview, the establishment of the scene of the interview naturalizes and coheres the wide range of effects and statements that are produced. Standardizing this context of conversation, the shot-reverse shot conventions, and, in particular, the framing that isolates each participant, situate the viewer as the consumer of unique moments. The dialogical interview delivers recognizable condensations that are contextualized. Not "a story from nowhere," the interview delivers displays of affect such as anger, shame, or tears that emphasize the role of the program and the particular correspondent that elicit them.[59] In this way, the interviewing style of each correspondent on *60 Minutes* is significant. Wallace's directness and incredulity and Reasoner's sympathy are crucial to the production of recognizable modes of articulation like the apology or confession.

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[57] The subject of television "news" is always television itself, displaying its ability to bring the news to the viewer. Margaret Morse, "Personality and Credibility," 56-65; and Mary Ann Doane, "Information Crisis Catastrophe," 225.

[58] For Stephen Heath's conceptualization of suture from which this description is drawn, see "Narrative Space," 379-420. Bill Nichols argues that the operations of the shot-reverse-shot are "necessary" to place the viewer in a relation of subjective attachment while "overhearing and watching the exchange between interviewer and interviewee." Bill Nichols *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991): 54.

[59] Christian Metz, "Story/Discourse (A Note on Two Kinds of Voyeurism)," in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982) 95.

Dramatic crystallizations of content are experienced as the "gotcha" moment in an interview scene. Akin to what has been called the "money shot" in pornography, in an interview, these are provoked by the interviewer and shared with the viewer as a kind of narrative pleasure, the pay-off of the interview experienced as a story.[60] The audio and image tracks of the "gotcha" moment work together to signify the importance of these televisual events. The meaning of the words spoken is as crucial as the visual registration of an emotion such as surprise, sadness, or relief. Without the prompting of the interviewer, these revelations could not be produced. And even more significantly, the time spent conducting the dialogical interview in order to produce such statements is the necessary pre-condition for such eruptions to happen. In these climactic moments, the correspondent and, by extension, the program and the viewer are active and constituent partners in the production of this "effect" at the same time that they are consumers. The "over the shoulder" shots are especially effective in establishing the voyeuristic dynamic. Situating the viewer right behind the correspondent, the camera position places the correspondent in half the frame and allows the viewer the other half. This framing emphasizes how these utterances are made available through the form of an interview and the mediation of a correspondent. The interview content and the formal construction of the event are inseparable. The representation of discourse operates as a product in itself, recorded and reified as both congealed labor and content. But the regularized movement back and forth between the different shots activates the viewer's sense of involvement and engagement, simultaneously erasing the sense of the

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[60] Linda Williams, "Fetishism and Hard Core: Marx, Freud and the Money Shot," in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 93-119. Interestingly enough, Williams argues that the first "come shot" appeared in the film *Deep Throat* (1972); in the same year as the film's release, then *Washington Post* editor Howard Simons assigned a Watergate informant the pseudonym "Deep Throat."

interview as a construction and conditioning the sense of the interview as an event or

story.[61] Providing dramatic coherence and temporal unity, shot-reverse shot editing

normalizes the interview context and highlights the unique status of these exchanges

within each interview. As a result, these speech events are represented as having a

particular immediacy and directness and thus value within the televisual economy.

The signature *60 Minutes* interview is defined as an event produced for a particular

segment. Providing the dramatic culmination of each story, the interview's broadcast

signifies the realization of the interview as an object of exchange. And yet these objects

are also excerpted in ways that enable them to be used in the opening preview sequence

of "snapshots" that introduces every episode. An extended example of this sampling

was used in the episode "The Nixon Years" that aired three days after Nixon's

resignation on August 8, 1974. For that broadcast, the establishing teaser included six

clips from the nine segments that had been edited together for the broadcast. Framed

within the outline of the 60 Minutes "cover," Morley Safer, who is pictured seated by

Mike Wallace, introduces the episode:

> Tonight *60 Minutes* browses through some back issues for a personal look
> at the Nixon years. Close up glimpses of the man his family and the men
> around his presidency. For the next hour, the bitter and the sweet of the
> Nixon years as captured by the cameras of *60 Minutes.*

Beginning with images from the first broadcast's observational footage of Nixon

watching the convention returns, the rest of the clips in this opening feature short

sections from interviews with Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Tricia Nixon, John and Martha

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[61] Christian Metz, "Story/Discourse," 91-92.

Mitchell, and John Erlichman. Punctuated by the signature stopwatch, the images from all of these interviews are cropped to fit into the title mask. This results in a series of tightly cropped close-ups of the different interviewees speaking and one shot of Mike Wallace asking a question to John Erlichman. Without any narration between the shots, the first four interview fragments present interview statements without the questions that were posed; the last two pieces are more obviously edited sequences in which Mike Wallace's questions are audible. In each case, the statement presented is the culmination of the interview, the "money" shot from these previously aired segments. Visually and temporally condensed, this collection of snippets operates as both a teaser and an illustration of the commitment to interrogating Nixon's presidency that *60 Minutes* had demonstrated over the previous six years.

Running a total of 3 minutes and 52 seconds, this particular *60 Minutes* introduction is a minute and a half longer than the 2 minute and 30 second introduction that had become the standard for the program. Running over its usual measured introduction, this display of interview footage as "talking heads" illustrates how an interview can be measured and quantified—edited down to be re-used and re-circulated. The reappearance of the running stopwatch eight times in the opening sequence also underscores the interview's quantifiable value and mimics the rhythmic segmentation of commercials and short stories in other news broadcasts. In this way, the extended introduction displays the wealth of incisive footage *60 Minutes* had amassed, calling attention to the literal amount of airtime that it could fill from its archive.

A re-run show produced from previously produced segments, this timely episode demonstrated *60 Minutes'* ability to cash in on the work it had already produced. This episode highlighted the role of *60 Minutes'* correspondents and their formula in the production of candid utterances and historic moments.[62] The preview is capped by Morley Safer's announcement: "Those and other candid moments from the Nixon years is what *60 Minutes* is all about this evening." To a great degree, this episode also demonstrates how *60 Minutes* is "all about" its own historic importance as a forum for critical interrogation and public conversation.

Repeated from the introduction, the episode ends with a telling statement from "The Nominee," the only in-depth interview with Nixon that appeared on *60 Minutes* (discussed earlier in this chapter).[63] Preceded by a cutaway to Mike Wallace listening, a close-up on Nixon's face accompanies this revealing statement:

> Some public men are destined to be loved and other public men are destined to be disliked. But the most important thing about a public man is not whether he is loved or disliked, but whether he is respected, and I hope to restore respect to the presidency.

In the context of this episode, this comment provides a telling coda for the reduction of Nixon's career to the controversies associated with the fraud, secrecy, and abuses of

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[62] "Moments are the elements of profit." "Reports of the Inspectors of Factories to Her Majesty's Principle Secretary of State for the Home Department for the Half Year Ending 30 April 1856," (London: George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode for her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1856), 56. Also cited in Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 352.
[63] In the segment "Upstairs at the Whitehouse with Tricia Nixon," Nixon was interviewed briefly as part of Morley Safer's walking tour of the private quarters of the Presidential family. A single camera captured Nixon standing beside the reporters while he described the role of his wife in organizing state dinners. The interview had an air of great informality, in particular because Nixon was not speaking about himself but his wife.

power revealed by Watergate. Mike Wallace's concluding statements provide an editorial gloss on that first interview: "That morning in his apartment, I thought I caught a glimpse behind the political façade of Richard Nixon and I admired what I saw. In his emotional farewell on Friday, we all caught another glimpse." Foregrounding a sense of himself as a witness and a participant in the representation of Nixon on television, Wallace connects the narrative of Nixon's presidency with these captured moments and the importance of the interview as a means to delve beneath appearances and "see" behind the public image of the President and other social actors. In this way, Wallace's final words highlight *60 Minutes'* role in the production of the story of "how the greatest political comeback turned into America's greatest political disgrace." The episode also charts the development of the program's hostility to Nixon. Combined, Wallace and Nixon's final lines serve to confirm the narrative that *60 Minutes* had helped to chart and create; but they also assert the significance of this crisis of political legitimacy.

This episode displays the consistency with which *60 Minutes'* was/is able to elicit sincerity through its dialogical approach to political and social content. Highlighting the questions of its correspondents as well as the answers of the interviewees, *60 Minutes* presents itself as leading the way with its progressive and rational approach to publicizing controversy, corruption, and dishonesty. The recognizability of the program's interview formula helps to establish *60 Minutes* as "hard-hitting" and critical. Alternating between anchor introductions and short excerpts of interviews, the episode presents and represents the program's willingness to go behind the scenes, to ask "the hard questions," and to be direct. Revealing the discursive aspects of the means of

production for these historic moments, *60 Minutes* advertises its role in the construction of the stories and knowledge it produces. This reflexive stance is also exhibited in the show's early willingness to be self-critical, soliciting responses from viewers, and reading excerpted portions of unsympathetic letters on the program.[64] All of these "dialogical" aspects emphasize *60 Minutes'* willingness to represent and contribute to national debates. The conventionalized dialogical interview further enables representations of critical exchange to circulate smoothly within the commercial economy of television.

IV. Commodities That Speak: 60 *Minutes* & *The Nixon Interviews*

On Sunday May 1, 1977, *60 Minutes* began with a segment about the historic television interview of the former President Richard Nixon by David Frost, the talk show host and media personality/investor. Three years after the "The Nixon Years" episode, the interview between Frost and Nixon became the vehicle through which Nixon returned to national attention and the *60 Minutes* spotlight. Following the signature stopwatch, Mike Wallace addresses the viewer:

> Three days from now, the long awaited Nixon Frost interviews begin with the former President's answers to Frost's questions about Watergate. What was the deal between the two, how much money? And

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[64] Perhaps the best example of this is "Looking at *60 Minutes*," an entire episode dedicated to answering critics of the program's investigative reporting techniques. This episode aired on September 27, 1981. It features a group discussion/interview in which Mike Wallace, Don Hewitt, two media critics, and two network executives watch and analyze a number of episodes together. The footage from three cameras is used to capture the debate that ensues. See Axel Madsen, *60 Minutes: The Power and the Politics pf America's Most Popular TV News Show* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1984), 202-207.

why are none of the networks carrying the broadcasts? That's our lead story tonight.

An emblematic example of how an interview encounter itself became a news-story, this segment also highlights the emergence of the interview as a commodity. *The Nixon Interviews* became the most recognizable of television interviews in the 1970s, simultaneously the most stunning example of the development of the interview as a means of literally capitalizing on notoriety and celebrity and an illustration of the dominant formal conventions of a television interview. But this segment on *60 Minutes* offers an expanded view of the form of television interviews and the context in which such a "deal" could happen, in which an interview could come to be treated as a commodity and command the price of $600,000.

When the "Nixon/Frost" segment aired on May 1977, *60 Minutes* had already established itself as a program known for its "investigative" stories and its signature "news-making" interviews.[65] Framed by Mike Wallace's narration and short interview scenes, this segment centers on Wallace's interview with Frost, recorded during the taping of *The Nixon Interviews.* An example of a dialogical interview, the event of "sitting down with Frost" to "get" a story not only provides a centerpiece, but it also furnishes a logic for the presentation and edit of the storyline. The interview between Wallace and Frost organizes how the "story" unfolds, but other dialogical interviews with network and advertising executives fill out the story.

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[65]This segment is followed by re-runs of segments that had originally aired in 1976 and 1974 respectively.

The central interview with Frost mimics the very sort of exchange and kind of stonewalling that was expected of Nixon. And Frost's reticence to reveal the exact terms of his deal with Nixon underscores the association of the television interview with a public mode of confession. In the cheeky exchange between Frost and Wallace that opens the segment, Wallace asks Frost how he will handle it if Nixon stonewalls him. Frost states that he hopes for "a cascade of candor" from Nixon. Accompanied by a medium close-up of his face, Wallace responds to this statement by repeating the phrase in incredulous disbelief, "a cascade of candor is what you expect from Richard Nixon?" A classic example of the shot-reverse shot formula for the depiction of a dialogical interview, the next shot frames Frost in a tighter close-up. Looking off-screen "towards" Wallace, Frost states: "No, it's just a phrase I thought would appeal to you." With this comment, Frost dismisses any suggestion that he is expecting Nixon to divulge anything direct or sincere without Frost's prompting, but it also registers Frost's knowledge of Wallace's reputation as a skeptical interviewer. On one level, Frost's articulation of this "hope" locates the segment and Wallace's interview with Frost in relation to the content of *The Nixon Interviews* through a structure of disavowal. But more than anything, it underscores the importance of the interviewer in the production of candor. The rest of the segment is built on that assumption and as a result, it demonstrates how the television interview is a form through which critique becomes enacted, represented, and commodified.

The problem of Nixon's credibility and candor serve as a prologue for the "real" story: the economics of the deal *behind* the Frost Nixon interviews. "Nixon/Frost" exposes the financial speculation about *The Nixon Interviews*, exploring how this interview came to

be treated as a thing to be bought and sold, evaluated and circulated as a particular kind of commodity. In his voice-over, Wallace reveals that Irving "Swifty" Lazar, Nixon's agent, refused to be interviewed for the *60 Minutes* segment. But not having this interview provides the pretext for Wallace to interview the network executives that Lazar had approached and a representative from one of the largest advertising agencies in charge of buying television time for corporate advertisers. Relying on shot-reverse shot editing, these supplemental dialogical interviews work together to foreground *60 Minutes'* ability to investigate behind the scenes of American commercial television and the special status of a Presidential interview on American commercial television.

Through interviews with Richard Salant, president of CBS, Herb Schlosser, the president of NBC, and an advertising executive at McCaffrey & McCall, the "Nixon/ Frost" segment reveals some of the intricacies of how commercial networks make decisions about their programs and how money factors into what they do and do not air. NBC declined to show the interviews because they could not afford them. ABC refused out of principle, having a policy against paying for interviews, also known as "checkbook journalism." For the ad agency, *The Nixon Interviews* represented "a bad media buy"—something that would not be nearly as interesting "as an interview with Attila the Hun." These interviews posed too much risk for any company that wanted to reach as many viewers as possible by buying time to broadcast a commercial.

In keeping with *60 Minutes'*s sense of itself as self-critical, the interview with Salant is the most extensive. Interviewing his own boss, Wallace asks Salant why CBS allowed

Frost to acquire these historic interviews.[66] For Salant, *The Nixon Interviews* represent a

different kind of risk for CBS, one that interferes with their profit-producing model—

associated not only with the production and maintenance of credibility and quality but

actual production costs. Thus, in the end, David Frost and his own producers undertook

the financial risk themselves. This wager meant that Frost would end up netting most

of the profits; but in the months and days before the broadcast, it was unclear how it

would turn out.[67]

The "Nixon/Frost" segment reveals how *60 Minutes* differentiated itself from the other

networks and located itself with respect to the payment of subjects. At the time of this

episode's airing, CBS did not have an explicit policy about "checkbook journalism;"

rather, it maintained a policy about only airing programs that it had produced. This

was a cost-saving measure, first and foremost, in addition to being a way to ensure

editorial control.[68] At this point in 1977, the costliness of news programs for television

networks stemmed from the expenses incurred by maintaining offices with

correspondents all over the world. *60 Minutes* offered another model that was more cost-

effective. The program relied on "in house" production teams to find stories that often

concerned domestic topics. The production costs of the interview-based segments are

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[66] Another version of the story suggests that David Frost outbid CBS for the interviews and that this segment with Mike Wallace was an effort to scoop Frost's scooping of the network.

[67] Mike Wallace's concluding remarks indicate that on top of his $600,000 fee, 10 % of the profits from the interviews went to Nixon. This brought the total amount netted by Nixon to over a million dollars.

[68] Patricia Zimmerman, "Independent Documentary Producers and the American Television Networks," *Screen 22*, no. 4 (1981): 43-53. The term checkbook journalism is conveniently distinct from commercial journalism, in which the products of investigation are used to generate income for the publisher/broadcaster. It refers to the means used to obtain information for a story by a journalist or team of journalists who have access to individual and/or institutional resources and backing.

relatively low in comparison to other sorts of programming (especially fiction programming). The only salaries for each of the segments is paid to those on staff: the reporters, researchers, producers, and production staff (camera, sound, and lighting technicians as well as editors). This model of profitability does not include having to pay the subjects of the many interviews that constitute each segment. Checkbook journalism is also looked down upon because the financial incentive casts doubt upon the integrity of the interviewees and the "objectivity" of their comments.

By focusing on this aspect of *The Nixon Interviews, 60 Minutes* exposes the complexity of the market context that it navigates. In so doing, it presents itself and its practices as somewhat above the financial fray. And yet by anchoring the segment around an interview with Frost on the eve of taping, the segment also enacts its own form of financial and cultural speculation. This episode of *60 Minutes* serves to "scoop" Frost's interview event, demonstrating the pre-eminence and significance of the location of *60 Minutes* at the beginning of the workweek. The program had only been situated in its Sunday 7pm slot the year before, but this segment shows how opportune the location is, anchoring the television week by both ending the weekend and framing the work week that was about to begin.[69] To a great degree, *60 Minutes* hit its stride—becoming what it continues to be, a gold standard, profit-producing machine, and signature asset for CBS—only when it found the "correct" position in the schedule, a position that located it in relation to the correct audience and to the rest of the schedule. Nearing its 10th

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[69] Nick Browne, "The Political Economy of the Television *(Super)* Text*," Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9 (Summer 1984): 183-95. Following Nick Browne's important analysis of the schedule as a defining character of the television text, this episode illustrates the significance of the "schedule" in the very operations and value of any given show.

anniversary at the time of the Frost interview, the program occupied a pre-eminent

position, one that allowed it to comment on other television shows and to situate itself

as distinct from other news and talk shows. In addition, this episode aired right around

the time that the program reached the top 20 according to Nielsen ratings.[70]

The "Nixon/Frost" segment on *60 Minutes* offers a view into the status of interviews in

the economy of the television industry. This segment also offers a picture of how the

interview functions in relation to the production and circulation of celebrity and the

creation of value and profit on television. Staging the difference between checkbook

journalism and the value production in which *60 Minutes* engaged, the segment provides

a look into a paid-celebrity/public figure interview as a limit-case. The interview

appears as a means for the production of content, but also as a thing, a commodity, a

bearer of value in itself that carries an exchange value, for the network and program, as

well as for advertisers. *60 Minutes'* segment illustrates how *The Nixon Interviews* had an

explicit exchange value that could be translated into the universal equivalent of money

for the interview subject as well as for the interviewer.

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[70] The history of *60 Minutes'* popularity can be traced through its Nielsen Rankings that
are calculated every year. Apart from the premiere episode that aired in September,
every episode that I examine here aired during what is called "sweeps"—April and May
when the rankings of prime time programming are estimated. In May 1977, *60 Minutes*
finished in the Nielsen Top 20 for the first time. It finished in the Nielsen Top 10 in
May 1978, and hit number one in the Nielsen rankings in May of 1980. It remained in
the top 10 from 1983 through 1993. Frank Coffey, *60 Minutes: 25 Years*, 235-237.
    Interestingly, 2008-2009 was the most successful season that *60 Minutes* had
since its 2001-2002 season in terms of averaging 14.29 viewers a program (it averaged
14.85m in that season). It also earned its highest rank in the Nielsen ratings since
1999-2000 season. Conjectures can be made about the significance of the Presidential
interview with Barack Obama and other news-maker interviews that worked to
counter-act industry trends (in terms of the declining viewership for news
programming on television). "CBS Press Release," May 28, 2009.

The more commonplace version of the interview on *60 Minutes* and other talk shows, news programs, and documentaries does not entail paying the subject of the interview. This non-payment of labor contributes to the way in which the show's production costs remain low. But the non-payment of interviewees also ensures the use value of the program in terms of the "credibility" of the information revealed.[71] An example of an unpaid interview, the 60 *Minutes'* segment demonstrates the television interview's complex admixture of what Pierre Bourdieu calls "cultural capital" and financial capital.[72] In the case of *60 Minutes,* its primary source of cultural capital is its reputation as being critical and direct, unsullied by the taint of paying its subjects. But the cultural capital of *60 Minutes* is translated into real capital as a result of the program's ability to sell airtime to advertisers on account of its ability to garner an audience, to generate publicity for itself and its interviewees. Unpaid, Frost's participation in the *60 Minutes* interview was both an effort to associate himself with the value accorded to *60 Minutes* derived from its integrity and to acquire some publicity for his own program. In the case of *The Nixon Interviews,* both Frost and Nixon stood to gain both cultural capital and payment. The "Nixon/Frost" segment exposes aspects of this process whereby surplus value is produced, revealing the ways in which the problem of value remains crucial to the interview as a means of production and an object of exchange.

For Marx, there are three kinds of value that a commodity can have, use value, value, and exchange value. "Nixon/Frost" explores how the exchange value of an interview is

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[71] This debate about paying for interviews continues. See Michael Cieply and Ben Sisario, "Film on Abu Ghraib Puts Focus on Paid Interviews," *New York Times,* April 26, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/26/movies/26morris.html.
[72] See Pierre Bourdieu, "The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods," in *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 74–111.

both assessed and assumed—and how this is predicated on Nixon being a known quantity, conceived of as a commodity. For the advertisers and networks, an interview with Nixon is a quantity already, one that could be assessed before the interview was completed. This personification of the interview is part of the mystification and the fetishism of the truth content involved in the interview-work and presented in the interview-form. Relying on the labor theory of value, however, we can see that the "truth" of any given interview is not the measure of its exchangeable value. Extracted from a process, what counts as "truth" in an interview is a created product, and this product is treated by the television industry as comparable to its other products. Thus, the edited version of a television interview that appears during a program exists in a context in which one interview can be substituted for another—that is, as one segment of TV among numerous other segments, it can take the place of another interview within the television schedule. It is in this way that it acquires exchange value as a commodity.[73]

For Marx, value is distinct from the exchange and use value. The exchange value of an interview comes from the socially necessary labor time needed to produce it, and this is the cumulative amount of labor, not just the labor of a single subject (in this case, of the interviewer or the interviewee). Yet this is what the form of appearance of an interview obscures. Television interviews appear to derive "value" from the content they produce as if this content is independent of any labor of production. That labor is effaced in favor of emphasizing instead the use to which news "content" can be put. Such use

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[73] Marx explains that "this form of manifestation is exchange-value, and the commodity never has this form when looked at in isolation, but only when it is in a value-relation or an exchange relation with a second commodity of a different kind." Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 152.

determines the exchange value that is calculated in terms of money, which is established to operate as a universal equivalent and thus appears to be the concrete and obvious "incarnation" of an interview's value. But this is an abstraction, the expression and representation of a process in which the labor and time taken to produce the interview is reified and transformed into something that can be exchanged.[74] With formal conventions for TV interviews set in place, such reification is possible, and so one television interview begins to stand in relation to the whole range of possible interviews. And so, in turn, the commodity status of an interview begins to define and shape the form.[75]

Marx describes this kind of mystification of value as a function and expression of commodity fetishism and personification. In fetishism, the commodity appears as a self-contained and intrinsically desirable thing—divorced from the labor, social relations, and time that were necessary to make it.[76] In personification, value itself appears to produce value; in other words, commodities appear as capital personified, and they seem to have an inherent value by virtue of simply being themselves.[77] These descriptions of the dynamics by which the commodity form disguises its origins help to explain the way in which the duration of an exchange recorded in a television interview can come to be treated as an object and a component-part of a narrative sequence. As a result of this process of production/representation, the interview appears as the reified and abstracted

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[74] Marx writes "commodities possess an objective character as values only in so far as they are all expressions of an identical social substance, human labour, that their objective character as values is therefore purely social." Ibid., 138-139

[75] Marx explains that the commodities' "objective character as values… can only appear in the social relation between commodity and commodity" Ibid.

[76] Ibid., 168-169.

[77] Karl Marx, *Capital Volume 3*, trans. David Fernbach (New York: Penguin Classics, 1991), 969.

expression of an individual personality or public figure rather than the product of the socially necessary labor time that produces the interview and creates its exchange value. Or, to use Marx's terms, on *60 Minutes*, the products of "subjective" labor processes (recorded interviews) "enter as means of production into new labor processes," and as a result "they lose their character of being products and function only as objective factors contributing to living labor."[78]

This process of commodification is well illustrated by the actual Richard Nixon interview with David Frost, as this is a prime example of a dialogical interview that dramatizes the very process of the interview even as it operates as an event-commodity and as a "celebrity" vehicle and portrait. Over forty-five million viewers watched the premiere episode of the interview between Frost and Nixon on May 4, 1977. Five programs of ninety minutes each were culled from over twelve days of conversation that took place in March of 1977 between David Frost and Richard Nixon. These interviews were edited and introduced by Frost and presented over four weeks in May and a final evening in September of 1977. *The Nixon Interviews*, as they were called, rely on the shot-reverse shot format to present this historic exchange. For Nixon, the interview represented an "opportunity to state my side," allowing him to lay out the stories behind his accomplishments as President, as well as to assert his version of the sequence of events around Watergate and the other scandals that led to his eventual resignation in 1974. For Frost, it was a tremendous opportunity to break through the public silence

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[78] Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 289.

that Nixon had observed since leaving office, to boost his own profile, and to make a lot of money.[79]

In his introductions to each segment, Frost emphasizes how the interview form and situation are genuine and unrehearsed. Since the program used a variant of live and direct access, Nixon did not know the questions in advance, had no control "over content or editing," and did not carry any notes. To a great degree, these concessions on Nixon's part represent an attempt to produce the type of immediacy that could counteract the negative associations generated by Frost's payment of Nixon. Yet the form itself is a commercial one. The question and answer format provide for easy and apparently "natural" breaks that naturalize both the flow of commercials and the title sequences that frame each segment, thereby ensuring the smooth operation of U.S. television's profit and meaning-making system. Short voice-over introductions accompany footage that contextualizes some of the questions and topics at the introduction of every "episode"—but most segments include shots of Frost as he asks his questions to Nixon. As with other dialogical interviews, the cutaways to Frost disguise the edits that tighten the presentation of the revealing conversational exchange, reinforcing the sense of the interview as a dramatic event produced explicitly for a viewing public. In the case of *The Nixon Interviews*, the "public" viewers are hailed as those invited to pass judgment on Nixon.

Apart from the b-roll footage used to introduce each segment, the program is almost entirely comprised of footage from the interviews. However, this formula is interrupted

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[79] "The Nation: David Can Be a Goliath," *Time Magazine*, May 9, 1977.

when Nixon is asked to describe how he felt when he left the White House after resigning. At this point in the program, Nixon's statements are used to provide an "inside" or alternate commentary for the stock news footage that had circulated widely and was extremely familiar to the viewers. Offering particular "insight" and perspective, the interview testimony here functions as the subjective description of a concrete scene that has been captured on film and documented visually. In contrast, most of the rest of Nixon's utterances produced within the context of the exchange with David Frost are representations of what has not been seen, dramatic material that is dialogical and discursive in character and corroborated visually.

The pronounced tension that bubbles throughout the proceedings concerns the question of the role of the press. This is broached explicitly in the fourth episode entitled, "The Final Days," in a vociferous and heated exchange between the two of them in which they interrupt each other often. In a significant way, Frost's presence and his interventions and interruptions of Nixon instantiate the power and importance of the press. In this way, the unfolding of the interview is as important as the "statements" that it produces. The "moments" are earned by Frost's visible labor and scrutiny. Frequent cutaways shots capture Frost's stone-like countenance, taut with the tension of trying to remain expressionless. Nixon's mini-monologues, while fascinating, are neither dramatic nor revealing; they verge on informational bombast. Instead, it is the dialogical and truly fractious exchanges that are productive of the "novelty" required to make "good" television.

This is apparent from the very beginning of the series. Framed as the context for the

extraction of a confession, the site and opportunity to watch Nixon confess, the first

episode culminates in a discussion of Watergate.[80] David Frost, while a questioner, is

neither an interrogator nor a silent figure. Rather, he is a partner in the production of

Nixon's answers. Presented with the same sort of mid-range shots that are deployed for

60 Minutes correspondents, Frost is accorded a respectful distance that underscores his

importance as a member of the press and self-appointed representative of the public. In

the final minutes of that first episode, Frost is actually posed a question *by* Nixon.

Frost's description of what he imagines the audience wants to hear prompts Nixon's

series of statements about how and who he "let down" in his dealings with the

Watergate fiasco. The sequence ends with an extended close-up of Nixon's face after he

finishes speaking.

The visual record of an interview subject has a dual function in the ideological

operations of the interview; it is an index of presence and candor, which are related but

not synonymous. As Margaret Morse writes, "subjective" journalism relies on the

construction of credibility and the appearance of sincerity. Sincerity is the parity

between the truth content of an enunciation and the intentions of an enunciator. But

the sign of sincerity—its test and evidence—relies on congruence between facial

expression and speech (or, in other words, a sense of presence that then yields a belief in

candor). The television interview stages the coordination of the appearance and speech

of an interviewee, making available a relationship between words and images that can be

scrutinized and assessed for "credibility" and "sincerity." Seen in this way, the interview

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[80] At one point, Nixon responds to a question from Frost by saying, "I am responding here, in effect, under oath." In Nixon's utterance, "here" refers to both the space and time that he shares with Frost during the interview and the space and time that the interview would occupy on television when the interview was broadcast.

appears as the site of great critical potential. But within the context of American television, this is also the site of financial speculation (in the case of *The Nixon Interviews*) and capital investment (in the case of *60 Minutes*).

As this example makes clear, across the television schedule, the normalization of the form of the dialogical interview allows the interview to appear as simply a content delivery device for a public figure or celebrity, who is understood as a particular sort of commodity: something or someone worthy of purchase and investment. But the fascinating aspect of the dialogical television interview in this case is that it places the social character of the "work" of celebrity on display. On *60 Minutes*, dialogical interviews present part of the labor time that a personality, celebrity, or political figure/leader has to expend in order to maintain their value. This labor is circumscribed as relational, expended only in the context of a filmed conversation with a representative of the media. These dialogical interviews produce a "profile," not just as another image, but as a form that connects their star images with their private or real selves through the intermediary of a correspondent and the medium of television itself.[81] As such, the circulation and broadcast of these interviews not only benefits the celebrities and correspondents, it also contributes to the creation of surplus value for the program and the network.

The formal distinction of the correspondent from the interviewees matches the command that the correspondent has over the story and the interview subject. It also offers a visual manifestation of critical "distance." The shots of the correspondent

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[81] Richard Dyer, "Introduction," in *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1-12.

listening as well as asking questions represent the correspondent "at work," engaged in a social performance and the cognitive labor that culminates in a product.[82] This visible "work" solidifies the sense of the correspondent as a public figure at the same time that it presents visual and auditory proof of the speech and presence of the subject. It is a partial record of the necessary labor time needed to produce the value of the interview-product, reliant on the discursive labor of both the interviewer and interviewee.

Not merely the visual representation of one person speaking, the dialogical interview records the work of at least two people in front of a camera. Not hiding the site or source of enunciation, these representations of conversation emphasize the "real" character of the speakers, suggesting that they are performing and appearing as themselves and that they are participating in an exchange that is "genuine" in the sense of being non-scripted. In doing so, the dialogical interview begins to take shape as something quite revealing of a new form of reification of speech, identity, experience, and affect produced through the depiction of a social relation and discursive exchange. Margaret Morse writes:

> Face-to-face conversation seems more real than objective news stories; it is also subject to different truth conditions: since discourse is not representation—a mode of the real—but an act in reality itself, the news as discourse enjoys a different linguistic and, by implication, ontological status. The referent of discourse is itself; its own time, place, and subjects are its "reality." Thus, it is not subject to the same verification as the referent of a story or even of a photograph, a represented world. Face-to-face conversation need not match or resemble "reality"—it is reality.[83]

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[82] See Paolo Virno, *The Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004) and Christian Marazzi, *Capital and Language: From the New Economy to the War Economy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008).
[83] Margaret Morse, "Personality and Credibility," 61.

Because the interview relies on this basic formal framework for its value within the televisual economy, the dialogical interview makes visible the way in which the discursive becomes complexly articulated with the celebration of the proliferation of "talk" and its commodification.

VII. CONCLUSION: The Value-Form of the Interview

The television interview is a media object. It is the representation and result of speech acts by different people that are recorded; these sounds and images are then edited and broadcast through the technological and cultural medium of television. The television interview is also the product of the labor of an interviewer, interviewee, camera-operators, editors, producers, gaffers, make-up artists, and production assistants. Together, all of this labor results in a product that appears independent, self-contained, and interchangeable with other such products, though it is actually extracted and abstracted from a whole web of social relations. The form of appearance of a commodity obscures these relations of production, the labor that produces it, and the labor power that creates its value. The development of the dialogical television interview as a commodity form makes some of this labor visible—but it also represents a particular conceptualization of financial and productive activity, one that is tied up in the representation of debate and critical dialogue. Through the dialogical interview, the social and relational character of interview-work is made available and acquires use and exchange value. The material form enables these television interviews to circulate as

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commodities, conditioned by the social mediations of labor and time.[84] As Marx writes, "the process of exchange gives to the commodity which it has converted into money not its value but its value form."[85] Exploring how the value-form of the interview is distinct from but related to its value is crucial to understanding the dominance of the paradigm of discourse and dialogue that is associated with the social and political utility of the press and the commodification of critique.[86]

All the *60 Minutes'* segments that I have discussed and *The Nixon Interviews* illustrate how the interrelation between the form and content enables the interview to circulate as a commodity. The proliferation of the interview form on American television demonstrates the process by which the experience, speech, and opinions of particular individuals come to acquire exchange value. This exchange value is directly related to the construction of the appearance of use value, the process whereby presence and discursive labor are shown to be worthy of attention and time.[87] "Nixon/Frost" emphasizes the unique character of the interview as a commodity with an exchange value in itself and how, as such, it is seen to be worth money—to be subject to a valorization process on the market whereby it is quantified in terms of an abstraction. The segment presents the interview as both a commodity and a means of production, as both the product of a social exchange and the expression of an individual. It is both singular and dialogical—the representation of a social relation between two individuals

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[84] Moishe Postone, "Critique and Historical Transformation," *Historical Materialism*, volume 12:3 (2004): 53-72.
[85] Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 184-185.
[86] Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London: Verso, 2005).
[87] Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 175.

that is necessarily dialogical, but only in so far as the interviewer's skill is displayed in order to extract information from another individual.

The naturalization and regularization of a commodity's form of appearance is the pre-condition for turning the subjective into an object of exchange.[88] With the establishment of a regularity for its form of appearance, the dialogical interview then begins to take on an exchange value, a potential price not just as the labor of the "journalist" but for the subject of the interview. This corresponds to the prevalence of the dialogical interview-form for the presentation and circulation of celebrities as personalities distinct from their star-images[89] or public performances.[90] According to Marx, one characteristic of a commodity is that its value appears to be an objective property of that article. In this way, the television interview itself represents the process by which the subjective is translated into an objective exchangeable thing. But the dialogical interview-form demonstrates how the interviewee (or a celebrity) is not simply a commodity.[91] Rather, the very interaction between the celebrity and another representative of the press becomes the value-form through which a celebrity could be commodified and circulated.[92] The dialogical interview exhibits "the formation of value

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[88] Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 188.
[89] Richard Dyer, "Introduction," in *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1-12.
[90] Barry King, "The Star and The Commodity: Notes Towards a Performance Theory of Stardom," *Cultural Studies* 1, no. 2 (1987): 153-158.
[91] Barry King, "Articulating Stardom," in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. Christine Gledhill (New York: Routledge, 1991), 167-182.
[92] Barry King, "Star, Celebrity, and the Money Form," *Velvet Light Trap* 65 (Spring 2010): 13.

out of what appears to be the natural values of a person."[93] Thus, the dialogical

interview makes this process available for analysis.

The interview's formal uniformity and predictability make it possible for this means of

production to circulate as a commodity. The visual and audio conventions of the form

operate in a way that emphasizes novelty, directness, and immediacy on the level of

speech and performance, foregrounding the "content" and information that the

interview subject and the interviewer appear to produce. But the formal conventions of

the interview have a meaning and significance in and above the content that they

present. Fitting into the established flow and segmentation of American television, the

interview's value is grounded in the simultaneity of image and audio and the

representation of the co-presence between an interviewer and interviewee.[94] In addition,

the interview presents a particular version of the ideological operations associated with

concealing the means of production and the socially necessary labor time needed to

produce an object of exchange (or in this case, a television segment). In a television

interview, the cognitive labor of the personified commodities is revealed, whereas the

material labor involved in the production of the interview as a media object itself

remains unrepresented. To a great degree, this dialectic of visibility and invisibility

calls attention to the political valence accorded to dialogue and discourse that the

interview evidences and reproduces.

The filmed interview as employed on television also evidences an approach to the

presentation and organization of labor based on the measurement, structuring, and

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[93] King, "Star, Celebrity, and the Money Form," 11.
[94] King, "The Star and the Commodity," 154.

domination of time. Represented as an exchange between two people, an interview's

form thus partakes in and augments the apparent dialogism, to use M. M. Bakhtin's

term, of the textual system of American television itself.[95] This is a system that is based

on the selling of time even as this temporal commodification is effaced by TV's sense of

immediacy and presence (precisely the sense of immediacy and presence produced and

promoted by the interview.) The hierarchy of the appearance of the different kinds of

labor in an interview is part of what distinguishes the operations of one interview from

another and its ideological function with respect to the construction and presentation of

various forms of value. Made explicit on *60 Minutes*, the dialogical interview is

constructed as an opportunity for the creation and dissemination of in-depth analysis

and critique.

In a hopeful moment in his book on television, Raymond Williams suggests that on

television:

> … a new medium seems evident: sustained and defined conversation,
> with a closeness of interaction that is made publicly available. Some of
> the best of this kind of discussion was developed in radio but television at
> times has added a real dimension to it: physical presence, attention,
> gesture and response which, are not merely spectacular or the devices of
> publicity but belong to sustained, defined and developed interaction, can

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[95] For Bakhtin, dialogism relates both to the fundamental "open orientation toward the listener and his answer in everyday dialogue and in rhetorical forms" and the simultaneous centripetal and centrifugal forces that are "brought to bear" on language, that connect every utterance to a multiplicity of other utterances and "socio-linguistic points of view." M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Michael Holquist, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 280, 272, 273. See also M. M. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel: Towards a Methodology for the Study of the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 3-40.

be, in their unity with the words, an experience that is significantly shared in some new ways.[96]

Williams does not develop this point. But it dovetails quite well with the way in which the representation of discourse on *60 Minutes* appears to extract value from the very characteristics that Williams enumerates: presence, attention, gesture, and the unity of words and image. But the abstraction of Williams' passage is symptomatic. Idealizing the possible forms of information, affect, and experience that television's production and construction of conversation might enable, Williams reproduces similar assumptions and associations about the political and critical possibilities of the representation of dialogue on television. The historically specific development of *60 Minutes*' dialogical interview offers an emblematic example of how this sort of "sustained and defined" conversation operated on American commercial television in the late 1960s and 70s. As a means of production and an object of exchange, the television interview has been tremendously productive, proliferating and normalizing the de-contextualization and reification of the utterances of individuals as an expression and representation of public opinion and experience.[97] But most importantly, this analysis has shown that the formal conventions developed to deploy the interview as a means for television's participation in a national conversation are crucial to the articulation of this politically progressive aspiration with the commodification of that same discourse.

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[96] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, 73.

[97] Foucault's elaboration of the confession as a model of how power is productive and discursive provides the foundation for this argument. See Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Edition, 1990). Television studies relies extensively on Foucault's notion of the confession for explanations of the proliferation of talk on television. My argument extends beyond the identification of power as productive and discursive. Discourse is now explicitly commodified, bought and sold, a form of labor that defines and colors all social relations and the very conception of social wealth. See Introduction pp. 12-13.

CHAPTER 3

The Personal is Political:

Ideology Critique and Group, Collective, and Collected Interview-Work

I. INTRODUCTION

Having considered the dialogical interview in the previous chapter on TV, I now turn to

the emergence of group interview-work in political documentary film in the 1960s and

1970s.[1] In this chapter, I differentiate between three different approaches to the

representation of more than one speaking subject. The group interview represents a

formation of multiple speaking subjects who may or may not have explicit connections

to one another. A collective interview, by distinction, involves multiple speaking

subjects who have more explicit connections and commitments to one another; the term

also refers to the process of collaborative production in which responsibility and

authorship is shared between the subjects and the filmmakers. Finally, collected

interview-work refers to the aggregation of a series of individual interviews within a

film or documentary project. I place all three types of interviews under the term group

interview-work in order to distinguish these uses of the interview from the deployment

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[1] There are many interesting examples of the "group interview" on television. In contrast, this chapter focuses on the political and ideological possibilities of group interview-work as a form that does more than affirm speaking as a political act. In these films, group interview-work is deployed to overcome the limitations of relying on individual personal experience and perspectives to investigate broad social issues.

of the interview used to identify individuals, to produce and circulate representations of personalities or celebrities.

With the advent of the CP-16 camera and more mobile sync-sound recording during the 1960s, the possibility of significant experiments in sound recording and more flexible forms of the interview emerged.[2] These innovations were especially significant for filmmakers who were interested in challenging dominant ideas about gender and sexual identity. The interview form in general plays a significant role in these documentary films, but the films that were associated with feminist and gay liberation movements sought to represent social groups through presenting group interviews and groups of interviews. These films and their use of group interview-work foreground the way in which the interview in political or committed documentaries became identified with a form of consciousness raising and a critique of the operations of ideology. The student movements of the 60s and 70s intersected with the women's movement to bring the "first person to the foreground of social and cultural discourse," which spotlighted questions of gender equality and sexual freedoms in a way that highlighted the

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[2] This technology is quite different than what Fred Friendly called "The One Ton Pencil," the camera used for television production (see page 78). See Jean Rouch, "The Camera and Man," in *Cine-Ethnography*, ed. Steven Feld (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 35. See also Michael Uwemedimo's article in which he argues that the new technology pioneered by Jean Rouch coincided with this mobile form of filmmaking and that the film *Chronicle d'Un Ete* (1960)—made with Edgar Morin, a sociologist—demonstrates an early and extremely thorough experimentation with the form. Michael Uwemedimo, "Inventing the Interview: The Interrogatory Poetics of Jean Rouch," in *Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch*, ed. Joram ten Brink (London: Wallflower Press, 2007), 251-266. Bill Nichols also argues that portable sound technology made the emergence of what he calls the "interactive" mode of documentary possible, citing *Chronicle d'Un Ete* (1960) as the first example of this sort of film. Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 44.

connection between individual experience, autonomy, and activism.[3] As American social

movements coming out of 1960s' radicalism took a more cultural turn (aiming not only

at economic justice, American imperialism, and civil rights), issues within the private

sphere began to take more and more precedence. Interview-work is a site where this

new perspective on politics emerges.

The three films I am going to examine are Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Comizi D'Amore* (1963,

released in 1964), San Francisco Newsreel's *The Woman's Film* (1971), and Mariposa

Film Group's *Word is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives* (1977). All of these films aim at

representing and analyzing aspects of "the social" as it intersects with "the personal,"

specifically the role of gender and sexuality within social reproduction. And they

feature group, collectively made, and collections of interviews, respectively. The first is

an early *cinema-verite* documentary made by Pasolini in an effort to capture the

changing sexual mores in Italy; it features a series of interviews with various crowds of

people that Pasolini finds in public places. The second film is a collectively made

women's consciousness-raising film; it is comprised of interviews and testimony from

women who are speaking in the context of a consciousness-raising group and as part of

the women's movement. The third film is a collectively produced documentary that

aired on public television; it seeks to represent the variety of experiences of the gay and

lesbian communities of the 1970s through the aggregation of interviews with various

homosexual individuals and couples.

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[3] Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*
(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), x.

Pasolini's interviews represent a temporary group that forms in order to gather around the microphone. These groupings of individuals represent various classes, including the peasantry and the proletariat. These are contingent groups, crowds composed of people who happen to be outside or on the street in various locations. San Francisco Newsreel's film captures a self-selected group of women who work and organize together. The subjects of *The Woman's Film* understand themselves as a group, being actively engaged in facilitating consciousness-raising—and they are filmed by a group of female filmmakers, who are part of a larger politically committed film collective, San Francisco Newsreel. In the final film, like the first, the process of filmmaking and interviewing itself is a catalyst or agent for the creation of a new type of group. In *Word is Out*, the collection of individual interviews creates a representation of a group of people. This representation of American gays and lesbians constructs an image of collectivity at the same time that the process of production produces a "collective, in retrospect." In addition, the film incorporates many different modes of public screening and community involvement (both in editing and fundraising) that partly extend the collective responsibility and authorship of the film to parts of the gay community in San Francisco.[4]

Though it is not always represented as such, the documentary interview is a collaborative form, according to Thomas Waugh.[5] It is "interactive," a hallmark of the

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[4] Thomas Waugh, "Lesbian and Gay Documentary: Minority Self-Imaging, Oppositional Film Practice, and the Questions of Image Ethics," in *Image Ethics, the Moral and Legal Rights of Subjects in Documentary Film and Television*, ed. Larry Gross et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 259-265.

[5] Waugh writes "Beyond the fundamental character of collective authorship, the films under review show many techniques facilitating collaboration between author(s) and subject, of which the most important is more than familiar: the interview… The

type of documentary that Bill Nichols characterizes as being the result of an explicit exchange between the filmmaker and the subject.[6] By making this exchange visible and audible in a number of different ways, these documentary films use the interview's interactivity to extend the social character of this means of production, highlighting its political import.   In addition, by employing group interview-work, these documentary films demonstrate the way in which the interview stages a negotiation between an individual's opinions and experience and a sense of "the social" and structural (what constitutes the political).

Feminist and gay liberation movements in the 1970s and early 1980s were explicitly grounded in debates about the relation between the personal and the political—both about the significance of self-expression and about the circulation of experience generally—so, of course, the films that sought to document them focus on those questions.[7] As has been remarked by Julia Lesage and Barbara Martineau, many feminist

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interview has been re-invented by lesbian/gay-filmmakers. Or, rather re-invented by the "consciousness-raising" feminist films of the early seventies, it has been refined and shaped in new directions by the present film-makers." Waugh, "Lesbian and Gay Documentary," 260. Waugh also builds upon the notion of the interview as a collaborative performance in "Walking on Tippy Toes: Lesbian and Gay Liberation Documentary of the Post-Stonewall Era 1969-1984." Thomas Waugh, "Walking on Tippy Toes: Lesbian and Gay Liberation Documentary of the Post-Stonewall Era 1969-1984," in *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writing on Queer Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 251.
[6] Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 44-56.
[7] It is extremely interesting to note how this maxim has circulated since its "first" deployment in relation to consciousness raising groups. The problematic it names continues to be tied into questions of gender, sexuality, consciousness, the relation between speech and visibility, and between publicity and privacy. But absent of social movements that might offer a link to the history of struggles for gender and sexual liberation, the reiterations of this sentiment appear to license the cataloguing and enshrining of individuality and lifestyle choices. The maxim was meant to signal the consciousness-raising group's role as a bridge from the personal to the collective. But it has come to circulate as a truth statement, rather than the founding assumption for a

filmmakers turned to the interview format as an extension of the process of consciousness-raising, and they demonstrated the way in which the documentary and, with it, the filmed interview were particularly appropriate and useful tools for the articulation and expression of the way in which "the personal is political."[8] Establishing a politicized understanding of experience is crucial to these films as it was to the American women's movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. Gay filmmakers followed suit, and they modeled their own documentaries on the practices of collecting and presenting one interview after another as a form of "coming out," which, as Thomas Waugh has asserted, is the gay liberation movement's version of the personal is political.[9]

This chapter traces the development of the intersection between the representation of the collective and the group and the emergence of the notion that the personal is political through exploring its intersection with the interview as a filmed form. I do this for two reasons: to expose the ideological problematic of the interview form in general and to explore uses of the interview that are grounded in a critique of politics that are based on individual solutions. It is my contention that collective and collected interviews make visible the role of the interview as a means through which ideology is

collective activity or that polemical response to the dismissal of women's issues by male-dominated left organizations that it was. The reification of the phrase has allowed the historical context of its first emergence to be erased. And without that context, the crucial additional assertion that followed the axiom—"but there are no individual solutions"— has receded from prominence.

[8] Julia Lesage, "Feminist Documentary: Aesthetics and Politics," in *"Show Us Life": Toward a History and Aesthetics of Committed Documentary*, ed. Thomas Waugh (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 223-251. Barbara Halpern Martineau, "Talking About Our Lives and Experiences: Some Thoughts on Feminism, Documentary, and "Talking Heads"," in *"Show Us Life,"* 252-273.

[9] Waugh, "Lesbian and Gay Documentary," 265.

produced and represented, foregrounding the process whereby individuals are interpellated into various subject positions. Group interviews represent individual speakers in an explicitly social context in a way that places individual utterances in an immediately and obviously more public sphere. As a result, group and collected interviews, when placed one after another, call our attention to the ideological effects of the form of direct address in an interview. In this way, these interviews offer a model representation of the action of ideology understood as 1) a set of ideas, 2) an institutional and material apparatus/assemblage, and 3) an animating and productive force within the lives and thoughts of individuals.

One cannot write the history of the political deployment of the interview without an encounter with the very conceptualization of the personal as political and thus with the feminist use of the interview, which crystallizes the "left" deployment of interview testimony at the same time that it illuminates the ideological and political traps inherent in that very deployment. As Carol Pateman has argued, as an assertion, "the personal is political"'s greatest "impact has been to unmask the ideological character of liberal claims about the public and the private."[10] The deployment of the interview within feminist and political documentary film confronts these liberal claims about the public and the private. Interview-work instantiates the axiom in its very insistence on the transgression that it poses to those distinctions—carrying "personal" information and experience into the open, making it public. In this sense, the interview is not simply a delivery system for a critique of the ideological character of those claims at which they

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[10] Carol Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public / Private Dichotomy," in *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 131.

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aim, but rather, in these films, it actively makes the personal political, confronting and challenging power relations. As such, I argue that group interview-work represents a progressive development in the history of the interview form.

Re-situating "the personal is political" in relation to the interview as a media practice allows me to offer a series of readings that unpack the relation between ideology critique and the operations of the interview. Group interviews highlight the dialogical character of the interview, making it visible by widening the frame in which to see this tendency in relief and contrast. This close attention to the relation between the dialogical structure of an interview and the answers it elicits demonstrates how interview-work itself offers a model for the operation of ideology, at the same time that it suggests the process by which those operations can be challenged. In this way, "political" assumptions about the interview become more visible. In tracing the practice of group interview-work, this chapter historicizes the transformation of the understanding of what it means to politicize identity and experience. This chapter re-contextualizes the actual historical context of the axiom's emergence and the roots of its deformation into identity politics. In addition, I offer a series of formal readings that explores how these films produce a critique of received ideas about sexual identity, gender, and politics, situating the role of the interview in the production and circulation of the new "ideas" about politics.

II. *COMIZI D' AMORE* (1963)

Pasolini's sympathies are Marxist and, in his 1963 film, *Comizi D'Amore*, he explores the structures of social reproduction that ensure the maintenance of the status quo and the continual existence of a labor force. In this film, he uses the interview to draw out a whole range of statements about gender and sexuality. Filming on the streets of cities and villages throughout Italy, Pasolini appears as the singular question-asker in relation to groups of people who crowd around the microphone as each person is given a chance to speak. Yet unlike the typical "man-on-the street" interview, these multi-subject interviews move beyond the frame of individual experience; they investigate "the sexual question or problem" in a way that calls attention to the relation between individual statements and changing social dynamics. Sexuality and gender norms are one of the most charged sites at which the personal and the political meet, where what is properly private is shown to be a function of social conventions, rights, customs, laws, and attitudes. Pasolini's group interviews highlight the tensions between personal experience and social standards. In these group interviews, each individual speaker's statements are mediated by and through their sense of and interactions with the people that surround them. This immediate audience enhances the "public" character of the statements.

As Foucault wrote in his review, "very far from the confessional, and very far, too, from an inquiry where the most secret things are examined under the assurance of discretion,

this is *Street Talk About Love*."[11] By deploying this "crowd-in-the-street" strategy, the

film places social relations under scrutiny at the same time that it records the opinions

and statements of children, adolescents, and adults that range from ludicrous to banal.[12]

In this sense, this film and its interviews present first-person speech produced within a

social context. As a result, these interviews yield statements that are not revealing of

individual "truths"; they are not isolated personal confessions.[13] Divided according to

age, geographical location, gender, and class, Pasolini's *Comizi D' Amore* captures the

statements of groups of individuals that are representative of specific categories. This

specificity, while not exactly scientific, is quasi-sociological and central to the structure

of the film and the logic of Pasolini's survey because it situates the range of statements

and opinions about sex, sexuality, marriage, and prostitution within categories that

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[11] Michel Foucault, "The Grey Mornings of Tolerance," in Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 229.

[12] Waugh coins this phrase to talk about *Comizi D'Amore*. Waugh, "Walking on Tippy Toes," 255.

[13] According to Cesare Casarino, Pasolini uses the interview to "plunge into that gaping abyss between words and bodies" (127). For Casarino, this abyss emerges as a result of Pasolini's "peculiar" style of interviewing, one which does not maintain the "equanimity" appropriate to "the eminently confessional genre," the stance necessary to "elicit, extract, and record the truth" (124-125). Casarino argues that as a result of Pasolini's alternative interview strategy, these subjects exhibit a "non-confessional eroticism" that models a different kind of subjectivity than the confessing subject, one which is as tied to the subaltern status of many of his interviewees as it is representative of the historical transition in Italian society's ideas about sexuality. This transition, according to Foucault, is a transition to a society organized around "tolerance" rather than repression (Foucault, "The Grey Mornings of Tolerance," 231). But for Casarino, it is also suggestive of a different project as well. Pasolini's project points beyond the tracking of "bourgeois" sexuality towards an estimation of the very lack of purchase that certain conceptions of sexuality and gender roles (and the interview/confession with it) have on the subaltern. Cesare Casarino, "Can the Subaltern Confess? Pasolini, Gramsci, Foucault and the Deployment of Sexuality," in *The Rhetoric of Sincerity*, ed. Ernst van Alpern, Mieke Bal, and Carel Smith (Stanford: Stanford University, 2009), 121-143.

make their ideological function more legible and that privilege group identity over the individual statement.[14]

Pasolini introduces each of his interviews with a title card that establishes the geographical location of the scene and the class position of his subjects. From the "Bourgeois University Students in Bologna" to "The Calabrian Sub-Proletariat," the statements of people who fit these labels are placed in comparison with each other. For example, in one sequence on the beach, Tuscan working-class attitudes towards marriage and divorce embodied by one middle-aged woman are contrasted with the views of a number of members of the Tuscan bourgeoisie. Pasolini courts these differences, building a portrait of a country divided by generation, class, and geography—and, importantly, gender.

Sometimes he demonstrates these oppositions within a single scene where men and women (and especially differently aged girls) are asked to respond to the statements of others. But it is not simply a gender divide that Pasolini portrays, even though the double standards regarding sexual conduct are a recurrent topic (and perhaps the most basic assumption of the film). Throughout the film, Pasolini addresses his interviewees according to where they come from. A scene with Italian soldiers is particularly striking in this regard. The scene is preceded by a title which states "in which it is seen that the very Italian problem of Machismo divides or unites people when faced by an

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[14] Another example of what Mary Poovey calls "classificatory thinking," this is reminiscent of the detailed categorizations that Henry Mayhew uses to divide his interview subjects in "Labour and the Poor." The need for classifications or types is crucial to the sociological construction of "subjects" who are the objects of study within research projects that use interview-work to gather and present information. See Chapter 1, pp. 36-38.

alternative: To be a Don Juan or a good father?" Pasolini exhorts each soldier to answer his questions by addressing them according to their geographical origins: "Calabrian, do you think of yourself as a Don Juan?"; "What about you, Milanese?" The difference in the statements of these men is negligible, but Pasolini's labels establish his power as an interviewer to select and categorize his subjects. This scene reveals the interview (and interviewing) as a form of determination that inheres in the selection of who to question as well as the act of questioning. Pasolini's mode of address also operates to de-personalize these speaking subjects, even as they are hailed and entreated to record their statements on film and in the context of their peers. By confronting his subjects with questions about the stereotypes he seeks to investigate, Pasolini's approach to interviewing privileges his questions and the importance of his mode of address, the act of asking. In this way, Pasolini's interview-style makes visible the emplacement and interpellation of a subject. His approach makes clear that simply by responding to the questions of an interviewer, turning to look at the interviewer, the position of a subject is activated and constituted.

Concerned with the reproduction of the family unit and the labor force in the service of the status quo, the film demonstrates how the interview facilitates the process of ideological suturing into subject positions. As Louis Althusser writes, "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices."[15] In Pasolini's film, the interview is a practice that reveals the centrality of the subject to the operations of ideology. Reminiscent of Althusser's scene of "theoretical theatre," the interviews in Pasolini's films take place in the street where the speaking subjects are hailed and

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[15] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Toward an Investigation)," in *On Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 40.

entreated to speak "on the record."[16] Placed in front of the camera, they are addressed

as the personifications/representatives of particular subject positions, positions that

they recognize themselves as being able to embody and speak from. Pictured after they

have already turned to face the camera, they are situated within the "one hundred and

eighty degree" field captured by the camera. By responding to Pasolini's camera,

microphone, and questions, they inhabit a particular subject position.[17] But even if they

only nod or demure, those pictured are marked as always already subjects of ideology,

concrete and real.

The process of subject creation appears somewhat uniform, even as each individual is

distinct, positioned in slightly different ways that are determined by historically

contingent variables. Surrounded by others, the people figured in Pasolini's interview

scenes are not specially distinguished, but they are socially determined. For example, in

the section following the scene with the soldiers, Pasolini asks a series of peasants from

"rural Emilia" for broad assessments of society that are qualified by "personal"

assertions. He asks an eight- to ten-year old girl standing between her mother and

father: "Do you think you have as much freedom as a boy?" The girl's answers are

literally situated within the constraints of the family, between her mother and father.

When asked if she agrees with her mother about the looseness of young people today,

she shakes her head and says "no." Pasolini then asks her: "For you, are things better

today or as in your mother' day?" Staring intently at Pasolini who is mostly off-camera,

she smiles and answers: "For me, things are better now," underscoring the very basis of

the authority of the filmed interview. This repetition of the personal qualification

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[16] Althusser, "Ideology," 48.
[17] Ibid.

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emphasizes the congruity between the image and the speaker who talks as the subject of her own statement.[18] Like many other interviewees throughout the film, she animates the received ideas that she mouths through a vague reference to personal experience or the addition of "for me." But the performance of that particularization does not guarantee or even hint at the sincerity of the statements offered; it simply grounds them, situating them in between other people's statements and beliefs, asserting once again that ideology operates through the category of the subject who is never isolated but always situated within a social context.

In addition, Pasolini's group interviews highlight the difficulty of changing or challenging gender norms and "traditional family values" throughout Italy. The street interviews in Palermo make the social constraints on ideas and behavior explicit. Men dominate these scenes and young women do not talk unless entreated by the men and boys already crowded around Pasolini and his camera. Physically brought into view by young men, the young women speak within a male-defined space, surrounded by the men who have already spoken. As a result, the mise-en-scene illustrates their position in society more powerfully than their sometimes inarticulate and halting descriptions of what is expected of them. Later in the film, Pasolini will conclude that "young girls" are the "surprising" heroes of his film because of their willingness to challenge the double standards that allow men more freedoms than women. Situated in scenes surrounded by others, the dissenting comments of pre-teen girls provide a relief from the repetition of old ideas about gender and sex.

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[18] Margaret Morse, "The Television News Personality and Credibility: Reflections on the News In Transition," in *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986), 55-79.

But despite this championing, the real strength of Pasolini's deployment of the group interview lies in its ability to capture the mechanisms of conformism, of social interaction and dissemination, and of the ways in which these ideas are transferred and conferred on others.[19] Pasolini's interviews call attention to the social functioning of ideology—how ideas operate to cohere and maintain the structure of class and power relations. To do this, Pasolini asks, "how do you feel about…" various aspects of the sexual problem from the existence of homosexuals to prostitution. "What does the thought of sex make you feel?" "What do you feel when in the presence of a homosexual?" "How does the idea of homosexuality make you feel?" "Do you feel contempt for those women (referring to prostitutes)?" Feelings literally animate the speaking subjects and provide a sense of the lived character of ideology. As a result, Pasolini's film points towards the ways in which ideas are inhabited, lived, and experienced. By grouping these questions under the heading of "Disgust or Pity?," Pasolini examines how internalized the "ideas" about homosexuality are, how personalized and embodied these dispositions towards gender and ideas of normality and the taboo are. But the answers to these questions yield even more platitudes—so Pasolini eventually turns to "more concrete" questions about practices and not feelings.

Inquiring about practices as well as opinions, Pasolini's questions go to the heart of the way in which ideas get passed on, how they involve and structure culture, circulating

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[19] An important inter-text for this film is Antonio Gramsci's "The Southern Question" and his discussion of the struggle and social negotiations that determine and shape hegemonic ideas. Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question*, trans. Pasquale Verdicchio (Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2005), 27-62. For an elaboration of this point, see Cesare Casarino, "Can the Subaltern Confess?," 121-143.

within every social situation. Pasolini asks questions like: "What do you do?"; "How do you talk to your son about sex?"; "Do you judge and condemn others?"; "How will you deal with your child if they are "not normal"? These questions speak directly to the mechanisms of "conformism"—understood not as voluntary but as socially conditioned and crucial to the reproduction of social life.

The strength of the film lies in the fact that Pasolini relies on no ventriloquism; his critique of gender roles and sexism, while fragmented, is clearly evident in each interview, preceding and following each scene, explicit in his questions as well as his intertitles. He not only acknowledges the partial character of the image of Italy that he has produced, but also embraces it by including a final section of interviews that document the perspective on the relation between labor and sex "from below." The social interactions in the scenes in which Pasolini asks two groups of men about the laws governing prostitution and the contrasting scene with actual prostitutes allows the most trenchant class analysis to emerge, demonstrating the way in which ideas and attitudes inform the legal structure and underpin it. In some of the most topical and historically specific interviews in the film, Pasolini asks about the Merlin Law passed in 1959 that had outlawed the exploitation of prostitution (a.k.a. pimping and brothels) and disbanded the system of regulation and registration that had organized prostitution in Italy since 1861. In these final group interviews of the film, we see and hear the most explicit analysis of the relation between the economy and the oppressive attitudes towards women. Men respond to one another, complaining about the economic hardship that they face when wanting to pay for sex at the same time that they repeat rumors and well-worn self-justifications. At the culmination of the mode of social

inquiry that he has undertaken, Pasolini finally has the discussion he has wanted all along—but the actual statements continue to disappoint him.

In the scene with the prostitutes, the problematic of the relation between the individual and the social becomes profoundly explicit as the private and personal come into view. The conclusions of the banal and yet "shocking" statements from prostitutes, whose livelihoods are offered within a social context amidst their peers, are still not what Pasolini wanted: they are not miraculously enlightened, but rather as retrograde as he feared. The sum total of the film offers a survey of this disjunction between the economic miracle and the cultural lag. And by using the tool of the group interview, Pasolini points to the social nature of the problem—that it would not be a matter of changing one opinion at a time but rather activating a larger project. That is, this "problem" demands a social project which in this instance is clearly allied with a Marxist analysis, a revolutionary perspective in which the transformation of society would have to be economic, cultural, and social.

Pasolini's group interviews produce an image of the social that is not simply a catalogue of experience or attitudes of individuals; he does not treat these statements as reflective of any truth. Instead, the statements are treated as the representations of "the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live," in the strictest sense of Althusser's definition of ideology.[20] In these interviews, people are not telling lies about their conditions: instead, they are shown be caught up in a process whereby their relation to their conditions is imaginary and fictional. In other words,

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[20] Althusser, "Ideology," 39.

they cannot recognize the ways in which cultural ideas and images shape their role in the structures of social reproduction.[21] Pasolini underscores this in the film's final scene, which depicts a couple preparing to marry. These scenes are accompanied by a cynical voiceover that comments on the ignorance necessary to act in certain ways, to fulfill society's roles. Perhaps the most explicit example of an indictment of the "false consciousness" of the subjects of the film, these staged wedding scenes provide a visual frame for the film—picturing the cultural ritual, the legal institution that ensures the reproduction of the gender and social relations described throughout the film, the social practice of marriage. But the deployment of the group interview throughout the course of the film makes it clear that this critique and analysis is the product of interactive work, the process of interview-work between Pasolini and his subjects in the street. And within the context of that filmed interview-work, ideology is shown to be something other than an inadequate representation of the truth. Instead, the obviousness of Pasolini's own role as a producer and editor highlights that even this capture of these statements is constructed, a product of invented social situations and exchanges.

Through the use of "crowd-on-the-street" interviews, the film demonstrates the political significance of personal and individual ideas about sex and gender at the same time that it demonstrates the political flexibility and limitations of the interview form as an ideologically charged technology for knowledge production. A picture of the way in which the individual's ideas and notions are politicized and the subject is the centerpiece of ideology, Pasolini's film as a whole illustrates how the social reproduction of notions

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[21] Ibid., 36.

about sex and gender (and about social reproduction itself) are not defined personally but conditioned and determined socially. Yet Pasolini, as an individual, mounts this analysis; he stands as a figure in and against the crowd. In this way, the film as a whole stops short of being able to call attention to the processes by which those contradictions might be surmounted or even directly addressed (or re-dressed). The group interviews demonstrate the way in which the personal is political, but they stop short of making the political out of the personal, of making a political statement out of these personal experiences. While the film documents the inconsistencies and residual character of ideas in Italy, the film is neither a tool for agitation nor propaganda. Pasolini's questions do not seek to raise the consciousness of those he interviews, nor does the film as a whole articulate an active programme for social change. Pasolini is a solitary voice in and against the crowd, an intellectual who is not advocating for a particular social movement or party.[22] He is a political isolate, unaligned at the moment of the film's production; he is an interviewer who is an outsider and provocateur. As a result, the film offers a "re-assessment of reality."[23] Neither evidence of "objective" reality nor an active effort in its transformation, the film offers a record of an intellectual and aesthetic

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[22] I use "intellectual" here in Gramsci's sense of the new intellectual—someone who is both a cultural worker (filmmaker or artist) and an agitator. Gramsci writes:

> The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor and organiser, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator ... from technique-as-work one proceeds to technique-as-science and to the humanistic conception of history, without which one remains "specialized" and does not become "directive" (specialised and political).

Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 10.

[23] Millicent Marcus, *Italian Cinema in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 245-262. Maurizio Viano calls this "a certain realism." Maurizio Viano, *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolioni's Film Theory and Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 54.

inquiry, one that simultaneously criticizes the interview as a basic form for the production of documentary truths and reveals it to be a practice that can produce material for the construction and circulation of a critique of the operations of ideology itself.

III. *THE WOMAN'S FILM* (1971)

Eight years later in the context of the American Women's Liberation Movement, the group interview takes on a different form and function in the explicitly feminist documentary film *The Woman's Film.* Produced by the San Francisco Newsreel collective in 1971, *The Woman's Film* moves through personal accounts in order to represent and enact a social critique. It uses a range of filmed interviews to create group portraits, to document the collective endeavor of the film, and to try to develop a collective solution to the problems of capitalism, racism, and sexism. The group interview form is central to this documentary because the personal statements that it elicits are the mode through which connections are made, and a sense of collectivity is produced at the same time that the statements themselves challenge received ideas about the role of women in society. Like Pasolini's film, this film is concerned with social reproduction, the role of ideas in the maintenance of the status quo, and how the subjugation of women and people of color fits into the broader oppression and alienation of workers under capitalism. This analysis of social conditions is again Marxist, and the film's dialectical form and content make that perspective and commitment to changing those conditions explicit.

The film begins with a short statement by a woman pictured from the shoulders up; this excerpt appears to be from a traditional interview. It is followed by a montage of images of women. A series of interviews come after the montage that detail stories of domestic labor and the work world, offering evidence of the historic intersection of racism with women's oppression that begins with slavery and extends to female Chicano migrant workers and black women on welfare. This collection of vignettes of oppression, based on the evidence of experience, leads into a section that showcases the positive experience of collective struggle in which the speakers have engaged. This section is composed of interview testimony and b-roll footage of the speakers pictured in group settings. A black woman states: "Once I joined welfare rights, I started like feeling like a human being again." Another woman states: "You know that now that I've been involved in the Chicano movement a little bit, I find that life, to me, has got a little more meaning." Responding to the question "what's different being in the movement?," another woman answers: "I feel that I have something to live for...." The film ends with a montage of stills from all of the individual interview-subjects, re-presented one after another. Music offers a cohesive counterpoint to the images, underscoring the political points of the speakers and the film as a whole. With images of protests, marches, and women at work, prints, engravings and advertisements, the film contextualizes speech about experience and the analysis of society, but the centerpiece of the film is its documentation of group discussions and the assertion of the significance of collectivity to both the understanding of women's personal experience and the transformation of society.

Unlike documentary films that "depict images of women talking to the camera about their experiences, with little or no intervention by the film-maker," *The Woman's Film* does not just let women talk to the camera.[24] As Claire Johnston writes, "The truth of our oppression cannot be "captured" on celluloid with the "innocence" of the camera: it has to be constructed/manufactured."[25] And San Francisco Newsreel's film takes that quite literally—including a range of formal interventions that frame personal experience in a broader political context. Through different forms of interview testimony, *The Woman's Film* demonstrates how personal experience can be folded into a social critique, incorporated into a movement that aims at structural and mass transformation. Through the form and process of various interviews, the film does not try to "represent" women. Rather it documents the statements of women speaking within consciousness-raising groups. In these social contexts, the individual women do not purport to speak for all women, but they register similarities that contribute to an ongoing process of politicization and justify their conclusions. Whereas Pasolini's questions expressed his social critique, the statements of the interviewees in *The Woman's Film* are the crucial building blocks in the development of the film's argument.[26]

In *The Woman's Film,* interview-work is part of a process in which personal experience is explicitly connected to social analysis, providing the material basis for an assessment of how society operates and what kind of actions and alliances alter both consciousness

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[24] Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," in *Notes on Women's Cinema,* ed. Claire Johnston (London: Society for Education in Film and Television, 1973), 214.
[25] Ibid.
[26] I refer to the women in *The Woman's Film* as "interviewees" because they speak to the camera or to others within the frame with the intention of having their statements made public, captured on film, and circulated.

and material conditions. The film begins with what appears to be a traditional interview subject; framed individually with a close-up on her head and shoulders, this woman's statements articulate one specific way in which the personal is political. In the context of *The Woman's Film,* the axiom of "the personal is political" is shown to be both a basis for the practice of speaking within consciousness-raising groups and the product of these groups, an awareness that results from sharing and examining personal experience within an intimate setting. "Gee. I got this problem, you know, but it's my *own* little problem. But it is not. There's nobody in this room that has a problem but what 50 million other people have that problem too," she says. This small snippet frames the film's notion of the relation between the individual and the social. It models a significant understanding of what it means to conceptualize one's own experience and to be part of a collectivity that extends beyond the confines of the room in which one finds oneself. With this simple pronouncement, the film furnishes the lens with which personal experience will be treated. The opening testimony of the film asserts that no one is unique in their experience of sexism and discrimination—an assertion that challenges the alienated subject positioning that was enacted with Pasolini's use of the interview throughout his film.

Similar statements are repeated throughout the film, but it is through the formal depiction of group interviews that the film combats the "individualizing" of experience most effectively. Placed within a social context, the experience of each woman is compared and related to the experience of the other women who speak to the camera. Even the opening statement is re-framed later in the film; the shot of this woman speaking widens out to a mid-range shot that captures the living room in which she is

speaking, a room populated by other women, children, and the filmmakers. The device of widening the frame is used particularly deftly in a scene in which women talk about their first-hand knowledge of office-work. The first speaker describes her experience while looking directly at the camera. "It comes inside you that you've been typing someone else's stuff, for so long, I mean you have nothing to do with it. It's alienating labor… it's alienating." At this point, the voice of another woman who is slightly out of frame comes in to identify with the first speaker. She says: "Also you're much more than a secretary; you have to fix the coffee." At the end of this sentence, the camera widens and we see this additional speaker seated at the feet of the first speaker. The second woman continues: "You have to play these jokes with the men. You have to hang up their coat." Then, the camera widens even further and pans past a row of women who are seated and listening to these women speak. The camera finally settles and focuses on a third woman who nods in identification with the initial speaker. The speakers' use of the generic "you" instead of the more specifically personal pronoun ("I") further emphasizes the way in which these statements are shown to be much more than the expression of individual experience. Pinpointing common forms of discrimination, this scene represents the links between the women in the group, connections that women watching the film can identify with as well. The process of both speaking and listening challenges received ideas about the social expectations of women. Through the dialogical form of interview-work, individual experience is placed with a broad context, and the ideological assumptions about women are held up to scrutiny. By representing the construction of these connections, this scene builds a political understanding of experience, one that coincides with the process of politicization of each "individual" speaker.

A collectively-made film, *The Woman's Film* emphasizes the social context of its interview-work through a variety of formal strategies.[27] Addressing multiple listeners, speakers face a range of directions when speaking. In this way, the film is not comprised of formally recognizable "interviews" in which the object and subject are easily distinguishable. In the scenes in which there are multiple speakers, the close-up and mid-range shots that capture women talking in the group make it unclear who is asking the questions to which the speakers are responding. The filmmakers are shown in only one still in the film. Their questions are often edited out or they are inaudible. And even when the questions are featured, they do not issue from any one particular source or location with respect to the camera, the microphone, and the speaker. Instead, these "interviews" represent forms of interactivity between the speaker and the women who are in the room with each speaker. This mode of documentation emphasizes the significance of the very act of speaking within a group and in front of the camera. It disperses the authority and control over the exchanges to the collectivity of those who are pictured. In addition, we see the camera finding its way, adjusting to locate an appropriate or optimal distance. These mobile and sometimes unfocused shots call attention to the filmmaking. An early speaker mentions the fact that the film-crew is all female and that her comfort and enthusiasm for talking in front of the camera stems from this demonstration of the capacity of women to do traditionally male jobs. The inclusion of some off-screen questions solidifies the sense that these encounters are occasioned by the presence of the film-crew. But the inclusion of these references does

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[27] The absence of singular representations of women is clearly part of the political strategy of the film. In fact, the only woman who is interviewed *alone* is shown later in the film in a number of group scenes: one in which she is part of a picket line with other wives supporting their striking husbands.

not detract from the agency of the women who are in front of the camera; it simply contributes to the argument of the film at the same time that it demonstrates the way in which the process of making the film is understood to be a political act as well.

As the film proceeds, the ratio of analysis to description in each of the speaker's statements increases. In addition, the articulation of personal experience is supplemented by images of women talking and acting in the world, marching, and joining pickets. At one point, one woman tells the story of a day on the picket line and describes a sign she held: a still image of a woman holding a sign on a picket appears as she recalls the words on her placard. This doubling does more than cohere and link the sound and image tracks; it corroborates the authority of the interviewee at the same time that it underscores the film's overall argument about the importance of collective struggle (and the role of film in that struggle). In this way, the film shows how consciousness-raising groups are a beginning, not an end in and of themselves. Speaking in groups and in front of the camera is part of the process of knowledge production that extends from the private sphere to the street and builds connections between women that support and produce the conditions of possibility for a women's movement. Focusing on the different kinds of work that women do inside and outside of the home, the film foregrounds not only the importance of women's labor in the reproduction of capitalism but also their role in its possible overthrow.

In one of the longest scenes of the film, women are pictured sitting in a somewhat formal setting with chairs arrayed around a table. The voice-over testimony of a woman speaking in a room with an echo accompanies this initial shot. As if looking for

the speaker, the camera slowly pans across the faces of the women listening to a description of the speaker's experience on welfare. A close-up of a woman with a baby seated on her lap accompanies the same speaker describing her child, but the woman in the close-up is not speaking. Only when the audio shifts slightly and another question interrupts the speaker's flow do the image and sound tracks meet up. We see the profile of the woman who has been speaking to the group when she answers the question, "What's the truth?" The scene continues with a static shot from another angle that captures many of the women listening to a speaker, this time in a more lecture-like context. There are two more pans of the group, one that literally blurs the faces of the women in an effort to catch one of the "audience" questions. But even this shot does not land on an image of the person who is speaking. Rather, this mobile image of the group accompanies the statement: "a few other of the women here have said, nobody can do anything for themselves as an individual anymore—you have to be in a mass for anybody to listen…." This scene is pivotal to the film because it introduces the film's turn towards an emphasis on the experience of activism. Having amassed a collection of individual experiences throughout the first half of the film, the film now turns towards the description of women's experience in social movements. The assertion of the importance of becoming part of the movement is established within the context of a group as well. The woman in this scene speaks in order to motivate the people to whom she is talking to get involved in the women's movement and the fight for social justice. This political consciousness infuses all forms of interview-work in *The Woman's Film*. Testimony is recorded in order to activate all those who listen. The doubling of images of people listening reinforces the significance of the role of those who listen as well as

speak, counteracting any didacticism or over-emphasis on the individual activists who populate the film.

The visual emphasis on the group shows how all of the testimony gains significance and weight because it is spoken within a communal or collective context. These personal statements become political because they are spoken within the framework of a group aimed at political activity, transforming society, and informing the women to whom they are addressed. These statements are even more consciously political because they are recorded with the purpose of being circulated. In this way, the interview-work of *The Woman's Film* makes personal descriptions of traditionally private experience available to circulate and reach others on a scale and in a format that is potentially limitless. These descriptions of individual experience—within marriages, within the home, at the workplace, on the picket line, and in welfare centers—demonstrate the way in which the very distinction between the private and public spheres is gendered, an ideological distinction that allows the oppression and subjugation of women to continue. Placed within the context of the film and situated within the social context in which they were produced, this testimony challenges and illuminates these received ideas, literally contesting these social distinctions by making a documentary that can operate within public exhibition sites as well as more intimate screening contexts.

In these ways, *The Woman's Film* documents the historical specificity of the practice involved in consciousness-raising groups and shows how the practice of consciousness-raising was quite literally allied with interview-work. This alliance became even more explicit when the habit of documentation and filming emerged. In its documentation of

these groups, the film actually challenges the reduction of the practice of consciousness-raising to its association with the axiom "the personal is political" and the subsequent confusion of the personal with the individual and the erasure of the centrality of the collective to these particular feminist politics. The original consciousness-raising groups were structured around one question that would be posed to every single woman in the room. Women would each take turns answering the question with reference to their own experience.[28] Speaking one after another, the answers to this one question would accumulate. After listening to all of the women in the room, discussion about commonalities would begin. Based on the collection of all of this "evidence," the women would begin to make sense of the structural framework that defined and shaped these experiences. As described by Carol Hanisch, author of an article entitled "The Personal is Political" published in 1969, the process of analysis and theorization served as the basis for the discussion of collective action.[29] Many of the early consciousness-raising groups (specifically the ones in San Francisco and New York) formed explicitly in order

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[28] Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and its Relation to the Policy Process* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1975), 103-146.

[29] Carol Hanisch, "The Personal is Political," in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation*, ed. Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt (New York: New York Radical Feminists, 1969), 75-79.

In a more recent "explanatory introduction," Hanisch has written that she did not title her own article, but that Firestone and Koedt took that liberty. Hanisch writes:

> I wish we could have anticipated all the ways that "The Personal Is Political" and "The Pro-Woman Line" would be revised and misused. Like most of the theory created by the Pro-Woman Line radical feminists, these ideas have been revised or ripped off or even stood on their head and used against their original, radical intent. While it's necessary that theories take their knocks in the real world, like everything else, many of us have learned that once they leave our hands, they need to be defended against revisionism and misuse.

"The Personal is Political: The Women's Liberation Movement Classic with a New Explanatory Introduction," Carol Hanisch, accessed February 4, 2012, http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html.

to combat the propensity of women, and people more generally, to focus on individual solutions to the problems of sexism and discrimination. Arrived at collectively, the knowledge that "the personal is political" was the basis for these groups; it was also the grounds upon which a movement was assembled, alliances were built, and obstacles to consciousness and political action were overcome.

A polemical statement used to assert the importance of the practice of consciousness raising and the women's movement in the face of dismissals from the male dominated left, the formula was initially tied to an explicit Marxist analysis of the significance of social reproduction to the operations and survival of capitalism. From a materialist perspective, the axiom also pointed to the significant role that ideology plays in the perpetuation of ideas about various "other" groups of people that prevent the working class from uniting to emancipate itself. It is for this reason that *The Woman's Film* relies on the model of consciousness-raising. Shown to be the product of a shared practice within *The Woman's Film*, the assertion that "the personal is political" is not an alibi for the simple investigation of individual stories—but rather it is the precursor for the political assertion that there are no individual solutions. In this way, group interviews are shown to offer a particularly illuminating site for the articulation of a feminist politics that combats the "individualizing" of experience and situates the significance of fighting women's oppression within a larger struggle against racism and capitalism. Alongside collective interview-work, the group interviews provide a context in which the basis for this social movement takes shape and becomes visible. As a result, the practice of consciousness-raising can be extended to a film audience. The final montage of close-up stills functions like a list of credits. Images of the unnamed interview

subject are placed next to each other in a way that asserts how each of these individual

speakers contributed to the production of the arguments contained in the film. Placed

one after another in full frame, they are not representatives or people who have played

roles; they are members of the women's movement who have actively participated in the

making of this film in support of that movement. But the scale of the film remains the

personal, something that allows it to speak to individual viewers and to assert the

necessity for individuals to become involved in collective solutions. The images and

sounds of the film do not substitute for the movement but gesture towards it.

Presenting the viewer with sounds and images from the intimate settings of living

rooms and consciousness-raising meetings, the film displays the construction of a social

project built through the process of talking about personal experience in different group

settings. The scale of this project is actively extended through the film's representation

of interview-work contributing to the production of a media form that can circulate and

encourage that very same talking in even wider publics.

IV. *WORD IS OUT: STORIES OF SOME OF OUR LIVES* (1978)

Another film that uses collective interview-work to represent the way in which

"personal" matters of sexuality and gender roles connect with a broad social critique is

Mariposa Film Group's *Word is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives* (1978). But unlike the

two previous films, *Word is Out* is not grounded in a Marxist analysis of social

reproduction. This film screened in movie theatres in 1978 and was broadcast on

American public television in 1979. Produced by a group of people who became a

collective "in retrospect," the film took over four years to make.[30] Over 140 men and women across the United States were initially interviewed on videotape before the final "26" individual subjects were chosen to be interviewed on film.[31] Interview-work comprises almost all of the final film, supplemented by a number of scenes of musical interludes in which songs about the experience of coming out are performed. B-roll in the film is used very sparingly; as a result, the audio interview-testimony is almost always accompanied by an image of the person who is speaking. Grounded on the assertion that coming out is a political gesture enacted through speaking, the stories of each speaker are verified and corroborated by this simultaneity and co-presence of the image and sound tracks. Facial expressions add to the affective power of the words spoken and underscore the political significance of the recording and circulation of this testimony. The film features young and old, men and women, White, Asian, Black, and Latino people, who all identify *as* gay. Representing this range of people through the use of the interview, the film asserts the presence, history, and humanity of people who do not subscribe to the heterosexual norms enforced by political and cultural institutions and portrayed within the media. The record of these individuals revealing the details about sexual identity and experience challenges the hegemony of hetero-normativity as an ideology and social practice.

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[30] Rob Epstein, "*Word is Out*: Stories of Working Together," *Jump Cut* 24-25 (March 1981): 10.

[31] 22 subjects were chosen out of the pre-interview tapes. A number of partners were included in the final interviews, so the total number of interview subjects in the film is 25, despite the fact that one of the early title plates in the film states that the film documents "Conversations with 26 gay men and women." In his recent book, Greg Youmans calls attention to the discrepancy between the title card's number and the fact that while there are 25 subjects introduced by thumbnail images, only 24 are interviewed. Greg Youmans, *Word is Out: A Queer Film Classic* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011), 28-29.

A significant documentary in the history of "queer" media, the film is divided into three

sections: "The Early Years," "Growing Up," and "From Now On." These temporal

markers refer to the stages in the life of each of the individuals and the social status of

homosexuals in American society more broadly. Loosely linked by periodization, the

interviews document "28 people who trusted us to freeze a moment of their lives."[32]

Framed as an answer to the question "Who are we?," the film uses the interview format

to produce its anecdotal evidence of the presence of homosexual men and women. Each

subject is pictured in a different location particular to that person, often domestic sites.

In this way, the film emphasizes the individuality and particularity of each of the

subjects. These "stories" are edited in relation to each other so that each story

progresses in parallel. This editing draws analogies that are impossible to ignore. The

cumulative effect of the editing is an undeniable sense of the way in which ideological

and social beliefs manifest in personal lives. The testimony of the film also exposes the

history of homophobia as articulated through institutions, practices, and individual lives

and bodies. But building a portrait of a "we" through the accumulation of individual

interviews poses a number of problems that the film attempts to mediate—issues made

more visible by the mechanisms and confrontations of interview-work.

Expressly dialogical and "interactive," voices from behind the camera pose questions of

the subjects.[33] The first scene following the credits features an interview with Roger

Harkenrider seated in front of a mirror. In the mirror, we see Peter Adair behind the

camera, a sound person a few feet away, and a number of professional lights. Over the

course of the interview, Adair asks Harkenrider a number of questions. The inclusion of

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[32] See previous note.

[33] Nichols, *Representing Reality*, 44-56.

an image of a filmmaker seated behind the camera underscores the importance of the medium of film and the interview-form, in particular, for circulating personal statements publicly. Making the mediation of these statements explicit, this scene asserts the significance of the way in which these interviews are conducted and establishes the formal practice that characterizes all of the interviews in the film. The placement of the interviewer behind the camera causes the interviewee to address the camera directly, something that produces a particular sort of intimacy with the interviewer and the viewer as well. From the wider shot, the camera zooms in to frame a close-up of Harkenrider's face. This move isolates the speaker at the same time that it creates a sense of immediacy and proximity for the viewer. Demonstrating the responsiveness of the camera, this move accentuates the conversational character of Harkenrider's discourse and self-description. It underscores the film's emphasis on speech as the medium of political exchange and activity. This deliberate approach to interview-work is repeated through the film in a way that simultaneously perpetuates this privileging of speech and calls our attention to it.

From the very beginning of the film, problems associated with "the burden of representation" are raised by the interviewees. Relying on dialogical interview-work allows the film to incorporate moments of auto-critique alongside its critical assessments of social institutions. Different forms of questioning rebound between the subjects and the filmmakers. In the opening montage of the film, Betty Powell states: "even as a Black lesbian, I wouldn't want to be seen as this is how Black lesbians are… I was hoping the film would be able to give a broader spectrum of a Black lesbian than just me." She remains the only Black lesbian in the film, but the inclusion of this

statement seeks to mitigate her token status through the representation of a form of self-consciousness.

There are a number of other moments in the film where the "burden of representation" is confronted. In one of the only interview scenes that diverges from the dialogical (and dyadic) conventions established at the beginning of the film, Elsa Gidlow, a 70-year old White lesbian, is pictured seated with four members of the film collective. Her comments in this scene register her doubts about her place within the larger film project. Preceded by images of the filmmakers and Gidlow meeting, a question is posed from behind the camera: "Elsa, you were worried how we would use you in the film?" Gidlow answers:

> Well you see, when someone has a pre-conceived structure into which they want to fit you, which, I mean with all due credit and everything else, that is precisely what you are asking me to do. You wanted to fit me into a structure which you have. Just as if I'm writing a novel or you're writing a novel, we use our characters that way we want to fit them into the structure we have for this work of art. And I understand your point of view in this, you have a structure and you want to fit your characters into it. But this happens to be a character that doesn't want to be pushed around or put into a context where she doesn't feel that it's true to her.

Straining against the very structure and premise of the film, Gidlow's comments challenge the way in which interview-work is generally deployed. Referring to herself in the third-person, her criticism of the use of an interview to fill in a blank or fulfill a quota articulates the limits of a political project that operates solely on the level of cultural representation—that seeks simultaneously to correct under-representation, to point to the reasons for that erasure, and to question the very structure that effaces difference. But Gidlow's verbal resistance and the formal singularity within the context

of the film authorizes the very project that she questions, introducing one of the clearest

assertions of identity in the film. She states:

> I'm glad I'm a lesbian. I feel complete. Because I'm utilizing what society
> characterizes as the male and the female elements and character. I feel
> that I have a proportion of each. I've said yes there's such a thing as a
> lesbian personality – I believe it's what I have and what I was born with.
> Having said that, let's take it for granted and go on from there and live
> our lives.

Elsa Gidlow's statements mark a kind of platform or baseline assertion about the

significance of identity, one that allows her to navigate the jump between the first

person singular and plural effortlessly.

The interview-work throughout the film captures a range of women and men who do

not confine themselves to "I-speak" but invoke the indefinite use of "you" in order to

extrapolate from themselves and make assertions that generalize from their experiences.

As a result, interview-work in the film navigates the tension between general

statements and specific experience in a way that amplifies the primary political goal of

the film: to produce a representation of homosexuals in the U.S. that simultaneously

preserves the individuality and difference of each of the speakers at the same time that it

indicts the social structures and institutions that oppress homosexuals. It is a sleight of

speech, at once distancing from the explicitly private and yet also offering an acceptable

way in which to talk about oneself that grasps at the structural and shared experience.

It is reminiscent of the "you" used in *The Woman's Film* to assert the political

significance and commonality of experience.

In one particularly important sequence, the testimony of four men and women details

the way in which the medical profession and the police treated homosexuals in the

1950s. Together, Bernice "Whitey" Fladden and Rick Stokes reveal their intimate

knowledge of the medical treatments administered to "cure" gays of homosexuality.

Composed mostly of tight close-ups, Fladden's speech revolves very firmly around

speaking of her own experience in the first person singular, but when she ventures into

more general statements on "state psychiatric hospitals" in the U.S., she begins to move

towards invoking the indefinite "you." When she is asked, "So you were given shock

treatments and stuff?," she answers: "I personally didn't get shock treatments, thank

goodness, but you were threatened with them all the time to keep you in line…." Stokes

takes up the storyline from here and offers a description from memory of the process

and feelings associated with shock treatments. Speaking as a survivor, his account also

vacillates between the generic "you" and his particular "I," offering testimony that is

simultaneously personal and impersonal.

> Each time, you would hope against hope that it wasn't your time yet. . .
> but that's the last thing I would recall—spinning wildly out of control
> until you lose total consciousness and you are aware constantly of this
> little box over there and what it's going to do to you.

The details of his narrative provide further evidence of the brutality involved in the

medicalization of homosexuality offered by Fladden's testimony. With the question

posed from behind the camera, "How many were you given?," the deixis of "you" re-

centers onto Stokes. "I really don't know, Peter, it would be have been somewhere

between 10 and 50 probably 25 somewhere along in there. But again I'm not certain of

the number." Here, the interview form shapes a negotiation between detail and

extrapolation, between specificity and generalization. As the speaker veers into the

realm of the general and indefinite "you," a question returns the interviewee to the more solid ground of speaking from the first person singular and, in this case, to a sort of spurious precision that works to produce assurance and a sense of accuracy. Placed next to one another, their testimony offers proof of the generalized nature of these practices.

An extended scene with Pat Bond builds on this sequence. Bond's tales of the lesbian culture within the Army during the 1940s and 50s are drawn from personal experience, but they also offer a portrait of the institutions and practices that determined sexual and gender roles more broadly. Most of Bond's indictments of the structures that oppress homosexuals operate on the plural ground of the "you" and the "we," sitting in between generalization and specificity and, even more importantly, between a personal statement and an interpellation of the viewer. And in doing so, they demonstrate the way in which the interview provides an exemplary site for examining the process of subject positioning through which ideology operates and the ideological structures/apparatuses themselves.

> I know we are oppressed by society certainly. Good God, the times when we were beaten up by the police, run over by the cops, persecuted by police, uh so many times, and there was absolutely no recourse. You just had to put up with that crap and, uh, being called names by the police, uh, being rousted out of bars for no reason where, you know, you were just sitting having a beer.

Bond's use of the "we" is instructive, grounding a statement that calls attention to the institutional character of the treatment of gays. But the "you" brings the description closer to the sense of powerlessness experienced by an individual who is being persecuted. The generic "you" offers some distance from that intimate knowledge, but is informed by the vantage point of an isolated individual.

An exchange that crystallizes the ways in which interview-work is hemmed in by the process of subject positioning in its efforts at ideological critique begins with a statement rather than a question from the interviewer: "It's incredible to me that you put up, that you lived with that eh uh on a daily basis and accepted it." Pat Bond responds, "You had to. What else were you going to do?" which is followed with her uncomfortable laugh. The interviewer responds with a question, "what kind of toll does that take? It's a number." And it is at this point that Bond offers some of the most "personal" statements yet, even correcting herself when she veers towards the generic "you."

> Yeah, I don't know, I suppose it takes a terrible toll in that you never, I never felt anyway that I was really worth very much. Uh, that what... (zoom into close up) whatever I did had to be to make a secret little safe place in my life for myself, somehow, without any help at all, from any quarter, except perhaps my dogs, you know, uh….. (pause which is followed by a zoom out to a wider shot) and perhaps a couple very good friendships, that's about it. I don't, uh…

A particularly poignant moment in which an interview enacts "coming out" as an emergence from both personal and political isolation, Bond's description moves between a very private register and the assertion of a plural experience, demonstrating how the constitution of identity itself is at the center of the operations of ideology and the filmed interview. The form of the interview actually dramatizes the isolation she describes, creating a tension that the film's structure answers. The content of the testimony justifies the very act of speaking in front of the camera, of coming out both personally

and publicly on film.[34] It also leads quite logically into a series of assertions of the need for a collective social movement, of a sort of unity, to confront these structures.

Throughout the interviews in *Word is Out*, the indefinite "you" is both politically powerful and suggestive of shared experience. At a distance from singular claims, the generic "you" expands the position from which the interview subjects speak. The movement between the indefinite "you" and the first person singular evinces part of the tension of coming out in a filmed interview, of emerging from the private into something more public. Awkwardly situated in close-ups of talking heads, the indefinite "you" is tempered by the inclusion of questions from behind the camera that remind the viewer of the concrete situation of the interview as literally interactive and dialogical. These questions also induce a vacillation between slightly different registers of positioning and address, returning the speaker to the strong and almost legalistic statements that are the provenance of the first person singular, the assertions on which the film's use of the interview is premised. As Pat Bond says in her interview, "I'm coming out right now, right? Here I am on television. Big white face on the screen saying, "Yeah, you know, I'm gay."" But the polyvalent "you" always resurfaces, moving the interview testimony into a more plural and political space, accompanied occasionally by reference to the first person plural.

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[34] Waugh, "Lesbian and Gay Documentary," 265-270. Waugh's initial analysis focused on the ethical and ultimately political stakes of "coming out." In his later essay, he focuses on the way in which this practice of coming out (and the interview, its favored cinematic form) "involved the transgression of the public-private divide." Waugh, "Walking on Tippy Toes," 264.

One of the important registers of *Word is Out*, this "you" establishes the subject positioning of the filmmakers and interviewers and the speakers who are speaking for themselves, representing themselves *as* gay. The function of the film is to establish this second person plural "you," to represent the heretofore unrepresented social and political subjectivity of homosexuals as part of a nascent "we." The first viewer and subject of address is the second person singular "you" behind the camera, someone who already identifies as gay. But in all of the interviews throughout the film, the speaker's "you" hails both the interviewer and the viewer. Simultaneously a second person singular and plural pronoun, this "you" includes the viewer in its production of a sense of an imagined and real collective/social force, the constitution of that "we."

Near the end of this segment of Part One, which focuses on the explicit exposition of the state institutions that enshrine and enforced repression, George Mendenhall asserts "it was the beginning of my awareness that I was not only a gay person, but that I should come out of my person and be in a broader sense, aware of other gay people and their rights too, because Jose would say, let's unite." He goes on to describe a moment of collectivity, the collective singing of "God Save Us Nelly Queens," a memory that brings him to tears because of the way in which it signifies a space of freedom and acceptance, of social togetherness. The film aggregates individual testimonies that document the internal and private struggles that have resulted from confrontations with structural repression and discrimination. As a result, the interviews in *Word is Out* constitute an image of social totality constructed from the vantage point of personal experience. Collected together, this series of interviews opens onto the realm of the first-person plural.

Over the course of these interviews, the generic axiom that the personal is political comes to have greater and greater specificity and meaning as it is shown to be true for a number of different speakers. The depth to which prejudice and discrimination, both personal and structural, has effected these individuals becomes more and more clear— and the question that the film produces is one in which individual solutions and attitudes are aggregated. The final footage of the film offers images of a Gay Pride parade, an embodiment of the differences and singularities that have been revealed through the process of accumulating these interviews. Ending with images of masses of people in the streets, an even larger composite emerges—one that points to the potential scale of a gay liberation movement, a social formation that might be able to take up the individual causes and combat prejudice. But these images are fleeting, another momentary conjuncture, similar to the solidarity and connection established through the conversations between the filmmakers and interviewees referred to as "shared moments" in the final credits of the film. In this film, the group comes afterwards, a function of the interview-form and its deployment as much as the film process.

The tension between offering a series of representations, being appropriately representative, and creating a different form or assertion of collectivity preoccupies the film. The interactions between the openly gay filmmakers and the interviewees underscore the collaborative nature of the project, extending the "we" beyond those who are interviewed. These mostly un-pictured voices add to the "collective portrait" of

gays in America at the same time that they produce it.[35] The Mariposa Film Group is pictured in a single small group photograph during the opening credits. The faces are almost entirely illegible; but the connections of their arms suggest the linkage and collaboration that shaped the project. In the introduction to each segment, however, the various interview subjects are represented by an arrangement of small thumbnails of each person's face taken from the interviews. These film stills are arranged in a composite with the name of each speaker appearing below the close-up images. This contrast mirrors the tension that the film navigates; it respects the individuality of each participant at the same time that it seeks to assert and represent the social and plural reality of gay men and women, of gay communities, couples, and individuals.

The critical and scholarly emphasis on the collaboration of the filmmakers in some ways eclipses the way in which the form of the film actually stages the problem of forming a collectivity of individuals. Through its deployment of interview-work, the tension between the individual and the social is manifest. There are only a few moments where the first person plural is voiced by speakers in the film, and yet the whole of the film speaks from that place; stories from some of *our* lives is, after all, the secondary title of the film. The interview is the form that mediates this representation, enacting and making visible the space of social subjectivity and the filmmaking process that has produced it. The film as a whole presents a collection of these interviews, creating a portrait of this "we" that is a sum of its parts. Each interview "part" both gestures

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[35] Peter Adair, Speech presented to Artlink, October 2, 1993. Included in the press kit for the *Word is Out* thirtieth-anniversary DVD release. http://www.wordisoutmovie.com/PressKit/WordIsOutPK.pdf.

towards this social body and offers a trenchant and detailed indictment of the social structures and ideological apparatuses that repress homosexuals.

V. CONCLUSION

In her 1984 essay "Feminist Documentary: Aesthetics and Politics," Julia Lesage looks at feminist film and video of the 1970s and early 1980s and recognizes how interviews and testimony comprise an aesthetic analogue to the politics of American feminist consciousness raising.[36] Lesage identified in the filmed conversation and the array of "talking heads" in feminist film and video the transformation of "conversation" and "talking about oneself" into a "new social force" and "a tool for liberation" – pointing explicitly to the continuity between talking in front of the camera with a politics that grew out of women talking about their experiences.[37] She points to the "deep structure" of these films that present one woman after another talking about her own experience—a structure that aggregates testimony and personal experience in a way that mirrors the discursive character of the political activity pursued within the "private" sphere of the consciousness-raising groups.[38] For Lesage, the intellectual work of analyzing women's experience is both documented and enacted in these films—processed by the filmmakers themselves and offered up to viewers.[39] By presenting previously unarticulated knowledge, these films assert and demonstrate that knowledge is political and that its

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[36] Lesage, "Feminist Documentary," 223-251.
[37] Ibid., 237.
[38] Ibid., 231.
[39] Alexandra Juhasz, "Introduction," in *Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film and Video,* ed. Alexandra Juhasz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 8.

power derives from having been "arrived at collectively."[40] Employing interview-work, documentary films further this process of moving from the private to the public, allowing the insights, the speech, the analysis, and the specific details of individual lives to circulate—to be published, made public to other women, men, and to the subjects themselves.

Lesage's reading of these films as analogues to consciousness-raising groups has a historical significance in its contribution to an appreciation of the politics of form in 1970s documentary, but her essay also offers insight into the political and ideological functioning of interview-work within documentary more broadly. The significance of her observations derives from her recognition of the significance and construction of collectivity in these films. The emphasis on the collective or the social in relation to the personal in these films resists the tendency in reading and making documentaries to emphasize only the particularities and specificities of the content on offer, what Lesage calls "the surface structure."[41] By recognizing in the structure of the films a more social and political analogue, Lesage's essay points to the possibility of reading the significance of the interview not only as a mode of representation that allows for new voices and new content to circulate, but also as the process by which the personal (and personal speech in particular) can be *made* political, not simply asserted or represented *as* political. For me, this is the central significance of interview-work; it is productive of politics at the same time that it is reflective of them. The group interview-work in these three films makes this clear, simultaneously revealing the ideological problematic of the interview

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[40] Lesage, "Feminist Documentary," 232.
[41] Ibid., 231.

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and working against it in an effort to call attention to the functioning and circulation of various ideologies that maintain oppression.

By looking at the way that these films use interview-work, we can locate the operations and processes through which the politics of identity are produced and circulated. But perhaps even more usefully, these films show group interview-work as a process of production that is social and relational. In their staging of the tension between the individual and the group, they demonstrate the way in which interview-work is inherently ideological as well as being "personal." In addition, these films show how the interview's political function is determined by its deployment in relation to the structure of the film as a whole.

For example, and as suggested by my previous reading, *Comizi D'Amore* demonstrates the way in which the interview has a productive and reflective capability. In *Comizi D'Amore*, group interviews do not reveal the truth about sex; rather, they reveal the status of social attitudes and the way in which these ideas are inflected by class and geography. The film shows how attitudes towards what Pasolini calls "the sexual question" are central to social reproduction, revealing how these ideas work to structure and reproduce society's assumptions, the basis by and through which people accept their circumstances and perpetuate beliefs that often fly in the face of their own interests. The strength of the film lies in how it both documents the adjustment of speech to social context and the difficulty involved in capturing statements that challenge received wisdom. Pasolini is not investigating the relation between people's ideas and their actions, or the "reality" of society and false consciousness. Rather, his film reveals

a series of encounters produced by someone bent on documenting the relationship between ideas about sex and its role in society and the so-called "economic miracle" of Italy. As a result, the tension between documenting the dominant ideology and Pasolini's non-conformist Marxist views animates the film.

A tacit critique of the televisual "man-on-the-street" interview, Pasolini's group interviews demonstrate the social character of ideology and the way in which "personal" opinion is distorted. In Pasolini's film, statements about sex by individuals do not stand alone; they are interrogated, situated within the context of group interviews and framed by commentary that offers an analysis and framework with which to assess them. The camera work provides a visual analogue as individual speakers are rarely pictured alone, and when the camera isolates them, it is only for brief moments that are followed by camera movements that situate them in a larger scene. Eschewing the "talking head" paradigm, Pasolini refuses to grant primacy to any one statement or assertion. Instead, he registers his frustration with the inability of his interviewees to make sense of their experiences. Allowing the contradictions to stand, Pasolini uses the group interview format to demonstrate how it is impossible to see the totality of the way in which ideas about sex and gender function to underpin society from an individual's vantage point.

Like Pasolini's film, *The Woman's Film* offers a critical engagement with the interview-form. As a whole, *The Woman's Film* embraces an aesthetic of admixture and inclusion at the same time that it moves towards the discussion of collective political action. The cinematic interview-work is explicitly social and relational, supplemented, enhanced, and elaborated through montage editing that establishes a dialectical relation between

sound and image. The structure of the film builds on the interview testimony in a way

that is analogous to how personal experience can get incorporated into a critique of the

intersection of the oppression of women with racism and capitalism. Consciousness-

raising provides the setting and the deep structure of this film, but it has a trajectory

that is informed from without, fine-tuned by the encounter with political training and

with political theory.[42] These women are not just talking; they have learned how to

talk, and they have incorporated many ideas in order to make sense of their

experience—and the representation of the interview-work is an analog to that. As a

result, the film presents a Marxist/Socialist analysis that is arrived at through and with

individual women talking about their own experiences together. This creates the

conditions for the viewer's encounter with this analysis and the collective labor that

both builds it and can act on it.

Through the collection of interviews, *Word is Out* reveals the difficulty of relying on

dialogical interview-work to represent a non-singular social body or to produce an

image of a group. These interviews operate as a form for the production of subjectivity

as well as its representation. These interviews represent another site in which the

inducement to talk about oneself feeds institutions with information and subjects one to

a kind of disciplining and self-regulation.[43] But these interviews are not simply

confessions, in Foucault's sense. They are examples of testimony and the political

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[42] Beverly Grant (member of the Newsreel Collective), interview by Dara Greenwald, February 8, 2010, Brooklyn, NY. In this unpublished interview, Grant recounts the importance of Marxism and specifically Maoism to these groups.

[43] Michel Foucault, "The Incitement to Discourse" and "Scientia Sexualis" in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 17-35 and 53-73.

process of interview-work.[44] Unlike a confession, a form in which the individual subject

is situated in relation to power structures, these interviews are conducted within the

context of consciousness-raising rather than discipline. As a result, the interview is

shown to be a technique and form through which it is possible to generalize from one's

experience and to extrapolate and provide an analysis that moves out from one's own

perspective. As a result, this film reveals the significance of the political problematic

involved in the interview, the relation of the personal to the political, and specifically the

process of conceptualizing the political not simply as an aggregate of individuals but as

a class or group—as the social.

Looking at *The Woman's Film* and *Word is Out* (and to some degree, *Comizi d'Amore*)

returns us to a moment when it was possible to conceive of speaking about oneself *as* a

woman or *as* gay as explicitly political, when filming an interview was seen as enabling

personal expression that was framed by political movements and political conceptions of

the power of the voice, when the interview could be used and understood as a political

process *and* a mode of representation. I have chosen to return to these films because

they use interview-work as a means for the production of knowledge, as a kind of

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[44] Gregg Bordowitz differentiates between testimony and confession in his essay "Dense Moments." He writes:

> Through testimony one bears witness to one's own experience to one's self. Through confession one relinquishes responsibility for bearing witness to and for one's self with the hope that some force greater than one's self will bear away the responsibilities for one's actions… A testimony that leads to confession recapitulates repression. A testimony performed successfully can lead toward liberation.

Gregg Bordowitz, "Dense Moments," in *The AIDS Crisis is Ridiculous* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 116-117. For an important discussion of the relation between coming out and confessing, testifying, and witnessing, see Jon Dovey, "The Confessing Nation," in *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 103-132.

relational work that can produce analysis, understanding, consciousness, and a sense of

the necessity for action. These films register the way in which interview-work produces

political knowledge, making the personal political at the same time that they frame and

stage the interrelation between the spheres of the personal and the political.

Since the late 1960s, documentary interviews have been used to raise awareness about

all sorts of issues; but this practice has proliferated without always maintaining the

politics or reference to the form's historical association with feminism and

consciousness-raising.[45] It is for this reason that I have turned to group interview-work

in an effort to re-assert the initial emergence of the formula "the personal is political"

and to investigate its relation to the interview as a media form. In doing this, I have

sought to foreground the caveat with which it was articulated at the time of its

emergence: "there are no individual solutions." I have done this by looking exclusively

at group interview-work, and, as a result, I have been able to differentiate the

ideological problematic of the form of the interview from its political deployment and to

make visible the political dilemma posed by the interview and its relation to the subject-

positioning necessary for the maintenance of various oppressive social structures. In

addition, the group interview-work examined in this chapter makes visible the ways in

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[45] Nichols and Waugh both acknowledge this association and debt in "The Voice of Documentary" and "Walking on Tippy Toes," respectively. Furthering their scholarship, this chapter explores the particularities of what "consciousness-raising" actually meant or could mean when conceptualized with respect to the use of interview-work within documentary film and interview-work. The compilation of interview testimony is central to the history of humanitarian documentaries, but also to mainstream and progressive issue films that seek to educate an audience about a given topic. Examples include: Marcel Ophuls, *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969); Emile de Antonio, *In the Year of the Pig* (1968); Errol Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008); Errol Morris, *Fog of War* (2003); Charles Ferguson, *No End in Sight* (2007); and Dylan Avery, *Loose Change 9/11: An American Coup* (2009).

which the interview instantiates the problematic faced by any kind of politics based on identity claims or personal/individual assertions or experience.

Much in the way that the applicability and wide-spread use of the axiom relies on the open-endedness of the terms of "personal" and "political," the interview's form enables it to be used for a variety of political purposes. The three films examined in this chapter use group interview-work in order to represent and enact a social critique. And in the case of the final two films, group, collective, and collected interview-work is at the center of documentaries that seek to represent, summon, and address forms of collectivity and social movements through the process of filmmaking and distribution. To varying degrees, these films demonstrate a progressive development in the history of interview conventions that allows for non-dominant and resistant modes of expression, ideas, and experiences to circulate. Looking at one of Bill Nichols' exemplars of the interactive mode of representation, Emile de Antonio's *Underground* (1976), Jonathan Kahana argues that the successful and creative incorporation of various political strategies into filmmaking demonstrates how "documentary was capable of projecting new forms of association."[46] For Kahana, the meaning of "association" is multiple, as he is referring to organizations and social formations, discursive and theoretical links, cultural, political, and material connections, as well as sound and image relations. For me, the deployment of the group interview is particularly crucial in the articulation of new "forms of association" because the image of "the social" that collective and collected interviews produce is predicated on an ideological critique of the conception of the relation between the personal and the political, indexing a change in

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[46] Jonathan Kahana, *Intelligence Work: The Politics of American Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 204.

the very definition of "the political" and the role of the individual within that milieu. But, importantly, the importance of the group interview reveals the ways in which media production and specifically documentary film production are situated at a critical juncture in the activity of social transformation—in a location where ideological production and the critique of ideology and society meet.

CONCLUSION

Questions of Form: The Dialectical Character of Interview-Work

On February 4, 2012, the organizers of Left Forum sent out a mass email to announce

Left Forum 2012, a conference that was scheduled to happen at Pace University in New

York City from March 16-19. The Left Forum is an annual event that features hundreds

of panels and workshops where activists, scholars, and organizers gather to discuss and

analyze "the great political questions of our time" in an effort to produce the "left

agendas" for the coming year.[1] What began as the Socialist Scholars Conference in

1981 (organized by Democratic Socialists of America luminaries such as Michael

Harrington and Stanley Aronowitz) became Left Forum in 2004 in the wake of a new

layer of younger organizers.[2] Left Forum 2012 sent a link to a splash page that

displayed a grid of thumbnails of video interviews.[3] The subject line of the email was

"Voices from Occupy Wall Street: Voices from Left Forum – Videos and more." An

elaborate and innovative promotion/advertisement for a conference, this deployment of

the filmed interview encapsulates the left association with the interview as a form at the

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[1] "Conference 2012 Theme | Left Forum," Left Forum, accessed May 13, 2012,
http://www.leftforum.org/conference/conference-theme.
[2] "History: From Socialist Scholars to Left Forum | Left Forum," Left Forum, accessed
May 13, 2012, http://www.leftforum.org/about/history.
[3] "Occupy The System: Confronting Global Capitalism," Left Forum, accessed May 13,
2012, http://www.leftforum.org/lf_vid.

same time that it reveals the connection between the materiality of the form and its ideological contents.

The association of the documentary interview with the politics of bourgeois liberalism has a long history. These assumptions go to the heart of liberal ideas about the relation between the exercise of "free speech" and the public sphere, and the political significance of mass participation in discussion and debate.[4] Since Arthur Elton's documentary film *Workers and Jobs* in 1935, the filmed interview has been used to present the voices of "ordinary" people talking about their experience, accompanied by their images, which provide a photographic index that corroborates and lends the testimony captured a degree of authenticity and credibility.[5] Even prior to the filmed interview, the media interview, as we have come to recognize it, was a practice aimed at "publicity" in the sense that this form emerged when face-to-face conversations between two (or more) people were conducted with the intention of making their contents public through the medium of a newspaper. The transformative power of "the intention of publication" cannot be underestimated, and my dissertation has traced the formal, ideological, and political consequences and changes that happen to "conversations" between people in an interview project. Recognizing the political possibilities of "publicity" for educating a public about various "problems" and "issues" was central to the first uses of the interview in the 1840s by newspaper correspondent Henry Mayhew explored in Chapter One. And this strain of interview projects has continued as a thread, running

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[4] Philip Rosen, "Document and Documentary: On the Persistence of Historical Concepts," in *Theorizing Documentary*, ed. Michael Renov (New York: Routledge, 1993), 77-79.

[5] Pascal Bonitzer, "The Silences of the Voice," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 319-334.

parallel and, one might say, beneath more commercial deployments of the interview by politicians, pundits, and celebrities who depend on interviews to develop and maintain public persona.

It is no surprise, then, that the Internet with its apparently "democratic," "decentralized," and "limitless" possibilities would seem a fantastically fertile ground for an increase in the production and circulation of interviews for the purposes of popular education, social critique, and progressive politics.[6] In particular, one of the web's greatest promises lies in the notion that it provides a forum for an increased (and potentially infinite) number of voices to be "heard."[7] On the Internet, voices are recorded and circulated in a number of formats—from blogs, to interactive comment feedback forms, to video interviews that can be uploaded onto any number of sites that operate as archives and distribution tools. In fact, as Jodi Dean pointed out a number of years ago, one can argue that "publicity" is the basic ideology of the Internet.[8] As such, the Internet provides an important site for the development and proliferation of the interview, given that it is so centrally invested in projects of publication, of making public. Additionally, the basic "interactivity" of digital media's means of production fits well within the context of the modern Human-Computer-Interface that, some argue, "is

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[6] Leah Lievrouw, *Alternative and Activist New Media* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011).

[7] "Because it offers universal access, un-coerced communication, freedom of expression, an unrestricted agenda, participation outside of traditional political institutions and generates public opinion through processes of discussion, the Internet looks like the most ideal speech situation." Hubertus Buchstein, "Bytes That Byte: The Internet and Deliberative Democracy," *Constellations* 4 (October 1997): 251.

[8] Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 4.

by definition interactive."[9] In fact, an analogy could be made between the interview and the interface, the code/screen through which reading, reception, access, and participation is mediated—enabled, shaped, and determined. The Internet, in particular, extends and expands the basic interactivity of computers and the myths associated with this essential functionality.[10]

The potential for viewer/user interaction with interview material on the Internet extends the sense of the interview as an interactive process and structure that can involve the viewer directly. Enabling the appearance of discours in Benveniste's sense and employing a rhetoric of direct address, the web actually allows viewers to respond "directly" to engage with the material, literally activating the clips by selecting and clicking. The interactivity of the web is functional—but the presentation of this interactivity is also only readable because it takes particular forms like the comment sections that occupy a large portion of the screen on YouTube pages and the *60 Minutes* website. These forms are updated versions of the "comments" and "responses" that early interview projects elicited. In the case of *The Morning Chronicle*'s survey of "Labour and the Poor," the publication of Mayhew's accounts solicited extensive letters to the paper. Mayhew incorporated this "interactive" exchange with his readers when

[9] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 70.
[10] Tara McPherson's early effort to provide a phenomenology of the Web is exemplary in the way that she considers the "experiential modalities…. specific to the medium of the Web itself as related to its materiality, and in some ways, independent from content, and also as ideologies packaged and promoted within certain Web sites." This conceptualization of the functioning of the web is, in many ways, analogous to the way in which I conceive of the form of interview-work. Interview-work is defined in relation to its materiality (its form of appearance), somewhat independent from content, and yet crucially determined with respect to the ideological context and framework in which it operates. Tara McPherson, "Reload: Liveness, Mobility, and the Web," in *New Media/Old Media*, ed. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 200.

he left *The Morning Chronicle* in order to publish his ongoing survey independently. He

included an "Answers to Correspondents" column on the wrapper that covered each of

his weekly editions. It was there that he printed the letters from readers and his own

thoughtful and often elaborate responses to his critics.[11] *60 Minutes* was also a pioneer

in its decision to present excerpts of letters from viewers at the end of most episodes. In

its third season, *60 Minutes'* correspondents began to read these severely edited

responses while cards printed with the comments were shown on screen. These typed

cards featured ellipses to indicate where words had been elided. By doing this, *60

Minutes* demonstrated that it was willing to invite criticism and "honest" enough to

admit how these citations had been truncated. A display of "interactivity" and

"responsiveness," this practice furthered the perception that *60 Minutes* was a site for

public conversation, contributing to and encouraging public dialogue and exchange

(however abbreviated). Growing almost "organically" from the representation of an

interview, these historical responsive practices demonstrate how the consciousness of a

public conditions the media interview. They highlight the significance of the viewer

and reader to the construction, representation, and circulation of interview-work.

But most importantly to this study, the Internet transforms and intensifies some of the

formal conventions associated with the filmed interview. Video footage of "talking

heads" are ubiquitous on the Web, appearing on the websites associated with

documentary films and projects, in addition to YouTube, Bloggingheads.tv, FORA.tv,

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[11] Eileen Yeo, "Mayhew as Social Investigator," in *The Unknown Mayhew,* ed. E. P.
Thompson and Eileen Yeo (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 51.

and countless "news media" and alternative media websites.[12] While not all of these

"talking heads" are the products of interview-work, their formal similarity suggests an

important inter-text for the representations of interview-work on the Web. As a result,

the interviews that do take the form of the "talking head" call our attention to some of

the aesthetic, ideological, and political questions raised by interview-work more

generally. They offer acute examples of the erasure of the labor involved in the

production of an interview as a media text, even as, at the same time, they make even

more evident the relation between the intellectual and discursive labor represented and

the creation of value. In this way, the Internet lays bare the interview's role in the

proliferation of manufactured subjectivities.

These formal "crystallizations" and the range of contexts in which interviews on the

Internet are deployed demonstrate how interview-work is not merely interactive; it is

socially and historically determined. Questions of form as they relate to the shaping and

circulation of content are crucial to the representation of an interview and to the role of

interview-work within cultural production more broadly. Within the context of the

expansion of the field of documentary media into digital formats, interview-work stages

the relation between the part and the whole, the individual and the social, the specific

and the general, in ways that exceed the ethical problematic addressed by earlier

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[12] FORA.tv's description of itself that appears on its YouTube channel is particularly symptomatic, especially in its claim to be "unmediated." Under the heading "About FORA.tv," they write "FORA.tv helps intelligent, engaged audiences get smart. We gather the web's largest collection of unmediated video drawn from live events, lectures, and debates going on all the time at the world's top universities, think tanks and conferences." "ForaTv – YouTube," ForaTv, accessed May 13, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/user/ForaTv.

documentary critics and practitioners.[13] In addition, the very conceptualization of the

interview as a vehicle for "voices" takes an interesting turn given the way in which these

voices are presented (and mediated) on the Internet—a turn that lays bare the role of

the interview in the manufacture and circulation of representations of the expression of

experience and opinion as well as information.[14] As a result, the basic relation between

process and product, between interviewing and being interviewed, between the form of

an interview and its status as a media text, opens onto a more significant set of

questions that concern the very definition and evaluation of intellectual and affective

labor and its role in relation to the maintenance and/or critique of social and economic

structures.

The easy accumulation of interview footage on the web as part of documentary projects

dramatizes the dialectical relation between the part and the whole. Bill Nichols

identified this as a structuring tension in documentary films from the 1970s and 1980s

by distinguishing between "the voices" that are presented and represented in individual

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[13] The interview was conceived primarily as an ethical problem for critics and practitioners in the 1980s and 1990s because they focused on the power relations between an interviewer and an interviewee as instantiated in both the process of interviewing and the recorded product. See Introduction, pp. 12-13.

[14] Mary Ann Doane, "Information, Crisis, Catastrophe," in *Logics of Television: Cultural Criticism*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 222-239. Doane's analysis of the representation of information on television is instructive for my reading of the interview's representation of information across various media. The interview is crucial to the production of information because it navigates and mediates the very de-contextualization that, according to Doane, defines something as "information" as opposed to knowledge. Providing a "context" in the form of the "event" of the interview itself, interviews appear to situate utterances in relation to a source and as such "humanize" the information contained within the statements offered. But the manufactured character of this new context and source works almost entirely to re-naturalize the way in which "sound-bytes," "moments," and "quotations" can be re-used and circulate in ways that are precisely "out of context." And importantly, this process re-asserts the significance of the medium that "delivers" or "presents" these newly "framed" products, in this case, the Internet.

interviews and the "voice" of the film. For Nichols, this is the distinction between a film's argument and its evidence, usually composed from interview material. In the context of the web presentation of interview projects like Left Forum's webpage, the sensation of any sort of coherent "whole" with respect to what Nichols calls "the argument" of a documentary film is very intangible. In many cases, the grid format is deployed to present archives of video footage. Interviews lend themselves to this archiving because they are easily edited down to snippets and self-contained segments. Encapsulated, the interview material becomes readily available, easy to hand, and visually comprehensible as pure parts (whether connected or unconnected from any whole). Infinitely categorizable under their "subjects," thumbnails of talking heads are especially appropriate images to represent interview footage of any length. In fact, this "form" is the preferred form for the representation of lectures and public talks as well.

In the case of Left Forum's webpage, these interviews are pictured as parts of the edifice of capital that are being dismantled. But in most cases, the frame-grabs and the footage to which they are linked function as building blocks for a documentary experience. The webpage for *Capturing Reality*, a conventional documentary about documentary making made by Pepita Ferrari for the National Film Board of Canada in 2008, is a meta-filmic example.[15] The web page features 163 thumbnail still images from filmed interviews with 38 documentary filmmakers. Recognizable as "images" from interviews, this array of heads and shoulders against a uniform black background is arranged in a grid. Each

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[15] "Capturing Reality: The Art of Documentary," National Film Board of Canada, last modified February 8, 2010, accessed May 13, 2012, http://films.nfb.ca/capturing-reality/.

image and clip is differentiated by an outline of the frame of the video.[16] Such a grid

format is the typical way in which video material is organized and presented online. For

these interviews, the grid illustrates and underscores the ways in which interview

footage provides the basic material with and around which conventional (and not so

conventional) documentaries are constructed. In the case of this project, the atomized

and disarticulated collection of clips offers a mode of viewing that is distinct from the

unified spectatorship experience of the documentary film that aired on Canadian Public

Television as well as in Film Festivals. Available on DVD through the website, that

"single channel" version is accompanied by a second "Special Features" DVD that

contains all of the clips that are featured on the website. Conceived as companions or

supplements to the documentary film, both of these new media formats offer a

"different" way to navigate a documentary film, one in which the consumer/user's

choice determines the "narrative" line and order of the viewing process.

Pictured as a set of resources, something to be wandered or "surfed" through, these new

"extras" dramatize the ideological implications of the regularization and exchangeability

of this particular presentation of a face with a voice. In these instances, the convention

of the talking head is further reinforced in a way that aestheticizes the interview as a

delivery system for a very particular sort of content. Mute and un-labelled, these

images of faces not only signify a series of answers, a series of statements on particular

topics; they also represent a range of individual subjectivities and voices. Captured and

frozen in these thumbnail stills, these subjectivities and voices await the action of the

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[16] Interestingly enough, these interviews are not presented in the old-fashioned 3:4
video aspect ratio, but rather they employ the cinematic aspect ratio of 16:9. This
suggests that the filmmakers are trying to mark *Capturing Reality* as a cinematic text,
rather than a digital one.

viewer to become re-animated. In this way, the stills themselves illustrate the process

of abstraction and subjectivization that interview-work produces. Isolated, these are

images of commodities that speak: figures that are interchangeable and uniform,

products of a labor that is mostly hidden.[17] They embody the answers that can circulate

freely from the living bodies that produced them, from the social and material context in

which they were created and crafted.

The history of the phrase "talking head" mirrors this dynamic as well. The term was

used initially in the late 1800s to describe an attraction in public exhibitions and magic

shows. As part of a live spectacle-act, a head that appeared to be severed from its body

demonstrated its ability to speak, eat, and channel voices and personalities from the

beyond.[18] A term of short-hand utilized by television producers to designate one of the

building blocks in documentary and news production, the term begins to appear in

newspaper articles about television with some regularity starting in 1968. A canny

appellation, it is everywhere and nowhere both in production, industry vocabulary, and

television and media studies. Despite its significance as a descriptor and an implicit

critique of the character of media production, the term itself has received little

attention.[19] To a great degree, the phrase "talking head" reinforces the very processes of

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[17] At the end of his first chapter on the commodity, Marx writes: "If commodities could
speak, they would say this: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us
as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own
intercourse as commodities proves it. We relate to each other merely as exchange-
values." Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I*, 176-177. For an elaborate reading of another
history of commodities that speak, see Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the
Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
[18] "Open Air Worship," *The New York Times*, August 18, 1874, 8.
[19] The number of documentary studies that refer to "the talking head" is too long to list.
But I call attention to Roger Hallas' recent study in which he uses the phrase "talking
head." In two chapters about videos that feature interview testimony, he uses this phrase

de-contextualization and replicability that it describes. The term "talking head"

identifies and encapsulates a central operation and economic imperative inherent in the

interview process: the making of a person into an object. The term is both a

generalization and a description of a form of representation that is entirely without

particularity or content.[20] The form of appearance of a "talking head" corresponds to the

way in which the recording of speech and visual presence entailed in a filmed interview

can operate in the service of generalizing and abstracting the subject it films (both the

interviewee and the topics/stories covered). Utilized for quotations and sound-bytes,

talking heads are associated with a monological rather than a dialogical understanding

of speech that foregrounds the social and polyvalent character of language.[21] Self-

contained, a talking head appears to have no history. But "talking heads" on television

rarely appear alone. They are almost always presented in relation to an anchor, a host

or interviewer, someone off-screen. Apart from the President of the United States and

news anchors, the only talking heads that speak directly to the viewer are the talking

heads in advertising.

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to indicate the basic formal convention of these videos. One of these chapters is even
entitled "Historical Trauma and the Performance of Talking Heads," but Hallas does
not address or account for his use of the phrase at any point in the text. Roger Hallas,
Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image (Durham: Duke
University Press, 2009).
[20] Talking heads are representations of moving body parts that are exchangeable in a
way that "faces" are not; faces are different, the site of unique expression and excesses of
information. The relation between the "talking head" convention and theories of the
cinematic close-up deserved study. For an overview of the scholarship, see Mary Ann
Doane, "The Close Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema," *differences: A Journal of Feminist
Cultural Studies* 14, no.3 (2003): 89-111.
[21] Bearers of mere "talk," as opposed to speech or dialogue, these textual forms are
fleeting and momentary, responsive to a present.

On the Internet, interviewees appear in grids and thumbnails in which the mediation of the interview is usually effaced. The thumbnail images hide the dialogical and social processes that produced them. Presented in a grid, they offer an image of a social and documentary totality that is atomized, de-constructed. To great degree, this is prefigured in the thumbnail images of interviewees that introduce each section of the film *Word is Out*, analyzed in Chapter Three. And in that, as in these websites, we begin to see the challenge of producing an image of the social, of building a social movement from the standpoint of such well articulated subjectivities, from interviews that present a single speaking subject. In that documentary, we are presented with 28 "stories," drawn from interviews, segments of which are woven together to develop both a trenchant social analysis but also a sense of collectivity. The structure highlights the significance of the relations and connections between each story and, by including audio of the questions posed to the subjects, the film consistently asserts the social character not only of the process of the filmmaking, but also of the ways in which the subjectivities represented are in fact determined and shaped in relation to social conditions, and specifically structural discrimination. In a related but much more commercial way, the stories on *60 Minutes* are constructed from dialogical interviews, situated entirely within a context in which particular durational moments can be highlighted in ways that demonstrate the productive capacity of the program and the network (as well as US television as a cultural form). In the cases examined in Chapter Two, each segment and interview works to establish the individuality of the correspondent and the interviewee, presenting and manufacturing singular subjectivities.

In the Left Forum's grid presentation of its digital talking heads, something else is also at work. Interested in problematizing the very possibility of a singular argument or perspective, the presentation of these individual talking head videos are framed explicitly as offering a series of different answers to *questions.* Presented as a collection of "voices" in which no one "voice" is meant to dominate, the answers represent a range of opinions and perspectives on both the Occupy movement and on the conditions to which this recent social movement has responded. Where other web documentaries often fall back on the subject's name to structure and organize the presentation of interview footage, Left Forum's webpage leaves out the names of the speakers; they are framed as "voices" in an invocation of the centrality of speech to the conception of politics being produced and circulated by this website. In the absence of names, the *questions* are foregrounded, appearing as titles at the beginning of each clip and framing every answer in a way that reasserts the dialogical character of the interview as a form.

Some of the questions are quite general; but it is clear that the questions were composed to make the filmed statements legible to the viewer. These titles cards provide framing for video clips that might otherwise seem dissolute or unorganized; and the slight repetitions also serve to cohere a diversity of answers that might betray an ideological or political incoherence. Questions include: Who organized the Occupy Movement?; What will it take to change this country?; Do you think this movement confronts capitalism?; Blame the system or blame the individual?; What do you think are some alternatives to capitalism?; What are some important features of the Occupy movement's democratic structure?; How are the occupations affecting capitalism?; Do you think this movement poses a threat to capitalism?; What is wrong with America

and what is the power of this movement? A celebration of the democratic and popular nature of these activities, each question and answer is framed as one of many. The lack of attribution in the video clips suggests that the website user's own voice and opinion could just as easily fit into one of these blocks, could be transformed into an interview that could circulate and contribute to the documentary evidence of political consciousness and activism.

Left Forum's webpage also illustrates the interview's role in the dissemination of dissent and "alternative" media, information, and analysis on the Internet. In addition to its "new content," the website also builds on the copious amount of documentary interview-work already on the web. Associated but not explicitly or literally "linked" to *Democracy Now!*, the webpage uses an interview from this alternative news source in the construction of its web edifice.[22] *Democracy Now!*, itself, relies extensively on interview-work for its original content. On *Democracy Now!*'s website, interviews conducted by Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez appear in multiple formats: as transcripts, streaming and archived video, live radio, and audio podcasts. The website also allows its listeners/viewers/users to stay connected to this progressive news source through Twitter, Facebook, and live RSS feeds. Exhibiting the interview's remarkable ability to be "remediated," this redundancy makes the substance of the interviews even more available for wide circulation.[23] It also highlights how central the interview as a form is to the circulation of alternative media.

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[22]"Michael Moore & Cornel West on OWS, Iraq & the Progressive Discontent Obama Faces in '12 Vote," *Democracy Now!*, accessed May 13, 2012, http://www.democracynow.org/2011/10/24/michael_moore_cornel_west_on_ows.
[23] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

In fact, the interview's structure of question and answer is so crucial to Left Forum's presentation that it is used to turn actual "speeches" into interviews. For example, Frances Fox Piven's talk at OccupyWallstreet is made into an interview through the insertion of title/question cards—an operation that happens to Naomi Klein and David Harvey as well.

> Title Card: Why did people choose to occupy Wall Street?
> Piven: Wall Street is the center
> Crowd: Wall Street is the center
> Piven: of the neoliberal cancer
> Crowd: of the neoliberal cancer
> Piven: that has spread across the world.
> Crowd: that has spread across the world.
> Title Card: What has Big Business done to disrupt social and economic relations?
> Piven: They have managed
> Crowd: They have managed
> Piven: over the last 50 years
> Crowd: over the last 50 years
> Piven: to push all the tax on our back
> Crowd: to push all the tax on our back
> Piven: and to virtually eliminate their own tax.
> Crowd: and to virtually eliminate their own tax.
> Piven: And then what do they do?
> Crowd: And then what do they do?
> Piven: They say that the deficits are the big problem.
> Crowd: They say that the deficits are the big problem.
> Piven: They are a problem.
> Crowd: They are a problem.
> Piven: Because Big Business and Finance have stopped paying taxes.
> Crowd: Because Big Business and Finance have stopped paying taxes.

Unnamed, except in the credits beneath this work, this "individual" speaker is not as important as the exchange and circulation of ideas in which she is participating. And yet the contradiction is that she *is* recognizable, demonstrably a "speaker" not just one of the crowd, a paradox that the form of the interview recapitulates through its work in defining subjectivity in and against the social.

The organizers explain the idea behind the presentation in a quicktime of captioning

that plays at the center of the grid/edifice/pyramid.[24] In this simple sequence of

statements, the significance of these video interviews is tied to the ethical and political

aims of Left Forum more generally:

> Upon finding everything from uncertainty to insight and skepticism as to
> what the term capitalism means, we wanted to convey the following
> point, which also reflects our own learning experience in doing these
> interviews:
>
> Everyone's conception of capitalism is equally valid: no one has a lock on
> the best definition.
>
> At the same time, living in a country where mainstream cultural
> institutions demonize people's attempts to feel dignity in exploring the
> meaning of capitalism as a system, it is equally important to find
> solidarity in developing a more unified, transformational understanding
> of capitalism.
>
> It is towards balancing these sides of the same exploratory effort that the
> following work is directed.

Placed at the focal point of the page, this text highlights that these interviews are

research and evidence, at the same time that they constitute an incomplete collection of

material whose diversity points to the need for a project that might unite them. Here,

interview-work is presented as both a means of production and a product. It is a tool for

the production and collection of research and the form through which that very same

research is presented and circulated. In this instance, these "dialogical" building blocks

represent a discursive process and activity that fits perfectly into the model of

knowledge production that the Left Forum seeks to embody; they represent a "part of" a

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[24] For a critique of the recent use of the pyramid form, see Eric James Triantafillou,
""We Rule You": The Visual Epistemology of Capitalism as a Pyramid " (master's thesis,
University of Chicago, 2011).

larger dialogical impulse and historically determined imperative. In this example, the literal form of the interview and its presentation are analogous to the politics of horizontality espoused by the Left Forum, a politics based on an understanding of de-centralization as inherently antithetical and hostile to the hierarchies and inequalities of capitalism.

In this instance, understanding the interview and its presentation as interview-work is crucial because the interview-work here refers to the project of recording the interviews, editing them, and presenting them on the web as well as the political work that occasioned the discussions that have already occurred and that will also happen going forward. This shares an affinity with Pasolini's project in *Comizi D'Amore*, which was discussed in Chapter Three. Pasolini's film and this webpage both highlight interview-work as a process of inquiry in which the questions and the framing are as symptomatic as the answers. To a great degree, Left Forum and Pasolini both *impose* questions on their interview subjects. But the significant difference is the way in which Left Forum's questions are unvoiced, disembodied, and abstracted. They appear in text, something that the viewer/user must read rather than hear. The work of interviewing is out of sight, referenced but unseen. In addition, this collection of "people on the street" interviews and, more specifically, of people at Occupy Wallstreet, pictures individual speakers standing in front of populated scenes. But only the transformed "speeches" capture any active sense of the social character of speech acts in the space of Zuccotti Park. In the "man on the street" interviews, the interviewees are plucked out of the crowd, distinguished from those around them, ushered into a personal conversation with another person with a video camera. In contrast, the repetitions

produced by "the human microphone" performance of Piven's pronouncements underscore the centrality of "speech" to the movement. These representations of interviews demonstrate the profound mediation of speech by the social context and by the physical bodies of the participants who create the amplification (in its technologically mediated form) that has been restricted by city ordinances (and police enforcement). A radically different "use" of the interview form, these video clips document expressions of resistance to "capitalism" at the same time that they register a newly activated desire for the articulation of more nuanced critiques, for more forms and forums for political activity and movement building.

However, most of the video clips on the webpage do not transform speeches; they use the commodity form of the interview, the talking head, to represent a range of different ideas and affiliations. The individual interviews on Left Forum's webpage are not instances of testimony based on experience, nor are they particularly trenchant analyses. Neither an attempt to construct a story, nor an accumulation of stories, these documentary interviews demonstrate the formal relation between interview-work and critique. But they also perpetuate the packaging and circulation of short speech-acts conceived of as political in and of themselves. The website indulges in a celebration of the proliferation of diversity even as it points out the necessity for the construction of solidarity. Documentation of discussions that have taken place in a recent past, these videos represent a sample of possible ideas, opinions, and people that one might encounter "in person" at a future date. As a result, the focus in this admittedly basic webpage is on the expectation that this dialogue will continue offline. But the evidence of "discussion" is still grounded in the deployment of the talking head form as a mode of

documentation; it serves as a delivery vehicle for individual statements whose value

derives from their exchange value as representations of diverse opinions. The form

itself has the capacity to encourage off-line participation, but the statements themselves

have value only in so far as they are interchangeable. Abstracted from social exchange,

the labor of interviewing is effaced.

The credits, framing, and formal presentation all contribute to the production of

meaning within these interviews. Together, these elements gesture towards a range of

categories of "the real," and, even more importantly, sites of cultural and social

production. Even though the user navigates and chooses the sequence of clips, this

"participation" is merely a prelude to future face-to-face conversations. The signifiers of

"the web's participatory possibilities" are notably absent: there is neither a comments

section nor a way to upload one's own interviews. But explicit associations with the

ongoing "interactive" feeds of the moment are also missing: there are no Twitter or

Facebook links. Instead, the imposition of the form of the interview itself signifies

"interactivity." No longer imagined as just a basic vehicle through which information is

circulated on the Internet, the form of the documentary interview operates as a crucial

model for the production of politics more broadly, a goad to "add your voice" to growing

movements.[25] Thus, Left Forum's webpage promotes a belief in the documentary

interview as a method that has a politics in and of itself; it suggests that interview-work

is a method with an inherent radical potential as opposed to a historically determined

form that is centrally implicated in the connection between liberal bourgeois ideas about

[25] Another interesting aspect of this website is the relationship it has to documentary media and to the act of filming (and editing) more generally: it sits between documentation and documentary work, between "unmediated" footage and a highly constructed presentation.

the power of individual speech acts and the commodification of media production and subjectivity itself.

In its embrace of the interview as a political device, the project displays an affinity with and debt to the group interview-work of the 1970s described in Chapter Three. It shares the same commitment to interview-work as a form of and tool for consciousness-raising. As in those films, the interview form here produces and represents a discursive relation between the viewer and the interviewees, drawing the viewer into the sense of a shared conversation through the use of direct address. But perhaps most importantly, these texts draw an analogy between the documentary interview and political activity and highlight the instrumental character of media production more generally. But whereas the interview-work in *Word is Out* and *The Woman's Film* articulated the way in which the personal relates to the social and political, the interview-work on Left Forum's webpage registers the formal and political difficulties associated with articulating a common goal. Rather than rehearse the well-worn criticism of the Occupy movement's inability to construct concrete demands, this interview-work gestures towards a future event at which the absence of a unified critique of capitalism might be addressed directly.[26] This use of the interview asserts the productive relation between the Internet and the practices of "real" embodied encounters and political organizing, some of which are even facilitated by technologies of the Internet. It does this by emphasizing the form that interview-work takes, relying on it as analogy and a representation of the sorts of interactions that it hopes to inspire. In this way, Left

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[26] Marco Deseriis and Jodi Dean, "A Movement Without Demands?," *Possible Futures: A Project of the Social Science Research Council* January 3, 2012, accessed May 13, 2012, http://www.possible-futures.org/2012/01/03/a-movement-without-demands/.

Forum's webpage continues a practice that situates interview-work within a field of

cultural production that extends beyond the boundaries of documentary film and video,

pointing towards the desire to inform and activate the public—a call to join a common

effort to articulate the problems and questions facing a social movement, to participate

in building an analysis.

The questions raised by the aforementioned documentary interviews on the Web call

attention to some of the recent challenges posed to the field of documentary practice

and studies. None of these are occasioned by the undermining of the photographic

ground or indexical guarantee by digital media. Rather, the questions posed by the

interview are manifested on the Internet in ways that can generate a confrontation with

the politics of the very forms we take for granted. The form of appearance of the

interview on the Internet stages a new configuration of the dialectic between the

immediate, "real," "live," and in-person and the recorded, documented, and

technologically mediated.[27]

The representation of the interview establishes a structure of analogy between these

two in a way that points to a dialectical and therefore shifting relation to historical

conditions, social conditions, and context. Indeed, changes in the conventions of the

documentary interview have a relation to the transformation of the semantic meaning of

the very term "documentary" that Philip Rosen has identified.[28] Rosen characterizes

this shift as a development from documentary's association with an educational project

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[27] Philip Rosen, "Document and Documentary: On the Persistence of Historical
Concepts," 66-67.
[28] Ibid.

to the term's linkage with a process of authentication. The final stage that Rosen pinpoints is the connection of documentary with the assertion of authority. In this recent online iteration of the documentary interview, we can glimpse another shift in the function of documentary media, one that is allied with a process of inquiry that is not signified by reflexivity. More than "epistephilia," these documentary interviews register a renewed sense of documentary media's role in a pedagogy that actively seeks to transform the meaning and operations of the public sphere in which it circulates.[29] As a result, it becomes even more imperative to interrogate the ideological problematic that the representation of interview-work reflects and produces.

As I argued in the introduction of this dissertation, the interview is a social and cultural form whose persistence across different media, time periods, disciplines, and contexts makes it a particularly useful object with which to chart the shifting modes of production, technologies, labor practices, and social relations that shape contemporary subjectivity, economic conditions, and cultural texts. Left Forum's website offers an example of a profound encounter with these economic shifts. This interview project was occasioned by a movement borne in response to the lack of concern for the 99% of the people who have been most affected by the economic crisis that came to a head in 2008.[30] As a result, this documentation of some of those voices from below provides a fitting end to a dissertation that charts the genealogy of the relation between interview-work and progressive efforts. A representation of a movement of people affected by an economic transformation, Left Forum's project is related but quite distinct from Henry

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[29] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 31.
[30] David McNally, *Global Slump: The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance* (Oakland: PM Press, 2011).

Mayhew's investigation into living conditions and the status of the wage in the context of growing inequality, poverty, and disease in London in the 1840s. No longer a critique of capitalism from the standpoint of labor, Left Forum's deployment of interview-work aims at a different scale of analysis, and the types of questions register the profound shifts in economic conditions and the increased abstraction of labor and capital. But the form of the interview is recognizable even in its visible differences. Despite the distinctions of the media and the historical conditions, these interview projects share a similar logic in their construction of a relation to the real and concrete and to their readers/viewers through the inscription and circulation of image and speech. Interview-work does not escape the contradictions and deformations created by capitalist class relations, but it can expose them, make them readable and "public" in a way that has the potential to call attention to some of the central ideological challenges of the work to change the very nature of the capitalist system.

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