Electronic media as an aids awareness facilitator within prison

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ELECTRONIC MEDIA AS AN AIDS AWARENESS FACILITATOR
WITHIN PRISON.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the degree

MA

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

BRUCE FELL, BA.

(Graduate School of Journalism)

This thesis is dedicated to all incarcerated men and woman, in particular to the directors and producers of *When In Rome*, in their struggle to correspond from the AIDS battlefield.
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SCRIPT  i
The thesis describes a cable television AIDS awareness information program, *When In Rome*, produced and located within a specific prison community cultural environment.

This thesis analyses processes of televisually authenticating vital, current, cultural factuality (a discourse predominantly associated with broadcast television journalism), from the perspective of 'within-community communication'.

The thesis notes that, when televisual contact is the fundamental mechanism for imparting factuality, the differences between mass televisual discourse and non-professional televisual discourse, can influence the conceptualisation and dissemination of factuality.

The thesis demonstrates how the producers imparted vital, current, cultural factuality, not being addressed by daily broadcast television information programs.

A study of the origins of authenticating and disseminating moving image information is undertaken. This information is presented as a means of contextualizing choices of image presentation style which the producers utilised to authenticate and disseminate information.

It will be demonstrated how the post-modern discourse of *When In Rome* echoes re-presentational and re-encoding process, distinctly linked to pre-televisual newsreel and documentary film.

The thesis notes that film and televisual authenticating devices have been, and are, subject to constant reinterpretation. This is supported by demonstrating how mainstream information-authenticating conventions were adapted for a specific 'within-community communication'.

The thesis concludes that by utilising a mélange of documentary genres, combined with culturally-specific symbology and referential links, the producers were able to engage, report, impart and authenticate vital, current, cultural factuality.
You think the crises are bleak now? They are, but can you imagine how much bleaker it would have been had network television and daily journalism had to have been relied on as sole providers of solace and truth? Many of us who cannot imagine such a climate fail in the imagining because in that event we would already have been dead.

(Bill Horrigan, 1993, p 173)
INTRODUCTION

Over the last one hundred years an increasing amount has been written by academics, documentary makers, journalists and media researchers about communicating with the mass audience. In more recent times a greater recognition of the heterogeneous nature of society has led to a growing interest and investigation into non-mainstream discourses. It is hoped that this thesis will add to that growing body of work. This thesis examines and describes a cable television AIDS awareness information program, *When In Rome*, that was produced and located within a specific prison community cultural environment.

The thesis analyses televisual processes the producers used to engage, report and impart current factuality discourses that we more readily associate with conventional contemporary televisual journalism. The thesis analyses the discourses of authenticity by examining their origins. In turn, this enables a discussion of how and why they were replicated and adapted within a specific community communication.

The notion that mainstream broadcast news, current affairs and documentary present information using culturally specific storytelling devices is universally accepted. The way that non-broadcast, and in particular non-mainstream news, current affairs and documentary practitioners present information is not universally understood. The thesis outlines how the authenticating devices utilised in the production relied on local style and location to communicate within its community. More formalised news and documentary practices are used to communicate with the mass audience. However, as Cubitt suggests, ‘within-community communication’ is more likely to employ different approaches that
draw on more fictive elements.¹ This thesis analyses those elements of production utilised in a specific ‘within-community communication’.

I feel privileged to have been involved with such a unique event as the production of *When In Rome*. To the best of my knowledge the production of innovative programs such as *When In Rome* is no longer possible in the NSW Department of Corrective Services. In retrospect, this production has a greater significance than I originally acknowledged during its production in 1991. Until inmates are once more empowered to become televisually pro-active, *When In Rome* represents the high water mark in non-mainstream televisual communication for Bathurst jail, if not for the entire Australian correctional system.

*When In Rome* was ‘officially’ produced and directed by the writer for the Department of Corrective Services. However, due to my teaching praxis the actual producers were inmates who formed the Bathurst prison AIDS Task Force. The actual directors were the inmate-social actors in the production.

The televisual syntax of mainstream news, current affairs and documentary reportage predominantly implies that a professional journalist is, or has been at the location of a personally witnessed culturally significant event. Instances are appearing where the professional journalist is not privy, either physically or via file footage, to a culturally significant current event; yet, that event is reported on and

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viewed by inhabitants of our televisual society. The technological achievements and mass production of televisual equipment over recent times have enabled this process to occur. Prisoners, who have access to televisual technology, can be seen as one example of this phenomenon. Thus, they've acquired the syntax - been exposed to it.

As previously stated, at the time of production I did not fully appreciate the significance of the project. It was only while researching screen language, and in particular the screen language utilised by early CD-ROM image engineers, that my thoughts returned to *When In Rome*. I had noticed how some CD-ROM image engineers used cinematic transition effects, like wipes and dissolves, in a non-traditional televisual syntax. Later research convinced me that these early CD-ROM image engineers had a propensity to use transition effects in a not dissimilar vein to some 19th century image makers; that is, the transition effect was outside of our contemporary televisual reading of the screen. It seems that these CD-ROM image engineers had predominantly centred their attention on the many and varied transition effects that could be digitally generated, rather than utilising transition effects, to aid in the storytelling process. Their emphasis, when it came to screen transitions, appeared to be the technologically based spectacle of the transition effect. They often appeared to totally ignore the screen language associated with a particular transition effect. To put it another way, often their emphasis, when it came to visual transition, was the transition technique, as opposed to the dominant televisual syntax of transition as a storytelling device. For example, within our televisual culture, a dissolve from one image to another is predominantly read as a transition in time and/or space. However, in the early CD-ROMs that I viewed, a dissolve did not
Introduction

necessarily equate to a transition in time and/or space. It may have been used merely as a transition from one shot to the next where no actual cinematic time shift took place. The research that followed looked at how moving image technology, combined with cultural imperatives, shaped the reporting of cultural information. This led to my researching the sequencing of images within television news, current affairs and documentary. It is from this research that I became aware of the cinematic evolution of authenticating reality.

When In Rome was produced in an alien environment, for an audience that award winning Australian documentary-maker David Goldie referred to as ‘Out Of Sight Out Of Mind’, the title of his major documentary series on Australian prisons. As Goldie's title suggests, these aliens are predominantly out of ‘our’ sight, though ‘we’ are not out of theirs. As inhabitants of the same televisual universe, we graze the screen as one herd, whether alien prisoner or free citizen. Hence, to effectively communicate with these aliens, who dwell within our televisual universe, all the skill of the professional image maker/journalist is required. The fundamental tenet of this thesis is that these prisoners, while physically removed from our cement and bitumen pathways, still travel the same electronic highways of commercial television, ABC, SBS, and the local video hire shop.

Our society is so inculcated with cinematic, dramaturgical and technological saturation that it is now possible for the incarcerated to access the dominant televisual screen. For this reason, a cinematic process

like the production of *When In Rome* could have only taken place in the latter half of the 20th century. The intimacy of video's inscription and its ability to be community specific especially through the quality of local speech is for Cubitt video's strength and appeal. As we shall see, it was not surprising that the inmates chose televisual communication as their means of expression, since they are part of the wider visually saturated, cinematic and dramaturgical society.

Putnis argues that it is vitally important that journalists who "finally control the pens, microphones, cameras and, very importantly, the editing machines . . . also (in the best cases) expose the back-stage goings-on". My interest lies in these fundamental elements of televisual image communication, construction and reportage. This interest is reflected in my profession, where I impart practical televisual skills such as the fundamentals of script writing, microphone techniques, video camera techniques and most importantly the 'language' of video film editing. Those practical televisual processes, surrounding the technological aspects of authenticating reality, are of most interest to me. However, the nature of my work at Bathurst jail was complex and subsequently it could have been analysed through the focus of several disciplines including Cultural Studies, Drama Practice or perhaps Screen Studies. Indeed I drew on my background as a teacher of Drama, Media Studies and Video Production to set up and facilitate events which led to the production of *When In Rome*, but the prime force for the production, was the AIDS epidemic.

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Although issues surrounding HIV, drug reform, and the culture of prison are not the central thrust of this thesis, it would be remiss not to touch on them.

**Ideology And Technology**

Having established the structural constraints under which *When In Rome* was produced, the thesis then discusses the relevant implications that the available technology had on the production. It will be asserted that *When In Rome* was considerably influenced by the dialectical nature of ideology and technology, as was the history of the dominant screen. The technology used in capturing and rendering the pro-filmic was portable, compact and accessible. The very nature of the technology, its versatility, enabled the inmate's access to the screen as a means of communicating.

As we shall see, the fundamental Western cultural reading of the screen by today's televisual audience, the DNA of screen language, has its genesis within silent, black and white film, dating back to the 19th century. By examining the technological and cultural processes that shaped and worked as information authenticating devices within the documentary and newsreel we can discuss the authenticating processes utilised by the producers. It is only after a thorough discussion of those relevant underpinnings that the thesis can show how the formative, pre-televisual, information authenticating processes of the documentary and news genre are permutated in *When In Rome*.

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It will be asserted that the ‘shape’ of *When In Rome* was moulded by a combination of cultural practice, available technology and carceral management practices. As Cubitt states: ‘technology is utilised within the cultural practice in which it is situated’. As an example, it will be demonstrated that the presentation and content of early moving pictures emulated cultural practice found in the theatre of the day. This fundamental premise provides the basis for discussing how the utilisation of available technology ‘shaped’ the authenticating processes utilised in *When In Rome*.

The journalistic imperative of *When In Rome* was to transfer vital cultural information to a target audience. Establishing televisual contact became fundamental to achieving this aim. Operating within a high risk HIV population, the AIDS Task Force put forward a strong and simple focus message: "if you contract the HIV virus you die... AIDS kills." The imperative was to instigate safe methods to reduce the risk of infection. Although the producers did not set out to work within a specific framework, they did aim to construct a program containing ‘meaning’ and "textuality as a site of life and death". The essential focus became one of representing legitimate authentication.

*When In Rome* was conceptualised within the contemporary cinematic framework of popular television culture. Yet, the cinematic authenticating process utilised to make meaning can be traced to the

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7 Ibid. p 174.
inception of film, predominantly via the evolution of the newsreel and documentary genre. Consequently many of the aesthetic and constructional journalistic televisual outcomes and solutions employed in *When in Rome*, can be viewed as "parallel solutions to historically shared problems". The thesis demonstrates how *When in Rome* echoes representational and re-encoding processes distinctly linked to pre-televisual newsreel and documentary film. The evolution of authenticating reality within the moving image, and in particular the documentary genre, will be discussed as a means of viewing *When In Rome* from within a postmodern documentary discourse. The producers, through drawing on their "naive" filmic literacy produced a documentary representing heroin usage within the prison system and stepped unwittingly into the terrain of visual postmodern discourse as outlined by Ulmer

The postmodern terrain is defined almost exclusively in visual terms, including the display, the icon, the representations of the real seen through the camera's eye, captured on videotape, and given in the moving picture.10

The thesis looks at how, without theoretically articulating the production process, the inmates instinctively drew on their basic visual cinematic knowledge to replicate cultural encoding. These cultural encodings were fundamental to the narrative style utilised to establish visual communication. The AIDS Task Force used a variety of pro-filmic events to 'make meaning'. In particular the depiction of masculine symbols of power and entrenched cultural symbols fundamentally expressed through

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language, dress and environment. created inmate specific encoding mechanisms and historic referentiality. Audience contact was built through images that had relevant and recognisable indexical bonds to referents.¹¹

Relevant aspects of the pre-contemporary evolution of the newsreel and documentary movement will be discussed to demonstrate how screen technology and political image control have always shaped the common cinematic horizon. Technological developments created new circumstances through which other approaches to news and documentary authenticity could be achieved. Yet, this authenticity was always subject to the political image control of the time. The thesis recognises that image control operates at the subtle level of cultural framing and in the more obvious influence of propaganda. The aim of the production was to authenticate a reality that would have legitimate referential weight to the target audience.¹²

All genres utilised in the production of *When In Rome* have been, at various times, utilised in the wider cultural documentary practice. Hence, *When In Rome*, a mere pebble on some vast televisual beach, has nonetheless been inextricably shaped by the incoming and outgoing tides of the last 100 years. It is shown how the producers, in their nascent quest to make meaningful contact with the audience, echoed significant evolutionary stages in the newsreel and documentary phenomenon of


representing reality authentically. The thesis elucidates certain historical documentary production genres within the production of *When In Rome* in a Nietzschean sense: "by coming back into being, which move forward by echoing the past".\(^3\)

Consequently the thesis argues that reading *When In Rome* in a contemporary context requires an understanding of modernist newsreel and documentary processes to re-present and re-encode legitimate authenticity. What evolved was a unique situation; on the one hand, the audience was culturally encoded to read the televisual screen through the latest contemporary inscribing technology; on the other hand, the producers, having been empowered to write and produce information for the prison population, only had access, by contemporary standards, to fundamental 'domestic style' televisual inscribing equipment. The thesis concludes that the inmates visually authenticated their information through the universal practice of converting information into a story. This enabled the AIDS Task Force to re-present and report the danger of a culturally dangerous daily event in a voice acceptable and assessable to its audience.

**Methodological Praxis**

It is hoped that this thesis will assist in the understanding of the processes involved in transferring culturally vital information within non-mainstream media. An obstacle which arises when dealing with non-mainstream discourse, as presented in this thesis, is that much of the work is new and innovative. Therefore, it may be at worst impossible and at best difficult to rely on quantitative or comparative content analysis.

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as methods of investigation. In instances like this the researcher often relies on less verifiable methods of analysis. This thesis applies an analysis of pre-televisual moving image communication used to encode authenticity. Only after such general and theoretical matters associated with encoding moving image authenticity are addressed thoroughly is any attempt made to analyse the encoding procedure adopted by the producers of *When In Rome*. This textual analysis will be complemented by observational research of the production practices employed by the inmates. This is undertaken as participation in the development of a greater understanding within the discourse of ‘within-community communication’.

As stated, instances like the one I found myself in are extremely rare; I did not fully appreciate how rare at the time. I was working within a vacuum of optimism. I believed at the time that the televisual information I was overseeing would lead to the implementation of a needle exchange program within the NSW prison system and hence facilitate in the slowing down of the AIDS epidemic. As we enter the last five years of the twentieth century, needle exchange services, common in the wider community, are still not available within NSW prisons. Hence the men and woman associated with the NSW prison system are still at a higher risk than the wider community of coming in contact with the HIV virus, thus placing the larger community at a higher risk of infection.
2.1 BACKGROUND

My association with Bathurst Jail commenced in 1984, initially as a part-time Drama teacher and later teaching Aboriginal Studies and Media Studies. During this time I taught in both the male and female prisons at Bathurst. I eventually declined an offer to become a full-time education officer for the Department of Corrective Services, choosing instead full-time contract work with the School of Communication, CSU-Bathurst. Since resigning from my position at Bathurst Jail, I have been involved with several jail related video projects; *When In Rome* is one such project.

By nature the prison system experiences a consistent turnover in both inmate and staff personnel. Many support and teaching staff are employed on a short-term contract basis. Additionally, the department finds it difficult to attract men and woman interested in a career as prison workers. For a variety of complex personal and social reasons many prison workers find it difficult to sustain a positive interest in the prison system. Consequently all new comers are received with caution by all who operate within the prison culture. Thus, after my first twelve months on the job, I was considered to be an established figure, part of the culture. The outcome of this was that I gained the confidence of many long-term inmates. To gain such confidence I went through a protracted series of testing stages. Inmates, like individuals in the wider community, rely on a variety of emotional, physical and psychological manoeuvrings in their attempts to influence. Once the long term inmates contextualised my persona, I was accepted. For the majority of these long term prisoners, Bathurst Jail was

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14 The Female prison has since been incorporated into the other women's prisons in NSW.
the place where they lived; some went as far as considering it ‘a kind of home’. These men had by far the most influence within the inmate population. They were the initiators within the inmate population.

**In-View Arts Group**

During my initial role as a Drama instructor I was part of a team which assisted a group of artists and musicians within the prison to establish an arts action group, the ‘In-view Arts Group’. Inmates were actively encouraged to participate in a variety of cultural activities, including painting and pottery exhibitions, pre-recorded programs for the local FM station (2MCE-FM) and organising recreational functions. They staged a series of rock concerts touring the NSW prison system. Paul Kelly and The Coloured Girls, and Do Re Me were some of the acts that toured the prison system at the time.

**Cable Television**

The screen is no blackboard, and the prime test of every film that is projected on its surface is that it shall be interesting to the spectator. It may be teeming with genuine instructive value, it may contain what is generally called a ‘message,’ but if it fails to hold the audience's attention, the value and the message will be lost.15

Prior to my involvement with the prison, the prison Sports Association (a powerful lobby group) had successfully lobbied to have a VCR connected to the prison cable system. The cable system had been originally designed to deliver broadcast television to the cells. The inmate Sports Association had

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I coordinated several arts and educational videos for the In-view Arts Group. This resulted in the Drug and Alcohol Authority providing funding to establish the first prison-based, inmate-access, video production studio in Australia. This consisted of a VHS video editing suite and a VHS video camera.

The facility was seen as an extension to the existing video cable system linking the two hundred and fifty cells within the prison. It was argued that the cable system would enable inmates to interact. The education wing of the prison supported the application for video equipment, arguing that an in-house cable television service would facilitate literacy education.

Bathurst prison incarcerates around two hundred and fifty prisoners, housed in four separate dormitories (A, B, C and D Block). Two of these Blocks (C&D) are designated for long term prisoners. The majority of these long term prisoners were able to make their cell reasonably comfortable. It was not unusual for these cells to house a TV, music console, posters, book shelves, rugs, personal photographs. All extra items were purchased by the individual prisoner. Many of the more transient inmates housed in Blocks A&B, who did not have a personal television, watched communal televisions, linked into the cable system.

16 The commercial station Mid-State is now Prime television.
In-View Cable TV produced a variety of video material for the cable system as well as the education and industrial wings of the prison. The prisoners also produced a program for the Bland Shire Council. The council provided the raw material and the inmates post-produced, edited, titled and recorded the voice-overs.

One of the most popular and consistent functions of In-view Cable TV was the production of a weekly ten to fifteen minute news and current affairs program ‘Crim-box’. Crim-box rapidly became perceived as the voice of the inmate. Crim-box was cabled every Friday at around 9.30 pm. It was programmed to run between two movies rented from a local video hire business. The videos were chosen by one of the sub-sections in C or D Block, thus reflecting the taste of the majority. The first video commenced around 8 pm, as the inmates were being locked into their cells for the night. Within a matter of months, Crim-box became part of the Friday night jail culture.

As the program gained in popularity, the number of inmates interested in making a segment or assisting in making a segment for the program increased. It is interesting to note that early episodes were not inclined towards news and current affairs; rather they mainly consisted of prison based music clips and re-edited commercial music clips. As the influence of Crim-box became more apparent, several influential long term prisoners became substantially involved. It was these men who significantly influenced the voice of In-view cable TV. These men were to become the personalities, the Andrew Olle's and George Negus's of Crim-box and
consequently In-view cable TV. Eventually Crim-box became the sounding board for the generic political issues of the day. The program took on a more traditional news and current affairs format and appearance. In the course of reporting on the many prison activities of the past week, the inmate presenters interviewed fellow inmates as well as a wide variety of official prison visitors, educators, social workers, law workers, artists, etc. The program became so popular and was seen as such a positive means of community communication, that various educational and prison support workers, including myself, arranged to have a wide variety of guests visit the jail, for the sole purpose of being interviewed for Crim-box.

### Interviewing The Superintendent

The influence of In-view Cable TV and in particular Crim-box came to the fore when the Superintendent of the jail agreed to appear before the In-view Cable TV camera. At the time a major issue concerning jail security was widely rumoured to be on the verge of implementation. The rumours suggested that the Department of Corrective Services was canvassing the idea of withdrawing certain privileges that had been instigated as a result of the Nagle Royal Commission. The rumours suggested that prisoners would no longer be able to buy special foods and would lose the use of their own radios, posters and computers, as well as other personal items. A counter rumour arose and circulated, suggesting growing support for a prison riot. The rumour was taken very seriously, since a riot razed the prison in February 1974.  

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The Crim-box interview with the Superintendent was a unique situation that became a major turning point in the life of In-view Cable TV. Inmates had access to the Superintendent for the first time without having to go through the usual intermediary stages of dealing with the warders. The inmate's power to access the Superintendent was perceived by the warders as threatening. The warders prior to this interview had literally been the gatekeepers to the administrative hierarchy. Now the inmates were wittingly or unwittingly challenging aspects of the warders' gatekeeping. The power and influence that Crim-box had acquired, was acknowledged by the Superintendent's insistence that his interview be replayed unedited. The inmates had quickly learnt how to use shot and location sequencing to re-construct events. As Gross and his colleagues point out,  

The meaning and significance attached to a visual image are a consequence of the label attached to it, the expectations associated with the context in which the image appears, and the assumptions made by audience about which sort of images are produced by which sort of image makers and shown in which sort of settings.\(^1\)

The history of Crim-box was riddled with constructed images via basic editing processes that were less than subtle in their implication. In this respect, some aspects of Crim-box paralleled some of the less desirable components of journalism practised in the wider community. Putnis points out that,  

Sometimes, however, the reality constructed by the journalist, using a repertoire of actuality, file-footage,

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The prisoners' PR machine, In-view cable TV, challenged aspects of the warders' traditional gatekeeping discourse. The Superintendent was now perceived as being directly accessible to the inmates via In-view Cable TV, rather than through the traditional filtering channels controlled by the warders. The televisual power of Crim-box had forced the Superintendent to operate in a manner similar to that of politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats in the wider broadcast media, "where the political image-makers have turned to insisting on live interviews so as to maximise their control and counter the editing machine".20

Here the televised voice of the 'other' was questioning the dominant culture, a practice that rarely takes place in the televisual world. Around the world many alternative groups and factions have access to video equipment, though, as the history of authenticating reality via the moving images demonstrates, authenticated reality has substantially been culturally encoded by the dominant culture, through non-fiction and fiction moving images.21 It is only in rare instances that an alternative voice has occupied the dominant screen and questioned the dominant discourse of the day.

In a later discussion with inmates it was noted that the interview with the Superintendent had had the unprecedented ability to cut through and

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21 The focus of this thesis is not the role of non-fiction film and video as a process of culturally encoding and authenticating dominant culture.
nullify rumour and innuendo. It should be pointed out that even though
the prison population is only 250 to 300 prisoners at any one time,
communication is stifled by factionalism, myth, rumour and innuendo.

Ironically the interview with the superintendent had two diametrically
opposite effects in the history of In-view cable TV. The first was that the
AIDS Task Force (discussed below) saw confirmation that ‘real’ issues could
be dealt with via In-view cable TV and, consequently, they lobbied to
produce a series of AIDS Awareness videos. Secondly, certain influential
people within the system feared the power In-view cable TV was acquiring,
or appeared to be acquiring. Subsequently, the production room of In-view
cable TV was broken into, resulting in equipment being damaged or stolen.
I left the Department shortly after the interview with the Superintendent
and had arranged for several students from Charles Sturt University to run
workshops out of the In-view production room. Unfortunately funding for
In-view cable TV was eventually cut and finally the system fell into
disrepair. The current education officer at Bathurst, in December 1994, was
unaware of the existence of any video equipment under her jurisdiction.

Aids Task Force
Some intravenous drug users begin their intravenous experimentation in
prison. The effect of mind-altering drugs in prison is referred to by the
inmates as ‘time out’, a way of passing time without being acutely conscious
of its linear reality. But, of course, not all inmates take drugs, and among
those who do, accessing drugs can be a long and arduous process. Jail is a
harsh and brutal environment where bonds of mutual support provide
inmates with emotional and physical mechanisms by which to cope. These
relationships can allow inmates to share food, tobacco, hopes, fears, drugs
and sexual favours. Hence, these bonds of mateship and dependency
become very strong ties, a means of survival and in many instances they are not unlike a marriage. However, many of these men who were participating in male-to-male sex and intravenous drug usage, were also involved in ongoing heterosexual relationships. These men relied on their female partners to visit them regularly. In some instances these visits involved sexual contact, smuggling of contraband, plus the more domestic necessities of accessing children and private messages to friends and relatives. Predominantly, the inmates who participated in male-to-male sex did not consider themselves homosexual or even bi-sexual. Nor was it uncommon for inmates to conceal their drug habits from friends and relatives. In general drug taking was not considered a taboo, whereas male-to-male sex was less culturally accepted. Consequently there was practically no public or private discussion of inmate sexual activity and very little discussion of needle sharing practices. For these men, like others in the broader community, to admit to an unsuspecting partner or relative that they were participating in male-to-male sex or administering drugs was particularly difficult. The process of AIDS education in the prison was further complicated by the unavailability of condoms and hypodermic syringes, which at least are available, if not utilised, in the larger community.

As a means of addressing prisoner-based issues of unsafe sex and unclean hypodermic syringe procedures, the AIDS Task Force was formed. The group attempted to address these issues within the NSW prison system in general and at Bathurst Jail in particular. The AIDS Task Force was comprised of twelve senior prisoners. Some of these men had participated in unprotected male-to-male-sex, and most had injected heroin at one time or another (some for the first time while in jail). I was not involved with
the formation of the AIDS Task Force. However, six of its members were major players in Crim-box, whom I had known for several years. The Drug and Alcohol Officer who facilitated the group's formation is a close friend and previous colleague of mine. In that context, I may have had some influence in the eventual decision by the group to produce a video.

**How When In Rome Came About**

The AIDS Task Force's quest to implement a new ceremonial procedure ‘2x2x2’ (discussed below), resulted in the production of *When In Rome*. The producers attempted to encourage a new component into the ceremonial procedure within a typical heroin ‘shooting gallery’ scenario. This new ceremonial procedure involved cleaning ‘previously used’ hypodermic needles with institutional bleach.

The title *When In Rome* is an aphorism that expresses colourfully one of the most difficult objectives of the video, the instigation of change in group behaviour. The AIDS Task Force recognised that one of its tasks was to pass on information aimed at creating a general HIV infection awareness within the prison community. That is, to present reliable information to inform and to overcome the misconceptions surrounding HIV infection. It was, however, quite another issue to initiate safe sexual and intravenous practices within the prison system. Condoms and syringes are contraband within the NSW prison system. Faced with the problem of changing cultural practice, the AIDS Task Force recognised that it is very difficult for an individual to challenge a dominant group or institutional practice. Simply put, when in Rome, one does that which the Romans do. The

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22 A ‘shooting gallery’ is a term used to describe a location were intravenous drug usage regularly takes place.
challenge for the AIDS Task Force was to establish within the prison system, a new heroin usage preparation and administration procedure.

Once established, the AIDS Task Force requested access to factual information. As a result, an intensive month-long series of seminars by professional AIDS workers was organised. One of the bargaining strategies in acquiring the funding for the seminars was that members of the AIDS Task Force would be able to pass on that information at a face-to-face level to high risk prisoners. However, this did not prove to be the case. Members of the Task Force were expert in understanding the reality of prison life, but they, like us all, were victims of their own social bias. As in any culture, the prison system consists of many sub-cultures, which for one reason or another often inhibits meaningful face to face contact.

Several months after the AIDS seminars, the AIDS Task Force reported that it was unable to make contact with all the inmate groupings it had targeted. The Task Force where possible had instigated discussion at an individual and dormitory level, as well as sanctioning the distribution of safe sex posters and other written material. Without the sanction of the Task Force or similar group the posters faced a greater risk of defacement.

2.2 LET'S MAKE A VIDEO

The AIDS Task Force felt there was adequate written material available for prisoners who were literate, but recognised that functionally illiterate prisoners predominantly receive their information from television. Thus it was decided that one of the ways the AIDS Task Force could raise prisoner AIDS awareness was by making AIDS-related programs for screening on
the prison cable system. The Drug and Alcohol Authority reacted positively to the suggestion.

The AIDS Task Force opted to work within a journalistic discourse, to assist in the recognition that there were very real HIV related dangers involved with inappropriate intravenous drug usage. The Task Force felt that for a program to have maximum impact it needed to be perceived, not so much as an educational program, but rather as a news, current affairs or documentary style program, one which reported on specific lifestyle practices within the jail's high risk intravenous drug culture.

Relaying The Message

One of the prime motivating forces behind the AIDS Task Force's involvement with the In-View cable TV system, was based on the premise that In-View cable TV enabled the Bathurst inmates an alternative screen to that of the dominant broadcast television screen. "How could we say that the question of AIDS is not also a question of who gets represented and who does not?" Consequently the potential to access high-risk HIV men via the cable system, using a discourse closer to the experiences of the target audience, was an attractive alternative to the AIDS Task Force. The AIDS Task Force was aware of the formidable obstacles before it, but the message was one that the prisoners themselves saw as vital in combating HIV infection in prison. Transmission of their message through the prison cable system would mean competing with mainstream television for their audience. On the one hand they needed to develop a program that could

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compete with mainstream TV while at the same time inform their target audience.

The AIDS Task Force appreciated mainstream media's ability to entertain and hold an audience, but they acknowledged its inadequacy in meeting the AIDS educational needs of prisoners. Bill Horrigan believes that television largely ignores many less socially palatable aspects relating to the AIDS epidemic. Perhaps this is why mainstream media is more adept at the 'hot' reporting of paediatric and foetal AIDS-related issues than to say, the 'warm' issues concerning the plight of IV-drug-related communities, inmates, prostitutes, Aborigines and other marginalised groups in our society.24

In recognising the issues facing small groups like the Task Force, John Greyson lists nine genres of alternative video styles in his article 'Strategic compromises: AIDS and Alternative Video Practices':

I. Cable-access shows addressing such topics as discrimination experienced by PLWAs (persons living with AIDS) and lesbian efforts against AIDS
II. Documents of performances and plays addressing AIDS
III. Documentary (memorial) portraits of PLWAs, most of whom had died by the time the tapes were completed
IV. Experimental works by artists deconstructing mass media hysteria, lies and omissions
V. Educational tapes on transmission of and protection against the HIV virus, designed for specific community audiences (women, blacks, Latins, youth, prisoners), often commissioned by AIDS groups

24 Horrigan, B. op. cit., p 166.
VI. Documentaries portraying the vast range of AIDS service organisations and support groups that have sprung up around the country
VII. Safer-sex tapes that adapt the conventions of porn to teach their bisexual, straight, and gay audiences the eroticisation of safer sex
VIII. Activist tapes, which document the demonstrations and protests of an increasingly militant AIDS activist moment
IX. A growing handful of tapes for PLWAs, outlining issues of alternate treatments for HIV infections and AIDS-related diseases.25

Most of the video categories above ‘react’ in response to the mass media’s inability to come to ‘real’ terms in its reportage of the AIDS epidemic. This is partly due to the rapid and volatile nature of the issue. This is not to suggest that the mass media is not attempting to keep abreast with representing the issue.

Like current wisdom concerning treatments for HIV infection and the opportunistic diseases that can accompany AIDS, we must recognise that this representational war will only be won when we select and combine, appropriate to each case and context, a variety of ‘cures’.26

The AIDS Task Force believed its target audience still held the view that AIDS was something that would not happen to them. Producing a video that would attract the largest target audience and hopefully motivate action towards recognising and talking about the production itself, would

facilitate the freeing of dialogue about AIDS related issues. The AIDS movement including groups such as the Task Force, have renewed attention to the importance of people owning and being able to determine the terms of how they are visually represented.\textsuperscript{27}

2.3. SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

The objective of \textit{When In Rome} was to provide information that reinforced the dangers of HIV infection and that showed how to clean hypodermic syringes with the available cleaning agents.

\textbf{Style Of Communication}

During its formation the AIDS Task Force had viewed several AIDS related videos. The inmates expressed grave doubts as to the effectiveness of videos that placed clinical information ahead of entertainment, especially where the video images held little relevance to prison life. It was felt that a clinical, educative video would not gain their target audience's attention, and consequently would not be able to compete with commercial television. In developing a script for the documentary, the inmates unwittingly followed the advice of Pulitzer Prize Special Award winner John Hohenberg, who states, \begin{itemize}
\item those who write for television must combine the skills and insight of the playwright, the motion picture scriptwriter and the practicing journalist.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{itemize}

The AIDS Task Force believed that within the privacy of the inmate's cell, a scientised discourse of facts and figures would be rejected as not having the

\textsuperscript{27} Horrigan, op. cit., p 171.
required entertainment value. They felt that to hold the target audience's attention they would have to develop a program that immediately gained attention and delivered its message via the narrative.

The AIDS Task Force believed the pro-filmic presence of inmates would only guarantee audience contact at the level of passing curiosity. What was needed was a process that would draw the target audience in, hold their attention and communicate the relevant information. The script called for five inmates. Three inmates would act out sharing a syringe, a fourth would insist on cleaning the needle and a fifth would be waiting to take the needle to another shooting gallery.

Locating a social actor for the role of ‘Jimbo’ was the most difficult problem of the entire production. All of the inmates approached feared that the audience would not perceive the difference between reality and re-presenting reality, that is, between the character and the actor. Efforts to convince various inmates that the documentary was a reconstruction were unsuccessful. The AIDS Task Force and the writer realised the role of the good guy, ‘Jimbo’, also referred to as ‘Sadie’, was too ‘real’ for the reality of prison life. Within the prison system men can be, and are, beaten, raped and murdered for disagreements over the use of drugs such as heroin. Historically, needle contamination had not been an issue within the prison culture, so to complain that the needle was not clean, was, within prison culture, seen as a sign of weakness. No inmate would undertake the role of ‘Jimbo’. Their concern was aptly illustrated in the script where the character ‘Speedy’ taunts ‘Jimbo’ by calling him ‘Sadie’, prison slang for a homosexual.
Although funds were available to employ a professional actor it was decided that I would play the part of ‘Jimbo’, because by this stage I had known and worked with some of the men for several years and had a solid working relationship with the production crew. More practically, the choice meant one fewer crew in the cell. An important consideration when each cell is roughly eight feet by twelve feet and when the production demanded four actors and at least two crew and equipment.

The inmate-actors gave due consideration to their identity being publicly and visually displayed through showing the finished production. They understood that the program was only to be viewed in jails and were able to give their permission for their individual identity to remain unobscured.

**New Ceremonial Procedures: (2x2x2)**

**Needle Flushing.**

HIV can be transmitted by contact with HIV infected blood. The Aids Bureau's preferred method of HIV prevention was one of needle exchange. This was also the inmates' preferred option. However, within the socio-political climate of the prison system needle exchange was not an option, as previously discussed.

In response the Aids Bureau researched cleaning agents that would be accessible to prisoners. It was found that the commonly available prison bleach, if used correctly, was effective in killing the AIDS virus. The two by two by two (2x2x2), method of needle flushing was the result of this research. The procedure comprised three simple steps. Each participant in a shooting gallery had to follow three simple steps before injecting the drug.
First Step - (2)
The user ‘flushes’ fresh water through the hypodermic needle. This is achieved by placing the hypodermic needle into a clean vessel containing clean fresh water. The plunger is extended and water is drawn into the syringe chamber before being expelled. The process is then repeated.

Second Step - (2x2)
The second step flushes bleach through the hypodermic needle in the same manner used to flush fresh water. The process is repeated.

Third Step - (2x2x2)
Fresh water is twice more flushed through the syringe. The needle is now ready to use. The two by two by two (2x2x2) needle cleaning procedure was ‘unofficially’ recommended for use within the NSW prison system.

2.4. CULTURAL FRAMEWORK OF INSTITUTIONAL DRUG CONTROL

A postmodern explanation of how a documentary such as When In Rome came about, can be found in what Mugford has called a ‘downwards’ state function.29 Here the state devolves many activities to local governments and communities. In this instance, the ‘downwards’ function, transferred the production of an information program from Corrective Services to the inmates themselves.

The societal processes that brought about the production of When In Rome, occurred within an historically recent change. The ideological approach

to drug control from prevention to harm reduction reflected this change. The harm reductionist approach develops strategies that reduce risks to the population. Specifically within Bathurst Jail this policy led to direct involvement of an inmate interest group, the AIDS Task Force.

However, the broad societal change, which created the opportunity to produce initiatives such as *When In Rome*, did not radically alter the philosophical differences within the institution. The inmates and support staff endorsed the notion of 'harm reduction', while the training and hierarchical structure of Corrective Services endorsed carceral discipline. The situation can be viewed as an example of the postmodern notion of an amoral management of 'harm reduction', developed within the modernist 'carceral' notion of discipline. This dichotomy imposed many production limitations. For instance, restrictions imposed on the production were exemplified in the difficulties encountered through location recording as the inmates could only operate within certain areas of the prison. Consequently the thesis outlines how the perceived audience impacted on the program's production. In doing so, it is noted how the producers, mindful of the social and institutional factors operated within the contemporary discourse of media gatekeeping. This was possible because of mutual horizons of perception that were established through similar life-world experiences. In other words their expertise and approval was necessary for the program's shape and completion.

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30 Ibid., p 372.
31 Mugford, loc. cit.
**Broad Societal Change**

Broad societal change impacts ideologically on policy direction and implementation. It effects attitudes and actions. Broad societal change has resulted in the broad change in drug control over recent times.\(^3\) \(^4\)

Contemporary societal change can be explained in terms of modern society evolving to a postmodern one.

There are three essential processes that produce modernity: differentiation of social roles and functions, rationalization of activities and the commodification of even more aspects of life. Modernity is characterised by centralising functions such as mass communication, international system of capitalist production, world wide system of nation states, mass transport, centralised bureaucracy and a culture of rationality. These processes have led to the state having a major role in identifying, describing, studying, responding to and controlling the population.

It has been argued that modernity is giving way to postmodernity. The centralising tendencies of the past are showing signs of reversal due in large part to continued fiscal crisis and perceptions of failure in many areas, though processes that produced modernity are still operative.

Mugford argues that "state functions are moving in four analytically separable directions - upwards, downwards, sideways, and out".\(^3\)\(^5\) Briefly: 'upwards' movements are seen as supra-state organisations such as GATT and the World Court; 'downwards' is a devolvement to local bodies and communities such as Neighbourhood Watch; 'sideways' indicates parallel

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\(^{34}\) Mugford, S. op. cit., p 369.
\(^{35}\) Ibid, p 370.
functioning such as with large unions; and 'out' refers to the selling of government assets.

It is the downward movement of the state function that pertains to many social control undertakings. This devolvement is designed to place the initiative and responsibility with the community. The approach to drug control can be placed in this category where the move is towards local or community responsibility and where links are forged with interest groups.

Foucault argues that modernizing societies have gone through three major phases of social control - the corporal, the carceral and risk management. The corporal phase was characterised by public executions, mutilations and humiliations. Wrongdoers paid in pain for their misconduct. Foucault argues in this period power is exercised and it is seen to be exercised. The growth of modernity saw the corporal phase gradually being replaced by intense 'discipline' of the 'carceral' phase. Here the wrongdoer is observed for indications of recalcitrance as this moralizing phase focuses towards discipline, regulation and chastisement. The ideology of the 'carceral' phase "is that the soul of the deviant will be reconstructed by reconstructing the minutiae of behaviour".

The third phase takes a broad view of the population and examines hazards that need to be managed. This approach focuses on damage reduction or containment. Hence, risk management is a pragmatic amoral approach that aims to avert and curtail the consequences of crime. This approach has resulted from the failure of previous methods of control and through

37 Mugford, loc. cit.
fiscal decline. The tendency is towards a risk society that is characterised by dealing with a problem by minimising damage and containment, rather than by moralising.

Mugford further argues that it is the fiscal crisis and the move away from reformism towards an attitude of risk control that has led to a harm reduction approach. From the postmodern notion of the ‘shrinking state’ it can clearly be seen that a risk management or harm reduction policy would be applied to a modern drug policy. An example of this approach would be the needle exchange program implemented in response to potential HIV infection from contaminated syringes.

Mugford argues that at points of interaction between advocates or agencies of older ideologies and those of the more recent there can be conflict. Advocates of older modes of control, for example law enforcement agencies, perceive that an amoral harm reduction approach abandons the individual, while discipline strengthens the fight against drugs. On the other hand the harm reductionists perceive previous positions as having failed particularly in regard to drug usage because of the moral righteousness and lack of resources to apply those methods. The position of social or health workers, particularly those involved in AIDS area, would be found in the harm reductionist camp.

The stress between positions of this dichotomy while usually posited in terms of personalities or interest group agendas can be better understood if viewed as results of broad societal systems of change in which they are situated. The carceral ideology of the prison was often at odds with the

38 Ibid. p 372.
postmodern harm reductionist approach of the bodies responsible for raising HIV infection awareness within the prison environment.

Carceral versus Harm Reduction

*When In Rome* is unique in that the production took place in an environment politically torn between two opposing ideologies. These ideologies were the modernist 'carceral' ideology of the prison system and the postmodern 'harm reduction' ideology of the various prison support agencies. The production can be seen as the direct outcome of societal and institutional ideologies. The aim of the production was to inform and, importantly, change group behaviour. That is, to raise HIV infection awareness, to demonstrate a safety procedure and to prompt a procedural change.

The particular institutional ideology reflected as policy impacted directly on the way heroin usage was dealt with. The Department of Corrective Services and the associated union refused to allow a needle exchange program to be implemented within the prison system. Thus, the Drug and Alcohol Authority and the AIDS Bureau agencies responsible for the implementation of drug policies, developed a prison specific approach to safety. This approach required a change in the current needle sharing practice to one of needle flushing. This was not the approach adopted in the broad community where a policy of needle exchange was implemented.
3.1 Preamble

One of the problems associated with discussing a work that is situated within an alien environment, such as a jail, can be the lack of familiarity with the images and their specific cultural referentiality. The risk is that the work may be viewed just as any other fiction. This poses a potential problem in reading *When In Rome* from the perspective of those who dwell ‘outside’ of the jail.

In order to establish a base from which to discuss the production style and authenticating process employed by the producers of *When In Rome* within community communication, the thesis will trace the development of the authenticating processes utilised to encode verifiable information within the moving image. It is intended that in the process *When In Rome* will be contextualised as a postmodern documentary. Rosen reasons that documentary is a "conversion" from the document that involves synthesising knowledge through sequence to absorb and build on the "referential field of past" to create meaning. This is where television news comes close to documentary in efforts to deal with simultaneity while applying meaning. Meaning is built by sequencing accounts and retrospective summaries in combination with indexical images of past realities.¹

This thesis commences by looking at a variety of documentary theories, in order to ask, ‘what is a documentary’? It is generally held that both fiction

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and documentary are artefacts; both are merely contrivances of varying degrees, both are created by editing and selection. The thesis looks at how contrivances are built upon and embellished through the use of camera movement, lighting, location and a myriad of post production technologies that culturally codify the moving image.

It will be suggested that various techniques employed by the documentary maker enables the audience to relate to reality. What is fundamentally important to this thesis is the way authenticating processes have evolved over a one hundred year development of the moving image, and, in particular, those processes associated with the newsreel and documentary. As we shall see, as early as 1898 the notion of documentary was being spoken of as ‘slices of public and national life’ in France, the hub of the film industry prior to the First World War. And it is here that we can trace the beginning of the social purpose of documentary. Then it will be demonstrated that influential documentary makers and theoreticians, like Dziga Vertov (1896-1954) and John Grierson (1898-1972) among others, argued that there were fundamental differences between fact and fiction. They believed that by confining a documentary to the process of drawing out and coming to terms with actuality (what already exists), then the documentarist can recreate a drama as opposed to a fiction.

In the section that deals with documentary techniques we see that the notion of documentary has continually been challenged and developed. The thesis looks at the processes of classifying and recognising the represented event through discussing the relevant aspects of presenting authenticity. In the process the thesis looks at how contemporary fiction can appear to parallel documentary when addressing social issues.
Consequently it is argued that the documentary/fiction debate has moved ground as contemporary documentary makers stressed elements in their productions that resemble fiction films.

It will be argued that the strength of documentary is in its mimetic relation to reality, that it establishes legitimate referential weight. The thesis looks at the notion of reflexivity, where the camera reveals not only the world but its operator's preoccupations, subjectivity and values. This in turn leads the thesis into audience, where the discussion suggests that the nature of documentary theory can be enhanced through examining how an audience may interpret the information before them. Home movies are mentioned as an extreme example where footage may lack expository or narrative structure, yet has documentary value "for those of whom it offers evidence".\(^2\) It will be demonstrated that documentary history indicates that the life-world experience of the audience determines authenticity. Following the discussion on audience, the thesis looks at postmodern documentary theory, suggesting that the postmodern documentary is a form of documentary pastiche which utilises a double coding by combining modernist and traditional techniques non hierarchically.

To contextualise modernist and traditional techniques, the thesis looks at discourses of factuality in practice, commencing with the genesis of documentary, which also encompasses the genesis of the newsreel, the emphasis is on the technological transfer of cultural encoding, this will involve touching on the embryonic elements of the documentary movement, generally associated with the birth of the dominant screen.

It is here that we see the relevance of Edison's Kinetoscope and Lumière's Cinématographe, in the development of contemporary televisual reality.

The section dealing with authenticating reality will demonstrate how Lumière's one minute films were the earliest projected means of representing and re-encoding legitimate authenticity. Subsequently the notion of re-encoding reality via the moving image, begins to encapsulate society. We see how the 'marvellously true to life' quality of the moving image rapidly transformed the moving image from novelty to social influence. It is from there that we see the development of moving image techniques significantly alter the notion of screen authenticity.

The process of editing is discussed as a seminal factor in the craft of representing and re-encoding legitimate authenticity. It is noted that 'the edit' facilitated a number of new authenticating processes. We see how rapid technological development saw the notion of documentary fracture into a number of distinct genres.

The notion of the avant-garde as an important aspect of the documentary movement is briefly looked at before discussing the work of Robert Flaherty and the philosophical underpinnings of John Grierson. Both Flaherty and Grierson had a fundamental impact on various notions underpinning documentary and newsreel communication.

With the outbreak of World War II, documentary films became an important tool in the mobilization of national resources. It is here that we see the meaning of documentary further extended, and in particular we see the
development of the semidocumentary and neorealism. The thesis then looks at the philosophical underpinnings of American Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité. This section briefly discusses the work of American Direct Cinema pioneer Richard Leacock before looking at the philosophy behind Cinéma Vérité and Ethnography. In particular, attention is given to the philosophy of Jean Rouch.

Having discussed the origins of authenticating reality, it is only then that we look at the elements of postmodernity via imaging the domestic. We see that the development of technology in terms of reproduction quality, portability and accessibility has influenced the concept of the profilmic. The thesis asserts that video technology is being applied in new areas whether it be for broadcast or non-broadcast viewing, allowing the production of many different 'voices'.

The section on intertextual cinema looks at how contemporary modification of filmic conventions is the result of a focus on authorship and particular cultural perspectives. This section stresses that the postmodern development of adapting filmic conventions, shows that image representation has been and is deeply culturally embedded. The thesis looks at relating the moving image to culture and argues that the focus should move away from production and towards communication, for there is now a greater diversity of peoples able to access technology. In turn this process recognises viewership, that is the audience, and the ways in which real viewers read the visual image through notions of filmic expression and culture. It is noted that viewer recognition is born out of their life-world.
The inmates' desire to report, impart and authenticate vital, current, cultural factuality from within the sphere of their life-world, drew on their culturally-encoded understanding of moving image authenticating discourses. It is hoped that the following discussion surrounding the evolution of authenticating devices within documentary and newsreel will aid in contextualizing When In Rome.

3.1. WHAT IS A DOCUMENTARY?

Historian and film critic Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. believes that documentary is one of the most questionable words in the vocabulary of film. Schlesinger is just one of many documentary theorists who, along with many documentary practitioners, support similar notions. Schlesinger maintains that 'documentary' "seems an honest, weather beaten word, conveying the feeling that here, at last, there is no nonsense, no faking, only the plain facts".\(^3\) Richard Barsam looks at the designation of 'non-fiction', saying that all documentaries are non-fiction films, but not all non-fiction films are documentaries.\(^4\) Many practitioners and theorists believed that the actual term 'documentary' in a contemporary context, is an inhibiting factor.

Yet, despite objections, the term 'documentary' is embodied in the discourse of theory, practice and the institution of both television and film. The history of 'documentary' that has attempted to collectively chronicle the events, peoples and reality of the twentieth century has led to a state of multiple meanings. Academy award-winning documentary winner Ira

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Wohl said "I hate the word 'documentary', it sends people streaming in the opposite direction from the box-office. It implies that they are going to have to suffer through some horrible 'learning experience'. Part of this problem resides in the capacity of the word to mean different things to different people.

'Documentary' is derived from the word 'document'. According to the 1933 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the noun 'document' appeared in the English language by the mid-fifteenth century. It originated from two principal sources: the French meaning 'evidence or proof' and the Latin meaning 'teaching and/or warning'. The noun 'documentary' entered the language only in the nineteenth century, when 'documentation' was also increasingly common.

The 1933 *Oxford English Dictionary* does not mention documentary in relation to film, however, the 1993 revised edition does. This edition further defines documentary as: "Factual, realistic, applied esp. to a film or literary work, etc., based on real events or circumstances, and intended primarily for instruction or record purposes".

In a 1926 review of Robert Flaherty's film *Moana*, John Grierson wrote: "of course, *Moana* being a visual account of events in the daily life of a Polynesian youth and his family, has documentary value". This was the public birth of 'documentary' in the English speaking world at least, in reference to film. Grierson was later to reject *Moana* as a 'real'

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documentary, as his personal theory on the documentary form changed over time (as indicated below).

Ellis asserts that Grierson's reference to the 'documentary value,' of Robert Flaherty's *Moana,* indicates that Grierson "would have been thinking of the modern meaning of document as 'a record which is factual and authentic'." In scholarly writing, documents are 'primary sources' of material; 'documentary evidence' in the eye of the law is placed above hearsay or opinion. Ellis postulates that "perhaps Grierson was also thinking of the French term *documentarie,* used to distinguish serious travelogues from other sorts of films, including mere scenic views."^9

As early as 1898 the notion of documentary was being spoken of in French. *Cinématographe* Boleslaw Matuszewski called for the establishment of a "cinématographie museum or depository" for material "of a documentary interest... slices of public and national life". Matuszewski argued that documentary film would be more meaningful to the young than books. His far-sightedness suggested that not only should the depository contain images of the meetings of rulers and departures of troops and squadrons, but "the changing face of the cities."^10

### The Art Of Documentary

Schlesinger like many screen theorists suggests that the differences between documentary and fiction are tenuous. It is generally held that both fiction and documentary are artefacts; both are merely contrivances of varying degrees, both are created by editing and selection. Framing the

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pro-filmic within the viewfinder of the camera, the operator is selecting an individual version of the world before them. This builds into a specific narrative in which the human observations and choices are contrivances. These contrivances are built upon and embellished through the use of camera movement, lighting, location and a myriad of post production technologies that culturally codify the screened image. However, this does not necessarily categorise the images into a specific genre. Schlesinger, further suggests that, wittingly or unwittingly both documentary and fiction embody a specific viewpoint and that in the end it is the artistic vision of the documentary maker that enables the audience to relate to reality, rather than any "documentary look". The artistic influence on documentary development over a century (as discussed below). The history of significant documentary processes utilised to re-present and re-encode legitimate authenticity commenced in France, the hub of the film industry prior to the First World War.

Social Purpose
There has been continuing debate since the early days of the screen about distinctions between documentary films and films that were obviously fictional. Documentary pioneers such as Dziga Vertov (1896-1954) and John Grierson (1898-1972), fervently argued the case that there were fundamental differences between fact and fiction. Grierson and his followers "drew harsh unflattering comparisons between the fiction film industry and both the formal potential of cinema and the social purpose of

13 Dziga Vertov is a pseudonym adopted by Denis Kaufman. Both names indicate turning or revolving. See Barnouw (1993). p 51.
documentary". The proponents of this type of early cinematic theory saw fiction film as escapist and ornate representations of the world.

Rosen asserts that various "film historians and theorists have sometimes written as if the main pretence of documentary cinema has been the rather naive one providing unmediated access to an ongoing pro-filmic event". This position contends that the thrust of documentary cinema tradition continually resides in assuring the viewer that the image before them is in fact ‘real’.

John Langer, maintains that it is the notion of ‘acceptance’ of a special relationship with the ‘real world' that has created a detrimental atmosphere in the critical discussion of documentary. In the past, essays on documentary masterpieces such as Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), (discussed below) have tended to focus equally on the physical geographic conditions under which they were filmed, as on the films themselves. This failure to separate the unmediated access of the ongoing pro-filmic event has meant that often documentaries are interpreted in relation to the courage, diligence, and ability of the maker. Casting the film maker in the stereotypical role of the "struggling artist and cultural hero" adds an element of romanticisation which "acts as a powerful inducement to audiences to accept the idea that all documentaries reveal some kind of 'truth' about the 'realworld'".

The inclination to over-stress the immediate conditions of these types of productions has resulted in classic

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15 Rosen, P. op. cit., p 87.
theories that presuppose that actual events can be reproduced on the screen.

By confining a documentary to the process of drawing out and coming to terms with actuality (what already exists), then the documentarist can recreate a drama as opposed to a fiction. This is fundamentally created through the process of recreation of observed actions using non-actors and shooting on location. The criteria for drama inside documentary, whether scripted or recorded as a spontaneous pro-filmic event, is for the pro-filmic to be derived from and limited to actuality. However in the case of the social actor, the audience is responding to the documentary's subject matter, rather than a performance driven fiction.17

Dai Vaughan believes that events must be contrived for the camera, that the documentary maker is at liberty to contrive. The medium itself (film/video) often requires that a director rehearses a social actor through a 'normal' task, even when the social actor may perform that 'normal' task countless times per day. A 'normal' task is not undertaken for the camera, as opposed to the 'hyper-real task' that is performed for the camera. That is, we are not filmed or videoed each time we carry out some 'normal' task. Vaughan argues that in order to ethically re-present that 'normal' task through the pro-filmic, adjustments to compensate for light, sound etc, need to be considered. One of the earliest exponents of this process was the pioneer of the semi-documentary, Humphrey Jennings, who rehearsed his social actors through their 'normal' daily tasks meticulously during the process of making his World War II semi-documentaries. Vaughan asserts that "Once we have accepted that there is no purely technical criterion for

17 Ellis, op. cit., p 2-3.
realism - no gimmick of presentation which can guarantee authenticity - then we are forced to recognise that we must rely upon the integrity of the artist for its creation and upon the judgment of the viewer for its proof”.18 This position is supported by Schlesinger who maintained that interpretation was inherent in documentary. For as Schlesinger asserts, no one can compress the mass murder of the twentieth century into two hours of film without criteria of selection; and selection is just another word for interpretation.19

The history of the documentary demonstrates that rarely, if ever, has the documentary maker believed in "total cinema" as perfect gaze or ideal chronicler. For those who have regarded it as a consummate goal, Rosen surmises that they "probably assumed its adequacy no more than the historian".20 These aspects of documentary have been pondered over throughout its development. For example, in the 1930's Grierson encouraged dialogue directed towards documentary aesthetics in relation to the manipulation of and representation of the documentary form. Grierson promulgated the social, political and economic role of documentary and maintained that these roles would be better served by accessing all available filmic styles to add emotion, depth and intellectual argument.21

Documentary Techniques

The notion of documentary has continually been challenged and developed. The impact of World War II on the documentary genre created

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20 Rosen, P. op. cit., p 88.
21 Ellis, J. C. op. cit., p 73.
an extremely diverse interpretation of its parameters. In the USA after the Second World War much of the fiction film produced took on a documentary ‘look’, and this continues to occur from time to time. In the 1990’s the use of the documentary ‘look’ on television in various productions, rock clips, dramas and advertisements, further compounds the notion of re-presenting and re-encoding legitimate authenticity.

A few examples of the means of creating the documentary look are the technique of the handheld camera, the use of black and white stock, the use of 8mm, 16mm or computer degeneration of 35mm stock to give an image a ‘technically flawed’ and or grainy look. Other processes include artificially damaged or burned-out look (suggesting old age), poor quality sound, haphazard camera movements and non-horizontal framing, or causing a camera to shake after an explosion; all such processes suggesting interruption from outside the film’s narrative as means of implying authenticity. The number of ways realism has been simulated since the inception of film is too numerous to mention. They are all attempts to capture a feeling of documentary reality, "to depict or purport to reality".22

The documentary feel is more than the utilisation of technological functions. Rosen reasons that documentary is a "conversion" from the document that involves synthesising knowledge through sequence to absorb and build on the "referential field of past" to create meaning. As mentioned in the Preface, this is where television news comes close to documentary in efforts to deal with simultaneity while applying meaning.

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Meaning is built by sequencing accounts and retrospective summaries in combination with indexical images of past realities.\(^2\)\(^3\)

Jean-Paul Fargier, points out that much debate between fiction and non-fiction film and video tends to overlook the obvious. "The first thing people do is deny the existence of the screen, it opens like a window; it is transparent. The illusion is the very substance of the specific ideology selected by the cinema".\(^2\)\(^4\) Nichols believes that by studying how sequences of sounds and images signify, we can begin to liberate documentary from anti-theoretical, ideologically complicit arguments, arguments that maintain the old notion of documentary-equals-reality, notions that trace back to the birth of film itself. This notion of 'documentary-equals-reality' is according to Nichols a "denial in fact of the screen being a reflective surface".\(^2\)\(^5\) As will be demonstrated below, the infancy of film has shown that in a matter of a few short years audiences were willing to accept constructed representations of particular events as legitimate authentication.

Similarly, the utilisation of techniques to present the style of documentary within fiction film has educated the viewer. Our gaze is no longer a guarantee that what appears on the surface of the screen, necessarily helps in deciphering genre, "it is simply understood as yet another artifice".\(^2\)\(^6\)

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\(^2\) Rosen, P. op. cit., p 71.
\(^4\) Nichols, B. 1976/77, *Screen*, vol. 17, no. 4, p 35 in Lansell & Bilby op. cit, p 17.
\(^5\) Renov, M. op. cit., p 21.
Presenting Authenticity

Stanley Hawes, one time associate of John Grierson and former long standing producer-in-chief of Film Australia, realised the vagaries required in defining documentary. Hawes and many others believed that a documentary should be made with the view to transfer information that would lead to improving human knowledge and communication, a fundamental "service to the community" to "improve the human condition". Hawes was careful not to bond the image to the object. Such bonding does not certify the historical status of the object nor the credibility of the argument about what is and what is not authentic. Nichols states that "'documentary' suggests fullness and completion, knowledge and fact, explanations of the social world and its motivating mechanisms".

The processes of 'classifying' or recognising documentary authenticity is compounded further when fiction films are produced to address a 'social problem'. They therefore can be produced with the same civic-minded, socially responsible purpose as a documentary that looks at a similar 'social problem'. Documentary does not "identify any structure or purpose of its own entirely absent from fiction or narrative. The terms become a little like our everyday, but unrigorous distinction between fruits and vegetables".

Documentary films utilise many of the "strategies and structures of narrative though not necessarily those of the popular entertainment

29 Loizos, P. op. cit., p 5.
Often this has taken the form of narrativization of the real where courageous individuals such as Nanook in Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* are focused on and utilised as the pivot on which to build a narrative.

Screen theory confirms that there is an unquestionably distinctive bond between a photographic or video image and that of which it is a record. The form (documentary or other) in which one can nail down the consequences and actuality of the pro-filmic event is however far from definitive. Nichols turns to a more poetic and less scientific discourse to imbue a concept of distinction between documentary and fiction when he asserts that,

> Something of reality itself seems to pass through the lens and remain imbued in the photographic emulsion. If we consider the imaginary realm of fiction as having a metaphoric relation to history and lived experience as a kind of carefully shaped, translucent cloud that displays contours and shapes, patterns and practices that closely resemble the ones we encounter in our lives, we might think of documentary as a mode where this fictive cloud has settled back down to earth. ³¹

The documentary/fiction debate has moved ground more recently as many contemporary documentary makers have stressed elements in their productions that resemble fiction films. The use of narrative suspense and closure, the technique of continuity shooting and traditional drama based editing (discussed below) are examples of the more commonly used production techniques that resemble fiction.³²

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³⁰ Ibid. p 5-6.
³¹ Nichols, B. op. cit., p 5.
³² Loizos, P. op. cit., p 5.
In regard to the fiction non-fiction polemic, Renov maintains that it is problematic to generalise uniform laws of construction as history has shown that documentary has involved utilising almost "every constructive device known to fiction...and has employed virtually every register of cinematic syntax in the process...there is the sense that truth, as understood within the Western philosophical tradition, demands the detour through fictive constructs".\textsuperscript{3} \textsuperscript{3}

Pro-filmic events are not specifically there for the purpose of being recorded. These events have their own life, independent of and anterior to the pro-filmic. Langer maintains that although action maybe rehearsed and or reconstructed, the pro-filmic is assumed to be authentic. "In this context the documentary is seen as a ‘trace’ of the world, and its implicit messages - that these events really happened and this piece of film is the proof".\textsuperscript{3} \textsuperscript{4}

It is this ‘trace of the world’ with its implicit messages that enables the audience access to screen-truth or authenticity. The ever increasing technologically sophisticated means of screen manipulation creates different perspectives on traditional notions of the documentary style and look. Previously the traditional documentary style was seen as a means of determining the inherent authenticity of the sound and images that occupy the screen and which "represent the historical world rather than imaginary ones". Documentary usually presents an argument about an issue, concept, or problem and it depends on the specificity of its images for

\textsuperscript{33} Renov, M. op. cit., p 6.
\textsuperscript{34} Langer, J. op. cit., p 12.
Nichols advocates a triple reading of documentary via three axes to illustrate the relationships between the different aspects of image production. The 'X' axis contains the narrative, following the plot to closure. The 'Y' axis involves the known or the referent situated in history. The 'Z' axis deals with the spectacle and audience appeal of the images. In documentary the relationships among the three axes are unique because of the referential linkage to the historical or real world.

Documentary is a particular style of representing information through sound and images. The ethical position of documentary requires that these sounds and images convey an indexical relation to the historic or real world. Documentary is the filmic form that relies on a mimetic relation with nature as a guarantee of its reality, truth and authenticity. The indexical bond, the link from and to the referent which is formed, creates the 'impression of authenticity'. However, this bond of image and referent while providing evidentiary value of authenticity, does not control viewer inference. Viewer inference is manoeuvred by textual effects that place the image in time and space. Commentary directs the viewer to the meaning of the text or the favoured meaning presented by the text.

37 Nichols, B. op. cit., p 27.
process is usually enhanced by the use of music in the soundtrack to give continuity as it is in fiction.\textsuperscript{40}

Links with audience are developed through the use of rhetoric where the emphasis is "less on meaning than effect". Rhetoric involves the ways that an argument gains or builds support such as factual information and other verifiable evidence. Rhetoric also involves the projection of the ethical nature of a character, emotional appeal and demonstrative appeal that can work towards persuading a point of view.\textsuperscript{41}

**Reflexivity**

The strength of documentary is in its mimetic relation to reality that establishes legitimate referential weight. The resulting impression of authenticity and its textual presentation are in contemporary documentary being examined and experimented with in relation to how reality is represented. Different ways of exposing the 'fabrication' of representation are developing. Reflexivity aims to expose the ideology behind the text and its representation of phenomenal reality. Reflexivity operates on different aspects of image creation form revealing the cinematic apparatus or identifying the makers or some other 'revolutionary strategy' that confronts the portrayal of reality so that ideology and text can be separated. The presence of the filmic technology in the pro-filmic event guarantees that the pro-filmic did exist in the past.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p 174.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p 134.

Nichols uses the term 'voice' or 'authorial presence' to express the essence of the text's social point of view. This entails an appreciation of how the visual and oral material is organised as well as the specific combination and interactions of all of a film's codes. The authorial voice, presented through style, gives a film's overall perspective, the moral outlook and ethical position. "The camera reveals not only the world but its operator's preoccupations, subjectivity, and values. The photographic (and aural) record provides an imprint of its user's ethical, political, and ideological stance as well as an imprint of the visible surface of things".43

**Audience**

The discussion of the nature of documentary can be enhanced through examination of how an audience may interpret a documentary. Nichols maintains that one of the more distinctive elements of documentaries is "the assumptions and expectations" invoked in the viewing process. An audience develops skills of inference through experience with interpretation and comprehension. The viewers' life-world experience forms the background from which to interpret a text and from which inferences are made. Can the respondent "construe it as meaningful"?44

In the documentary genre it is the relation of the text to the historical world that forms the basis for viewer inferences. Inferences specific to documentary form are made from both cues in the text and the life-world experience, of the viewer that are directly related to the historic world. That is, the referent is taken to be from the real world rather than an imaginary one. The look of things becomes an index of meaning and

situations maintain a chronological dimension, social actors maintain their normal appearance. The viewer is then able to recognise the historical world and identify the argument outlined by the text. The indexical bonds that link the pro-filmic with the referent, and the textual presentation of specific information, produces legitimate referential weight.\textsuperscript{45} Put from Vaughan's perspective the documentary maker must "persuade the viewer that what appears to be is".\textsuperscript{46}

It is the images that direct us to the historical world that make documentary a fiction unlike any other. However, if the historical world is unfamiliar then the images will probably be viewed just as any other fiction. Nichols illustrates this point by using home movies as an extreme example where footage may lack expository or narrative structure, yet has documentary value "for those of whom it offers evidence".\textsuperscript{47} To gain evidential value, footage must be historically specifically recognisable. Linking with an audience requires an image's indexical bond to its referent to be relevant and recognisable. Can the audience accept this as "being true".\textsuperscript{48}

Documentary history has indicated that it is the life-world experience of the audience that determines whether or not the screened information is read as authentic. Audience's notions of screen-truth or screen-lie operate in conjunction with life experiences. As previously stated, interpretation can be influenced by screen aesthetics.

\textsuperscript{45} Nichols, B. op. cit., p 24-31.
\textsuperscript{46} Vaughan, D. op. cit., p 102.
\textsuperscript{47} Nichols, B. op. cit., p 160.
The contemporary televisual audience is experiencing a blurring of traditional encoding mechanisms that are historically rooted in traditional notions of film language. Now black and white footage, digitised images, rapid computer driven split second edits are merely part and parcel of the contemporary audiences televisual life-world. As always re-presenting legitimate referential weight and hence, authenticity, is based upon the individual's horizons of perception. These horizons of perception have over the past one hundred years been increasingly influenced, initially by the audiences 'public witnessing' of a filmic life-world and contemporarily by the audiences more individual viewing of a televisual life-world.

Postmodern Documentary

The postmodern documentary is a form of documentary pastiche. It utilises a double coding through combining modernist and traditional techniques non-hierarchically. The trend is to a weakened historicity that looks to a recoding of previous forms and a proliferation of new ones.\textsuperscript{49} Rosen outlines Baudrillard's hypothesis that the need for real outside signification compulsively propagates simulation, a hyper-real. But the presence of fragmentary representation and the profusion of indexical signs made available through technology, in contemporary documentary, allows the documentary genre to continue to evolve.\textsuperscript{50} Zurbrugg quotes Cage on postmodern culture as having a surprising capacity to precipitate creative fertilization in strange, unexpected ways, which may come "first from here and then from there.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} Rosen, P. op. cit., p 83 & p 88.
Contemporary documentary is thus stable and fluid, representing images fictively, no longer ideologically naive; it is commodified, blending creative innovation and established indexicality, yet it remains as always earnest. The nature of the documentary is also determined by its practitioners. The historically conditioned, yet, unsolidified, variable and evolving nature of the field has been based significantly on what documentarists have considered the parameters, the extremes to be. These new areas exert pressure on the definition of documentary. "The qualification, contestation, or subversion of these same boundaries move from inconsequential anomaly, to transformative innovation, to accepted practice".\textsuperscript{52}

Renov sees documentary form as "the more or less artful reshaping of the historical world".\textsuperscript{53} Yet, the contemporary area of focus is not the fiction/non-fiction dichotomy but the steadily narrowing area in the middle. Thus the thrust becomes not one of limiting intrusion into the pro-filmic but one of keeping faith with its character as pro-filmic fact.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{52} Nichols, B. op. cit., p 15.  
\textsuperscript{53} Renov, M. op. cit., p 11.  
\textsuperscript{54} Vaughan, D. op. cit., p 105.
4.1. THE GENESIS OF DOCUMENTARY

Theatre To Film - The Technological Transfer Of Cultural Encoding

Cultural encoding of televisual language reaches further back than the history of film and television. Therefore to demonstrate how re-presenting and re-encoding legitimate authenticity within the moving image developed, a brief explanation of how theatrical encoding was transferred to film encoding will take place. It will be demonstrated how culturally influential that transfer was on the contemporary audience.

John L. Fell believes that with the moving image there surfaced an entire tradition of narrative techniques that had been developing unsystematically for a hundred years. These narrative techniques appeared sporadically in ephemera as diverse as theatre, print, optical amusements, comics, engravings, lithography, photography, painting, stereograph sets, peepshows, song slides, and postal cards.¹

Film and television are the outcome of specific cultural and technological developments associated with the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Marshall McLuhan proposed that a new medium devours as content the medium it seeks to replace.² Thus, it can be understood how many of the presentational and contextual processes associated with the

² Ibid., p 12.
way the screen is interpreted have their origins in theatre. The period
that saw the transfer of theatre as a mass consumption medium to film as a
mass consumption medium, is of interest here. Many of the theatrical
encodings that were transferred from theatre to film, were orchestrated as
a result of advancements in technology. Through briefly looking at this
period of transition we can appreciate the depth of cultural encoding in
relationship to the moving image and the lineage associated with ‘making
meaning’ and the language of the screen.

Theatrical developments were driven to meet the need of population
demographics. For instance, the English rural migration to the cities in
the 1830s, increasingly expanded the numbers of potential audience. Fell
asserts that the people who attended the theatre and later its filmed
equivalent shared a desire to see dramatised allegories of human
experience. Morality plays, sentimental plays as well as the Gothic novel
were the genesis of the Melodrama. It is through the genre of melodrama
that we can graphically see how the infusion of cultural encoding from
theatre, become equally inculcated within film.³

The development of theatrical-encoded storytelling processes of speech,
gesture and sets to a high degree of sophistication meant that a story could
be instantly understood. Hence, mass communication with a rapidly
expanding and diverse audience was facilitated. From around 1875, due in
part to the ‘reality’ component associated with the new technology of
photography, theatre audiences became increasingly dissatisfied with the
theatricality of cut cloth and painted flats. In order to meet the changing
demands of audience, theatre strove to find new ways to authenticate the

³ Ibid., p 14.
epidermis of reality. ‘Real’ objects, (doors, walls, animals, water, etc.) were used to create part of the theatrical spectacle. As we shall see, within mass communication, technological advancements consistently absorb and create new spectacle as devices for emphasising the narrative.

The utilisation of gas as a light source is a good example of advancing technology impacting on and influencing the manner by which our culture encodes meaning. Once gas technology became sufficiently sophisticated, gas lighting was utilised to encode meaning. The audience learnt to encode the ‘fading down’ of the gas lighting on stage as either a transition to night or death or a dream or, indeed, the end of the performance. Of course, ‘turning up’ the gas, like ‘fading down’, encoded meaning. Gas light, then became yet another encoding process within the storytelling process. Directors could take the audience from night to day and back again, from one encoded location to another, once gas technology became an embellishing technology. Time and location could appear to transpire before the audience with the use of gas technology. By 1864 the audience was familiar with this convention and hence, encoded into reading transition from morning to night or from one location to another. In this way the technology became a means of embellishing the storytelling process and was absorbed into creating theatrical effects. Therefore this type of embellishing technology impacted on cultural encoding some twenty years before Edison’s 1894 film *The Sneeze.* It is hard to think of a single televisual information program that does not use the technology of light to authenticate factuality.

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footnote: The *Sneeze* (1894) was filmed in Edison’s laboratory when W.K.L. Dickson captured fellow employee Fred Ott sneezing. Jacobs, op. cit., p 2, dates this film as 1894. Ellis op. cit., p 9 dates it as 1893.
4.2. EMBRYO'S OF THE DOCUMENTARY MOVEMENT

Birth Of The Dominant Screen

In 1898, Boleslaw Matuszewski, a cinématographe operator put forward the virtues of film particularly its documentary value. Matuszewski’s enthusiasm for the medium of film reflected the enthusiasm of the day, which had in two short years doused Louis Lumière’s early scepticism over the longevity of film. Lumière had, while training his first batch of opérateurs, suggested that they should not look upon film as a long term career. He felt that film might only have a short life once the novelty diminished. However, by 1898 Matuszewski envisaged a far reaching future for the documentary genre. He predicted that film would find a niche in the arts, industry, medicine, military, science and education.5

Embryonic Documentary

The French physiologist, Étienne Jules Marey’s embryonic documentaries of birds in flight and a cat falling backwards were scarcely three or four seconds long. Yet, these four second marvels were the genesis of the moving picture industry and hence the documentary. Notable in this embryonic development are Thomas Edison’s The Sneeze (1894) and Louis Lumière’s Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory (1895). These screen vignettes present us with a sample of the first cinematic images viewed and consequently are the foundation stones of how we read the screen. These glimpses of the initial foray into screen reality short as they are, The Sneeze (20 seconds) or Lumière’s Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory (60 seconds); are nonetheless documented works, reference

points when discussing the major influences in re-presentation and re-encoding of legitimate authenticity.\textsuperscript{6}

**Kinetoscope And Cinématographe**

Lewis Jacobs maintains that over a period of almost thirty years from 1894 to 1922, what we have come to know as the ‘documentary’ slowly developed and finally emerged as an original model distinct from all other types of motion picture.\textsuperscript{7} Similarly, Ellis proposes that the birth of film was also the birth of documentary. He outlines that the experimental ‘actuality’ recordings captured on film in the 1890s at Edison's ‘Black Maria’ studio, were a precursor to documentary. However, Louis Lumière's first films, projected to a paying audience in Paris on December 28, 1895, are far closer in content and approach to subsequent documentaries. The Lumière Brothers' *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895), filmed with Louis Lumière's *Cinématographe*, was significantly different from Edison's Studio documentation. Consequently, from as early as 1895 the second distinct screen genre emerged.\textsuperscript{8}

Both screen genres were popular and profitable. Lumière's images were projected onto a screen so that more than one person could view the image, unlike Edison's Kinetoscope that was restricted to individual spectatorship. Both the Kinetoscope and the *Cinématographe*, proved to be financial windfalls for their respective inventors.\textsuperscript{9}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Ibid, p 2-3.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Jacobs, L. op. cit., p 2.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Ellis, op. cit. p 9.
\item \textsuperscript{9} Barnouw, E. op. cit., p5.
\end{itemize}
On November 30, 1894, James McMahon opened a Kinetoscope Parlour at 148 Pitt Street, Sydney. For a one shilling entrance fee patrons were able to watch via an eyepiece five successive machines, each running a 20 second Edison program. The initial success of the Kinetoscope in Australia, like elsewhere, was phenomenal; McMahon's Kinetoscope Parlour attracted 22,000 people to its doors in its first five weeks.\(^\text{10}\)

The projection of Lumière's 'actualités' in 1895 at the Salon Indien was their first public viewing. The theatre seated 120 people, and soon the program was being shown twenty times a day at half hour intervals. This enabled some 2,500 people per day to view the new phenomenon. Four concurrent Lumière programs were running in Paris by April of 1896 (one developed into a permanent cinema). In June of the same year Felix Mesguich, a Lumière operator having finished his first American projection at the B. F. Keith Music Hall in New York, was carried to the stage amid deafening shouts and applause as the orchestra played ‘The Marseillaise’. The new technology was taking the world by storm. Starting in February 1896 in London, an avalanche of foreign cinématographe premières began. Six months after the Paris opening the cinématographe was launched by the Lumière organisation in England, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Siberia, Russia, Sweden, the United States, and soon thereafter in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, India, Australia, Indochina, Japan, Mexico. Within two years Lumière operators had travelled to every continent except Antarctica.\(^\text{11}\)


\(^{11}\) Barnouw, E. op. cit., p 9-11.
The rapid success of film led to the construction of Australia's first purpose-built cinema by 1906. By 1909 Australia boasted the largest purpose-built cinema in the world, seating 4000 patrons. This rapid cultural assimilation of the screen as an entertainment and information medium indicates how rapidly this new form of communication was encoded world wide. 12

An obvious but important factor when discussing the overwhelming acceptance of motion picture technology is that society had already had its appetite stimulated by photography and pre-photographic devices like the Magic Lantern. In fact long before photography had become practical, the motion picture had already been domesticated. Many devices portrayed motion through a series of cartoon pictures. At first these early motion picture devices were more novelties than practical storytelling devices. However, Theisen stresses that they were popular and helped stimulate the demand for motion pictures.13

There was a rapid succession of motion picture devices invented such as Plateau's 1831 Phenakistoscope, Hornern's 1834 Daedaleum, and the Zoetrope invented by Desvignes in 1860. Theisen says that the Zoetrope was also known as the Wheel of Life and this device showed action such as a child jumping a rope or a man pumping water. Reynaund's 1877 Praxinoscope was the most notable of the pre-cinematic inventions. Reynaund drew short sequences of dramatic action in the form of plays,

which were subsequently projected on a screen in the Reynaund Optical Theatre.\textsuperscript{14}

Consequently, it was the preceding technology of photographic devices such as the Praxinoscope that allowed the audience rapid assimilation of the cinematographic image, though it would not be until the early twentieth century before cinema technology would match and then surpass theatre technology in re-presenting and re-encoding meaning.

4.3. PENULTIMATE TECHNOLOGY

Many of the inventors and early film experimenters were able to contribute to the development of documentary. Edison and Lumière were among the first to present images to the public. But it was the nature of their inventions that shaped the direction of their filmic outcomes. Edison achieved early, though short lived, success with his Kinetoscope in 1894. He had invented a camera that was electrically operated and very large, needing six or seven men to move it. The sheer size of the camera forced Edison's staff to create pro-filmic events in his 'Black Maria' Studio. These events included such activities as vaudeville acts, dancers, jugglers, cowboy rope-twirlers. Edison's staff were forced to bring the world to them. Although Edison had talked about the great educative and social value of film, the profit motive and the nature of his invention saw Edison concentrate instead on filming vaudeville acts for the peep-show Kinetoscope.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Theisen, loc cit.
\textsuperscript{15} Barnouw, E. op. cit., p 5.
Louis Lumière's background in a family photography enterprise had enabled him to conceptualise a very different approach to motion-camera design than that of Edison. The cinématographe was unlike Edison's Kinetoscope because it was both portable and flexible. It was not only a portable camera, but it was also a portable printing machine and film projector. Hand cranked the cinématographe could go just about anywhere.

Re-Encoding Reality

Lumière's first pro-filmic event was an outside activity, Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory. Both technologically and socially, the magnitude of Lumière's 1895 public screening is almost beyond description, for Louis Lumière's actuality footage significantly added to the very process by which humanity conceptualised itself and the world it was part of. This was not photography, "this was an instrument for catching life on the run: "sur le vif", as Lumière put it".16

Lumière's cinématographe and its subsequent derivatives have proved to be the penultimate piece of technology when it comes to re-presenting reality, for it both mirrors society and confirms society's perception of itself. In fact perhaps not until Neil Armstrong's 1969 walk on the moon was there such a powerful universal affirmation of humanity's technical aptitude.

By 1897 Lumière opérateurs were literally travelling the world. A typical Lumière program of 1897 might include: Sydney Wheel Race / Breakers at Bondi / The Baby's First Lesson in Walking / The Electric Carriage Race

While a few of these early films involved deliberate performance for the camera, as in Lumière's *Feeding the baby*, most were actual, 'raw' daily events. These types of film soon became known as *documentaries*, *actualités* — topical, interest films, educational, expedition films, travel films, or after 1907 travelogues.  

4.4. AUTHENTICATING REALITY

Lumière's one minute films were the earliest demonstrations of representing and re-encoding legitimate authenticity on the screen. Screen truth, or 'life as it is' as Dziga Vertov would come to call it, was at first, film that was technologically un-compromised; there was no intermediary or embellishing-technology or additional production processes involved. The screened image resulted out of: rendering an event, the photographic development of that event, and the projection of the event onto a screen. Society now had a technological process that "could perceive and represent reality with greater fidelity than any medium known theretofore".

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Selling Reality

The strength of the 'life-world' nature of Lumière's 'actualities' was in their ability to be identified. Actualities had a clear social purpose; they dealt with real people and real events. Ironically this ability to be identified as having a clear social purpose evolved, in part at least, out of a troubadour style of publicity employed by Lumière's operators.

Lumière's operators demonstrated traditional troubadour techniques in orchestrating and publicising the intended pro-filmic event. Arriving at a new location the operators would lure a potential audience into attending a screening. The potential audience's anticipation of seeing themselves, or at least familiar surroundings on the screen, served as an enticement to attend. At the end of the day, after the Lumière operator had processed the film, the local audiences saw the ultimate proof, that the actualités filmed by the cinématograhpe were not a 'trick'.

The cinématograhpe told the 'truth', even if it was hand cranked 'black & white' and mute. This process, where the audience was able to view familiar faces and places, fundamentally built into our collective consciousness the notion that the camera, via the projector, rendered onto the screen a two dimensional reality, a 'screen reality' which the viewers' personal life-world experience validated. No other form of mass communication had come close to this amazing process. Understandably film was perceived as a 'true' re-presentation of the world we knew, and therefore in that sense film did not lie; it may have joked and made fun of people, but it did not lie. The technology of the day could only mildly construct reality, by either altering the speed by which the hand cranked
cinématograhpe recorded the pro-filmic event or, once filmed, reversing the projected image.

In Australia, even into the 1920s, travelling photographers were still able to attract crowds in country towns by showing footage of local streetscapes and recognisable faces. The audience was able to verify that the projected image re-presented their life-world and thus they accepted the technological processes that created the image. This acceptance of the reality of the image as a true representation of the actual 'real' world they knew and occupied was also applied as a true re-presentation of the world they did not occupy. It was as if the technology of the camera validated the truth.

This notion that film equalled truth is born out by Matuszewski's statement in 1897 that film would reveal liars. Film technology of 1895 required much technical expertise in capturing the image on film. The filmic process was predominantly devoid of post-production manipulation, consequently the pro-filmic event and the projected image were one; that is, they were an exact photographic re-presentation of the subject. In Lumière's 60 second film, *The Sprinkler Sprinkled* (1895), we see a man watering his garden with a hose as a teenage boy creeps up on the man placing his foot on the hose, causing the water to stop flowing. The man looks down the hose as the boy releases the pressure on the hose, resulting in the man squirting himself in the face. The man then chases the boy. Although mounted on a tripod the cinématograhpe was unable to pan.

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chase *conveniently* takes place within the fixed frame of the camera. As we shall see, this and similar *actualités* were perceived as innocent antics, however they were still perceived as *actualités*.

4.5. MARVELLOUSLY TRUE TO LIFE

**From Novelty To Social Influence.**

For the moving image to be officially recognised as an instrument that had significant social influence several technological innovations took place. In raising the status of the screen beyond the novelty of Edison's Kinetoscope ‘peep-shows’, Louis Lumière significantly contributed to mass cultural encoding through the projected moving image.

These ‘public’ screenings were destined to re-produce exotic images. These exotic images, like the ‘local’ images, would be generally viewed as truthful re-presentations of reality. This innocent, naive reading of the screen by the general public evolves out of the technological process of the first projected film, combined with the undeniable aesthetics of film as the penultimate technology for re-presenting reality.

Dai Vaughan believes that the pervasive unspoken message of ‘actuality’ film or video is that the pro-filmic really happened and ‘here’ is the proof. This singular obsessiveness has become the documentary paradigm since Lumière first captured the image of his workers leaving their factory.\(^2\)

Hence before the onset of the 20th century, documentary production had

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commenced. The early actualities were the genesis of the documentary idea. As the first films of fact they recorded real events with an accuracy and heightened actuality that made them seem "objects of magical wonder . . . marvellously true to life".\(^2\)\(^3\)

As a consequence of films *marvellously true to life* quality, the ruling class significantly influenced films 'accuracy'. While businessmen such as Lumiere and Edison strove for profit, the ruling class saw the screen as an aid to power and control. The history of politically motivated omission from the dominant screen is almost as long as film itself.

In 1897, while on duty in Russia, Lumiere camera operators Francis Doublier and Charles Moisson found themselves at the scene of the Tsar's official presentation to the Russian people, following his coronation two days earlier. To mark the occasion each member of the crowd was to receive a piece of cake, a bag of candy, a goblet bearing the Tsar's monogram and a sausage, all wrapped in a kerchief printed with portraits of the royal couple. As the estimated crowd of half a million pushed and jostled for their souvenirs, two large cisterns gave way, causing the collapse of platforms upon which many people were standing. Hundreds of people fell to their death and many more were crushed to death in the consequent confusion. Doublier and Moisson filmed the tragic events, only to have their camera and film confiscated, never to be returned. No word of the tragedy appeared in the Russian press, even though an estimated 5,000 people died.\(^2\)\(^4\) In less than three years after the official birth of the

\(^{24}\) Barnouw, E. op. cit., p 13.
projected image, a ruling class had placed embargos on the re-presenting and re-encoding of legitimate authenticity.

4.6. DEVELOPMENT OF FILM TECHNIQUES

The First Edit

For the purpose of this discussion, the writer adheres to the view outlined by Ken Dancyger (1993) that in relation to the aesthetics of technique, craft and meaning of editing, that which applies to film can be taken to apply to video as well. It is from this perspective that the influence and significance of editing is established.

A period of great filmic creation and experimentation took place from about 1885 to 1930. It was within this silent film epoch that the process of editing developed and matured. This period also saw the consideration of visual continuity and the deconstruction of scenes into shots. Such narrative developments as parallel editing meant that the theatre based 'sensation scene' could now be emulated on screen. The melodramatic notion of intercutting from one locale to the other at increasing tempo until the two storylines were joined, resulted in the replacement of filmic 'real' time by 'dramatic' time.

'The edit' enabled the screen even greater power to re-encode reality. The process of editing is a seminal factor in the craft of re-presenting and re-encoding legitimate authenticity. Dancyger suggests that film and television are more powerful, influential and international than ever. As a

result, the edit is a very powerful process because of its potential to influence the re-presentation and re-encodification of reality.\textsuperscript{26}

It was through fiction film that the 'art' of editing evolved.\textsuperscript{27} Editing subsequently changed the nature of screen communication. By around 1907-8 the popularity of fiction film outweighed the documentary film: as a result the quantity and vigour of documentary film fell away. To some degree the documentary had fallen victim to its own rapid success. The tendency of the majority of documentary makers at the time was to retain the formula of pro-filmic actuality, regardless of content. The nature of the pro-filmic event itself was changing due to editing.\textsuperscript{28}

Lumière's operators, as part of promotional practice, sought out and received sponsorship from the aristocracy who were eager performers (as mentioned below). According to Barnouw, the ruling class became infatuated with their own pro-filmic frolics. The price their filmmaking entourage paid for being purveyors of ruling class performances was dramatically highlighted with the development of the edit process. Audiences no longer found the recurring images of the aristocracy preening themselves entertaining, once the edited drama became available.\textsuperscript{29}

Editing enabled the filmmaker post-production control over the continuity of a filmed event. This new application jettisoned film towards a radical

\begin{footnotes}
\item[26] Dancyger, loc. cit.
\item[27] Barnouw, E. op. cit., p 22.
\item[28] Ibid., p 21-22., Dancyger, op. cit., p 4.
\item[29] Barnouw, E. loc. cit.
\end{footnotes}
change in subject matter and hence new ways of reading the screen. Prior to 1903 the screen was "almost exclusively devoted to the film-of-fact's, objective recording of un-manipulated actuality". Suddenly the rearrangement and reconstruction of reality for the purpose of narrative and dramatic construction was available. Where previously the camera alone signified the projected filmic event, an entire new conceptual understanding of the pro-filmic was to evolve from the discourse of editing. Perhaps not until digital manipulation would any other image manipulation process alter as radically the way filmmakers and ultimately the mass audience perceived the construction and re-presentation of reality.

When the first motion pictures were presented to the general public by Edison's Kinetoscope and Lumière's Cinématographe, the process of editing did not exist. At first the novelty of viewing an image was limited to sixty seconds or less, due to the available technology. Yet, within 30 years of the first screened images, the principles of classical editing had been developed. However, in the formative years of film the techniques of presenting, continuity, screen direction, and dramatic emphasis through editing were not intrinsic to the pro-filmic process, though French avant-gardist George Méliès was producing films that ran for 14 minutes by 1902. Méliès, in *A trip to the Moon* (1902), had utilised his theatrical experience to create a sense of spectacle and a playful sense of the fantastic to make his films seem more dynamic. However his films remained a series of scenes, each scene captured by a single shot. The camera remained stationary capturing the pro-filmic event in long-shot and the shots (scenes) were then strung together to make the story. Méliès is said to

have discovered quite by chance crude in-camera editing by turning off the camera during one sequence and starting it again during another. Méliès used this process for vaudevillian effect.\(^3\)

However, by 1903, Edwin S. Porter, among others, began to use visual continuity to facilitate encoding the film's message. Building on Méliès work filmmakers like Porter discovered that the organisation of shots made the filmic narrative more dynamic.\(^4\)

Porter had demonstrated that the single shot, recording an incomplete piece of action, is the unit of which films must be constructed and thereby established the basic principle of editing.\(^5\)

The editing process allowed filmmakers to conceptualise events that, once edited, would 'speak' in a language foreign to the discourse of the previous eight years. Editing opened up vast possibilities for fiction film, bringing a previously unavailable excitement to the screen and giving rise to the highly successful "Nickelodeon era" (1904-1910). Film could begin to match the narrative of theatre.\(^6\)

Porter's *The Life of an American Fireman* (1903) was constructed from twenty shots. Porter utilised newsreel footage of an actual fire and combined it with interior fiction sequences to show firemen rescue a mother and child from a burning building. Porter's use of actuality footage woven with dramatic fiction footage was a catalyst for the fiction genre and a major turning point for the documentary genre. Porter's shot-by-shot alternation between interior and exterior made the story of the rescue

\(^3\) Dancyger, K. op. cit., p 3.

\(^4\) Ibid, p 5.


\(^6\) Jacobs, op. cit., p 3.
seem dynamic, and subsequently extended the viewers' filmic vocabulary. For while Méliès strung his one shot scenes together to tell a sequential location by location narrative, Porter introduced to the audience the filmic equivalent of theatrical narrative concepts.35

By utilising the actuality footage and interspersing it with a fictitious pro-filmic event, Porter had demonstrated how two shots filmed in different locations, with fundamentally different objectives, could, when edited together, imply greater meaning than the sum of the two parts. Dancyger suggests that this "juxtaposition could create a new reality greater than that of each individual shot".36 Porter's innovation hastened the demise of actuality footage as a means of sustaining an audience's attention in respect to its entertainment value alone. The actuality, film of fact, which had dominated the screen for the first eight years of film's public history, was all but abandoned by the commercial manufacturers. Actuality no longer dominated, although it would find its niche in reportage and ethnographic genres.

The editing process utilised by Porter and others paved the way for the development of what was to become the standard editing procedure within a filmic scene. Building on Porter's work, W D. Griffith segmented scenes into long shots, medium shots, and close shots. This revolutionary process enabled the viewer to sequentially access the main thrust of the narrative within a scene. The long shot, or establishing shot, enabled the viewer to locate and orientate the forthcoming pro-filmic events in filmic time and

35 Dancyger, op. cit., p 3-4.
space. The medium shot provides a pathway for the viewer to reach the objective of the scene, often presented in medium close-up or close-up.

Griffith also experimented with the construction of scenes where shorter and shorter shots were used to heighten dramatic impact. Consequently he demonstrated that by intercutting and ordering sequences, scenes could be fragmented, and only the moments closest to the intent of the scene needed to be shown to achieve realism. Dramatic time began to replace real time as a criterion for editing decisions.37

The box office success of Griffith and others who utilised his filmic style indicates the sophistication with which the general public were able to read the rapidly evolving language of the screen. Subsequently, the documentary movement began to use the filmic language of Porter and Griffith to re-present and re-encode legitimate authenticity.

By 1918 Griffith's editing innovations were the prime influence on filmmakers around the world. In the Soviet Union his technical achievements were studied intensely. Lenin had endorsed the importance of the role of film in supporting the revolution, thus, providing an example of filmic solutions being applied to political problems. V I. Pudovkin and other revolutionary filmmakers "planned, by means of new editing methods, not only to tell stories but to interpret and draw intellectual conclusions from them". Dancyger suggests that while being similar in his narrative strategy to Griffith, Pudovkin experimented freely with scene

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construction in order to convey ideas that were more politically motivated than those of Griffith.  

In the early 1920s, the Russian director and theorist Sergei Eisenstein, set about combining the editing language of Griffith with the political doctrine of Karl Marx. Eisenstein developed Griffith's style further by refining the combination of visual composition with the edit process.

Consequently, within the period from 1900 to 1930 the addition of and subsequent evolution of the editing process within non-fiction and fiction film had greatly broadened filmmakers' options "to make sense, to move, to disturb, to rob of meaning, to undermine the security of knowing".  

4.7. NEW DOCUMENTARY DIRECTIONS

Rapid technological developments saw the notion of documentary fracture into distinct genres. This development created the formal introduction of the newsreel genre and the evolution of documentary into the feature documentary.

**Feature Documentary**

With the development of longer film spools and the editing process a new form of documentary, the 'Feature film', evolved. This new form enabled the documentary to run for an hour or more, in stark contrast to Lumière's one minute 'shorts'. Once more the film industry (fiction & non-fiction)

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39 Dancyger, op. cit., p 32.
found itself in new terrain. The feature film soon established itself as the way of the future. Elegant theatres were constructed specifically for showing feature films. Jacobs asserts that the elegance of these buildings introduced a new respectability to the notion of going to the pictures and soon the middle class joined the working class as regular patrons of film. Under these conditions the non-fiction film gained a new measure of importance.40

The new respectability of documentary spurred a significant development in the genre that Jacobs describes as "a style of screen journalism that had some of the character of magazine articles".41 These programs centred on issues of national and international importance such as war, social issues, other cultures and countries. The sociological difference between these films and the earlier Lumière actualities stemmed from the ability to record and sequence reality. The earlier actualities could only replay a brief moment of a lineal sequence of reality. Now reality was the very subject of these films and no longer treated as a background. This concentration on milieu "signalled a new point in the factual film's efforts to achieve a synthesis of the real environment and the forces that move through a culture".42

Many of these new documentaries were made by scientists, explorers, and other non-professional film makers as well as professional camera operators. The new documentary makers often used film as an adjunct to their professional field of endeavour. An example of the new documentary maker was Walter Baldwin Spencer (1860-1929), an anthropologist who was

41 Jacobs, loc. cit.
42 Ibid, p 5.
Professor of Biology at Melbourne University from 1887 to 1919. Spencer, Chief Protector of Aboriginals in the Northern Territory undertook, in 1901 and again in 1912, field studies of Aboriginal tribal life, filming the first mainland Australian Aboriginal ceremonies and dances. Spencer and his partner, Francis Gillen, as the then unknown Robert Flaherty, had no cinematographic field experience before setting out on their ground breaking documentary careers.43

Emerging from this new era was a quest for scholarship that led to a redefining of ‘actuality’ and hence new interpretations of re-presenting and re-encoding legitimate authenticity. A new genre of documentary was evolving towards the notion of participation within the social environment as opposed to earlier notions of merely recording life's pro-filmic passing parade. Such films as *Lisbon Before And After The Revolution* (1910), *Captain Scott's Expedition To The South Pole* (1911), *Votes For Women* (1912), *The Western Front* (1919),44 are a sample of documentary titles of this period. These titles are in stark contrast to those of the Swedish film archives of 1907 (see page 98).

The Newsreel
From the onset of public film presentation, current events were filmed and exhibited at random intervals. These ‘current news pictures’ mainly covered the familiar contemporary topics dealing with dominant political, cultural and sporting events. By 1910, camera operators in major cities throughout the world filmed headline news. Established theatres throughout Australia showed newsreels. The dominant ‘newsreel’

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43 Trustrum, J. A brief history of the documentary, in Lansell, & Beilby, op. cit, p 23.
44 Jacobs, op. cit., p 5.
distributors were Pathé Australian, Animated Gazette, Williams' Weekly, Spencer's Gazette and T. J. West.45

The Lumière-styled 'actuality' documentary of the time was being superseded. Rapidly growing competition for weekly filmed news brought the 'film of fact' into closer contact with world issues than ever before. The once customary documentary story became a ritual composite of a "royal visit, military manoeuvre, sports event, humorous item, disaster, and ethnic festival. The newsreel institutionalised the decline of the 'actuality' documentary. It had been an era of beginnings, and an astonishingly prophetic one".46

The period had, however, cemented in our cultural psyche notions that the actuality-documentary and newsreel equals 'screen-truth'. One still cannot deny the ability of actualities such as the 1896 Melbourne Cup or the 1895 Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory to present legitimate authenticity. These images are intrinsically different to Edison's vaudeville performers or Méliès avant-garde renderings. The former hold something we know as the 'essence of existence/life', the latter we also know to be real, but in a different sense.

4.8. AVANT-GARDE

Jacobs asserts that the new dimension in newsreel propaganda of 1919-1920, "constituted a major new extension of the non-fiction film, simply by

demonstrating that visual news material could be so manipulated as to serve an ideological point of view". The avant-garde documentary arose out of the desire to challenge the bourgeoisie's rendering of the dominant screen.

The context in which avant-garde appears here is primarily associated with the 'new' in relation to the conventions of dominant screen expression at the time. The "British documentary of the 1930's was considered avant-garde, as it included much experimentation with new forms and techniques as well as with new subject and purpose". While the documentary, like fiction, is dependent on images, the documentary is "at least grounded in more formally innovative and socially responsible motives and intentions".

**Mannahatta**

Lewis Jacobs outlines that "the 1920s were an age of betrayed idealism, disillusionment, and cynical materialism — but also a period of high creativity in the arts". Radical experimentation appeared in literature, painting, music, theatre. *Mannahatta* (1921) supported the 1897 prediction of film critic Matuszewski, previously mentioned, that one facet of documentary would be presenting "the changing face of the cities". The rapid evolution of the documentary form had advanced towards and beyond Matuszewski's 1897 prediction. The release of the film *Mannahatta*, made by painter Charles Sheeler and photographer Paul Strand, illustrated this

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48 Ellis, op. cit., p 47
49 Ellis, op. cit., p 56.
50 Nichols, op. cit., p 4.
The film is an abstract portrait of New York. The avant-garde movement, like the documentary movement, rebelled against the fiction film, which had become the predominant artistic as well as commercial form of the day. The revolutionary Mannahatta did not make reference to actual people, places or events, but manipulated factual material to express the feel of a city through abstract design. The documentary attempted to realise its subject via the potentialities of the film medium.\textsuperscript{52}

Both the traditional documentary movement and the avant-garde movement strove to realise the potential of the film medium and in doing so concurred that the fiction film was telling lies about life.\textsuperscript{53} These movements approached this dilemma from opposing perspectives. Traditional documentarists maintained that conventional fiction films were not realistic enough, while the avant-gardists claimed that they were too realistic. In an attempt to dispel the 'lies of fiction film', the traditional documentary movement and the avant-garde documentary movement each rendered a different version of factuality. "The former wanted external (objective) facts presented accurately while the latter wanted formal (aesthetic) patterns and inner (subjective) truths presented poetically".\textsuperscript{54}

Jacobs maintains that Mannahatta "reflected the 1920s' new philosophy 'of freedom in the arts'. In complete contrast to any factual film that preceded it, Mannahatta's contribution lay in its aesthetic vision".\textsuperscript{55} Having little initial exposure Mannahatta had no immediate impact when released in the United States. However, with the film's French screening, at a Dadaist

\textsuperscript{52} Jacobs, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{53} Ellis, op. cit., p 46.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, p 47.
\textsuperscript{55} Jacobs. op. cit., p 6.
venue, it came to be internationally acknowledged. This result was a reflection of the rich French film culture, dating from Lumière to the subsequent work of George Méliès, who is recognised as the first major avant-garde film maker.\textsuperscript{56}

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects in the evolution of the documentary and the development of avant-garde, lies in the fact that the genre, of which \textit{Mannahatta} is a prominent example, did not aim to mirror nature. Instead it sought to deconstruct reality and reconstruct it into a rhythmic composition. "This emphasis on the formal values of the motion picture was an innovation for the time, and introduced the film of fact to a new aspect 'art'". This new documentary territory that did not mirror nature in order to 'truthfully' document a society was not only a quantum jump in the ongoing rendering of the dominant screen, but the catalyst for many avant-garde documentaries, such as Walter Ruttmann's \textit{Berlin} (1927) and Joris Ivens \textit{Rain} (1929).\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{Vertov}

The avant-garde techniques utilised in \textit{Mannahatta} (1921) were further explored by Dziga Vertov in \textit{The Man With a Movie Camera} (1929). Vertov's 1929 avant-garde documentary style employed tracking shots, slow motion, animated stills, unusual camera angles, projecting backwards and hidden cameras. The importance of the style for Vertov was exposure of the process of documentary making itself. These techniques allowed Vertov to directly explore his documentary vision. Vertov aimed "to create a truly international film-language, absolute writing in film and the complete

\textsuperscript{56} Ellis, op. cit., p 47.
\textsuperscript{57} Jacobs, op. cit., p 6.
The techniques employed by Vertov were a forerunner to the postmodern concept of reflexivity.

The *Man With a Movie Camera* exhibits a complex cinematic view of urban daily life, while simultaneously foregrounding the actual production process. Vertov is questioning the supposition that the documentary is a window to the world. Vertov focuses on the reality by exposing the filmmaking processes that create meaning. The occupancy of the screen is merely an image and "the true reality is not the reality of what is shown but the image itself. This conscious subversion of the documentary makes the focus of the film not the real world but the cinematic language used to transcribe that world." Vertov believed that only the documented truth could be honest enough to bring about true revolution.

Vertov's devotion to the truth is exemplified in *The Man with a Movie Camera*. The film tells the story of one day in the life of a film cameraman. Vertov is able to repeatedly remind the viewer of the artificiality and non-realism of cinema. Consequently, non-realism, manipulation and all of the technical elements of film become part of this self-reflexive film that looks at the director's own intentions and uses the film to explore these intentions and to make them overt. Special effects and fantasy were part of those technical elements. Particularly in relation to editing, Vertov is more closely aligned with the history of the experimental film than with

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the history of the documentary. In terms of his ideas, however, he is a forerunner of the cinéma vérité movement.60

The Man With a Movie Camera is significant as it is here that we see the notions of the avant-garde-influenced documentary cross over into what has come to be known as Cinema Vérité and Direct Cinema. In The Man With a Movie Camera, Vertov was able to give a sense of ‘being in the action’ that was not emulated until the advent of 16mm synchronised sound equipment.61

4.9. FLAHERTY AND GRIERSON

Robert Flaherty intended producing a biography of a typical Eskimo family. The resulting film was in reality a study not of a typical Eskimo family, but presented a glimpse of an Eskimo life from the masculine perspective. The gender specific point of view of a male filmmaker is typical of the vast majority of documentaries and fiction films produced in the history of the moving image. That aside, Nanook of the North (1922) further extended documentary discourse. This documentary was Flaherty's first feature film and is unquestionably a landmark in documentary history. It is generally recognised as the "classic progenitor of the documentary idiom".62

For the purposes of this discussion it is relevant to note the equipment which Flaherty used. His equipment included a specially built telephoto

60 Dancyger, op. cit., p 26.
61 Jacobs, p 59.
lens as well as developing and printing equipment.\textsuperscript{63} These 'embellishing technologies' enabled him to produce a documentary that utilised encoding processes that had been more commonly associated with the dramatised screen. Flaherty achieved his ends in two ways. The use of a telephoto lens enabled him to film dangerous and logistically difficult events from a safe distance, while enabling those events to be read by the audience within a culturally acceptable frame. That is, the telephoto lens enables the audience to get close to the action,\textsuperscript{64} a process that had become culturally encoded, primarily through the drama genre.

Flaherty acquired developing and printing equipment that enabled him to process his film. The developing equipment, just as the telephoto lens, enabled Flaherty to get close to his subject matter, but in a different way.\textsuperscript{65} By projecting his pro-filmic renderings to Nanook and his family, the target group soon became accustomed to viewing themselves on the screen. They rapidly understood the purpose of the camera although they had no previous contact with film. Consequently Flaherty was able to re-present legitimate authenticity. Scenes such as Nanook and his family preparing for sleep, in what appeared to be a 'typical' igloo, were not what they appeared to be. The audience views the sequence of the family undressing under their fur coverings and snuggling against each other for warmth as a process that appears genuine, though, it was an authenticated re-construction. The pro-filmic 'reality' of this scene is that Nanook and his family were acting out the every-day ritual of going to sleep. This pro-filmic process was not in principle dissimilar to countless other actualités, such as Lumière's \textit{Feeding the Baby} (1895).

\textsuperscript{63} Ellis, op. cit., 23.
\textsuperscript{64} Jacobs, op. cit., 97.
\textsuperscript{65} Shirwood, in Jacobs, op. cit., p 18.
To film the igloo interior sequence, the pro-filmic space had to be constructed for the camera. The actual, real event could not be filmed due to the bulk of the image recording technology in comparison to the size of the igloo and the amount of light available. The filmed igloo interior was not of a 'typical' igloo, but that of a giant igloo. The larger than life igloo took several days to build, whereas a 'typical' igloo usually took several hours. The 'hyper-real' igloo enabled a pro-filmic rendering of a typical eskimo bedtime ritual.\textsuperscript{66}

Nanook and his family developed an understanding of what Flaherty was attempting to capture by viewing the film rushes. The harsh environmental reality of their world could not be changed by European contact, but their culture could. What Flaherty rendered in \textit{Nanook of the North} (1922), \textit{Moana} (1926) and \textit{Man of Aran} (1934) was his version and perception of a reality, his factuality. By utilising advanced technology Flaherty was able to communicate with an audience. He was able to access advances in film production and to develop a sophisticated encoding process in order to make meaning.

Although not called documentary at the time, \textit{Nanook of the North} signalled the beginnings of a new type of documentary. Flaherty's concentration on pro-filmic detail, combined with a highly developed sense of continuity, was a break from the traditional purely descriptive documentary of the day. Hence, a new horizon in reading the dominant screen was initiated. Flaherty had "swept away the notion that what the camera recorded was the total reality". He "proved that there was another

\textsuperscript{66} Bamouw, op. cit., p 38.
reality that the eye alone could not perceive, but which the heart and mind could discern”.\(^6^7\)

**John Grierson**

Philip Rosen asserts that classical arguments in the documentary tradition have regularly interpreted the meaning of documentary against what it is not.\(^6^8\) In order to look at the classical documentary arguments it is imperative that we look at the work of John Grierson.

Ellis asserts that John Grierson, more than any other individual, is responsible for the development of the documentary film in the English-speaking world.\(^6^9\) Swann suggests that the documentary, or "film of actuality", had been important from the time of the Lumière brothers, but it was only after the films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Flaherty that Grierson considered film as a tool for ideological propaganda. Swann asserts that Grierson was prompt to note Lenin's belief in "the power of film for ideological propaganda . . . Grierson's great innovation was to adapt this revolutionary dictum to the purpose of social democracy".\(^7^0\)

Dancyger suggests that Grierson was affected by the powerful editing style of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Eisenstein utilises intellectual montage that introduced ideas into a highly charged and emotionalised sequence. This technique greatly influenced Grierson in taking the

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68 Rosen, P. op. cit., p 64.
69 Ellis, op. cit., p ix.
principle of social or political purpose and joining it with a visual aesthetic.\textsuperscript{71}

At the height of his career Grierson was able to maintain a strategy of steadily producing short documentaries offering a consistent social view that reinforced certain attitudes in a manner which Ellis considers to be similar in tactics to today's television commercial makers.\textsuperscript{72} Over time Grierson's meaning of 'documentary' moved from his initial use, as he applied it to \textit{Moana}, (as previously mentioned) to its derivative interpretation. This version of documentary meant to 'document' or to teach and propagate "using the 'documents' of modern life as materials to spread the faith of social democracy". Grierson came to prefer that the word 'documentary' stand for a concept, a purpose, an idea, rather than a film code.\textsuperscript{73} This later interpretation of the meaning of documentary by Grierson was a significant departure from his interpretation in his 1926 review of \textit{Moana}. Grierson had called \textit{Moana} a documentary, but by 1936 Grierson felt that \textit{Moana} was not realistic. Evelyn Gerstein wrote:

That in Flaherty's wake in England today, there is a school of younger film directors led by Grierson, the film critic, who once touted Flaherty as the creator of cinema and leader in the escape out of the studio impasse. Today, Grierson has rejected Flaherty as an exotic, and established a unit for the production of realistic documentaries.\textsuperscript{74}

Grierson's accusations of Flaherty's work point to a significant division in the development of and notions pertaining to documentary. Grierson was saying that his social movement films, celebrating the worker, were

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{71} Dancyger, op cit., p 20.
\textsuperscript{72} Ellis, op. cit., p 75.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p 4. p ix.
\end{footnotes}
realist, but that Flaherty's poetic films, celebrating 'humanity' were not. It is here that we can begin to chart the finite deviations within the term 'documentary' and consequently the implications such finite interpretations have in relation to re-presenting and re-encoding legitimate authenticity.

A Griersonian Perspective Of Flaherty

Grierson and Flaherty, while friends and occasional production allies, had different philosophical approaches to the use of the screen. Flaherty's ethnographic approach was to preserve on film the dignity of a world rapidly falling victim to the onset of high modernity. As time passes one cannot deny the magnitude of Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, *Moana* and *Man of Aran*. Grierson, however, a working class socialist, found himself making documentaries celebrating the worker, through a period of world economic depression, leading to the outbreak of the Second World War. He subsequently developed a personal theory of documentary that emphasised the fundamental needs of the working people of the time (though usually ignoring the plight of the unemployed and the under-class). Grierson and his devotees believed Flaherty's work lacked a relevant socio-political message. Paul Rotha, a long time ally of Grierson's, saw Flaherty's work as, "wax works figures acting the lives of their fathers" when referring to *Nanook of the North*, *Moana*, and *Man of Aran*.75

Rotha was referring to Flaherty's documentary practice that saw the production of *Man of Aran* in 1934 during the Great Depression. Dancyger asserts that the making of this film was an indication of how far Flaherty had roamed from the issues of the day. Flaherty had a particular

75 Langer, op. cit., p 13
mythic vision of life, and he re-created that vision in his films. Flaherty, in an attempt to record exotic cultures before they became lost forever, often arranged for his subjects to revert to prior cultural activities. While filming the famous walrus kill, in *Nanook of the North*, Flaherty in later years recalled how Nanook and his fellow hunters, fearing for their lives, called to him to stop filming their life and death struggle with the giant sea monster, as it edged further out to sea. With Nanook's harpoon lodged deep in the Walrus, he and his co-hunters tugged at the harpoons leash for 'grim life' while the walrus dragged them towards the ocean. Nanook called to Flaherty to shoot the walrus, with the rifle that Nanook had become accustomed to using in such circumstances. Flaherty pretended not to hear Nanook's desperate plea. Nanook's rifle does not appear in the film.

Seventy years later, the footage of the walrus and Eskimos in a life and death struggle is still breathtaking documentary footage. Similarly, when making *Moana*, Flaherty found on arriving in Samoa that the native woman no longer wore grass skirts, instead they had opted for cotton skirts. Flaherty had grass skirts made for his pro-filmic version of Samoan life.

**Grierson Towards Social Reality**

Grierson and Rotha, believed that documentary meant 'now', what was happening at the door step. They believed that a documentary should comprise contemporary discourses particularly in a world in the grip of depression, edging towards the possibility of war.

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76 Dancyger, op. cit., p 55.
77 Barnouw, op. cit., p 37.
79 Grierson in Ellis, op. cit., p 76.
John Grierson maintains that "the idea of documentary in its present form came originally not from the film people at all, but from the Political Science School at Chicago University in the early twenties". In 1923 Grierson received a Rockefeller fellowship to pursue postgraduate research in the United States. Grierson pursued his study into public opinion and the mass media at the University of Chicago. He met Walter Lippmann, whose ideas had already influenced his thinking. Lippmann discussed the problems of governments becoming too big, too distant and complex for the average citizen. He maintained that the average citizen felt that they could no longer keep up with the information required to make informed decisions and he asserted that education was the only solution to this social dilemma.

Grierson acknowledged that it was Lippmann who suggested to him that, rather than becoming involved in the popular press, to which Grierson had been initially drawn, he should turn his attention towards the potential of film. Lippmann proposed that film was the appropriate medium to provide citizens with the ability to make informed decisions.

After returning to Britain, Grierson initiated his brand of social commitment. The vast majority of (predominantly upper middle class and well educated) documentary filmmakers who worked with him in producing over three hundred films between 1929 and 1939, reflected his social commitment. Grierson, said "I look on cinema as a pulpit and use it

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81 Ellis, op. cit., p 73.
as a propagandist". Ellis believes that it was Grierson's innovative leadership, theoretical articulation of the form, function, ethics and aesthetics of documentary that influenced documentary makers in Britain and throughout the world. As a producer Grierson was, to some extent or another, responsible for the release of literally thousands of films. Grierson stated,

We have believed with persistence that the first and last place to find the drama or reality is in what men today are doing and thinking and planning and fighting for. We have indeed found our field of observation and the rough patterns of our work in the clash of forces inside our own metropolitan community.

Grierson's First Principles of Documentary (1932-1934) categorised documentary into "lower" less valuable, and "higher" more valuable forms. Grierson believed that one only began to wander into the world of documentary after having passed beyond the non-fiction forms of travelogue, newsreels, "magazine items", scientific and educational films. Rosen asserts that "from the beginning a lasting truism of the documentary tradition that patterning, rhetoric, artistry, or something, had to be added to the indexical capacity of the medium". Rosen believes that this was why Grierson was able to put to use "concepts of story, drama, and the organic to indicate a prerequisite of genuine, 'higher' documentary".

Grierson was concerned with shaping the institutions of society, his goals were always social, economic, and political. He accessed every available filmic style, including 'art', to achieve his goals. Ellis asserts that 'art' in

82 Barnouw, op. cit., quoting Hardy, p 86.
83 Ellis, op. cit., p 74.
84 Rosen, op. cit., p 64-65.
the British documentary of the 1930's was primarily used to add emotional depth to intellectual argument. Grierson perceived his style of documentary as anti-aesthetic; he maintained that 'art' was "the by-product of a job of work".\footnote{Ellis, op. cit., p 73.} Grierson rejected beauty as worthy in itself; he rejected aesthetic experience as being enriching or broadening. Similarly he had little interest in films that offered information and insights along with refinements that ultimately contributed to a more sympathetic understanding, unless this process led to 'action'. Richard MacCann asserts that the Griersonian opposition to, and contempt for, the illusion and spectacle of early popular cinema was evidenced by Grierson siding with stories that were taken from the 'raw' against those with 'artificial backgrounds' which neglected the 'real world'.\footnote{MacCann, R. (1966). A Montage of Theories in Lansell, R. & Beilby, P. op. cit., p 12.}

4.10. PROPAGANDA

During World War I the USA began making propaganda films, as did other nations including Australia, in 1915, a year before Great Britain. Similarly, in November 1916, Germany started the \textit{Frontline} newsreel. Russia developed a propaganda film unit after the 1917 October Revolution. Newsreel propaganda was firmly established and showed that visual news footage could function to illustrate an ideological perspective.\footnote{Ibid, p 26-27.}

It seems that reconstructions and fakes have been around almost as long as film. The earlier constructions of images consisted mainly of combining actuality footage with studio or constructed footage. Often reconstruction was used to make the actuality footage more interesting and exciting and
hence able to compete with colourful newspaper reports. A typical example from around 1900 is actual footage by Albert Smith that was not released by Vitagraph until footage of a table-top "battle of Santiago Bay" was added. The constructed table top 'battle' was complete with profuse cigarette and cigar smoke, explosions, and cardboard ships going down in inch-deep water.88

This sort of activity was seen as enterprising at that time and little attention was given to the genuineness or ethics behind the reconstructions. Similarly, the Empire Marketing Board's 1930's film Conquest used footage from a fiction film to replicate authenticity.89

As outlined previously cultural bias frames 'objective' reporting by means such as selecting the hierarchy of subject matter. That aside, Jacobs claims that initially newsreels mainly confined themselves to 'objective' reporting. It was perceived that the facts were presented without bias or special viewpoint. Newsreels grew in influence and acquired a special place within the film world. "Newsreels began to treat such controversial subjects as war, politics, and labour in such a way as to affect public opinion".90

Barnouw proposes that cultural bias in film dates back to the period when Louis Lumière sent his operators to the four corners of the world. Barnouw maintains that, along with seeking the patronage of monarchs, it was

89 Ibid, p 24 & p 142.
almost inevitable that the operators should develop bonds with military, governments and entrepreneurs.  

The Lumière films made between 1895-96 were predominantly reflections of French middle-class life. However when Lumière's operators started to tour the world, filming and displaying their films, patronage was sought. As a matter of promotional practice, the Lumière operators sought out and received royal sponsorship with triumphant success. "King, Tsar, Kaiser, Emperor, Maharaja had readily played their part in launching the wonder of the century". The Swedish film archives of 1907 bears witness to the royal patronage bestowed upon Lumière filmmakers:

Oscar II and Sofia's Golden Wedding Anniversary  
The Kaiser at Swinemünde  
Wilhelm II and Nicholas II Coming Aboard the Deutschland  
Kaiser Wilhelm's Visit of London  
Kaiser Visit to Portsmouth  
Pictures From the Life of Oscar II  
Funeral of Oscar II (Barnouw, 1993, p 22).

In the United States the situation was similar. Theodore Roosevelt, even before becoming President, was an especially eager performer. In 1898 he showed, according to Albert E. Smith, Vitagraph co-founder and cameraman, "a willingness to halt his march up San Juan Hill and strike a pose". The aristocracy's pro-filmic reactions, signified an acknowledgment of the camera. The ruling class knew that the subsequent screening had the potential to reach a vast audience.

91 Barnouw, op. cit., p 22.  
92 Barnouw, loc. cit.  
93 Barnouw, loc. cit.  
94 Ibid, p 23.
Official Government film production in Australia commenced in 1911. D. R. Moore, claims that counter to the experience in Europe and the United States, attending the movies in Australia at the turn of the century was by-and-large perceived by the establishment as vulgar, gratuitous and plebeian entertainment. It was not until events like the 1905 Premiers' conference in Hobart that attitudes began to change. The State Premiers viewed actuality films of buckjumping, cattle sales, sheep-shearing and wood chopping combined under the title of 'An Exhibition of Living Pictures'. These scenes of rural and urban Australian life were designed to inform the Premiers about various aspects of Australia that may have been unfamiliar.95

It is not surprising then that the resulting pro-filmic images reflected the dominant rationale. For example pro-filmic images of native peoples from distant colonised shores, were predominantly portrayed as being enthusiastic to convert to the dominant culture, and consequently to be loyal. Actuality had rapidly created blatantly constructed readings of the screen. Institutional versions of re-presenting and re-encoding legitimate authenticity had a significant cultural impact. "Most 'native' shots probably gave western audiences a reassuring feeling about the colonial system".96

A famous exception to this rule was recorded by an Edison camera operator in 1903. Native Woman Coaling a Ship and Scrambling for Money, displayed degrading images of West Indian women. The images had such a disturbing effect on the American theatre audience that the film, for economic

96 Barnouw, op. cit., p 23.
reasons, rarely reached the screen. It would seem that by 1903, society had developed a propensity for a culturally specific reading of the screen.\footnote{Barnouw, loc. cit.}

The films *Native Woman Coaling a Ship and Scrambling for Money* is an important signpost in the historical lineage of screen discourse. These examples indicate that, from the very infancy of the screen, the genesis of a universal re-presentation and re-encoding of legitimate authenticity was rejected in favour of an institutional and culturally specific reading of the screen. Consequently when Grierson and others came to talk about presenting images that are 'raw', the notion of 'raw' images would be inextricably linked with cultural interpretations of authentic 'screen-truth'.

Aided by the introduction of sound, the documentary movement developed other versions of reality and methods of encoding it. The depression of the 1930s saw the documentary develop into an instrument of social policy. Dancyger suggests that during this period of instability and unpredictability, documentary films "searched for a stability and strength not present in the real world".\footnote{Dancyger, op. cit., p 54.}

Documentary production had become a sophisticated process. Discourses from the 1930s stressed the importance of preplanning, aesthetics, dramatising and even scripting the pro-filmic. Paul Rötha supported "the use of the film medium to interpret creatively and in social terms the life of the people as it exists in reality". Rötha appears to be sanctioning the use of 'non-actuality' within the documentary genre. Rötha did not rule out actors or the use of studios from documentary production "as long as the..."
filmmaker's purpose was to help a society function better to contribute to more satisfying lives for its people". Reading the documentary screen had moved well beyond the naive notions of the screen presentation of unmediated events. Authenticating reality was now recognised as being culturally bound within the perception of both the maker and the viewer at the point of mutual life-world knowledge.\textsuperscript{99}

By the 1930s, it seems that any pro-filmic or post-production function that created images purporting to contribute to an improved quality of life or served a 'worthwhile' social function was eligible to be classified as factual. While Rötha condemned Robert Flaherty for re-constructing the past, there was a growing acceptance of the re-construction of the present. Defining authenticity was becoming far more elusive. As technology developed to produce the documentary sophistication of the 1930s, powerful permutations of representation became available through the sophistication of screen technology. This further compounded the issue of the authenticity of re-constructed reality.

Art in the form of more sophisticated renderings of representation for example, became accepted. Hence, art for the sake of society became the documentary imperative. Subsequently, the more traditional forms of documentary subsumed many aspects of avant-garde screen language. Ruttmann, who had gained notoriety for his avant-garde renderings in \textit{Berlin} (1927), assisted Leni Riefenstahl to edit \textit{Olympia} (1938) and later made \textit{Deutsche Panzer} (1940). The 1920s French avant-garde filmmaker Cavalcanti worked with Grierson after moving to Britain in the 1930s.

\textsuperscript{99} Ellis, op. cit., p 5.
Grierson was forging documentary as an instrument for propagating social and political opinion and thus cementing the philosophies of the social realist documentary, which aimed at exposing the plight of the working class. 100

New renderings of the dominant screen came with the emergence of political persuasion documentaries, which rapidly developed into outright propaganda documentaries by the onset of the Second World War.

One of the most notorious examples of the political documentary, *Triumph of the Will* (1935), emerged from Germany. This government initiated project enabled its director Leni Riefenstahl access to enormous resources, including: a staff of 120 people — which included sixteen leading camera operators, their assistants and supporting technicians — thirty cameras and four sound trucks, twenty-two automobiles and their drivers, along with uniformed police. 101 During this period all documentary production in Nazi Germany, was directly controlled by government. The German government implemented and directed the documentary 'voice' towards the glorification of the nation and its Führer. Under government sponsorship the German documentary developed outstanding technical excellence, as Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *Olympia* (1938) demonstrated. The technical excellence displayed in films such as Riefenstahl's further embellished the official version of reality. The documentary had found another purpose; as Jacobs states, in pre-war Germany documentary was used "to suppress the faculty of understanding that might have undermined the bias of the whole (Nazi) system". 102

100 Ellis, op. cit., p 55-56.
102 Jacobs, op. cit., p 73.
4.11. WORLD WAR II INFLUENCE ON THE DOCUMENTARY GENRE

The outbreak of World War 2 forced all governments to realise that film, and in particular documentary film, could provide the social glue required to maintain an adherence to the government's agenda. Film had become part of popular culture and hence had become a logical means for disseminating information. The feature documentary and newsreel were used during this time to deal with the background as well as the foreground of war. Governments needed to inform and motivate the general public and its militia.¹⁰³

With the outbreak of World War 2, documentary films became an important tool in the mobilization of national resources. Official government departments for the production of propaganda films had already been established in Germany. Britain and the USA had the need to produce their own versions of the war, as did the smaller political powers like Canada and Australia. In Australia a film division within the Department of Information (DOI) was established in 1942. The high Australian unemployment rate was second only to that of Germany, and for this reason the official Australian documentaries of the period prior to the war "were prosaic and conventional, delivering a strictly official account of life in Australia during the Great Depression".¹⁰⁴

Extending The Meaning Of Documentary

Utilising the documentary to motivate national and international opinion during the period surrounding World War 2 demonstrates how

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¹⁰³ Ellis, op. cit., p 134.
¹⁰⁴ McMurchy, M. in Murry, op. cit., p 179.
The devastation inflicted by the Japanese at Pearl Harbour stirred Americans into war fervour. However the American soldier found the Pearl Harbour bombing difficult to place in context with the war in Europe. There needed to be a means of clarifying who they were fighting, who they were supporting and why. For the first time in the history of the USA, the army was to take on the task of political educator. The majority of American documentary and fiction filmmakers engaged themselves in the obligations of a government at war. From 1942 until the end of the war documentaries in American, as elsewhere, served as a powerful device for implementing national policy. The significance of the American war documentary in discussing the 'power' of the dominant screen to inform has some interesting consequences that were uncovered in the American war series Why We Fight. One of Hollywood's most successful directors, Frank Capra, was commissioned by then Chief of Staff, George C. Marshall, to produce a series of films to prepare enlisted American soldiers for war. The seven Why We Fight documentaries (1943-1945) are, according to MacCann, among the most successful propaganda films ever made.

They attempted (1) to destroy faith in isolation, (2) to build up a sense of the strength and at the same time the stupidity of the

105 Ellis, op. cit., p 134; Bamouw, op. cit., p 139.
enemy, and (3) to emphasise the bravery and achievements of America's allies.  

MacCann points out that Capra used a variety of filmic genres in his attempt to communicate with the audience, including compilation footage, re-created footage, excerpts from Hollywood films, animation, and excerpts from Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. Riefenstahl's documentary was originally devised to inspire the Nazi cause, but under Capra's direction excerpts were used to motivate the American troops. Capra's documentaries were technically outstanding achievements. However, research carried out by the US army indicated that the predominantly working class audience did not read the screen as Capra had intended. Only the well-educated middle class audience did so. For the majority of his audience Capra had moved outside and beyond their horizons of understanding.

Semidocumentary

Britain had a small dynamic documentary movement resulting mainly from the earlier work of John Grierson. Grierson, had by the outbreak of the war, moved to Canada to establish the Canadian National Film Board. Britain found itself facing possible invasion as Germany rapidly conquered Europe.

The British used documentary to bolster national resilience. Barnouw asserts World War II was the period where the development of the Bugle-call documentary took place and that they were an adjunct to military action. The documentary maker's task was to "stir the faithful's blood, and

106 MacCann in Dancyger, op. cit., p 65.
107 Dancyger, loc. cit.
chill the enemy to the marrow.\textsuperscript{109} Under the umbrella of the Bugle-call documentary, Ellis maintains three major types of British wartime documentaries emerged: the actuality/newsreel or ‘records of battle documentary’, a continuation of the peacetime social documentary and the semidocumentary.\textsuperscript{110}

With the development of the semidocumentary the notion of documentary moved closer to the fiction genre than had been seen previously. The British semidocumentary in the main combined the standard documentary conventions utilising non-actors, location shooting, a narrator describing or embellishing the pro-filmic with a high degree of skilfully handled artifice, such as tightly scripted dialogue, sometimes location sync-sound recording, carefully plotted suspense and familiar characterisations. Towards the end of the war John Grierson denounced much of the British documentary work from this period, saying that "it was a newsreel war not a documentary war... requiring the crude immediacy of reportage rather than the considered refinement of art".\textsuperscript{111} Significantly, the war had necessitated British documentary to move beyond the 1930s Griersonian concept of the social documentary, and incorporate some of the ‘purpose of life’ themes found in Flaherty’s work.

**Neorealism**

Documentary realism as a structure for stability and a reinforcement of social values dates back to (as has been shown) the beginnings of cinema. The *Sneeze* (1894) in the USA, *Workers leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895) in France and the *Melbourne Cup* (1896) in Australia are some of the

\textsuperscript{109} Bamouw, op. cit., p 139.  
\textsuperscript{110} Ellis, op. cit., p 111.  
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid. p 125.
earliest examples. The style of actuality illustrated in these films later developed into travelogues and popular event films, ‘prototypes of news reports’. Later developments evolved into elaborate aesthetic and political agenda documentaries under the influence of documentary makers such as John Flaherty, Dziga Vertov, and John Grierson. As indicated, documentary had predominantly distanced itself from spectacle, glamour and fiction, though elements of all three can be seen in the works of one or more of the above. Yet, documentary realism gained a fictional ally in Italy with the defeat of fascism towards the end of the Second World War. Italy was able to rekindle its Social Documentary film movement and transform it into Neorealism. Neorealism relied on reality "of themes and on a style of expression which freed the film as a whole from artifice and convention". "It set up cameras in the streets" and contacted "with life as it is really lived".112

With the fall of fascism the social environment supported the dominant screen acceptance of the new form of documentary. Leprohon asserts that neorealism was the product of its time. It was not a school of artistic aesthetics or values so much as an opportunity to express suppressed emotion. Decades of repression firstly by the bourgeoisie and then by the fascists had attempted to camouflage this repressed emotion. "Neorealism was thus a revival of the Risorgimento, the 'unfinished revolution'". 113

Nichols proposes that neorealism had the ability to "catch at a glance the drama-laden moments of ordinary lives", where emotional sympathy is roused with almost each scene, building a pathos with an intensity which

113 Ibid, p 86.
resembles melodrama. The neorealist film, like the melodrama, has plot and characters, though neorealism tended to be less developed than its fictional counterparts. In the neorealist documentary, historical and/or political situations command centre stage, rather than the development of interpersonal relationships. It is the plot and the character that embody the theme and idea. Neorealism is a form of social consciousness film that takes in elements of both traditional fiction and documentary genre. The documentary styles of news footage, narration and maps, were often used as a bridging device in the neorealist documentary. Fiction on the other hand would usually solve similar problems through a tightly scripted plot. Unlike the fiction film, neorealism relied less on dialogue and performance. Instead, it utilised professional and non-professional actors, which tended to remove it from the traditional notion of the Star genre fiction film. "Such films melded the observational eye of documentary with the intersubjective, identificatory strategies of fiction". Robertos Rossellini's Open City (1945) is a classic example of the neorealist genre with its authentic crumbling walls.114

4.12. LEACOCK AND ROUCH

Both the American Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité are often referred to as 'vérité', or direct cinema. The concept of 'direct cinema' centres on the technique of recording pro-filmic reality, specifically: 'direct' refers to the synchronous recording of image and sound.115

114 Nichols, op. cit., p 169
115 Ellis, op. cit., p 218.
The development of the various documentary genres, such as Actuality, Feature, Neorealism, and Direct, have been dependent on the historical and technological circumstances of the time. The practical implementation of much of Vertov's documentary philosophy, for example, had for technological reasons, little effect on his contemporaries. The advent of television produced pressure to develop more versatile and flexible film technologies. The constraints of 'setting up' individual camera and sound recording equipment made it difficult, if not impossible, to film events as they actually took place. Technological advancements, including the 16mm film camera and later video, provided the impetus for the successful development of what was to be more widely known as cinéma vérité.\footnote{116}{Pruzanski in Lansell, R. & Beilby, P. op. cit., p 42.}

Cinéma vérité and American Direct Cinema evolved out of a need to get closer to the action and get there faster, to give the viewer a sense of 'being there'. The documentary was now able to achieve the flexibility Vertov had alluded too in \textit{The Man With a Movie Camera} (1929) and that which Richard Leacock had momentarily experienced while filming Flaherty's last film \textit{Louisiana Story} (1948). The advent of light weight portable cameras, usually requiring a crew of two, enabled the new documentary maker mobility and flexibility and, perhaps most importantly, the ability to interact with the subject matter. This resulted in a sense of immediacy and involvement, which projected to the viewer a heightened sense of participation.\footnote{117}{Ellis, op. cit., p 227.}
American Direct Cinema

American Direct Cinema attempted to adopt a fly-on-the-wall approach and followed an event to its conclusion. The documentary style of American Direct Cinema was able to develop in essence the effect of a compelling fiction. This was achieved through the utilisation of a sense of characterisation achieved by dealing with real people in real situations. Leacock's *The Chair* is an example, where the camera follows the process of a civil rights lawyer in the quest to rescind a death sentence of an inmate on Death Row.118

Richard Leacock, pioneer of the American Direct Cinema movement, wanted to get as close as possible to the pro-filmic subject, with the desire to capture the spontaneity of the moment. The philosophy behind American Direct Cinema was to discover and reveal the moments of ‘truth’ and ‘real’ world processes that are central to creating the feeling of ‘being there’. Leacock felt that it was only through intimacy with the pro-filmic that a documentary arrived at ‘truth’. In James Blue's interview with him in Spring 1965, Leacock said

> What is it we filmmakers are doing, then? The closest I can come to an accurate definition is that the finished film-photographed and edited by the same filmmaker is an aspect of the filmmakers perception of what happened. This is assuming that he does no directing. No interference. In a funny sort of way, our films are the audience. A recorded audience. The films are a means of sharing my audience experience, which is very different from being a playwright. We say we are filmmakers, but in a funny sort of way we are the audience. We do not have the burden of a director.119

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118 Barnouw, op. cit., p 238.
Cinéma Vérité, with its implicit social purpose, evolved out of the theories of Dziga Vertov's, 'Kino-Pravda'. 'Film truth' or 'life as it is' and 'life caught unawares' is how Vertov described 'Kino-Pravda'. Vertov's Kino-Pravda indicated a type of documentary genre that sought to render reality without any preconceived notions. For 'Kino-Pravda,' American Direct Cinema and Cinéma Vérité, "truth was to be achieved by a direct encounter with uncontrolled life where the camera — in a figurative sense — set out to discover the genuineness of a particular human scene".\(^\text{120}\)

Jean Rouch used the camera as a means of initiating public thought and actions. Rouch's probing investigative style became a tool that initiated action as opposed to American Direct Cinema's propensity to observe action. The exponents of the two genres had liberated the camera from the tripod, as a physical and practical means of getting action. Cinéma Vérité in France moved towards a critical examination of the environment in which people moved rather than the American Direct Cinema's explorations of individuals under stress. Jean Rouch and anthropologist Chris Marker, are the recognised pioneers in this field. Rouch asserted that as a filmmaker he had to say to the audience: "I looked at what happened with my subjective eye, and this is what I believed took place". Rouch's documentary technique enabled the camera to relay the pro-filmic events without overt aesthetics.\(^\text{121}\)

\(^{120}\) Jacobs, L. op. cit., p 375.
\(^{121}\) Langer in Lansell, R. & Beilby, P. op. cit., p 16.
Inherent in the techniques employed by Cinéma Vérité was a constructional shortcoming. This shortcoming is tied to our cultural expectation of screen presentation consisting of a beginning, middle and end. Cinéma Vérité's probing, sociological style, while containing fascinating and arresting vignettes of 'actuality', was in the end more suited to the specialised fields of anthropological and ethnographic documentary.¹²²

The emergence of ethnographic film-making has enabled Western audiences unprecedented opportunity to view people from distant and isolated places. Unlike traditional feature film-making, traditional ethnographic film-making is associated with recording events as they happen. This usually implied that the pro-filmic event was devoid of script, actors, sets and retakes. However, the duality of the moving image functioning as both record and language impacts on detached scientific observation. The moving image needs to capture the essence of the people, their passions, their fears, their motivations.¹²³ Therefore it is not surprising that ethnographers cite Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) as the genesis of, or at least one of the earliest, ethnographically inspired films.¹²⁴

Flaherty's intimate film making style was in his time the documentary exception rather than the rule. The ethnographic paradox is that Flaherty scripted his films and used the Eskimos as actors playing out their own social roles.¹²⁵ However Flaherty's version of ethnographic filmmaking

¹²² Jacobs, op. cit., p 379.
¹²³ Loizos, op. cit., p 7.
¹²⁵ Sherwood in Jacobs, op. cit., p 16.
achieved what many other documentaries of this period lacked. Often, the observed ‘others’ remained the object of the documentary and, hence, remained strangers to the viewer. The documentary *Grass* (1925) is an example of this style of documentary.\(^{126}\) The majority of ethnographic style films prior to the work of Rouch observed cultures in broad terms and in doing so kept the observed people at a distance. Hence the subject of the documentary becomes the object and in this way serves to distance and dehumanise people.

The colonial ethos of modernity produced a predominance of technological advancements in capturing the profilmic, without taking into account the cultural aesthetic or ethical considerations of what was being rendered. Timothy Asch says of early documentarists that "their sole objective was to collect images and make a film that would be both scientifically objective and interesting to anthropologists and the audience at home". The subjects of films such as *Nanook of the North* were generally co-operative but they were powerless to influence the production process, and in part due to the tyranny of distance, unable to influence the final edited product.\(^{127}\)

In the 1940s Rouch, who was inspired by Flaherty, took a more personal approach to ethnographic film-making. Rouch established the modern ethnographic approach that required spending extended periods of time in the field, learning the language and developing an understanding of the subject people. Showing a final cut of the production to its subjects before general distribution was only seriously raised as preferred ethnographic practice after about 1968.\(^{128}\)

\(^{126}\) Barnouw, op. cit., p 48.
\(^{128}\) Asch, loc. cit.
4.13. ELEMENTS OF POSTMODERNITY

Imagining The Domestic

The development of technology in terms of reproduction quality, portability and accessibility has changed and broadened the nature of the profilmic. The 'pervasive' camera has accessed types of behaviour previously unavailable. This greater access is particularly apparent in the area of domestic subject-matter. These areas of human activity are either not public or not repeatable. They are the most difficult to capture filmically through simple re-enactment or without interference.

The effect of the presence of the camera and the image makers on the profilmic event has new emphasis with the recording of domestic, personal and intimate subject-matter. Interference and distortion within the profilmic cannot be overcome by non-structuring, lack of shot selection or editing.

Vaughan maintains that the nature of film equipment today has eliminated the characteristics of documentary's former credibility that was formed by the limitation of recording public or recordable events and the restriction to general topics. A potential solution can, however, be found in the various elements of the discourse being separable to the viewer. Reflexive methods that enable the viewer to identify the ideology and the text involve the acknowledgment of the filmic equipment and the presence of the makers. Other constructional devices can effectively provide codes by which the viewer interprets the filmic process. For instance a

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commentary could present different sides of an argument with different voices.130

Technology is being applied in new areas, whether it be for broadcast or non-broadcast viewing. The accessibility of image-making technology is allowing the production of many different 'voices' through the communications of many more indigenous and socio-cultural groups.

**Intertextual Cinema**

The contemporary documentary genre encompasses a diversity of film styles which have been employed in response to the need to apply different conventions in different contexts. This has led to what MacDougall terms 'intertextual cinema'.131 This refers to a means of dealing with the "complicity and diversity of cultures", the multiple voices of cultural representation and the multiple audiences viewing these visual images.

Contemporary thinking recognises that the history of documentary and ethnographic documentary in particular has shown that representational styles appropriate in one society may not successfully represent another. MacDougall contrasts East African and Australian Aboriginal interactive styles where the former is outspoken and pragmatic and the latter is more inscriptive.132

MacDougall sees that the contemporary modification of filmic conventions is the result of a focus on authorship and particular cultural perspectives.

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132 Ibid. p 96.
One conventional adaptation is the acknowledgment of authorship that allows an audience another strategy of understanding. Other modifications include cultural borrowing to incorporate repetition, non-narrative structures, associative editing and the decentring of subject matter that shifts the focus of attention from the central to the peripheral. Applying different conventions facilitates the opportunity to convey other versions of reality. The postmodern development of adapting filmic conventions shows that image representation has been and is deeply culturally embedded.

Filmic Expression And Culture

Chalfen maintains that when relating film to culture the focus should move away from production and towards communication. Here he is talking about the role of narrative structure and the way in which pictorial communications are linked to indigenous or sub-cultural non-pictorial communications. Through studies of indigenous and domestic photographs, film and video, different ways or styles of presenting visual communication have been recognised. For instance, a comparison was made between Navajo narrative style derived from myths, folktales and storytelling and their narrative style developed through film. Parallels were found between the different modes of communication that showed a similar cultural structure. The Navajo footage revealed a large proportion of walking scenes that related to and emphasised an event or act in comparison to the usual western usages of walking scenes that are used as a bridge between activities.

133 Ibid, p 97.
135 Ibid, p 228.
Similarly, the Balinese narrative style that structures the television documentary shown on Balinese television is another instance of culturally reflected codes of image making. The narrative style adopted in the documentary conformed to the conventions of Balinese pre-electronic narrative style. This situation also reflects an instance of cultural specificity in audience response.\textsuperscript{136}

Different filmic representational styles can be found in the heterogeneity of subcultures within Western society. Chalfen showed that representational styles favoured by 'naive' middle class filmmakers were spectatorial or outside the images made. Yet, the lower or working class 'naive' filmmaker style was participatory. This reflects the linking of cultural communication and narrative styles to social components.\textsuperscript{137}

Authorship is socially driven or at least structured. Hughes-Freeland suggests that these culturally specific instances of filmic representation indicate that they should be considered in terms of "how they are constructed and read by their producers and their audiences rather than through "generic classifications".\textsuperscript{138}

In the postmodern world even with the influence of the dominant media it is possible to find a heterogeneity of indigenous and socio-cultural filmmaking. This heterogeneity of image making illustrates the oxymoron quoted by Chalfen that "cameras don't take pictures, people do".\textsuperscript{139}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Hughes-Freeland, F. (1992). Representation by the Other: Indonesian cultural documentation, in Crawford & Turton op. cit., p 243.
  \item \textsuperscript{137} Chalfen, op. cit., p 230.
  \item \textsuperscript{138} Hughes-Freeland, op. cit., p 245.
  \item \textsuperscript{139} Chalfen op. cit., p 237.
\end{itemize}
situation now is that a greater diversity of peoples are able to access technology.

4.14. VIEWERSHIP

TV sets are receivers, but people are viewers. They do not see; they look, pay attention, get bored, ignore, select, disparage and praise.140

The recognition of audience and the ways in which real viewers read the visual image is an indication that the audience cannot be perceived as passive. Martinez speaks of the "socio-historic processes in spectatorship". Viewer perceptive and interpretative strategies are shaped by social interpretative conventions. These form the background from which interpretive methods of identification and gratification develop. Martinez quotes Fiske (1980) as maintaining that "readers do not 'read' texts; they 'write' them".141 Here 'writing' is the exercising of interpretive strategies to assign intentions and formative properties of a text.

Horizons

Television programs "intend an experience of recognition for the viewer".142 Viewer recognition is born out of their life-world, the familiar daily environment that is formed by horizons. Horizons involve our relationships with others and shared conceptions of how things are. Horizons of experience are remembered cognitive frameworks which impact within the individual's perceptual processes. They allow an

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140 Hughes-Freeland, op. cit., p 254.
individual a sense of knowing or an understanding of the predictable nature of a person or a thing's familiarity. Horizons structure and guide subjective perception, thus providing a central aspect of our ability to function in the world. Horizons of experience are culturally inflicted and those living as a community have the community as a horizon. A community (or family or household) horizon produces a background for subjective perception and structure that frames the basis of 'within-community communication'.

Individuals as viewers (of television) project a meaning for the text and the text attempts to replicate instances of a viewer's life-world, although this life-world replication occurs at a level of detail that excludes real viewers. It is the frequent repetition of form, character and content presented on television, a "horizon of horizons", which affords the audience opportunity to recognise the familiar.¹⁴³ There remains the fact that real viewers may at times recognise something of themselves in a text, but there will always be a distance.

The experience of distance and difference, familiar and recognisable from a text is the way meaning is appropriated. Martinez studied the 'film literacy' of a group of students to gain an understanding of interpretative strategies.¹⁴⁴ He found that these students had a preference for gratifying entertainment of personal narratives that combine humour and drama. These viewing preferences are reflected in the general viewer of the consumer society, who has greater knowledge of and preference for

¹⁴³ Ibid. p 20.
¹⁴⁴ Martinez op. cit, p 143.
gratifying entertainment that is found on television or film. Denzin maintains that the general viewer has televisual cinematic knowledge.\textsuperscript{145}

"The relation text-reader produces correspondences of ideologies and master codes that are articulated within specific socio-historical conditions of reception".\textsuperscript{146} Martinez's research located a gap between "symptomatic responses, interpretations of viewers and particular films — particularly factual films". This occurs when viewers do not match the text's model reader and when the represented subjects do not meet the viewers' aesthetic expectations or feelings.\textsuperscript{147}

It would follow then that the optimum communicative power of film, television or video would occur when the text found its model reader and when the represented subjects met the viewers' aesthetic expectations and feelings. In this climate of positive response, the old adage 'that images speak louder than words' is apt.

The Televisual Spectator

Friedberg outlines the crucial impact which television has had on the spectator. The televisual spectatorial nature of audience is fundamentally different to the cinematic spectator. The cinematic spectator experiences a projected image in a darkened environment, where the spectator is immobile and anticipates a protracted period of time in the occupation of a

\textsuperscript{146} Martinez, op. cit, p 151.
\textsuperscript{147} Discussed above in relation to Frank Capra's 'Why We Fight' films.
single gaze. The spectator experiences a non-interactive relation to a 'larger than life' framed image displayed on a flat surface. The televisual spectator experiences electronically transmitted images in a lightened environment where other activities are undertaken simultaneously and where there is less restricted mobility. Television programming includes repetition allowing greater opportunity to view missed programs or to repeat viewing. Time-shifting facilitated through VCRs and movie rentals has fundamentally impacted on the contemporary spectator. Viewers are able to exercise more control over the circumstances of their viewing.

"The gaze of the spectator is different from the glance of the television viewer". Friedberg uses gaze to "describe mobilized virtual visuality" but adds that the common contemporary meaning is of a "structure of a gaze where the subject only sees itself being seen". The viewer has an awareness of the politics and ethics of the gaze where the images themselves are providing the evidence. The televisual audience expects to encounter a variety of gazes over a similar viewing period.

The image scale is one of the greatest distinguishing aspects between television and cinema spectatorship; although television screens are increasingly large the scale remains very different. Friedberg cites Kaplan as maintaining that television is a 'postmodern' image presenter.

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149 Ellis quoted in Crawford & Turton, op. cit., p 260.
and cinema is a 'modern' form. The argument is based on the premise of 'postmodern' relating to 'decentredness' where the flow of televised images decentres the spectator in comparison to the 'fixed' viewing of cinema.\textsuperscript{152} Postmodern viewing includes channel hopping with the aid of the remote control, VCR time-shifting and television programming that includes an array of additional images such as station promotions, program promotions, sponsorship information, community announcements and advertisements, altogether creating a sophisticated plethora of visual images.

The nature of the contemporary viewer is sophisticated and participatory and has a greater potential to access different styles. Cubitt sees that technology, and in particular video equipment, has pervasive qualities. The wedding video is an instance of the rapid acceptance of technology into one of the most identifiable rituals in Western culture. Cubitt maintains that, although extremely formularised, the wedding video is highly particular to the individuals who view it. Its authenticity is unquestioned as its audience is immediately able to recognise members of the family group.\textsuperscript{153} Simultaneously, the wedding video depicts an instance of a broader event and as such it operates at the particular and the universal level.

Of course, one of the difficulties encountered in regard to discussing 'viewing' is to consider the heterogeneity of the audience. While viewers or spectators can be defined in terms of identifying with particular programs it is necessary to remember that membership of a 'community' is

\textsuperscript{152} Friedberg, loc. cit. 
\textsuperscript{153} Cubitt, op. cit, p 5.
"complex, contradictory and radically different". The multitude of racial, ethnic, gender, socio-cultural aspects of communities are often the overlooked aspects of viewing.

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5.1. NOTIONS WITHIN CONTEMPORARY NEWS AND DOCUMENTARY

The thesis to this point has argued that the essence of documentary is within the discourse of presenting legitimate objective factuality. Consequently the history of the newsreel and documentary as set out enables *When In Rome* to be discussed from within the discourse of documentary. In addition to the pre-televisual notions of authenticating reality, the thesis has drawn on contemporary boundaries of meaning within documentary to further contextualise *When In Rome*.

History has demonstrated that as the wonder of screen technology (technological spectacle) fades into the realm of general acceptance, screen content comes to the fore. Associated with this transition is the realisation that to reach an audience moving images needed to be distanced from technological spectacle. This was observed as early as 1896.

In reviewing a Lumière program in the Russian newspaper, *Nizhegorodski listok*, on July 4, 1896 I. A. Pacatus\(^1\) describes the wonder of the new technology and contemplates its future. The Lumière program was being screened at Aumont's "among victims of social needs and among the loafers who here buy their kisses". The author ponders "why of all places should this remarkable invention of Lumière find its way and be demonstrated here, this invention which affirms once again the energy and the curiosity of the human mind, forever striving to solve and grasp all". The

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reviewer later surmises why films reflecting mundane daily topics such as *Woman workers leaving the factory* can be screened in places like Aumont’s.\(^2\) For these images are out of step with the audience and will “painfully sting the woman who sells her kisses”. Pacatus then suggests that perhaps more apt films for screening at Aumont’s may be *As She Undresses.*\(^3\)

This wonderful anecdote serves to illustrate that ‘technology as spectacle’ can only for a time have precedence over content. Here I see a parallel between Pacatus’s observations and my own observations of early CD ROM engineers, mentioned in the introduction, which led to my investigation into authenticating reality on the screen. A more contemporary example of the phenomenon was the situation in relation to the cable system at Bathurst jail. The inmates rapidly assimilated the prison based cable system leading to the perception that In-view cable TV was ‘another’ channel. This in effect shifted In-view cable TV from the oddity of being a momentary ‘technological spectacle’ to the realm of domestic appliance. By the time *When In Rome* was produced, the content of inmate programs had become fundamentally important. The producers of *When In Rome* in attempting to compete with a domestic appliance, ‘spectacle laden broadcast TV’, had to take aestheticism into account.

The response to maintaining audience interest was recognised and addressed by the early image makers and *The Sprinkler Sprinkled* (1895) illustrates this point. The earlier description of this *actualité* (p.70) was written after my first viewing of the sixty second film. It is therefore

\(^2\) The Lumière film that Pacatus refers to as *Woman workers leaving the factory,* is more commonly known as *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory.*

\(^3\) Ibid, p 409.
interesting to compare my perception of the film with a 1896 review of the same film.

A gardener watering flowers. The light grey stream of water, issuing from a hose, breaks into a fine spray. It falls upon the flowerbeds and upon the grass blades weighted down by the water. A boy enters, steps on the hose, and stops the stream. The gardener stares into the hose, whereupon the boy steps back and a stream of water hits the gardener in the face. You imagine the spray will reach you, and you want to shield yourself. But on the screen the gardener has already begun to chase the rascal all over the garden and having caught him, gives him a beating. 4

This was the first time the reviewer had viewed a moving picture and it was perceived as a revelation, a wonder of contemporary technology. From reading this review one can see how dynamic this new technology of the moving image was in 1896. For me, however, it was just one of many fascinating 19th century films, unique because of its century old lineage, if nothing else. To the contemporary viewer the pro-filmic action is clearly orchestrated: for the 1896 audience the spectacle created by the new technology was a wonder. The 1896 audience was not familiar with reading the screen and had had little opportunity to acquire visual cinematic knowledge. 5

4 Ibid, p 408.
5 Though it can be assumed that the audience had not viewed a film before, it is more than likely that some members of the audience had viewed devices that replicated moving images, as mentioned above.
Lumière had already entered into the second phase of films presentational process of orchestrating social actors in order to embellish the actualité. Films such as Feeding the Baby (1895) and The Sprinkler Sprinkled (1895) are examples of pro-filmic events. The Sprinkler Sprinkled illustrates the introduction of a created spectacle, where the social actor is directed to enact a task in order to maintain audience interest.

The original 1895 audiences were awe-struck by the moving image as an event. This scientific spectacle, for a short time, took precedence over the content of the image. Yet as we have seen, in order for the new medium to develop into the market place, it had to move beyond being a scientific marvel, into the arena of entertainment. Pacatus and Lumière both recognised the need for film to move beyond a scientific discourse. The AIDS Task Force similarly recognised the short comings of purely scientific factual images from their experience during the AIDS seminars and consequently rejected scientific, factual image, as the only means of reporting vital, current, cultural factuality.

5.2. WHEN IN ROME AS A CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTARY.

The aim of the production was to authenticate a reality that would be legitimate to the target audience. Corner argues that one of the defining points of documentary success is the degree to which the audience accepts it as 'being true'. Hence, the ability or skill in which contrivances are concealed becomes more important than the details of technique. "Realism is the subject, but not necessarily the things you use in it". It is the

intention of a documentary that holds the fundamental importance. Corner quotes Barr as maintaining that
documentary presents a report. Documentary is concerned with action; its form is the dramatization of facts, reconstruction of events, and it uses any dramatic device to make its point. It will use information it seeks to convey. Its intention is to make people feel as well as think.7

In many ways When in Rome does not fit the traditional modernist documentary style but can be categorised as a contemporary or postmodern documentary. The producers drew on devices such as reconstruction, scripting, actual locations, social actors and combinations of styles, outlined below. The program can be placed in a postmodern position where boundaries are challenged, where both contemporary and traditional styles are drawn on and where new aspects are developed as means of recoding previous forms.

As the medium became familiar to the audience the content within the medium became of primary importance. The audience was no longer engaged by the spectacle of the event. The producers realised the need to develop textuality and that this would require utilisation of whatever means available. The development of textual depth and diversity was perceived as the mechanism which would gain audience attention and then maintain it.

7 Ibid, p 77.
The televisual spectatorial nature of audience was relevant to the nature of the production. The many aspects of the contemporary televisual viewer applied to the target audience. They were experienced in the multiple gazes that television viewing offered, along with time-shifting and station hopping. Maintaining viewer attention required drawing on the life-world experience of the inmates and their horizons of expectations, and hence needed to appeal to the desire for entertainment and sub-cultural referentiality.

The inmates faced many technological limitations in their desire to make meaning. The 'downwards' pressure of postmodernity had furnished them with 'parts' of modern screen storytelling technology — a simple video camera and a simple editing deck. Yet, they had to tell their story without the aid of the specific filmic storytelling conventions that have been developed as technological capabilities allowed. For example, one hundred and thirty years after the embellishing technology of gas lighting had culturally encoded meaning for mass audiences, the producers of *When In Rome* had to re-present and re-encode legitimate authenticity, without appropriate lighting technology. Yet the fundamental embellishing technology of 'lighting' is utilised hourly within the televisual images surrounding News, Current Affairs and Documentary information presentation. The producers who read television through culturally encoded messages, were unable to 'write' their message, using the embellishing technology that codified their understanding of meaning, and hence also their audience's understanding of meaning. The limitation of specific embellishing technologies directly influenced the production's look and feel.
The discussion of *When In Rome* looks at the documentary influences that underpin its production and its viewing. The following scene by scene discussion outlines how specific aspects of the production *When In Rome* echoes significant documentary developments. It is shown that textual depth and diversity were achieved through a pastiche of documentary styles.

5.3. SCENE ANALYSIS

Winston argues that for the image to sustain authenticity, when combined with rhetoric, it needs legitimate referential weight. Referential weight was established through specific environmental features that will be outlined in the Scene Analysis.

Making Meaningful Contact With the Audience.

The soundtrack utilised music as a linking device as the documentary required a number of locations both inside and outside the prison and traversed a number of documentary genres. In deciding to use music as the linking device, the inmates followed traditional newsreel and documentary procedure. The producers used a segment of Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata' as an audio cue by attaching it to the opening scene and subsequent scenes where necessary.

Scene One

In tracing documentary genealogy from Lumiere, we have seen how audience ‘screen literacy’ has been shaped through a combination of technology and cultural bias. This has facilitated the reading of news and documentary as re-presenting and re-encoding legitimate authenticity. This is primarily the result of the ‘factual’ nature of those first films.

Intuitively, the inmate producers drew on the audience’s primal filmic syntax and utilised the fundamental documentary genre of *actualité* in their quest to establish and maximise authenticity.

The first shot of *When in Rome* is a wide camera angle that frames the prison gate. The opening shot authenticates the production in two ways. The first level of authentication is situated in the obvious pro-filmic reality that what is being rendered is Bathurst Jail. This is the physical world of the target audience. Secondly, and more importantly, this scene gives status to the program. The majority of inmates arrive at prison inside a Department of Corrective Services vehicle. The vehicles are literally windowless cells on wheels. For security reasons, the prison system prefers prisoners not to know what the outside of the prison looks like. For this reason the majority of inmates have no experience of the surrounding geography of the prison. Therefore, being able to show the entrance to the prison encoded the program with status and in doing so, made meaningful contact with the audience. The prison warder walking towards the prison gate is by far the strongest referent. This indexical link to referent, the warder, provides legitimate referential weight.
The producers' use of the actuality genre in Scene One can be viewed as a cyclical linking of the present and past screen. The structure of the scene has direct lineage with the first projected films. The comparative functionality of the equipment used to capture the scene has distinct parallels with the equipment used to capture Lumière's *Actualités*. The resulting image is similar in style to Lumière's initial works such as *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*. Both were captured by the simplest of processes, that of a camera placed on a stand in order to render life's passing parade. The tripod used for this scene did not have a conventional EFP (Electronic Field Production) or ENG (Electronic News Gathering) fluid head. That is, the camera could not tilt up and down or pan from left to right or visa versa. This was functionally similar to the camera Lumière used. It is from this perspective that Scene One has a direct lineage to Lumière's *Actualités*. The camera operator was the only member of the regular production crew able to go beyond the walls of the prison. Actuality is the simplest genre for a one-person crew to work with. Hence the resulting image is of a wide shot capturing unmediated actuality. Lumière's actualities were the result of the advancement of photographic based technologies within the rapidly expanding epoch of modernity. The Task Force was dependent on technology, as was Lumière. The capitalist-technological-population paradigm of modernity allowed the inmates to access image technology that had developed from the derivatives of Lumière's *cinématographe*. The result enabled incarcerated men access to equipment that had been previously unattainable. Yet, it was the postmodern devolution of responsibility to interest groups that facilitated actual inmate access to video equipment. As Annette Kuhn points out, "it thus becomes increasingly untenable to maintain that technological
developments are outside of historical and ideological determination”.  

Scene One directly reflects the ethnographic imperatives of Jean Rouch and the ‘good intentions’ of Robert Flaherty. The scene not only replicates Lumière’s *Actualités* but it goes beyond. Within the technological abundance of postmodernity, the amateur is now able to replace the omnivorous operator who captured ‘others’ on film/videotape for removed ‘others’ to watch. Here the amateur producers, as the real audience, are able to stipulate the pro-filmic. In instances like this the camera operator is merely rendering the image on behalf of a specific culture. Consequently the image of the prison gate is layered with an ethnographic meaning for the audience as maker. This ethnographic interpretation is in contrast to the hegemonic approach where those with access to resources of the dominant culture interpret the needs of the ‘other’ in relation to the imperatives of the dominant discourse. Working within the imperatives of the dominant culture, it is here that we see a clear line of difference between the reporting imperatives of the ethnographic amateur and those of mass media journalism.

In Scene One, the viewer recognises the authoritarian iconography of the prison gate. Our cultural encoding tells us that this is an authoritarian institution with its high impenetrable stone walls, a closed iron gate, and ‘men’ in uniform. However at the level of informed observer the image has other encodings. The inmate perceives this is an image of their forbidden epidermis. The scene presents all viewers with messages of power and control. Hence, for the inhabitants of this prison-world, Scene One has added ‘ethnographic’ permutations. This is an ‘ethnographic-

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journalistic' presentation of information. The amateur producers of *When In Rome* utilised Lumière's *Actualité* genre to introduce *When In Rome* as authentic by drawing on our primal filmic instincts cemented in our social psyche. In other words the actuality documentary equals factuality, 'screen-truth'.

**Scene Two**

Scene Two ironically parallels the moving picture's second phase in the evolution of screen discourse. This occurred by progressing from filming the factual event to filming the theatrical event as pioneered by Méliès in about 1898. The architect of the avant-garde screen, Méliès, saw the possibility that film could be employed to signify something *other* than what it was recording. In a similar manner the producers of *When In Rome* utilised available resources to signify something *other* than what was being recorded.

The context in which avant-garde appears here is primarily associated with the 'new' in relation to the conventions of dominant screen expression of the time, as previously outlined. However, documentary is founded in socially responsible motivation and intentions. Significant documentary avant-garde processes were initially used by Sheeler and Strand in *Mannahatta* (1921) and later expanded on by Vertov in *The Man With a Movie Camera* (1929). Traditionally the avant-garde movement rendered an un-real quality to the screen in an attempt to create meaning through another authentic perspective. Through the utilisation of these techniques Scene Two and Scene Four of *When In Rome* can be seen to be

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socially responsible and motivated pro-filmic events, more akin to imparting factual information than fiction. By locating contraband items such as a telephone, cigarette lighter and a woman within the inmate's cell, the producers utilised dominant cultural icons as sub-cultural discourse to further encode and authenticate the authorial voice.

**Contraband Items**

Inmate telephone calls are rationed; inmates have to apply to make a telephone call. Thus, telephone calls are treasured, they cannot be bartered between inmates, but they can be withheld or granted by the system. The presence of a telephone in a prison cell signifies at a number of levels. As a scripted device, the telephone was built into the video as a simple means of holding audience attention.

The telephone encodes Mick's screen persona as a powerful figure. Within the sub-culture it shows that Mick can successfully rort the prison system. The telephone is real and Mick is lying in bed with it in his hand. This tells the audience that Mick the social actor is also a powerful person. So whether the audience reads the screen as Mick the actor or Mick the inmate he is powerful, due to the encoding associated with the telephone. The social actor Mick provided significant referentiality and verifiability in establishing authenticity.

Gas propelled cigarette lighters are illegal in the prison system, although I did occasionally see them. The display of the cigarette lighter on a silver tray gave status to the character and to Mick as local hero. Having a Waiter carry contraband for your personal access is also an indicator of the character's high status.
The producers of *When In Rome* were unable to gain permission for an empty champagne bottle to be brought into the prison. The official reason given was that the bottle could be used as a weapon. Consequently, a champagne glass was acquired to function as a prop for this scene. The notion of sipping champagne has multiple cultural connotations both in and out of prison. Here it was used to support the encoding of power, affluence and eroticism.

The symbology of the waiter operates at several levels. The first interpretation is the humour involved in having a waiter in prison. The second is a parody of the idea that ‘prison warders are merely waiters for the inmates’. Here the satire encodes authenticity; by making specific contact with the intended audience, it places power in the hands of the subculture. By reversing the plight of the prisoner from ‘hard done by’ to ‘waited upon’, the video makes contact with its audience through the use of farce. Only prisoners can fully appreciate the irony of being depicted as having limitless access to phone calls and champagne. Importantly, only inmates can make such a statement acceptable within the sub-cultural context of the production.

The presence of the aerobics instructor is without doubt the most complex of the signifiers found in the video. Bathurst is an all male jail, housing over two hundred and fifty inmates. There is little doubt that a dominant inmate fantasy (along with freedom) is to be with a woman. The presence of a woman in Mick's cell unquestionably encodes both Mick and the production with high status. The levels at which that encoding operates are complex.
Hansen, Needham, & Nichols tackle a similar theme in their discussion on pornography. The authors talk about the undeniable nature of the phallus in heterosexual and homosexual pornographic film. While the circumstances surrounding the phallus may be fantasy, reality presents itself by way of the erect penis. In the constructed reality of the 'cum-shots' the camera concentrates on the penis ejaculating. There is much contention about the 'reality' of the ejaculating penis. Male ejaculation is situated around sexual arousal. An erect penis, depicted within a pornographic program, is an 'actuality'.

The 'actuality' of a woman in Mick's cell is on one level just one more comic device. On another level the woman's presence functions as a status signifier. The woman was not a fantasy. The telephone was 'just' a disconnected prison telephone, the waiter was a prison worker, the lighter and champagne glass were minor pieces of contraband. However the 'woman' was a living and breathing reality. In a prison system that denies close access to the opposite sex, the presence of a woman is extremely powerful.

The unquestionable encoding that the woman attached to When In Rome was that the makers, and hence the narrative, had legitimacy. The presence of the woman was a vital 'hook', a device intended to lead the phallocentric viewer deeper into the production. It empowered the production with multiple layers of intrigue. It placed the incarcerated all male environment within the conundrum of the phallocentric dilemma to which Hansen, et. al. allude. On one level the reader knows the image

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before them to be fantasy, but the 'actuality', the real presence of the image, contorts our psyche.

The location for this scene also has referentiality as Mick, a long term prisoner, had one of the more aesthetically appealing and comfortable cells at Bathurst Jail. His cell was not the norm. It was usual for recently arrived inmates to pass by or be shown Mick's cell and so it was a well-known location. Thus, Mick's cell had referentiality to the historic world.

This scene relied on prison 'literacy' to build and maintain the culturally specific voice. The scene was devised to achieve maximum entertainment value for the target audience.

Scene Three

The combination of actuality and reconstruction utilised in the production, mirror certain trademarks of the propaganda genre. Dancyger suggests that Grierson's efforts of the 1930s, were attempts to find positive reinterpretations of society.12

*When In Rome* is an example of the effort to find positive reinterpretations of a high HIV-risk inmate sub-culture. It is one of the earliest endeavours to communicate particular ideas about this sub-culture. It is in Grierson's 'attempt to bring society together' that we find the genesis of organisations like the AIDS Task Force. As indicated, Grierson used film during the depression in an attempt to bring society together. The 1930s depression was a fracturing event, and Dancyger suggests that Grierson and others

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wanted to use film to heal society and in that sense he was an early propagandist.

*When In Rome* can be read as propaganda. Many of the tools used to communicate ideas to the target audience involve classic techniques employed in propaganda. The ‘Jimbo’ character becomes a hero because he insists on cleaning his syringe before injecting heroin. Yet, there is no contextual information regarding ‘Jimbo’ or any of the character’s background or individuality. Traditionally we have observed that a function of the propaganda documentary is to brush over complicating issues and concentrate on those issues that will unite the audience. The need to unite sub-groups or entire nations against a common enemy has become a dominant theme of the propaganda documentary, news and current affairs screen. No better example of this can be found than in the recent Gulf War where the military controlled the agenda, "by providing its own irresistible footage".13

Both historical and contemporary evidence indicates that in instances where news and documentary purports to unify groups of people, certain values and issues are suppressed to create a unified and marketable reading of the screen. Similarly, the AIDS Task Force’s ‘war’ against unclean hypodermic syringe usage, required the production to adhere to a specific focus. Thus, certain procedures were condensed.

Scene Three, ‘The Shooting Gallery’, is a case in point. It was deemed that issues surrounding heroin distribution protocol were too complex to deal

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with the time available. Heroin is not always divided equally among the participants in a shooting gallery. The person who accesses the syringe may lobby for more of the 'cut'. Similarly, the person who physically accesses the heroin and the person or persons who paid the larger amount of money or 'in kind' for the heroin may also receive differing portions.

The inmates who participated in *When In Rome* realised that an accurate portrayal of their lifestyle required re-presenting and re-encoding customs in order to make meaning. Similarly, Nanook and his family seventy years before them acted out processes perceived by Flaherty to be necessary for an accurate portrayal of their lifestyle. The inmates realised their role in the pro-filmic event just as Nanook had. The inmate's story in a similar vein to Nanook's was not imposed, but derived from the material itself and arranged into a loose narrative that expressed their prison lifestyle. In stark contrast to Mick's cell, shown in the previous scene, the 'Shooting Gallery' cell scene is cold and dispassionate. In this reconstruction the inmates perform as social actors re-presenting the ritual processes involved in a group participating in heroin usage. Echoes of post-war neorealism come to mind as the producers re-create the drama against the backdrop of an actual prison cell, a cell that was occupied the night before by a transient soul and destined to incarcerate another at the end of the day. The location is a referential, authenticating link for the knowing inmate audience. Unlike Mick's comparatively ornate cell, this cell was for anyone familiar with the Australian prison system, a typical prison cell. Similarly, the knowing post war Italian audience understood that the crumbling walls of Roberto Rossellini's *Open City* (1945) were not the result of some brilliant art direction; the walls were authentic.
The action in Scene Three functioned as a re-presentation of an authentic shooting gallery. To establish this authenticity it was decided not to utilise actualité or avant-guard representations. The real risks involved in using an illegal substance within the prison system, especially the culturally laden taboos surrounding heroin, needed to be addressed authentically.

The reconstructed action was enhanced through character development, music, editing and camera angles. Mick's persona in Scene Two was of a calm but powerful wheeler and dealer. In Scene Three, Mick is a purposeful shooting gallery hustler. The background music dramatically cuts from Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata' to contemporary music appropriate to prison culture. The contemporary music heralding the neorealism of Scene Three emulates traditional televisual discourses. Program specific theme music is a key heralding audio semiotic for televisual documentary, current affairs and news bulletins, grazed daily by the inhabitants of the televisual universe.

The producers were faced with the age old documentary problem of audience contact. Paul Strand articulated this problem in 1937 when he said that the challenge "does not end with the problem of how an audience may be informed": "The documentary maker must devise legitimate techniques for moving an audience by projecting the basic dramatic meanings implicit in the documents."\(^1\)\(^4\)

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Ideological Conflict

Unfortunately the reality of the cell complicated, rather than alleviated, the producers' desire to create authenticity. There was concern that the reality of the background signified too much authenticity. This was ‘just’ like the type of cell that is commonly used as a shooting gallery. The producers were now very concerned that some of the unintended audience within the institution would not read this scene as neorealism, but would in fact read it as actuality. Consequently it was decided not to show the scripted sequence of the syringe penetrating skin.

The producers could not guarantee that the intended ‘shooting up’ footage would not be used to incriminate the inmate social actor at some later date. The producers opted for censorship. They felt this would be a better option than that taken by Timothy Asch in 1975, where the possible institutional retribution of peasants "will hound the documentary maker to his grave". Asch had guaranteed a tribe of Afghanistan nomads that the footage of them was only for educational purposes. Asch did not own the rights to the program and later lost control of the footage. The footage was later used within a political context and subsequently endangered the lives of the nomads. The producers were acutely aware that any shot or sequence within *When In Rome* had the potential to be lifted out and re-edited to suit some other agenda. As Peter Putnis points out, ‘using file-tape is not merely re-presenting images in the sense of ‘quoting’ them. It is decontextualizing them and giving them new meanings’.!

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16 Ibid., p 6.
The producers' decided to censor certain visual confirmations of authenticity surrounding the re-construction of the heroin administrative processes. The producers' instigation of blatant gatekeeping procedures risked jeopardising the authenticity of the documentary. Hansen et. al. address this issue when referring to the pro-filmic decisions surrounding the images of penile ejaculation and the sexuality that it represents in pornography. The image of an ejaculating penis is confirmation of male sexual arousal. Within the culture of heroin use, seeing the insertion of the needle into the body and the subsequent discharging of the heroin, carries similar confirmatory 'power'.

Authenticity was maintained through utilising quick editing and concentrating on the dramatic conflict between 'Speedy' (the second last to use the syringe) and 'Jimbo' (the last, who insists on cleaning the syringe). 'Speedy' taunts 'Jimbo' by calling him 'Sadie' (derogatory prison slang meaning homosexual). Authenticity was maintained by diverting the emphasis from the needle to a conflict of sub-cultural social status.

By employing dramatic techniques the documentary breaks with ethnographic tradition. According to Timothy Asch, the first rule of ethnographic film making is the pro-filmic rendering of long wide shots in order to record whole sequences. Yet, within this contemporary production, the producers chose the opposite technique of short close shots as a means of legitimising authenticity. As previously illustrated the ethnographic film is primarily concerned with recording culture, so that it

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17 Nichols, B. op. cit., p 217.
18 The aim of pornographic documentary is sexual arousal, whereas the aim of *When In Rome* is not drug arousal.
19 Asch, T. op. cit., p 199.
may be studied by professionals and their students. This is in contrast to fiction and documentary that are primarily produced for the general public. However, looking at *When In Rome*, in a postmodern ethnographic ‘amateur journalistic’ sense, the high risk HIV inmate is not only tribe, but observing professional and student as well. Gaining their screen literacy skills from contemporary television, the producers decided that legitimate authentication would be achieved by replicating televisual discourse.

Pertinent Discourses of Information

The production aimed to inform, entertain and achieve authenticity despite having access to limited technological resources and operating within a carceral environment. The producers strove to authenticate the scene through use of prison idioms of masculinity, language and dress.

As we have seen, the recognition of dress as an authenticating device dates back to at least Flaherty’s *Moana* of 1926. Similarly, the *When In Rome* producers realised the importance of dress as an authenticating device. Fundamental to this dress were the tattoo embossed bodies of the men themselves. So, although the video was shot indoors in winter (Bathurst winters are very cold) the inmates wore clothing that enabled the camera to capture their tattoos. Just as Flaherty had ordered grass skirts be made for his Polynesian subjects, as an authenticating device, the producers chose dress that revealed the tattoos of their social-actors for the same reason.20 There are countless instances in contemporary televisual journalism where the reporter dons a costume as an authenticating device;

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20 Ray, S. in Jacobs, op. cit. p 381.
images of journalists dressed in battle regalia, reporting from or on war zones, is the obvious example.

The scene is laden with signifiers or referents that attested to and authenticated the phallocentric bravado that surrounds the projected image of an all male 'shooting gallery'. The powerful indexical bonds to referents of the inmates' basic clothing and exposed tattoos, in combination with the dialectic language, encoded the legitimacy of the social actor for the purpose of achieving authenticity.

The use of prison dialogue with its short and sharp sentence structure and frequent and repeated use of expletives provided legitimate authenticity and further attests to the producers' intuitive use of the medium.

5.4 SECOND MOVEMENT

The authenticating processes employed in Scenes One, Two and Three functioned to primarily establish the plausibility of the document for the target audience. The purpose now was to disseminate the information inherent within the AIDS Task Force's agenda, and so Scene Four introduced a second movement within the production. Here the producers emulated televisual journalistic aspects predominantly associated with contemporary commercial television information programs. In the televisual process practised by commercial television news producers, the structuring and sequencing of stories/information are for the explicit purpose of delivering the audience to a product advertiser, while at the same time maintaining audience loyalty for the ongoing program. The
When In Rome producers had structured their program in an attempt to deliver their audience to important information. This is an obvious philosophical difference between the commercial imperative of broadcast television information programs, and within community communication, the imperative of the AIDS Task Force.\(^1\)

The genealogy of the second movement within When In Rome has historical links to the work of Eisenstein, Griffith, Porter and Méliès, where the multi-shot and continuity framing techniques have their genesis. The producers wanted to emphasise the positive effects associated with cleaning a used hypodermic syringe. To achieve this purpose a cause and effect story was told. As previously stated this was to be achieved within the available institutional environment and production equipment constraints. The producers were also critically aware of imparting their message within an acceptable time frame. From previous experience they believed that it was possible to maintain audience loyalty for a very brief period. As members of a televisual spectatorship who are use to time-shifting and station hopping, the inmate viewers are familiar with the 'multiple gaze' potential of contemporary viewing. Thus the first three scenes developed high entertainment, interest and authenticating components.

Scene Four

The producers returned to the actualité genre for the opening shot of the second movement of When In Rome. This scene ironically paralleled Lumière's second phase in the rendering of the pro-filmic. Having captured unmediated actualities such as Workers leaving the Lumière

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Factory, Lumière turned his *cinématographe* towards more theatrically constructed *actualités* such as *The Sprinkler Sprinkled*, discussed above. In this film, and all film of that period, both *actualité* and theatrical action took place within the locked camera frame of ‘no camera movement or re-adjustment’. The camera’s rendering of the pro-filmic worked like a proscenium arch. Such was the pro-filmic method utilised by the *When In Rome* producers at the commencement of Scene Four, when ‘Jimbo’ walks into frame and kneels in front of the three white crosses.

The filmic need to express ‘Jimbo’s’ inner thoughts posed a production problem due to the limited technological resources available. The necessity for similar story telling devices were faced and overcome by Méliès, before the turn of the century. Though restricted to *cinématographe* type technology, Méliès had converted many of his stage presentations to film. However he encountered difficulties in that the melodramatic storytelling processes inherited from the stage required the utilisation of several locations or altered states of consciousness, such as dreams. Such storytelling processes were difficult to represent on film using the available technology. Méliès introduced an ingenious solution: by stopping the camera and inserting or removing props and actors before once more rolling the camera, various illusions were created.

The technical problem encountered by the *When In Rome* producers was finding a way to relay to the audience ‘Jimbo’s’ thoughts and memories. To illustrate what he was remembering, a flash back to the shooting gallery was inserted. The cut away to the syringe enabled the producers to move the camera frame and set up a second *actualité*. Thus the third shot in the
sequence is framed across ‘Jimbo’s’ shoulder towards the three white crosses. To emphasise the severity of the message, the producers linked the symbols of death, the three crosses to the three men who had injected heroin from an unclean syringe. Further emphasis was applied by associating unclean injection to incarceration.

When Méliès transported his audience into the mind of a character, he simply cut to the thought or dream that the character was having. The film of the day was silent and its subsequent screening was usually accompanied by narration that enabled the audience to dramatically place the action. The narration was often provided by the showman who projected the film.

This was a culturally accepted practice resulting out of experience of the earlier Lantern-slide shows. Contemporary processes that signify a character's thoughts or dreams, such as swapping from colour imagery to black and white or dissolving to the dream/memory were not introduced until the technology became available or the convention had been established. A televisual interpretation of the showman who narrates and interprets events can be linked to the contemporary convention of news, current affairs and documentary presenter.

Wishing to relay ‘Jimbo’s’ dream/memory, the production "moves forward by echoing the past." By reverting to narration in order to facilitate the dramatic placement of ‘Jimbo’s’ dream/memory, the producers re-invent a 19th century encoding technique. The priest reading the ‘Last Rites’

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22 Méliès and others used dissolves indiscriminately as a means of transition from one scene to another without intending it to indicate the passing of time.
became the ‘on-camera’ showman. The priest facilitated the audience's journey into ‘Jimbo's’ mind. This sequence serves to further highlight how the producers, operating within the specific production constraints, devised parallel solutions to historic problems.

**Scene Five**

The producers, using narration take the audience back to the shooting gallery, by way of ‘Jimbo's’ memory. To authenticate ‘Jimbo's’ memory the producers returned to the *actualité* and avant-garde representations rejected in the same location when shooting Scene Three. Central to the power of this scene is the priest. The priest, as social actor, was the priest who regularly and routinely visited the prison. Hence, the Bathurst prison priest, as a social actor, serves a similar authenticating and status raising function to the woman in Scene Three. By utilising the actual prison priest, the producers were attempting to say, ‘is this dream a dream?’ The knowing audience reads that the inmates are ‘stoned’, hallucinating under the influence of heroin.

Constructionally the producers have initially set up the scene to be a memory/dream. However, both the backdrop and the priest's authenticity, work against the paradigm. The producers, Asch-like, extend the length of the scene. The audience ‘as informed observer’ is given time to reflect and assess the consequences of old rituals. In this sense the style of the long wide shot falls into the more traditional ethnographic style of authenticating reality.

The scene portrays the pleasure inmates derive from heroin, and in doing so maintains communication with the audience. This communication was
facilitating acceptance of prevention awareness. The video is framed within an amoral risk reduction ideology that acknowledges heroin usage.

Scene Six

To remain consistent with the harm reduction ideology and to maintain authenticity, Scene Six depicts 'Jimbo' using heroin after release from prison. This required a sensitive approach so as to maintain authenticity and communication. In focusing on the message the scene was kept uncluttered by locating 'Jimbo' in a public amenities block. This location avoided any extraneous referents associated with worldly status and achieved legitimate referentiality. The camera colour balance was slightly adjusted to introduce a blue tint to the picture to produce a cool feel to the scene. The way 'Jimbo' appeared in this scene was crucial to the appropriate interpretation of the program. The producers strove to present the character as typical and realistic of a post release person. Similarly, the video was not intended as an advertisement for heroin, but needed to authentically encode. Consequently the producers returned to a neorealist style by using a public amenity block to minimise over favourable perceptions of 'Jimbo's' 'freedom'.

The before 'use' procedures of needle flushing were the focus of the action. The producers structured this scene to take place in real time. By showing the sequence in real time, the producers hoped that it would re-state, through fact, how little time the process of cleaning a syringe required. This use of real time reflected the producers' return to a more traditional documentary approach to authenticate legitimacy. They perceived that the importance of information on screen would be read by the target audience
as essential and important life sustaining information. Thus, the audience would subsequently read the sub-cultural discourse accordingly.

Scene Seven

Scene Seven repeats the 2x2x2 process outlined in Scene Six but in a more conventional contemporary television/video manner of compressing time. The focus in this scene was to reinforce the message and in doing so paralleled one of the main strategies promulgated by John Grierson. As previously mentioned, Grierson, at the height of his career, steadily produced short documentaries offering a consistent social view that provided "a constant reinforcement of certain attitudes, not unlike the strategy of today's makers of television commercials".24

Scene Eight

In Scene Eight, the final scene, the producers believed it was important to return to the reality of the jail. In choosing the opening actualité sequence the producers believed they were rounding off the story by going full circle. The utilisation of this style re-emphasised the grand narrative implicit in the documentary and provided closure. This means of finishing provided historicity to draw the audiences back to a referential point. This served to reaffirm and strengthen legitimate authenticity.

5.5. COMMENTS

It was perhaps Jacob's description of Flaherty's work as "another reality that the eye alone could not perceive, but which the heart and mind could

discern", combined with the avant-garde notion of reality being too real that forms the cornerstone of how the producers of *When In Rome* set about re-presenting and re-encoding relevant legitimate authenticity.

The deliberate breakaway from the traditional authoritative style of documentary was for this particular subcultural group, given their incarcerated circumstances, of greater referential value. The 'voice', of the production, in the Nicholsonian sense, while still masculine, was also institutionally unauthoritarian. It was not the voice of the 'other'. Visual communication in the style that related to the communicative style of the 'subject' required utilising less traditional documentary methods. The communication processes utilised in *When In Rome* are not generally recognised common documentary practice.

The production relied on local style and location to communicate within its community to address the inmates as a group. Usual documentary practices are used to communicate with the outside world but 'within-community communication' it is more likely to look at different approaches that draw in more fictive elements. This is especially pertinent to group viewing situations more likely to be found in non-western communities.

Perhaps, even more specifically, the viewing situation for the inmates could be seen as similar to that of a family group's viewing a wedding video. In these circumstances authenticity is accepted and the individuals

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26 Ellis, op. cit., p 47.
27 Nichols, B. op. cit., p 37.
in the wedding party are immediately recognisable and identifiable as family or friends. Just as viewing the ritual of a wedding encapsulates the universality of the event, the viewing of the ritual of the shooting gallery presented an instance of a broader situation that was immediately identifiable to the specific audience.

We have seen how screen language is reliant on the technology available to the producer of the image. Advancements in technology have enabled documentary makers access to pro-filmic events previously unattainable. Video gave power to the inmates to communicate in a way previously unheard of.

Reflexivity in news and documentary works to emphasise the encounter between the filmmaker/reporter and the viewer. It heightens viewer awareness of the relation to the text and the text's problematic relation to what it represents. While *When In Rome* did not utilise techniques resembling the more obvious reflexive methods, it did forge a different relationship to that of 'pure' news and documentary form with its viewers.

The filmic style of the production did attempt to create a bridge between the filmmakers and the viewers. The very nature of the text, its rawness and naive construction could be seen as performing a similar function as certain elements of reflexivity. The viewer through the amateur ethnographic nature of the production could understand the ideology and identify with the text. Hence, the look of the images relating to prison life was an index of meaning just as the domestic wedding video has its own index of meaning.

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29 Ibid., p 5.
The target audience was a community or group drawn together because of their environment, although no real audience is homogeneous. Earlier discussion indicated that the inmate viewer would be either a long term or a transient viewer. In reality the heterogeneity of the inmate audience is much more diverse. Issues of race, ethnicity, socio-cultural backgrounds and even types of crime are all fundamental components of the inmate audience that were potentially influential in individual interpretive strategies.

Just how successful the video was in communicating with its intended audience has not been quantitatively evaluated. At the time of the initial viewing it was perceived to have gained viewership and maintained it for the duration of the program. The Drug and Alcohol Authority then planned to transmit the program in other prisons throughout the state. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to gauge how effective the communication was in terms of initiating group behaviour change.
CONCLUSION

The thesis has demonstrated how postmodern circumstance enabled a group of inmates to become televisually empowered within a contemporary prison. It was demonstrated that a set of culturally and historically specific circumstances required and enabled the production by prisoners of an AIDS awareness video. The paper focused on how the inmate-produced AIDS Awareness information program attempted to authenticate its message.

The authenticating processes utilised in *When In Rome* were analysed and viewed through a study of modern and postmodern documentary and associated genres. The thesis analysed and verified how film and televisual authenticating devices have been, and are, subject to constant reinterpretation. This was supported by demonstrating that mainstream information authenticating conventions were adapted by a specific sub-group for a community communication.

The thesis argued that, when televisual contact is the fundamental mechanism for imparting information, the differences between mass televisual technology and non-professional televisual technology can impact on how authenticity is constructed. As a means of discussing notions of authenticating televisual information, the thesis analysed the origins of the moving image.

The thesis observes how, without theoretically articulating the production process, the producers drew on their culturally encoded, televisual literacy. It was demonstrated that televisual literacy has predominantly evolved out of film literacy. Subsequently it was argued that the imperatives which
formed film literacy were the bedrock of *When In Rome's* production and authenticating techniques. The producers had no specific intention to work within a ‘fiction’ or ‘non-fiction’ framework, though, it was demonstrated that they produced a program that communicated specific information through authentication.

It was further demonstrated that the technological limitations imposed on the production shaped the program's visual, cinematic and dramaturgical nature. It was pointed out that current history has seen remarkable changes in technological developments, facilitating a minority group's access to portable recording and replay technology. The limitations of the available technology required a process similar to certain pre-televisual documentary and newsreel processes. Consequently the thesis demonstrated how *When In Rome* echoed those re-presentational and re-encoding processes distinctly linked to pre-televisual newsreel and documentary film.

It has been demonstrated that the producers in their quest to re-present and re-encode legitimate authenticity unwittingly traced significant developmental processes associated with the newsreel and documentary movement. Consequently it was argued that many of the aesthetic and constructional outcomes can be viewed as parallel solutions to historically shared problems. The thesis looked at significant approaches to documentary screen, commencing with Lumière's original *actualités* through to the heterogenous imperatives of Rouch's ethnographic reportage. The thesis deduced that legitimation of authenticity is the crucial context upon which information is judged.
It was demonstrated that, due to the nature and content of the program being situated within a specific community cultural environment, the message had the potential to be misread by the wider community. It was demonstrated how the inmates operated as communication gatekeepers in an attempt to overcome this situation.

The discussion illustrated that the production developed levels of cultural encoding as a means of creating meaning. On one level the cultural concept of anti-authoritarianism was employed to establish authenticity. On another level elements of verification consisted primarily of the depiction of masculine symbols of power and other encoding mechanisms steeped in culturally specific identification. It was demonstrated how referential identifiers such as location, use of highly expletive language, display of contraband and 'natural' dress were techniques drawn on to establish authenticity.

Subsequently, it was shown that both historical and contemporary evidence indicates how, in instances where the moving-image purports to unify groups of people, certain values and issues are either implied or suppressed to create a unified and marketable reading of the screen. This was the case with *When In Rome*. It was illustrated that the production focused on a single aspect of the AIDS issue within a specific environment. This was shown by selectively focusing on a particular safety technique without reference to other aspects of drug use or sexual behaviour. The thesis outlined how this process resembles that utilised within pre-televisual and current televisual discourse and how this applied to the production *When In Rome*.
The specificity of the prison environment — its place in the real world — was seen as providing the basis for connecting with the audience. The thesis demonstrates how the producers, having perceived the target audience as reading the dominant screen, in a similar manner to the majority who dwell in the televisual commonplace, imparted vital, current, cultural information, that was not being addressed by daily broadcast television information programs.

It was indicated that the indexical links to referents shown in the production facilitated key communicative functions. The producers combined prison slang and sub-culturally specific symbols to act as signifiers to encode legitimacy and interest. They contacted their audience by using images and dialogue pitched directly at a prison ‘literate’ audience and thus elucidated a particular reading. It was shown that comparisons could be established between specific documentary genres and different scenes of the production.

The ‘within-community communication’ nature of the production functioned to authenticate a sub-culturally specific discourse. The nature style and ‘look’ of the program also served as a referent to historicity, that it happened in the inmates' life-world. This discourse established the relevance of the message through its authenticity, enabling the community communication production to function within the professional sphere of AIDS education.

Exploring the interpretation of authenticity, as a forum for analysing *When In Rome*, the thesis noted the contemporary position of documentary,
where traditional and established conventions are being challenged, adapted and expanded.

The thesis establishes that the discourse of film and televisual authenticity is primarily linked to the evolution of the newsreel and documentary genre. It is demonstrated that legitimation of authenticity is the crucial contextual factor by which information transference is judged. It was shown that the notion of authenticity is tied to a reality-actuality continuum where the fundamental belief is that the re-presentation of factuality is based on information that is verifiable.

It was noted that the strategies found in postmodern documentaries remain wedded to the same principles of authentication, if not the same rhetorical codings as earlier styles. As indicated in the production, the ongoing focus on legitimising authenticity is being approached from innovative and less-traditional styles.

The production was shown to be the outcome of the life-world experience of the makers that was similar to the life-world experience of the target audience. It was the result of mutual horizons of perception within the commonplace.

The thesis concludes that the inmates' postmodern propensity for a mélange of documentary genres resulted in an innovative use of televisual cinematic literacy, a literacy which was fundamentally grounded in the journalistic imperative of passing on to the viewer, reliable, factual reportage of vital, current, cultural information.


Beethoven Moonlight Sonata. *The professional*, The classic line CD No3


(C Stratford-upon-Avon Studies:2)


United States of America.


Langer, J. (1982). *The Documentary Film In Australia*


The object of the scene is to both establish the location for the documentary and give a feeling of a typical day at a typical prison. A prison warder walks towards the main prison gate. Another prison warder leaves the prison at the end of his shift.

A low security prisoner hovers round the gate. Several of the prison's resident pigeons hover overhead.

Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata can be heard beneath the daily traffic of the Great Western Highway and the prison pigeons.

The music carries us into the next scene.

CUT

SCENE II INT MICK'S CELL DAY

Mick yawns, he's bored, it's just another day in jail. The camera pulls back to reveal a female aerobics instructor exercising beside the base of Mick's bed.

MICK (voice-over)
It's tough being in jail.

From Micks P.O.V. we see the aerobics instructor.

MICK (voice-over)
It's the simple things you miss.

From aerobics instructor's P.O.V. Mick has an idea, he reaches for the phone.

From Mick's P.O.V., we see a waiter enter the cell. On the waiter's tray we see a glass of champagne a cigar and a cigarette lighter.
From aerobics instructors P.O.V, the waiter first hands Mick the glass of champagne, then the cigar before lighting the cigar.

MICK (voice-over)
Still you learn to adapt.

From Mick's P.O.V. we see the waiter move towards the door. From the door's P.O.V. the waiter walks towards the camera and blackens it out.

MICK (voice-over)
As they say, when in Rome.

Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata abruptly ends as we cut to Scene III.

CUT

SCENE III INT SHOOTING GALLERY DAY

Micks bursts into the cell. He's wearing typical prison singlet and shorts. Bruce is leaning against the wall by the door.

MICK
We're there.
Get an eye on the door, Bruce.

BRUCE
Sweet.

We see Jimbo for the first time. Jimbo watches Mick walk towards him. From Jimbo's P.O.V. we see Mick begin to mix the heroin. Speedy who we see for the first time looks on.

SPEEDY (voice-over)
Come on lets go.

We see Mick drawing the heroin out of a plastic spoon. The spoon slips.
JIMBO (voice-over)
Don't spill the cunt.

SPEEDY (voice-over)
Yea, what are ya doing?
We see an anxious glance from Bruce.

MICK (voice-over)
Take it easy, take it easy.

SPEEDY (voice-over)
Take it easy. Fuck!

Speedy holds Mick's arm while he shoots up.

SPEEDY
Too tight.

MICK
No, it's all right. Ok let go.

Jimbo is anxiously watching the proceedings.
The syringe is flushed into a (cream cheese) jar of water.
The syringe is emptied onto the floor.

SPEEDY (voice-over)
Good shot.

MICK
This one's for you Jimbo.

JIMBO
Mate I want to clean the cunt first.
MICK
It's just been in half a dozen bloody arms.
The cunt's probably fuckin blunt.

BRUCE
Fuck that shit, do ya want a shot
or do are want to clean the fuckin fit all day.
It's mine now.

We hear Speedy call like a cat.

JIMBO
Fuck off.

Bruce places the syringe between Speedy and Jimbo.

BRUCE
Get it in ta ya's.

Speedy realises that Jimbo won't take the fit. He turns towards Jimbo spreading his legs in a sexually powerful manner.

SPEEDY
Fuckin Sadie, fuckin slops again.
I don't know what your fuckin problem is.
We're all fuckin mates.

The camera zooms in so that we don't see the syringe piercing the skin.
We see Jimbo anxiously watching Speedy flush out the syringe.

SPEEDY (voice-over)
Oh that's good shit that.

As Speedy goes to refill the syringe for Jimbo, Jimbo places his hand over the spoon.
SPEEDY (voice-over)
Sadie, what's the fuckin problem?
We're all fuckin friends here.
We're all fuckin mates.
Mick is keeping guard by the door. He indicates for someone to come into the cell, an Aboriginal inmate enters.

ABORIGINAL INMATE
Got that fit brother?

JIMBO
Ya Ok I won't be a tick.
Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata re-commences.
The syringe is drawing the last of the heroin from the spoon.

CUT

SCENE IV
EXT CEMETERY
DAY

Framed across the screen are three white crosses signifying the death of Mick, Speedy and Bruce. Jimbo walks into frame and crouches before the crosses. We flash back to a blood contaminated syringe flushing out into the cream cheese jar. We hear a priest reading the Last Rights.
Jimbo turns towards the camera as if it were the priest.

SCENE V
INT SHOOTING GALLERY
DAY

Mick, Speedy and Bruce sit before the prison priest. They are stoned. The priest is reading the Last Rights.

SCENE VI
INT PUBLIC TOILET CUBICLE
DAY

Jimbo is preparing a batch of heroin. We see his rough cleaning utensils, a schooner class, a used Coca-Cola bottle containing bleach. The Last Rights fade out as Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata commences once again.
We see the following superimposed over the images of Jimbo's preparing his syringe.

SUPER
TWO FRESH WATER

SUPER
TWO FRESH BLEACH

SUPER
TWO FRESH WATER

SUPER
2X2X2

SCENE VIII
EXT OUTSIDE PRISON ENTRANCE DAY

Similar to the opening scene. We see one prison warder leaving the prison and another arriving.