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Videocentric criticism, postmodernism and the deconstruction of television

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Videocentric criticism, postmodernism and the deconstruction of television

Taylor, Christopher James, M.A.
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1992
VIDEOCENTRIC CRITICISM
POSTMODERNISM
AND THE
DECONSTRUCTION
OF
TELEVISION

by
Christopher Taylor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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in
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Abstract

This research offers an alternative method to the study of television and visual narrative. It criticizes Western society's videocentrism, or Western culture's centering of television as the predominant medium of communicating to mass society. This method of criticizing videocentrism is known as videocentric criticism.

Chapter One is an assessment of the modern and postmodern condition. It refers to philosophy from the Greek and modern Enlightenments to suggest that Western society's eventual shift to videocentrism can be attributed to philosophy from these periods. This chapter then addresses modernity and postmodernity during the twentieth century. Postmodern cultural phenomena is emphasized as postmodernity progressed in proximity with the evolution of television.

Chapter two defines videocentric criticism within the human communication process. It addresses how this process is affected by the artificial qualities of mass media. Theories of narrative, structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstruction are applied to televisual information. Within videocentric criticism, deconstruction is the microcosmic method of analyzing televisual information. An example of televisual information is partially deconstructed to illustrate the method.

Chapter three proposes the Levels of Televisual Reality, or the macrocosmic method of analyzing televisual information
within videocentric criticism. This chapter begins with a summary of Plato's "Divided Line Analogy," which was the rationale for the development of this method. The Levels of Televisual Reality suggest a person interacts with televisual information as an artificial form of: environment, experience, and consciousness. Each level is illustrated with examples. This chapter concludes with an example of televisual information that is perused combining the microcosmic and macrocosmic methods of videocentric criticism.
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CHAPTER ONE
POSTMODERNITY
AND THE
AGE OF TELEVISION

Research in postmodernism has primarily addressed the arts and popular culture. Historically, traditional art like painting and sculpture involved unique works of art. People would travel great distances to galleries and museums to see icons representing some aspect of their society. With the advent of mass media and the mass production of art, people began to perceive these icons differently. Postmodernism addresses this issue by posing the question: with mass production, does art remain art or has it become a consumable product for society?

Postmodern culture originated during the 1930s. Since then, postmodernism has been accepted, rejected, enhanced, defined, and redefined, making it one of the least understood cultural movements in recent history. The fundamental ideas of postmodernity are not original or revolutionary. Similar movements have existed within modernism. The avant-garde, surrealism, and dadaism have had postmodern qualities. Yet, they remained under the cloak of modernism. Postmodernism seems to be different because unlike these previous movements, postmodernity directly questions its own foundation within modernity.
Postmodernism is not without controversy. A debate exists whether postmodernism is a cultural movement. Postmodernity evolved under the premise that modernism has reached its cultural summit. Modernity's continuation as the predominant cultural influence in Western society has begun to contradict its own fundamental ideas. Modernists and neoconservatives who defend modernity reject this idea. They defend modernism by rejecting postmodernism. Their view is that postmodernity is grounded in modernism and therefore, cannot succeed as a cultural movement because it contradicts its own modern cultural foundation. Critics on both sides of this debate admit the institution of modernism has created problems in contemporary society. But, the decision to reject modernity and proceed with postmodernity, or visa versa, remains unresolved within the academy.

This research acknowledges both positions, but encourages postmodern progress. Postmodernism is a cultural movement that is breaking new ground, and simultaneously eroding its modern origin. The erosion of the modern foundation is evidence that supports the notion that culture will never advance unless it questions its own origin. Western culture must surpass its established cultural parameters to examine itself from an alternative perspective. Postmodernism is not the first or last cultural movement to face rejection. History has proven that cultural movements only become more significant when they are surrounded by controversy and rejection.
The institutionalization of modernism has traditionally tried to forge culture to work within itself. Postmodernism is the transcendence of this outmoded view. It is the evolution of new cultural parameters that are synchronous with current society. Cultural parameters are not boundaries where cultural theory ends, they are boundaries that cultural theory must surpass. Within modernism, mass media such as television has become a limited cultural parameter. That is, I will argue that the institution of television has become a barrier to, rather than an extension of cultural advancement.

Postmodernism acknowledges the new 'mass media era' that society has entered. The 'mass media era' originated with Marshall McCluhan's concept of the global village during the early 1960s. McCluhan's vision of a global village was an optimistic one. However, postmodernism emphasizes the unforeseen problems created by this technological revolution. These problems, which are the foundation of videocentrism, have been unconsciously shaping society's perception of its own existence. The condition of videocentrism is the problem of a new generation. Therefore, a new generation of media research methods is necessary to address it: this research contributes a method I call videocentric criticism. By exploring this issue, videocentric criticism will also attempt to answer a more serious question: is the mass media turning culture into a form of postmodern art, or have culture and individuals always been consumable products for society?

There are many different theories about postmodernity.
One theory, the 'postmodern constellation,' addresses the different disciplines postmodernism encompasses. The 'postmodern constellation' has recently included: architecture, art, dance, history, literature, music, philosophy, science, political and social theory. The 'postmodern constellation' is an exemplary approach to cultural criticism. However, there are limitations within the 'postmodern constellation.' For example, studying the similarities between postmodern dance and politics with the intention of developing a new political theory, has the potential of becoming absurd. Postmodernism is a diverse rhetorical theory with perpetually expanding boundaries. To create a methodology for videocentric criticism, specific guidelines and definitions need to be established. The purpose of this chapter is to review the 'postmodern constellation' to illustrate the condition of videocentrism and determine a niche for videocentric criticism.

Postmodernism can no longer be considered an abstract idea that simply questions modern culture. It needs to be recognized and established as a new form of cultural criticism.

This chapter creates a summary definition of postmodernism by reviewing literature addressing modernism and postmodernism. The foundation of modernity is traced through the Greek and modern Enlightenments. Literature addressing postmodernism is retrospectively reviewed beginning prior to 1950 and concludes with literature from the early 1990s. It is separated into five periods: the
1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and the early 1990s. There are two considerations involved with this literature review. First, when was an author's research conducted, and when was it published? Second, what time period was the research addressing? Appropriate postmodern concepts will be emphasized that define videocentrism and videocentric criticism.

THE GREEKS AND THE MODERNS

A recent postmodern theory suggests a relationship between the Greek and modern Enlightenments. Stanley Rosen advocates this relationship:

That we cannot return to the past in no way cancels the fact that we have already been there, and so, as historical beings, are still there. As moderns, we are also ancients (2).

With this theory, Rosen asks: "What would the ancients have done had they possessed our knowledge?" (3). Contemporary culture possesses the knowledge of the ancients and the moderns. Does this knowledge improve our perception of current culture and society? Rosen's theory suggests that philosophy from both Enlightenments can be combined as humanism. Postmodernism's rejection of modern institutionalization is a result of modernity's long standing denial of this theory.

This research addresses the development of modernity through the Greek and modern Enlightenments, and how specific philosophy from these periods has contributed to the condition of videocentrism. Following Rosen's theory, this research hypothetically assumes television existed during the
Greek and modern Enlightenments. How would Plato's study of representational media, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's interest in the cultural and social effects of representation apply to the medium of television?

THE REPUBLIC: BOOK TEN

In "Book Ten," Plato banned mimetic or representational art from the hypothetical city of The Republic. Mimetic art included drama, poetry and painting. Plato's denunciation of painting strengthened his argument against mimetic poetry. McLuhan succinctly summarizes Plato's theory in "Book Ten:

In the Republic, Plato vigorously attacked the oral, poetized form as a vehicle for communicating knowledge. He pleaded for a more precise method of communication and classification . . . one which would favor the investigation of facts, principles of reality, human nature, and conduct. What the Greeks meant by "poetry" was radically different from what we mean by poetry. Their "poetic" expression was a product of a collective psyche and mind. The mimetic form, a technique that exploited rhythm, meter, and music, achieved the desired psychological response in the listener. Listeners could memorize with greater ease what was sung than what was said. Plato attacked this method because it discouraged disputation and argument. It was in his opinion the chief obstacle to abstract, speculative reasoning—he called it a poison, and an enemy of the people (113).

McLuhan's interpretation of "Book Ten" is similar to what will later be defined as videocentric criticism. Plato saw similar problems with the mass media of his era just as McLuhan saw these problems during the peak of modernism. Videocentric criticism acknowledges that these problems have always existed and have transcended various communication media. Alexander Nehamas also addresses "Book Ten" in his
article, "Plato and the Mass Media," Nehamas states: Plato's attack on poetry is better understood as a specific social and historical gesture than an attack on poetry, and especially on art, . . .
Plato's criticisms, perhaps paradoxically, become immediately relevant to a serious contemporary debate (214).

Nehamas addresses the current ethical problems of television. To consider Plato's hypothetical city as contemporary society creates a parallel between mimetic art and television.
Nehamas continues: "Plato makes his 'greatest' objection to poetry on the basis of imitation. Not only average people but good people as well, even 'the best among us,' are vulnerable to its harmful influence (605c-10)" (qtd. in Nehamas 216).

Television is mimetic art because it deceives both its creators and its viewers. According to Plato, those who claim knowledge of the world are deceived by mimetic art because it causes the: "inability to distinguish knowledge, ignorance, and imitation" (589d). The 'knowledge of the world' broadcast on television is always from the perspective of those who produce and broadcast the information. Like mimetic art, there will always be a difference between the actual events intended to be broadcast, and the subjectivity of television's creators.

Plato claims that objects exist on three levels: as natural objects, as functional objects, and as mimetic reproductions (597c). Objects in nature and those reproduced for a specific function, have a practical use in society. Mimetic objects are contrary to natural and functional objects because they are not real. Their sole purpose is to
imitate real objects. During the processes of creation and interpretation, natural and functional objects are altered. Mimesis is deceptive because it has the potential of making natural and functional objects deceptive.

There are several analogies in "Book Ten" that are comparable to television. According to Plato, people have three basic functions in relation to objects in their environment: as user, maker, and imitator. Videocentric criticism acknowledges that the existence of television has affected each function. From a Platonic perspective, a user of television should become knowledgeable of television and recommend to the makers of television how they can improve television. However, in actuality this rarely occurs.

There are four problems with television. Each can be illustrated with a Platonic analogy. First, most users of television will never become knowledgeable of television because most of its production is invisible. In a mirror, everything in the reflection is a reproduction. These reproductions are images and not reality. Television is similar to a mirror. The surface is a specific size and only reveals an abstraction of the televisual environment. The viewer of television cannot see the image beyond the edge of the screen. If one could view this hidden image, our ideas about the created televisual environment would probably be altered.

Second, the makers of television create a mimesis of society. Plato describes an incredibly skilled craftsman who is "able to make all artifacts and can produce everything
that comes from earth." But the problem with this mimesis is the results of his labor is only the appearance of objects and not "their genuine actuality" (596d). According to Plato, little can be learned about an appearance. This is illustrated by the "Divided Line Analogy" which is discussed in chapter three.

Third, television is a mimesis of society and itself. Post-production techniques and special effects create a reality further from the truth than the original mimesis. According to Plato; a painter can "portray a shoemaker, carpenter and all other craftsmen, and not understand the crafts of any of them" (598c). The limitations of television are the same as the painter's. Television is an imitation of society from the perspective of the creators of television.

Are the creators of television knowledgeable of the world they are trying to imitate? Plato writes, if one "were truly knowledgeable about these objects of mimesis, he would much sooner put his serious interest in the actual things than their copies. . . ." (599c). This is untrue of television. The makers of television use elaborate production techniques to make their mimesis appear real. The makers of television at best have only partial knowledge of the world because it is unlikely their knowledge is synchronous with all aspects of society.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

The beginning of modern philosophy is associated with the modern enlightenment, which began in the sixteenth
century, and continued through the nineteenth century. The philosophers of France including Rene Descartes, Michel De Montaigne, Denis Diderot, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are among those who initiated modern philosophy by attacking Christianity and the church to redirect philosophy towards a rational or scientific view of the world. Lawrence E. Cahoone summarizes modernism and the problems surrounding its definition:

"Modernity can be provisionally defined as ideas, principles and patterns of interpretation, of diverse kinds ranging from philosophic to the economic, on which western and central European and American society and culture, from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries, increasingly found itself to be based.

The historical starting point is impossible to fix; any century from the sixteenth through the nineteenth could be, and has been, named as the first "modern" century. . . . In the ongoing debate over the nature of modernity the choice of starting points tends to depend on which principles are taken to be constitutive of recent modernity. . . . This is because the fundamental aim of the debate over the nature of modernity is to discern where modernity is going now through understanding its past and, furthermore, because the concept of modernism is founded on the conviction that we are heirs to a relatively coherent modern Western heritage of ideas. (8).

Rousseau was among the philosophes who contributed to the modern Enlightenment, and simultaneously rejected it because of its adverse effects on society. In A Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts, also known as the First Discourse, Rousseau addressed many aspects of Western culture and society. He believed the arts and sciences were the cause of moral decline in Western culture. The mass production of images was a byproduct of the development of the arts and
sciences. Therefore, visual media was a significant contribution to corrupting individuals and society. Obviously, Rousseau had no comprehension of a communication medium like television, but his critique of society, and the problems created by images is similar to current cultural problems this research addresses through videocentrism and videocentric criticism.

Rousseau began the First Discourse by commending the progress of the modern Enlightenment. Society had become materialistically wealthy from the cultural contributions of the arts and sciences. His text compliments the achievements of technology and the resulting improvements of society. However, there was a hidden agenda in Rousseau's First Discourse. The accomplishments of technology were not completely beneficial. Rousseau wrote;

the sciences, and the arts . . . strew garlands of flowers on the iron chains that bind them, make them forget the original freedom for which they seem to have been born, cause them to love their slavery, and turn them into what is known as civilized people (208).

The advancement of technology appeared beneficial; but in reality, progress only veiled society's growing ethical and cultural problems. Rousseau believed covering society's social problems with cultural accomplishments only increased the problem. The First Discourse described societies where the arts and sciences flourished while ethics and morality declined. He compared this dilemma with societies that were primitive in their learning and knowledge, but advanced in their moral and ethical standards. Rousseau concluded the
acquisition of knowledge and the advancement of technology was responsible for moral and ethical decline in Western culture.

Jean Starobinski's interpretation of Rousseau's First Discourse emphasizes the conflict between appearances and reality as a cause of moral decline in society during the modern Enlightenment. Videocentric criticism acknowledges this problem of technology progressing faster than moral philosophy in Western culture. The idea of appearances being deceptive was not original at the time Rousseau wrote the First Discourse. Starobinski states,

the antithesis between appearance and reality . . . had become cliche. . . . In the theater and the church, in novels and in newspapers, sham, convention, hypocrisy, and masks were denounced in a variety of ways. . . . The theme was sufficiently commonplace, vulgarized, and automatic that anyone could work variations on it without strenuous effort. (4-3).

Rousseau rigorously addressed the antithesis between appearance and reality. His outspoken criticism of accepted social values of his time separated his writings from the other philosophes of the modern Enlightenment. Starobinski continues,

Suffused with pathos, the antithesis of appearance and reality gives the Discourse its dramatic tension. . . . The clash between appearance and reality is echoed in a series of other conflicts: between good and evil (and between the righteous and the wicked), between nature and society, between man and his gods, even between man and himself (4).

Rousseau acknowledged that society would stagnate without progress. However, as long as cultural advancement
13

existed, moral problems within society would continue. Cultural developments were irrelevant without people. But people could exist without progress. He believed ‘the lesser of two evils’ was for society to reject cultural advancement. He also realized this was impossible. Rousseau elaborated his reasons for supporting both sides of the issue:

A vicious people can never return to virtue. . . . One can never go back to the time of innocence and equality, once one has departed it. . . . This was one of the reasons why he wished to keep the arts and sciences intact; in a society already corrupt, they performed a useful service in moderating the excesses of corruption. . . . It could well seem paradoxical to assert that the arts and sciences which had helped to propel men towards corruption could now serve to mitigate its evils; but as Rousseau himself declared, “I would rather be a man of paradoxes than a man of prejudices.” (qtd. in Cranston 243).

The First Discourse was Rousseau’s first critique of society. He believed the advances in science and technology were responsible for a moral decline in Western society. Rousseau believed art, and the reproduction of images contributed to the rise of technology and the decline of morality in Western society. Just as mimetic art and the mass production of images and text were a representation of these problems during the Greek and modern Enlightenments. Videocentric criticism suggests television is a representation of this continuing conflict between technology and morality in contemporary society. Videocentrism is Western society’s apathetic acceptance of this conflict.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Modernity was intrinsic to the advent of postmodernism.
Jurgen Habermas offers a concise definition of modernity. He refers to the beginning of modernity in the eighteenth century as 'the project of enlightenment.' This involved the institutionalization of Western culture. Problems in "scientific discourse, theories of morality, jurisprudence, and the production and criticism of art" were institutionalized as cultural professions and studied by experts in their appropriate field (8). The original vision of 'the project of enlightenment' had the best intentions, however, "the twentieth century has shattered this optimism" (9). Society's transcendence of time and culture has begun to erode the established values of modernity.

Several writers used the term postmodernism prior to 1950. "Federico de Onis used the word 'postmodernismo' in his Antologia de la poesia espanola e hispanoamericana (1882-1932) published in Madrid in 1934" (Hassan 85). Dudley Fitts later used the term in his Anthology of Contemporary Latin-American Poetry published in 1942 (Hassan 85). Both authors did not elaborate on the term. Their descriptions suggested an ongoing debate within modernism. Arnold Toynbee made the first significant attempt at defining postmodernism in the sixth volume of, A Study of History, published in 1947. Toynbee's concept of postmodernism suggested the beginning of a new historical cycle that began in 1875 (39). This new cycle implied the demise of established Western values as the predominant world culture. Charles Jencks summarized Toynbee's concept as; "the decline of individualism, capitalism, and Christianity, and the rise to power of Non-
Western cultures" (3). Toynbee's theory of world culture remains accepted in current postmodern criticism.

The evolution of television paralleled society's transition to postmodern culture. In 1941, David Sarnoff predicted the contribution television would make to society:

Thus, the ultimate contribution of television will be its service toward unification of the life of the nation, and, at the same time, the greater development of the life of the individual. We who have labored in the creation of this promising new instrumentality are proud to have this opportunity to aid in the progress of mankind. It is our earnest hope that television will help to strengthen the United States as a nation of free people and high ideals. (qtd. in MacDonald 31)

In 1949, Dumont advertised their television sets in Newsweek with the following statement:

Once upon a time... there was a little princess who was very good, and kind to all about her. And because she was so good, her fairy godmother appeared to her one day and said: "I am giving you an Enchanted Mirror. When you look in it you will see and hear things that are far away— even to the farthest corners of the earth. Through it, skilled musicians will play for you and learned men will speak to you. This Enchanted Mirror will bring to you much pleasure and deeper understanding, so that you may live your life in wisdom and happiness. There is no more precious gift than I can give" (qtd. in Altman 47).

As television progressed as a commercial medium, the pioneers of its development believed television's existence in Western society would contribute to the positive growth of Western culture. J. Fred MacDonald described the era: "Television became an acceptable, attractive, and affordable national utility in 1948-49." (43).
Structuralism evolved as a critique of existential phenomenology during the early 1950s. Although fundamental structural theories existed during the modern Enlightenment, structuralism did not become a prominent intellectual movement until post World War II. In the 1950s, Roland Barthes contributed to the structuralist movement within modernism. The publication of *Writing Degree Zero* in 1953 and *Mythologies* in 1957 were significant contributions to structuralism and the culturally dominant theories of modernity. Barthes remains a central figure in the development of structuralism.

In the 1950s, the significant postmodern issue involved representation and values. Postmodernism questioned existing cultural methods of representation. Craig Owens describes Martin Heidegger's theory of modernism and representation:

> For modern man, everything that exists does so only in and through representation. To claim this is also to claim the world exists only in and through a subject who believes that he is producing the world in producing a representation (66).

Television was christened the 'Golden Age of Television' during the 1950s. Programming during this era was dominated by the comedy-variety shows which also meet their demise during the same decade and the dramatic showcases that continue to evolve today. MacDonald describes television's cultural effects:

> Americans bought receivers and did not question the medium or its impact. . . . the sudden availability of television challenged traditional social patterns. . . . TV was the
cause of major declines in movie attendance, book purchases, admissions to professional sport events, radio listening, and attendance at the theatre and the opera. . . . Educators claimed that video was undermining the study habits of students (69).

Despite criticism of their content and their effects on social patterns, the major networks, NBC, CBS, and ABC became the predominant institutional forms of broadcast television. As production costs increased, television's content became statistically based. The purpose of television began to shift from; a shaper of culture to a gainer of profit.

Television began contributing to the social values that were the foundation of Western culture. Institutionalized modernism supported this redefining of cultural values. Postmodernism opposed and simultaneously extended beyond modernity by challenging this displacement of Western values. Literary critic Irving Howe was among the first to use the concept of postmodernism polemically. He compared modern and postmodern thought. Modernism asked, "How shall we live with (our) existing values?" Postmodernism extended this question by asking; "How do we live with (our) existing values?" (192). While modernism avoided issues that attacked the established cultural order, Howe claimed, postmodernism was a direct attack on modernism's established order of society (203). The early debates between modern and postmodern theory often became intense. In actuality, postmodernism did not emphasize rejecting Western values, instead it questioned them. Postmodernism rhetorically asked: is society an accurate representation of our culture, and if it is, where
is society leading our culture?

The cold war science fiction films of the 1950s such as, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, and The Incredible Shrinking Man, had postmodern attributes. Howe suggested the dehumanizing qualities of modernism created alienation in individuals within society. Postmodernism was a renewed search for individual identity. These films questioned the established cultural order. The central theme of these films was often concerned with dehumanization, the 'fate of freedom,' and the consequences of the loss of identity. These films never offered any solutions to the issues they addressed. Instead, they generated a new form of cultural representation for a society that was becoming vulnerable to the social problems of modernity.

1960s

The 1960s were undoubtedly a significant period of cultural change. The events of the 1960s still represent a radical break from modernism and the authoritarian state. Modernists had to accept the fact that Western culture was a culture within a greater culture. Postmodernism of the 1960s suggested the West had lost its superiority within the world culture. After victory in World War II, and the development of nuclear weapons, the West seemed invincible. However, events such as: the Korean war, the Soviet development of nuclear weapons, Sputnik, and problems in Indochina, all suggested Western vulnerability. The United States was no longer alone as a superpower.
In 1966, Jacques Derrida delivered his "Discourse of the Human Sciences" at a symposium at John Hopkins University. He lambasted Levi-Strauss' structural theories. With his denunciation of structuralism, Derrida introduced his theory of deconstruction to the American academy, thus advancing the post-structural movement within postmodernism. (Norris 242). In 1967, three significant books by Derrida addressing deconstruction were published. These were: Of Grammatology, Speech and Phenomena, and Writing and Difference.

Architecture became part of the 'postmodern constellation' during the 1960s. Postmodern interpretations searched for a metamorphosis within existing modern architecture. Charles Jencks described the evolutionary architecture of Robert Venturi among others as an attack on "'orthodox Modern architecture' for its elitism, urban destruction, bureaucracy, and simplified language" (6). The significant observation was that architectural change was necessary to accommodate society's shift towards mass culture. Kenneth Frampton described postmodern architecture as two; "symbiotic instruments of Megapolitan development—the freestanding high rise and the serpentine freeway" (17). Both forms were the result of modern architecture, and would remain an integral part of a postmodern landscape. They represented the value of real estate and "the victory of universal civilization over locally inflected culture" (17). Andreas Huyssen described a typical postmodern interpretation of modern architecture: "Since the 1960s..."
(postmodernists) have argued against modernism's hidden dependence on the machine metaphor and the production paradigm, and against its taking the factory as the model for all buildings" (14). Alienation, changing values, and the move to mass culture were the predominant postmodern messages symbolized in the changing architecture of the 1960s.

Postmodernism became established in literature and the arts during the 1960s. Postmodernism claimed modern art would be reduced to a commodity for entertainment unless it could create an experience unique to itself. As art was becoming mass produced, society's ideas of the purpose of art began to change. Harry Levin claimed Western culture had become a consumer of representations. People watch television and films, listen to recorded music, and purchase books and magazines full of photographic reproductions. Levin states:

This is reproduction and not production; we are mainly consumers and not producers of art. We are readers of reprints and connoisseurs of high fidelity, things are based on credit cards and expenses accounts. Our culture is based on our economy. Art is a business before it is expression (279).

Levin's research was concerned with the decline of modernism rather than the advent of postmodernism. Ironically, his views of modern art eventually contributed to the foundation of postmodern art. Stanley Trachtenberg describes Andy Warhol: He "reminds us of the difference between reality and the attempts to reproduce it in his silk screen repetitions of celebrities, (and) of commercial products. . ." (7). Trachtenberg continued, with postmodern art of the 1960s, there was a; "tendency to both empty the work of meaning and
to reify it as an object in the world" (7).

In 1962, Sarnoff commented on Western society's acceptance of television: "It is a mistake to assume that viewing can take place without the consent of the viewers— that a mass audience will just sit there and watch, regardless of what is on the screen." (qtd. in MacDonald 221). However, Sarnoff's statement was inaccurate. MacDonald describes the same period:

the networks were providing the entertainment fare desired by a large segment of the potential audience—in many cases, a majority of the population. . . . TV served a civilization conditioned by broadcasting since the 1920s to accept quality with heavy doses of mediocrity (221).

Daniel Boorstin observed Western society's fascination with television. In 1961, he developed the concept of the pseudo-event as a result of mass media's creation of its own reality to communicate to society. Jean Baudrillard described Boorstin's pseudo-event as:

a world of events, history, culture, and ideas produced not from the fluctuating and contradictory nature of reality, but produced as artifacts from the technical manipulation of the medium and its coded elements (Revenge of the Crystal 92).

Pseudo-events had been evolving in Western culture since the advent of newspaper reporting in the early nineteenth century. They continued to evolve with the invention of the telegraph through the development of photography and color television. Boorstin described the aesthetic effect of pseudo-events:

Vivid image came to overshadow pale reality. . . . television has led a later
generation of television watchers to see the Western cowboy as an inferior replica of John Wayne. The Grand canyon itself became a disappointing reproduction of the Kodachrome original (14).

Boorstin suggested, that mass media has deceived Western culture and society by providing illusions that are supplements of actuality. The occurrence of a pseudo-event was invented for the purpose of reproduction: "Its success is measured by how widely it is reported" (11). A pseudo-event spatially and temporally supplemented the occurrence of an actual event. It forced the question, was the actual event worth communicating to society? A pseudo-event, which in a sense is a false event de-emphasizes the actual event's occurrence. Without this, "ambiguity a pseudo-event cannot be very interesting . . . it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy" (11-13). Because of pseudo-events, Boorstin assumed all images were deceptive. He believed the pseudo-event symbolized society's move toward Orwellian culture.

1970s

During the 1970s, most American neoconservatives defended modern culture. However, during this time, some began to question capitalism and Western modern values. Neoconservatism still rejected evolving to a postmodern culture. However, they could no longer ignore the problems created by changing Western values. Daniel Bell, a prominent neoconservative of the 1970s argued, "the crisis of the developed societies of the West are to be traced back to a split between culture and society" (qtd. in Habermas 6).
Bell's crisis referred to the problems of alienation and withdrawal created by the dehumanizing qualities of modern culture. Bell further claimed this crisis: "unleashes hedonistic motives irreconcilable with the discipline of professional life in society" (qtd. in Habermas 6). However, Bell did not blame the qualities of modernism per se. He blamed the, "adversary culture . . . (that) stirs up hatred against the conventions and virtues of everyday life" (qtd. in Habermas 6). Bell's attack on postmodernity suggested the modernists and neoconservatives recognized the developing problems in modern culture. They believed the source of this cultural implosion was caused by the advent of the 'adversary culture' or postmodernism. In their view, postmodernism posed a greater threat to Western culture than modernity's transcendence of itself.

During the 1970s, Martin Wallace wrote one of the most detailed descriptions of postmodernism to date. His descriptions were pluralistic comparisons of modernism with postmodernism. They were divided into four separate sets. The psychological/physiological set described a new sensibility, an unprecedented new way of perceiving society that could lead to a radical transformation of society. The environmental set suggested a technical and social transformation of our world. The emphasis was on valorizing new kinds of aesthetic experience. The sociological/political set compared modern and postmodern society. Modern society was structured and specialized within an authoritarian government. Postmodern society was mass culture based on
anarchy, but not to be confused with nihilism. The aesthetic set described both cultures. Modernism attempted formal order where postmodernism was a mockery of formal order. Postmodernism envisioned a relationship between art and life. This was contradictory to modernism. Modernism interpreted this relationship as going beyond the accepted realms of the purpose of art in society. (144).

Owens described a postmodern observation that began in the 1970s as a response to: "modern aesthetic's claim that vision was superior to the other senses. . ." (70). From a postmodern perspective, this was absurd because there was no positive value with the idea. To assume vision is superior to the other senses further revealed alienation and false consciousness in Western culture. Owens continued, "the predominance of the look . . . has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations. . . . The moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality" (70). In other words, the body becomes a representation. A representation of what an individual perceives as the established values of Western culture. With the body as a representation, the body becomes an art form that emphasizes commodity rather than expression. This emphasis on commodity was an attribute of Western culture's mass media. The materialistic styles that represented success in Western culture were constantly evolving. Individuals in Western society were constantly reminded by mass media that their primary goal in Western society is consumption and the pursuit of success.

The removal of the Federal Communication Commission's
authority to regulate cable television in 1966 initiated the formation of the superstations: WTBS, WGN, and WOR, and the movie channels: HBO, Cinemax, etc., via satellite transmissions. The advent of these alternative networks to the major networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, began society's rethinking of television. However, it would be the next decade before cable television had saturated the nation.

1980s

In 1980 Habermas professed: "Although the avant-garde is still considered to be expanding, it is supposedly no longer creative. Modernism is dominant but dead" (6). Habermas suggested, that the dehumanization and specialization of modern society had caused a separation of individuals from "the everyday hermeneutics of communication" (9). Postmodern theory suggested, that these alienating qualities could be removed from society by eliminating the "culture of expertise" from modern society (9). Habermas emphasized the need for a shift in aesthetic criticism in Western culture.

Jean-Francois Lyotard discusses the problems of 'meta-narratives' in his book, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge. Lyotard's criticism of narrative as a historical approach is applicable to the entire 'postmodern constellation.' Owens summarizes the postmodern 'meta-narratives' of history as, "Western man's self-appointed mission of transforming the entire planet in his own image . . . that is, the transformation of the world into a representation. . ." (66). According to Lyotard, a postmodern
Decline in narrative can be seen through the diffusion of "techniques and technologies since the Second World War, which has shifted emphasis from the ends of action to its means. . ." (37). Lyotard describes a trend that has continued to the present. He describes postmodernism in the following terms:

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what 'will have to be done' (81).

Lyotard's postmodern criticism of narrative expresses a significant doubt in the established order of modernity. His theories question the methods of recorded history and the laws of science. The progression of history has caused postmodernism to doubt the vital qualities of modern culture.

Hugh Tomlinson questions an even greater modern value, the validity of scientific 'truth.' In his article, "After Truth: Postmodernism and the Rhetoric of Science," he suggests; the starting point for postmodernism is to consider scientific 'truth' unimportant or even undesirable because of the problems with 'truth' when it is associated with realism. According to Tomlinson:

the postmodernist 'takes truth seriously' and tries to make sense of it. He carries out an 'internal critique' of 'truth' itself. It is not that 'truth' ought to be rejected in favor of something like beauty or intuition but that the disciple of truth, the rationalist, cannot give a coherent account of it in his own terms (44).
Postmodernism directly attacks modern philosophical values by doubting scientific 'truth.' Modernism claims the methods of searching for scientific 'truth' are established and cannot be questioned. Postmodernism asks, what if these methods are inaccurate? And, what are the consequences of these inaccuracies? To address these questions, it is necessary to review Tomlinson's concept of modern and postmodern realism:

The realist believes that truth is indispensable to thought. Whatever the difficulties with positive attempts to define it, he relies on a series of negative arguments in its defense. . . truth performs an explanatory function. That it is less of a theory and more of an explanatory hypothesis (50).

Tomlinson continues with a postmodern explanation of realism and 'truth.'

The postmodernist story is a simple one: realism, in any of its forms, cannot be made coherent in its own terms. We have, as Putnam says, reached 'the demise of a theory that lasted for over two thousand years'. . . . The question is: Where do we go from here? (52).

Tomlinson's postmodern theory of 'truth' is not a metaphysical assertion that there is no 'truth.' From a scientific perspective, the realist sees only one explanation to a problem. That explanation is either true or false. The postmodernist sees many explanations to the same problem. None of these explanations are either true or false. The acceptance or rejection of either true or false is the rejection of realist 'truth.' With the rejection of 'truth' comes the search for an alternative 'truth' or a new concept of 'truth.' This can be accomplished by the application of
postmodern theory to modern cultural problems. Tomlinson states: postmodernism is "the telling of new stories, the invention of new worlds . . . to think the unthinkable . . . Postmodernism does involve radical cultural change" (56).

Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulations* appeared in English in 1981. He described the four successive stages of an image. The first stage, is a sign's reflection of a basic reality. The second stage is where the image that masks and perverts a basic reality. According to Baudrillard; "The second inaugurates an age of simulacra and simulation, in which there is no longer any . . . last judgment to separate truth from false" (Selected Writings 171). The judgment of an image being true or false is de-emphasized over the existence of the image. In the third stage, an image masks the absence of a basic reality. Steven Conner describes Baudrillard's example of: "the iconoclasts, who feared and despised images of the deity because they believed that the images were testimony to the absence of any deity" (55). The fourth stage bears no relation to any reality. The image has become its own simulacrum. Baudrillard's theory of a simulacrum is a reproduction without an original; therefore, the simulacrum is the original. Television is an exemplary example of a simulacrum.

In 1985, Neil Postman wrote a critical study of television entitled, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. He began by addressing different generations of mass media. Postman claimed that historically, writing has always been the superior medium to speech:
What people say is assumed to be more casually uttered than what they write. The written word is assumed to have been reflected upon and revised by its author. . . . The written word endures, the spoken word disappears; and that is why writing is closer to the truth than speaking (21).

As society shifted from a print based culture to an electronic media based culture. The value of the written word became less significant. Postman wrote, "television has achieved the status of 'meta-medium,' an instrument that directs not only our knowledge of the world, but our knowledge of ways of knowing as well" (79).

Postman suggested the telegraph initiated the transition from the print based "Age of Exposition," to the television based "Age of Show Business:"

As a culture moves from orality to writing to printing to televising, its ideas of truth move with it. Every philosophy is the philosophy of a stage of life, Nietzsche remarked. To which we might add that every epistemology is the epistemology of a stage of media development (24).

Postman illustrated Western culture's evolution to an image based culture:

Think of Richard Nixon or Jimmy Carter . . . and what will come to your mind is an image, a picture of a face, most likely a face on a television screen. . . . Of words, almost nothing will come to mind. This is the difference between thinking in a word-centered culture and thinking in an image-centered culture (61).

Postman saw Western society in crisis because an image based culture that was turning its media content into entertainment. Thus undermining Western society's position in the world. Postman correlated the decline of the West as a
world power with the development of television.

Postman elaborated on Boorstin's theory of the pseudo-event and suggested that television is responsible for the pseudo-context:

A pseudo-context is a structure invented to give fragmented and irrelevant information a seeming use. But the use the pseudo-context provides is not action, or problem solving, or change. It is the only use left for information with no genuine connection to our lives. And that, of course, is to amuse. The pseudo-context is the last refuge, so to say, of a culture overwhelmed by irrelevance, incoherence, and impotence (76).

Postman described the academic issue twenty years ago; how had television shaped and reflected culture? This issue has evolved to the acceptance of television as culture. Society has reached: "a critical mass in that electronic media have decisively and irreversibly changed the character of our symbolic environment. We are now a culture whose information, ideas and epistemology are given form by television. . ." (28). Postman described Western society's acceptance of mass media as a Huxleyan phenomena. Western culture unquestioningly accepted the entertainment that mass media has become. Postman stated that television is a significant form of entertainment. However, the dilemma was that television "has made entertainment itself the natural format for the representation of all experience" (87).

The 1980s witnessed a rupture within the modern institution of television. Cable television made alternative networks like MTV, CNN, Fox Broadcasting Company, as well as the movie channels, pay per view, and the superstations household words. These new forms of television began to
reshape Western society's perception of television. The suddenly vast sources of televisual information made available by cable decentered the major networks as the primary sources of televisual information. The alternative networks were a postmodern break from the modern institution of television. Despite this postmodern break, the original networks struggled to maintain their institutional identity.

1990s

Stefan Morawski defines three predominant variants within the 'postmodern constellation.' These variants are the socio-cultural postmodern, the artistic postmodern, and the philosophical postmodern. According to Morawski:

They are intrinsically interlaced, . . . In one word, post-modernism has to counterweight the antinomian traits of the modernistic worldview, which was primarily bound to the prevalence of (a) production as the very basis of social fabric; (b) elites which were to play the role of the 'gardeners of culture' educating the masses; (c) a given hierarchy of values determining what is true, just and beautiful . . . pertaining to reveal the sense of human existence, the meaning of history, (and) our bonds with the cosmos. . . . (53)

The late 1980s and the 1990s have begun to address television as part of the 'postmodern constellation.' Brian Seitz addresses television and metaphysics. He correlates Platonic philosophy and Derridian deconstruction with the medium of television. Seitz states: "Television is a new discursive element (as water is an element) and a 'system of production,' the likes of which has never existed in all of history until now" (192). In 1991, Alan Olson coined the term "Before Television" or "B.T." He addresses the developments
within Western culture and society now that a generation of post B.T. people are coming of age (4). Brown describes television in "Video Ergo Sum" as:

the principle form by which the nation as a whole is able to talk to itself does not this sum up the mirror-like nature of television's effect on human consciousness? Most Americans want to view what everyone else is viewing in order to confirm their sense of belonging... Selfhood is realized in the knowledge that we are all watching the same image at the same time. (21)

Brown declares that the 'shared reality' created by televisual information is mediated by the medium of television.

In 1990 Geoffrey Ulmer introduced teletheory, which is based on the belief that: "the theories of Derrida and the other French post-structuralists offer the best hope for understanding an era in which the technology of culture is shifting from print to video." (vii). Although television maintains the qualities of a modern institution. Teletheory is the development of postmodern methods of studying television. Ulmer summarizes television's evolving role in contemporary society: Television "is best understood as the name for the institution that has arisen to manage and distribute the medium of video... just as cinema is said to be the institutionalization of film" (x). Ulmer continues: Just as "school is the institutionalization of literacy... television is the institutionalization of video in our civilization..." (3).

Ulmer's teletheory and videocentric criticism share the same concerns of interpreting televisual information. Ulmer
states:

Video images are always framed in verbal discourse and mediated through cultural interpretations available in everyday language (part of the comprehension of images include paraphrasing). Television organizes information narratively, ordering the complex action of sound and image through time by means of a combination of oral and pop culture forms. . . (ix).

Ulmer's teletheory is primarily concerned with the application of video technology within the academy and its potential in a classroom environment. Videocentric criticism approaches television from a postmodern perspective to address culture and society.

Ulmer contrasts Boorstin's and Postman's view of mass media. Both Boorstin and Postman respectively describe television as a prelude to Orwellian or Huxleyan society. They have conducted thorough research to develop a paradigm of television as deception. Their theories are not unfounded. However, as their research suggested, television is culture, and it contributes to our methods of learning about the world as well as our knowledge of the world. It is therefore, necessary to redirect the emphasis of televisual research as Ulmer has done. Videocentric criticism and teletheory acknowledge the problems and limitations of television and suggest it is possible to live productive and virtuous lives with the existence of television.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has revealed the diversity and complexity of postmodernism. Postmodern theory has interpreted popular
culture in significant ways. The research of Lyotard and Tomlinson have successfully challenged the established values of modernity. Their work reveals the validity of postmodern theory. This research illustrates the expansion of the 'postmodern constellation,' from the first usage of the term, to its questioning of modern narrative and scientific 'truth.'

With Western society's entrance into the 1990s, the direction of television has become speculative. The alternative networks now scramble the satellite signals that allowed their inception, while the original networks maintain their institutional structure. It appears as if the alternative networks are becoming counterparts to the institutional networks that are the foundation of television. A postmodern supplement cannot supplement something without eventually becoming the original that was supplemented. If Western society wants itself represented by the pastiche of alternative television, it is going to have to pay for it.

Postmodernity keeps representation in a state of transition. It addresses the methods of producing representations, and the methods of interpreting them. Postmodernism can be considered the re-interpretation of representation. Videocentric criticism addresses how modernity has altered Western culture's interpretive methods. Videocentric criticism of videcentrism suggests the alienating qualities of modern society has reduced people's interpretive abilities by making them indifferent to most of the televisual information they are exposed to. Modernism has
created an expanding human environment where the subject's interpretive abilities continue to contract.

This chapter has assessed the postmodern condition and highlighted some of the events within the history of television that have contributed to Western culture's shift to videocentrism. Television has become a postmodern phenomena because its purpose has evolved beyond its original intention. Despite its shift from a source of great knowledge and information to a tool for mass marketing, it has still created the condition of videocentrism. Videocentric criticism is a method of transcending videocentrism, or the modern cultural parameters represented by television.
CHAPTER TWO

VIDEOCENTRIC CRITICISM

POST-STRUCTURALISM AND DECONSTRUCTION

The emphasis of this research has been the historical and philosophical foundation of videocentrism and videocentric criticism. From a visual communications perspective, the decline of modernism and the advent of postmodernism has involved the scrutiny of established methods of representation and interpretation. Researchers today acknowledge similar problems in mass media that Plato and Rousseau addressed in the communication media of their times. Philip Lutgendorf reverberates Rousseau's First Discourse: "Pious viewers wrap the TV set with garlands of flowers to celebrate the images that flow across the screen" (qtd. in Goethals 63). Seitz addresses metaphysical viewing of television reminiscent of Plato's philosophy:

Traditional metaphysical viewings, which present TV as a network of nothing more than appearances—which present TV as not real—generate hierarchically organized discourses, which are hazardous because they reduce television to the status of mere image . . . " (202).

The theories of representation were in question prior to the Greek Enlightenment. They have remained unanswered through the modern Enlightenment to become postmodern issues. This thesis illustrates these problems have existed for centuries.

In recent history Baudrillard, Boorstin, Postman, and
Ulmer have contributed to defining new areas of television criticism. Boorstin and Postman addressed the social and cultural problems associated with television. This research agrees with Ulmer's teletheory by suggesting the problems of television have become passe' and society should move to the next level of understanding them.

How can individuals in society understand the limitations of television and use these problems to their advantage? The application of videocentric criticism assumes these issues have always existed. If they have always existed; then in a sense, they have never existed. These problems are actually non-problems. The existing dilemmas of representation and interpretation is a state of nature. Instead of considering this natural state a problem, it is an alternative rhetorical perspective. Although this research establishes when problems with representation and interpretation began, a history of these problems is unnecessary to apply videocentric criticism to television. The intention of the historical introduction was to define the condition of videocentrism, and establish a need for videocentric criticism.

HUMAN INFORMATION EMISSION AND RECEPTION

A videocentric definition of television is unconventional compared to established mass media and popular culture definitions. Television is simply an idea. People's perception of television is similar, and simultaneously different. When a person thinks of television, a collection
of abstract ideas from previous televisual experiences is likely to occur. Baudrillard stated "the entire architecture of the media is founded on . . . the emission and reception of information" (207). Human beings constantly receive information from the external world. This information exists in the human mind as: environment, experience, and consciousness. The human mind is a passive receptor of external information and an active emitter of internal information. These combined are the faculty of reason. If human beings are receptors of external information, then the external environment is a passive emitter of information. Assuming these ideas are true, television is an artificial receptor of external information and an artificial emitter of internal reason. When a person views television, he/she becomes a receptor of artificial: environment, experience, and consciousness.

Television is a representation of Western culture and society. This creates a problem when a viewer fails to realize that television is a simulacrum before it is real. Obviously, most people understand that televisual information is not actuality. But what happens to a viewer who becomes engrossed with televisual information? During this state of 'zoning out,' they no longer see a television. Televisual reality becomes Baudrillard's hyperreality within the simulacrum:

A possible definition of the real is: that for which it is possible to provide an equivalent representation. . . . At the conclusion of this process of reproduction, the real becomes not only that which can be reproduced, but that
which is always already reproduced: the hyperreal. . . . Hyperrealism is only beyond representation because it functions entirely within the realm of simulation. . . . Hyperrealism is an integral part of a coded reality, which it perpetuates without modifying (145-146).

The simulacrum of television is comparable to Baudrillard's description of Los Angeles and Disneyland: "It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology), but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real. . . ." (172).

There are two reasons television can be considered an emitter of artificial: environment, experience, and consciousness. First, television is a simulation or false reality. Televisual information represents Western society's cultural priorities. The popular issues seem to shift with television's often dysfunctional agenda. What is popular today becomes obscure tomorrow. Televisual information changes as events dictate in Western culture. The television industry involves thousands of people in a vast number of locations. Network television is made to appear objective by its subjective creators.

These agenda setting decisions are frequently made by people with limited knowledge of the society they are creating a representation of. Ronald Berman describes television's narcissistic qualities:

the mass culture that we get on TV is produced by hacks with college degrees. What they create does not tell us how the average person lives, feels, or thinks, but what someone who has been superficially educated thinks about alienation or liberation. . . . The strategy of the medium has been to imitate limited parts of social
life, to replicate certain human experiences, . . . (109).

Television is always someone else's interpretation of Western culture and reality.

The second reason television can be considered an emitter of artificial environment, experience, and consciousness involves its presence. Televisual reality can always be attenuated by the viewer. The external world is constantly emitting passive information. This is a constant beyond human control. People are not capable of attenuating reality. Televisual reality is different. It can be controlled by the viewer in a variety of ways, such as: turning the television on or off, changing the channel, adjusting the volume, or leaving the room. Any of these actions will attenuate televisual information. This kind of manipulation is impossible in the external world. In Western society, television has become a desired form of artificial environment, experience, and consciousness.

Televisual reality has the capability of transcending a viewer's perception of environment, experience, and consciousness in sophisticated ways. Elaborate production techniques create experiences that exceed the events of a person's daily life. Viewers can: see a sports event from a perspective that rivals the coach's point of view, participate with someone winning a new car, travel to the middle of a battlefield, or intricately plot and commit murder. This televisual environment, experience, and consciousness, that viewers intentionally expose themselves
to is Baudrillard's hyperreality. Hyperreality may not be more 'real' than actual reality because of the technical limitations of television. But, hyperreality offers people artificial environments, experiences, and consciousness they otherwise would not have because of the limitations of their lifestyles. Television is also capable of influencing a person's ethics and morality through a form of artificial reasoning it performs for its audience. From a logical perspective, viewers are intentionally provided with premises and conclusions to issues the creators of television choose to address. Obviously, this has an agenda setting quality. But more importantly, viewers can be persuaded in ways that are logically questionable. Videocentric criticism asks, how does hyperreality and artificial reasoning effect the individual viewer and society?

Television is deceptive as a medium and, through the televisual information created by the makers of television. Reality is altered by the medium of television. Like Plato's description of poetry, television is at best only a mimesis of the actuality it portrays. Regardless of their intentions, the creators of television create deceptive information for broadcast on television. Videocentric criticism considers the televisual medium a constant. However, there are varying degrees of deception within televisual information. These degrees of deception inherently exist within televisual information. However, just as a mirror reflects a reversed image, its function is still useful to society. Videocentric criticism acknowledges and surpasses the inherent limitations
of television. Although television is inherently deceptive, its function in society has become essential.

Examples of videocentric deception exists in dramatic series like Dallas, and Dynasty, and in a recent series of "Miller Genuine Draft Beer" advertisements. Programs like Dallas and Dynasty are a false representation of Western culture. They create an inaccurate depiction of American lifestyles, yet have become accepted icons of American society. Richard Collins describes these programs in his study of American television in the European television markets:

surely both celebrates and castigates advanced capitalist structures and relationships, offering desires and their punishments in the same movement, short-circuiting guilt, giving us things to wish for and rewarding us with confirmations of our own superiority because we don't have them... (qtd. in Caughie 46).

Just as Dallas and Dynasty have become icons of American lifestyle, Miller Genuine Draft Beer has become an icon of American leisure. Miller Genuine Draft Beer advertisements shroud the consumption of their product with power and mystery. The emphasis of these commercials is beer as an object of worship. Viewers tend to be overwhelmed by the special effects and elaborate production scale without recognizing the actual message of these commercials. One specific Miller Genuine Draft Beer commercial is a giant bottle of Miller Genuine Draft Beer surrounded by a rocket launch facility in the middle of a desert. The personnel at this facility are casually dressed and appear to be in a state of euphoria. This advertisement implies defense and/or
scientific research as a form of social ritual. In reality, this kind of construction site is a dangerous work environment. It is the operation of heavy equipment and the use of hazardous materials. There is similarity between the image in this advertisement and the activities at ground zero prior to an underground nuclear test. This is not the place for a party. The consumption of Miller Genuine Draft Beer is obviously glamorized. The giant bottle of beer as an object of worship portrayed in a scientific environment illustrates Western culture's prioritizing technological advancement and defense research. In actuality, this activity would not be acceptable in these work environments. One must ask, What is the actual agenda of this advertising?

STRUCTURALISM AND POST-STRUCTURALISM

Structuralism is a fundamental aspect of videocentric criticism. The Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure originally divided semiosis into two separate components, the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the physical component of the communication process. It is any utterance or mark on a page that represents an aspect of the external world. Chatman separates the signifier into three different aspects of a narrative statement: "thus any kind of physical or mental action for the first, any person . . . any entity that can be personalized for the second, and any evocation of place for the third" (25). A videocentric signifier is similar to a structural signifier. The difference is that it is primarily visual and is found exclusively in a televi
environment. The signified is the conceptual component of the communication process. It is not a physical object, but the notion of that object. Whatever a signifier implies, the signified is that implication. Chatman defines the signified as either "event, character, and (or) detail of a setting" (25). Since the signified is a mental image concept initiated by the signifier, a videocentric signified is identical to a structural signified. This semiotic relationship between the signifier and the signified is known as a sign.

A signifier can only be theoretically separated from the signified. In actuality, a signifier cannot exist without a signified. This relationship between the sign, signifier, and signified, is known as Saussure's 'lexicon of signification.' This lexicon is the foundation of structuralism. A linguistic signifier compared to a videocentric signifier has the limitation of being arbitrary. For example, a linguistic signifier of a building can imply many things. The word 'building' spoken or written on a page implies a vast possibility of different kinds of buildings. A videocentric signifier contains more information than a linguistic signifier. A televisual image of a building implies very specific information of that particular building.

Edmund Husserl differentiates between expressive and indicative signs. Expressive signs express meaning. An expressive sign refers to an object, and is also a description of that object. An expressive sign is a subjective expression. Indicative signs cannot express meaning. They indicate the presence of an object. An
indicative sign is an objective indication. "As Derrida emphasizes, the distinction between indication and expression is not a distinction between different signs, but rather a distinction between the functions a sign can exercise" (Evans 27). Videocentric criticism assumes that most televisual signs are expressive. Although indication occurs, the makers of television are unconcerned with objective indication. Television exists for the purpose of expression or subjectivity. The distinction between sign, signifier, and signified are fundamental aspects of videocentric criticism.

**NARRATIVE**

Videocentric criticism applies Chatman's narrative theories in the study of television. Chatman believes that narrative structure can transcend different mediums such as discourse, text, television, and film, without altering the original structure of the narrative. Chatman fundamentally defines narrative as communication:

> it presupposes two parties, a sender and a receiver. Each party entails three different personages. On the sending end are the real author, the implied author, and the narrator (if any); on the receiving end, the real audience (listener, reader, viewer), the implied audience, and the narratee (28).

To videocentrically study a televisual narrative, three concepts must be addressed. These are: Chatman's method of 'reading out,' stream of consciousness, and the difference between thoughts and impressions. Chatman describes the term 'reading out' as: "decoding from surface to deep narrative structures. Narrative translation from one medium to another
is possible because roughly the same set of events and existents can be read out" of a narrative regardless of its medium. (42) Chatman defines 'stream of consciousness' as: "the random ordering of thoughts and impressions" (188). Thoughts are traditionally communicated through discourse and language. Impressions on the other hand, are obtained through nonverbal methods. Videocentric criticism recognizes two aspects of the human stream of consciousness. First, the human 'stream of consciousness' is an internal communication process. And second, this process will change with the person's transcendence of time. As a person views television, they receive thoughts and impressions about the televisual information they are watching. Ideas may register as impressions about the environmental or experiential aspects of a televisual scene. For example, a person wearing a raincoat, and a wet sidewalk in a scene, may not necessarily be acknowledged through self verbalizing or paraphrasing. A viewer probably will not make themselves consciously aware that the scene is wet, outside, and that it contains at least one person. This information is impressionistically acknowledged. Impressions are likely to imply other impressions. For example, the person wearing the raincoat and the wet sidewalk imply that it has rained recently and that it may be a cool and damp environment. Applying the concepts of reading out, 'stream of consciousness,' and impressions to a narrative is a subconscious approach to Husserl's lexicon. These concepts become pronounced during a close viewing of television. The randomness and unpredictability of televisual
information requires viewer's application of these concepts to improve their comprehension of televisual information.

Assuming Husserl's 'lexicon of signification,' the sign is the structure, and the signification is the content, of a communicative message. Structuralism defends the denotative or consensual meaning of language and communication. That is, denotation suggests that signs, signifiers, and signifieds, have standardized accepted meanings. Denotative structure and signification becomes arbitrary within televisual information. Videocentric criticism applies a post-structural approach to interpreting television that acknowledges denotation, but emphasizes connotative interpretation. Connotation acknowledges personal definitions and interpretations of information. The discipline of visual studies has never successfully created a rigid structure of interpretation compared to linguistics. Visual interpretation is predominantly connotative. John Fiske and John Hartley describe connotative interpretation as influenced by culture: "In the connotative order, signs signify values, emotions and attitudes. . . . Connotation is expressive, involving subjective rather than objective experience, . . ." (44). Post-structuralism and especially deconstruction emphasize connotation by revealing that complex strings of signs, signifiers, and signifieds have the potential of being meaningless. Post-structuralism has suggested that denotation is a fallacy. Traditional structuralists emphasize denotation and claim that post-structuralism and deconstruction undermines and destroys language. Their view is extreme. What
these structuralists do not realize is that theory must adapt
to the culture; rather than the modern stigma that culture
must adapt to the theory. Videocentric criticism is the
process of abstracting televisual information into their
structural elements and studying them from a post-structural
perspective. The following diagrams illustrate the structural
variations between discourse and mass media communication.

Discourse or Textual Communication

![Diagram A](image)

**DIAGRAM A**

Diagram A illustrates the traditional structural
paradigm of textual or interpersonal communication. The
structuralists were content with this theory of
communicating, interpreting, and reasoning. This diagram is
not incorrect. However, this method does not acknowledge the
existing limitations of human communications.

Televisual or Mass Media Communication

![Diagram B](image)

**DIAGRAM B**
Diagram B is post-structural. It remains structural, but illustrates post-structural theory because it disrupts the original paradigm of diagram A. This diagram acknowledges the limitations of human communication without suggesting any solution or explanation.

Diagram B does not propose that televisual communication is always more complex than interpersonal or textual information. It acknowledges that mass media communication has the potential of emitting more information both quantitatively and qualitatively than traditional communicative methods. As a viewer becomes overwhelmed with encoded messages, they have the tendency to unconsciously acknowledge that information, but decode it as disregarded information. The information is theoretically acknowledged, but it is not processed from a signifier to a signified. Traditional structuralism is established on the principle that there is no signified without a signifier and visa versa. Videocentric criticism questions what actually happens to this disregarded information? Is it truly disregarded or is it processed through a yet to be determined theory? Fiske and Hartley have developed 'three orders of signification,' which implies a hierarchical order to the equivalent of disregarded information (45). This hierarchy is determined by culture, values, and an individual's knowledge of the world. Videocentric criticism does not reject Fiske and Hartley's theory, but suggests that disregarded information is randomly structured. There is a point where human comprehension becomes a 'stream of consciousness.' A viewer begins to form
impressions randomly or for reasons beyond their cultural influence.

Diagram C illustrates that television is structurally repetitive. That is, it is designed to constantly repeat itself. The videocentric diagram C offers a post-structural explanation why people may choose to view television programmed in a repetitive format. Videocentric diagram C requires the 'stream of consciousness' theory. With the transcendence of time, this paradigm will remain constant, but the information that is signified through it will change. Videocentric diagram C was developed in this research to describe what occurs to televisual information as a viewer becomes overwhelmed by the amount of information they are exposed to. As mass communications media become more sophisticated, methods such as videocentric diagram C will require further development and modification.

Videocentric Communication (the undetermined theory)

DIAGRAM C
With each viewing, the originally disregarded information is acknowledged by the act of multiple viewing, and becomes an anticipated signifier which becomes a signifier, and enters the encoding and decoding process. The result of an anticipated signifier is biased knowledge of the object. Biased knowledge should not be considered negative. In fact, it makes the decoding process easier for the viewer. Biased knowledge is not a constant. It is similar to the human 'stream of consciousness,' and is altered by the variables of the viewer which include such attributes as: a person's age, wisdom, maturity, cultural influence, education, emotional state, attention span, and lifestyle, etc. . . . These attributes contribute to a person's changing perception of the same information. However, biased knowledge is also dissimilar to the human 'stream of consciousness.' It is not a subconscious act. Biased knowledge is a form of denotative interpretation consciously performed by the viewer.

Diagram C is not exclusively for networks who broadcast exclusively syndicated television. There are repetitive qualities in all television networks. News programs are routinely broadcast from the same studio set. Sporting events are broadcast from the same standard camera angles. They may introduce reverse angles, or display graphics of a play diagram on the screen, but these are always alternative views. The game is not intended to be continuously seen from this perspective. Sitcom and dramatic series essentially occur in the same setting. With sitcoms and soap operas, if a
scene occurs in an alternative setting, the setting is obviously contrived with props. This intentionality reminds the viewer that the characters, and the events of the program, are outside their established environment. This is a form of anticipated signifier. Numerous television networks such as: CNN, WTBS, TNT, Nickelodeon, MTV, VH-1 programming are based on this undetermined theory. Each of these networks broadcast a repetitive program format. They must assume that viewers are decoding new encoded information each time they view a rerun program. Why would people watch reruns of programs without getting new information from them?

Television accommodates the transcendence of knowledge through time. Particularly the major networks who rerun their programs on an annual basis. Television is repetitively designed just as Western culture and society is repetitive. Each day people wake up, go to the same job, and perform the same tasks. Daily life in Western society for the most part is structured and organized. It is more structured and organized than a person's natural existence, which consists of random activities. As a person's thought processes become disorganized in relation to society, they experience stress. This over structuring of Western culture is unnatural. It has created a Rousseauian adversity established in the sciences and the arts. Rousseau's theories of society against nature exists in contemporary society. Television has become an artificial method of neutralizing or escaping the stress of living in Western society.
All forms of interpersonal communication depend on the usage of language. People are natural receptors of information from the external world. As a person receives a signifier emitted from his/her environment it is received by the senses, decoded into linguistic terms, and committed to memory as a signified. When that person wants to communicate that information, they must reverse this process by retrieving the signified from memory, encode it to language, and emit it as a form of discourse. The limitation of this process is revealed through deconstruction. Society has evolved relying on this limited method of communication. Language enslaves society to its own limitations. As mass communication becomes technologically more sophisticated, this method of encoding and decoding signs becomes less efficient.

Television has the qualities of both linguistics and literature. Network news, sitcoms, and dramatic series are narratives. They are written and created from a script and screen play. Before these programs exist as televisual information, they exist as a written text. Talk shows, editorials, and certain aspects of sporting events, and news; resemble discourse. These forms of television use no scripts. They rely on the spontaneity of the participants. Television is similar to speech and text because they each create a mental construct of an environment, experience, or consciousness. However, the hyperrealism of these artificial environments, experiences, and consciousness, when
communicated through television appears more real because televi
sual signifiers contain more signifying information than a textual signer. This has been illustrated with diagrams A, B, and C.

Society has developed communication technology that encodes signifiers faster than people are capable of decoding them as signifieds. The medium of television exists with these deconstructive problems between itself and its audience. Television has the oratory qualities of speech, yet television programs are frequently structured like written texts. Ambiguity exists within the process of televisual communication between: the signifier or the makers of television, the sign or the televi
sual information, and the signified interpreted by the viewer. Meaning can be altered or misinterpreted between these three structural aspects of television. This deconstructive paradigm suggests that television has the same inherent structural problems as speech and text.

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF TELEVISUAL INFORMATION

Deconstruction rejects traditional structuralism. Norris describes structuralism as the: "traditional ideas of the text as a bearer of stable meanings and the critic as a faithful seeker after truth in the text" (Deconstruction: Theory and Practice 3). In contrast, deconstruction opposes structuralism by questioning the structure within texts because of the inherent limitations of language. Derrida has applied deconstructive readings to criticize the accepted
views of language, literature, and philosophy. In Dissemination, Barbara Johnson describes Derrida's deconstructive theory:

Deconstruction is not a form of textual vandalism designed to prove that meaning is impossible. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or generalized skepticism, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not meaning but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. This . . . implies that a text signifies in more than one way and to varying degrees of explicitness. . . . the deconstructive reading does not point out the flaws or weaknesses . . . of an author, but the necessity with which what he does see is systematically related to what he does not see. . . . The critique reads backwards from what seems natural, obvious, self-evident, or universal, in order to show that things have their history, their reasons for being the way they are, their effects on what follows from them, and that the starting point is not a (natural) given but a (cultural) construct, usually blind to itself. (qtd. in Derrida xv).

Deconstruction fundamentally claims that meaning within the sign, signifier, and signified, relationship is deferred and multiplied the moment a person begins the process of interpretation. Meaning is deferred when the interpretation of a signifier is delayed until a person has obtained additional information about that signifier to make an accurate interpretation. During deferment, the possibilities of the meaning of a signifier multiply. Compound this dilemma with the multitude of signifiers a person is commonly exposed too, and meaning has the possibility of becoming radically altered. Although deconstructive theory is capable of revealing absurdity in many of its applications, Derrida
insists deconstruction is a cogent approach to the search for meaning. J. Claude Evans supports the validity of deconstruction, It:

is not a simple rejection of traditional scholarship and rigor: critical, deconstructive reading has to pass through traditional rigor even if the ultimate effect is to show that such rigor is never as absolute and well founded as it claims to be (xv).

Deconstruction has a unique relationship with post-structuralism. It is post-structural, but it simultaneously opposes, and extends, post-structural theory. Postmodernism exists within the opposition/extension relationship between post-structuralism and deconstruction. Postmodernism is the de-emphasis of language in Western culture. Hal Foster claims, that post-structuralism suggests there is no meaning beyond a written text (xi). In actuality, post-structuralism emphasizes how information is expressed rather than what information is expressed. Post-structuralism suggests the representation of an idea can stand alone, and should not be interfered with by the persuasion of its creator. Deconstruction accepts this post-structural view as a realistic approach, but differs in interpretive theory. Post-structuralism assumes there is always meaning. Deconstruction suggests that as a message is read, reread, interpreted, and reinterpreted, the meaning of a message has the possibility of becoming meaningless. Videocentric criticism is grounded in a similar relationship because it simultaneously opposes and extends a viewer's comprehension of television.

Television is the exemplary medium to conduct a
deconstructive study of visual narrative. Television is perceived as its own self contained environment, experience, and consciousness. The programming of the major networks has become a paradigm of traditional modern institutionalization. Television at its most spontaneous will always defy Derrida's 'metaphysics of presence.' That is, the absence of the writer of a text during the reading of that text. How does this absence effect the interpretation and meaning of a text, and how does this effect visual narrative and televisual information? The artificial environment, experience, and consciousness, of television will never be in the actual presence of the viewer. Only a simulation is present.

Videocentric criticism develops a naturalistic approach to understanding television by assuming television's existence to be artificial. To achieve this, one must consider television's existence a natural state. That is, viewers are intrusive of television instead of visa versa. This may seem contradictory. But, from a deconstructive perspective, this opposition is necessary to achieve a natural approach to television. Watching television is a passive process as opposed to discourse and the reading of texts which are active processes. In most television viewing circumstances, viewers can passively interact with televisual information. The comprehension of a conversation or a text is different. A person must attempt to understand a conversation or a text because the interpretation of these media is an active process. A person's perception of television is similar to their perception of the external environment, only
their environment is natural and television is artificial. Videocentric criticism is the study of an artificial environment, experience, and consciousness, from a natural perspective. This approach allows viewers to passively become more aware of how television effects: themselves, culture, and society.

TERMINOLOGY

A predominant activity within structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstruction has been the defining and the redefining of concepts and theories. There are several concepts within deconstruction applicable to television. These are: presence, phonocentrism, logocentrism, oppositional terms, supplement, differance, dissemination, trace, intertextuality, metaphor and metonymy. As Keith Pheby suggests: "Derrida's deployment of these terms should not be seen as an attempt to produce a foundation for critical analysis. The terms themselves are . . . strategies. . ." (3). These strategies are a useful approach to the study of television. Of these strategies, trace, intertextuality, metaphor and metonymy, are sub-strategies that primarily assist in the clarification of the other terms. These combined terms are deconstructive strategies and sub-strategies which are the macrocosmic method within videocentric criticism.

PRESENCE

Derrida and deconstruction has become controversial because of the academic disciplines and subjects he has
deconstructively criticized. Through deconstruction, Derrida has lead a significant attack against the validity of Western metaphysics. He suggests that because Western metaphysics is grounded in language, it has contributed as much to knowledge as it possibly can. Western knowledge has reached its closure. Metaphysics has begun to implode on itself. Derrida states:

The history of metaphysics therefore can be expressed as the unfolding of the structure or schema of an absolute will-to-hear-oneself-speak. This history is closed when this infinite absolute appears to itself as its own death. A voice without differance, a voice without writing, is at once absolutely alive and absolutely dead. (Speech and Phenomena 102).

The foundation of most forms of philosophy is knowledge of the present as opposed to knowledge of the past or future. Madan Sarup states: "by (something) being present in an unmediated way and present in itself, (something) is undeniably certain" (37). A deconstructive approach disagrees with this traditional theory of presence. Sarup continues, there is no "definable moment which is 'now'" (37). The past, present, and future are equal in human comprehension. Evans describes deconstruction and the accepted metaphysical view of presence:

we identify Being with itself presence. What is real is what is present to us in the present. What is past is not any more; what is future is not yet. Being is experienced as what is available and thus manipulable in the present. Heidegger, however, claims that the very presence of something as something is conditioned by an absence (Being) that makes that presence possible. The task of deconstruction is the task of retrieving the experience of this absence that makes presence possible (xx).
False consciousness is enhanced by television's constant manipulation of presence. Television appears to exist in the present. However, this is a misconception. Most programs are produced in the past and intended for broadcast in the present. For example, live sporting events have predetermined camera angles, partially prewritten scripts and statistics. The present is reduced to a minimum in a television broadcast to improve the realism of the production. Videocentric criticism suggests the creators of television broadcast televisual information assuming its meaning will be altered when the program is broadcast. This method of producing television allows the creators of television to alter the events of the present. However, of greater concern; this method gives the creators of television the ability to manipulate society's perception of the past.

PHONOCENTRISM AND LOGOCENTRISM

Deconstruction acknowledges the limitations of discourse compared to written text. The medium of television is different from discourse and texts. Yet, the same limitations exist when television is compared to them. The limitations within discourse, text, and television involve the sign, signifier, and signified relationship. The signified is altered during the present and the past. Derrida describes this phenomena of presence through phonocentrism and logocentrism. Sarup describes phonocentrism as: "the assumption of presence . . . (and the) priority (that) has been given to speech over writing" (38). Of these three
mediums, discourse exists closest to the present. Language is communicated through discourse in an immediate sense. As spoken words transcend time, their meaning becomes altered. If these spoken words are written as text, their meaning can be altered further through interpretation. Combine these spoken words with a montage of images and simultaneously broadcast it to millions of people; the possibility of altering the original meaning of the message becomes infinite. Logocentrism is an extension of phonocentrism. Sarup continues: society is "committed to a belief in some ultimate 'word', presence, essence, truth or reality which will act as the foundation of all our thought, language and experience" (40). Derrida refers to logocentrism as society's transcendental signifier, and to believe in such a signifier is absurd.

Videographic criticism is an extension of phonocentrism and logocentrism. It assumes television has become Western culture's transcendental signifier resulting in videocentrism. Television creates a representation of society that is the foundation of Western culture. The emphasis of televisual programming is the consumption of material goods and services. Television's representation of society can induce false consciousness in an individual viewer. People develop a false need for material objects because television suggests these objects will bring some form of gratification. The creation of this televisual representation is a continuous process. As television's representation transcends time and is experienced by different people, the
representation is deconstructively altered. The creators of television simply create another image to supplement the altered image it originally produced. As the supplement supplements, Western society continues to live in a state of false consciousness created by videocentrism.

OPPOSITIONAL TERMS

The search for oppositional terms or deconstructive dichotomies is a significant aspect of deconstruction. A typical search for oppositional terms involves a close viewing of televisual information. The structural elements are separated into sign, signifier, and signified, with an emphasis on the signified. Within televisual information, the signified's intended meaning is usually obvious. Deconstructive dichotomies supplement the meaning of the original signified with its opposing meaning. That is, once the meaning of a televisual signified has been determined, insert the opposite of the original meaning and review the signification of the televisual information. A second viewing considering the opposing signified may reveal alternative significations of the televisual information's actual meaning. John Sturrock addresses the disseminating qualities of Derrida's theories of oppositional terms:

Oppositions such as outside/inside, transcendental/empirical, worldly/non-worldly depend on a point of differentiation, a line of division where, for example, the inside is separated from the outside. It is only in relation to that point of differentiation, which controls the distinction between inside and outside, that the opposition can exist... where the inner and the outer, the material and the non-material, seem for a moment to be fused,
serves as the point of reference in relation to which all these distinctions, which are essential to our metaphysics, can be posited (169).

After a viewer has determined a deconstructive dichotomy, the original and the opposite terms are hierarchicalized. As Sturrock implies, the determining of oppositional terms during a normal viewing experience occurs very quickly. This process exists only in the present. Once hierarchicalization is completed, the oppositional terms exist in the past. Deconstruction emphasizes this moment of presence. The study of discourse is immediate and the most fundamental to analyze with this method. Written texts are more complex to analyze because of the different levels of oppositional terms that can possibly exist within a text. Television is the most sophisticated medium to study because of; the multitude and complexity of signifiers, the possibility of different levels of signification, and the possibility of opposing terms, all exist as a simulation. Deconstruction has been criticized because the insertion of deconstructive dichotomies in discourse, text, and television has the possibility of becoming absurd. This is true, only if a viewer lets it become absurd. The hierarchicalization of signs is unique within all individuals because it is influenced by the variables of the viewer.

SUPPLEMENT

Within oppositional terms, one term is always supplemented by the other. Derrida's common example of a supplement is Rousseau's conflict between nature and culture.
As culture takes the place of nature, culture becomes nature's supplement. The supplement has two qualities: first, it has both negative and positive effects on the original; second, it substitutes and simultaneously adds to the original. Within the supplement, both terms are hierarchicalized. The primary term is the preferred term or the better state. For example, Rousseau was obsessed with nature as the primary state. Culture was becoming an extension of nature that was creating predominantly negative effects on nature. Rousseau acknowledged the positive effects, but chose to emphasize the negative. An example of opposition supplemented within television is the unceasing issue whether television is a wasteland or a cultural utopia. It can be argued that the wasteland is an extension of the cultural utopia of television. The advocates of television as a wasteland probably acknowledge both views, but choose to emphasize the negative. Within this hierarchicalization, one of these cannot supplement the other, without becoming the other.

DIFFERANCE

The term differance is a supplement of difference because it simultaneously extends and hierarchicalizes the meaning of a signifier. To study the differance of a signifier comprises two significations; the spatial 'differing' of the different possibilities of a sign, and the temporal 'deferring' of signification. Differance is the denial of the presence of the referent once signification has
occurred. Just as it denies the presence of a signified before signification is completed. The difference between signifiers is displaced spatially because of the different interpretive possibilities of the sign. The deferring of signification is *deferred ad finitum*. That is, deferment of the signified can theoretically last indefinitely. Differance is the spatial and temporal difference between an objective and a subjective signifier. A subjective signifier can always be replaced with an objective signifier. This is part of dissemination. Determining the differance of a signifier is a random process within an individual. Although an objective signifier paradigm has infinite qualities, subjective decision making causes the process to break. If there were no subjective reasoning; no signification would occur until a deductively valid decision could be made, which is impractical. Differance always exists in the present. Once the process of dissemination is fractured and a signified is introduced, dissemination is in the past. Difference and Differance are a deconstructive dichotomy.

**DISSEMINATION**

Dissemination is the essence of the deconstructive process. It exists within deconstructive dichotomies, supplements, and differance. Dissemination is a variation of the diagrams A, B, and C. The following diagram D is a hypothetical diagram of the signification failure described by dissemination.
Norris describes dissemination: "Writing exerts a 'disseminating' influence on language, such as to multiply the possibilities of meaning and prevent any assurance that 'true' communication has in fact taken place" (Derrida 186). Television has the same disseminating potential as writing. Although a televisual signifier may contain more information than a written signifier, the interpretation of televisual information is subject to dissemination for two reasons. First, visual images are interpreted connotatively or subjectively. That is, there is not a denotative or objective discipline to interpreting visual information. Second, people are innately subjective. As televisual information becomes more complex, the viewer is more likely to subconsciously begin disseminating by deferring judgment of signifiers. Dissemination reveals how language, which is denotatively based becomes dysfunctional on its own terms. Harland describes dissemination:

In dissemination, language manages to avoid both social responsibility and individual irresponsibility: 'responsibility and individuality are values that no longer predominate here: that is the first effect of dissemination.' In dissemination, language
reveals an anarchic and unpredictable level of functioning, subversive of all rigid proper meanings on the ordinary socially controlled level (136).

When applying dissemination to televisual signifiers, which involves subjective interpretation; one must assume that the meaning of these signifiers will probably become deferred. However, subjective reasoning with connotative interpretation also has the possibility of keeping dissemination at a controllable level.

DECONSTRUCTION SUB-STRATEGIES

The remaining three deconstruction terms are sub-strategies within the deconstructive strategy. They are useful in determining: presence, deconstructive dichotomies, supplementation, differance, and dissemination. Following the description of these deconstructive sub-strategies is an example of an advertisement that illustrates the application of these sub-strategies to a video narrative. Derrida uses the term intertextuality to describe texts that refer to other texts. Within televisual information, television frequently refers to itself and other programming. Intertextuality obscures the boundaries between different media.

In the study of informal logic, a trace is a sign of physical evidence. A deconstructive trace is evidence of the presence of a referent or a sign. As differance denies the presence of a referent after signification, a trace is evidence of its presence. Just as differance denies the presence of a signified before signification, a trace is
evidence of the presence of the signified. Within a narrative, traces can build on each other. A trace can be a trace, of a trace, of a trace, etc... This is similar to, yet opposes dissemination and the failure of signification. Derrida describes a trace as:

The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the difference which opens appearance... and signification (Of Grammatology 65).

As a deconstructive trace is evidence of an absence, its presence is necessary to signification.

Metaphor and metonymy is an essential condition of language. They are frequently found within televisual information. Television, like language is the process of transference of meaning from one signifier to another. Derrida describes metaphor as: "meaning is founded on something other than itself" (Speech and Phenomena 110). Metaphor implies one idea, but to be interpreted; a person must also understand something else. Metaphor is the proliferation of meaning because the possible metaphors for an idea or image is theoretically unlimited. Metonymy is a variation of metaphor based on the same principle. Metonymy is the substitution of an attribute for the whole. Some common linguistic examples of metonymy are: referring to the crown as the king, and the phrase 'all hands on deck.' Metonymy frequently occurs within televisual information from product advertisements, to people representing events or objects.
SUB-STRATEGY EXAMPLE

An example of televisual intertextuality, trace, metaphor and metonymy, can be found in another 'Miller Genuine Draft Beer' advertisement. This advertisement involves three men entering a tavern in an arid environment, and physically enter a television in the tavern to travel to a tropical island inhabited by three shipwrecked women. The advertisement begins by intertextually showing the program on the television in the tavern. It is a program that appears to be a film with women in swimming suits stranded on a tropical island. Superficial dialogue in the program implies the three women are hopelessly stranded. One woman intertextually points towards the viewer as if she is looking in the distance and asks "is that a ship?" At this moment the door of the tavern opens and a man's leg wearing a well worn boot steps through the doorway. The woman looking at the ship peers out of the television as if to notice those who are about to enter the tavern. The patrons of the tavern look towards the door as three men enter and walk to the bar. One of them orders three Miller Genuine Draft Beers. There is a brief moment of eye contact between the man who ordered the beer and the woman on television. The next shot is the same boot walking on the bar in the direction of the television. As the men walking across the bar approach the television, one of them opens a bottle of Miller Genuine Draft Beer. The opening of the bottle begins a blizzard in the tavern. The women on television are peering out at the phenomena. The man's hand that just opened the bottle reaches into the
television screen. The following shots are a brief montage of product views. After this montage, the boot that originally entered the tavern, and walked on the bar, is seen as the last of the men as they enter the television. The patrons stare in disbelief. The actual viewer is intertextually shown their expressions from the perspective of the television. The next shot is the men with the women looking out of the television. One of the men reaches toward the screen from inside the television and turns the television off. The next shot is a close up of the television power switch clicking to the off position. The final shot is a long shot of the interior of the tavern. The television is off and the patrons appear to be perplexed by what they just saw.

Televisual intertextuality occurs in this advertisement on four levels illustrating varying degrees of reality. The closest to reality is the perspective of the actual viewer who observes the advertisement from its intended perspective. Beyond the actual viewer, intertextuality and reality becomes a simulation. The next level is the patron's perspective. This is a simulation of reality and the actual viewer's perspective. There are several patrons, each witnesses this phenomena from their own perspective. Assuming these are actual people (in actuality, they are not. They are simulations of actual people.) the actual viewer assumes each of them has their own recollection and explanation of the phenomena they each experienced. The next level is the men entering the tavern with the intention of using television as a medium to traverse different environments. This level is a
The simulation of the actual viewer's and patron's perceived imagination. It could be a representation of their desire to shift their present perspectives. The final level of intertextuality is the women peering out of the television into the simulation of actuality. Their perspective is a simulation of television. The presence of these four intertextual levels softens the defined boundaries of the televisual medium. One's awareness of televisual intertextuality is significant because its recognition expands a viewer's comprehension of television's capability of simulating presence and reality.

Deconstructive traces coincide with differance. There are four traces within this advertisement that are applicable to both approaches to differance. The traces are: the television, the bar, the man's boot, and the bottle of Miller Genuine Draft Beer. In the first approach, differance is objective by denying the presence of the referent after signification. The television is a referent at the beginning and the end of the advertisement. The presence of the television in the concluding shot of the advertisement defies differance, and is a trace of the original referent in the first shot. The bar has the same referential qualities as the television. It also is a trace of itself at the conclusion of the advertisement. The man's boot is a referent, but it disappears after signification. There is no trace to suggest the boot or the man wearing it has remained present within the simulation. The bottle of beer as a referent arrives late in the advertisement, but its trace is present after it has
transcended the boundaries of television. The people within the television are seen sharing it.

The second approach to differance is subjective. In this approach, differance denies the presence of the signified prior to signification. To study this approach; it is necessary to determine what the signifier of the referent is signifying, and how signification has altered its presence. The television initially signified a hostile environment where women were stranded. Signification changed the scenario. They are no longer stranded. In fact, the viewer is left with the impression that after the men entered the television, none of them wanted to be rescued. This further implies they were never stranded in the first place. At the conclusion of the advertisement, there is no trace suggesting people were ever stranded on television. The bar signifies a place before and after signification. It remains unchanged throughout the advertisement. The bar is a trace of itself. In fact, the bar inherits the trace qualities of the television. The presence of the trace at the conclusion of the advertisement implies the patrons of the bar are actually the stranded ones. The man's boot signifies the presence of the man. However, there is no visual correlation establishing any of the men to the boot. Any correlation is established impressionistically. At the beginning and the conclusion of the advertisement, there is no trace signifying the presence of the boot or the men. The bottle signifies a beverage that is cool, refreshing, and thirst quenching. Prior to signification, the opposite is extensively implied by the
other referents and traces.

As Derrida has implied, the interpretation of metaphor within a text is infinite. The intertextuality of this advertisement suggests the predominant metaphor is a representation of somewhere else. The four separate perspectives of: the women on television, the tavern patrons, the men who enter the tavern, and the actual viewer are simulations of a preoccupation with a place that is not immediately present. The women on television seem obsessed with being rescued from the deserted island. The tavern patrons metaphorically escape their existence by consuming beer. The men who enter the tavern, enter it with the intention of transcending one simulation to the next. The actual viewer is watching television for its alternative environment, experience, and consciousness. Therefore, the viewer searches for another place by default. Western culture's shift to videocentrism is a significant contribution to this default. The four perspectives are representations of presence. But, the presence is a metaphor of non-presence. Within this advertisement, presence is somewhere else.

Metonymy involves a figure of speech that represents an entire object. Travel and transcendence is metonymically illustrated by the man's boot. One could associate the metonymy, 'these boots were made for walking' with the signification of the boot motif in this advertisement. A metonymy that Miller Genuine Draft creates with this series of advertisements is the association of their bottle of beer
with a blizzard. These advertisements imply there is a blizzard contained in every bottle of Miller Genuine Draft Beer. This is visually signified in each advertisement. The conclusion of each advertisement reaffirms this metonymy with the slogan, "Get Out Of The Old. Get Into The Cold." "The Old..." is metaphorically illustrated by the nostalgia of the tavern, the contrast in age between the tavern patrons, who drink a different brand of beer and the younger men and women who enjoy Miller Genuine Draft Beer. "Into The Cold" is metonymically implied by the blizzard created by the younger people and the bottle of beer. In this advertisement, the blizzard begins as one of the men opens a bottle of Miller Genuine Draft Beer and continues to the conclusion. There is one shot showing the snow storm coming from within the television set before the men enter it. This suggests the younger people are as much a part of the blizzard as the product. Thus through the medium of television, Miller Genuine Draft Beer metonymically signifies their product as 'taking the younger generation by storm.' The medium of television combined with metonymy effectively creates an artificial: environment, experience, and consciousness. In this advertisement, the older tavern patrons are bypassed by the simulation. The younger men and women are consumed by it.

CONCLUSION

Frequently, the structural, post-structural, and videocentric diagrams A, B, and C respectively cannot completely define the process of televisual signification.
When this occurs, the application of deconstruction to televisual narrative can be useful. Deconstruction may not necessarily complete the signification process. But, it will reveal why signification has been: biased, deferred, disregarded, disseminated, or supplemented.

Deconstruction is a close viewing tool. It is the process of breaking down the basic elements of televisual information. It is applicable to all televisual information. However, because of its microcosmic nature, its application tends to keep a viewer involved with minute aspects of information. Therefore, its purpose is for defining areas of signification that become undefinable.

A method of analyzing televisual information on a macrocosmic level is described in the final chapter. This method is the Levels of Televisual Reality. Just as deconstruction is a microcosmic approach to televisual information, The Levels of Televisual Reality are a macrocosmic approach to the analysis and understanding of televisual information. The Levels of Televisual Reality and deconstruction are complimentary research methods intended to be used in unison with each other to achieve the same goal. That is, the understanding and surpassing of Western society's shift to videocentrism.
CHAPTER THREE
THE LEVELS OF TELEVISUAL REALITY

The Levels of Televisual Reality, or the macrocosmic method, are the essence of videocentric criticism. The idea to create the Levels of Televisual Reality was a consequence of a close reading of Plato's "Divided Line Analogy," and the "Allegory of the Cave," from The Republic. Plato's theories of knowledge and representation are described in the "Divided Line Analogy," and illustrated with the "Allegory of the Cave." Just as Plato illustrates the "Divided Line Analogy" with the "Allegory of the Cave," this research illustrates the Levels of Televisual reality with examples of televisual information. To proceed to the Levels of Televisual Reality, it is necessary to review these excerpts from The Republic. The production and interpretation of images has been surrounded by uncertainty since the Greek Enlightenment. This chapter assesses the similarities between Plato's philosophy and videocentric criticism.

THE DIVIDED LINE ANALOGY

In "Book Six" of The Republic, Plato introduces the four stages of intelligence with the "Divided Line Analogy". Richard Lewis Nettleship described the "Divided Line Analogy" as "the stages of development through which the human mind passes or might pass from ignorance to knowledge" (238). The
"Divided Line Analogy" is an ascending scale of knowledge divided into four unequal sections. Francis MacDonald Cornford suggests: the "inequality symbolizes that the visible world has a lower degree of reality and truth than the intelligible" (221). There is no distinct division between the sections. Each section is a different level of cognition. Each level above is closer to knowledge of the world than the level below it. A diagram of Plato's "Divided Line Analogy" follows.

DIVIDED LINE ANALOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTS</th>
<th>COGNITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Good</td>
<td>D Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms</td>
<td>(noesis)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>C Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>(dianoia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visible</td>
<td>Reasoning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Objects</td>
<td>Notion</td>
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<td>(eikones) Images</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>B Belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadows</td>
<td>(pistis)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Opinion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Imagining</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(eikasia)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conjecture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE DIVIDED LINE ANALOGY

The divided line analogy is also separated into two vertical columns. The left column represents objects or
different views of the world. The right column represents
different levels of cognition. The bottom of the scale,
designated with a letter A, is total darkness and is the
lowest level of cognition which is imagining, (eikasia) or
ignorance. The word 'icon' is derived from eikasia. Objects
at this level are only shadows and reflections. Cornford
states, imagining is a superficial

    state of mind that takes sensible appearances
    and current moral notions at their face value-
    the condition of the unreleased prisoners in the
    Cave allegory . . . who see only images of
    images (222).

The top of the scale designated with a letter D opposes
eikasia. It is perfect illumination, and is the highest level
of cognition which is intelligence (noesis). Knowledge is the
cognitive level all people should pursue. However, there is a
higher pursuit, and that is 'the good' which is an object or
the ability to have multiple views of the world. 'The good'
is an end in itself.

The level of belief (pistis) is above eikasia. It is
designated by the letter B. According to Plato, pistis is,
"the models of images, the living creatures around us, all
plants, and the whole class of manufactured things" (510a).
From a moral perspective, pistis is the following of true
beliefs, but not knowing why. According to Meno, "True
beliefs are sufficient guides for action but are insecure
until based on knowledge of reasons for them" (qtd. in
Cornford 222). In the hypothetical city of The Republic, the
skills of the craftsman are on the level of pistis.

The level of reasoning (dianoia) can be considered the
threshold to intelligence (noesis). This is the realm of mathematics, logic, and science. At this level, images are created not for the sake of images, but to develop a better understanding of the world around us. Through this process, one acquires multiple views of the world, and therefore; knowledge of the world.

The "Allegory of the Cave" from "Book Seven" of The Republic illustrates the ascension of the "Divided Line Analogy". The prisoners deep inside the cave live in eikasia, because their knowledge is only shadows and reflections. A prisoner who is set free, begins the journey towards the cave entrance and reaches pistis. He begins to see and believe the existence of objects, but does not understand why he believes them. As the prisoner exits the cave, he begins to understand and reason about objects in the upper world. The prisoner has reached dianoia. Eventually, the prisoner becomes a philosopher, he decides to return to the cave to bring his fellow prisoners into the upper world. However, they doubt him and even try to kill him, because their knowledge is only of shadows and reflections. To them any other object or level of cognition is false. However, the upper world is 'goodness.' The philosopher is compelled by 'goodness' to bring his fellow prisoners to the upper world, because the pursuit of good is the supreme end.

Knowledge significantly increases by ascending the "Divided Line Analogy". As one ascends, the knowledge one must understand increases. There is more to know about an actual object than there is in its reflection or image.
Therefore, "the relationship between each higher and lower stage is expressed by Plato as the seeing an image or shadow and seeing the thing imaged or shadowed" (Nettleship 240). Although images are the lowest level of the "Divided Line Analogy", they are an essential part of ascending to the highest level. Upon reaching the level of belief (pistis), one begins developing their ability to judge images. Pistis is a process of development. After developing that capacity to reason about images (dianoia), that person is able to determine if an image is true or false. One achieves the level of reason (dianoia) by creating images of the objects not for the aesthetic quality of the images, but to develop a better understanding of how and why that object exists.

For example, a television journalist and a senator are discussing the latest bill in the senate. The journalist may have knowledge of the issues, but the senator has a thorough knowledge of the bill, and the implications of that bill passing or failing in a vote. Both persons have knowledge of the subject, but each has a different reason for pursuing it. The television journalist wants information on the bill for the benefit of television. The senator wants information about the bill because it benefits society. Videocentric criticism assumes these different perspectives of a subject, and acknowledges that a person's varying perspectives change with the transcendence of time.

A postmodern interpretation of the "Allegory of the Cave" involves an outside observer watching the philosopher go back into the cave to bring his fellow prisoners to the
upper world. The postmodern observer could draw three conclusions about modern society from the "Allegory of the Cave". First, the most obvious is the cave is television. The people inside are deceived by the representations of another world. If living in the cave is the equivalent of television, and every home in Western society owns a television, it seems that modern society is regressing toward the cave rather than reaching for the upper world. Second, the people inside the cave know the cave is not reality. But they choose to stay because it is unknown if reality in the upper world is better than the cave. Third, the postmodernist would reject Plato's ideas of individual specialization and living one's required role in society because it leads to alienation and disillusionment. Modern society has become Plato's society of specialization. To move to the upper world would be to step outside of one's role in society. This would not be in society's best interest. A postmodernist would recommend the prisoners to leave the cave to escape modernity, or criticize modernism because the released prisoners were unable to adapt to living in modern society. Postmodern criticism reveals and emphasizes cultural problems rather than contributing to their solution.

It is apparent from Book Ten, the "Divided Line Analogy," and the "Allegory of the Cave," that Plato would have banned television from the hypothetical city of The Republic. Television's function is to imitate society by setting agendas for society. Television is created to appear intellectually complex, but in reality it cannot be. As an
object, television remains on the lowest level of Plato's Divided Line Analogy. Television is ignorance; it is obviously images and illusions. However, it is also a complex method of persuasion. As an artificial level of cognition, television broadcasts the knowledge of the world. Television will never reach the highest level of the "Divided Line Analogy" because it is an electronic medium devoid of human qualities. But as the technology of television evolves and becomes more interactive, what are its possibilities? The fact that a mass communications medium can be considered applicable to Plato's "Divided Line Analogy" is unorthodox. But, one must ask, how does television influence culture and society? This research illustrates that television functions on a higher level of knowledge than many members of society who devote many hours of their lives to viewing television.

THE LEVELS OF TELEVISUAL REALITY

The Levels of Televisual Reality are a "Divided Line Analogy" designed for the study of television. Videocentric criticism acknowledges Baudrillard's theory of television as a simulacrum. It extends Boorstin's pseudo-event and Postman's pseudo-context theories of mass media by developing a method similar to Plato's "Divided Line Analogy" that is applicable to television. Applying television to the "Divided Line Analogy" was a provocative approach to television and its application was philosophically unconventional. Therefore, instead of defining the medium for the method, the method must be defined for the medium. The Levels of
Televisual Reality defines television as an artificial form of: environment, experience, and consciousness. Unlike Plato's ascending "Divided Line Analogy", the Levels of Televisual Reality are ascended and descended as a person views television. Televisual environment is the lowest level of television, and televisual consciousness is the highest level of television. Televisual environment, experience, and consciousness, differ from the established psychological and philosophical definitions of these terms because television is a simulation of these qualities.

The Levels of Televisual Reality are initially separated into three non-mutually exclusive narrative categories. These are television as: information, dramatic narrative, and ambience. Informational television is televisual narrative that is non-fiction. Television news and documentaries are informational. The category of dramatic narrative encompasses dramatic programs, sitcoms, and televised films. Many programs are currently being produced that cross into both informational and narrative categories. Examples are: Entertainment Tonight, Rescue 911, The Tonight Show, and Cops. These programs present non-fictional information from a dramatic perspective. Finally, the category of ambience encompasses all aspects of television. The most common form of televisual ambience is music videos, and a certain genre of advertisements. The narrative of televisual ambience is often abstract or nonexistent. The informational aspects often appear surreal or out of context with reality. However, informational television can also become televisual ambience.
Watching CNN, or continuous broadcasting of an event like Desert Storm becomes televisual ambience over extended time. Ambience can be informational or dramatic narrative that the viewer has become desensitized to.

The concept of televisual interaction is significant to this research. Many will argue that contemporary television is not interactive. This research suggests that a limited interaction occurs during a person's viewing of television. The creators of television motivate a person to watch television. As that person views television, they interpret televisual information. Television continues the string of televisual signifiers by broadcasting more information. The viewer continues the interpretive process. The creators of television broadcast televisual information and the viewer interprets it as televisual, environment, experience, or consciousness. Both the creators of television, and the viewer, attempt a communicative interaction, but it is incomplete in a conventional sense. The interaction terminates within the televisual medium, or does it? As the technology of television becomes more sophisticated, so will human interaction with television.

Videocentric criticism emphasizes the decoding of televisual information by the viewer instead of the encoding of televisual information by its creators. John Condry describes human interaction with television: "With the environment of television, the path of influence is more one way: Television changes us more than we change it" (57). McLuhan has also stated the need to study the decoding
instead of the encoding process.

All media work us over completely. they are so persuasive in their personal, political, economic, aesthetic, psychological, moral, ethical, and social consequences that they leave no part of us untouched, unaffected, unaltered. The medium is the massage. Any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowledge of the way media work as environments. All media are extensions of some human faculty-psyche or physical (26).

Television is a medium where a viewer can interact with an artificial environment, experience, or consciousness. Televisual interaction is a manifestation within the viewer.

The decoding of televisual information is done exclusively by the viewer. Multiple viewers are likely to perceive the same televisual information at different levels. Just as a single viewer is likely to perceive the same programming at different levels at different times. The Levels of Televisual Reality is intended for a person to understand televisual influence and interaction. As one ascends the Levels of Televisual Reality through experience and consciousness, televisual interaction becomes more complex. This is illustrated by a person's raucous behavior while viewing a sporting event, or a viewer's gratification when the 'bad guy' in a televisual drama or film, 'gets what they deserve' when they are captured or killed.

The creators of televisual information may attempt, and probably intend to encode their information at a specific level similar to the Levels of Televisual Reality. Condry describes the intention of the creators of television as "attracting and holding attention rather than offering an
accurate portrayal of 'reality.' (The) Makers of television
drama want to tell a story, and they cannot be constrained by
'reality' in doing so" (57). But, there is a limitation the
creators of television must accept. They cannot encode their
televisual information at a specific level and be assured a
viewer will interpret their information at their intended
level. However, this situation is changing. As television
continues to evolve, and Western society continues to center
itself in a state of videocentrism, the encoding of
televisual information by its creator's will become more
efficient. Assuming television is encoded during production,
the creators of television would probably emphasize their
information as experiential, which is ironically the most
common form of television. The following diagram F
illustrates the Levels of Televisual Reality.

levels of televisual reality

although the levels can be applied from both an encoding and
decoding process, The intention of The Levels of Televisual
Reality is an interpretative method of the decoding process.
A viewer can transcend the different levels continuously or they may view television at one level for an extended period of time. This is determined by the variables of the viewer. It is also possible to view television at multiple levels since televisual environment, experience, and consciousness are not mutually exclusive levels. The following example illustrates the non-mutuality of the levels. The major television networks broadcast a one half hour news program each night. To view the evening network news every night is a ritual that is primarily informational. If a viewer were to change the television channel to CNN and leave the television on that channel for the next six hours, that same informational news would probably become televisual ambience. As the evening news becomes part of a mass media environment in the home, it is likely to transcend informational and narrative experience, to become an ambient environment or consciousness.

There are basic guidelines that can determine what level one is viewing television. Within the televisual information being viewed, one can ask the primary questions: who, what, when, where, why, and how. Televisual environment will usually contain objective answers to who, what, when, and where. Televisual experience will combine these four objective answers with subjective answers to why and how. Televisual consciousness will address each of these questions subjectively. They are hierarchicalized by the viewer's structural and post-structural interpretation of the televisual information, as well as the variables of the
Televisual environment is the first level of the Levels of Televisual Reality. Televisual environment is best described as an artificial place. It exist in each narrative category of television. Its occurrence is most common in informational television. Televisual environment is defined as the mental, spatial, and temporal, area between televisual signifiers and signifieds. That is, the mental area between televisual information and the viewer's decoding process. As televisual information is interpreted as an individual message, a viewer is reduced to a one on one relationship between viewer and television. This causes a communicative relationship with television to be intimate. It suggests everyone has their own private spatial environment within the mass televisual environment.

Televisual environment is a viewer's method of acknowledging Boorstin's pseudo-event. The interpretation of televisual environment is accomplished by the decoding of indicative signifiers. This involves 'reading out' impressions and denotative concepts from the televisual environment and comparing them to the viewer's concept of reality. A viewer's interpretation of televisual environment is defined by denotative concepts and acknowledged as biased knowledge.

Televisual environment has minimal influence on a viewer. However, the creators of television frequently
stretch the boundaries of our established concept of environment. For example, during the broadcast of NFL football games, the networks routinely break from the broadcast to insert a series of advertisements. As the programming returns to the football game, the sports announcer's says to the audience, "welcome back." This may seem, and probably is harmless, but, the viewer never actually went anywhere. Television has implied that the viewer left television's artificial environment. Can this environmental discontinuity contribute to desensitizing a viewer to actual reality?

In this example, television created a pseudo-event for the viewer. The advertisements within the pseudo-event qualify as Postman's pseudo-context. But, televisual environment is concerned with pseudo-events. The announcer's remark, "welcome back" may seem expressive, but actually it is an indicative signifier of the viewer's implied journey through the advertisements. The televisual images create impressions of the viewer's journey. And, the announcers's comment, "welcome back" is a linguistic denotation that the viewer left the environment and returned. Viewers are obviously aware of their immediate environment. But, does this repetitive exposure to artificial environments over time begin to redefine a viewer's phenomenological concept of existence and reality? A viewer's biased knowledge of the televisual environment keeps the viewer in control of their immediate environment. But, a viewer's biased knowledge changes over time, and television contributes to this bias
shift. As the medium of television continues its technological evolution, a viewer must continue to bias their knowledge to remain at an equal interactive level with television. An acceleration in televisual technology combined with a regression in a viewer's ability to bias their knowledge could produce adverse effects in an individual viewer, and society.

EXPERIENCE

Televisual experience is the second level of the Levels of Televisual Reality. Televisual experience is artificially induced social and cultural experience. It is the most common form of television. Televisual experience is established in Boorstin's pseudo-event. But its manifestation occurs within Postman's pseudo-context which is the interpretation of televisual information for its entertainment value. Since televisual experience is predominantly a form of entertainment, it is interpreted as expressive signifiers, connotation, and impressions. Expressive signifiers and impressions are decoded by the culturally developed variables of the viewer. A viewer's knowledge is biased by connotative definitions they have learned from previous actual, and televisual experiences.

The most common narrative category in televisual experience is dramatic narrative, or the story within the experience. An individual intimately experiences televisual information intended as mass experience for a mass audience. Sports, cultural events and live news broadcasts contain this
form of televisual experience. Most prime time programming is experiential. This kind of televisual experience includes: dramatic series, sitcoms, televised films, and documentaries. Televisual experience contribute significantly to shaping Western culture. It allows viewers to participate in activities they would otherwise never have an opportunity to experience. A viewer will most likely have a televisual experience within a televisual environment.

An example of televisual experience is MTV's Sports with Bo Jackson. A specific episode is a profile of Patrick De Gayardon, the world's premier sky surfer. He has been the subject of Reebok 'Pump' athletic shoe advertisements. The episode begins with Dan Cortese of MTV Sports interviewing Bo Jackson. The interview is filmed in a black and white cinema verite' style giving the interview scene a home video look. In the interview, Bo Jackson expresses his disinterest in sky surfing. A transition appears on the screen with graphics, music, and the phrase, "Air Solo Thrill." After a second transition consisting of music and images, the scene changes to Patrick De Gayardon describing himself and his feelings about sky surfing. The profile of De Gayardon consists of him speaking on camera. Multiple cameras are used, one of them is a black and white camera. This entire profile is edited with aerial scenes of De Gayardon sky surfing, and interfaced with text on the screen that emphasizes the subjects he discusses.

This episode also has televisual environment and consciousness qualities, but it is predominantly televisual experience. The experiential guidelines of who, what, when,
where, how, and why, are literally expressed by the text on the screen. The beginning of the episode with Bo Jackson rejecting sky surfing is a series of expressive signifiers. Jackson is an icon of American sports and athletics. The viewer can easily identify with Jackson's description of this dangerous sport. It is experiential because the viewer has a personal experience with a legendary athlete who discusses a sport that is beyond his ability.

De Gayardon's is portrayed as a different kind of athlete. He pursues sky surfing because it is fun, and an expression of freedom. His sport has become a pseudo-event because television and its audience has developed an interest in his activities. However, it is predominantly a pseudo-context because this interest in his skills is a form of cultural entertainment. The rapidity of editing, and the repetition of images makes much of this televisual information impressions. It is interpreted connotatively because different viewers will perceive this information from varying perspectives. These perspectives range from total envy to complete insanity. Chatman's theory of 'reading out' applies because, the scenes in this episode were originally a Reebok advertisement. Its transcendence through television has made De Gayardon a human interest story. A viewer's biased knowledge actually improves with each viewing of this episode. Each time it is viewed, familiar signifiers are intentionally disregarded to search for new connotative meanings. In this particular televisual information, denotative definitions are few simply because De Gayardon's
activities are quite foreign to most viewers. An excellent example of biased knowledge is the final shot of De Gayardon in flight. The shadow of the cinematographer appears on his sky board as he descends to the earth. Only after multiple viewing does this example become apparent. It is considered biased knowledge because it requires a close viewing to see it, and its presence reminds the viewer that De Gayardon's activities are a televisual experience.

CONSCIOUSNESS

Television as a form of consciousness is the third level of the Levels of Televisual Reality. Televisual consciousness is difficult to define. Once a viewer realizes they are interacting with televisual consciousness, the viewing is no longer a state of consciousness. It regresses to a form of experience or environment. Televisual consciousness is a combination of environmental and experiential phenomena. McLuhan described how a viewer receives televisual information. "In television, images are projected at you. You are the screen. The images wrap around you. You are the vanishing point. This creates a sort of inwardness, a sort of reverse perspective. . ." (125). When viewers achieve televisual consciousness, they are no longer in the room with the television. They are in an artificial televisual environment, experiencing televisual experiences.

Televisual consciousness is the most sophisticated form of television viewing. The narrative category most common to televisual consciousness is ambience. Televisual
consciousness and ambience are predominantly influenced by the human 'stream of consciousness,' which is "the random ordering of thoughts and impressions" (Chatman 188). Impressions are denotatively defined because this is a passive method of subconsciously interpreting signifiers. Connotation occurs at a recreational level. When interacting with televisual consciousness, a viewer does not apply structural discipline to their connotative functions. Connotative interpretation becomes random. It is the chance for the viewer's mind to contemplate self, society, and culture without the structural constraints of society and culture. Televisual consciousness functions through disregarded information instead of biased knowledge. Disregarded information is a subconscious act that is passively performed during normal viewing. Biased knowledge is conscious reasoning and decision making. In the state of televisual consciousness, the viewer will always apply a passive method of interpretation.

All forms of television have the potential of becoming an interactive form of televisual consciousness. Some forms of televisual information are easier to achieve televisual consciousness with than others. One commonality all televisual consciousness has is temporality. The longer a person views television, the more likely they will achieve an interaction with televisual consciousness.

An advertisement for Coca Cola contains the characteristics of televisual consciousness. The advertisement is a rapid montage of images combined with
music. It begins with an illuminated arc light followed by a bottle behind a fresnel lens, a close up of a man's face, and then returning to the bottle behind the fresnel lens. The scene changes to a long shot of a woman under a beach shower beneath a pier. She sees the reflection of a red and white light move along the pier. She begins to run into the scene. The scene changes to a different man looking inside an empty refrigerator. A sedate narrator says, "If you're searching for a cool, refreshing experience, if you're looking for the real thing, then you have come to the right place." The scene returns to the woman running through the red and white light. Followed by the man and his refrigerator. The red and white light is reflecting off the wall of his room. The next scene establishes the red and white light shining through a town. The woman reaches the base of a lighthouse where the red and white light is originating from. At this time, the advertisement reveals the Coca-Cola bottle creating the red and white light from the lighthouse. Another scene in the town shows the projected Coca-Cola logo reflected on the side of a building. The woman gets to the top of the lighthouse where the first man in the commercial hands her a bottle Coca-Cola and says "I see you got my message." Her response is, "I see I am not the only one." The closing shot is the road towards the lighthouse with many cars approaching the lighthouse.

This advertisement is created around the human 'stream of consciousness' theory. Although a close viewing reveals a precise editing sequence, the advertisement is created to
appear as a random occurrence. The sedate music and narrator contribute to this mood. A close viewing reveals a narrative exists in the montage of images, music, and narration. However, the dramatic lighting and random appearance of the advertisement within televisual programming suggest it is televisual ambience. The Coca Cola bottle is not clearly shown until the end of the advertisement. Yet, because of previous denotative impressions created by Coca Cola, the viewer is likely to subconsciously recognize the product before it is actually revealed. This advertisement contains no subliminal messages. The images at the beginning of the advertisement are abstract and best interpreted connotatively. As the advertisement progresses the images become denotative making interpretation become easier for the viewer. The pace of the montage moves comfortably with the music and narration. This makes the process of biased knowledge a difficult task. The viewer is likely to subconsciously disregard information they find unnecessary. Most of the advertisement occurs at night. Only the visual information relevant to the product is illuminated. This reduces the televisual information requiring interpretation. Thus minimizing the need for biased knowledge and disregarded information.

The Levels of Televisual Reality can be phenomenologically summarized. A viewer's perception of an object does not create that object's presence. That is, an object exists independent of a person's perception of it. When considering television, this phenomenological theory has
two aspects. First, the independent existence of television, and second, the independent existence of the objects and events that are televisual information. Interaction with televisual environment is defined as television viewing when these phenomenological concepts are acknowledged. Televisual experience occurs when these concepts become insignificant to the viewer. Interaction with televisual consciousness occurs when the viewer disregards these phenomenological concepts for interaction with televisual environment and experience. As a viewer begins to interact with televisual consciousness, the differences between perception, television, and televisual information becomes less defined. One achieves televisual consciousness when the distinctions between these three aspects of televisual viewing become disregarded information.

DECONSTRUCTION OF TELEVISUAL ENVIRONMENT, EXPERIENCE, AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Within videocentric criticism there is the microcosmic and macrocosmic methods of studying visual narrative and televisual information. Both methods are equally applicable to all televisual information, but each method serves a different purpose. Deconstruction has been described as the microcosmic analysis of televisual information. Its function is qualitative interpretation of televisual information. Deconstruction's critique of presence makes it an ideal method of temporal and spatial analysis of the televisual mediums compression of information. The macrocosmic method, or The Levels of Televisual Reality is a 'real time' method.
It is the better of the two methods for studying televisual information quantitatively. Considering the volume of televisual information that is broadcast on any particular day, it is apparent that televisual information requires an efficient means of interpretation. This is the purpose of the Levels of Televisual Reality. Its pragmatic design makes it easy to comprehend high volumes of televisual information. However, there are moments when the macrocosmic method is incomplete. Videocentric diagram C in the previous chapter offers an explanation of how signification can become uncertain relative to the Levels of Televisual Reality, but its explanation of why is often limited. Another problem that must be acknowledged is televisual information that simultaneously transcends different levels and categories of the Levels of Televisual Reality. Deconstruction, or the microcosmic method clarifies these problems within the analysis of televisual information. The following example illustrates the effectiveness of deconstruction when applied to visual narrative and televisual information.

This example is an automobile advertisement for the Nissan Maxima GXC. It begins with a middle aged man wearing a business suit. He is walking his dog at night on a dark street. As the man stops for his dog next to a fire hydrant, an automobile in a dealer's show room behind the man flashes its headlights attracting his attention. The automobile dealership is obviously closed. As he turns to look at the lights, the scene changes. The actual viewer is shown a close up of the car's compact disc player inserting a disc by
itself. A variation of Ravel's Bolero begins to play. The man walks up to the dealership's window and voyeuristically looks inside. The advertisement changes from the man's point of view to the actual viewer's point of view. The following montage of automobile detail views are composed that make them impossible to be seen from the man's perspective. Yet, the advertisement implies these views are what he sees. After this montage, the scene returns to the man and his dog. A close up of the dog signifies the phenomena occurring in the showroom has the dog's attention as well. The next shot is from the car's point of view; looking at the man, and his dog, as the driver's side door unlocks and opens by itself. Next is a closeup of the man with a lump in his throat as a result of this experience. This shot is followed by a view of the steering wheel with an air bag installed, followed by the driver's seat reclining. The scene returns to the man as he proceeds toward the door of the dealer's showroom. He pulls on the door handle. Although the dealership is closed, the door opens sounding an alarm. The scene completely changes to the man suddenly awakening to his alarm clock going off at 6:47 am. The man, who is startled by the alarm, jumps up in his bed, and awakens to the harsh morning light shining through the window. His dog is calmly laying by his side. The screen fades to black, and a narrator disparagingly wishes the actual viewer to have "pleasant dreams." The narrative of this advertisement is analogous to Robert Enrico's short film, An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.

This example requires a close viewing to deconstruct the
significant aspects of this advertisement. It can be separated into three segments: the establishing or environmental segment which include the first three shots, the persuasive or experiential segment which emphasizes the qualities of the automobile and reinforces these qualities by inserting images that signify the man's emotions, such as want and desire. And the concluding or consciousness segment which transcends environment, experience, and consciousness simultaneously as the man awakens from his dream.

The structure of the establishing segment is environmentally obvious. The advertisement begins as a typical televisual or cinematic narrative. The opening shot is a man walking his dog. Televisual signifiers reveal a middle aged man walking his dog at night after work. This establishing shot fades to black. The next shot is a closer view of the man and his dog with the automobile in the background. This shot correlates the man with the automobile. Until this point in the advertisement, it is difficult to distinguish the advertisement's purpose. The encounter with the automobile appears coincidental. The experiential segment is based on emotions. Initially, the man is uninterested in the automobile. However, once the automobile interacts with him, he is easily fascinated. In production terms, there are two views of an automobile: a Hollywood view, and a Detroit view. A Hollywood view of an automobile emphasizes the; beauty, glamour, prestige, and lifestyle, that an automobile can provide. A Detroit view emphasizes the technical qualities of a vehicle such as crash dummies, or a car
driving through cones. All of the televisual signifiers of this advertisement are Hollywood views. These experientially based images emphasize desire, and deemphasize virtue. The concluding consciousness segment is best illustrated by diagram B. The short duration and rapidity of transitions between shots is likely to become unconsciously disregarded information. However, with repeated viewings, as illustrated in videocentric diagram C, the concluding segment is likely to become biased knowledge, and intentionally disregarded by the viewer. The biasing of the conclusion or the consciousness level, does not effect the persuasive aspects of this advertisement; because the emphasis of the advertisement is the experiential segment, which contains the persuasive signifiers.

The purpose of studying presence within televisual information is to acknowledge its exploitation by the televisual medium, and the resulting multiple characteristics of presence this exploitation creates. The environmental segment at the beginning establishes the presence of this advertisement which becomes a deception in the consciousness or concluding segment. The first shot concludes with a fade to black. This transition establishes the current environment and experience of the man walking his dog. The presence of this environment and experience is temporally compressed within the medium of television. In actuality, the act of 'walking the dog' requires more time than this advertisement allows. The sequence of shots after the fade to black; deemphasizes 'walking the dog,' and emphasizes the
seductiveness of the automobile. This reprioritizing of presence redirects the actual viewer's attention from the man and his dog, to the man and the automobile. The automobile is a physical object, and the multiple qualities of its presence are limited. However, the man is a person, probably with similar characteristics of the actual viewer. In the immediate present, the only qualities of the man that are revealed by the advertisement, are his actions of 'walking the dog' and awakening in the morning. As the advertisement becomes the past, the actual viewer realizes the seductiveness of the automobile caused the man to; abandon his dog, commit a burglary, and wake up in bed alone. The man became a victim of his own desire. As a vision of the future, this advertisement deemphasizes virtue, and emphasizes the seduction of an individual by a physical object. Thus, the actual viewer simultaneously experiences innocence, desire, and guilt, as a simulation of the present.

Presence within this advertisement is exploited spatially and temporally. Spatially, these multiple perspectives give the actual viewer a point of view that is impossible to experience beyond the televisual environment. The montage of the simultaneous multiple perspectives of; the man, the car, the dog, and the actual viewer as a voyeur, combine to make this presence unique to televisual information. Temporally, the advertisement transcends time and television with a dream like quality. The entire environment, experience, and consciousness, is temporally compressed to a thirty second advertisement. The greatest
exploitation of presence occurs at the conclusion when the actual viewer discovers that the entire environment and experience was a form of consciousness or a dream. The viewer is left with the unresolved dilemma of which state of presence is more desirable: dream or reality? This dilemma remains unresolved because the advertisement lacks any tangible referent to a particular moment in time. Because of its timelessness; the presence of this advertisement which is simultaneously a dream and reality, can exist in the past, present, and future.

This advertisement contains several traces within the structure of the narrative. The study of deconstructive traces is a diagnostic approach to determining the integrity of referents and signifieds. Within television, a trace is limited to its own environment or experience. The presence of televisual traces exists within the medium of their creation. Of the two approaches to differance through trace evidence, differance denying the presence of a referent after signification and a trace being evidence of the presence of that referent is the predominant approach in this advertisement. In this example, each trace builds and supplements the next trace: the headlights flashing, followed by the compact disc, followed by the door unlocking and the seat reclining, to the man opening the door and the burglar alarm becoming the man’s alarm clock, contribute to the narrative. As each trace contributes to the next, the narrative's need for the previous trace is supplemented by the next trace. Thus, strengthening the narrative. These
traces are metaphors of: sight, sound, touch, desire, virtue, and reality. Despite the fact these traces are human qualities simulated by television, each is always present as a referent. The head lights represent sight, the compact disc represents sound, the unlocking car door represents touch, the man's expression as all this occurs represents desire, his decision to open the door knowing it is wrong represents virtue, the burglar alarm detecting him opening the door represents reality, and the alarm clock metonymically represents the 'dawn of a new day.' All of these traces are supplemented to form a metaphor of temptation.

As differance denies the presence of a referent after signification, a trace is evidence of its presence. The man and his dog are traces of themselves because their presence remains after transcending the dream and awakening to reality. The car is also a trace but its presence is slightly altered after the man awakens from his dream. The final view of the automobile is lit by the same lighting as in the showroom; but, any referents of the showroom have been removed. This illustrates the differance of the dealership after signification by the environmental and experiential segments. The dealership disappears upon the man's awakening. In fact, his actions coincide with his alarm clock; as he awakens, the dealership vanishes. The alarm clock is not a trace after signification because there is no evidence of its existence prior to its signification.

Just as differance denies the presence of a signified before signification, a trace is evidence of the presence of
that signified. In this approach: the man, the dog, and the car, are also traces of their signification prior to signification. Signification does not alter their presence. Only the presence of their environment and experience is altered through a shift in consciousness. That is, the simulation of a transition from a dream to reality. The alarm clock is altered by differance. It is actually a burglar alarm before it is an alarm clock. The signification of the alarm clock is altered prior to signification. Therefore, it is never present until after signification.

The intertextuality of this advertisement differs from the previously offered description of the term. It does not refer to television or any other medium. However, the advertisement intertextually implies through its own presence that this kind of experience is only available through television. This form of intertextuality is not unique to this advertisement. It is prevalent in many forms of televisual information that apply a surrealistic approach to their narrative and production. This advertisement is an exemplary paradigm of 'videocentric intertextuality' because within the Levels of Televisual Reality, it transcends the categories of: information, narrative, and ambience; and the levels of: environment, experience, and consciousness. This is a frequent occurrence as a person views televisual information.

This advertisement deemphasizes the phonocentric priority of the spoken word. It contains no dialogue until the concluding segment. A narrator metonymically reminds the
viewer to have 'pleasant dreams.' Signification that is deferred through dissemination by the concluding segment is further deferred by the metonymy: 'pleasant dreams.' The signification of this metonymy implies the actual viewer will continue to live in the unsympathetic existence of reality until they own this automobile. Logocentrism implies an ultimate truth or reality that is the foundation of Western thought and experience. A logocentric perspective of this advertisement would consider the automobile an ultimate truth or reality, in which one can metonymically 'pursue their dreams,' because the aesthetic quality of the dream segment is more desirable than the awakening segment. This advertisement implies that Western society is based on an 'autocentric' perspective that is similar to logocentrism. Deconstruction is grounded in the idea that the belief in such a perspective is absurd.

Several deconstructive dichotomies and supplements are present in this advertisement. They emphasize virtue, and reality. Will versus desire is the primary dichotomy in this advertisement. The man is tempted by the car, and his temptation is supplemented by desire. As a human being, he has the choice of: being virtuous, or pursuing his desire for the automobile. Although the man possesses the ability to decide, the advertisement deemphasizes this quality of him. Instead, the man appears to have no will power. He is easily motivated by desire. Even though the advertisement reveals little of the man's character, the viewer impressionistically believes he is more. The man is a representation of what an
actual viewer may perceive a man with these attributes to be.

Another deconstructive dichotomy is the conflict between
the man's honesty and dishonesty. The supplement of this
opposition initiates the sequential supplementation of the
remaining opposing terms. As the man's dishonesty supplements
his honesty, reality supplements the dream, and day
supplements night; multiple levels of presence are revealed.
As a deconstructive dichotomy is supplemented, it is also
hierarchicalized.

These supplemented and hierarchicalized dichotomies
become multiple perspectives of presence. Between the
opposing qualities of honesty, or dishonesty, honesty is the
better quality by virtue. The dream illustrates the man
becoming dishonest. If honesty had supplemented dishonesty
before the man opened the door; he would have never opened
the door and therefore, would never have awakened from his
dream. To 'live in a dream' is the metonymical equivalent of
living a false existence. Although honesty is the better
quality by virtue, This advertisement creates a paradox of
truth.

Of the opposing terms dream or reality, the dream is
hierarchicalized as the better state in the advertisement.
The dream cannot be reality because the events that occur in
the dream are out of context with reality. An Automobile is
incapable of; flashing its headlights, playing music,
unlocking its doors and reclining the seats, at will. An
inanimate object cannot actually seduce a person as the
advertisement has implied. There are no structural
restrictions preventing the representation of reality from becoming the dream. But from a narrative perspective, their is no practical purpose in reversing the hierarchy. In this advertisement, the dream supplements reality, but although it is capable, reality does not supplement the dream. The dream is a metaphor of reality. But, reality is not a metaphor of the dream until the actual viewer purchases the automobile.

These dichotomies create a surreal image of human existence. In actuality, human beings have the will to choose between virtue and vice, and a dream or reality. However, the man in this advertisement is a representation. He is the equivalent of Plato's mimetic art. In any televisual simulation, the characters will not possess the virtues of an actual human being. They will only possess likenesses of these virtues. At the conclusion, the advertisement divulges itself of any moral wrong doing by revealing to the actual viewer that this televisual experience was a dream. The metonymy 'pleasant dreams' implies this kind of dream is common because the man awakens the same way most people wake up in the morning, by the shock of the alarm clock.

Structuralist theory would suggest that instead of the actual viewer's dissemination of signifiers from the concluding segment, disregarded information in diagram B, or biased knowledge videocentric diagram C are more likely to be interpreted. Dissemination of the signifiers is difficult to determine for two reasons: the spatial and temporal compression of the advertisement, and the deception revealed by the concluding segment. Just as these reasons make
dissemination difficult to ascertain, they are the primary explanation of its occurrence. Dissemination is likely to occur at the beginning of the concluding segment of the advertisement. The inverted close up view of the man's face as he is awakened by the alarm can be considered a 'dissemination flag.' It defers the viewer's signification process by confusing the viewer to what is actually occurring. This deferment continues after the deception is realized. In this advertisement, dissemination occurs in the past after most of the initial signification is complete. Dissemination evolves to differance because this 'post dissemination' creates a difference in the initial signification. The dream that was originally signified as reality becomes inverted (as the visual metaphor of the man's inverted face when he awakens implies) and is resignified as a dream. As this dissemination becomes differance, the presence of the dream segment's referents, and the awakening segment's signification, comes into question. The signification of this differance becomes differed and deferred until the original signifiers can be reevaluated by the actual viewer. After the viewer overcomes dissemination, and differance, the viewer will eventually understand what has occurred within this advertisement. But, the entire process has caused the viewer to continue contemplating the advertisement and its product after the conclusion. Thus, the advertisement has been effective.
CONCLUSION

Deconstruction reveals the uncertainty of the communication process that Western society has deemed its foundation. The existence of: multiple presence, the denial of referents and signification, and opposing terms revealing the actual intentions of a message; combine to question the direction and future of Western thought. Deconstruction does not solve the problem of videocentrism, it only offers an explanation. Although this dilemma is a macrocosmic issue within Western society, its resolution must occur on a microcosmic level. That is, the individual must recognize Western culture's shift to videocentrism, and adapt their interpretive abilities to look through the veil of television.
This research contributes to a new direction in the study of mass communication and interpretation. The recent historical period this research addresses has witnessed significant growth in humanity. Timothy Leary wrote of the consequences of the Apollo Space Program:

The Apollo missions were more than technological triumphs or nationalistic achievements. . . . the beginning of a species mutation has occurred-equal in importance to the first amphibian movement from water to land early in biological history (181).

Just as the Apollo missions are a historic landmark in human evolution, the advent and development of television is a cultural reference point that will be known as the era that changed human perception of reality. Western society has begun its transcendence from a language based culture to an image based network. The current problems of aliteracy and illiteracy will be difficult to resolve when those who are plagued by these deficiencies can obtain information through television. With the ever increasing flow of information that dominates Western society, the human ability to comprehend this flow will eventually become overwhelmed. Western society must adapt to the information culture it has become. Society may power itself with communication technology, but the power source remains unharnessed, and its full potential unknown. This research is an applicable method to better understanding visual information. The adage, 'a picture is worth a thousand words' has become closer to reality than one may realize.
Work Cited


