Documentary Studies and Linguistic Anthropology

Ilana Gershon & Joshua Malitsky

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Abstract *This article suggests that linguistic anthropology offers useful analytical tools to documentary studies because both fields wrestle with questions that emerge from the circulation of indexical representations that are putatively constructing truths. Linguistic anthropology is deeply concerned with the ways that texts circulate, and how this circulation affects how indexical representations are structured and how constructions of reality are produced. The question this article tackles is: how can insights that linguistic anthropologists have been developing about circulation, indexicality, and the construction of facts be usefully mobilised to think about documentaries?*

Introduction

When documentary studies emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s as an area of focus, scholars such as Bill Nichols, Brian Winston, and Michael Renov were addressing the poststructuralist and postmodernist challenges that destabilised the relationship between the image and its referent – a relationship considered integral to any understanding of documentary as a unique genre (see as key texts Nichols 1991; Renov 1993; Winston 1995). They asked: what happens to a practice that (most often) aims to represent the real objectively during an era in which the image has apparently lost its referent? At the same time, they and other scholars recognised an apparent contradiction in the relationship between audiences' enthusiastic responses to representations of the real and theoretical assertions about the decay of referentiality. It seems likely that even as postmodern critiques and digital images proliferate, representations of the real hold more power than ever to shape audience's attitudes, values, and beliefs (see Renov 1999).

Documentary scholars are not the only ones concerned with the links between representation and reality. Indeed, in the past two decades, linguistic anthropology has been developing an analytical framework for tackling questions comparable to those asked by documentary scholars. Whereas scholars of documentary and film and media studies have focused attention on the photographic sign as indexically linked to a historical referent, linguistic anthropologists tend to emphasise that linguistic practices are indexical. That is, linguistic anthropologists explore how representation emerges from

linguistic practices in ways that presuppose a link between signs and the conditions in which signs are used.[1] For linguistic anthropologists, indexes are the processes that embed every use of a linguistic form in social contexts such that interpreting the linguistic form necessitates using knowledge of that context. Linguistic anthropologists have focused on verbal discourse to explore when and how people understand signs to refer, developing analytical concepts that we suggest can be usefully applied to documentaries as semiotic, visual, and aural systems. To understand documentaries in particular, we also want to interrogate the various mechanisms by which documentaries are conceived as representations anchored in reality. Thus, we emphasise how analysing documentaries involves understanding how people in different historical contexts ascribe truth value to certain production procedures and textual organisations. Linguistic anthropologists consider a central question: what assumptions and processes undergird the ways representations presuppose and entail social contexts? Answering such questions using these particular toolkits encourages documentary scholars to pay close attention to the specific historical and cultural imaginations necessary to produce and interpret an individual or set of documentaries. This in turn opens up an analytical space for understanding the power relations and political stakes underpinning the production and circulation of documentaries. In this article we outline the analytical framework that linguistic anthropologists have developed and explore which aspects might be fruitfully brought to bear on documentaries.

We are advocating analysing documentary ideologies, which we define, with deference to Silverstein (1979), as the set of beliefs, attitudes, and strategies about documentaries with which filmmakers, viewers, and critics explain or justify perceived film structure and meaning. We are arguing that people's understandings of how signs can be truthful are fundamentally ideological. This allows us to focus on the ways that these sets of beliefs are always multiple, sited, interested, positioned, and contested. This anthropological framework provides scholars with new ways to discuss how documentaries are structured, how images are interpreted to represent truth and fact, and how filmmakers, viewers, and critics' reflexive understandings of documentaries affect their production and reception.

This challenges some perspectives scholars, filmmakers, critics, and audiences often maintain about the relationship between documentary, realism, and the historical world. Although some frequently conflate documentaries with realism, scholars of documentary have, without question, detailed the aesthetic changes as well as the political and ethical implications within claims on the real (see Nichols 1991; Gaines 1999; Juhasz 1999; Lesage 1984). Building on this, we are asking about the labour that goes into producing documentary realism by exploring how indexicalities circulate and seem

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[1] To be sure, film and media scholars have also emphasised knowledge of the process of production as central to the function of (cinematic) indexicality. The most notable example is Philip Rosen, who, in *Change Mummified* (2001) argues that the audience's understanding of the moment of capture, the process of development, and the projection of the film image all drive the investment in this particular relation between image and referent.

stable so as to produce realism (Agha 2005). For documentaries to be conflated with realism in the first place, people have to make particular assumptions about how indexicalities function in documentaries. Both linguistic anthropologists and documentary scholars take this notion of indexicality from Charles Sanders Peirce. Documentary scholars and film scholars in general interpret Peirce as emphasising the direct physical relation between the photographic representation and its material object (Doane 2007a; Gunning 2008; Metz 1974; Wollen 1972). In this article, we rely on linguistic anthropologists' definition in order to explore its potential as an analytical resource for film studies, which is a move in accord with recent film scholarship (see Doane 2007b; Malitsky 2010, 2012; Tsang and Winston 2009). We are purposely writing against the definition of indexicality that assumes indexicalities are the physical traces of other contexts, that inherent in the indexical sign itself is the possibility that one can locate its origin, can travel backwards, so to speak, to the moment the indexical sign was fashioned. This is the ideological promise that documentaries often depend upon – that their signs are transparently traceable to an 'out there'. Realism relies on these beliefs about indexicalities and the trace, the assumptions that the production process works by accurately capturing these traces.

It is up to filmmakers, critics, and audiences to define and mobilise realism. Our aim is to provide a new set of tools to aid in understanding the political, social, and ethical possibilities and prices others are paying for their specific understandings of realism. To accomplish this, we propose conceiving of indexicality as an *ideological* presupposition that signs can and do reference the rest of the world to which they are unproblematically anchored. This offers an insight into why, for others, documentaries and realism might seem to fit so seamlessly together.

When documentary scholars focus on the historical shifts in how documentary films are taken to represent truths, they understand the indexical links between representation and reality to be culturally and historically specific. Turning to linguistic anthropology allows us to frame these historical shifts in documentaries as shifts in documentary ideologies. Analysing these shifts entails attending to what documentary makers, viewers, and critics think about how film can index a represented or displayed 'reality' in relation to what transpires onscreen. In foregrounding this tension between ideas about film and actual film practices, we rely on recent work by linguistic anthropologists exploring language ideologies (Kroskrity 2000; Schiefflin et al. 1998; Silverstein 1979; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).

In examining language ideologies, linguistic anthropologists call attention to the dialectical relationship between what people believe language accomplishes and how language is actually used. Dialectical here alludes to how people's beliefs influence but do not predict their practices. While there is not a one-to-one correlation between people's ideas about language and how they actually speak and listen, people's language ideologies still importantly influence language use. The same is true of how documentary ideologies influence documentary production. For example, observational filmmakers, such as Robert Drew, D. A. Pennebaker, and the Maysles brothers, all imagine documentaries to be spaces of democratic engagement. They use long takes and eschew voiceovers to create the impression of a minimally mediated public

sphere available to everyone. These filmmakers' understandings of what constitutes democratic dialogues shape the form and method of their films. Yet viewers and critics of these films may have different ideas about the authority of the voiceover or what constitutes a democratic public dialogue. For some viewers, access to film and editing equipment subverts egalitarian engagement – the lack of voiceover for them is a formal but ultimately inconsequential gesture. Along those lines, some critics argue that such pretense to democracy obfuscates the filmmakers' own role in determining meaning. Studying language ideologies and documentary ideologies elucidates the relationship between what filmmakers, viewers, and critics believe about indexical representations and the ways in which these beliefs shape their practices – and vice-versa.

In short, paying attention to documentary ideologies is paying attention to the inevitable reflexivity of representational practice. Linguistic anthropologists emphasise reflexive engagements with language and with social practice. The reflexive awareness at issue is not limited to an individual's awareness – it is not only the film director, film editor, individual audience member, or critic's understanding of how film can represent reality that is under analytical scrutiny. It is film-viewing communities that fashion different reflexive positions. Thus, the perspective people use to understand documentaries as representational texts is, fundamentally, itself a socially constructed perspective.

Linguistic anthropology has begun to examine the ways texts travel, circulations that affect how indexical representations are structured and how constructions of reality are produced. This perspective allows scholars to trace the contours of aesthetic and methodological changes by more rigorously accounting for dialogically and unpredictably interwoven motivations, practices, and interpretations. The question this article is tackling is: how can the insights that linguistic anthropologists are developing about circulation and indexicality be usefully mobilised to think about documentary ideologies?

Introducing language ideologies

Studies of language ideologies begin with the assumption that every utterance, every text, presupposes and entails social contexts and social actors.[2] To speak is thus to make implicit or tacit claims about how people and objects are interrelated, and to suggest future interactions and objects. This functionality is integral to the ways in which people refer via utterances, the ways that people attribute meaning to signs. An utterance such as 'get me the pen over there' presupposes spatial relations (a context in which 'over there' is sensible) as well as the speaker's role and that of an addressee. The speaker assumes referents that exist prior to the statement, that is, the speaker assumes the statement itself does not create '*the* pen' or the 'over *there*'. Speech acts also create objects, people, social relations, and social unities in the moment of utterance. 'Get me the pen over there' also can perform a hierarchical relation between the speaker and the one spoken

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[2] As Mikhail Bahktin (1994) pointed out, utterances always presuppose previous utterances. One speaks with the historical traces of others' efforts to represent haunting every speech act.

to – notice the absence of 'please' (Brown and Levinson 1987; Ervin-Tripp 1976; Goffman 1981). Utterances assert how the world should be organised as much as they presuppose such organisations. Presupposing and entailing occur at all levels, from the discrete utterance to a bounded conversation to an entire film or text. The range of what is presupposed and entailed may be different at every level – a discrete utterance presupposes differently and with different consequences than a film. What remains constant is that a reality of some sort is both claimed and projected through representation.

By talking about how language presupposes in the context of documentary studies, we are privileging language's propositional and referential aspects. Language, and representations in general, are more multifaceted, also having aesthetic and performative aspects. In focusing on the processes that enable language to be propositional and referential, we are turning to an intersection between the concerns of linguistic anthropology and documentary studies where scholars in each field are concerned with how representation and reality are intertwined through social assumptions and social practice. The social is at the heart of these concerns. How representations index truth changes depending upon the historical communities producing and viewing the documentaries. Thus the question becomes: what social assumptions underlie the ways in which representations are taken to be both referential and propositional (especially when people often see representations as no more than this)?

Language is not simply an array of presuppositions, entailments, propositions, references, performative or aesthetic practices – for language to function it must be regimented. In other words, there must be a linguistic structure through which claims and associations can be made, which can be called syntax or discursive structure depending on the level of analysis. Scholars think about how structures shape practices from many different perspectives. What is productive about turning to how linguistic anthropologists approach the relationship between structure and practice is the kind of structure that language requires. Language requires regimentation and sequences that speakers knowingly and unknowingly manipulate to communicate. Speakers order language in ways that have parallels in film to narratives or regimented sequences. For film or language to be effective there has to be an ordering logic, although the audience may not be convinced by the strategies used.

We have been discussing what language accomplishes, the pragmatics of how language functions. As scholars of language ideologies realise, people speaking have ideas about how language functions that shapes how they use language. People tend to have reflexive and articulable ideas about how language should be structured and how language refers. Their insights are not necessarily transparent or predictive when analysts examine the actual utterances. How people think they and others should speak is not always how people speak. The logic that people use to judge speech is often not the logic that emerges when you analyse their actual speech. Yet what people think about language offers powerful insights into their linguistic choices and practices. For example, many speakers of American English have a general understanding of what it means to speak standard American English. They also have social assumptions about the kinds of people who speak standard American English. To be able to speak standard American

English gives people symbolic capital in some settings, while in other contexts it can distance them from a particular community, marking them as elite or trying to be elite. How people choose to speak is intimately linked with their understandings of the social consequences of speaking, insofar as they choose (see Hill 1993, 2001; Urciuoli 1996). Scholars of language ideologies have found this tension between the pragmatics of language and the beliefs about language fruitful for understanding when and how people speak in certain ways and how particular texts circulate.

Utterances cannot accomplish their social labour without ideologies in place guiding language users in understanding how language functions, including how texts function. Accents could not reflect class structures if people did not have ideological assumptions about what particular speech patterns can index about a person's social position. As a corollary to this, texts, film or otherwise, cannot circulate without language ideologies. Silverstein argues: 'ideologies present invokable schemata in which to explain/interpret the meaningful flow of indexicals. As such, they are necessary to and drive default modes of the gelling of this flow into text-like chunks' (1998: 129). Ideologies are essential guides for interpreting how a set of indexical representations acts as a text, and in particular, a text that can shift contexts while still presupposing and entailing social realities effectively. From a linguistic anthropological perspective, ideology is not false consciousness. Rather, ideologies are integral to how people determine meaning as well as the contours of a text or a genre. In short, ideologies are integral to recognising any linguistic pattern as socially meaningful.

Entextualisation all the way down

The concept of documentary ideology, we suggest, opens up many new possible angles for the study of documentaries. In this article we will focus only on one possible direction – how studying entextualisation can expand analyses of documentary production, circulation and reception. Entextualisation refers to the process of producing bounded, isolatable interactions that are discernibly distinct from – and hence potentially separable from – their cultural contexts of production. Entextualisation allows us to focus on the labour of producing documentary texts – not only the labour of producing a film as a bounded text, but also the labour of producing utterances that can be bound as texts, removed from their contexts of production, and placed in sequences that make up films. This labour is performed both by the social actors within a film or video as well as the film crew recording. Entextualisation is only part of the process of making documentaries – for the bounded interactions to travel, they must be decontextualised (separated from their contexts) and recontextualised (integrated into a new context).[3] This process is central to documentaries because they are recontextualised ensembles of entextualised (and then decontextualised) utterances, texts and interactions. Entextualisation as a process is dependent on language (and documentary) ideology, since, as Silverstein has pointed out, language ideology (and, for us,

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[3] Here we are following Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs' (1990) take on entextualisation, decontextualisation and recontextualisation.

documentary ideology) invests the systems by which people make social interpretations[4] with the driving force for fashioning signs into 'textlike chunks' (1998: 129). Thus documentary ideologies are key to understanding entextualisation, and the strategies of entextualisation are key to understanding documentary ideology. In short, documentary ideologies are dialectically intertwined with entextualisation.

Documentary filmmakers transform speech and events into circulable texts. Filmmakers are using moments that are always already presented as texts and translating them into discrete chunks of other texts. Those recording the conversations are not the only ones participating in entextualisation, in transforming the interactions into texts. The people being filmed or recorded may demarcate their interactions as already available to be decontextualised, that is, separated from the interactions' contexts. They do so through metanarration or framing, through formal markers of cohesion, through formal organisation and, occasionally, through translation (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 75–6). For example, as we will discuss at length later, in Errol Morris' *The Fog of War*, Robert McNamara continually and explicitly labels the 'lesson' putatively illustrated by the specific narratives he tells, anticipating and limiting its place within the larger documentary structure. McNamara is shaping his words proleptically, imagining how the words might travel into a documentary context.

Documentary filmmakers are thus engaged in constructing text-collages out of elements already prepared for circulation in some form. Here we are suggesting that interactions as captured in film or video are entextualised prior to becoming part of those films and videos themselves. The work of documentary filmmakers is to recontextualise, to create new co-texts (the special internal context of any stretch of discourse) for these discrete chunks that then, in turn, can themselves be circulated. Importantly, the documentary filmmaker uses entextualising techniques to make interactions into a text different from those used by the people they are recording who are engaged in those interactions.

Documentaries consist, to a large degree, of recontextualising previously entextualised speech through technological apparatuses. A recording device transforms an utterance into a text-artefact that demands textual 'reading' when circulated – whether the device is a Nagra, a DAT, or even an audio cassette recorder like the one Errol Morris uses to capture David Harris' confession in *The Thin Blue Line*. Different technologies of inscription and editing allow scholars and filmmakers to record, select, and isolate the utterance from the physical, social, and historical context in which speaking takes place in real time.

Documentary segments are recontextualised into coherent and interpretable overarching documentary texts. Filmed gestures and voice contextualise the individual, while narration serves to provide a new meta-semiotics for interpretation. The medium through which the information is presented also shapes how filmmakers and viewers understand the component, that is, the

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[4] Linguistic anthropologists, and especially Michael Silverstein, would call such systems the metapragmatics of the utterances.

documents' function within the documentary argument.[5] Here we take documentaries to be compilations of different mediums of entextualisation, that is, compilations of texts that are bounded differently by the medium through which they are presented, as well as compilations of different texts themselves. For example, a filmed photograph bounds and presents information differently than a cut away to 8 mm home movie footage; a filmed legal document bounds and presents information differently than an animated map.

Documentaries often juxtapose these different mediums as a way of distinguishing evidence and of referencing historical events. That is, documentaries mobilise different media ideologies through these implicit comparisons. The filmmakers and the viewers, however, do not necessarily share the same media ideologies. As we have argued earlier, such ideologies are particular to their historical moment – a Bolshevik in 1927 would understand home movie footage of the Romanovs in class terms, for only the elite had access to 35-mm film for home movies. Viewers of today are likely not to interpret the filming itself as implicitly marking class. To understand documentaries as an array of entextualisations, one needs to take into account the ideologies surrounding the mediums themselves as well as the ways in which the recontextualised entextualisations presuppose time, space, and social context.

Our insistence that documentaries are entextualisations, decontextualisations, and recontextualisations 'all the way down' (Geertz 1973: 30), so to speak, centres the notion that the document and documentary function in productive tension rather than subsuming the document to the logical and persuasive power of the documentary. However one wants to define the relationship between the document and the documentary, we believe that it is critical to account for the labour that underpins recontextualising documentation into a coherent text. Throughout the production process, filmmakers work to locate these entextualised images relationally such that the governing logic – be it rhetorical, associational, or poetic – is legible. They rely on various types of links within and across texts. Michael Chanan has recently turned to the Bakhtinian chronotope (or time-space) in order to characterise the 'screen world' of a documentary (Chanan 2000: 56). He distinguishes documentary's associational or argumentative logic that *foregoes* spatio-temporal continuity from fiction film's narrative or plot-driven logic that *relies* on spatio-temporal continuity. While Chanan allows that certain mode of documentaries, such as those that depend upon direct observation, 'may borrow the garb of narrative continuity', he concludes that documentaries organise time and space in ways that are fundamentally distinct from fiction film (60). As documentary filmmakers labour to ensure that documentaries are comprehensible, they have to invoke a chronotopic logic that links documents and documentaries.

Chronotopic logics are not simply incorporated into documentaries; filmmakers must use a wide array of techniques to produce the logics that underpin a legible film. This is true of observational films as well as found

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[5] Describing every documentary as having a documentary argument is a logical extension of a linguistic anthropological attention to how documents presuppose and entail particular social contexts. In presupposing some social relations, the documentary is also always ignoring or refusing others.

footage films – that is, films thought to be governed by diametrically opposed chronotopic logics.[6] To illustrate this, we turn to two examples, the Maysles brothers' observational film, *Salesman* (1968) and Santiago Álvarez' found footage film, *Now!* (1965). *Salesman* is a film that follows door-to-door Bible salesmen travelling around the country as they struggle to meet quotas while navigating the demands of the road. The narrative revolves around Paul Brennan, ('the Badger') and his inability to relate to people becomes a personal and professional crisis. The film fits squarely into Bill Nichols' category of the observational documentary, a mode of documentary filmmaking that generally eschews voice-over narration, employs long-takes and synchronous sound, is organised around extended processes or crises, and aims for the 'exhaustive depiction of the everyday' over providing historical or contextual information (1991: 38–44). Like other films in the American direct cinema tradition, *Salesman* does not use voice-over narration to frame the events taking place onscreen. However, the film is edited in such a way that characters' testimony performs a related function. The 'Badger's' and other characters' testimony – directed to the filmmaker and other characters – serves a metanarrational purpose. The testimonies make this particular world of Bible-selling comprehensible; the characters anticipate the narrative direction of the film; and their desires drive the narrative logic.

Found footage films, by virtue of the fact that their entextualisations do not partake of the same historical space, perhaps rely to a greater degree on the effort to link locations through an array of aural and visual strategies. Santiago Álvarez provides a particularly innovative example of such practices. His short film, *Now!* is structured around a song by the African-American singer, actress, and activist Lena Horne called *Now*, a black liberation anthem set to the Jewish dance song *Hava Nagila*. The film is rapidly edited and composed of photographs and live action footage of racial conflict sent to Álvarez clandestinely by friends in the United States. His ability to make a comprehensible, politically radical argument revolves around his sophisticated management of these disparate times and spaces. Whereas Horne's song is the dominant structural frame, Álvarez also links images visually. He does so not simply by their associational implications, but through tone, colour, shade, frame, angle, direction, and so on. Moreover, he is particularly innovative in his ability to mobilise continuity-editing strategies such as eyeline matches, and establishment-breakdown-reestablishment sequences for precise rhetorical and emotional purposes. Such strategies contribute to an understanding of the chronotopic logics of the film – logics Álvarez mobilises for reasons opposed to those of the classic Hollywood cinema's desire for continuity.[7]

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[6] Although observational and found footage films are thought to be governed by distinct chronotopic logics, each regularly relies on written words, whether in the form of intertitles or location identification, as narration that helps to articulate an intelligible time-space of the film.

[7] Voice-over narration and other aural strategies such as direct onscreen testimony from the filmmaker are the most common contemporary ways of making the chronotope of documentary legible and are often privileged in defining documentary's management of time and space.

Our point is not to exhaust or even identify the wide range of strategies that documentaries mobilise to manage its time and space. Rather, we argue that such management is a central and multi-staged effort of the documentary project. To make arguments, to speak poetically, to prompt intellectual and even visceral associations requires linking and translating entextualisations into a new, coherent text. Below, we discuss re-imagining the chronotopic logic of a documentary as a *process* of entextualising, one that does not privilege the final recontextualising step.

We agree with Chanan's argument that documentary is primarily concerned with organising elements of social-historical space according to a rhetorics or poetics (2000). But privileging the spatial over the temporal on account of continuity is only possible if the focus is entirely on the process of recontextualisation, or in Chanan's framework, the organisation. In other words, attending to the various processes of entextualisation offers insight into how specific recontextualisations manage time and space in ways that might differ from a documentary's overall governing logic – thus changing the logic of the chronotope. We propose that in addition to thinking about the organisational or recontextual logic of documentary, scholars also should analyse two other aspects when addressing a chronotopic logic they see as governing a film or set of films. The first aspect involves considering the initial (always already) prepared entextualisation or testimony as it exists in the profilmic world. The pertinent question is: how does the pacing of speech, the particular gestural activity, and the movement through space of all (human and non-human) participants reveal a logic governing the production itself? Second, analysts should pay attention to the chronotopic logic of the mediated extraction, asking: what is the time-space organisation of the entextualisations or cinematic documents themselves? Although another way of articulating what it means to imagine the pro-filmic, the point is not to claim that scholars fail to consider spatial and temporal shot length, among other features, or that we have a tradition of disregarding the pro-filmic. Rather, it is to say that liberating the document from its subservience to the documentary offers potential by imagining a set of chronotopic logics *in tension* with one another. It can serve to complicate spatio-temporal logics in such a way that they can travel more forcefully *across* cinematic practices as well as *within* the flexible field of documentary.

We have been addressing how documentary filmmakers wrestle with locating time and space as they recontextualise footage. To manage time and space, filmmakers must choose among an array of narrativising and sequentialising strategies. Their choices shape and are shaped by their documentary ideologies. Understanding the pragmatic differences in filmmakers' methods and techniques often is the first step towards understanding a filmmaker's documentary ideology. That is, filmmakers' documentary ideology often guides how they choose to solve the technical dilemmas of translating decontextualised segments into segments that the audience can locate in time and space.

However, time and space are not the only challenges filmmakers face in subsuming a document to the documentary, that is, in constructing a segment's indexical surround so that viewers find the documentary as a whole intelligible. Filmmakers must also present social contexts that are invariably

presupposed in the film segments. This is often a task that requires imagining particular viewers – what is the social information a viewer might need to locate the person or event in an appropriate cultural context that ensures documentary legibility? Documentary scholars tend to comment on these techniques in their analysis of class, race and gender hierarchies, arguing that particular documentaries are re-inscribing or challenging these social distinctions. Here we want to call attention to the problems of creating intelligible texts that lie behind the techniques that scholars have previously analysed in terms of power relationships. The dilemma urged by our analytical tools is first and foremost to understand how these social cues are constructed as intelligible cues before then attempting to analyse the inequalities with which the films engage.

Jennie Livingston's (1990) *Paris is Burning* offers a good example of the multiple ways in which documentaries presuppose a range of social knowledge.[8] Livingston anticipated some of the viewers' needs for contextual information. Through titles, interview testimony, and mutually orchestrated mise-en-scène, she introduces her subjects as socially stigmatised poor black or Hispanic queers competing in drag balls in various categories, such as military realness, banjee realness, butch queen, executive realness, and so on. Participants explain in detail how the competitors are organised into different houses, how the competition is structured, and what counts as an insult. They describe the different genres of insults – from 'read' to 'shade' to 'voguing'. While the documentary contains considerable explication, here, Livingston presupposes knowledge of *Vogue Magazine* in the 'voguing' sequence. Not only does she assume the audience will understand the reference to the fashion magazine, but also that they will understand the form of symbolic capital this fashion magazine name might index. The competitors are appropriating the power and prestige of the magazine in their battles – a social move that Livingston also presupposes will be apparent to her viewers. It is this social labour that must be explained to *Paris is Burning*'s viewers unfamiliar with *Vogue* and its particular potential for symbolic appropriation. As documentaries travel into unanticipated contexts, the tacit social assumptions in these films become apparent in unpredictable ways.

Documentary entextualisation and the pro-filmic

To clarify how this multi-staged process of entextualisation works, we turn now to some concrete examples – films by Dziga Vertov, Esfir Shub and Errol Morris. We focus on how these filmmakers' methods and aesthetics depended upon their documentary ideologies of indexical relationships between filmic representations and reality. Our examples come from films produced during moments of aesthetic, political, and institutional transformation, as we see these as privileged objects for examining documentary ideology. Throughout these periods, artists, cultural critics, and (often) state representatives debate the proper form and method of making film – non-fiction film in particular. These debates are often the moments when people are most explicit

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[8] For us, this distinction is often most apparent in our classrooms.

about their documentary ideologies, and when scholars can clearly see the dialectical relationship between how people believe documentary 'speaks' and the actual texts that are produced.

In the Soviet Union during the 1920s, Dziga Vertov, Viktor Shklovsky, Esfir Shub, Osip Brik, and others conducted arguably the first sophisticated debates about the proper form and method of making documentary films. Vertov developed his film methods in part as critique of newsreels and fiction films. His practice of making political arguments out of established, authentic cinematic facts challenged both what he saw as the naiveté and ineffectiveness of previous newsreel forms as well as the mystifying falseness of contemporary fiction film. For Vertov, 'life caught unawares' (*zhizn' vrasplokh*) described his method of capturing the pro-filmic in such a way as to ensure his films' ontological authenticity and minimise the role of performance.[9] Vertov insisted that film must be based in reality and must be dynamic. For Vertov the images must be spontaneously captured and made up of unself-conscious performances to link film and reality and to preclude what Vertov saw as artifice. Vertov did not want subjects to entextualise their utterances and actions in anticipation of being filmed. His documentary ideology revolved around capturing what he perceived as intensity and authenticity, an ideology that shaped his filmmaking methods.

Shklovsky supported Vertov's project but gradually became disenchanted with his aesthetics. He grew to dislike how Vertov linked film and reality, arguing that his films emphasise the relationship between shots in too rapid and disjointed a way. As a result, Shklovsky claimed that Vertov's films deprive the material 'of its soul – its documentary quality' (1988 [1926]: 152). Shklovsky insisted that the 'soul' of documentary was linked to 'its date, time, and place' (1988 [1926]: 152; see Malitsky 2004). For Shklovsky, the rapid dynamics of Vertov's editing increasingly undermine his claim on the real.

Shklovsky turned to Shub's *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927) as a model approach to documentary. Shub's found footage film was made up mostly of fragments of home movie footage from the elite of Soviet society. Shklovsky and others argued that this found footage restored authenticity to the film document as well as rendered the overarching film more intelligible to the masses. Two aspects of Shklovsky's argument pertain to our discussion of entextualisation and recontextualisation. First, Shklovsky and Brik (1988 [1928]) pay considerable attention to Shub's approach to the pro-filmic, arguing that her use of found footage – these already entextualised chunks – required re-scripting before she engaged with the material. In other words, what was so valuable in a found footage method was that the filmmaker had to approach any material for the first time with a textual organisation in mind – an organisation always in tension with the original filmmakers'

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[9] Hicks (2007) has demonstrated that *zhizn' vrasplokh* does not, as is commonly understood, necessarily mean filming people with a hidden camera. Rather, Vertov's writings indicate that *zhizn' vrasplokh* can also be understood as filming by means of a 'swift attack', or a rapid provocation that produces intense, honest responses. These are just two of the ways Vertov recommends to ensure authenticity and limit the performative element.

aims.[10] Engaging the already entextualised footage with a recontextualising or organisational principle in mind was seen as efficient, understood to ensure a correct political argument, and recognised as increasing intelligibility. For Shklovsky and Brik, Shub's approach to found footage countered the undesirable aspects of Vertov's emphasis on spontaneity and dynamism.

The second implication of Shklovsky's argument is to recognise that Shub's aesthetic located the document in its historical context and was intelligible because of its particular use of time and space. Shklovsky understood Shub's slower-pacing and more distanced perspective as ensuring the authenticity and intelligibility of the film document. Whereas the film's broad organisation (its recontextualisation of the entextualisations) relied on montage juxtaposition, its entextualisation of the film documents – the practice of found footage montage – operated according to a different chronotopic logic entirely. Filmmakers employing this logic are concerned with anchoring the chunks in time and space at the same time as they prepare the chunks to travel. Thus, analyses of the film's chronotopic logic have to account for the chronotopic logic governing the entextualisations and recontextualisations that occur at various levels.

Moreover, Shklovsky's emphasis on locating non-fiction material in its historical context demonstrates a commitment to engage reflexively and explicitly with what it means to entextualise and recontextualise. Shklovsky was one of the founders of Russian literary formalism and an active contributor to debates about film formalism. Shklovsky was committed to the idea that meaning in cinema derives primarily from the relationship between shots. *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* is a montage-based film, organised intuitively and associatively around a series of juxtapositions. For Shklovsky (and Shub) to argue for the centrality of the ontological authenticity of film documents was to argue that for the filmmaker, the initial entextualisation should be an *a priori* process. Placing the value of the document *alongside* that of the documentary was part of their documentary ideology about entextualisation. The fact that Shklovsky, Brik, and Shub were the ones promoting such a move highlights the changing role non-fiction film played in the Soviet Union at that time – a role shaped by a set of 1920s-specific historical conditions.

Our interest in raising this example is neither to validate Shklovsky's claim nor to celebrate a Shubian over a Vertovian method and aesthetic. Instead, the example points to how linguistic anthropological ideas can help to map any documentary ideology's stable and shifting tenets. The fact that it is unlikely that Shklovsky would ever have made such claims about fiction films points to an ideology that assumes documentaries have a

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[10] Brik (1928) writes, 'Vertov flippantly denies the need for a script in a non-played film. That is a great mistake... Vertov tries to replace the script by intertitles. He tries to give meaning to the shots through words but this tendency produces nothing like that at all. *Meaning cannot be applied to the film shot externally: it is contained within the shot itself* ... It is curious that Shub's film *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, which is composed of old film sequences, produces a much more coherent impression because its thematic and montage plan has been carefully devised'. [Reprinted in Taylor and Christie (eds.), 225–26; emphasis added]

privileged relation to the real. But his celebration of Shub's chronotopic logic (popular but hardly unanimous) also allows us to delineate a set of ideologies surrounding 1920's Soviet documentaries. Our hope is that linguistic anthropology provides useful tools for addressing why documentaries change in the ways they do over time – even within the seemingly insular world of 1920s Soviet documentary.

The Soviet case centers on the dynamic relationship between document and documentary while pointing to the ways in which the material itself (captured spontaneously or found in an archive) shapes the available approaches to it. We would like to expand this last line of thought by traversing back to the pro-filmic to consider the ways in which the initial moment of entextualisation limits or enables its future uses and points to a set of power dynamics integral to any documentary ideology. To do so, we turn to two films by Errol Morris, each of which focuses on a 'technokiller' (see Calhoun 2004).

Mr. Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred A. Leuchter, Jr. (1999) and *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara* (2003), centers on the careers and personal lives of two men who became involved in institutions of killing – Leuchter by designing various execution devices, McNamara as the US Secretary of Defence responsible for crafting Vietnam War strategy. Whereas each film is organised chronologically, the degree to which the protagonists control the film differs significantly. Leuchter, whose controversy stems from his involvement with Holocaust revisionism, comes across as the ultimate dupe, an unknowing narrator whose vanity leads to his personal and professional outcast. McNamara, who is regarded as the bellicose advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, aims to continue rehabilitating his reputation by appearing in the film and comes across as a highly skilled media performer.

Two examples from the films clarify the disparity in control the protagonists maintain. In the opening credit sequence of *Mr. Death*, Leuchter is filmed perched in a giant birdcage, a device only partially illuminated by flashing blue electric currents. Sitting in front of a control panel as lightning flashes envelop the screen space, Leuchter is established as a modern-day Dr. Frankenstein, who unknowingly engineers his own death. This is only the most vivid example of Leuchter's willingness to be placed in precarious situations. Throughout the film, Leuchter is shot performing stunts in dramatic light. Multiple times he is seen staring into a mirror or body of water that reveals his reflection. The film concludes with a shot of Leuchter strapping himself into an electric chair as he narrates a story about the implications of doing so. Each of these dramatic performances works to assert the film's claim that Leuchter's downfall results from his vanity and lack of self-knowledge. Taking the Frankenstein analogy one step further, one could say that Leuchter's participation in the film functions as another unknowing, self-imposed technological suicide.

Leuchter's verbal testimony aligns with his participation in the film's highly stylised visual landscape. His trite moralisms are uncannily undercut by his short declaratives, awkward technocratic language, and utter lack of irony. Leuchter neither possesses the verbal skill nor the media savvy to anticipate filmic recontextualisation strategically. In other words, Leuchter not only

acquiesces to Morris' aesthetic vision, his inept entextualisation strategies encourage the audience to read him as lacking social and cultural capital. As a result, his role in the film only further contributes to the downfall that began when he aligned himself with Holocaust deniers.

While *Mr. Death* raises the ethical dilemma of how best to deal with its protagonist's apparent lack of self-knowledge, *The Fog of War* has been critiqued for letting 'a pathological liar and a comically pathetic braggart' off the hook too easily (Alterman 2003). When focusing on entextualisation, it becomes apparent that *The Fog of War*'s narrative structure is strongly affected by Robert McNamara's considerable skill as an interviewee. Two examples demonstrate how McNamara distinguishes himself as an entextualiser. First, McNamara explicitly reveals his interview strategy when advising (connected to one of his lessons), 'never answer the question that is asked of you. Answer the question that you wish had been asked of you'. Later on in the film, he offers an additional strategy to employ if that one breaks down – refuse to answer the question:

> **Errol Morris:** After you left the Johnson Administration, why didn't you speak out against the Vietnam War?
> **Robert McNamara:** I'm not going to say any more than I have. These are the kinds of questions that get me in trouble …. A lot of people misunderstand the war, misunderstand me. A lot of people think I'm a son of a bitch.
> **Morris:** Do you feel in any way responsible for the war? Do you feel guilty?
> **McNamara:** I don't want to go any further with this discussion.

In this example, McNamara's outright refusal exemplifies his skill and power. For example, notice that in this refusal, McNamara is implicitly referencing the Fifth amendment and recontextualising the Constitution for his own purposes. McNamara is constantly anticipating the film that will emerge from collecting and re-arranging his words. This does not just happen within each 'lesson' of the film's segments, but shapes the narrative structures available to Morris when he is organising the documentary argument.

The contrast between the entextualising skills of our respective technokillers has two significant implications for an understanding of documentary ideology. First, it indicates ways that various entextualising strategies limit and enable future textual uses. Second, the contrast reveals the capital that comes from possessing language game skills, as well as points to the dynamics at work in any pro-filmic interaction. In other words, having the power to dictate the organisation of a film or the power to negotiate the interview technology and location creates a particular space of enunciation – one unavailable to the Fred Leuchters of the world. Thus, any study of documentary that thinks 'entextualisations all the way down', must take into account not only the limits and possibilities various entextualisations offer but also the uneven terrain on which they are initially emergent. Focusing on the power dynamics at work between those filmed and filmmakers provides insight into the skills of those filmed at entextualising.

Conclusion

In this article, we have been outlining how language ideologies can inform a concept of documentary ideologies, and how the concept of entextualisation and recontextualisation could re-figure analyses of the document's relation to the documentary. Documentary ideologies presuppose that every engagement with a documentary is a recursive one, that people's understandings of how representations and reality are linked (that is, how indexicality functions) informs the ways they make and interpret documentaries. Different communities have different documentary ideologies – filmmakers, critics, and viewers do not necessarily share the same documentary ideology. It thus becomes the task of the analyst to decipher how people think documentaries function and how this shapes their engagement with or choice of what is on the screen. While this question can be more broadly seen as one of film ideology, we have been arguing that documentaries are a distinct genre in part because of the central role that entextualisation plays in both their production and reception. People's ideologies of entextualisation here become as important as their ideologies about filmic images.

Linguistic anthropologists offer documentary scholars an analytical toolkit for tackling questions of scale (see Gal 1998). Documentaries often use the textured dialogues between two people or the immediacy of a particular setting to comment on larger social questions, such as the fairness of the legal system. The work of a film is often to create an apparently seamless link between the minutiae of interactions and larger social structures or problems. While documentary filmmakers and viewers consistently forge these links so the documentary appears effective and intelligible, scholars often analyse how these links have been made so as to be persuasive. We have proposed that linguistic anthropologists' techniques for tracing the power of indexicality is a crucial component of this task. We suggest that studying the different documentary ideologies at play when filmmakers, critics, and viewers interpret certain indexical connections as effectively forwarding a documentary's argument is a rigorous method for unpacking how documentaries establish and traverse levels of scale.

Documentary ideologies become a vantage point not only for analysing different levels of scale but also various documentary subgenres and their mutually constitutive differentiation. Extending Chanan's analysis of the ways in which documentary filmmakers manage time and space in the process of organising footage, we see the chronotopic logic as useful for distinguishing documentary subgenres (and potentially other non-fiction subgenres) as well. We have argued that linguistic anthropologists' commitment to thinking 'entextualisation all the way down', taken in tandem with Chanan's analysis, provides a useful method for evaluating chronotopic logics. By paying attention to time-space organisation of the initial entextualising moment and the mediated extraction, documentary scholars have the tools to distinguish an array of subgenres. In our examples, we detail how a focus on documentary ideologies and their corresponding chronotopic imagination might distinguish differently between observational and found footage documentaries. In particular, this shifts scholarly attention from an emphasis on documentary's organisation to a dialogical view of the document's productive

tension with the documentary. Our approach takes seriously the social dynamics of pro-filmic interactions and accounts for the ways they affect the chronotopic logics of films. This is a method that supports rigorously contextualised aesthetic analysis. It is also a method that can address nuanced changes within and across documentary genres – one that when applied to a range of films can help point to subtle, yet crucial, shifts within a particular documentary ideology.

Acknowledgements

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