>>Video Chaos

Introduction

From the outset, in this Video Chaos dissertation, through an examination of current video practices, I note an emerging trend towards disseminating audio-visual content simultaneously in the form of poly-sequential narrative structures. I argue that this is a significant development within the video medium, and as will be seen in the dissertation, this is an effect of video new media artist-practitioners’ engagement with the relationships between art and technology. Whilst a number of issues come to the fore in this research, exploring the issues of narrative structuration will be the primary focus of this dissertation.

In the context of this research, poly-sequential narratives are defined as being formed by screening either multiple frames or screens of audio-visual content alongside each other in the same space. Over time, the viewer witnessing a number of varying narratives simultaneously engages with multiple perspectives of a subject.1 Although this transformation is occurring across some film/video practices in art, media and new media, I argue that there are number of issues emerging in terms of articulating and determining these poly-sequential narrative structures. This proposition is informed by following the research objective to examine the changing conditions of video practice and theory in new media environments.

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1 Peter Weibel, “Narrated Theory: Multiple Projection and Multiple Narration (Past and Future),” in New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative, eds. Martin Rieser and Andrea Zapp (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 105-119.
Making the transition from film and television production to development of video content in new media instigated this research objective.

The book *Videography*² by Sean Cubitt is a significant starting point for examining previous research and theorisations in this area. Examining a broad range of more obscure types of video practice being produced up to the early 1990s provides Cubitt with ideas and ways of thinking which extend existing approaches towards the theorising of video practice. Importantly, this is because he is interested in expanding the types of discourse being produced on video practice and more broadly on electronic media practices.³ Likewise, analysing innovative examples of video practice in this research project provides ideas for understanding shifts currently occurring in both video practice and subsequently in the field of new media.

In addition to this, Cubitt demonstrates the transitive nature of video, a medium that takes on a wide variety of forms throughout society.⁴ This indicates that video, as a topic of research, is very broad and diverse. Hence, this research project follows a more specific line of inquiry in the length of this dissertation. A case study methodology is used to focus this research project and generate discussion on current video practices. Continuing this specialisation, the case studies are chosen from the new media categories of single-channel video and interactive video distributed on the Internet.

In establishing an analytical framework to survey the case studies, Chapter 1, *Video Theory in New Media*, engages with existing theories on both video and new media as a field of study. A crucial feature of this chapter is to establish the broader contexts for this research. Another key objective is to position this research project in the new media field. The pursuit of these objectives starts with an analysis of the concept of theorising video. This leads to formulating a broad framework for video research in new media so connections can be made between theorising video and

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³ Ibid, xi-xix.
⁴ Ibid, xi-xix.
new media research. Overall, this chapter provides the background needed to move towards setting up a more specific analytical framework to survey the case studies.

Continuing this engagement with existing theory, Chapter 2, *Surveying Video Practice*, utilises established theories in arts and media studies to formulate an analytical framework for the case studies. This includes finding an analytical model that articulates difference in terms of what is ‘new’ in the video practices being surveyed. Having made a connection between video and media studies in the previous chapter, a starting point for determining this methodology is to look at the processes used to study media. This includes examining the different theoretical ideas developed by Marshall McLuhan and Raymond Williams. These theorists’ ideas on medium and content begin to provide an analytical framework that can be applied in a new media context.

Consequently, the specific examination of the medium in a number of contemporary video practices demonstrates the way that the inherent characteristics of the technologies used have a direct effect on the structuring of the audio-visual content. Therefore, the case studies are chosen on the basis that they portray differing approaches towards the presentation of audio-visual content. The case studies, as emerging ‘new’ video and genres, are examples of video practice that are beginning to transform established audio-visual viewing conventions - as witnessed in most traditional cinema, television and music videos. In other words, these video works demand the development of different types of viewing literacies. The practitioners experiment with both the structuring of the video content and the way the audio-visual elements are integrated to create the resulting narrative form. Close examination of the case studies is found in Chapter 3, *eurovision* and Chapter 4, *Vogs*. Also included in this examination are interviews conducted with the each of the video producers (refer to interview transcripts).

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The first case study, eurovision, explores a territory between interactive video and single-channel video. Multiple streams of data streaming on the Internet into the browser window is a notion that artist Linda Wallace aims to translate into the single-channel video artwork. Using intermedia practices, a diverse range of media elements are layered together as multiple tracks of data to investigate a new form. In eurovision, film excerpts from Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957) and Jean-Luc Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967) are combined in split-screen format with TV grabs from the 'Eurovision' song contest, archival documentary footage and original video-photos recorded by the artist. All these elements are composed into a magazine-style template of separate multiple frames that screen simultaneously. In contrast, the audio is a single computer music track fusing this mix of imagery. Using recombinant video aesthetics, Wallace rigorously explores the spatiality of the frame. Splitting the screen into multiple frames instigates an engagement with poly-sequential narrative structures.

The second case study, vogs, explore new forms of interactive video by integrating video, audio, text, and still images in the hypermedia environment of the Internet. Merging cinematic practices with hypertext constructs, the video practitioner Adrian Miles experiments with what he describes as a video version of weblogs. A text-based version of an online diary, weblogs utilise hypertext links to connect to other websites and information on the Internet. Using multiple tracks of audio-visual data, in the form of "micronarratives", Miles engages with interactive poly-sequential narrative structures. These narrative configurations are realised by the user integrating a complex mix of separate audio-visual tracks in the frame.

Central to this evaluation of the case studies is the formation of connections and associations with current and emerging new media theory. This process is achieved by analysing the case studies in a number of sequential steps. Surveying both the practice and theory produced by the practitioners, this analytical process starts with

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8 Seth Keen, “Artist Profile: Linda Wallace”, *Mesh 17* Experimenta online journal (December 2004), http://www.experimenta.org/mesh/
an examination of the way the video content is presented. This initial observation provides a framework to explore the motivations of the practitioners and subsequently the broader context of each video practice. Consequently, this provides the background needed to scrutinise the methods used to integrate the audio-visual elements into the resulting narrative structures. Overall, the aim is to formulate discussion on the social and cultural influences encouraging these types of creative engagements with video as a medium. These ideas and outcomes are discussed further in the conclusion.

Finally, as a composite thesis of theory and practice, the practice has examined the topic through the production of the audio-video installation *Sugartown* and three video works, *The Hazzards, Nodal Dialectics 1*, and *boomsplatbangwhack*. While these video works exist as discrete media artworks, they also operate as a type of practice process diary for working through the ideas explored in the written dissertation. Even though the video works are not meant to literally ‘illustrate’ those ideas, they nevertheless explore ways of integrating the theoretical concepts into my own art practice. In addition to this written dissertation, a ‘Practice Report’ documents the nature and development of the practice research undertaken during the course of the study.
Chapter 1:

Video Theory in New Media

1.1 Video, a Parasite

Firstly, it is important to point out that there is no ‘video theory’ as such. This is an argument that Sean Cubitt uses in the introduction of his book *Videography*.10 Scott McQuire also takes this position in his article “Video Theory”11 in order to establish a framework for theorising video. This means that there is no pre-existing body of theory as in a conceptual totality. Cubitt, conscious of the difficulties involved in trying to frame a theory of video, states:

> There is no video theory in the way that there is a body of knowledge called film theory or, rather differently, television studies. There never will be. Not being really a simple and discrete entity, video prevents the prerequisite for a theoretical approach: that is deciding upon an object you wish to know.12

Understanding this is important because it indicates that the theorising of video has to be seen as being part of other theories rather than being self-contained. However, there is plenty of theorising occurring around video, which Cubitt engages with in his writing.

Furthermore, Cubitt argues that because the term ‘video’ is used in many differing contexts, this makes the meaning of the word unclear. The word ‘video’ is used to

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10 Cubitt, *Videography*.
12 Cubitt, *Videography*, xvi.
differentiate video equipment from film equipment. ‘Video’ is used to describe post-production processes that utilise video technologies and describe a number of video formats. The list of video formats is constantly being increased with technological advancements - old formats are superseded by new formats but the word ‘video’ remains in the technical descriptions. ‘Video’ is a term synonymous with the video rental store; the VHS format is being replaced by the DVD format, but customers still refer to feature films in this context as videos. Therefore, the word ‘video’ can be used to describe many differing types of audio-visual genres from cinema to an aerobic instruction video. With screens being developed for many varying types of audio-visual output from mobile phones to public spaces like the Sydney underground, the word video is also used to describe what Cubitt refers to as “public playback”. For example, digital technology increases the potential for the cross-media development of a television program like *Big Brother* to be distributed on a number of varying platforms including online streaming video on the Internet. Finally, the use of video technology in medical, education, military, scientific, surveillance and communication fields extends the use of the word in specific relationship to each of these contexts. Therefore, from the outset Cubitt proposes the term “video media” as a way to avoid this confusion and focus attention towards the concept of analysing video practices.

So, the term ‘video’ in the context of this research project needs to be seen in relation to the study of video practices – that is, in the way that video technologies are used to produce cultural texts. ‘Practice’ comes to be identified as being an action or execution carried out on video technologies to meet a social requirement. Therefore, current video practice techniques are analysed to detect what types of social influences are causing video theory and practice to change in new media environments. Dealing with the diversity and breadth of video as a topic of study, my research focuses on an analysis of video practice within the field of new media. The term ‘video’ is therefore used to relate to video practice within that specific field.

In effect, the concept of “video media” is also used by Cubitt to draw attention towards the multi-faceted nature of video as a medium. Video crosses into many

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13 Ibid, xi-xix.
territories and has a prolific number of varying forms. Cubitt argues that video, as a “bastard medium”, should not be considered as being a solitary, chaste medium. In fact video, porous by nature, pilfers techniques from all types of visual and audio practices. In addition, the growing accessibility of video technologies, to amateurs and artists, extends the ability to experiment with video as a ‘medium’. Therefore, new forms of video are constantly emerging due to advancing technology and its accessibility to artist-practitioners. This ongoing development also causes existing video forms to mutate and reshape into other forms. McQuire similarly identifies video as a “hybrid medium”. Like a parasite, video subsumes other media forms and constantly regurgitates different crossbreed versions of the original.

To counteract the idea of trying to work with video as a distinct independent medium, Cubitt proposes the concept of video being a transitive medium that has a presence in many aspects of everyday life and communication. For this reason, Cubitt connects video theory with the study of both culture and media. It is on this premise that he proposes that video in cultural terms is “both a symptom of the societies in which it has emerged and is being used, and a tool in their further development.” Determining video as cultural practice places the study of video within what he calls the “cultural struggle”. Therefore, instead of trying to form an independent field of video study, Cubitt suggests that any discourse on video becomes a “strand of cultural studies or media studies.” But he insists, due to the complexity of video, that the ‘medium’ also “needs to be understood in close relation to art”.

Having determined that video has integral connections with culture, media and art, Cubitt proposes that analytical methodologies used in these fields can be utilised to formulate a video theory. This approach is about making associations across a range of established fields of study. Cubitt maintains that:

14 Ibid, xv.
16 Cubitt, Videography, xv-xvii.
17 Ibid, xvii.
18 Ibid, xviii.
Looking at ideas and histories of art, film, television and music allows us to think about video in terms of similarities and differences with each mode of practice.\(^{19}\)

McQuire argues that the aim is to understand the diversity of the medium and the fluid connections video has with other creative practices, rather than focusing on the concept of video being uncontaminated like the more self-contained, defined visual arts medium of painting, for example.\(^{20}\) Following this approach, this research explores how such connections can also be extended into new media practices.

1.2 New Media Research

The methodology proposed by Cubitt (and McQuire) shares similarities with a general approach towards new media research, where the aim is to make connections and associations across a variety of disciplines in order to produce research outcomes. Currently my research is situated in the field of new media where, due to the newness of the field and the rate of change, a recognised analytical framework is still in the process of being formulated. In the article “What is New Media Research?”,\(^{21}\) Chris Chesher recognises this early stage of theoretical formulation as an asset because there are no deterministic ties to an established field of study. He proposes that research in new media integrates a broad range of disciplines. This analytical framework, he argues, suits the differing types of research possible in this field and opens up the potential for unusual outcomes. His proposal sets up a research methodology, which is about “finding connections between things that are most often considered different and unrelated.”\(^{22}\) This is similar to the research methodology Cubitt uses to analyse video practice.

However, this research topic differs from Cubitt’s analytical methodology in a number of ways. Firstly, there is a need to make new media research independent of other fields of study. Cubitt situates his research within the field of media studies. Chesher’s evaluation of new media research, however, makes a connection with

\(^{19}\) Ibid, xviii.
\(^{22}\) Ibid, 228-229.
media studies but aims to promote a separate field of study. In general terms, his objective is to avoid the strict and limiting conventions that often become synonymous with established research disciplines. Instead, he proposes an open research methodology that encourages innovative outcomes that allow for the diversity of research topics emerging in the new media field, and advocates a collective approach towards new media research generally. His idea is to prevent research in this area operating under a number of varying titles and disappearing into an unrecognised zone of inquiry.23

In addition to this, the authors Martin Lister, Jon Dovey, Seth Giddings, Iain Grant, and Kieran Kelly, in a book titled *New Media: A Critical Introduction*,24 point out that in the last two decades “the world of media and communications began to look quite different”25 and this distinct “difference” demanded the formation of new media studies. This transformation, they argue, needs to be examined independently, away from other traditional disciplines such as cinema and media studies.26 Furthermore, a significant part of this change is the result of technological advancement and new media’s intense relationship with technology. In fact, a broader study needs to be conducted on the relationship between technology and society as a part of these dramatic changes. The authors point out that new media studies are a component of such an analysis. In other words, this field transpired due to wide-ranging transformations that started to occur right through society over the last four decades.27 Lister et al. state that:

> New media are caught up with and seen as part of these other kinds of change (cause and effect) and the sense of ‘new times’ and ‘new eras’, which follow in their wake. …the emergence of ‘new media’…is seen as part of a much larger landscape of social, technological and cultural change; in short, as part of a new technoculture.28

In examining the term “technoculture”, new media studies appears to emerge from a global social, cultural and technological upheaval which requires redefinition of

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23 Ibid, 229.
25 Ibid, 10.
26 Ibid, 10-11.
27 Ibid, 10-11.
28 Ibid, 11.
the cultural meaning of technology. This includes understanding the differing forms of media and art that are produced to disseminate culture. In the book *The Second Media Age*, Mark Poster states that technological advancements provide the opportunity to redefine the exchange of ideas due to people being able to make and publish their own content. The convergence caused by technology breaks down the demarcations between different forms of media and the boundaries between professional and amateur. Both technological and cultural developments become enmeshed within what comes to be called ‘new media’. Therefore, Chesher insists that new media research should focus on examining new methods that are the result of the integration of both culture and technology. Following on from the ideas discussed above, the many significant advances in technology and the ways that video is used to produce content have instigated this inquiry. Therefore, this research project will examine how video practice can be analysed in relation to both technology and culture in new media.

1.3 New Media Technologies

As noted above, the evaluation of the relationship between society and technology is central to new media research. The use of new media technologies is an integral component of current video practice in new media. A practitioner works with technology in combination with art and media constructs. Hence, in order to conduct this research it is necessary to comprehend this relationship. Analysing this relationship within the context of new media raises the problem of a number of key approaches or perspectives about the nature of this relationship. The first approach

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30 Ibid, 3.
31 Chesher, “What is New Media Research?”, 228.
is that of ‘technological determinism’, a belief that technology evolves as a separate entity disconnected from society and that progress is solely the result of advances in technology. The opposing viewpoint is the concept that technology integrated into the fabric of society is always already affected by cultural, social, political and economic influences. This means technology, instead of being independent, is an entity that can be guided in terms of change and progress. Comprehending these two contrasting viewpoints has a considerable impact on the examination of current innovative video practices. A third position on the nature of this relationship understands it as complex and dynamic, and as the effect of the necessary interplay between technology and society.

In effect, the framing of this research relies on determining what constitutes change in the video practices analysed in the case studies. The objective is to work out what is ‘new’ in the video practices being examined. As Cubitt proposed earlier, connections and associations are made across different practices and theories to determine what could be considered as ‘new’. Following this methodology, an analysis that only covers technological advancements to determine what is ‘new’ runs the risk of becoming extraneous and disconnected from actual practices. Chesher questions a research methodology that focuses solely on evaluating developments in technology. He is cautious about research that is tied to a specific technology.

A techno-centric approach closes off more than it opens up. If a new technology emerges or an old one mutates into something different, “Internet” researchers, for example, could fast become irrelevant.

For example, if weblogs are examined purely in terms of a technology, the research outcomes end up being a report on technological advancements. This type of

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32 Daniel Chandler, “Technological or Media Determinism”, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, website http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/tecdet/tecdet.html (accessed 26th May, 2002). Scholars who study the history of communications technologies or media include historians of technology and of literacy, sociologists, economists, political scientists, anthropologists and technologists such as computer scientists. A central controversy concerns how far technology does or does not condition social change. Each commentator emphasizes different factors in technological change. No neat explanation is adequate and rigorous proof is difficult if not impossible.
33 Chesher, "What is New Media Research?", 227.
34 Ibid, 227.
analysis offers no connections with broader social and cultural influences, nor on the relationships between specific technologies and specific cultural practices. Chesher’s argument is that new media research needs to make links with broader entities outside a purely technological analysis. Accordingly, in this research project the changing parameters of new media technologies are examined in terms of how they allow practitioners to explore new forms of creative expression and practices. New media technologies are not seen as being responsible for change, but rather as a developing tool to meet social needs.

By contrast, a technologically determinist approach would identify something ‘new’ as being driven solely by technology. This notion, according to Lister et al., has broader historical connections with “modernist” principles where the practical application of scientific advances equalled improvement in the world at large. Anything new has nothing but positive connotations and therefore all new technologies will improve daily life. This way of thinking has been transferred onto an age dominated by computers and information technology. Such a modernist approach has considerable influence, they argue, on the development of new media. Phillip Roe points out that using technology to determine what is ‘new’ in new media does not allow for the discovery of factors that are instigated by social needs. He states:

> If ‘new’ is taken instrumentally and technocentrically, in a linear progression of emerging/evolving technologies, it implies little more than a technologically determinist world whose forms and events are primarily designed by software and other technology corporations.

In his article, “That-which-new media studies-will-become”, Roe argues that imaging technologies like photography are realised as part of an inclination to interpret the world around us in a certain way. This means the invention of a technology like photography occurs to meet certain social demands. This analogy in the context of this article is used to argue that new media studies are also being formulated in a

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similar way.\textsuperscript{37} Therefore, working with this premise, video practices are realised not due to technological advancements, but as part of an inclination to produce other ways of representing the world. Using Roe’s argument, identifying something ‘new’ in new media is about discovering the “social desires” that instigate the development of certain technologies. This approach presents a different view on the relationship between technology and society.

According to Judy Wajcman we tend to accept new technologies without question. This lack of critical judgement, she argues, is prompted by the influences of ‘technological determinism’. Analysing how technologies are produced, Wajcman draws attention to economic factors. Bottom-line costs play an enormous role in forming new technologies where maximising profits is a stronger determinant than the needs of the purchasers. Furthermore, this economic strategy often produces inferior technological options simply due to cost-saving measures. The fabrication and choice of technology shifts into an arena governed by political processes, setting up the potential for technology to be configured by society. In addition to this, Wajcman examines the way technology is configured. Firstly, she argues that generally new technological inventions are conceived by developing existing technologies. A clear example of this in new media is software updates, which merely extend the useability of the original software. Another example is how film editing influences the design of video non-linear editing software - the name ‘bins’ used in non-linear software comes from the cloth bin that was constructed to stop film strips from being scratched. Furthermore, Wajcman demonstrates the way technologies are integrated into the fabric of society by examining the perception of technology. A computer is an ineffective ‘physical object’ without an operator. How operators use a computer as a tool for production and communication is what determines the technology. The social connection with computers is very evident in new media, where a person is required to develop a complex range of skills and literacies to operate software. Overall, Wajcman states that technology is “a form of social knowledge, practices and products.”\textsuperscript{38} Therefore, she argues that technology

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

needs to be analysed in relation to the “social context” in which it is produced. Differing video technologies, for example, may be analysed in relation to cinema, surveillance and military contexts. Overall, it can be inferred that technology is configured by society, and at the same time, technology has an impact on society. This complex and argued relationship between technology and society is also examined by Raymond Williams in his book *Television: technology and cultural form*. His argument is that in order to study a media form like television, technology needs to be viewed pragmatically in terms of how it is utilised. Television in this instance is seen as being brought into existence as a technology due to what he calls an “intention”. This means a technology like television is developed to fulfil certain “social needs.” Williams states: “The technology would be seen, that is to say, as being looked for with certain purposes and practices already in mind.” A sharp contrast in comparison, he declares, to “technological determinist” principles, whereby television would be conceived purely due to the ongoing inquires of technological experts. Television, once it was produced and used by consumers, would then formulate parameters that influence “social change.” Basically, under this premise, Williams points out that technologically determinist principles focus on technology as being made responsible for social change. This notion, he argues, overshadows any analysis of practice and the social needs that instigated the development of the technology in the first place. Finally, his argument is that television is devised as a technology to facilitate certain social requirements, which are realised through the development of practices that use that technology. Following this viewpoint, video practices change not to meet technological advances, but the demands of changing social needs.

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39 Ibid, 3-14.
41 Ibid, 7.
43 Ibid, 121-139.
1.4 Medium and Technology

The relationship between medium and technology also needs some clarification. The notion of ‘medium’ essentially emerges from McLuhan in the 1960s. For McLuhan, a medium is equivalent to a technology, a notion which suggests a technologically determinist orientation. Jim Andrews in an article titled “McLuhan Reconsidered”\textsuperscript{44} provides a more recent viewpoint in terms of applying McLuhan’s theories to the study of new media. Although Andrews defends McLuhan’s theories, he does examine the criticism that McLuhan’s ideas are technologically determinist. Andrews focuses on McLuhan’s idea that media are technological “extensions of men” - that technologies actually add to our bodies either mentally or physically like an extra appendage. He states this notion of technology is important because of the way it introduced the idea that technology affects “individuals and their habitual modes of perception.” An extreme example of this concept is the cinematic movie The Terminator\textsuperscript{45} in which the actor Arnold Schwarzenegger becomes a type of cyborg – a cross between a robot and a human being. But Andrews argues that McLuhan proposed that although technologies change people, they do not actually transform people into a technology. A technology like the Internet, for example, offers the opportunity to broaden human visual and aural capacities. Therefore, the Internet, following McLuhan, is both a medium and a technology.

In fact, the concept of a medium effecting our sensory perceptions is demonstrated further in Mark Elsom-Cook’s definition of the term. He proposes that all information is communicated through a sensory perception – “sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell”,\textsuperscript{46} which he calls modalities. A range of differing kinds of information can be received through each of these modalities. Using video as an example, we receive through sight and hearing varying kinds of vision and sound. The vision may include text, moving imagery and stills. The sound may include voice, music and sound effects. Elsom-Cook calls each of these differing types of audio-visual data

\textsuperscript{45}James Cameron, Director, The Terminator, Feature Film, Duration 108 min., (1984).
“channels”. Video therefore utilises two modalities, sight and hearing, and a number of varying channels in different combinations to communicate cultural texts and content. A true medium, Elsom-Cook claims, develops a scenario where a multitude of channels are integrated in a way where they work together in unison. A specific example of this in the video production process is the sound mix, where voice, music and sound effects are integrated into one track so the viewer can comprehend them. Also, he argues that a medium is established through a process of convention. In the example of video, the receiver of the audio-visual content learns to develop, through gradual exposure to a specific media form, the viewing literacies needed to comprehend the content.47 He therefore states that a ‘medium’ is:

A set of co-ordinated channels spanning one or more modality which have come, by convention, to be referred to as a unitary whole, and which possess a cross-channel of interpretation.48

His definition makes a connection with McLuhan’s idea that a medium affects the way we perceive aural and visual content, but also Elsom-Cook draws attention to the idea of conventions being part of social paradigms. This is a notion that leads to Raymond Williams’s views on the relationship between medium and technology.

Contrary to McLuhan’s argument, Raymond Williams, who has also had a significant influence on the study of media, understands a medium as being directly connected to practice. He opposes the idea that a medium is a technology. Instead, he argues that when a technology is utilised in a specific way to convey meaning, the outcome of this engagement becomes a medium. Therefore, the medium of television is formed by utilising audio-visual technologies with the objective to convey meaning in a certain way. Lister et al. examine Williams’s concept of a medium by dividing the practice of photography into two distinct processes in order to point out the differences between technology and a medium. Firstly, they argue that there is a “photographic technology” - a specific technological process that has been devised to capture light and translate that light into visible images. They argue that using this technological process in the production of computers, for example,

47 Ibid, 3-5.
48 Ibid, 5.
demonstrates that photography in this instance is a technology not a medium. Instead, photography becomes a medium when photographic technologies are utilised to convey meaning. In this context, Lister et al. state: “the technology of photography is being used as a medium of communication, expression, representation or imaginative projection.” Therefore, the technology becomes the tool in the production process of conveying an idea in the form of a photo. In other words, the reason for conducting the production process is not instigated by the technology. To sum up, photography becomes a medium through the development of specific types of practice techniques using photographic technologies. These practices, according to Williams, are determined by social and cultural influences, not technology.

Another important part of Williams's analysis is the relationship between a medium and practice. In a section titled “From Medium to Social Practice”, he argues that there is a misunderstanding about what defines practice. Historically, a medium was viewed conceptually in two different ways. Firstly, the term ‘medium’ was used to describe early media forms that emerged as a means to convey information to a mass audience. The term in this context became synonymous with the term ‘media’ and is seen as being interchangeable with that term. Using my own example, television is a media form or a medium that is used to broadcast audio-visual content to an audience. Secondly, and around the same time, the term ‘medium’ was used to describe the raw material used by artists in painting. In these early stages, a ‘medium’ in this context was described as being “any liquid in which pigments could be mixed.” This understanding of the term, Williams argues, led to the notion of connecting more broadly the characteristics of raw materials with the specific practices used to produce artistic content. Williams states that:

> The properties of the medium were abstracted as if they defined the practice, rather than being the means. This interpretation then suppressed the full sense of practice, which has always been defined as work on a material for a specific purpose within certain social conditions.

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49 Lister et al., *New Media: A Critical Introduction*, 83.
50 Ibid, 83.
51 Ibid, 83.
53 Ibid, 159.
54 Ibid, 160.
This is an important point to be considered in the surveying of video practice, when this analysis focuses on the medium rather than the content. Finally, Williams’s argument also leads towards connecting changes occurring in video practice with ongoing social needs.

Following the argument that video practice and technologies are shaped by social needs, the objective of this analysis is to detect patterns that indicate these varying types of social needs. Understanding these social directions will lead to a better comprehension of what is required in terms of both video practice and theory in new media environments. Overall, making connections with broader social and cultural influences creates an opportunity to comment on the broader field of new media.

In summary, this contextual framework begins to sketch an outline for my analysis of the following case studies. Video as a transitive medium is connected with the study of culture and media (1.1). The field of New Media is separated from other well-established disciplines, like Media Studies, for two key reasons. Firstly, due to the scale of change that has occurred culturally as part of technological advances, New Media demands a separate field of study. Secondly, as part of this demand for a separate field of study, there is the opportunity to develop an analytical framework that caters for the innovative and diverse outcomes occurring in New Media (1.2). Studying video practice in New Media therefore involves analysing new methods that emerge as the result of the integration of both technology and culture. In this analysis technology is not autonomous, isolated from society. Video practice is examined in terms of the way practitioners engage with both new media technologies and culture. The ‘new’ aspects of these video practices are methods that reflect not so much the advances in technology but the social desires being promulgated by society, both explicitly and implicitly (1.3, 1.4). Evaluating the changes that are occurring in video practice provides an insight into the types of social desires that are emerging as part of what Cubitt calls the ongoing “cultural struggle”.

**Chapter 2:**
2.1 Medium and Content

From the outset, Marshall McLuhan, although controversial, is still seen as having a significant influence on the way Media is studied. In what was fast becoming a media saturated environment in the 1960s he focused attention away from thinking about the content of media to a consideration of the medium itself, a concept encapsulated in his famous quote “the medium is the message”. In his book *Understanding Media*, McLuhan uses a number of examples repeatedly to get this concept across, including a reference to Cubist painting. In this example, he discusses the way Cubist painters introduced a style of painting that was intended to encourage viewers to move beyond looking purely at the content in a painting. Instead of reproducing a scene using paint, these painters took up the challenge of representing a scene from a number of perspectives on the flat surface of the canvas. This process created a situation where the scene was being viewed from varied angles at the same time. McLuhan argues that this shifts the viewers’ perception from the content to a consideration of the painting technique which drew attention to the framing of the scene and its representedness. He states:

> Is it not evident that the moment the sequence yields to the simultaneous, one is in the world of structure and of configuration?56

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55 Ibid.
56 Ibid, 13.
Abandoning a focus on reproducing a singular and totalising viewpoint that culminates in a point on the horizon plane, as in conventional modes of three-point perspective, the fragmented multivalent scene in a Cubist painting requires the viewer to shift their attention onto analysing the arrangement of the colour and form within the picture frame\textsuperscript{57}. Hence, the viewer is asked to think not about the content but painting as a medium. The painting technique, rather than the content, is recognised as having an effect on the viewer.

However, in proposing this concept McLuhan did cause some confusion about the role content plays in the analysis of media. In the book \textit{Digital McLuhan},\textsuperscript{58} Paul Levinson examines this issue by imposing McLuhan’s theories onto an era influenced by digital technologies. Levinson argues that McLuhan's concept “the medium is the message” was misconstrued as meaning that the content in media did not need to be analysed. But Levinson points out that a medium would not exist without an element of content.\textsuperscript{59} In the Cubist period, Herbert Read argues, although many of the painters declared that they were not concerned with the content, they did nevertheless gravitate collectively towards imagery that had a direct relationship with their artistic lifestyle at that time. The people, objects and scenes they encountered became the content that they processed through their cubist style of painting.\textsuperscript{60} Furthermore, Levinson points out that if a computer had no operating system and the varied types of software required to produce content, they would not “be anything other than an interesting piece of junk”.\textsuperscript{61} McLuhan’s aim was to make people aware of the characteristics of a medium and how those characteristics could structure the way content is perceived.

\textbf{2.2 Video Feedback}

\textsuperscript{57} ibid, 13-14.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, 35.
\textsuperscript{60} Herbert Read, \textit{A Concise History of Painting} (London: Thames and Hudson. first published 1959, reprinted 1969), 97.
\textsuperscript{61} Levinson, \textit{Digital McLuhan}, 5.
Take, for example, the video artwork *TV Buddha*\(^{62}\) by Nam June Paik, and the way this work displays a specific characteristic of video as a medium. In this gallery installation, a cast statue of a Buddha faces a video camera, which records an image of the Buddha. The Buddha stares at an image of itself on the monitor placed underneath the video camera. The content displayed on the screen is the unchanging image of the stone Buddha. The content in this work is minimal, focusing the attention of the viewer onto characteristics of the medium. This image recorded in real-time demonstrates the closed-circuit potential of video, where an image can be recorded and played back with only a slight time delay. McQuire names this characteristic “instantaneity”, and argues that this is one attribute of video that differentiates the medium from film, which requires lengthy processing before an image can be viewed. Discussing ways to theorise video, McQuire identifies this characteristic as being particular to video and a phenomenon that extends through artworks like *TV Buddha*. McQuire argues that Paik uses “instantaneity” to structure the way that the viewer perceives the content.\(^{63}\) In a similar way that a scene is re-configured in the medium of Cubist painting, video is used to alter perceptions of time and space.

More concretely still, Paik drew attention to television as a medium by revealing the video technologies behind the content. Instead of re-contextualising content to make a comment on television as a media form, Paik chose to promote an awareness of television by working with the video technologies directly. Consequently, this artistic approach towards video caused Paik to be instrumental in establishing video as an art form. John Hanhardt’s statement on Paik’s video art reiterates this point:

> He transformed the very instrumentality of the video medium through a process that expressed his deep insights into electronic technology and his understanding how to reconceive television, “to turn it inside out” and render something entirely new.\(^{64}\)

In *Magnet TV*,\(^{65}\) this approach is demonstrated by the use of a magnetic device to disrupt and alter the video signal on a television set. The result of this interference

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\(^{63}\) McQuire, “Video Theory”, 5-8.


\(^{65}\) Ibid, 115.
was displayed on the television screen in the form of minimal abstract patterns. Again, this minimal content focused the attention of the viewer onto the electronic signal and video as a medium. Continuing experimentation with this idea, Paik developed with a technician a video synthesizer device. The synthesizer, like the magnet, enabled him to manipulate the electronic signal of the original recorded images and demonstrate further the concept of television content merely being a broadcast electronic signal. Working with the technologies used to produce television, Paik explored the medium rather than the content.

2.3 Video Structures

An analysis of the above video examples from Paik begins to provide a framework to survey video practice in new media. These two works demonstrate a connection with the specific characteristics of video technologies and how these characteristics can be used to structure content. As McQuire pointed out, a characteristic like “instantaneity” becomes a defining attribute of video as a medium. In other words, the ability to utilise video feedback to present audio-visual content is what makes video distinct from the medium of film, for example. The notion that specific characteristics of a medium and subsequently the technologies used may effect the way content is structured, is more complex and diverse in new media practice. Differing software, along with the convergent nature of digital technologies, presents a broad, varied range of technical characteristics to comprehend as a part of analysing different video practices. For example, interactive video published on the Internet using QuickTime software raises considerations not only of the video authoring, but also hypermedia and networked environments. Comprehension of the characteristics of these technologies is needed in order to consider what effect

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67 Hypermedia definition: http://www.pcwebopaedia.com/TERM/H/hypermedia.html (accessed 16th November, 2004.) An extension to hypertext that supports linking graphics, sound, and video elements in addition to text elements. The World Wide Web is a partial hypermedia system since it supports graphical hyperlinks and links to sound and video files. New hypermedia systems under development will allow objects in computer videos to be hyperlinked.
they may have on the structuring of the content and ultimately the practice of working with video on the Internet.

This leads to thinking about the ‘form’ in relationship to the way that content is structured in video work. Williams analyses the definition of ‘form’ and raises conflicting viewpoints on the differences between “form and content”. One theoretical standpoint advocates a connection with social influences compared to a conflicting point of view that identified this difference as being determined purely by “aesthetic” evaluations. Following the historical progression on the use of the term in the study of artworks, Williams proposes that this examination may focus on “the formation of a work, which requires a specific analysis of its elements in a particular organization.” In Cubist painting the process of presenting fragments of varying perspectives together, introduces a shift towards an analysis of form over content. The image is analysed by examining the way the content is arranged on the canvas. Analysing Picasso’s Cubist painting, Read queries his progression towards monochromatic tones and the formation of planes based on "light and shade". Read points out that Picasso defined his Cubist painting as “an art dealing primarily with forms, and when a form is realized, it is there to live its own life”. This perspective influences the way video practice is examined in the case studies. Current video practices exhibited as video art and new media art are diverse and complex in terms of form.

For example, Finola Jones’s video work *Artificially Constructed Habitats*, exhibited in 2004 at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space, demonstrates this complexity. In brief, the essayist Maeve Connolly introduces this video installation “as urban vignettes, documenting fragments of human and animal behaviour.” Looking at the set-up of the installation the work includes 22 monitors grouped into seven clusters of varying monitor numbers, along with two large screen projections. This is

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69 Ibid, 139.
71 Ibid, 78.
a total of 23 channels of video. The audio consists of two channels of ambient sound distributed through the gallery on the same speakers but integrated across two amplifiers. This audio loop is not synched to any of the looping video imagery. Therefore, this audio has a separate and random relationship to the video imagery. In addition to this, two of the TV monitors emit another two channels of audio separately. On DVD format this audio is synched to the video and loops consistently in synch with the moving-imagery. The configuration of audio-video channels and the method of screening are often used to describe moving-image work. In the *Remembrance and the Moving Image*\(^74\) exhibition at the Australia Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne, each artist’s video work is described in the catalogue in terms of the type of audio-video configuration. This also includes differentiating interactive video from linear screened works, where an active user is required instead of a passive viewer.

Another aspect to consider in *Artificially Constructed Habitats* is the cycle of the moving-imagery content, which on DVD format is looping continuously and again producing random relationships between each screen. Consequently, over the period of the install it will be unlikely that there will be the same configuration of moving-imagery at any one time across all the screens. This method of presentation is facilitated by the ability to loop using the DVD format as the distribution platform, a structural influence that was not available with analogue video without rewinding the tape format supplied. Finally, as a part of displaying the material across multiple screens, full-screen colour dividers are used to separate and locate each “vignette” within the simultaneous screening of all of the content. This use of full-screen solid colour creates an added visual resonance not only individually on each screen but also across all the screens. The moving-imagery within this multi-screen environment remains full-screen, meaning that the screen on each monitor is not split into frames. Instead, multiple monitors positioned in clusters create a split-screen effect. The artist Finola Jones envisaged this content screened in a multi-channel environment. She identified these structural elements as playing a significant role in the perception of the audio-visual content. The artist has

consciously configured the arrangement of the screens so that the content has to be experienced in multiple perspectives. The point being made through using this example is that an examination of the structure of a video work provides ideas towards identifying new forms of video practice.

Another brief example of this concept is the audio-visual work *Familiar Circuits*,75 exhibited at the Foreshore Space in Canberra. Video artist Michael Ashcroft uses a VJing software application called *Isadora*76 to author the video content. This application, normally used for live performances, was installed in the space to run automatically over the period of the exhibition. The video presented as a three-channel installation did not loop like the locked-off DVD format discussed earlier. Instead, the video imagery passes through an array of patches77 which are designed to alter the scene durations over the duration of the exhibition. Cycles of differing scene duration changes run concurrently on the three screens. These changes are controlled by using programming and offer effectively an infinite amount of multilinear visual combinations across the three screens, over the period of the exhibition. Similarly, the narrative structuration is locked-off as in Jones’s use of multiple DVD loops. But in *Familiar Circuits*, the boundaries of each looping scene can be manipulated into a variation of structures that alter over time. *Isadora* as a video technology offers the potential to explore this method of presentation and subsequently use this type of structuring to affect how the content is interpreted. In conclusion, new video technologies provide opportunities to experiment with the way video is structured for presentation.

76 *Isadora* definition, Application designer Troika Ranch, [http://www.troikaranch.org/isadora.html](http://www.troikaranch.org/isadora.html) (accessed 16th November 2004): *Isadora* is a graphic programming environment that provides interactive control over digital media, with special emphasis on the real-time manipulation of digital video. An *Isadora* program is created by linking together graphically represented building blocks, each of which performs a specific function: playing or manipulating digital video, capturing live video, looking for MIDI input, controlling a DV camera, etc. By linking the modules together you can create complex interactive relationships.
77 *Patch* definition: [http://www.webopedia.com](http://www.webopedia.com) A patch is an actual piece of object code that is inserted (patched into) an executable program.
Furthermore, determining how content is structured using video technologies raises a crucial issue with regards to this research project. For example, differing mediums like DVD and the Internet require the content to be structured differently. Interactive video as a form of hypermedia is a prime example of this paradigm. The conventional practice techniques of scripting used for film and television will not necessarily translate into the pre-production of interactive video content. Video practice therefore often involves the defining of new practice techniques that work with the differing structural configurations of new media platforms. The content is selected and configured in relation to these structural parameters. Paik’s video art TV Buddha (discussed earlier) is a prime example of this process. This installation would not have the same resonance if another object had been used in place of the stone Buddha. McQuire, in examining the video characteristic of instantaneity, draws attention to the way the Buddha reiterates this characteristic:

The Buddha, who sought to keep himself free from all external impressions by immersing himself in mystic contemplation, is confronted by his own image.78

Paik, interested in displaying the video characteristic of instantaneity to the viewer, selects the content to emphasise this attribute. Therefore, I propose that in the case studies the way video content is structured becomes the starting point for examination. The medium is being analysed rather than the content. This relates to the way Cubist painting is examined (as discussed earlier).

It follows then that the next two sections place the case studies in the context of surveying video practice. Introducing the case studies eurovision and the practice of Vogging in this chapter provides an insight into the motivations of the practitioners and subsequently their approach towards the structuring of the audio-visual content. Another aspect of these introductory sections is to point out the differences between the case studies in terms of what they provide this research project.

2.4 eurovision

78 McQuire, “Video Theory”, 8.
eurovision is a single-channel video produced by the artist Linda Wallace for gallery exhibition. Wallace has a diverse background in photography, cinematography, radio, journalism and publishing, experiences she brought together in the media company machine hunger, formed in 1995. This diversity, in combination with curating a range of international media arts exhibitions, informs her art practice, which has embraced the convergence of media and art in the medium of video. Her obsession with the transitive nature of video has successively involved short pieces and multi-monitor installations; large multi-screen public installations produced through machine hunger; digitally-composited single-channel video; and she is now returning to installation and public space works. Wallace’s developing focus on the simultaneous screening of mixed media forms using multiple screens or frames within the screen is transferred onto eurovision. The split-screen technique is gradually becoming more prevalent in television and cinema, like in the TV series Spooks or the film Timecode for example, but few practitioners are applying more experimental approaches in terms of the narrative potential of this form of presentation (refer to Images 1,2 & 3).

A major influence on the structuring of the video content in eurovision is Wallace’s interest in the Internet. This video project originated from the concept of the viewer being able to watch varying types of data being streamed off a server into a single frame. An alternative version of eurovision was authored as an interactive video onto a DVD but the artist prefers the work to be screened as a single-channel projection, where the user cannot break up the progression of the narrative. In a review, Anna Munster states:

79 Linda Wallace, Living Tomorrow is a research project into the potential of narrative emergence. The work features a number of concurrent video streams drawn from a database of video fragments of various lengths. These are to be streamed at high resolution over the Dutch Gigaport network, which connects various cultural and academic institutions. http://www.machinehunger.com.au/LivingTomorrow/essay.html
81 Mike Figgis, Director, Timecode, Feature Film 35mm, Duration 97 min., Columbia Pictures (2000).
Confounding genre specification, and therefore implicitly resisting relegation to either digital or time-based media, it boldly announces its status as a linear version of an interactive project.  

To some extent, a video monitor being used like a computer hooked into the network has contributed to the artist taking up a doctoral scholarship award with the Advanced Computational Systems Cooperative Research Centre at The Australian National University. This centre provided high-speed bandwidth access and the artist could develop “narrative structures or literary adaptations and software” that extend the potentialities of these new technologies. In her PhD report on the production of *eurovision*, Wallace describes the narrative as being closer to an interactive narrative than a traditional linear narrative. She proposes that the narrative structure of *eurovision* uses and extends the fundamental structures of traditional linear narrative and also goes beyond what is the “commonly understood ‘interactive’ narrative experience, where each sequence takes us further on in the ‘classic’ narrative pattern.”

*eurovision* draws attention to the explorative potential of a video practice that falls between interactive video and traditional linear narrative video. This was a concept I had not considered when I set out on this research, the idea of a video practice where interactive narrative structures are developed on the surface of the screen. The predominant push when I started this research (at the end of the dotcom boom) was motivated by a rush to work with interactivity in a distribution mode like CD-Rom using complex software such as Macromedia Director. Exploring interactive narrative structures on the screen in *eurovision* specifically involves the fragmentation of the screen, a practice technique Wallace stressed, in the interview, as being very under-explored. Wallace refers to the video works in the book *Stuff it*:

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82 Anna Munster, “The Screen Divided” *RealTime* magazine, no. 53 (Feb/March 2003), 22.
83 Linda Wallace (Producer *eurovision*), interview by Seth Keen (February 2004).
The Video Essay in the Digital Age\textsuperscript{86} as an example of the few video practitioners who are experimenting with the spatial dynamics of the screen. But this book does demonstrate in broader terms the continuing development of narrative structures in single-channel video production and how this progression is being influenced by both advancing digital video technology and the emergence of new media forms. This exploration is being led by the pursuit of an argument in the form of a visual essay. Wallace described her own narrative pursuits as being driven by a “strong argument… more conceptual means much more in the direction of conceptual art.”\textsuperscript{87} This video practice is defined by the ability to integrate a complex mix of data into poly-sequential narrative structures.

2.5 Vogging

In contrast, the second case study focuses specifically on a practice called Vogging\textsuperscript{88}, a video genre invented and named by the practitioner Adrian Miles. Vogging is part of the emerging genre on the Internet called ‘videoblogs’. The weblog (or blogs) phenomenon originated on the Internet as a text based medium. In videoblogs, video replaces text as the principal medium. Miles teaches the theory and practice of hypermedia and interactive video in the Media Studies degree program at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). This video practice forms part of his academic research. Interested in investigating the potential of interactive video as an interactive medium, he uses weblogs as a framework to explore interactive video within the new media environment of the Internet. Therefore, Vogging is a form of hypermedia - a video media form that is influenced by interactivity and hypertextual multilinear structures. eurovision, in contrast, takes hypertextual multilinear concepts and transposes them back onto the linear structure of single-channel video (refer to Image 4).

\textsuperscript{87} Wallace, interview, 2004.
\textsuperscript{88} Adrian Miles video weblog website, “videoblog:vog 2.0”, \url{http://hypertext.rmit.edu.au/vog/} (accessed April 10, 2002).
Also, it is important to understand Miles’s objective to explore and research innovative approaches towards video in the field of new media. He aims to formulate and trial new audio-visual viewing conventions. In other words, a viewer that uses conventional cinematic and televisual viewing conventions will find it difficult to comprehend this video practice. As Miles is an academic in a Media Department, the vogging practice offers the potential to explore audio-visual narrative structures that engage with the characteristics of a networked milieu. The practice outcomes are utilised for theoretical papers and as part of ongoing curriculum development. Miles also proposes as part of his digital video teaching that students learn three possible stages of production skills: the first covering traditional media skills in cinema and television; the second “re-purposing” older media forms for distribution on new platforms. Mark Pesce discusses the process of “re-purposing” in the paper “The New Reality for Producers” and refers to this process as producing for “cross-media” platforms. The development of the *Lord of the Rings* cinema series is an example Pesce uses to demonstrate this point:

> From day one, it was conceived of not just as a series of movies, but also as a series of games, DVDs, and other media properties. Both the production schedule and budget were designed to allow all of these projects, progressing simultaneously, to reinforce each other.

New media platforms can therefore provide wider distribution beyond the cinema screening and the rental video store. The third video production stage, Miles argues, is to create an education environment where students are encouraged to pursue the “development of new objects”. He proposes that the role of education in new media is to take ideas to industry. These three areas of video practice demonstrate the expanding hybrid nature of video content and the convergence of audio-visual practices across old and new media forms.

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90 Ibid.

91 Miles, Interview, 11.

92 Ibid, 10 -11.
Furthermore, this case study on vogging practice extends the analysis of multilinear narrative structuration in this research project. The open-ended nature of the Internet and Graphic User Interface (GUI) demand other narrative approaches compared to locked-off single-channel video works, like *eurovision*. Central to the multilinear characteristic of hypertext is the ability to construct relationships between multitudes of disparate forms of media. In videoblogs, audio, moving-imagery, photos and text are linked together into multilinear structures that replicate the rhizomatic pathways of the Internet. The user mixes these varying separate media elements together into combinations authored by the video blogger. Therefore, in *eurovision* the multilinear structures are pre-composed and finalised or locked-off on the surface of the screen. In the vogging practice the user initiates multiple connections across a multitude of audio-visual data as part of engaging with the GUI.

To sum up, the two case studies are chosen as part of investigating multilinear narrative structuration across both single-channel and interactive video. In terms of surveying video practice, as discussed earlier, the differing characteristics of the mediums being used have an effect on the narrative structuration process.
Chapter 3:

Case Study One

3.1 Introduction

eurovision was chosen as a case study because I was initially interested in the way eurovision uses the video compositing software (Adobe After Effects)\(^9^3\) to achieve a complex split-screen presentation. Further, not many DV practitioners are experimenting in such a focused way with what is described in Wallace’s accompanying PhD dissertation as “multiple streams into one frame”.\(^9^4\) Authored over a significant period of time, eurovision follows a meticulous approach towards working with the spatial and temporal dynamics of the frame. This very thorough experimentation is noted by Munster: “There are relatively few examples of rigorous investigations into the formal, technical possibilities and aesthetic implications of digital video.”\(^9^5\) In direct relation to this, eurovision also employs a recombinant video aesthetic to integrate a range of pre-existing media forms. This, in combination with splitting the screen, presents an integration process that differs from traditional linear editing. The resulting narrative challenged the methods I


\(^9^5\) Munster, “The Screen Divided”, 22.
normally used to interpret most traditional cinema and television. *eurovision* is an example of innovative video practice, which demonstrates a number of new approaches towards using digital video technologies to present video content.

This chapter is broken into two main sections. The first section establishes a visual framework which examines the practice techniques applied to this particular video work. This includes looking at the re-use of existing media, the materiality of video as a range of formats and the integration methods used to present a diverse range of data within a single screen (3.2). The second section utilises this background to examine the motivations behind the narrative structuration (3.3). This examination covers three main concepts: firstly, the notion of an essayist approach towards narrative (3.4); secondly, the splitting of the screen and the way space is used to produce poly-sequential narrative structures (3.5); and finally, this narrative analysis culminates in the notion of a cultural shift towards new types of viewing literacies (3.6).

### 3.2 Recombinant Video

In an interview, Wallace talks about the way video constantly devours other media and new “technological developments.” It is the porous nature of the medium that prompts her to use video to re-use various media. In techniques which hark back to Guy Debord’s ‘detournement’ of the 1960s or the Scratch video of the 1980s, she re-uses and re-mixes images and text to re-contextualise the original sources in another form. Conceptually, Munster describes this remix as “offer[ing] a darker sense of a more alienated Europe.”96 Wallace herself describes her work generally as being fixed on “the crisis articulated by Pop in the sixties.”97 In effect, the pop culture art movement primarily from the 1950s to 60s demonstrates clearly the reuse of media material as part of producing an artwork. The early “Campbell’s Soup” screenprint series by the artist Andy Warhol is an early example of this idea.

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96 Munster, “The Screen Divided”, 22.  
A more direct example of media re-use is the 1963 *Saturday Disaster* screenprints of photos of a horrific car crash. A news photographer’s photos are re-contextualised for arts exhibition\(^98\) and extended by the way digital technologies allow easy access to the copying, reproduction, and creation of virtual imitations of the world around us. Overall, in *eurovision*, the remix brings together visual imagery from different eras and contexts, all integrated aurally with a single audio track of contemporary computer music. Chris Rose, writing about the artist’s latest work *entanglements*\(^99\), describes this process as the “re-use and manipulation of media (cinema, internet, analogue video, television) by digital video.”\(^100\)

Wallace’s motivation in relation to re-using media forms emerges from a keen interest in exploring and re-using existing media, an interest demonstrated in the title of her thesis accompanying her practice – *Material Media: Artifacts from a Digital Age*. The main argument of this thesis is that artists through their re-interpretation of existing media are causing a fundamental transformation in the “expression and the formal properties of the medium.”\(^101\) Examining the historical development of film/video recombinant practices, Peter Weibel points out that a significant motivation for artists using this technique is the opportunity to critique media by re-using existing media. He also makes a connection between recombinant practices and splitting the screen. Dividing up the screen provided a method to produce associations across a mix of media forms.\(^102\) The proposal put forward by Wallace is that in re-using media, artists activate the potential to generate “something new”.

Crucial to the narrative construction of *eurovision* is the remixing of a number of video formats. Two well-known feature films are structured around four different nationalities of song contestants from the ‘Eurovision’ TV series. Film excerpts from Ingmar Bergman’s *The Seventh Seal* (1957) and Jean-Luc Godard’s *Two or Three*...

\(^{102}\) Peter Weibel, “Narrated Theory: Multiple Perspectives and Multiple Narration (Past and Future)”, *New Screen Media Cinema/Art/Narrative*, eds. Martin Riesler and Andrea Zapp (London: British Film Institute, 2001), 49.
Things I Know About Her (1967) dominate the screen space alongside other smaller scale visual material. The film excerpts are captured from VHS tapes and the eurovision song contest excerpts are recorded off live television. This second and third generation source material is used in the final screened version. This includes archival documentary footage and original video-photos recorded by the artist. The video-photos, recorded while travelling in Europe, include transitional video sequences shot in a European train station. This element is highly compressed using the software After Effects and is one of the few recordings that is modified using visual effects. Predominantly in eurovision most of the varying formats represent the material as it has been captured. This means the data is not treated or changed with digital effects to hide the original format of each media form. Interested in the differing tonal qualities of video formats, the differing types of images offer resonance in terms of narrative construction and the transformation of context.\footnote{Wallace, ed., testpattern, 1.} All of these varying formats digitised into the computer become one form of data, namely binary code, but the digitising process brings into this environment all the resonances of the original material. The artist states that: “The digital process doesn’t destroy the materiality of the source elements, instead their history is still their materiality – it is written all over them so to speak.”\footnote{Wallace, “Report”, Material Media, 38.} In eurovision the computer becomes like a pot for cooking: each ingredient or differing media form is digitised into the system to see how it will effect the emerging content.

A powerful example of our understanding of how a format can influence narrative is in the film “Sex, Lies and Videotape”\footnote{Steven Soderbergh, Director, Sex, Lies, and Videotape, Feature Film, 101 min. (August 1989).} by the director Steven Soderbergh (1989). The textual quality of home movie footage is used to develop a sense of intimacy and private connection with the viewer. The confessions of an actor in the film, recorded on handycam, develop a powerful resonance with the viewer through a domestic familiarity with this format. eurovision and the artist’s following work entanglements demonstrate the ability for video practitioners to work with the resonances of older historical media and new forms of video technologies. The military night vision video used in the Iraq war is recorded off television and reused.
in the artwork entanglements. This night vision video has a monochromatic high contrast green tonal quality. This video footage used countless times in 2003 Iraq war news broadcasts becomes identified with this event and with the technologies of war. The visual quality of this footage is used as a device to develop the terrorist theme of this video work. Instead of altering each media form with digital effects, the textuality of each media form is used for narrative effect.

In regards to the manipulation of pre-produced media forms, Manovich draws attention to the way that the original media source becomes irrelevant in a digital context. In cinema production “live-action footage” becomes what he calls a “raw material” that is produced to be altered using computer software. The concept is to use this material simply as data in a process which sets out to fabricate another form of reality not necessarily representative of the original source material. In addition, this “live-action footage” can be created entirely within a computer independent of any recording apparatus – the camera. Therefore any “live-action footage,” regardless of the means of recording, is simply data that can be used to create content. Manovich notes that “the very distinction between creation and modification” is no longer relevant in a digital environment. In a similar fashion any pre-produced media recorded and digitised into the computer for re-use takes on the same malleability as data produced for cinema production.

Therefore, sampling and remixing, with the advent of digital technologies, become the lingua franca of many new media practitioners. This quote from a declaration of principles put forward by the Cyberpunk arts collective titled “Cyber Dada Manifesto” reflects this concept: “DIGITISE THE WORLD. (A new life awaits you). TECHNOLOGY is speeding ahead...Take technology apart and see what it really is! Reuse everything!” Following this idea, artists are sampling data from numerous

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107 Ibid, 302.
108 Cyber Dada Manifesto http://project.cyberpunk.ru/idb/cyberdada.html (accessed 1st April 2004). The Cyberpunk Project (TCP) is a remotely available net of files about cyberpunk subculture, cyberpunk science fiction and general cybculture in the form of free information. This is an open directory, hosting related documents and literate work.
places rather than producing original content. In an article titled “Ideas in the Mix,” Bernard Schutze argues that we function in a “remix culture”. He writes:

*Mix, mix again, remix: copyleft, cut 'n' paste, digital jumble, cross-fade, dub, tweak the knob, drop the needle, spin, merge, morph, bootleg, pirate, plagiarize, enrich, sample, break down, reassemble, multiply input source, merge output, decompose, recompose, erase borders, remix again.*

But Schultze points out that there are distinct differences between how mass media organisations reuse media compared to artists. The “copyright” protected commercially orientated organisations merely regurgitate in a slightly different context what already exists. This is in contrast to artists who advocate a paradigm of, in Schultze’s words, “creative borrowing and sharing.” A part of this position he proposes is again to explore, and experiment towards the creation of something “new”. *eurovision* is an example of this remixing spectacle and sits within this artistic framework of remixing.

### 3.3 Video Fusion

The first evidence of the video screen becoming an interface comparable to a browser window in *eurovision* is found in the notion of layouts used in desktop publishing. Historically, the Internet has developed from being a text-based medium into a multiple media form. Wallace explores a similar web-page aesthetic to position a combination of media forms within the screen frame. This frame design is described by Munster in terms of “formal experiments with the screen as a panel, almost an interface…” A range of photos and moving-imagery elements are positioned together on a black background. Dealing with the screen like a grid, *eurovision* moves seamlessly from multiple frames of different sizes being positioned on the background with no overlaps, to images layered on top of each other, to the occasional surprising traditional full-screen frame. Visually this video...

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110 Ibid, 1.
111 Ibid, 1.
112 Munster, “The Screen Divided”, 22
work moves predominantly from a magazine style layout to the more recognisable multi-layered compositing effect of motion graphics. Following the concept of data being streamed into a browser window, Wallace deals with the integration of “multiple streams” of data in a linear time-based form. The technique of balancing this integration is identified as a key practice component by the artist, who writes, “the issues are around how to get the streams synchronized and in the right places within the frame.”

Consequently, as Yvonne Speilmann has argued, as a single-channel video, *eurovision* is an “intermedia” practice rather than a multimedia, hypermedia or mixed media practice. Speilmann uses the feature film *Prospero Books* as an example of intermedia. In this cinematic work, the screen split into a number of frames combines a range of differing moving-image forms. In intermedia, Speilmann argues, an entirely new media form is created due to a process she names “transformation”, taking place between different forms of media. Analysing the effects that new technologies have on the integration of different media forms, Speilmann proposes that this “transformation” is what differentiates intermedia from other practices. In *eurovision* a moving-image film is placed beside an animated sequence of still photos within the same frame. This type of integration produces both a temporal and spatial relationship between these two different types of images. The bringing together of the distinct differences between these two media forms in the same space is what causes a “transformation” to take place. Speilmann proposes that this “transformation…becomes a structural category that expresses the ways these different elements are connected and merged into each other, thereby creating a new form.”

Paradoxically, according to Speilmann, in multimedia the media forms are integrated but remain separate. An early Wagner opera is an example of this type off approach. Wagner in an article titled “Outlines of the Artwork of the Future”

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114 Peter Greenaway, Director, Feature Film, 124 min. (1991).
(1867),\textsuperscript{116} insisted that only the combination of all art forms would produce a full representation of “drama” on the operatic stage. The focus in this integration therefore is to develop “drama” as an art form. Therefore, each art form is subservient to this objective. In the mixed media example \textit{Overdrive} (1963)\textsuperscript{117} by the painter Robert Rauschenberg, photographs are fused into an oil painting. Using silkscreen printing and oil painting techniques Rauschenberg brings these two media forms directly together. Speilmann proposes that the result is not a “transformation” like in intermedia, but “intertextuality”, where change occurs independently within the individual medium of painting. This means that painting as an artistic medium is changed by this combination - but an entirely new medium is not created. Similarly in hypermedia the focus is on the assembly of separate media forms, where the objective is not to alter the structure of each media form.\textsuperscript{118} Speilmann’s hypothesis on “transformation” occurring in intermedia points to this type of practice relying on a specific integration process that effectively utilises temporal and spatial dynamics to achieve this result.

It follows then that the resulting complex integration of aural and visual elements is drawn from Wallace’s previous experience with a diverse range of media. She noted how producing experimental radio programs and working in magazine design had an effect on the authoring of \textit{eurovision}. In radio production the artist became very aware of the power that different types of audio elements bring to the final program. Voiceover or narration, for example, have a significant effect on a listener, becoming the dominating channel of information in an audio mix. In \textit{eurovision} the artist, aware of the power of dialogue, uses minimal dialogue in the soundtrack for that reason. Text also tends to dominate the attention of the viewer. In \textit{eurovision} the existing English subtitles are left as a powerful element on the film excerpts to help re-contextualise the original film footage. For Wallace, a viewer seeks this text out as a way of determining a reading of the work.\textsuperscript{119} This means that each channel of information (text, music, voiceover, moving-images, stills) is handled differently in


\textsuperscript{118}Speilmann, “Intermedia in Electronic Images”, 55-61.

\textsuperscript{119}Wallace, interview, 2004.
terms of how they may affect the overall mix and subsequently the viewer. Utilising experience in magazine design, the artist put a considerable amount of time into designing a template as a basis for fragmenting the screen. Wallace referred to this process as being similar to designing a layout grid for a periodical magazine. This involved thinking about the shape of the DV-Pal screen (720 x 576 pixels), the cinemascope shape of the Godard film, and the 35mm shape of the Bergman film. A template was created to develop consistency and continuity with the viewer, similar to a designer magazine layout. Techniques of defining patterns within the frame of the screen and using repetition are also influenced by 2-D print design. The main influences referred to by the artist are the screen-printing techniques developed by Andy Warhol and the work of the more recent Dutch print and web designer Meike Geritzen. References to these varying media and art forms consequently have a significant effect on the final design of the interface in this video work.

3.4 Video Essay

Before exploring the concept of a video essay approach, it is important to understand what Wallace was trying to achieve with this work. In the interview she stressed an interest in experimenting with an abstract approach but also developing within this a substantial argument that the viewer follows as a narrative thread. eurovision takes on the form of a written essay where multiple threads are integrated in and alongside the main discussion, to extend the argument being pursued by the artist. Each of the frames within the screen contributes additional information and narratives towards an ongoing argument. This abstract approach allows the artist to experiment with another objective, which is to disrupt the traditional harmonious integration of sound and vision used predominantly as a suturing effect in cinema. Traditionally, the close integration of sound and vision is used to lead the audience as a group down a linear narrative path. In contrast to this, the aim of the disruption technique in eurovision is to create a diverse range of

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narrative readings. The artist talked about following a process that involved “opening up cracks in the surface…for people to travel down.”\textsuperscript{122} The objective of this process is to create opportunities for viewers to produce their own individual narrative interpretations.

Hence, Wallace described the narrative as being influenced by the form of a written essay.\textsuperscript{123} Working with this narrative objective, I suggest that \textit{eurovision} could be classified as a video essay, a genre described by Biemann as being “somewhere between documentary video and video art.”\textsuperscript{124} The video essay genre, Biemann argues, caters for practitioners who are interested in examining “complex” associations around a question or inquiry. The genre allows practitioners to utilise a broad range of diverse material to explore in an organic fashion a way of thinking or critique. The ability to synthesise this material in a myriad of combinations is intensified in the digital environment.\textsuperscript{125} The underlying theme of Biemann’s book examines how this synthesis is being altered by digital video:

One of the questions will be whether and how new technologies transform the previously analogue medium of video to become more dissociative, multi-perspective and hypertextual in the structuring of images and sounds.\textsuperscript{126}

Questioning our perception of media, Wallace examines in her practice the narrative potentialities of contemporary media forms along with how advancing digital video technology allows this narrative approach to be presented.

Currently, \textit{eurovision} is an example of a video work that demonstrates a number of connections with the characteristics of the essayist style used by filmmakers in early film essays. In addition to this, \textit{eurovision} is emblematic of the shift this style is making to meet the potentialities of advancing digital technology and the way information is being represented. Historically the essayist style emerged as a genre within film documentary in the early 1940s. The essayist style, Alter argues, was conceived to enable filmmakers to work in a more abstract and multifaceted manner

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{122}] Wallace, interview, 2004.
\item [\textsuperscript{123}] Ibid.
\item [\textsuperscript{124}] Biemann, ed., \textit{Stuff it}, 8.
\item [\textsuperscript{125}] Ibid, 8-11.
\item [\textsuperscript{126}] Biemann, ed., \textit{Stuff it}, 9.
\end{itemize}
compared to the dominant precedent which involved presenting “facts and information” within a coherent linear storyline. This style of documentary, which took a more distinct shape from the 1950s to the 1970s, rejected the notion that documentary had to necessarily provide “social” comment and be understood by a wider audience. This style provided a platform for individuals to put forward an idiosyncratic and personal perspective on a subject. In *eurovision* and much of Wallace’s other work the artist predominantly explores issues around “representation and simulation” within the changing environment of media. This subject is highly complex – the type of subject that might be tackled in a conventional theoretical, written essay.

### 3.5 Screen Space

To construct the essayist visual style in this video example requires the creation of associations across and between differing visual information. Splitting the screen into multiple frames creates this dynamic, yet the split-screen technique is hardly a new phenomenon. Early examples of experimenting with large-scale simultaneous multi-projections are the Czech filmmakers like Emil Radok and Josef Svoboda (1958 –1969). Radok’s audio-visual screening *A Mirror of my Country* used a technique named “Polyekran”, which involved multiple projections and the use of audio to explore the dynamics of space and time. Vit Havranek describes this audio-visual work as an experiment with the sensory perceptions of the audience and an opportunity to project in unison a number of corresponding scenarios. Discussing this process more broadly, he writes that it is like the spectator experiencing “a magical feeling of entering several spheres at once”. Havranek compares this notion to John Cage’s experimental audio work *Imaginary Landscape No. 4*, in which audio from 12 different radio channels are fused together into one

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128 Kevin MacDonald and Mark Cousins, eds., *Imagining Reality* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 211.
audio exhibit. This is a process he believes is easily reproduced using the medium of video.\textsuperscript{130}

This type of approach progressed onto the single screen, as Peter Weibel demonstrates in looking at the way filmmakers began in the 1960s to explore new forms of representation, leading to the deconstruction of the technologies and processes used in the creation of traditional cinematic practices. Art practitioners were interested in extending the boundaries set by traditional cinema and consequently also investigated the use of the screen space. Breaking out of the screen conventions altogether, there was a move towards spatial considerations and different narrative structures. Weibel states:

\begin{quote}
Multiple projections of different films alongside one another, one on top of the other and in all spatial directions represented more than merely an invasion of space by the visual image. They were also an expression of multiple narrative perspectives.\textsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

This movement, he suggests, was motivated by the social desire at that time to locate narrative structures more aligned with the way people experience the world. This is a disjointed and discursive process where, unlike linear narratives, there is often no beginning, middle or end. In tracing this focus on the development of poly-sequential narrative structures Weibel, in examining video artists in the 1990s, recognises that the re-configuring of space becomes an integral part of this narrative process.\textsuperscript{132}

This is also a concept taken up by the new media theorist Lev Manovich. In \textit{eurovision}, film excerpts are combined with other time-based and stills imagery within the screen frame. This, in effect, is the union of cinematic linear narrative with other types of visual data within the same space. In the chapter titled “Spatial Narrative and Macrocinema”, Manovich questions the potential outcomes that may be possible when single-screen cinematic narrative is reframed and united with

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid, 102-109.  \\
\textsuperscript{131} Weibel, “Narrated Theory”, \textit{New Screen Media}, 43.  \\
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, 42-49.
\end{flushright}
multiple images using digital technologies. Prior to producing eurovision, the artist worked with multiple monitor video installations to experiment with space, but with the development of digital video technology has shifted this interest and experimentation within the single monitor screen. Operating within a completely digital environment with digitised data provides the potential to experiment with the splitting of the screen space. Manovich argues that the narrative potential of split-screen techniques and subsequently a focus on space is underdeveloped in that, historically, cultural movements dictated a shift away from spatial considerations. This concept is demonstrated in cinema, where there has been a predominant fixation on time. As a result cinema has tended to follow a full-screen paradigm.

In order to examine the result of experimenting with this union and re-configuring of the space on the screen, it is important to understand the differences between what Manovich describes as “spatial narrative” and “spatial montage”. In a conventional book or in most ‘Hollywood’ cinema the narrative unfolds step-by-step on the page or within the boundaries of the cinema screen. A painting that displays a number of sequences alongside each other is an example of a number of narratives operating within the one space. “Spatial narratives” occur simultaneously and can be witnessed in unison. “Spatial montage” occurs when time-based imagery is added into each of the frames alongside other visual information like still images and text. “Spatial Montage” can also occur when hyperlinks are used in an interactive work to introduce new frames or new data – like text, for example, into the browser window space. Hyperlinks act like edits in a sequential time-based edit: each link introduces a new frame, building up the fragmentation of the screen and developing new relationships with the frames already on the screen. Manovich refers to the html work My boyfriend came back from the war as an example of this type of “spatial montage”. The Russian Internet artist Olia Lialina describes this work as being driven by a desire to reproduce cinema on the Internet. She soon discovered through this endeavour that the unique parameters of a hypertextual and networked

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133 Manovich, “Spatial Montage and Macrocinema”, The Language of New Media, 324.
134 Ibid, 323-324.
135 Ibid, 322-326.
136 Olia Lialina, My boyfriend came back from the war, http://www.teleportacia.org/war/
system had a significant effect on the concept of cinema in this setting.\textsuperscript{137} Looking for a narrative approach that worked within this context caused Lialina to shift from a focus on time to more consideration of space. This notion is realised in the work where the browser window space becomes fragmented, as the user progresses through the narrative presented in each frame. Consequently, this focus on spatial considerations, Manovich argues, causes a shift in filmmaking practice where “the logic of replacement, characteristic of cinema, gives way to logic of addition and coexistence.”\textsuperscript{138}

These poly-sequential associations can be formed using both spatial and temporal montage. The spatial montage in a single-channel work operates within the space of the frame on the surface of the screen and in the form of material placed on top of each other. The ability to manipulate every pixel in that frame offers the opportunity to work with (to use the PhotoShop software terminology) ‘layers’ of visual and audio data. This concept of “layering” is discussed by Biemann:

New image and editing technologies have made it easy to stack an almost unlimited number of audio and video tracks one on top of another, with multiple images, titles, running texts and a complex sound mix competing for attention of the audience. Stuff it! Distill it! Stratify and compress it!\textsuperscript{139}

The development of working and thinking about the spatial dynamics in digital video practice, I suggest, is a key practice issue for both practitioners and educators. The focus is on developing competencies around how a broad mix of mediums can be integrated not only over the progression of time, but within the space of the frame in digital video.

The practice of juxtaposition within the frame in \textit{eurovision} exemplifies what can be described as a fundamental shift in digital video practice. Compositing software combined with all the data being accessible in a computer database intensifies the tendency towards a process of fragmentation and the simultaneous union of multiple digital video data within the frame. The practitioner uses traditional


\textsuperscript{138} Manovich, “Spatial Montage and Macrocinema”, \textit{The Language of New Media}, 324-326.

\textsuperscript{139} Biemann, \textit{Stuff it.}, 9.
sequential editing practices, spatial design and what I would call ‘mixing techniques’ to integrate these elements. In the mixing process the artist works with the scale of the image, repetition, looping, layering and temporal speed. Producing this type of narrative is described by Munster as a re-assembling process:

Narrative more generally can be seen to rest not upon linearity and singular viewpoint but on the layering, combination and texturing that different sequenced modules brings to events. 140

This mixing process is, I suggest, similar to the way multiple tracks are mixed together in computer music. Each frame is like a track in an audio mix, where it is given the appropriate balanced treatment to fit with the other elements as a whole. In the After Effects software each movie is represented as a separate track or layer, as in Photoshop. Overall, the focus shifts from determining a single cinematic edit (i.e. how the next shot will affect the shot before and the one to follow), to a focus on placement and associations between multiple elements within the screen.

3.6 Digital Literacies

Exploring the multi-linear narrative structures in eurovision draws attention to a major issue that is emerging in digital video practice – that of digital literacies and the possibilities of reading such texts. This issue, I suggest, is being driven by the coming together of multiple viewing literacies. The functionality of the computer and the hypertextual nature of the World Wide Web require the development of particular literacies that are pertinent to those environments. These types of literacies in combination with the established literacies of cinema and television produce in eurovision a hybrid narrative style. The poly-sequential narrative structures being developed in eurovision could be compared with the types of narrative structures being developed in interactive video practices. But in eurovision the multiple connections are taking place on the surface of the screen. Manovich argues that the potential to work with “spatial montage” using digital technologies alters the equilibrium between space and time. This means “spatial montage” takes
on a much more prominent role, an equal role with “temporal montage” in the construction of narrative. The concept of “spatial montage” as a part of cinema language is being influenced, Manovich argues, by the design of the computer interface and computer coding like “object-orientated programming”.141 The “user” works constantly with the concept of co-existence and multiple associations occurring at the same time. In *eurovision* the narrative structure is described as being multi-directional – “It loops around, back, then forward, it doesn’t just give you more linear direction, but keeps making connections across the segments to build a horizontality of narrative construction (and diagonal) as well as vertically.”142 The artist, working with linear fragments of old films, develops a narrative structure that explores associations between multiple frames. Overall, the narrative structure of *eurovision* utilises two very different types of viewing literacies.

Consequently, the narrative style in *eurovision* has similarities with interactive narrative structures. In her previous work *lovehotel*,143 Wallace describes the narrative process as being based on a dreamlike state. The spectator watching the work is able to cross fluidly back and forth from “one narrative stream to another”, creating a state of mind that Wallace refers to in terms of her practice as “creating an overall impression”.144 There is an explicit and direct connection here with the narrative concept described in the article “Something to Imagine: Literature, Composition, and Interactive Fiction”, by Stuart Moulthrop and Nancy Kaplan.145 In a classroom exercise, the teachers set students the task of analysing some “interactive hypertext” examples. The aim of the exercise was to get students to explore alternative associations with “literary texts”. Interactive writing examples were provided as a way to develop comparisons with stories published in books. The outcome of the exercise, the teachers argue, was a fundamental shift in the

141 Manovich, “Spatial Montage and Macrocinema”, *The Language of New Media*, 326.
understanding of classical narrative structure. They back up this argument with a statement from one of the students, Andrew Sussman:

> We have spent our whole lives reading stories for some kind of end, or some kind of completion or goal that is reached by the characters in the story...I realized this goal is not actually reached by the character it is rather reached by our own selves...[This completion] occurs when we have decided for ourselves that we can put down the story and be content with our interpretation of it. When we feel satisfied that we have gotten enough from the story.

The concept of forming an individual reading of this type of text can be related back to Wallace’s aim to encourage each viewer to formulate their own narrative interpretations. This article also demonstrates the possible shift that is required in viewing literacies to interpret a video work like eurovision.

Furthermore, in the process of establishing a hybrid narrative, the artist is conscious about using the viewer’s familiarity with established viewing literacies. The artist argues that, rather than presenting a completely unfamiliar narrative style to a viewer, it is important to utilise these familiarities. eurovision introduces new types of viewing literacies that need to be adjusted to in order to read and understand the work. The artist points out a major difference between linear cinematic narrative in comparison to the essay model: “the essay is very different from the film story, the essay is telling an argument whereas the film is telling a story.” This is an important point to grasp for a viewer who may be trying to piece together a story in the traditional familiar manner as presented in most cinema and television. But Wallace uses the familiarity of these ingrained viewing literacies as a device to develop this essay model. This means working with the need for viewers to feel secure in terms of following a conventional linear narrative. She described playing with this desire by taking the viewer away into new territory but always maintaining contact with an underlying familiar linear narrative. This is a useful point to consider in regard to overcoming the issue of viewers’ unfamiliarity with new hybrid narrative styles.

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147 Ibid, 7.
149 Ibid.
In eurovision, the multi-layered mix of these varied mediums is mainly written in the post-production phase. The time that usually goes into scripting a work following the print literacy paradigm is now shifted by digital technologies into scripting in the DV medium itself within the post-production phase. The time taken to develop a feature film script in pre-production now shifts into working out the script in post-production – a process discussed by Wallace in her thesis.\textsuperscript{150} This raises another practice issue where in a similar fashion to writing an essay, the production of digital video content in eurovision centres on determining an argument using imagery. The argument or concept is what provides a focus for the practitioner to write from in post-production. This notion, I suggest, shifts the focus of production towards more of an artistic practice where the outcome is determined by understanding the conceptual basis behind a work. This is in contrast to being reliant on a storyline or a blueprint in the form of a written literary script. Writing in the medium directly means the practitioner is now required to develop digital or multiliteracies as a part of refining this method of content development and the technique of integrating a mix of mediums.\textsuperscript{151} A specific part of these literacies is the concept of mixing discussed earlier, which provides a concluding point in this case study analysis.

\textsuperscript{150} Wallace, “report: eurovision”, Material Media, 34-56.

Chapter 4:

Case Study Two

4.1 Introduction

I chose the case study vog titled *Collins Street* (2001)\(^{152}\) for two main reasons. Firstly, this practice, like *eurovision* (case study one), experiments with the fragmentation of the frame and the parallel screening of multiple visual images. However, the concept of working with multiple streams of data follows a different structure. In *Collins Street*, video, text, stills, audio narration, and atmospheric audio remain separate and are not mixed together into one channel of video. Hypertext links integrate the varying elements in *Collins Street*. Secondly, *Collins Street* demonstrates how a networked environment affects the integration of video content. The multilinear structure of hypertext and the Graphic User Interface (GUI) influence this integration process. An examination of these two aspects demonstrates a shift towards multilinear narratives and “spatial montage” in video practice.

In order to examine these two aspects the chapter is broken into three main sections. The first section establishes a visual and contextual framework on vogs as a form of video practice (4.1, 4.2, 4.3). In the second section, the influences of film and television are examined to extend this contextual framework and demonstrate how established cultural codes affect the development of this new media video practice (4.3, 4.4). The third section focuses on a close analysis of vogs as a video

practice (4.5, 4.6). The fragmentation of the frame and the integration of multiple media forms is analysed in this section.

4.2 Collins Street

This first section breaks into two parts. Firstly, the vog example Collins Street is analysed, to provide a visual and aural perspective on this genre of practice. This includes identifying vogs as a form of hypermedia and demonstrating the difference between this case study and eurovision as an intermedia form. Secondly, a contextual framework is established by examining the relationship between weblogs and vogs, along with the objectives of the practitioner.

The complexity of the authoring used in the vog Collins Street provides a useful example for the theoretical analysis of vogs in this case study. Collins Street selected from the ‘vlog’ website streams onto the computer as a ‘pop-up’ QuickTime movie, separate from the website page. Clicking on the movie reveals a number of video sequences of Collins Street in Melbourne. These sequences split the frame into three separate vertical sections. Edited sequences of buildings, people and traffic offer three slightly different perspectives of the street, within the one frame. Each section is cut up into three smaller rectangular blocks, recognisable by fine black lines. This vog looks relatively simple on the visible surface, but in each section, there are a number of hotspots that randomly call up separate vision, text and audio tracks. Miles describes this work as consisting of:

Nine video tracks, three sound tracks, one sprite track, and a colour track. The sprite track, which is a fully scriptable track type in QuickTime, contains nine still images that are temporarily collaged over individual video panes, and the colour track is simply the movie’s black background. As “Collins Street” (a downtown Melbourne street) plays the user can mouse over each of the video panes, and doing so ‘triggers’ the sprite track which turns on and displays for a pre–scripted duration a jpeg image which contains text. The same sprite track also controls which of the three simultaneous soundtracks is being heard, and its relative volume.¹⁵³

The user engaging with this vog triggers different audio tracks and reveals text behind each of the smaller rectangular blocks.

The sprite track, which utilizes animation key frames, controls the jpeg images.\textsuperscript{154} A sentence is revealed behind the moving images: “quality of change is more important than quantity.” There are three audio tracks and each one is allocated to particular sections in the frame. Miles discusses in the first narration track the theoretical ideas behind this particular vog. In the second narration track Miles interviews “a colleague (…Adrian Danks)…about his experience of this particular street.”\textsuperscript{155} The third audio track consists of on location atmospheric sounds from the street. Where the cursor is placed determines the predominance of each track and the volume level. In the very centre of each section, the audio is mixed evenly and therefore you hear a blend of all the tracks simultaneously. In his notes accompanying this vog, Miles describes this work as integrating “hypertext” concepts into “time-based media”. Providing the user with a number of choices, Miles aims for alternative interpretations of the work as a whole.\textsuperscript{156}

A key aspect to understanding \textit{Collins Street} is to think of this vog as being like a “container” that holds an array of separate images and sounds that connect together. This is in comparison to viewing one-channel projection like cinema, where the entire content is presented on the screen. In this vog there are several sets of visual and aural information that the user has to activate. Vogs are a form of hypermedia. Hypertext and hypermedia are terms that generally have the same meaning, but hypermedia usually refers to content that contains a mix of media forms, while hypertext usually contains only textual elements. Hypermedia is a relatively open system where the user follows multilinear paths through a network. Speilmann describes hypermedia as a “universal medium” where due to digital technology all media forms combine as one medium. Hypermedia therefore exists as a “multidimensional structure”.\textsuperscript{157} In \textit{Collins Street}, the user produces their own variation of (sequences of) images and audio as part of engaging with the work.

\textsuperscript{154} Sprite definition: Tim Cox ed., \textit{for Apple Computers, QuickTime for the Web} (San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, 2004). In a cel animation of a bouncing ball…each frame contains the whole image of the ball and background. With temporal compression each key frame contains the whole image, while the intermediate frames describe the differences from frame to frame using an algorithm.” 473. This means a variation of actions can be added into the moving image timeline.\textsuperscript{155} Miles, \textit{Collins Street}, Vog.\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.\textsuperscript{157} Speilmann, “Intermedia in Electronic Images”, 59-60.
This vog, unlike some other vogs, contains no external hypertext links to other web pages, and therefore Collins Street is a self-contained network. Furthermore, Collins Street presents a relatively simple hypermedia structure compared to other more complex approaches towards interactive video content where the aim is to provide an extensive database of audio-visual material in order to achieve an inexhaustible amount of narrative options.\textsuperscript{158} Collins Street relies instead on multiple combinations of a limited amount of content. This differs from using complex branching paths and a large amount of video content as occurs in some earlier interactive video. This structure gives the user a large number of choices. The idea was to give the impression of an endless labyrinth. In a vog tutorial, Miles advocates that students learn how to determine “complex narrative” structures by forming multiple combinations with minimal units of content.\textsuperscript{159} The limitations of video download speed and the time Internet users spend on one particular item influences the structure and duration of the narrative units. Within these constraints, therefore, Miles is interested in “micro-narratives”\textsuperscript{160} that allow the user to engage with a vog in fragments. In this multilinear fragmented setting, vogs have no clearly defined “beginning and end”. Vogs follow the spontaneous immediate diary writing style of blogging. Collins Street, and vogging overall, invoke a style of video practice that is immediate – this contrasts with the detailed compositional and integration process used to produce eurovision.


\textsuperscript{159} Miles, “Softvideography”, 21.

\textsuperscript{160} Mary Klages, “Postmodernism Again” quote – “In place of these grand narratives, postmodern theorists like Lyotard propose sets of ‘micronarratives’—small stories, small theories, which might explain a certain set of phenomena, but which don’t make any claims to universal ‘truth’. Such micronarratives would have use value; they could arise from and be applied to specific situations, but none would claim to explain everything, or to explain all other theories, or to be the preferred or dominant framework through which any event could be understood. Postmodern micronarratives thus are multiple—there is one for every situation, rather than one narrative covering all situations— and they are necessarily different and largely incompatible; there’s no way to put all the micronarratives together to form one unified coherent idea of how the world, or human beings, operate.” http://www.colorado.edu/English/engl2010mk/pomo2.html (accessed 17 October 2004).
4.3 Blogging

Blogging provides a useful framework to explore the convergence of hypertext with video; with vogging Miles looks at an established new media practice on the Internet as a basis to explore a new mode of video practice. Vogging originated for Miles from an avid interest in Weblogs. In a chapter titled “Defining Open Publishing”, Geert Lovink describes “weblogs (or blogs) as frequently updated websites run by individuals and linked to other blogs.” The weblog is designed to collate regular posts and acts like an online diary which has the facility to provide links to information on the Internet. Historically, in an article on blogging Torill Mortensen and Jill Walker describe weblogs as being personally edited websites that initially acted as a portal of links for users, usually around a particular subject or field of interest. The blogger develops through commentary (short written posts) a personal idiosyncratic point-of-view on their subject of interest. A focus on particular subjects with others then develops into the formation of blogging communities who link websites and engage in the process of swapping notes and commenting on particular ideas. Miles’s own personal blog and vlog develop the growing blogging community, which focuses on using the medium to extend academic research and new media discourse. However, in the wider public domain, blogging is generally recognised as being informal personal online publishing that is used like an electronic diary to record daily thoughts.

Consequently, a criticism of blogging is that in the form of a personal diary the content is often banal or vain. The world’s most boring weblog is an extreme example of this idea, where the writer describes daily events like, “Having stared at the computer screen for too long, my eyes began to ache.”

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immediate perception, blogging has grown in popularity mainly due to the potential of peer-to-peer\textsuperscript{165} networking. The private is made public and blogs turn into a powerful global publishing medium. An example of this is the way politicians in the United States promote their political position and raise funds using blogs.

Miles, facing this criticism of vanity publishing, argues that a weblog has the potential to develop a particular voice for the blogger. Using a text-based blog as a portal for informal and formal academic discussion, Miles has developed his own personal point-of-view in the public domain of the Internet. His academic research in this form promotes a wider discourse and community beyond academic journals. The vlog, an offshoot of this blog, utilises the opportunity to publish video content globally. Miles proposes that advances in video technology and the increasing ubiquity of the medium promote the exploration of a different type of video practice on the Internet.

In addition to this, an examination of the motivation behind other ‘video weblog’ practice reveals a collective interest in the invention of a new way of working with video. Miles describes blogs as the first native genre on the web that doesn't use the page as the defacto mode.\textsuperscript{166} Electronic writing in this environment moves beyond the parameters of the page due to the ability to link to other information on the Internet. Miles is interested in the concept of exploring video as a “writing practice”, and joins other practitioners who recognize the potential to use video as a form of electronic writing.

\textsuperscript{165} Peer-to-peer definition: Generally, a peer-to-peer (or P2P) computer network refers to any network that does not have fixed clients and servers, but a number of peer nodes that function as both clients and servers to the other nodes on the network. This model of network arrangement is contrasted with the client-server model. Any node is able to initiate or complete any supported transaction. Peer nodes may differ in local configuration, processing speed, network bandwidth, and storage quantity. Popular examples of P2P are file-sharing networks. \url{http://www.free-definition.com/Peer-to-peer.html} (accessed September 18, 2004).

\textsuperscript{166} Miles, Interview, 6.
This leads to the MIT Media Lab ‘Interactive Cinema’ research group’s work with ‘video weblogs’ as a project listed in their research initiatives. Asling Kelliher, the researcher working on ‘video weblogs’, focuses on the historical use of the diary to authenticate actions as part of substantiating a person’s day-to-day existence. Interested in the accessibility and ubiquity of video production tools, Kelliher is working on “developing a software tool that will provide users with a functional and uncomplicated method for publishing their video content online.” The underlying idea here is to produce an application that sets in place a production method and aesthetic approach, which makes video as quick to work with as the written word. A ‘Wiki’ list group calling themselves the “VideoBlogging People” have made their website a portal for links to videoblog perspectives and technical tips along with a historical timeline on the development of video blogs that starts with invention of the “Picturephone.” They say their objective is to develop a “language of video”. Understanding how this concept will evolve will rely on the careful examination of how blogging operates successfully on the Internet.

In this light, Collins Street excludes an important factor that makes blogging so successful in a hypertext environment. Blogging uses the network capabilities of the

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169 Ibid.

170 Wiki definition: A collaborative Web site comprised of the perpetual collective work of many authors. Similar to a blog in structure and logic, a wiki allows anyone to edit, delete or modify content that has been placed on the Web site using a browser interface, including the work of previous authors. In contrast, a blog, typically authored by an individual, does not allow visitors to change the original posted material, only add comments to the original content. The term wiki refers to either the Web site or the software used to create the site. [http://isp.webopedia.com/TERM/W/wiki.html](http://isp.webopedia.com/TERM/W/wiki.html) (accessed 14 September, 2004).


Internet, and transforms the diary format from a conventional printed form into a medium that utilises the Internet as a substantial database and provides the potential to establish networked communities. In relation to this, Collins Street does not connect outside of itself – this vog is a self-contained object. Miles has experimented with this concept in the vog titled vog roll 2.0 which vertically lines up a number of small video shots of video bloggers like a text blog roll. Each video has a hypertext link to each person’s website and video blogs. But in the main, like other video weblog practitioners, his focus is mainly on the development of video writing practice. This is about making video quick to work with like written text. Miles’s concentration on researching video as an interactive form in many ways causes a shift away from the ‘peer-to-peer’ attribute of blogging. This aspect may develop more over time and raises an interesting point in regard to using an existing successful new media practice as a guide for the development of a new video practice. Both the medium and the technology need to be considered as part of this development. Video as medium will necessarily dictate a different form of new media compared to blogging. This is as noted in my discussion of the relationship between older and new media forms.

4.4 Cultural Codes

In this second section, an examination of the influences of established cultural codes on the development of video practice extends this contextual framework on vogs. This leads into an analysis of traditional cinematic representation and the relationship between this practice and new media technologies. Comprehending this relationship and the negotiations that this practitioner makes in regard to these cultural codes provides some insights into the formation of this video practice. Furthermore, this background provides a framework to analyse the structural form of vogs.

Put succinctly, established media forms like traditional cinema and television have a significant influence over the progression of new video practices. A friction occurs between the domination of these older cultural conventions and defining this vogging practice. This friction occurs when the existing cultural paradigms of cinema and television become a benchmark to develop video content on new media platforms. This benchmark frequently causes a misinterpretation of new media technologies and the resulting practice in many cases is a poor version of the older media form. Stuart Moulthrop looks back historically at comments made by Marshall McLuhan to draw attention to the development of content that attempts to transfer old media forms onto new media technologies:

As McLuhan observed, rapidly changing societies tend perversely to assign new technologies the work of old, producing oxymorons like “televised hearings,” “live recording,” or “electronic book[s].” These conceptual crossovers often represent unfortunate misunderstandings of new media. 175

Discussing these misappropriations with Miles in the interview, he pointed out that the companies that survived the dotcom crash in the late 1990s had a very clear understanding of the characteristics of the Internet and a networked environment. 176

The quest to make the Internet a version of television demonstrates this point. The technology journalist Leslie Walker discusses (in 2002) the race by the large computer conglomerates to reproduce TV on the Internet, and describes their quest as a desire to “create a Web version of TV.” 177 Walker examines the ongoing mission to produce the technology that will allow video streaming to achieve the same almost faultless real-time movement we see on TV or in the cinema. Walker, in reflecting on past failures and “mega-flops” by conglomerates who have come and gone, remains unsure if this “would-be-mass medium is ready for the masses.” 178 However, the race continues to create Internet TV. Apple computers, at

176 Miles, Interview, 4.
their 2002 Developers Conference,\footnote{Apple Developers Conference, San Jose, California, 2002. \url{http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2002/apr/15wwdc.html}} proudly compared an uncompressed QuickTime movie alongside their latest upgraded compressed version and asked the large audience to spot any differences in the video and audio quality. Apple is collaborating with other large technical corporations to develop an improved standard compression codec for streaming audio and video on the web. The aim for Microsoft and Apple separately is to achieve “unparalleled quality” when it comes to “streaming audio and video content on the web.”\footnote{Apple Computers website, \url{http://www.apple.com/} (accessed June 2002).} This objective plays a significant role in the development of new media technologies and the direction of video practice.

Because of the domination of these cinematic and audio-visual conventions, the development of new media curriculum is also affected. In the Bachelor of Arts Multimedia program that I was involved in, the video course titled “Digital Moviemaking” used mainly cinematic conventions as a benchmark for the course content, even though in multimedia, video as a medium is utilised across a variety of platforms in combination with other mediums and (as discussed above) is often re-purposed for cross-media distribution. The result is a number of varying audio-visual forms that are both linear and interactive. Therefore, I suggest in the example of the Digital Moviemaking course discussed, that the video curriculum needs to be based on both old and new media video practices, within the context of a Multimedia degree program. Lovink, in an article titled “The Battle over New Media Education”,\footnote{Lovink, “The Battle over New Media Education”, My First Recession.} argues that the film and television industry is recognised as a benchmark for developing new media education programs in many tertiary institutes. This is because there is still the notion that students trained in new media will find positions in the film and television industry.\footnote{Ibid,173.}

Similarly, the cultural influences of older media affect the interpretation of new media technologies. The comprehension of the proprietary software QuickTime used to produce vogs is evidence of this factor. Understanding this software as
simply being a movie player reflects this dependence. A web-surfer viewing a
QuickTime movie, downloaded from the World Wide Web onto their desktop, could
easily mistake QuickTime as a computer version of a VCR player. Examining the
introduction of video being screened on a computer, Manovich describes
QuickTime as a technology “that turned the computer into a film projector”.183 This
could be an acceptable way to analyse this transition but alternatively QuickTime is
more than a “film projector” or VCR player. The Webmonkey184 website describes
QuickTime not only as a “video compression tool” but also a comprehensive
“multimedia platform”. The Apple website explains how QuickTime can handle “over
200 digital media capabilities and components”.185 This software accepts a large
number of media formats in their original form and can publish these natively from a
server to the web. QuickTime operates not only as audio-visual player but also as a
media publisher in “networked environments”. Furthermore, multimedia authoring,
audio, publishing, third party plug-ins, media skins, interactivity, streaming, and
compression form part of the development of this software.186 The point here is not
to promote Apple or this software, but use it as an example to show how older
media cultural values can often inhibit the understanding of new media
technologies.

The appropriation of older cultural values is analysed further by Vivian Sobchack in
the article “Nostalgia for a Digital Object: Regrets on the Quickening of QuickTime”
(2000)187 Why QuickTime movies were ever called “movies” is challenged by
Sobchack, who refers to Manovich’s theory that “the language of cultural interfaces
is largely made up from elements of other, already familiar cultural forms”.188 The
point that Manovich makes is that the interfaces we engage with on the computer
are not defined by technology alone, but are instead determined by cultural codes.
They evolve not due to the demands of technology via a technologically determinist

184 Webmonkey
http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/01/42/index4a_page2.html?tw=multimedia
186 Ibid.
187 Vivian Sobchack, “Nostalgia for a Digital Object: Regrets on the Quickening of
QuickTime”, in The Digital Millennium Film Journal No. 34 (Fall 1999): 3.
http://mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ34/VivianSobchack.html
188 Manovich, “The Language of Cultural Interfaces”, The Language of New Media, 71.
perspective, but due to social needs. In order to understand changes in communication styles and formats, recognized cultural forms (like cinema) are used as benchmarks to establish meaning. In this example, the cultural conventions of cinema provide a way to understand the new media software QuickTime. The word “movies” represents the specific functionality and particular principles associated with cinema paradigms. These metaphors may help with understanding a new medium, Sobchack suggests, but they can also create a degree of “blindness” in relation to understanding the distinct attributes of that medium. This may hold back the way in which the medium progresses or is used. Sobchack prefers the term “memory boxes” rather than “movies”, arguing that QuickTime as an authoring architecture offers the potential, like the computer database, to store a variety of data types. Writing about single-channel video streamed off the web in 1999, Sobchack pre-empts the potential of QuickTime as interactive “containers” (or miniature databases).189

In order to counteract the boundaries that older media conventions impose, Manovich argues, for the term ‘object’ to deal with the complexity of convergence and promote the development of new practices not necessarily tied to a specific category. ‘Object’ is a useful term for new media content, he claims, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the diversity of new media content produced crosses all areas of practice in pure and hybrid forms. Therefore, there is a need for a term that allows for a variety of hybrid forms that often have crossovers with aspects of art, design and media. Secondly, there is a historical connection with the methodologies set up by the “avant-garde artists of the 1920s”.190 The philosophy of these artists towards producing art as ‘objects’ provides a perspective for the production of new media content. Referring to the “laboratory experimentation” that took place in this period, Manovich proposes that new media provides the potential to explore innovative practices using technology. These artists in essence used this term to break down the demarcation of genres in order to produce new types of content and subsequently the influences of established art and media forms. The term ‘object’ from Manovich’s perspective provides a way to avoid this confusion or necessity to

189 Sobchack, “Nostalgia for a Digital Object”.
be specific about categories. Thirdly, due to the hybrid nature of new media practices there is often a problem in categorizing content. For example, Chris Chesher’s paper titled “Dis>play: Is this a game? Or is it art?” explores the blurring of classification that can occur between commercial software computer games and art that use the same technologies.\textsuperscript{191} Finally, a recognisable term sets up a framework to represent the underlying ideologies of the new media field.\textsuperscript{192} In conclusion, Manovich’s exploration of a term that describes new media practice is another example of the significant influences of established media conventions.

In fact, the more familiar a form of media becomes, the more influence this form has on the development of new media. Weibel and Shaw share similar frustrations with Miles on the dominating conventions of traditional cinema. They argue that the supremacy of traditional cinema disadvantages the development of “cinematic representation” using new technologies. Weibel insists that new technologies and the creation of “platforms”, like the Internet for example, offer opportunities to experiment with the traditional notion of cinema.\textsuperscript{193} The model of traditional cinema, Shaw argues, is restricting the development of these varying directions: “despite cinema’s heritage of technological and creative diversity, it is Hollywood that has come to define its dominant forms of production and distribution, its technological apparatus and narrative forms.”\textsuperscript{194} This argument connects directly with Miles’s observation that any modifications in practice “generally maintain cinema and television as a specific cultural institution, so what has been affected are the means and processes of production, but not the form itself.”\textsuperscript{195} These practitioners are examining the parameters of new technologies to guide their practice rather than relying solely on existing cultural conventions. Similarly, this interest motivates Sobchack’s article on QuickTime.

\textsuperscript{192} Manovich, “The Terms: Language, Object, Representation”, \textit{The Language of New Media}, 14-15.
\textsuperscript{193} Shaw and Weibel, eds., \textit{Future Cinema}, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid, 19.
\textsuperscript{195} Miles, “Softvideography”, 1.
Sobchack’s analysis of the motivations behind full screen, high-resolution video on the Internet demonstrates this motivation. Referring to the cinema theorist Andre Bazin, she argues that the underlying principle of the creators of cinema was to reproduce what we see of the world, as it exists, with our naked eye.\textsuperscript{196} This is a flawlessly reconstructed artifice of the world around us, a principle that still dominates any “technical discoveries” filmmakers create as part of producing cinema. Miles expresses frustration with the way film and TV practitioners want to hang onto “full screen, full motion and absolutely full user control”.\textsuperscript{197} Sobchack examines instead the present characteristics of streaming QuickTime movies and acknowledges the existence of a new resulting form which has developed due to the limitations of Internet technologies. The current real-time playback faults in QuickTime movie streaming are celebrated, the “…gaps, gasps, starts, and repetitions”,\textsuperscript{198} the “miniature” frame sizes. She laments the eventual demise of present video streaming technology due to the aim to advance technology to meeting this older representational precedent.

The examination of these relationships between the development of new technologies and cinematic representation feature in the book \textit{Future Cinema}. This large collection of new modes of cinematic practice represents examples that Weibel argues are “not inspired by “total cinema” in Andre Bazin’s sense of a total representation and mechanical reproduction of reality.”\textsuperscript{199} Miles’s vogging, along with practices collated together in \textit{Future Cinema}, eventuate because the practitioners are interested in discovering new ways of perceiving cinema. Weibel argues that these practitioners aim to:

\begin{quote}
Deconstruct the total apparatus of cinema, to transform the cinematic apparatus, and create new technologies that allow different psychic mechanisms, that subjugate subjects in the cinema, that allow different relations between the spectator and the screen different representations/constructions of reality and subjects, a critical relation to representation.\textsuperscript{200}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{197} Miles, Interview, 4.  
\textsuperscript{198} Sobchack, “Nostalgia for a Digital Object”, 2.  
\textsuperscript{199} Shaw and Weibel, eds., \textit{Future Cinema}, 17.  
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
The basis of this argument centres on the notion that developments in traditional cinematic practice are due to alterations occurring in what Weibel calls the “cinematic apparatus”. A simplistic historical analogy that demonstrates how a change in the “cinematic apparatus” can affect content is when cinema shifted from mute sound to integrated vision and audio. Miles sets himself the task of defining a video practice that emerges due to what he describes as “utilising available technologies”. In conclusion, both Miles and the editors of *Future Cinema* argue that film and video practice is influenced by the attributes of new media technologies.

4.5 Screen Collage

This third section connects the specific attributes of hypertext and the Graphic User Interface (GUI) with the construction of this emerging video practice. It begins with a visual survey of the fragmentation of the frame occurring in *Collins Street*, which leads into an analysis of the role hypertext and the GUI play in determining a “multilinear” video form (4.5, 4.6). The objective is to provide some insights into the methods of integration used in hypermedia compared to intermedia. A comparison between the integration techniques used in *eurovision* compared to *Collins Street* extends this analysis. Overall, the objective of this section is to make connections with some of the points raised in case study one.

In *Collins Street*, the frame is sliced up, and fragments into multiple frames. Even though the scale of this QuickTime movie is small within the computer window, the visual information scales down even further due to this fragmentation. The video shots of *Collins Street* convey a multi-perspective impression of the street, not through conventional full-screen video, but by screening a number of small frames simultaneously. As in *eurovision*, the representation of the visual elements takes on a form of “spatial montage” (discussed in case study one), where the emphasis shifts from the concept of cause and effect in temporal montage to a focus on

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associations between separate images. Editing and temporal montage operate within the fragments, but the term ‘montage’ in this context becomes problematic, as Miles points out in one of the voice-over tracks – “What is montage when you have a multi-linear video system?”\textsuperscript{202} Miles experiments with the relationships between these separate elements within the frame, exploring the concept where “montage is collapsing into collage”.\textsuperscript{203} To understand the notion of collage in this context, it is helpful to firstly consider what is meant by “multilinear”.

In effect, Miles argues, the major reason why the form of video is not explored is that there is limited experimentation beyond one-channel, full-screen film and television practice. Miles states that the core of this issue centres on the perception “that video for software designers, users, consumers is still conceived as a linear, time-based object, that consists principally of an image and a sound track.”\textsuperscript{204} Instead, Miles uses the potentialities of a hypertext environment and the functionality of the GUI to experiment with video as a multilinear form. The screen fractures into multiple windows that operate simultaneously. Multiple images and sound tracks remain separate or mix together depending on where the user ‘mouses’ within the frame. The content is the result of adapting video as a form into multilinear hypertext and GUI. Central to this multilinear nature of hypertext is the ability to construct relationships between multitudes of disparate forms of media. George Landow presents this concept in the article “Hypertext as Collage Writing”,\textsuperscript{205} where he states that this type of structure consists of:

\begin{quote}
Text composed as lexias (blocks of words, moving or static images, or sounds) linked electronically by multiple paths, chains, or trials in an open-ended web. Since readers can take different paths through such bodies of information, hypertext is therefore properly described as multisequential or multilinear rather than as nonlinear writing.\textsuperscript{206}
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{202} Miles, \textit{Collins Street}, Vog.
\item \textsuperscript{203} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{204} Miles, “Softvideography”, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{206} Ibid, 153.
\end{itemize}
In the context of a writing practice, Bolter describes hypertext as a form of writing, which breaks down the sequential "hierarchical" process used in writing for print. He argues that writing in a multilinear fashion provides the opportunity to develop a networked structure. Bolter illustrates a version of "electronic hypertext" by describing how a book, for example, is sliced into a multitude of meaningful sentences. The process of creating multilinear associations between these sentences forms a "network" of meaning. This networking process is not limited to electronic forms like the Internet. The use of indexing in printed books also follows a similar non-hierarchy, making random associations between different subject ideas. The difference, Bolter argues, is that "digital technology" offers more potential to develop this multilinear approach and how the end result is displayed to the user.207 Another important part of this multilinear display in the context of vogs is the Graphical User Interface (GUI).

The GUI is central to the multilinear display of vogs on the computer screen. Manovich, in examining the Human Computer Interface (HCI), explains a major difference between the computer screen and the conventional television screen. He claims that whereas the latter provides a framed view into a defined area of visual and aural material, the GUI also offers functions whereby the user can manipulate both space and time.208 Miles, analysing writing in an electronic environment, points out the potentiality of this difference:

This means that content spaces are no longer pages but screens, they can be multiple, variable in size, altered by the user, and that content can now be presented, and not only written, in multilinear and multisequential ways.209

Miles argues that this defies the notion of pursuing a progressive sequential order that is contained within a single full-screen frame like in most cinema and television. The user instead works with a multitude of media forms simultaneously and therefore develops literacies around this type of functionality (as discussed in the previous case study). Manovich proposes that the computer screen relies not on a single frame that takes up the entire screen surface, but on a number of frames

208 Manovich, "The Language of Cultural Interfaces", in The Language of New Media, 88-93.
209 Miles, “Softvideography”, 5.
positioned within the boundaries of the frame. This promotes a reliance on viewing multiple frames concurrently.\textsuperscript{210}

Therefore, the resulting fragmentation of the frame in \textit{Collins Street} is in effect a form of ‘collage’ which emulates the influences of the GUI, rather than controlled montage. Landow describes collage historically as a cutting and pasting technique that combines different media forms and found objects (in the example of Cubist works) together mainly in the form of static paintings. He proposes that hypertext writing uses similar collage properties to Cubist painting, whereby in the process of “juxtaposition, appropriation, assemblage, and concatenation”\textsuperscript{211}, associations form between differing elements. In the electronic environment of hypertext, each element is a node and links between such nodes create associations. The ability to use links to initiate these collage properties provides the opportunity to use both collage and montage in \textit{Collins Street}. Furthermore, Landow claims that any screen that is capable of displaying a number of windows provides a setting for the creation of collage. On the computer, therefore, visual and aural data can be collaged together as well as text.\textsuperscript{212} In summary, the fragmenting of the frame in \textit{Collins Street} works with montage in the form of edited moving-imagery in combination with collage.

\section*{4.6 Hypermedia Video}

Another factor that affects this fragmentation and the combining of different images and sounds in \textit{Collins Street} is the integration methodologies of hypermedia. In short, hypermedia uses hyperlinks to integrate plain text, video, audio, and still images into, in most, cases a non-linear narrative structure. In \textit{Collins Street}, a networked multilinear structure provides the opportunity to keep these varying elements separate compared to the final mixed process used in one-channel video.

\textsuperscript{210} Manovich, “The Language of Cultural Interfaces”, in \textit{The Language of New Media}, 94-103.
\textsuperscript{211} Landow, “Hypertext as Collage-Writing”, 57.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid, 55-63.
Speilmann argues that the main objective in hypermedia is to determine how to retrieve these separate elements. The differences between each form of media are not the main priority in the integration process as it is in intermedia. In the intermedia work *eurovision*, Wallace spent a significant amount of time balancing the differences of each media form to produce the final audio-visual result. The integration of the each varying element is based on a careful consideration of scale, repetition, composition and audio level. The prominence of an element in terms of what the viewer will gravitate towards to understand the narrative is also evaluated as part of this integration process. In an article on hypertext, Moulthrop points out that media forms like television favour one modality, in this case sight, in order to achieve an integration which will be understood by the viewer. This concept also applies to other media forms, such as radio, where audio and subsequently hearing is the predominating modality. He proposes that hypertext, due to the historical relationship it has with “literature”, relies instead on a similar interpretation process in combination with sensory “perception”. *Collins Street* is an audio-visual form of hypermedia that favours associations between separate images and sounds rather than one modality. Miles argues that, “hypertext can be a viewed as a post-cinematic writing practice in its combination of meaningful units (shots and nodes) and their possible relations (edits and links.)” Following this objective results in a different type of integration compared to intermedia.

*Collins Street* as a form of hypermedia demonstrates a different form of integration compared to *eurovision*. The audio tracks running simultaneously often compete with each other, making it hard to understand the individual narration tracks. This contrasts with the careful mixing of multiple audio tracks in television to produce a coherent outcome for the viewer. The audio tracks generally share equal importance amongst each other, which contradicts a conventional television mix where one element is required to dominate the narrative. The other audio tracks mixed behind the narration focus on communicating the spoken word clearly to the viewer. In this vog, the user can choose uneven mixes of all the audio or each track separately. Mousing disrupts the time-based video fragments running

213 Speilmann, “Intermedia in Electronic Images”, 59-60.
214 Miles, “Softvideography”, 3.
simultaneously, along with activating sections of text that appear through the video imagery. The interactive authoring makes it very difficult to read this text. This seems to signify the practitioner’s intent, which is for the user to engage with parts rather than the whole. The user instigates the integration of the separate media forms. The user has to learn how to integrate the most understandable configuration by engaging with varying combinations using the mouse. Overall, the integration of the varying elements fractures the video space. Miles in an audio track describes the vog as being a “sketch”\textsuperscript{215} where the idea is not to spend time on the carefully constructed integration that normally goes into audio-video production. In effect, Miles experiments with multiple combinations of the media forms he has assembled. He configures these combinations to engage the user in the integration of the separate media forms.

To conclude this case study analysis, *Collins Street* is a form of video practice that experiments with the specificities of new media technologies to determine a video form that reflects the cultural codes emerging on the Internet; a shift towards viewing literacies of concomitant and multiple simultaneous associations, as discussed in case study one. Both *Collins Street* and *eurovision* in their own ways negotiate the growing importance of space in the construction of narrative using video. Both also negotiate the redefinition of narrative as a multisequential structure. A key difference is that *eurovision* constructs this type of narrative for a passive viewer compared to an active user in Collins Street. In *eurovision* the concept of multiple streams of data in the browser window is transferred from the Internet onto one-channel video. Through a process of intermedia, transformations are created not by interactive links but by the differences between the media forms. The focus is on layering these differences together to control the sensory perception of the viewer and guide them in the formation of associations. In *Collins Street*, however, the focus is on the assembly and linking of separate elements into a structure that involves the user in the process of making associations. These different responses towards the integration of multiple elements begin to provide some insights into approaches towards digital video practice in new media.

**Conclusion**

*The Garden of the Forking Paths was the chaotic novel itself. The phrase ‘the various future but not at all’ suggested to me the bifurcating in time, not in space. Rereading the whole work confirmed this theory. In all fiction, when a man is faced with alternatives he chooses one at the expense of others. In the almost unfathomable Ts’ui Pen, he chooses - simultaneously - all of them. He thus creates various futures, various times which start others that will in turn branch out and bifurcate in other times.*

-- Luis Borges 216

A German Spy, Yu Tsen, the narrator in the story, plans to murder Steven Albert – a man he selected randomly from the phone book. Albert has spent much of his life examining an incomprehensible novel written by Yu Tsen’s ancestor, Ts’ui Pen. Albert has taken on the difficult task of deciphering what he perceives as being a “chaotic novel” – a fictional story by the real life writer Luis Borges. Albert seeks a method of analysis that brings some type of order to the narrative structure. In this example, the term ‘chaos’ is used to describe Albert’s confusion – he is not able to make sense of the narrative based on the narrative conventions he already knows. Therefore, he examines the novel like a puzzle in order to determine an analytical method that will enable him to make sense of the narrative.

In relation to the video work analysed in the case studies, both Wallace and Miles investigate narrative structures that push towards establishing new conventions in terms of video practice within new media. Their video narratives at this point appear to be chaotic because these new conventions are still in the process of being formed. Therefore, the task for them and other video practitioners is to locate a form of order that can be deciphered or read by viewers.

Paradoxically, the editors of the book *New Screen Media Cinema/Art/Narrative* propose that there is currently a “narrative chaos” in the broader field of new media and specifically in relation to audio-visual practices. They assert that practitioners exploring new narrative structures that work across the intersection of both art and technology are creating this chaos. They open this book with a quote from the fiction writer Kurt Vonnegut who, writing about the construction of narrative in his novels, boldly claims that he “will bring chaos to order”. Instead of there being a main protagonist, all characters will be equally significant in his stories. Following his hypothesis, the reader has to make order out of the chaos that he writes. Vonnegut implies that it is necessary to deconstruct established conventions so that people can be shifted towards comprehending new narrative conventions. Such a notion gestures towards the difficult negotiations necessary to the establishment of new video genres. Video practitioners devising new narrative structures negotiate both the formation of some type of order along with being prepared to let go of established ideas and conventions – often including what they understand to be the concept of ‘order’.

In effect the writing of Borges, and particularly the story *The Garden of the Forking Paths*, are also used by Carlos Basualdo to argue for a move towards a multilinear method of exhibiting contemporary art. Basualdo, writing in the catalogue for the international *Documenta11_Platform 5* contemporary art exhibition, reveals a method of exhibiting that allows multiple connections to occur simultaneously. Dealing with a large-scale exhibition with a broad range of artistic mediums along with artworks from around the globe, he is interested in breaking away from “linear” and “chronological” exhibiting methods. However, at the same time he is cautious of, as he states, “replacing a linear order for chaotic informality, the free co-existence of everything with everything”. Instead he argues that through a careful process of planning and organisation, a sense of reasoning can be maintained. Ultimately, his goal is to create a multifaceted and complicated narrative structure.

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218 Ibid, xxv-xxvii.
that is still comprehensible. In short, he demonstrates through his argument the need to locate and formulate multilinear structures that maintain a form of meaning for the viewer. Basualdo’s referral to this type of curatorial approach provides another example culturally of the desire to investigate other narrative forms – in this case a multilinear form.

Similarly, Nick Montfort refers to Borges and the *The Garden of the Forking Paths* in connection with narrative developments in new media. Specifically, this is in connection with the formation of hypertext narrative structures. Montfort suggests that within this short story Borges explains the concept that a novel “can be read in multiple ways.” This explanation is brought to the reader by Albert’s efforts to make order out of narrative chaos. This notion of reading a novel in a multilinear way Montfort compares with the narrative structure of the hypertext novel, claiming that Borges conceived this narrative form before the creation of computers. Borges’s multilinear approach towards narrative, Montfort argues, has acted as a guide for many new media practitioners to configure hypertext narratives.

Borges’s early writing points, I suggest, towards the notion of a narrative form that is “yet to come” – that is still reaching towards its fulfilment as a form.

Thus, Wallace and Miles could be seen as being caught up in what Douglas Kellner describes as a shift towards the formation of “multiliteracies or multiple literacies” (3.6). In the article, “New Media and New Literacies: Reconstructing Education for the New Millennium”, Kellner argues for the re-development of conventional literacy foundations in order to meet the demands of change brought about by technology and new media. Contained with this argument is a focus on the development of these new literacies to meet the requirements of hypertext platforms like the Internet. He states that:

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223 Kellner, “New Media and New Literacies”, *The New Media Handbook*. 
As technological convergence develops apace, one needs to combine the skills of critical media literacy and new forms of multiple literacies to access and master the new multimedia hypertext environments.224

In terms of working with hypertext constructs Wallace, in *eurovision*, produces a “linear version of an interactive project”225 as part of an aim to create a single-channel version of a number of frames streaming into the video screen - like an Internet browser window. Miles, stating that “video can be treated as hypertext”, 226 merges cinematic practices with hypertext constructs (4.1). Both of these video practitioners explore, in line with Montfort’s notion of the hypertext novel and Borges’s story *The Garden of the Forking Paths*, the potential to read video narratives in a multilinear way. To sum up, the exploration of multilinear narrative structures in the case study video practices could be seen as being one part of the development of ‘multiple literacies’ in the broader field of new media.

At the outset in this *Video Chaos* dissertation, I asserted that the examination of current video practices would demonstrate an emerging trend towards disseminating audio-visual content simultaneously in the form of multilinear narrative structures. Consequently, I argued that this trend has caused significant development within video as a medium and, as seen in the case studies, is an effect of video new media artist-practitioners’ engagement with the relationships between art and technology. For these reasons, whilst a number of issues have come to the fore in this research, exploring the issues of narrative structuration has been the primary focus of this dissertation.

It follows, then, that a key issue that arises is determining a narrative structuration process that meets the social demand for the multiple simultaneous distribution of video content. Video as a “bastard medium” permits practitioners to fuse a mixed bag of mediums into multilinear narrative structures. But, as discussed, a significant issue is determining narratives that can be unraveled by the viewer - multilinear narratives that do not fall into chaos. So, a major contribution towards the outcome of this research is identifying the narrative structuration processes that begin to

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224 Ibid, 96.
emerge as a result of examining the case studies. The following final analysis therefore makes connections with practice approaches in the case studies that begin to provide ideas for further research in this area. The following ideas also begin to provide a framework that may be applicable towards my own practice and teaching video in new media education.

A starting point is being clear about the form of media being worked with and the differences between intermedia and hypermedia. The analysis of Eurovision as an intermedia form revealed that the narrative structuring follows different requirements compared to the vogs practice (4.6). In intermedia, as Spielmann argued, a mix of media are combined at the interface in a way that causes a “transformation” to occur, which subsequently produces a new form of media. Jurgen Heinrichs and Spielmann state:

> Whereas intertextuality explores text-to-text relationships, intermediality addresses the merger and transformation of elements of differing media. 227

An objective of intermedia, Spielmann claims, is to question existing media forms. This is an objective Wallace achieves by following a precise and calculated integration process that primarily draws attention, in this example, to cinema and televisual forms. Heinrichs and Spielmann state that:

> Intermedia self-reflexively reveals the form of the medium itself: it draws attention to its mixed nature from multiple perspectives. 228

To sum up then, the narrative aim in hypermedia, according to Spielmann, also follows a “multiple perspective” paradigm. But the objective in hypermedia is to create links between separate media forms through multilinear narrative structures. 229 In vogs the focus is on linking data together rather than making an intermedia “transformation” occur on the surface of the screen. These differing

228 Ibid, 6.
229 Ibid, 5-7.
objectives denote a different approach towards the structure of multilinear narrative in *eurovision* compared to the hypermedia *vogs* practice.

Another factor is determining the specific attributes of the mediums being worked with and how these may restrict or enhance a multilinear narrative approach, a factor that is often blinded by the desire to reproduce existing media forms on other platforms (4.4). In Miles's *vogs* manifesto he stresses that “A vog is not streaming video (this is not the reinvention of television).”230 A vog is not merely a TV program streamed off the web, a vog is interactive and utilises the attributes of a networked online environment. In an interview, Miles explained the importance of understanding the specific attributes of a medium and how these attributes play a crucial role in the production of content and subsequently in narrative structuration.231 Using the Digital Video Disc (DVD) format as an example he points out that a:

> DVD is a publication medium, the materiality of the DVD – what it affords us as filmmakers is fundamentally different to what TV or Cinema affords…rather than treating it as a publication medium or distribution medium – think of it as an authoring medium…to put it in a very simple way, what is the grammar of the medium?232

In regards to new media practice, Miles suggests that a key objective is to develop a thorough understanding of the “technologies” being used – an engagement in his *vogs* practice that intersects across both art and technology.233 *Blogs* are a successful genre on the Internet and used as an example to develop an understanding of the specific characteristics of the Internet (4.3). Vogs as a genre of video practice demonstrate the practitioner’s understanding of the characteristics of video and the Internet. Through what he calls “sketches”, Miles explores potential multilinear narrative structures that reflect and work within the parameters of these two mediums.

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231 Miles, Interview, 3.
232 Ibid, 3.
233 Ibid, 10.
The next significant stage is verifying and recognising the type of multilinear narrative structures that may be applicable to both the mediums being used and the attributes of those mediums. In essence this is an analytical inquiry that comprises an extension of this research project. In direct relation to the case studies, *eurovision*, I assert, follows an open structure in which Wallace aims to promote a diverse range of readings for each viewer. Therefore, associations across the multiple frames on the screen are open and complex. But at the same time the closed structure of the Bergman and Godard films provide a connection back to a conventional known narrative structure (3.4). A similar open approach is noted in Finola Jones’s video work, *Artificially Constructed Habitats*, where multitude screens positioned in varying clusters are used to increase and fragment associations across the material presented (2.3). An example that could be seen as being a closed structure is a diptych or triptych painting, whereby the viewer is asked to view all the paintings as a whole. In many cases this is left to right in a chronological progression. The vog *Collins Street* in essence uses a triptych composition to display a number of perspectives of Collins Street concurrently. If the interactivity is not engaged with in *Collins Street*, the narrative structure could be seen as being relatively closed. But mousing over the work fractures this simplicity and produces more complex arrangements of vision and audio. In *eurovision*, complexity is created on the surface of the screen in what is a fixed single-channel work. Overall, these types of observations begin to recognise the complex and varied types of narrative structuration that are possible.

A prime example of this open and closed approach towards narrative structure was reiterated in a lecture given by Ross Gibson. Covering a topic titled “The Risk of the Dramatic Database”, Gibson claims that narrative in cinema, printed on film, presents a closed or locked-off structure that is broken by interactivity and a medium like the Internet. Mediums like the Internet for example, he argues, demand open-ended narratives. In the construction of vogs, Miles encourages his students

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234 Ross Gibson, “The Risk of the Dramatic Database”, *New Media Lecture Series* (Centre for New Media Arts, The Australian National University and The National Museum of Australia, September 3, 2004). Gibson discusses the social, psychological and aesthetic conditions that have given rise to new cultural forms like dynamic databases, multimedia engines and adaptive algorithms.
to utilise the multilinearity of a hypertext structure – to create narrative structures that allow for several audio tracks to run concurrently, and still being coherent if the user moves at any moment from one to another.\(^{235}\) This type of multilinear narrative requires an open structure that allows for alterations to occur as part of the user engaging with the work. When Gibson was queried about the type of theoretical references that are available to provide guidelines for structuring open-ended narratives, he referred to Garden theory: the varied techniques used to design and sustain gardens by different cultures, he claims, provide some insights into how to combine multiple elements together in new media. This is an example of the appropriations of rules and systems to another form, and yet to be fully formulated in relation to multilinear narratives.

Another significant factor that emerged as a part of configuring the multilinear narrative structures in the case studies is a focus on both time and space. Firstly, Borges’s concept of time in the story *The Garden of the Forking Paths*\(^{236}\) draws attention to the different moments in time being presented concurrently. Janet Murray argues that time in the novel, within this short story by Borges, is not fixed. Time instead forks in a number of directions and presents the potential for a number of time periods to exist simultaneously.\(^{237}\) This is a notion in evidence in Albert’s explanation that “the various future but not at all” suggested to me the bifurcating in time, not in space.”\(^ {238}\) Both Wallace and Miles explore the simultaneous display of differing time periods within the screen space. In *eurovison* a number of time periods are placed alongside each other using photos, film and video. In the vog *Collins Street*, unless a number of cameras recorded video all at the same time, the varying shots of Collins Street in Melbourne are recorded at different times. The collection of varying shots are then placed alongside each other and run concurrently. In contrast, a flashback in a full-screen feature film is unable to be viewed alongside another time period. Hence, in a split-screen video work the potential to present a number of time periods concurrently becomes an integral component of the multilinear narrative structure.

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235 Miles, Interview, 9.
The temporal structure of a time-based narrative in many cases influences the spatial composition and subsequently the overall narrative structure. In other words, a conventional and known narrative structure becomes a starting point to determine the multilinear structure. In the production of *eurovision*, Wallace experimented for some time to work out a framework for the narrative structure (3.3). In the final result Wallace uses the feature film excerpts as the pivotal and major visual element to build both the spatial and temporal narrative around. The other major narrative influence is the Eurovision song contestants’ performances. The four contestants, of four different nationalities, provide breaks to section the overall video work into four parts. In the vog *Collins Street*, a complex number of audio-visual elements are hyperlinked into a simple time-based visual narrative. The video images basically capture the part of one day at the Collins Street location. This video material is then sliced up and fragmented with other video shots, but overall the viewer watches events occurring on Collins Street from a number of different perspectives. A number of Miles’s other blogs often utilise one recorded video shot (a moment in time) which allows for the complex introduction of other media forms using hyperlinks (4.2). A final example is the feature film *Timecode*. In a split-screen of four frames the director, Mike Figgis, displays action that is recorded in one take from four different perspectives. The audience, dealing with a complex audio edit that moves them from one frame to another and watching four frames of moving-imagery simultaneously, are given one chronological time period to comprehend. The narrative structure of the time-based material plays a crucial role in the spatial composition and the overall multilinear narrative structuration.

So the use of space becomes a predominant aspect of multilinear narrative structures, the notion being that space and time have equal importance in the configuration of new media narratives (3.5). Also presented in this section was the Manovich argument that a number of time-based narratives presented beside each other produce an effect that he calls “spatial montage”. In hypermedia, links produce the same effect in static visual material by introducing new elements into the frame. The use of space brings a new dimension to defining narrative structures. He states that “the logic of replacement, characteristic of cinema, gives
way to a logic of addition and coexistence.” These two defining attributes are evident in both of the case studies. In eurovison there is an emphasis on “co-existence”, whereby templates are devised to configure the compositional layout of elements alongside each other in the frame. The composition, the configuration of the frames in the screen space, is combined with temporal editing to produce the final narrative structure. In the vog Collins Street, in addition to defining the composition of the multiple frames, a key factor is configuring the introduction of other elements into the screen space using hyperlinks – in this case text and a number of audio tracks. Spatial composition is combined with hyperlinks which, as Miles suggests, are equivalent in function to cinematic edits. Overall, in differing ways these video practitioners work, as Manovich also argued, with both the temporal attribute of “replacement” along with the spatial attributes of “addition and coexistence.”

The conclusion to be drawn from this research project is that there are a number of issues associated with determining multilinear narratives and structures in new media video. In a broader context, there is a social and cultural gravitation towards the presentation of new cultural texts and content in the form of poly-sequential structures. The New Media field evolves and develops to meet this demand for new types of “multiliteracies”. Consequently, the immediate challenge, as demonstrated in the case studies, is determining multilinear narratives and structures that begin to transform established audio-visual viewing conventions and develop the concept of multiliteracies. But the concept of multiliteracies in many ways only becomes fully known when specific literacy conventions are reached and established – a notion that makes it difficult to define a narrative structuration process in any complete way in advance.

Furthermore, intersections are required across both cultural constructs and video technologies in order to meet the demand for new types of content. In this scenario, the varying available technologies are the tools in the process of production. However, the constant advancement of video technologies opens up a plethora of

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239 Manovich, 325.
240 Miles, “Softvideography”, 3.
multilinear narrative options. These structural options change along with advances in technology and the prospective ways that those technologies can be used.

Also, technological advancements may often be instigated by financial and political motives, along with the influences of established cultural conventions. Such ideological investments often confuse the development of a narrative structuration process that is attempting to express emerging social desires. In other words, the production of any type of cultural text is both constrained and liberated by the forces that are at work on it, including both commercial and political motives as part of broader social developments. However, it is through the very struggle for such expression that new forms emerge.

Finally, as demonstrated in the case studies, the configuration of multilinear narrative structures shifts from a focus on ‘narration’ itself to a process that relies on the formation and linking of varying elements of data. The new media video practitioner working with the computational potentiality of digital technologies engages with the possible structural configurations that fit within the parameters of the technologies being used. Perhaps this engagement may lead to audio-visual chaos or eventually to varying types of recognisable viewing conventions. The novelist and critic Norman Klein reiterates this notion:

> We must become structuralists again, not postmoderns. We can do this...All forms of narrative should be put up to question; all forms of identity in story. Beginnings, middles, and ends should be re-evaluated. Nothing that is taken for granted should be ignored. We start from scratch, but with sensory and political realities of the moment. Be a trifle clumsy, be a trifle risky. Trust your ability to get lost in order to find something.\(^\text{241}\)

End.