

HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORDS
AND A CAMERA
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Freedom of Speech, Ethics of Listening and Mixed Messages in Image Media

1. *Freedom* is hot verbal currency these days and much is claimed or done in its name; it has become what in French would be called a *passe-partout*, a key to all doors. George W. Bush used the word freedom forty-two times during his second inaugural address as US president in 2005; the speech lasted only twenty-one minutes, which makes two freedoms a minute.² As an abstract and modern notion (i.e. not physical freedom from slavery or oppression) freedom can be seen as a product or indeed aim of the Enlightenment project;³ it was sloganised during the French Revolution in *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (liberty, equality, brotherhood) and canonised in the same year in relation to speech as the first amendment to the US constitution. Thus freedom of speech represents something like an after-thought, a belated realisation, or indeed, a Derridean supplement.⁴ Since 1789, freedom of speech has been promoted to a *fundamental human right* and is now embedded in many constitutions and charters worldwide, often bundled with the right to information. Yet this double freedom of expression and information is by no means an absolute one; there are many interests, be they political or economic, with which it may not interfere.

While speech – if it is permitted – can come about as a spontaneous act, access to information on the other hand – even if it is considered a right – always takes place in a controlled environment, guarded by gate-keepers in different guises: editors, archivists, politicians or search-engines.⁵ Not only if speech is to be free and informed is it dependent on access and thus subject to various control-mechanisms; also on much more subtle levels, many conditions need to be met before one feels free and at ease to speak one's mind and articulate one's position vis-à-vis a status quo. These political, cultural, educational, social, economic and, last but not least, emotional factors evade easy quantification. In *Archive Fever* Derrida notes how access to archives can be seen as a measure of liberation from totalitarian regimes and a first step towards democratisation and the values of free speech and involvement in political processes it promotes.⁶ In addition, I would argue that conditions need to be met whereby newly accessed information can also be circulated freely and sensibly, that is, without simply being instrumentalised by journalistic or political propaganda. In allusion to Benjamin's historical index of recognisability,⁷ we could speak of a historical index of utterability, a marker of moments in time and place when something can be said, when it becomes speakable. But even then, even if speaking is possible, hearing, listening and understanding is another matter altogether.

2. For decades, many facts of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict have remained unspoken, not only in both communities but also internationally. While the phenomenon of the so-called ‘new historians’ has begun to demystify certain aspects of official history, much remains unsaid.⁸ Moreover, in recent years there has certainly been a lot of talk about Israel/Palestine, and indeed leaders of the two communities have also begun to talk to each other (if only intermittently). However, the absence of a complete freedom of speech on both sides of the conflict can still crudely and sadly be measured by the fact that speaking one’s mind can (and has) cost people their lives. The fear of recriminations for uttering what is deemed unutterable on either side of the political spectrum is only matched by a general apathy and a deep lack of trust in words after years of empty verbal gestures by the politicians of the day.

Defying this hopeless situation, the Palestinian and Israeli documentary film-makers Michel Khleifi and Eyal Sivan set out to hear people speak about their experiences in this complicated land, tell their stories, convey their understanding of the political situation as well as their memory of the past and their hopes for the future. Travelling from the south to the north of Palestine/Israel on a virtual line which follows the UN borders of the never implemented 1947 partition plan (resolution 181), the film-makers encountered anonymous Israelis and Palestinians and encouraged them to freely speak their minds. The result is a four and a half hour filmic document of their journey, *Route 181* (2003). In the project notes Khleifi and Sivan write: ‘The voices of those forgotten by official discourse will, we hope, be heard – the voices of those who nonetheless constitute the majority in both societies, those in whose name wars are fought.’⁹ Much has been made in Middle East commentary of the lack and/or promise of dialogue. *Route 181* exposes the false premise of this. The film-makers’ aim was not to reconcile opposing sides, nor to make them talk to each other; what they do instead is more modest, but also more radical. They simply listened to what people have to say. And it is their act of listening which creates the very conditions for what is being said and how it is being said. Viewers might not agree with what people say in the film; we might feel shocked, surprised, saddened, angry or hopeful. However, one of the most powerful reactions the film provokes stems from the sheer fact of hearing people speak; they dare say things which might be considered treacherous by some in their own communities. What we encounter first and foremost in *Route 181* is the act of faith constituted by free speech.

3. In the first chapter of his *On Interpretation*, Aristotle writes:

Every sentence is significant [...], but not every sentence is a statement-making sentence, but only those in which there is truth or falsity. There is not truth or falsity

in all sentences: a prayer is a sentence but is neither true nor false. The present investigation deals with the statement-making sentence; the others we can dismiss, since consideration of them belongs rather to the study of rhetoric or poetry.¹⁰

This linguistic snobbery (or descriptive fallacy as it is called) remained largely unchallenged for over two thousand years. Among the first to oppose the Aristotelian prejudice against non-judgemental language was Thomas Reid who considered in the late nineteenth century other types of sentence in addition to judgements. Reid’s technical term for prayers, promissings, warnings, forgivings, etc., is ‘social operations’. Sometimes he also calls them ‘social acts’, and opposes them to ‘solitary acts’ such as judgments, intendings, deliberatings and desirings, which are characterised by the fact that it is not essential to them that they be expressed and by the fact that their performance does not presuppose another ‘intelligent being in the universe’ in addition to the person who performs them. Social speech acts are significant for two reasons: they are independent from notions of truth and falsity, and they actually dismiss these as irrelevant categories or classifications altogether. In addition, they introduce a vis-à-vis into the equation, an addressee. The ear of the other, the act of listening is the condition, the *raison d’être* of this kind of speech. While the rights or wrongs of solitary speech acts belong to the realms of truth and morality, or history and philosophy, the social speech act operates in the mode of address, in turn prompting an ethics of listening. Lévinas describes the face-to-face encounter as the primal moment from which all language and communication springs. The face of the other in its expression and mortality summons me and pronounces that we are responsible for others. The appearance and awareness of otherness as well as the emergence of ethics itself is thus localised in the face-to-face situation.¹¹ Face-to-face, my hearing becomes an act of listening. The other’s voice commands me to listen, and by addressing me, makes me into a witness of its utterance. As a consequence I become answerable. This does not mean that I actually need to answer, but I am irrevocably drawn into the responsibility of having been addressed. As such, having someone who listens, rather than someone who answers can be considered as the first condition for dialogue.

Khleifi’s and Sivan’s presence and attention in *Route 181* allows the people they encounter on their journey to address them and in turn address us, the viewers. The real exchange which thus occurs lifts the weight of the journalistic and politicised communication under which the region (and the world) so agonises; the doctrine of judgement, truth or information – the solitary speech act – is turned into an address, a social operation. What we see and hear is more powerful than facts or judgements; even if the interviews do contain them, the apparatus, that is the listening and observing

camera, turns their pronouncement into a social act, an address. The very presence of the camera presupposes that ‘other intelligent being in the universe’; us, the viewers, who will be face-to-face with the interviewee’s warnings, prayers, forgivings and despair. In *Route 181* the *mise en abîme* of official history and truth-discourse modifies the quality of listening and implicates us, the viewers, in what is being said. Like the film-makers themselves who have rejected tribal allegiances, we begin to hear with the ear of the other. This creates a critical shift from *what* is being said to *how* we listen to it. Indeed, at a time when so much has been said about Palestine/Israel but much less has actually been heard, the quality of listening takes on crucial importance. What the encounter with the protagonists of *Route 181* makes us realise is that we do not just need new historians or new histories, we also need an ethics of listening.

4. But what are the parameters of such an ethics? And how does it operate in image media, i.e. beyond direct speech and one-to-one dialogue? That is, how exactly does the camera affect the speech act and consequently the act of listening? How does the camera affect the relationship between addresser and addressee? What modes of intelligibility frame the relationship between speaker and listener in filmed speech? And going one step further, what are the different epistemological and ethical formations in Bush’s second inaugural address broadcast to the nation and world as opposed to the filmed interviews in *Route 181*?

Since J. L. Austin’s influential *How To Do Things with Words*, speech acts that address a listener and demarcate a social operation are conceived of *performatively*. What is performed first and foremost is a commitment, namely to one’s words. Early in his book Austin poignantly refers to the common saying ‘our word is our bond’.¹² So beyond *what* is being said, the mode of address itself is already marked by the performance of an illocution of committing ourselves to our words and offering this bond to an other.¹³ This ‘offer’ forms the basis of the ethical or moral contract whose sphere of influence can reach both into the personal and the political. On the one hand, to address a vis-à-vis, to offer a commitment to one’s words, is to invite someone to listen, to understand; this also means taking the risk of being misunderstood, making oneself vulnerable to the judgements of others. It is this vulnerability that opens up the ethical, inter-personal dimension that is so engaging in *Route 181*. On the other end of the spectrum, an address to the nation will try to avoid misunderstandings and cover up vulnerability. George W. Bush’s speech performed the bond of words in a different way altogether, namely not as an invitation to listen and understand but as a command to listen and a persuasion to follow his interpretation of current affairs. Both the interlocutors in *Route 181* and George W. Bush speak to camera. But their mode of address operates differently. Whereas

the recorded conversations in *Route 181* stem from a spontaneous invitation to speak, and once relayed to the viewer, they open up an ethical inter-personal dimension, the scenario of the leader speaking to his nation/the world makes use of deliberate rhetorical devices with moralistic and political aims that leave little interpretative freedom.¹⁴ At the same time, Bush’s frequent recourse to the word and concept of freedom in the context of his *Realpolitik* ironically exposes the darker meaning of the notion of bond performed in the speech act; here it is no longer an offer of a mutually beneficial contract, but a tool for political and economic control, a shackle. It also rammes home the message, that of course, words are *not* binding;¹⁵ promises can be made and broken, hopes and aspirations can be expressed without ever having to be met. Indeed, words can do an awful lot (not least buy time), but – as we know all too well from Iraq or the Israel/Palestine conflict – they are nothing compared to facts on the ground.

5. The camera frames and faithfully records both the invited/spontaneous, personal speech acts in *Route 181* and the president’s scripted public address to the nation. In both instances the camera is the *inter-locutor*, an immediate vis-à-vis that itself, however, is not addressed and instead mediates *between* addresser and addressee. The camera produces a different kind of mediation in each case, subscribing to different regimes of the image with their attendant claims to reality and truth. The static, televisual close-up shots of Bush, inter-cut with brief images of the crowd at his inaugural ceremony were broadcast in real-time to allow the nation at home ‘to be there’ too and to each be addressed personally in their living room. The camera in this case performs the function of relay or transmitter; it creates a transparent window through which the president can address his people. The result is a shared space and time where the viewer becomes a privileged witness of the president’s oath.¹⁶ In contrast, the handheld, cinema-verité style shots of people in their everyday surroundings in *Route 181* were filmed and edited in a documentary mode, where the camera (not the viewer) takes on the role of the witness and gives voice and image to an otherwise unrepresented and unheard reality. Whereas the live broadcast of Bush makes its viewers complicit in a soliloquous political act performed through words which inscribe us in a ‘common’, monolithic version of history and subjugate us (and the world) to the force of freedom,¹⁷ the documentary format of *Route 181* creates a multi-vocal chorus, akin to that of a Greek tragedy; that is, it represents the general populace in a drama performed by a few key players. This chorus, made up of people from different sides of ethnic and political dividing lines, promotes a freedom of interpretation by providing a commentary of the main themes and giving us background information to the unfolding political tragedy as well as expressing fears and secrets that cannot be spoken by official spokespeople. Superficially, *Route 181* employs

the format of the *vox populi* (aka ‘vox pop’), also frequently employed on TV. However, the recorded interviews do not pretend to give us unmediated access to *the people*, but are instead presented as a carefully choreographed and edited series of encounters. In turn, the distance between the viewer and interviewees in the film creates a space for reflection and criticality. We, as viewers must find our own way through the diversity of opinions and personal stories, and become interpreters engaged in a hermeneutics of the spoken word. Yet, while the ethics of listening implied in this mode of address requires reflection, empathy and criticality, it is not entirely resistant to manipulation. Certainly, it does not induce a false or forced sense of complicity as in Bush’s rhetoricised address. Subscribing to an engaged, realist documentary methodology, *Route 181* nevertheless shares aspirations of *political instrumentality*. As Bill Nichols poignantly observes:

Documentary film has a kinship with those other non-fictional systems that together make up what we may call the discourses of sobriety. Science, economics, politics, foreign policy, education, religion, welfare – these systems assume they have instrumental power; they can and should alter the world itself [...]. Discourses of sobriety are sobering because they regard their relation to the real as direct, immediate, transparent.¹⁸

6. While the performativity of the social, relational speech acts of both Bush and the interviewees in *Route 181* on one level implies a break from notions of truth and falsity (because they do something with words rather than just make a statement), the apparatus of their mediation – whether as live TV-broadcast reaching the nation’s and the world’s living rooms or as a documentary film touring international human rights festivals – is far from immune from the ambitions of truth production. To be sure, the level of implied objectivity differs in each case, not just, as we have seen, in terms of the rhetorical devices employed in the respective modes of address, i.e. official version versus personal testimony, but also in terms of the transparency of the camera. In Bush’s televised speech, the operation of recording is rendered almost completely invisible through static, ‘omniscopic’ images, whose live transmission, however, is framed and branded by the TV news-channels by way of a continuous caption and channel logo. While the apparatus of image *production* is invisible or transparent, that of its *dissemination* is not. By contrast, in *Route 181* the camera is often hand-held and we hear the film-makers’ voices ask questions or interject comments from behind the lens; this reflexively points to the film’s apparatus and the selective and subjective aspects of the processes of mediation and framing. However, when *Route 181* is screened, these reflexive moments recede into the background and the film as a whole seems to subscribe to ‘the credo that a good documentary is one that draws attention to an issue and not itself’.¹⁹ And so, despite,

or perhaps even because of these glitches in transparency, the sobriety of the image and the controlling gaze implied in it remain unchallenged in both cases. The avowed realism at the heart of both image-regimes identifies them with epistemic processes and in turn supports an illusionistic mode of reception (i.e. fostering the belief in the real).²⁰ The problem that follows on from this, is that a genuinely engaged film like *Route 181*, which is overtly critical of both the political status quo and the politics of information/representation, can still be absorbed (and in some ways become neutralised) by the political apparatus and the prevailing regimes of image and knowledge production it critiques but with which it shares a trust in realism, sobriety and agency.

7. The tables are turned, as it were, and the pitfalls of this subsuming of critical strategies seem at least partly avoided in a recent collaborative project by the artists Andrea Geyer, Sharon Hayes, Ashley Hunt, Katya Sander and David Thorne. *9 Scripts from a Nation at War*, premiered at Documenta 12 in 2007, is a 10-channel video installation presented as a constellation of viewing booths. Each video stages the speaking of a script which is based on interviews with different types of people talking about their relation to, and experience of, the ongoing war in Iraq: a veteran, a student, a citizen, an actor, a blogger, a lawyer, a journalist, an interviewer. Crucially, these characters are performed by actors and non-actors alike. And in some cases, the original interviewees re-speak their own words, or learn the words of others.²¹ The fact that we watch re-staged, performed interviews undermines the epistemological foundations of the documentary mode and thus destabilises doctrines of truth and knowledge; it allows us to cast a sobering look at the very discourses of sobriety. The apparatus – camera and TV-monitor – no longer provides a more or less seamless and transparent means to objectively represent the real. Here, the order of the same is replaced by the uncertainty of resemblance. The performance of the original speech act and the social operations it implies are opened up to critical scrutiny by its re-enactment. In a Foucauldian sense, *9 Scripts* does not replace one truth with another but rather constitutes a new politics of truth.²² What takes place in the work is not just a problematisation and subjectivisation of the gaze (as reflective documentary practice has been doing for some time) but also of the object of the gaze, i.e. the performing speaker. What is put in question through the strategy of re-staging the interviews are the very rules of engagement – the formation, functionality and authority of performative speech, and whether it makes use of overt demagogic rhetoric or relies on the implicit critical powers of personal testimonies. As such, *9 Scripts* does not just promote awareness of the operations of the media image or attempt to change political consciousness; rather, it transforms the very systems of knowledge and image production from within and thus critically addresses their performative, political, economic and

institutional parameters. In the set-up we encounter in *9 Scripts*, it becomes less and less useful to talk about the dichotomy of truth and fiction, of real or fake testimony. Instead, what is thrown into relief is how we as viewers negotiate the break-down of this binary not just in the installation itself but in our daily encounter with mass-media. In this sense, *9 Scripts* stages a disruption similar to that which Rancière associates with *the aesthetic revolution*, where ‘testimony and fiction come under the same regime of meaning’.²³ And if, as we have seen, the so-called *performative turn* can be thought of as the first fundamental shake-up of the Aristotelian system, *the aesthetic revolution* might represent the final nail in the coffin of its certainties and dichotomies.²⁴ Indeed, it goes one important step further than Austin, who still insisted on the necessity of authenticity in performative utterances, i.e. that they are spoken by someone who is *authorised* to do so and that the circumstances of their enunciation are genuine. In fact, in a similar move to Aristotle’s seen above, Austin dismissed all other instances:

A performative utterance will, for example, be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage [...] or spoken in soliloquy. This applies in a similar way to any and every utterance – a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in many ways parasitic upon its normal use – ways which fall under the doctrine of the etiolations of language. All this we are excluding from consideration.²⁵

It is precisely its parasitic use of language that makes *9 Scripts* so serious and effects a sea-change not just in the status of the speech act or speaker, but also in our agency as viewers and listeners. Rather than rendering speech void, it shakes the fundamentals of interpretation, it destabilises the certainties of identification: Who, really, is speaking here? What position are they speaking from? And who are they addressing? Who are we?

8. In the artists’ words:

9 Scripts from a Nation at War considers the processes by which we are positioned as certain kinds of ‘individuals’ in relation to war – artists, soldiers, students, prisoners, detainees, citizens, Iraqis, Europeans, Americans, and so on. A student or a detainee or a journalist is formed not only in relation to political and ideological conditions, but also by the agency of the individuals themselves, always struggling in response to how they are positioned.²⁶

In *9 Scripts* the actor-speakers are directly positioned by the recognisable, generic contexts in which they are filmed, a classroom, in front of bookshelves, in a street.

Consequently, we can easily identify the types of people they represent: a teacher, a student, a journalist, a military commander. Their speaking further corroborates the roles and identities we have assigned them. However, the artificial scenarios and the parasitic use of language in the re-enactments unmask a profound confusion at the heart of this identification: we might know what they are but not who they are.²⁷ Hannah Arendt has explored this fundamental problem at the heart of all identification: ‘The manifestation of who the speaker and doer unexchangeably is, though it is plainly visible, retains a curious intangibility that confounds all efforts toward unequivocal verbal expression. The moment we want to say who somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying what he is.’²⁸ *9 Scripts* creates a *mise-en-scène* of this intangibility, of this slippage of identification and allows us to grapple with its ramifications. Rather than presenting the original speakers and tapping into the belief of an illusory, certified, authentic identity, the installation tackles the problem of mis-identification at the heart of speech in general and discourses of sobriety in particular; it substitutes the same with the similar, the specific with the generic and replaces the authoritative spoken word (and the performance of its bond) with its play-acted repetition.²⁹ Somewhat paradoxically, it is the very re-enactment of the original speech act that frees its meaning from the constraints of (mis-) identification. The emancipation of meaning from its original context, that is, the transfer of the performative illocutionary power – of agency – from the authentic speaking subject to an actor is, of course, as old as theatre itself. However, it is its use in an ostensibly documentary, sober or realist context (where it cannot be dismissed as fictional drama) that marks it as part of what I would call the ongoing Copernican revolution of the media image (or Rancière’s aesthetic revolution).³⁰ The unreliability of witness or document not only affects our blind trust in the indexicality of the recorded image but also disturbs our long-held understanding of, and belief in the power of agency. The pronouncements made by the actor-speakers in *9 Scripts* are neither simply (Aristotelian) statements or judgements, accounts or testimonies, i.e. epistemological formations inscribed in systems of truth; nor are they performing an (Austinian) ethical or moral bond which enacts the modalities of personal or political agency. Instead, the speakers manifest themselves as unstable, uncertain signs – sound-images – that, not so much like a Greek chorus but more like the ancient Oracles, reveal the very mechanisms of knowledge-production, identity-formation and agency.³¹ This revelatory quality is by no means positivistic or self-sufficient. Rather, it relies on a kind of transference between work and viewer. It is in our encounter with the characters or types in *9 Scripts*, that our own generic nature, our own scripted identity becomes palpable and our (belief in) agency – be it personal or political – is put in question. The spatial *mise-en-scène* of the installation serves to undermine any notion of a monolithic sphere of

influence and instead places us in labyrinthine channels of multiple inscription. As such the work demands a mode of engagement and attention which constantly needs to recalibrate itself, shuttling back and forth between a destabilised discourse of sobriety and the drama of its break-down, between transparent images and foregrounded mediation, between realism and theatricality, between political statement and literary locution. Negotiating this unstable terrain, we begin to draft maps of intense, sensible uncertainty, and follow trajectories between the visible and the sayable,³² between freedom of speech and the ethics of listening.

Are these the new rules of engagement in the war of images and words, the new parameters to understand, process and disseminate images and words of war? Could this be a new strategy that manages to resist both the assumptions, control and optimism at the heart of most established regimes of image and knowledge production, and the fetishisation, delusions or pessimism of many forms of reflexivity and criticality?

1. The starting point of this essay is a short text published in 2005 in the journal *I+I+1* under the title, 'Talk is cheap – Some Notes on Freedom of Speech and the Ethics of Listening in *Route 181* by Michel Khleifi and Eyal Sivan', on the occasion of the exhibition *The Trouble with Talkies*, curated by Double Agents (Adam Chodzko, Graham Ellard & Stephen Johnstone, Jaki Irvine, Uriel Orlow, Lisa Panting and Anne Tallentire). The current essay significantly revises and extends the reflections presented in that first incarnation.

2. Bush's speech can be watched in two parts at www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaNONpC3VMs and at www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLaJMdZOWi8. Site last visited on 10 April 2008.

3. 'If [the public] is only allowed freedom, enlightenment is almost inevitable. For even among the entrenched guardians of the great masses a few will always think for themselves, a few who, after having themselves thrown off the yoke of immaturity, will spread the spirit of a rational appreciation for both their own worth and for each person's calling to think for himself ...' Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment*, 1784. <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/kant.html>, visited on 10 April 2008.

4. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, [before Baltimore] Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1998. Derrida considers writing as the *supplement par excellence*, since it replaces speech, already a supplementary signification system. So the written law of free speech can be considered as an epitome of this double supplementation.

5. The recent decision by Google to filter its results in China in line with its censorship policies has been a stark reminder that the Internet is by no means exempt from control-mechanisms.

6. 'There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratisation can always be measured by this criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation. *A contrario*, the breaches of democracy can be measured by [...] *Forbidden Archives*.' Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Parenowitz, [before Chicago] Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1995, p. 4.

7. 'For the historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time.' Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin, London & Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press 1999, p. 462.

8. The new historians whose re-appraisal of official history and/or propaganda since the late 1980s has ushered in a Post-Zionist debate, include among others Baruch Kimmerling, Joel Migdal, Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, Tom Segev and Avi Shlaim.

9. The film is available in a 4 DVD box set. More information on www.memento-production.com.

10. Aristotle, *Categories and De Interpretatione*, trans. C. W. A. Whitaker, [before Oxford] Oxford: Oxford University Press 1975, pp. 45-6.

11. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, [before The Hague] The Hague: M. Nijhoff 1979.

12. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1976, p. 10.

13. The presidential oath at the beginning of the inaugural ceremony perfectly demonstrates the performative speech act as an utterance that does something by saying it and thus performs a bond. Raising his hand the president repeated after the Chief Justice of the US supreme court: "I, George Walker Bush do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the constitution of the United States. So help me, God."

14. 'Man is a political animal because he is a literary animal who lets himself be diverted from his 'natural' purpose by the power of words.' Jacques Rancière, trans. Gabriel Rockhill, [before London] *The Politics of Aesthetics*, London: Continuum,

2006, p. 39.

15. Stanley Cavell voiced both of these concerns about the bond of words in *Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida*, Oxford: Blackwell 1995.

16. Bush: 'I am grateful for the honor of this hour, mindful of the consequential times in which we live and determined to fulfill the oath that I have sworn and you have witnessed.'

17. 'At this second gathering, our duties are defined not by the words I use, but by the history we have seen together. [...] There is only one force of history that can brake the reign of hatred and resentment and expose the pretensions of tyrants [...] and that is the force of human freedom.'

18. Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1991, pp. 3-4.

19. Nichols, *Representing Reality*, pp. 178-9.

20. 'The credo that a good documentary is one that draws attention to an issue and not itself follows from the documentary's epistemic foundations.' Nichols, *Representing Reality*, pp. 178-9.

21. Further information can be found on the project's website: www.9scripts.info

22. Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge 2002.

23. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 37.

24. 'The aesthetic revolution re-arranges the rules of the game by making two things interdependent: the blurring of the borders between the logic of facts and the logic of fictions and the new mode of rationality that characterises the science of history. [...] The Aristotelian dividing line between two 'stories' or 'histories' – poets' stories and the history of historians – is thereby revoked, the dividing line that not only separated reality and fiction but also empirical succession and constructed necessity.' Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, pp. 36-7.

25. J. L. Austin, *How to do things with words*, pp. 21-2.

26. www.9scripts.info Last visited 10 April 2008.

27. 'In acting and speaking, men show who [not what] they are.' Hannah Arendt (1958) *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998, p. 179.

28. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 181.

29. 'The specific revelatory quality of action and speech, the implicit manifestation of the agent and speaker, is so indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and speaking that it can be represented and 'reified' only through a kind of repetition, the imitation or mimesis, which according to Aristotle prevails in all arts but is actually appropriate only to the drama, whose very name (from the Greek verb dran, "to act") indicates that play-acting actually is an imitation of acting. [...] Only the actors and speakers who re-enact the story's plot can convey the full meaning, not so much of the story itself, but of the 'heroes' who reveal themselves in it.' Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 187.

30. A number of other recent works have been using similar techniques of re-staging and manipulating interviews, e.g. Omer Fast's *A Tank Translated* (2002) or *The Casting* (2007). There are also equivalents in popular culture of the blurring of boundaries between 'the serious and the silly', e.g. through the introduction of play-acting in documentary practice which has led to the new genre of docu-drama.

31. '[...] the manifestation of the 'who' comes to pass in the same manner as the notoriously unreliably manifestations of ancient oracles, which, according to Heraclitus, 'neither reveal nor hide in words, but give manifest signs.' This is a basic factor in the equally notorious uncertainty not only of all political matters, but of all affairs that go on between men directly, without the intermediary, stabilizing and solidifying influence of things.' Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 182.

32. 'Political statements and literary locutions [both] produce effects in reality. They define models of speech or action but also regimes of sensible intensity. They draft maps of the visible, trajectories between the visible and the sayable [...]' Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 39.