



Week 6

Media Rituals

- Introduction
- Authors
- Cultural Model
- Assumptions
- Key Concepts
- Arguments
- Critique



- **Carey's model (cultural studies)**
 - Offers a *cultural approach* - an alternative view of **communication as a ritual process**
 - Shared construction of the patterns of social behavior
 - **Media reporting a wedding ceremony**
 - In which **news stories are cultural forms** (i.e. similar to theatrical productions or fictional stories)



Cultural Studies (two traditions)

British Cultural Studies

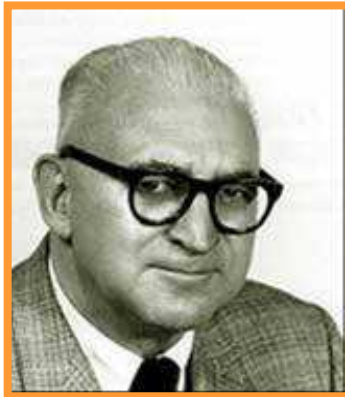
- 50s and 60s
- Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham
- Founding fathers: Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and E. P. Thompson
- Stuart Hall (Encoding/decoding)



American Cultural Studies

- James Carey: *Communication as Culture. Essays on Media and Society*, 1988; *Media, Myths, and Narratives. Television and the Press* (ed.), 1988
- An alternative view to the paradigm of media effect and the tradition of mass communication research

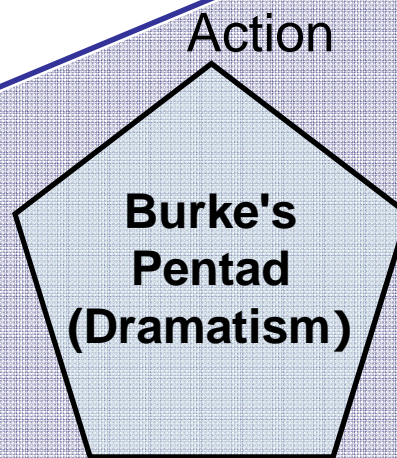
The Cultural Model of Communication



Lasswell

News = message

**The News =
cultural form**



Carey

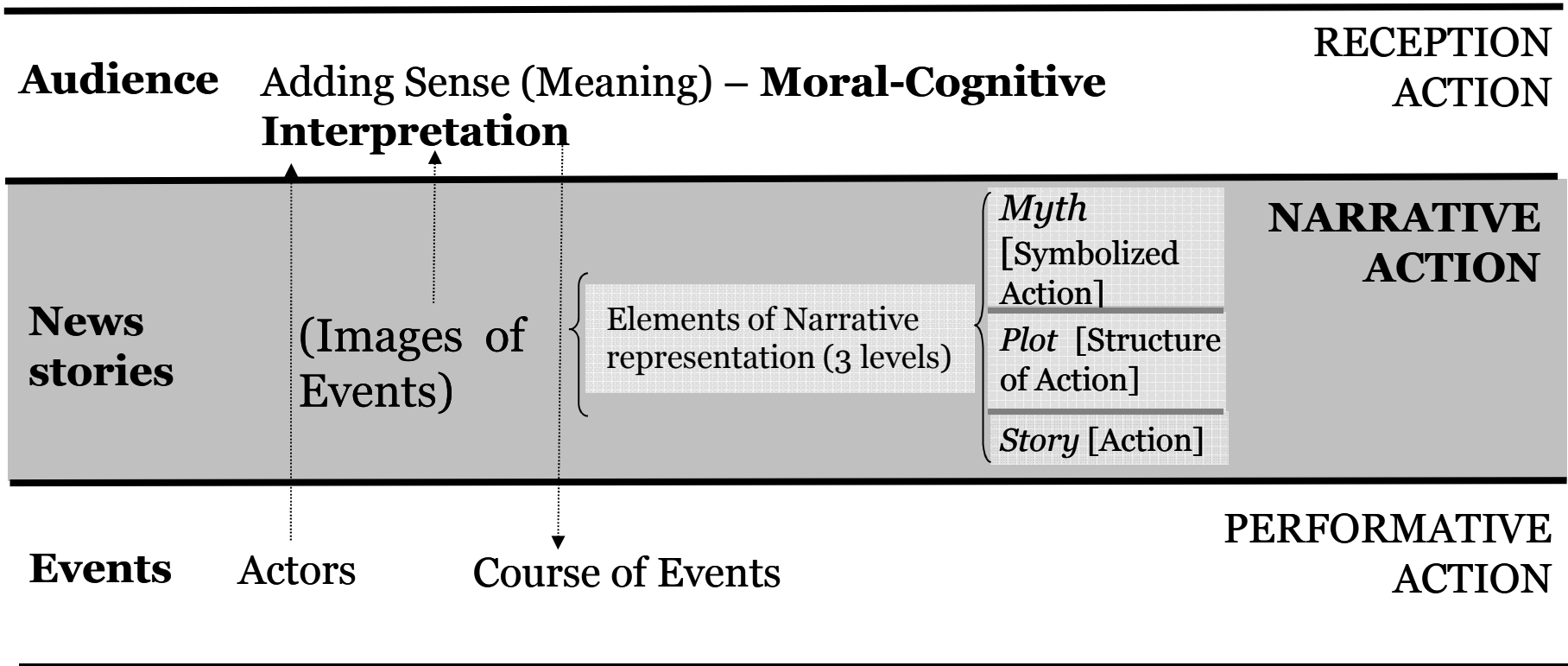
Transmission process

- **Relational perspective**
- Communication = **contact** (human beings, animals, machines)
- **Materiality** of informational messages (analogical / digital signals to be quantify)

Cultural process

- **Symbolic perspective**
- Communication = shared **cognitive content** (ideas, feelings)
- **Intangible feeling or qualities**

A narrative Model for the News



Theoretical Assumption

- From “media effects” and “ideology” to **cultural influence**
- If the media influences the perception of events, then its influence is essentially cultural
- Studying the media from a cultural perspective requires considering it as an institution dedicated to "productive activity, a transmitter and receiver of **symbolic forms**" (Thompson, 1998: 33)
- Epistemological commitments:
 - “Cultural” independence of factual powers
 - Study of meanings in themselves, not in relation to other variables

- **Role of the media**

- ✓ The news is intrinsically related to a cultural system of common beliefs

- **“Effects” of the media**

- ✓ News products can be seen as forms of “symbolic impact”

- ✓ the narrative form can be evaluated for its moral-cognitive effectiveness on the audience

- **Active role of the media audience**

- ✓ Media narrative establishes a plausible “pact”, a contract that invites the public to support a conventional rhetoric or presentation
- ✓ Journalist and public assume, respectively, the roles of “narrator” and “implied audience”, and share symbolic references of codes and narrative
- ✓ **The public mentally processes the story** - for example, selecting and outlining the events or proposing a hypothesis on the development of an action



- Cultural approach explains the relationship between journalists, audience, messages and effects in the eminently **cultural nature of journalistic practice**
 - News stories refer to a **cultural order** in which journalists resemble storytellers that gather moral assumptions on the world they narrate
- Media narratives themselves contain key elements to examine “effects”; they incorporate cultural values that head toward one or another **public interpretation** of the events reported
- **Critique**: the **idealistic** claim for journalistic autonomy

Journalism as Ritual

A Case Study



[Kennedy's death](#)

[the first man reach the moon](#)

[Signoff](#)

[Obama praised Cronkite](#)