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TEACHING TELEVISION LITERACY
IN SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY
SCHOOLS.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation develops a syllabus for the study of television literacy in South African secondary schools. There are two natural divisions in the development of the thesis; the section which explores epistemological issues and the section which describes the strategic issues. The first section examines the nature of print literacy. This consists of four elements: mastering the basic language of the medium; being able to decode this language; using the medium for personal creative ends; and having the capacity for critical reflection. It is possible to talk in terms of a language of television and so this definition of literacy can be extended to television as well. There are three main areas for the study of television literacy. These are: the production techniques and effects of television; the conventional forms of the medium; and the nature of television as a mass medium. Once this has been established the dissertation explores the strategic issues of a methodology and areas of knowledge for teaching television literacy. Although there are many methodologies for the study of the mass media, the British Cultural Studies approach, together with Hall's three moments of encoding and decoding, seems to offer the methodology most suitable for teaching critical literacy. Within this theoretical framework it is possible to describe a syllabus for teaching television literacy. This syllabus involves studying the encoding and decoding of television messages within the context of the technical infrastructure of television; the internal and external relations of production, and the frameworks of knowledge which determine the form and content of television.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Overview

This introductory chapter explains the hypotheses underlying the study, the methods of investigation, and the objectives of the study and finally offers an outline of the subsequent chapters.

Anyone who teaches or writes about television must soon become aware that a prodigious number of books have been published in the last forty years about many aspects of television. Simply consulting the bibliographies of a few of those printed in the last few years will give the prospective teacher of television an indication of the enormous scope of these writings. (See for example Fiske 1987a, McQuail 1981, Allen 1987.)

This presents an immediate difficulty in that any further writing about television must compete with this existing body of material. Secondly, a perusal of even a few of these texts will make the teacher aware that the study of television is a vast and complex topic and that it is not possible to deal with every aspect.

Nevertheless, this dissertation is an attempt to add something to the debate about mass media in this country by providing a readable, coherent text about the nature of television literacy and how it might be taught. The dissertation does not pretend to be a definitive text

about television. There can be no such thing applied to a complex medium which is constantly changing.

The dissertation springs out of a number of concerns. Firstly, television is a distinctive medium and needs to be studied as such. While it is possible that some of the methods which are applied to other media may be useful in studying television they should not be applied without understanding the nature of television itself. Of direct bearing to this is the fact that many media teachers seem to conflate television study with film study. For example, the descriptions of the various activities of the media teaching in the Cape Province, Natal and Transvaal, reveal that what is happening in most cases in media studies, is in fact film studies. (See Prinsloo and Criticos 1991, pp.29-43.)

A further point is that for many teachers it is still debatable whether media study should form part of the curriculum. In fact, even in The United States, where media teaching has been in progress for many years, the struggle over the introduction of media studies into the mainstream syllabus is not over. The New York Times of December 10, 1990 reports that California's Superintendent of Education is wary of introducing media studies as a separate subject in the curriculum on the grounds that it will take away time from the teaching of

basic skills and more important subjects. This is a common objection to the teaching of media studies. The same article puts it as follows:

Media literacy education is not being welcomed by all. Many educators see media literacy courses as a capitulation to popular tastes that steals valuable time from teaching literature and other important subjects.

HYPOTHESES

Underlying this exploration of the questions of television literacy and the development of a suitable curriculum are a number of hypotheses. It is necessary that these should be made explicit at the outset so that they can be used to measure progress. They are:

1. that it is becoming increasingly important that a study of the mass media, and particularly of television, should be included in the school curriculum
2. that, in order to understand the nature of television literacy, it is important to investigate what being literate really means
3. that television is a distinctive and complex medium and that it is therefore, necessary to describe, as fully as possible, the nature of the medium
4. that it is crucially important for there to be a sound theoretical basis for the teaching of television literacy
5. that it is possible to develop a syllabus suitable for teaching television literacy in South African secondary schools.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

As will become apparent during the course of this study, the choice of method for studying television lies between the empirical and critical approaches. Implicit in the empirical method is the collection and translation of data into manageable units of analysis. As the eventual thrust of the dissertation denies the usefulness of this approach, the argument too is free of the collection and analysis of data. There are obviously some merits in empirical research, but the principal concern of the study is to provide a more historical and social vision of television literacy than that suggested by empirical methodology.

The methodology of the study has thus concentrated on a thorough examination of the epistemological issues; a description of traditional and current methods of interpreting television and a synthesis of these to form a suggested curriculum.

Breaking with tradition, there is no single chapter which offers a comprehensive literature survey. Instead, supporting sources and a wide range of writings on the various topics are referred to as the dissertation progresses.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

Arising directly from the hypotheses above are a number of explicit objectives.

1. to describe the nature of print literacy
2. to describe the language of television
3. to describe the forms and conventions which govern the production of television
4. to describe television as a mass medium
5. to describe the concept of television literacy
6. to describe and critically comment on the traditional and current methods of the study of television as a mass medium.
7. to suggest a syllabus for the teaching of television literacy in South African secondary schools

Chapter Outlines

The thesis has consequently been divided into chapters which are based on the objectives described above.

Firstly, it is necessary to provide a justification for the study of television. Chapter Two describes briefly some of the more important reasons why the study of the mass media, and particularly television studies, should be undertaken.

Once it has been established that there are cogent reasons for making television studies part of the curriculum then the immediate issue is how this should be undertaken. Firstly we should be reasonably sure what is

meant by television literacy. Secondly we need to decide how this should be taught.

This approach is supported by Masterman (1985), who asserts that the problems of teaching critical television viewing skills can be divided into two broad areas; epistemological and strategic. Following this lead the remainder of the thesis has been divided into two parts: a section which deals with questions of definition and meaning, and a section which suggests particular strategies for teaching television in South Africa.

The primary epistemological problem centres on the meaning of literacy. If we are to speak of television literacy and media literacy then it seems essential to have a clear understanding of what it means, in a general sense, to be literate. Chapter Three examines the nature of literacy in the modern world. This discussion of literacy is crucial to the epistemological chapters of the thesis.

The logical progression from this discussion of print literacy is towards a definition of television literacy. It is important though, to explore some further questions of meaning before considering television literacy.

These epistemological concerns centre on the nature of television itself. Before attempting to describe television literacy it is necessary to try to understand what television is.

This implies, firstly, an examination of the composition of television images. Chapter Four aims at a description of the medium and the way in which television images are constructed. This could be regarded as equivalent to a study of the grammar or "language" of television.

In order to understand the medium fully it is necessary to understand not only the grammar of the images but also the conventions which govern the way in which these images are employed. Chapter Five thus examines the typical forms and conventions of television.

Chapter Six builds on the epistemological foundations of the previous chapters in attempting to describe as fully as possible the nature of television as a mass medium. It is necessary to place it in this general context. This brings to an end the basic epistemological issues.

The next issue is one of strategy: How do we teach people to become television literate? Fundamental to this discussion of strategy is an examination of the historical and current methods of studying television.

Chapter Seven surveys the traditional approaches to the mass media in order to provide an historical perspective. Arising directly from this survey is the discussion, in Chapter Eight, of the most suitable methodology for teaching television literacy.

Finally in Chapter Nine there is a description of suitable activities and methods which could form the basis for a curriculum for the teaching of television literacy in South Africa.

The approach suggested tends to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, but is based firmly on the epistemological issues explored in the earlier chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

A RATIONALE FOR THE TEACHING OF TELEVISION LITERACY

Overview

This chapter suggests a rationale for the teaching of television literacy. The amount of time spent viewing television is increasing in this country. As the most influential mass medium television has a powerful socialising effect on the lives of people. Education for television literacy is necessary to counter the rationalities presented on the screen. In the face of growing international control over the dissemination and content of information it is vital to teach students about television. Such education is education for freedom.

The teacher who sets out to teach about television needs, at the outset, to be thoroughly convinced of the need for teaching about the media in general and about television in particular. Thus this chapter sets out a rationale for the the study of the mass media and of television.

Perhaps the best general introduction to this subject is in Masterman (1985, pp.3-17), who offers the following seven reasons why media education is crucially important.

1. The high rate of media consumption and the saturation of contemporary societies by the media.
2. The ideological importance of the media, and their influence as consciousness industries.
3. The growth in the management and manufacture of information, and its dissemination by the media.
4. The increasing penetration of media into our central democratic processes.
5. The increasing importance of visual communication and information in all areas.

6. The importance of educating students to meet the demands of the future.
7. The fast-growing national and international pressures to privatise information.

The ideas in this chapter spring directly from Masterman, but include support from other sources. An attempt is also made to make the argument relevant to the South African context.

The modern world has witnessed an explosion in media consumption. In 1983 Tunstall claimed that the average British adult spent 75 hours a week with television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Of these media, it is television which takes up the most time. Inglis (1990, p.55) reports that the national average television viewing time in the United Kingdom, in 1987, was 28.4 hours per week. In 1980, Finn claimed that an average American high school graduate would have spent the equivalent of two and a half years watching television; 45% more time than in the classroom.

The position in South Africa is not dissimilar. Sinclair (1985) suggests that overseas trends in television viewing are likely to be repeated in South Africa. DuPlooy (1990, p.3) reports that, before the introduction of pay television in this country, adults were estimated to watch eighteen hours of television a week and children twenty hours.

With the world-wide increase in penetration of video cassette recorders into households the trend towards increased viewing is likely to be accelerated rather than diminished. People are relying increasingly on television as a source of entertainment and news. Technological advances and more sophisticated distribution techniques are ensuring more or less instantaneous dissemination of high-quality pictures on to the screens of the world. The development of satellite television, video recorders and local area networks has determined that a high proportion of the messages we receive today are in visual form.

Children entering school now will inevitably emerge into a world of leisure and work in the 21st century where visual messages will predominate. They will also have been exposed in their school careers to varying amounts of educational television and will probably have spent a great deal of their leisure time watching television. This is what Masterman refers to as media saturation.

This seems to pose an immediate challenge. If both children and adults are consuming more and more television, then it seems necessary that we should examine what is happening in this process and also try to understand the nature of television itself. It is possible that both watching television and learning

through television are entirely different processes from those involved in learning from and reading print.

It seems impossible to deny that television has a potentially powerful socialising and cultural effect in the lives of young people today. This effect is bound to increase. Television is a human construct and as such it can only reflect the reality of those who produce it. In other words television mediates reality, and as Fiske and Hartley (1978, p.17) indicate,

an understanding of the way in which television structures and presents its picture of reality can go a long way towards helping us to understand the way in which our society works.

This suggests a more profound reason why there ought to be education about television. Education is not simply a preparation for the world of work but also a preparation for a life as social beings living in a world where television will play a major role in the construction and mediation of meaning. This means that it would seem necessary not only to teach pupils to understand and interpret visual television messages but also to appreciate that the reality represented on the television screen is the creation of a particular group or groups and may thus reflect their interests and prejudices.

Inglis (1990) puts it as follows:

We propose that all academic subjects are ways of seeing and criticizing the historical narratives of the day. (p.185)

This leads directly to the question of control of mass communication media. Although, as Curran et al. (1982) illustrate, centralised control over mass communication is medieval in its origins, a study of the power groups in the acquisition of mass media channels and in the manufacture and control of mass media messages is a vital part of understanding television. There is a universal tendency for mass media to be concentrated increasingly in the hands of fewer people (Curran and Seaton, 1985). This is obviously true in the South African context for both broadcast and educational television. It seems to be of compelling concern that pupils should be taught to discover and examine the underlying motives of the power groups that are responsible for the mediated reality on the television screen.

It can in fact be argued that television education is education for democracy. "Widespread media literacy is essential if all citizens are to wield power, make rational decisions, become effective change agents, and have an active involvement with the media" (Masterman 1985, p.13). In other words it can be said that: "media

education is a preparation for responsible citizenship" (Unesco, 1982).

A further, more general, reason why education about television should take place lies in the shift from verbal to visual modes of communication. The shift towards visual communication began in this century with the development of moving pictures and accelerated with the invention of television. Recently this tendency has been given new impetus by the development of video and the visual display unit. However, it seems that teachers in South Africa and elsewhere pay little attention to an understanding of the processes involved in sending visual messages. What is more, very little time is spent in teaching students what it means to be visually literate.

As long ago as 1978, Barton & Miller argued that;

Teachers in the humanities and social sciences need to collaborate, to adjust their curricular structures, and include student needs for new critical foundations from which to analyze electronically based visual environments.

(p.234)

The shift to visual literacy presupposes that there may be a whole new set of principles for encoding and decoding visual messages. This is vitally important not only because the medium through which learning takes place is changing but also because it may be possible

that the very nature of learning may be changing. In other words it is possible to surmise that a generation of children growing up in a television age have "learned how to learn" in a new way. In order to grasp what happens in this process it seems imperative to understand the visual codes which form the "grammar" of the television message.

A result of the short lifespan of broadcast television in South Africa is that there has been little opportunity to develop a tradition of media criticism. Although there has been some growth in interest in media studies at universities and training colleges there is at present no prescription on teachers in training that they should have to undertake such studies.

The fact that media studies forms part of the National Core Syllabus for English in South Africa is also both pertinent and problematic. (See Prinsloo and Criticos 1990, pp. 29-70, for a discussion of some of the current activities in media teaching.) The introduction of media studies indicates a recognition by the education authorities that media education is important but this does not resolve the dilemma. Teachers undertaking to explore media criticism and lacking the necessary training are likely to resort to expediency. As it is language teachers who are most likely to teach media

criticism, their most probable refuge will be to treat media criticism as simply another form of literary criticism. This will mean that any approach to television will be governed by the constraints inherent in this approach.

Firstly this approach ignores the fact that television is a very different medium from a literary text and that it demands a very different method of analysis and interpretation. Fiske and Hartley (1978) argue that any attempt to treat television as another literary text is "doomed to failure" (p.15). They point out that the codes which structure television are very different from those which structure literature and that in fact television is to some extent subversive of the values most prized by literacy.

If the study of television is to be treated as a process of discrimination between good and bad programmes, then it is likely that teachers' prejudices about the medium will prevail and that much of television will be dismissed as popular, frivolous and unworthy of serious study. This suggests firstly that teachers will pass on their own prejudices about good and bad television to students. In many cases it is likely that teachers' ideas of what constitutes good television might well be

based on a notion of how closely it conforms to good literature.

A second difficulty is that language teachers might assume that there is one set of principles which can be used to study film, television and general media. In fact, as this dissertation demonstrates, there may be general principles of visual literacy which can be applied to television, but we must not overlook the fact television is a complex and unique medium, demanding specialised study.

A further justification for the study of television lies in the fact that television institutions portray a particular view of society and the world through the programmes they broadcast. Those who own and control television channels determine programme content. Present indications are that there is an increasing reliance on television for entertainment and news. This means that those groups which determine programme content play a powerful role in shaping the predominant reality in the country. It thus seems important to critically analyse the rationales underlying the selection and structuring of programme content of television in this country. This will progressively reveal the relationships between the controllers of programmes and other pressure groups such as advertisers and the government. Analysis of these

relationships will also reveal the underlying ideologies which television is being made to serve.

Discovering the predominant ideologies in the South African context is far from simple when one considers the large number of imported programmes shown on SABC and M-Net. This must have serious cultural implications for viewers. The situation is further complicated by the multi-cultural audience which television reaches in this country. The ways in which television is used and the responses to it must vary widely among these cultural groups. Because television is such a powerful socialising and cultural force, it seems important that people should be literate in the medium so that they can make sense of it.

This suggests that it is important for the television teacher to teach critical viewing skills which help the individual to make sense of himself in relation to the group. Unless this happens it seems likely that the individual will be progressively separated from a sense of himself in the wider community and will lose touch with himself as social being.

Giroux (1981) suggests that one of the justifications for the development of a radical perspective in classroom education is

..developing pedagogical practices that use the lived experiences of the students themselves as the starting point for developing classroom experiences in which students discover how they give meaning to the world and how such meaning can be used relectively to discover its own sources and limits. (p.29)

Of course we cannot expect the media to be totally without bias. Those authorities which control the media must, of necessity, present certain views of the world through the programmes that are shown.

This is by no means unique to this country. The mass media are often used to give credence to particular rationalities. However, if we can teach critical reflection about the media, and in particular television, we will be working at demystifying the notion of organised rationality.

In addition, as Ewen (1983) says,

we will be teaching students to think in such a way that they can remain true to themselves, to the communities from which they come, rather than alienated from self and community by the process of education that encourages the translation of people into manageable things. (p.224)

This is not to suggest that the study of only one of the mass media can alone counteract this rationality.

However, television is arguably the most important mass medium and deserving of special study.

The final reason for the study of television is the fact that information world-wide is becoming a commodity to be bought and sold. We are faced with increasing media saturation by international companies and national agencies which are manufacturing information and controlling the flow of that information. Masterman (1985, p.15), argues that this turning of information into a commodity and the growth of international information companies will eventually "threaten the very future of all public information systems, not least the education system itself."

Students today find themselves in a world where they are watching more and more television and where television and visual communication have growing influence. In addition, international institutions are controlling and selling information to a greater and greater degree. As educators we need to prepare students to actively participate in understanding and decoding the media. We need to free them from the dominance of the reality portrayed in the media and prepare them to play an active role in a future where media organisations will have even

more power. We need to make students critically literate.

Ferguson (1991) puts it as follows:

For, above all, Media Education is an endless enquiry into the way we make sense of the world and the way others make sense of the world for us. Above all it must be genuinely and openly critical. (p.20)

Masterman (1985, p.17) agrees with these sentiments. He argues that media teachers should be in the vanguard of the teaching profession.

They can play a leading role in shaping a public consciousness capable of articulating the public interest and of urging popular control of information and of information-generating institutions, particularly in the educational sphere.

There are, thus, many powerful arguments why we should study the media, and television in particular. In order to do so we need a sound theoretical basis. The following chapter begins the establishment of this basis, with a discussion of what it means to be literate in the modern world.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF LITERACY

Overview

Traditionally, literacy has been used to control people. Literacy training has a social and political context. Real literacy means that an individual must be able to operate beyond the level of functional literacy. This implies four elements: understanding the technology of literacy; being able to use the technology to record and recall information; being able to use the medium creatively; and having the capacity for critical reflection.

The word "literacy" in general current usage simply means the ability to read and write. But it has become increasingly common for the word to be used in a number of new contexts and associations. Writers speak of "visual literacy", "the new literacy", and "media literacy". In order to understand the meanings of these terms and, in particular, of the term "television literacy", it is essential to examine what is meant by literacy. This chapter thus consists of a discussion of what it means to be literate in the world today. Following this there is an attempt to use this description of literacy to reach a tentative definition of television literacy.

Although the history of European print literacy can be traced back to the Greeks, it does not seem until modern times that attempts were made to define what being literate really means.

During the First World War testing for the United States Army revealed extensive illiteracy, a pattern which was repeated in the draft for World War Two. It is during this period that the concept of functional literacy originates.

Levine (1982, p.250) reports:

The notion of a level of literacy more sophisticated than the mere capacity to write one's name and to read a simple message, but less than "full fluency", appears to have gained currency in specialist circles during World War II.

Implicit in this realisation was the notion that there must be different levels of literacy, but it was not until after the Second World War that there was any systematic attempt to define literacy in measurable terms.

In 1948 the United Nations Population Commission proposed that "the ability to read and write a simple message" should be used as a working definition of literacy. In 1950 a British Ministry of Education pamphlet defined "literate" as: "able to read and write for practical purposes of daily life" (Bullock, 1975). UNESCO proposed a similar definition in 1951. These attempts to define literacy remain vague but show an increasing concentration on the functional aspects of literacy.

Gray (1956) was the first to use the term functional literacy, which he defined as follows:

A person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group. (p.24)

This marks an increasing sophistication in the definitions of literacy. Gray places emphasis on literacy as a social skill which might vary from age to age and society to society. This suggests that literacy is a cultural phenomenon.

In 1962 UNESCO proposed a definition which took Gray's idea even further. It added the notion that literacy contains the potential for intellectual growth and also stressed the idea that it was inseparable from its context.

A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainments in writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development.

(Oxenham 1980, p.87)

As it became more common to speak of functional literacy it also became necessary to measure the level of literacy

attainment in order to determine whether someone had in fact reached the functional level. Gray originally felt that a functional literate was at the level of competency reached by ten year olds in the United States. This age has been progressively revised upwards to the point where researchers now claim that a person would have to attain the literacy competency of a fifteen or sixteen year old in order to be able to function adequately in a complex society.

The Bullock Report expresses this quite clearly:

In other words the level required for participation in the affairs of modern society is far above that implied in earlier definitions. It is obvious that as society becomes more complex and makes higher demands in awareness and understanding of its members the criteria of literacy will rise.

(Bullock 1975, p.11)

Heath (1980) comments similarly. She reports that there has been a growing tendency in the United States to define literacy in terms of minimum competence as measured by psychometric scales of reading ability and the capacity to read documents such as social security and pension forms. For instance a survey conducted for the United States National Reading Council defined literacy as: "the ability to respond to practical tasks of daily life". This seems a simplistic definition, which echoes the functional literacy approach in Britain.

The principle of functionality thus seems entrenched in the popular conception of literacy. Not only is literacy generally seen as a tool useful for carrying out the tasks of everyday life but it is also seen as particularly necessary for the world of work. This is certainly the view of literacy that employers share.

Heath (1980, p.123) reports:

A compilation of surveys of employer attitudes toward the preparation of youth for work defined literacy as the integration of mathematical and linguistic skills necessary for filling out a job application, filing, conducting routine correspondence, monitoring inventories, and expressing oneself clearly in writing.

Whether we regard literacy as necessary for life in general or more particularly for work it seems clear that functional literacy aims to condition people to serve society usefully. Bee (1980, p.48) makes this point particularly strongly:

Functional literacy is more a donation to the people, a creation by experts which is handed down to selected groups to serve a definite purpose. The educational contexts and methods are adapted to keep the participants at a level which the donors consider desirable.

Literacy skills were controlled by elites long before the invention of printing. This process of domination continues to this day. Enzensberger (1970) claims that the written word continues to be used to intimidate and dominate other classes in modern industrial societies.

It appears, then, that literacy and literacy training are inherently ideological. Literacy acquisition cannot take place in a neutral context because both the values of the recipient and, more importantly, the values of those providing the literacy training are present in the learning context.

Although this point cannot be too strongly made it is often overlooked. Many descriptions of literacy acquisition are de-politicised and de-contextualised. They typically ignore the fact that there are values both in the texts used for literacy training and in the context in which literacy takes place.

Berger and Berger (1976) affirm that literacy is a social institution arising out of a particular historical context and emphasise the ideological function of literacy. O'Sullivan et al. (1983) support this: "(literacy) is ideologically and politically charged - it can be used as a means of social control or regulation...." (p.129).

A functionally literate person is one who operates at a determined level in society; a level which enables him to adequately perform the tasks demanded of him by society. A functional literate is essentially passive in relation to the society in which he is located. In Freire's terms

he is "domesticated" (Bee 1980). This is what Pattison (1982, pp.170-207) characterises as mechanical literacy.

Functional literacy is literacy which enables an individual to operate at a minimally successful level in society. Inherent in this concept is the idea that there are other levels of literacy at which people can operate. If there are individuals who are functioning at a minimum level there must be others who habitually operate at levels above this. This, in turn, raises the question of the definition of these higher levels of literacy.

Postman (1981) defines real literacy as the ability to manipulate the media of communication. By this he means that a true literate ought to be able to understand the technology of communication and be able to use it imaginatively and constructively for his own ends.

Hade (1982) has essentially the same view but presents a more detailed analysis of the components of literacy. He argues that in an information society literacy has three levels. The first of these is the understanding of language. This means simply knowing the alphabet and being able to read a printed text. The second level requires translation, which requires being able to change the language from one form to another. This would involve, for instance being able to write down a speech. This level also presumes the ability to create and

control messages. Hade calls this creation. The third level demands evaluation; the ability to discriminate between and compare messages. This suggests that real literacy must have an element of critical reflection.

This is essentially what Freire (Bee 1980, pp.47-50), argues when he maintains that the only valid literacy is one which makes people critically literate and able to intervene in reality. Freire insists that literacy ought to touch on the consciousness of the illiterate.

Functional literacy does not do this because it does not involve the recipient in any of the decisions about literacy acquisition and therefore encourages passivity.

Bee (1980, p.50) expresses his argument as follows:

If a person is to become genuinely literate as opposed to functionally literate, a quality of critical reflection must be engendered in the pedagogical methods.

In Freire's terms genuine literacy must teach people how to demythologise and decode their culture. This is a continuous process, and it is thus not sensible to talk of a completely literate person, only of an experience of literacy which is genuine because it involves an act of serious critical reflection (Bee 1980, p.49).

This puts a rather different slant on literacy, suggesting as it does that even a person who possesses a

very limited degree of conventional literacy is capable of an act of genuine literacy.

This is not to suggest that literacy acquisition is not a progressive act; there must be stages through which anyone who is becoming literate must go. What Freire is arguing is that genuine literacy acquisition demands a different pedagogical approach from functional literacy teaching.

Working from the basis of the points which have emerged from the description of the development of print literacy, it seems possible at this stage to attempt a definition of what it means to be genuinely literate in the modern world. As Hade's description of the various levels of genuine literacy seems particularly useful and is not essentially at odds with even the most radical critics of functional literacy this has been used as a basis for the description.

Firstly the genuine literate should have sufficient knowledge of the technology of the printed word. This means understanding the alphabet and being able to read at a level sufficient to cope with the literacy demands of modern society. It is impossible to set a precise minimum for this level but at present this is set in first world countries at the comprehension level of a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old.

Secondly a literate person should be able to use the technology of literacy to record information. In other words, individuals should be able to use writing and reading to record and recall information. Thirdly, a literate person should be able to use literacy to create and retain original messages. This stage moves beyond the act of recording the messages of others. It implies the use of literacy for personal, creative ends.

The final element of genuine literacy is the capacity for critical reflection. Literates should be able to understand and appreciate the social and historical contexts in which meanings are made and be able to demythologise and decode these meanings. To be genuinely literate it is not sufficient only to have mastery of the tools of literacy. The technological skill must be used to make sense of the reality in which the literate finds himself.

It seems that this element of critical reflection as part of genuine literacy cannot be assumed to be a higher level skill in the sense that only a handful of super-literates might achieve this level. Rather this element pervades the acquisition at all levels. This is a crucial point. Whether we are considering print literacy or any other kind of literacy, there must be an implicit notion that critical literacy should be built into every

level of the acquisition process. This is not to deny that whether one is talking about television or print literacy there must be a minimum level at which people need to operate in society, only to insist that critical literacy must be present.

In an age of mass media communication the question of critical literacy poses new challenges. The shift from orality to literacy demanded new skills of the learner. That these skills were carefully controlled is beyond dispute. The result was that literacy was reduced for many to a mechanical level. In order to be truly literate the individual in society needs to rise above this level of functional literacy, whatever the medium of communication.

If Hade's description of literacy is to be extended to a medium like television then we need first to establish whether there is sufficient basis of comparison between the ways in which media such as print and television are interpreted. If this can be established it ought to be possible to arrive at a detailed definition of television literacy based on the definition of print literacy above. Presuming for the interim that this basis for comparison exists it is possible at this stage to propose a tentative description of the elements of genuine television literacy.

The first element of television literacy would be an understanding of the technology of television. This does not imply a thorough knowledge of all the technological aspects of television production. This would be the equivalent in printing of understanding how the printing presses and other means of production worked, clearly not a prerequisite for print literacy. This level of literacy is concerned not so much with the means of physical production of the television message as with the "language" of television, i.e. the means of social production. Presuming such a language exists, literacy at this level would mean mastery of the elements of such a language. In other words it would be necessary to show, firstly, that there is a vocabulary of television production which can be used in varying ways to form the grammar of the television programme and, secondly, that it is possible to learn to interpret this grammar.

The second requirement for television literacy would be the ability to express in another form the contents of a television message. This could possibly mean expressing in writing the decoded contents of the message or even relating orally what was seen on the screen. This is equivalent to Hade's idea of "translation".

Following immediately on the principle of translation is the idea of creation. If people are to be truly literate in the medium of television then they ought to be able to use the technology of television and the codes of television to create and store original messages.

Finally, genuine television literacy must have a spirit of critical literacy implicit in all its elements. If the teaching of television literacy is not to be reduced to the mechanical level of functional literacy then it is essential that those who use and understand television should possess this element of critical reflection. In the case of television this would mean the ability to demythologise the television message and to interpret and describe the social and cultural context in which it is produced.

This description of television literacy depends on there being sufficient similarity in the acts of interpreting verbal and visual messages. The following chapter accordingly concentrates on establishing whether television has a language and whether it is possible to learn to interpret and use it. In order to achieve this it is necessary to examine more closely the nature of the television message and the process of sending television messages.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LANGUAGE OF TELEVISION

Overview

This chapter establishes that there is a language of television production, which consists of a vocabulary of shots and a grammar of production practices. This is used together with lighting, sound and scenery to produce television in certain typical forms.

In any discussion of television it is clear that the nature of the medium itself plays a vital role in the production of meaning. It is not sufficient to examine the finished product, the content. We must also examine the processes by which programmes are produced.

Indeed the whole television apparatus-people and machines-exerts such a strong influence on what is being communicated that we must examine the medium itself on at least an equal basis with its content.

(Zettl 1981, p.116)

Television has developed specific social forms and production practices which are available for interpretation although there are differences of opinion about the degree to which these are accessible to interpretation. For instance Masterman (1985) claims:

The processes of media production are, for the most part, actively concealed from the public. Media professionals frequently assert that they are simply reflecting the world as they find it, a claim which is given a good deal of authenticity by the dominant conventions of illusionism and realism employed by the media. (p.127)

However standard texts on television production by those involved in the television industry (Millerson 1979) make no pretence about the ways in which the medium manipulates information. It seems that although media practitioners are quite open about the fact that the medium manipulates the messages it sends, the way in which this happens tends to obscure the nature of this manipulation.

To determine whether it is possible to substantiate the tentative description of television literacy of the previous chapter, it is necessary to describe the ways in which television is produced.

Television codes range in complexity and this means that the medium can be processed at differing levels of complexity.

The representational codes of television range in complexity from literal visual depiction to the most abstract and arbitrary signs, including verbal language and audiovisual metaphor.

(Rice et al. 1983, p.266)

In discussing ways in which media messages are made, Corner (1983, p.266) suggests that there are three phases commonly agreed on by researchers. The first of these is the "institutional and organisational conditions and practices of production, governed by

media policies and by the professional and medium related conventions of language and image use."

The second is "the moment of the 'text' itself; the particular symbolic construction, arrangement and perhaps performance which is the product of media skills and technical and cultural practices." In the case of television, this is the form and content of what is broadcast.

The third phase is "the moment of reception, consumption or 'decoding' by audiences and readerships". This involves the practices by which the television viewer, in a particular social context, would make sense of the television message.

He goes on to say that;

there is also the possibility that we can indicate by the term "television language",.....a system of visual meaning whose primary units (e.g. the forms of shot) and their syntax (e.g. editing) achieve a level of language-equivalence. (p.269)

Rice et al. (1983) identify three levels of representation in television which are not essentially different from Corner's. The first of these is the literal visual and/or auditory portrayal of real-world information. When Millerson (1979) claims that "most pictures are factual, without any predominating

emotional appeal" he is essentially speaking of this level. But both Rice et al. and Millerson counter the view that this is a common level of representation on television.

Rice et al. point out that unusual angles of viewing, lighting, and distance, affect the literal quality of this level. Millerson appears to suggest that representation at this literal level is common on television. But in the context of his repeated acknowledgements and explanations of the distorting effects of almost all the media practices he describes, he does not himself appear to sustain this argument.

The second level of representation which Rice et al. describe are the media forms and conventions peculiar to television. The third level consists of symbolic forms, both linguistic and non-linguistic. This level is not unique to television.

It is the elements of the second level of representation, more than any other which seem to form the "language" of television and must therefore be described in detail.

These features provide a structure for the presentation of context in a manner analogous to syntax in language

(Rice et al. 1983, p.267)

Fiske (1987a) specifies four codes of television: the social codes of appearance, dress, make-up, environment etc; the technical codes of the camera, lighting, music, editing, sound; the conventional representational codes which shape the representations of such things as narrative, conflict, character, action, dialogue and setting; and the ideological codes such as race, class, materialism, and capitalism. These classifications of codes or levels of representation reflect the varying approaches of their authors to the interpretation of television but there is fundamental agreement in these categorisations. At a basic level there exists a vocabulary (lexis) of television terms which is concerned with the smallest unit of intelligible meaning - the shot.

Next there are the media practices and conventions which determine how the shots themselves are composed (i.e. how the content is achieved). This is equivalent to syntax in language.

The combination of the typical shots and the conventional ways in which they are used has the result that television is produced in specific forms. It is necessary to describe these forms in order to determine what role they play in television literacy.

It is the concern of this particular chapter to examine the nature of the language of television and to describe the effect of the typical media conventions on the television message. The following chapter concerns itself with the forms of television.

The basic element of the television message is the shot. The shot varies in terms of: length i.e. distance from the subject, focus, i.e. depth of field; camera movement; camera angle; camera height; and the zooming of the lens. All these aspects, separately or in combination, have an effect on the shot.

Shots, in particular those of people, are classified by the amount of a person covered by the shot. The common description of these is as follows:

ECU Extreme close-up, isolated detail

VCU Very close-up, from mid forehead to above chin

BCU Big close-up, full head height nearly fills screen

CU Close-up, just above head to upper chest

MCU Medium close-up, cuts body at lower chest

MS Medium shot, cuts body just below waist

KNEE Knee shot, three quarter length shot

MLS Medium long-shot (full-length shot FLS)

LS Long shot-person occupies 3/4 to 1/3 screen height

ELS Extra long shot (XLS)

Millerson points out that longer shots "reveal location, establish mood, show inter-relationships, or follow broad action". Closer shots "lay emphasis; dramatize, reveal reactions, demonstrate detail". (1979, p.61)

The very long shot promotes a feeling of detachment in the viewer. The shot is often progressively tightened (i.e. the background is progressively excluded), gradually increasing the impact of the people in the scene. The close-up draws the viewer's attention to the emotions and reactions of the actors.

In general, then the length of shot is directly related to the creation of atmosphere and mood. It is interesting, as Ellis (1982) points out, that the extreme close up in television differs markedly from that used in film, in that a close up of a face on television produces an image which is approximately normal in size where on the film screen it is larger than life. This has the effect of generating an equality and even intimacy. But, as Fiske (1987a) suggests, the form which this intimacy takes depends on the context in which it occurs. In his analysis of a segment of the television programme Hart to Hart, he shows that eighteen of the twenty one extra close-ups are of the male or female villain and concludes that;

used to dramatically link a series of isolated objects. The whip pan consists of a fast panning from one subject to the next in a series. It is used to create a number of dynamic and dramatic relationships between subjects. It may show cause and effect, a change in time and space, a dramatic comparison or a shift in attention.

Tilting the camera produces one of two general effects. Either it emphasises height and depth or it indicates relationship. Tilting upwards produces feelings of rising interest and emotion. Tilting downwards lowers interest and emotion. Naturally the viewer's response to these movements is largely conditioned by the dramatic context and the accompanying dialogue. In tilting, as with many other camera movements, the interplay between the linguistic and visual elements is crucial to the interpretation and it is the combination of these that produces a particular audience response.

Camera height can also have a great influence on the audience's attitude to a subject.

In a drama you may deliberately choose the camera's height to emphasize or diminish a person's dramatic strength, or to control the impact of dialogue. Similarly, if you shoot a piece of sculpture from a low viewpoint, it will appear imposing, forceful and impressive; while shot from above it loses vitality and significance.

(Millerson 1979, p.70)

In other words the emotional response of the viewer to almost any subject is coloured by the angle from which it is filmed. The more extreme the angle the more this emotional response is heightened, providing, of course, that the angle is not exaggerated to the point where the viewer becomes aware of the camera rather than the effect it is creating.

Zooming uses a lens of variable focal length which enables the camera operator to shoot more or less of a scene by focussing on different aspects of the picture. Zoom-ins are used, among other things, to direct attention, to increase tension, and to give emphasis. Rice et al. (1983) report that in children's television; "long zooms involve slow presentation and/or emphasis of important content".

This discussion of the shot leads directly into a further, typical media practice which has a great effect on the way in which the picture is produced: the composition of the picture. The importance of this aspect cannot be overestimated.

A study of pictorial composition helps you to produce attractive significant pictures, that direct audience attention and influence their feelings about the subject and its surroundings.

(Millerson 1979, p.81)

There are three elements of picture composition: the design, arrangement, and selection of what goes into the picture. In television production the first two of these are of minor importance. Composition by selection is the most common situation. The cameraman has to consciously choose what to put into the picture. He achieves this by moving the camera to select various visual components varying shot size, focussing, camera height, framing and lateral movement. As Ellis (1982) indicates, television typically uses several cameras and sustains attention by rapidly intercutting between them.

In this process the camera does far more than simply select an appropriate picture. The very process of including a segment of a scene implies that there must also be exclusion. What is left out of a scene may be as important as that which is included. In this way the camera is interpreting a scene through the eyes of the director and cameraman. This may not be of major significance in, for instance, a drama where the director has in any event arranged or composed the shot according to his taste or the demands of the drama. But it does take on vital importance in a real life situation where the cameraman has to choose which elements to include and therefore which to exclude. In

other words the camera shot does not portray reality, because the camera modifies whatever it sees. . . This process is exaggerated by a wide range of subjective effects. For instance, the relative prominence of the subject in the shot also colours its impact within the shot. By consciously or unconsciously presenting the subject as small or relatively unimportant in the context of the shot it can be made to appear insignificant. The body postures of the subject also influence the viewer's attitude and camera treatment can exaggerate or diminish this effect. For instance shooting a strong political figure from slightly below in mid-shot makes that person appear more powerful and dominating.

In addition the way in which the picture is sequentially composed influences the viewer's gaze. Careful camerawork and composition focus the viewer's eye on one sector of the screen at a time. The continuity of the transitions from one centre of interest to another is manipulated so that the viewer's eye moves smoothly from one focus of interest to another. In this way the director guides the viewer through a sequence of pictures. (See Zettl, 1981.)

This brief discussion of the major components of composition illustrates the way in which this process

influences the final picture. Editing continues this process of manipulation. In television production there are three kinds of editing, each carried out at different stages of the process. The first of these happens during the actual production of the television picture. This is accomplished by mixing the products of the various cameras being used in the filming. The second occurs when the videotape is edited after production and the third when film (rather than video) is used in television.

Whenever the process of editing takes place, the effect remains the same. Millerson (1979) reports that editing is concerned with four basic principles: when and how there is to be a change from one shot to another; the time, method and duration of these transitions; the order and duration of shots; and, the maintenance of good picture and audio continuity. Decisions made in these areas have a direct effect on the "appeal, interpretation and emotional impact of the program material" (p.110).

He spells out the effects of editing.

1. An entire production can be shot on a single camera -yet through skilled editing the audience is given a sense of unlimited spatial and temporal freedom.

2. Editing can juxtapose events occurring at quite different times and places. It can seemingly expand or contract time.

3. Editing can insert or omit information; correcting, excluding or censoring. It can equally well excise the extraneous or the essential. It can introduce the apposite - or the irrelevant.

4. Editing creates relationships - that may or may not have existed.

5. Editing is selective, and depending on the choice and arrangements of this selection, you can influence the audience reactions and interpretations of events.

(p.110)

These comments are most revealing. Editing has enormous power to transform the reality of the television message.

The principal editing techniques used are the cut, the fade and the mix. The cut involves switching from one shot to another. This immediately establishes a relationship between the subjects in the two shots whether they were originally linked or not. The fade-in provides a quiet introduction to action. A fade-out suggests a peaceful ending to the action. When used together in a sequence as a fade out-in, the technique suggests a change of mood or pace but is also a convention indicating a change of time and place. The mix is produced by fading out one picture while fading in the next. This implies a restful transition but a quick-mix can also suggest events which are concurrent;

while a slow- mix suggests differences in time and place, such as flashbacks.

When a television programme is actually in production the combination of the techniques used in the shot, the composition and in the editing process are combined with a number of other elements to form the finished product. Chief among these other elements which play a part in this process are the lighting, the sound and the scenery. Lighting is used to create the emotional mood of the shot. A predominance of light tones creates a light cheerful effect while darker tones are clearly more sombre and depressing. Thus the lighting in the studio plays an important part in the creation of mood. "Lighting directly influences the viewer's interpretation and reactions to the flat picture.....(it) not only enables the camera to see but is a major contributory factor to your audience's responses" (Millerson 1979, p.133).

It must also be remembered that the director is fully aware of the emotional connotations of colour and is able to use these suggestively. Fiske (1987a) reports that the hero's cabin in Hart to Hart is lit in a soft, yellowish, light and that of the villain in a harsh, whiter one.

Sound is of even greater importance. Millerson claims: "You can manipulate the relative volumes of sound for dramatic effect; emphasizing particular sources, creating loudness to suit the situation". Sound directs the viewer's attention to changes of theme and pace in a production as well as highlighting dramatic changes. It can be used to establish location through characteristic noises. It can be used to suggest thoughts and feelings and to imitate. It is commonly used to identify particular events or characteristics and becomes a theme for whole programmes.

Interestingly, although sound plays such an important part in television production, the quality of sound production is characteristically poor. Ellis suggests that this is so because it is necessary for the viewer to have his attention directed to the screen by the sound and not for the sound to supplant the visual. The characteristic effect that this has on television production is discussed more fully in the following chapter.

Scenery is obviously used in studio production and its effect is often taken for granted. The effects created can range from the atmosphere created by the right backdrop in a studio interview to a complete mock-up of an indoor scene.

It is difficult to describe all the possible ways in which the production of any particular programme may be influenced by the techniques that are used in the production. While there are obviously tried and tested techniques and media conventions, there are also innovative ones such as the developments in graphics and their combination with video material which are breaking new ground and creating new effects all the time.

What is certain though is that in the production of the television programme the practices and conventions which are employed have characteristic effects. These are summed up by Millerson as follows:

Typical reasons for production techniques

- To disguise the restrictions of the small flat TV screen and limited viewpoints
- To guide and concentrate audience attention
- To obtain visual variety and encourage continued interest
- To emphasize, exaggerate, reduce or subdue information
- To create a particular emotional impact (horror, tension)
- To beautify, glamorize, make more attractive
- To expand/contract/distort space or form
- To build up an illusion or effect purely by editing, viewpoint, camera angle
- To transform time and motion (time lapse, slow motion movement),

To simulate an emotional or physical state
(flying, drowning, unconsciousness)

To achieve "magical" effects (transformation,
shrinkage, growth).

(p.280)

It does seem, then, that there is indeed a language of television, which consists firstly of the vocabulary of shots and secondly of a grammar of production practices. The combination of these elements in production mediates the reality of the image and produces television in particular forms. The understanding of both the language of television and the conventional forms of the medium is necessary for the literate viewer.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONVENTIONAL FORMS OF TELEVISION

Overview

As a result of the production practices and codes television is produced in typical conventional forms. This means that it is segmented and scheduled. It has a typically stripped-down image, where sound plays a subordinate role. Television uses direct address to set up intimacy with the viewer. It is inherently dramatic and uses typically narrative forms.

The technical codes of television correspond to a language of television but, as a result of the typical technical practices in the creation of television programmes, television is produced in conventional representational codes. These are the conventional forms of television; the ways in which it is typically presented to the viewer. The focus of this chapter is on a description of the forms of television.

In distinguishing between oral and literate modes of communication, Fiske and Hartley (1978, p.15) claim that television is "ephemeral, episodic, specific, concrete and dramatic in mode". This serves as a useful starting point for a description of the medium.

Their use of the word ephemeral suggests that firstly, unlike the written word which is open to review and consideration the television image appears only to disappear. There is no chance of reflection at the

time of reception. Even though video recorders offer the chance to replay parts of television programmes, and some programmes such as sports items have replays of moments of television, the fact remains that most of the images of television are designed for a quick glance from the viewer before the attention moves on to the next fleeting image. The quick intercutting of images serves to reinforce this process of short bursts of attention to ephemeral images, forcing the glance on to the next image.

Williams (1974) originally used the concept of "flow" to describe this continuous succession of images that appear on television. When he talks of "flow" he

means that television is a continuous succession of images which follows no particular laws of logic or cause and effect, but which constitutes the cultural experience of "watching television".

(Fiske 1987a, p.99)

Williams is disturbed by the apparently disconnected nature of the segments of the programmes he analyses but his description reveals how segmented television programmes are. Ellis (1982) prefers the use of the idea of the segment which he defines as "a relatively self-contained scene which conveys an incident, a mood or a particular meaning."

Television tends to be heavily segmented with each segment being self-contained, moving in real time towards its own climax of action.

.....broadcast TV offers relatively discrete segments: small sequential unities of images and sounds whose maximum duration seems to be about five minutes. (p.112)

Obviously not all segments are quite as short as this but this is essentially what Fiske and Hartley mean by the episodic quality of television.

Ellis points out that while advertisements, news, and current affairs magazine programmes provide the most obvious examples of the segmentalisation of television; "this procedure extends very much further across virtually the whole of TV's output".

The segment form implies the repetitive nature of television. The serial and the series underpin this repetition. The serial is a programme that moves to a conclusion in a number of weeks. However the multiplicity of characters and situations in the serial poses problems for the broadcasters in that the viewer may well lose track of the details or never become involved in the serial at all.

The solution to this dilemma is repetition.

Hence a number of techniques: the title sequence that introduces characters.....; the repetition of material from the end of one episode to the beginning of the next; carefully placed references to events in the conversations of characters.

(Ellis 1982, p.123)

These techniques simply lead to an increase in the number of segments.

The series may be fiction or non-fiction but it has no end in view. It provides a stable situation in which various incidents take place from week to week. "A fundamental stability and return to zero at the end of each programme or programme section is implied by the series" (Ellis 1982).

The series is perhaps the most typical television form.

The series is very widespread in TV, and complements the construction of TV output into segments. Segments gain their mutual organisation and some of their coherence from the complicated series patterns which generate them.

(Ellis 1982, p.125)

The segmented nature of television is compounded by the effects of scheduling. Scheduling is the way that particular programmes are chosen and arranged in

sequence. The strategy behind scheduling is to ensure an uninterrupted flow of segments for the viewer.

Fiske (1987a, p.105) sums up this particular aesthetic quality of television:

The television text, then, is composed of a rapid succession of compressed, vivid segments where the principle of logic and cause and effect is subordinated to that of association and consequence to sequence.

A further unique quality of television is the particular nature of the image which is produced for broadcasting. Fiske and Hartley call the medium specific in the sense that it deals with very particular images. In the process of selection the camera necessarily focuses on some images to the exclusion of others.

When Fiske and Hartley speak of television as concrete they are indicating that the medium does not deal in the abstract. Its currency is the image not the idea. Postman supports this arguing that television works largely with analogic symbols.

The images which engage our attention on the screen are visually compelling. The way in which they are produced and their linking with sound and word engage the viewer's attention. This is why Postman (1981)

claims that television is an attention-centred medium. It is deliberately constructed to engage and hold the viewer's attention.

In a similar vein, Ellis sees the television image as "sparse, stripped-down", claiming that this is one of the central characteristics of television production.

Since the information value of the TV image is deliberately honed-down, it is quickly exhausted. Variation is provided by changing the image shown rather than by introducing a complexity of elements into a single image.
(1982, p.132)

Postman (1981) has a similar notion in calling television image-centred.

Sound has a special relation to the image in television. Obviously the sound is of crucial importance in television production and the ways in which sound is used in production have been previously mentioned. However the production practices when taken in combination make the relationship of the visual and the auditory unique to television.

Pointing out that the quality of television sound is characteristically poor, Ellis argues that this is so because the image is subordinated to the sound. Sound is used to keep viewer's attention on the screen.

"Hence the importance of programme announcements and

signature tunes and, to some extent, of music in various kinds of series" (Ellis 1982, p.128).

The combination of the "stripped down" image and the role of sound in drawing attention to the image produces an immediacy about television. There is the sensation that what is being broadcast is happening at that time.

This is enhanced by the way in which television uses forms of direct address.

Broadcast TV is forever buttonholing, addressing its viewers as though holding a conversation with them. Announcers and newsreaders speak directly from the screen, simulating the eye-contact of everyday conversation by looking directly out of the screen and occasionally looking down (a learned and constructed technique). Advertisements contain elements of direct address: questions, exhortations, warnings.
(Ellis 1982, p.133)

The fact that television often employs direct address also enhances the sense that television is of the specific, present moment. Indeed it is a unique characteristic of television to directly engage the viewer. It has already been mentioned that sound is used to repeatedly direct the viewer's attention to the screen and the stripped down image tends to enhance this effect. The viewers of television are held in a peculiarly intimate relationship through this mode of direct address.

This characteristic of television has a great effect on the way in which the medium shapes the views of the viewer. By establishing this intimate, explicit relationship with its viewers, television becomes a powerful force in presenting a particular view of normality to the viewer. Ellis (1982) says that this produces a bond between the viewers and the programme's central concerns, and claims that a relationship of "humanist sympathy is set up, along the lines of seeing how everyone is normal really, how much they really do desire the norm that society has created for itself".

He goes on to describe this intimate bond more explicitly:

But the intimacy that broadcast TV sets up is more than just this form of sympathy. It is made qualitatively different by the sense that the TV image carries of being a live event, which is intensified by the habit of shooting events in real time within any one segment, the self-contained nature of each segment, and the use of close-up and sound continuity. All of these factors contribute to an overall impression, that the broadcast TV image is providing an intimacy with events between couples and families, an intimacy that gives the impression that these events are somehow co-present with the viewer, shared rather than witnessed from outside.
(p.136)

This has been quoted at length because it is crucial to comprehend how the effects of television's immediacy and direct form of address attempt to engage the viewer

in a "complicity" with the views being presented as normal on television.

Cutting produces forms of variation of visual information, and sound has an important role in drawing the viewer's attention back to the screen. The image and sound both tend to create a sense of immediacy, which produces a kind of complicity between the viewer and the TV institution. (p.144)

This is not to suggest, though, that television is entirely successful in presenting one coherent picture of the world to the viewers. Hartley (1985) argues that television is caught between competing needs; "the need to appeal to and win over a wide diversity of audiences and the need to discipline and control those audiences so that they can be reached by a single, industrially produced cultural commodity".

A number of writers besides Fiske and Hartley focus on the dramatic nature of television. Masterman (1985) suggests that most television is dramatically constructed. In writing of the typically dramatic construction of television messages he claims:

News, current affairs, documentary and sports programmes all attempt to inform or entertain us by telling us stories and by constructing heroes, villains, conflicts, reversals and resolutions. Dramatic shaping is endemic to most television editing, and the medium is frequently involved in the production of fictional forms even when dealing with avowedly factual material.

(p.178)

Ellis (1982) argues that television does not have a strong narrative form like cinema but that through the process of segmentation and the effects of immediacy, television becomes implicitly dramatic.

Brantlinger (1983) makes the point much more strongly. He develops the thesis that modern mass media, and television in particular, are like the ancient Roman circuses in that they are providing spectacles for mass consumption.

If television is making the world a smaller place, it is doing so through the production of specularity in the form of mediocre (or worse) programs that stimulate narcissism rather than true self-reflection and public involvement. (p.276)

Postman's claim that television is narrative-centered and that "the content of the TV curriculum consists of picture stories" (1981, p.6) also suggests the dramatic nature of television.

The dramatic nature of television, the particular relationship of image and sound and the way in which it is arranged in sequences and segments give rise to a distinct form of narration on television.

Narrative may be defined as: "The devices, strategies and conventions governing the organization of a story (fictional or factual) into sequence" (O'Sullivan et

al. 1983). Although narrative analysis has become the hallmark of the semiologists in particular there is widespread agreement that television is organised in narrative forms.

Fiske (1987a) says:

Given that narrative is such a fundamental cultural process, it is not surprising that television is predominantly narrational in its mode. Television drama is obviously narrative, but so too is news; documentaries impose a narrative structure upon their subject matter; sport and quiz shows are presented in terms of character, conflict, and resolution. (p.129)

Kozloff (1987) writes;

..... American television is as saturated in narrative as a sponge in a swimming pool. Most prime-time television forms - the sitcom, the action series, the prime-time soaps, the made-for-TV movie, the feature film - are obviously narrative, as are such daytime offerings as cartoons and soap operas. (p.43)

In addition to this, she goes on to point out that many other forms which are not ostensibly fictional also employ covert narrative modes. Masterman (1985) supports this claiming: "The use of narrative by the media is not confined to fictional genres". He discusses how the media (and television in particular) tend to impose narrative structures on news, current affairs, documentary and sports programmes. (For a

fuller discussion of this, and some thought-provoking remarks on the media coverage of some aspects of the 1984 Olympics see pages 175 - 186.)

While the typical form of television is narration, this does not mean that it operates in the same way as film, which moves sequentially towards completion and closure of the narrative.

Ellis (1982) argues that television narration does not have such a strong internal dynamic as film but asserts that:

Broadcast TV narration has a more dispersed narrational form: it is extensive rather than sequential. Its characteristic mode is not one of final closure or totalising vision; rather it offers a continuous refiguration of events. (p.147)

Although television may present itself in formulaic ways this does not mean that it tells all of its stories in quite the same way. Those who produce broadcast television realise that viewers are not all the same. (See Fiske 1987a, p.37.) At the same time it is vitally important that they stay tuned.

So television uses a variety of narrative forms but they have a core pattern, a certain view of normality.

This normality then constitutes particular incidents as intrusions, upsets or worries. In fiction, this tends to produce a view of the family and work structures as unchanging and unchangeable, a stable core buffeted by outside forces. In news, this constitutes current events as intrusions upon the peaceful life of the viewers at home and their surrogates, the reporters.

(Ellis 1982, p.158)

In other words broadcast television proposes a certain view of itself. It presents itself to the viewer in certain ways and tends to propose "a certain kind of position of viewing for that viewer".

Broadcast television can thus be seen as having distinct aesthetic forms. It consists of a flow of quickly passing segments and tends to use repetition to maintain the viewer's interest. The typical television image is stripped-down with the minimum of detail with sound being used to draw the viewer's attention to the image on the screen. This is also achieved by rapid cutting between images.

The way in which image and sound are used together creates a sense of immediacy about television for the viewer. As television also uses direct address the viewer tends to be drawn into an intimate relationship

with the television institution and a bond is formed between the viewers and the programme's central concerns.

The effect of segmentation and the immediacy produces a form of narration on television which is not only dramatic but also tends to represent all television events - fiction and non-fiction - as narrative. Despite the need to cater for the tastes of a variety of viewers this narrative patterning tends to present a core of normality which viewers are invited to share.

Television has thus the technical codes or production techniques, which form the language of television production. It has, in addition, the conventional forms (or representational codes) discussed in this chapter.

However the discussion has thus far avoided the issue of context. Television functions in a social context with which it interacts. A complete understanding of the medium involves a knowledge of the ways in which it characteristically functions as one of a number of mass media in society. The following chapter is devoted to an examination of this.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NATURE OF TELEVISION AS A MASS MEDIUM

Overview

This chapter describes those features which television shares with other mass media in society. The texts of television have an intertextuality with other texts. Television is ideological and invites the viewer to complicity with the realities presented on the screen. Television is essentially capitalist and is owned, controlled and influenced by a number of outside agencies

The discussion of the forms of television in the previous chapter was limited to those features unique to the medium itself. However this does not exhaust what can be said about the nature of television. It must be remembered that television has a context and that it is only one of a number of mass media in society. We need to examine it in this context to more completely describe its nature.

Any single programme on television cannot be understood in isolation. Anything which appears on the television screen must be seen in relation to the total production of the television industry and in relation to the social context in which television broadcasting takes place. The programmes (or texts) of television can only be understood in relation to all the other texts which relate in some way to them.

Fiske (1987a) claims that:

The theory of intertextuality proposes that any one text is read in relationship to others and that a range of textual knowledge is brought to bear upon it. (p.108)

He proposes two axes of intertextuality: the horizontal and the vertical. Horizontal intertextuality is concerned with the way in which particular texts relate to others of the same type. Vertical intertextuality is concerned with the way in which other texts of a different type, such as publicity for television programmes and writing about television, relate to television texts.

It is through the study of horizontal intertextuality that we are led into an examination of genre, character, context and gender.

One of the ways in which television tries to control its polysemy and organise its narratives is through the use of genre. Genre may be defined as:

the recognized paradigmatic sets into which the total output of a given medium (film, television, writing) is classified.
(O'Sullivan et al. 1983, p.98)

Genre is thus not a unique feature of television, but it works to shape the product of television into particular

forms which predetermine to some extent (possibly a great extent) the viewer's response to the programme.

Genre is a cultural practice that attempts to structure some order into the wide range of texts and meanings that circulate in our culture for the convenience of both producers and audiences.

(Fiske 1987a, p.109)

A programme within a particular genre must be seen in relationship to all the others in the same genre. For instance, the reading that a viewer makes of a sit-com depends on a knowledge of other sit-coms. In addition, genres are constantly changing as they absorb new examples of the genre. These shifts are partly in response to changing audience demands, either real or as conceived by the producers, and shifts in society reflected in the shifts in the genre. One of the principal reasons for allocating programmes into genres is to capture and maintain viewers' interests, thus providing audiences for advertising messages.

Feuer (1987) emphasises that genre has ritual and ideological functions. Fiske sustains Feuer's argument. He claims firstly that:

Genres are intertextual or even pre-textual, for they form the network of industrial, ideological, and institutional conventions that are common to both producer and audiences, out of which arise both the producer's program and the audience's readings.

(Fiske 1987a, p.111)

And continues:

Genre is a means of constructing both the audience and the reading subject: its work in the economic domain is paralleled by its work in the domain of culture; that is, its work in influencing which meanings of a program are preferred by, or proffered to, which audiences.
(p.114)

This suggests that genre study should not concern itself only with the question of how far a particular programme typifies its genre. It is concerned with the way in which the genre represents culture. Genre is a cultural practice and therefore any one text on television should be seen in relation, not only to the other texts of the medium, but also to the texts which the reader brings to the interpretation of a text.

Just as the texts of television cannot be read in isolation from one another, so television itself cannot be isolated from the society in which it is located. The relationship between the texts of television and other texts which relate to the medium is the domain of Fiske's vertical intertextuality. Television is an inescapable part of cultural life. As a result there is a whole host of texts which are about television but are not specifically television texts. These texts carry a range of intertextual connections with television.

The point is that it is not possible to simply separate the texts of television from those about television. Publicity releases and information about the lives and activities of the stars are, for instance, inescapably bound up with the meanings of the programmes to which they refer.

Television's pervasiveness in our culture is not due simply to the fact that so much of it is broadcast and that watching it is our most popular leisure activity, but because it pervades so much of the rest of our cultural life - newspapers, magazines, advertisements, conversations, radio, or style of dress, of make-up, of dance steps.

(Fiske 1987a, p.118)

This has definite implications for the teaching of television literacy. Any approach to television literacy cannot overlook the fact that television is intertextually intertwined with many other texts in our culture. Literacy in television is thus also concerned with those texts which relate to television. This presents difficulty because there are potentially so many inter-connected texts. The fact remains that it is important to give attention to those texts which are directly about television because they represent the site of a struggle for meaning over television.

Fiske (1987a) indicates that the wide range of journalistic writing about television is typical of this second level of intertextuality. At one extreme this may

consist of texts such as publicity releases which represent the industry's attempt to present itself in a certain light. At the other extreme there is writing which represents genuine criticism and analysis of the medium. Somewhere in the middle lie the fan magazines, which rely both on information from the television studios and the direct responses of readers.

The third level of intertextuality lies with the meanings the viewers make of television. As programmes are produced and broadcast, so the viewers themselves formulate opinions and express their views, interpretations and interactions with the programmes. Whether these are in the form of conversations and discussions, or of letters to newspapers or to the broadcasting institutions, they form a growing and shifting set of texts which are directly related to television.

These three levels of intertextuality correspond with the three levels of representation on television suggested by Corner (1983) and Rice *et al.* (1983). For a full discussion of these see Chapter Four.

The importance of these texts that the viewers personally create about television is that they are in themselves helping to make the meaning of television. Although

studies of the audience response are not new, the importance of what the viewers themselves say about television has latterly received increasing attention from media researchers (Morley 1986, Fiske 1987a). This does not mean that viewers are free to make their own meanings about television. The institutional and ideological practices, which determine the way in which television programmes are made, shape the viewers' responses. As Fiske (1987a) writes; following his discussion of the many ways in which viewers are able to articulate the texts of television:

The plurality of these meanings and articulations is not, of course, a structureless pluralism, but is tightly organised around textual and social power.
(p.126)

The fact that the television message is constructed in certain conventional ways which results in the presentation of ideas as natural or normal suggests that it is inherently ideological.

The whole question of ideology is problematic but needs to be discussed if we are to establish the ideological nature of television. Although ideology is a Marxist concept and its use tends to be favoured by those who favour certain approaches to the interpretation of the media, the discussion of the concept at this stage is

essential to the issue of what it really means to be television literate.

Ideology as a theoretical concept comes from Marxism. While Marx did not explicitly formulate a theory of ideology his ideas are grounded in the following propositions.

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.

The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. In so far therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.

(Marx 1977, pp.176,389)

The notion that social being determines consciousness leads in traditional Marxism to the concept of ideology as false consciousness. For the ruling classes false consciousness occurs when they imagine that their position in society is governed by a set of irrefutable principles such as the laws of God or nature.

For the subordinate classes, false consciousness occurs when "they make sense of their social and individual

circumstances in terms supplied by the prevailing ideology". (See O'Sullivan et al. 1983, on which this discussion of false consciousness is based.)

Also, because Marx was most concerned about developing a theory of ideology in relation to his theories about the dynamics of a capitalist society, he was more concerned with the overall ideological role of the mass media in society than with the ideological dimensions of specific media messages.

The Frankfurt School attempted a more direct criticism of the mass media which they called the culture industry.

They argued that the culture industry had logically emerged to perform a highly manipulative role in advanced capitalist societies, serving to contain and subvert forms of oppositional or critical consciousness on behalf of the dominant capitalist class.
(O'Sullivan et al. 1983, p.93)

For the Frankfurt school "the media define for us the very terms in which we are to 'think' (or not 'think') the world" (Bennett 1982). They proposed a negative view of the way in which the media operated in society, suggesting that they "made the world of serious culture more widely accessible only at the price of depriving it of its critical substance" (Bennett 1982).

This suggested a view of the consumers of the mass media as essentially passive in relation to the power of the media. The pessimism of the Frankfurt School in the face of the realities of society tended to leave them theoretically powerless and ultimately lead to a rejection of their concept of ideology.

Althusser reformulated the theory of ideology. He viewed it as a representation of the imaginary relationships of individuals with the real conditions of their existence.

Althusser's work stressed that ideology expressed the themes and representations through which men relate to the real world. For Althusser ideology always had a material existence.Ideology, rather than being imposed from above and being, therefore, implicitly dispensable, is the medium through which all people experience the world.

(Curran et al. 1982, p.24)

This reformulation led to a notion of ideology in general. The ideological effect cannot be attributed to false consciousness but on how people made sense of their existence. In other words ideology is a practice.

Ideology, according to Althusser, is not an abstract, stable set of ideas that we unconsciously adopt, but a practice: it exists and works only through practices, and here we are concerned with the simultaneous and inseparable practices of making sense of the text and thus of reconstituting ourselves as subjects-in-ideology.

(Fiske 1987a, p.25)

Meaning in this reconstitution of ideology is conditional on the practice of signification. As Heck (1980) points out, Althusser's reformulation puts the emphasis in ideological analysis on the structure of media messages. However he conceived of the social structure of society as so powerful that it tended to reduce those involved in the social practice of signification to a submissive role.

He has thus been criticised for tending to represent capitalism as a totally coherent system "lacking internal conflict at either the economic, political or ideological levels" (Bennett 1982). He saw the process of signification as "too uni-accentual, too functionally adapted to the reproduction of the dominant ideology" (Hall 1982).

Volosinov argued that uni-accentuality - the process where things appeared to have only one meaning - was the result of a "practice of closure: the establishment of an achieved system of equivalence between language and reality, which the effective mastery of the struggle over meaning produced as its most pertinent effect". In reality this closure was not achieved; the struggle for meaning depends "on the relative strength of the 'forces in struggle', the balance between them at any strategic

moment, and the effective conduct of 'the politics of signification'" (Hall 1982, p.78).

Volosinov's focus on the multi-accentuality of signs is an important development in the theory of ideology because it emphasises that, not only is there a struggle for meaning over signs, but that it is also impossible to permanently allocate signs to any one side in the struggle.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony is also useful in countering Althusser's diminution of the power of the individual to resist ideology. Hegemony refers;

principally to the ability in certain historical periods of the dominant classes to exercise social and cultural leadership, and by these means - rather than by direct coercion of subordinate classes - to maintain their power over the economic, political and cultural direction of the nation. The crucial aspect of the notion of hegemony is that it operates not by forcing people against their conscious will or better judgement to concede power to the already- powerful, but that it describes a situation whereby our consent is actively sought for those ways of making sense of the world which "happen" to fit in with the interests of the hegemonic alliance of classes, or "power block".

(O'Sullivan et al. 1983, p.102)

This implies that there is an element of complicity in the workings of hegemony. The interests of power groups are represented as normal and natural and often appear to address the interests of those whose consent is being

sought. In the words of Poulantzas (1975) the workings of ideology depoliticise issues.

Roland Barthes has explored this depoliticisation of everyday issues in his studies of popular culture. Central to his thinking is the concept of myth. His use of the word refers to "a chain of concepts widely accepted throughout a culture, by which its members conceptualize or understand a particular topic or part of their social experience" (O'Sullivan *et al.* 1983, p.216). Myths work unconsciously to naturalise history. The mass media in any society are some of the chief producers (or reproducers) of ideology in people. In the way in which television works through typically narrative modes, presenting a reality which is normal and natural and inviting the viewer to share in this view of reality it is clearly ideological. Also the way in which it does not coerce the viewer, but seeks to win consent to the "realistic" ideas presented makes it hegemonic in its workings. To achieve this naturalistic effect television employs myth.

Myths seek to perpetuate the ways in which societies traditionally view a wide range of subjects such as gender, sex-roles, work, race, and family. In order to understand the ways in which the viewer interprets a television text it is necessary to explore the myths

being represented in a particular text. Examining myths means analysing the narratives of television at the level of their cultural-ideological significance. This suggests an analysis of the ways in which television represents masculinity and femininity, for example, or of the ways it might represent character, or institutions such as the government.

Myths are not static, "they are constantly changing and updating themselves, and television plays an important part in this process" (Fiske and Hartley 1978, p.43).

This means that, for instance, the representations of women on television will shift to accommodate the ways in which they are currently perceived. Occasionally a television text may play with current myths as Madonna does in her representations of female sexuality in her music videos. (See Fiske 1987b, Chambers 1986.)

Television is thus one of the most powerful ideological agents in society. In the way that it presents ideas (or myths) as normal and natural it seeks to win the consent of the viewer. However, because the viewers themselves are actively making their own meanings of television, we need no longer see them as passive victims of ideology.

The fact that the emphasis in the theory of ideology has shifted from the economic, should not be allowed to obscure the fact that television broadcasting has a profoundly economic base. An understanding of the underlying economics of the medium is an essential element of literacy.

There are at least two dimensions to this economic base. Firstly, the television corporations need to show a profit, or at least work within the constraints of their government-allocated budget. This directly affects the content of television broadcasting. Obviously some types of programme are more expensive to produce than others. This means that it is important for the television company to be able to produce programmes that are inexpensive, or which may have the appearance of being lavish productions but are relatively cheaply produced. For instance, Masterman (1985) points out that the title sequences of Dallas offer the prospect of a lavish production, where in reality most of the sequences are shot in relatively cheap indoor locations.

This need to restrict the costs of programmes also leads to the buying of imported material. This can be bought at a fraction of the cost of a locally produced programme as the profits from the programme have already been reaped. This has important cultural repercussions in

that the cultural values of the programme are imported as well.

In addition, the narrative forms of imported material may be different. For instance the narrative structures of American television are geared to the need for a greater number of commercial breaks (Masterman 1985).

The second dimension of the economic base of television is the relationship between the corporation and its advertisers. The need to maintain and increase audience levels is crucial to sell the products of the advertisers and to provide advertising revenue for the television corporation. This leads to a symbiotic relationship between the producers of television and the advertising agencies which in turn affects the way in which television is constructed.

As the paymasters of commercial television, advertisers obviously act as a powerful pressure group upon the television companies.
(Masterman 1985, p.111)

This influence is exerted firstly by the type of programmes that advertisers support (and therefore promote). Secondly, and more importantly, advertising itself is a manifestation of a capitalist, consumerist society and so television can be seen in part as working to sustain capitalist ideology.

What is also of some interest in this context is the fact that the advertisements on television tend to be much more expensively produced than the programmes that surround them. This tends to compel the viewer to watch them.

Advertisements are typically innovative and skillfully produced, using the techniques of television in a way that the medium itself often cannot afford. This is a deliberate economic strategy to keep the viewer's attention and deliver the audience to the market place.

Another interesting phenomenon is the relatively recent appearance of programmes on television which in themselves act as advertisements for products commercially available. One of the first of these, The Masters of The Universe series was explicitly designed to sell the characters and their accompanying paraphernalia. The programme itself was interlaced with more overt, conventional advertising messages about the products.

By this it is not intended to propose a simplistic notion of a base/superstructure model, where the consumers of television are held in a passive relationship by the advertising power of the medium. What is being suggested is that in becoming literate about television it is necessary to understand that television is a profoundly

commercial enterprise and that this economic base should be investigated.

Underlying this issue of the relative power of advertisements over viewers is the question of the positioning of the viewer in relation to the messages of television. This has already been touched upon in the discussion of Volosinov's theory of the multi-accentuality of signs. However, the question of the relative power of the viewer in the face of the texts of television is crucial to the understanding of television literacy. For this reason it is appropriate to discuss the issue more fully.

Fiske (1987a) emphasises the heteroglossia of television texts.

As society consists of a structured system of different, unequal, and often conflicting groups, so its popular texts will exhibit a similar structured multiplicity of voices and meanings often in conflict with each other. It is the heteroglossia of television that allows its texts to engage in dialogic relationships with its viewers. (p.90)

This is not to deny that there is meaning in the text. Quite clearly people do find common interpretations of what is on television. All meanings are not equal on television. The way in which television is produced and

the conventions which govern it tend to limit or shape its meanings.

However the necessity to accommodate the tastes of the variety of viewers works towards a polysemy of the text.

Interestingly, television's economics, which demand that it can be made popular by a wide variety of social groups, work against its apparent ability to exert ideological control over the passive viewer.

(Fiske 1987a, p.93)

Hall (1980) proposed four possible decoding modes for the viewer: the dominant, the professional, the negotiated, and the oppositional. Morley (1983, p.110) adapted this model suggesting three broad frames within which a decoder may position himself in relation to media texts: dominant, where "the decoder may take the meaning fully within the interpretative framework which the message itself proposes"; negotiated, where "decoders may take the meaning broadly as encoded; but by relating the message to some concrete, located or situational context which reflects their position and interests, they may modify or partially inflect the meaning"; and oppositional, where "the decoder may recognize how the message has been contextually encoded, but bring to bear an alternative frame of interpretation, which sets aside the encoding framework and superimposes on the message an

interpretation which works in a directly oppositional way".

This model marks an advance in the thinking about the relative power of the viewer to make meaning, but it proved to be insufficient to account for the variety of readings of which viewers are capable. Fiske (1987a) suggests that the limitations of this theory are "that it overemphasizes class in relation to other social factors and that it implies that the three types of reading are roughly equal".

Morley himself (1983), went on to stress the complexity of audience responses suggesting that "textual decodings can no more be 'read off' from class/ethnic gender/sub-cultural positions than meaning can be read off from textual characteristics" (Masterman 1985, p.219).

He preferred a model taken from discourse theory to account for the multiplicity of readings possible by the viewers. A discourse is a socially produced way of talking or thinking about a topic (Fiske 1987b).

Television discourse includes the enormous amounts of sense-making representations that have been established as the available modes by means of which our watching or "reading" of television is fixed, directed, regulated and encouraged along particular lines.

(O'Sullivan *et al.* 1983, p.75)

The reader too, brings a number of discourses to the reading situation.

A television text is, therefore, a discourse (or a number of discourses if it contains contradictions), and the reader's consciousness is similarly made up of a number of discourses through which s/he makes sense of his/her social experience.

Fiske (1987b, p.268)

For Morley reading a television text is defined as that moment when the discourses of the reader meet the discourses of the text. The necessity to accommodate the diverse needs of the audience may result in polysemy but the text is ideologically structured to prefer certain dominant meanings.

Fiske sums up these oppositional elements of the reading process.

The television text is, like all texts, the site of a struggle for meaning. The structure of the text tries to limit its meanings to ones that promote the dominant ideology, but the polysemy sets up forces that oppose this control. The hegemony of the text is never total, but always has to struggle to impose itself against that diversity of meanings that the diversity of readers will produce. But this polysemy is not anarchic and unstructured: the meanings within the text are structured by the differential distribution of textual power in the same way that social groups are related according to the differential distribution of social power. All meanings are not equal, nor equally easily activated, but all exist in relations of subordination or opposition to the dominant meanings proposed by the text.

(1987a, p.93)

This discussion of the struggle to make meaning of the television text is obviously crucial to the strategic or pedagogical issues of television literacy, but it is germane to the definition of the concept as well.

Masterman (1985, p.220) suggests firstly that "the important insight that audiences perform their own ideological operations upon texts needs to be integrated into media teaching at all levels". As a consequence he claims that teachers "will need to develop a sensitive and close working knowledge of the cultural competencies and sub-cultural differences which exist within their groups". This is clearly relevant to the teaching of television literacy.

However, he suggests as well that this understanding should "also inform student responses, and give to the students a greater awareness of the social and sub-cultural roots of their own judgements".

This seems to indicate most strongly that an understanding of the relative power of viewers to make meaning of a text, and the importance of their own discourses in this process is crucial, not only to the teaching of television literacy, but is also an important element in defining what is meant by the term.

Before attempting a summary of the points made about television, it is necessary to mention one final characteristic of television as a mass medium. Television broadcast institutions are owned and controlled. This has already been implicitly touched on in the discussions of the ideological nature of television, the theories of viewing positions and the relationship between the television companies and the advertisers. The question of who owns and controls the broadcast institution is relevant to the issue of literacy for the simple reason that those who own and control the medium have some power to determine content.

In addition, there are other sources of power and control over the media, such as the government and acts of parliament. Masterman (1985) suggests the following areas of knowledge for this topic:

- (a) an understanding of the general significance of overall patterns of media ownership and control within the context of
- (b) an awareness of other important sources of power and influence within the media.

This chapter has attempted a description of television in its social context, suggesting that this knowledge forms an essential part of television literacy.

There are five major features of television as a mass medium.

1. There is a intertextual relationship between the texts of television and other texts.
2. Television is a powerful ideological force, which seeks to win consent for its representations from the viewers.
3. Television is fundamentally capitalist.
4. Viewers are not held in a passive relationship to the medium; they bring their own discourses to the viewing situation.
5. Television institutions are owned and controlled and influenced by a number of external organisations.

This completes the investigation into the nature of television. It is now possible to sum up the components of television literacy.

There are three elements. Firstly there is the vocabulary of production techniques and their effects; secondly there are the conventional forms of television; and thirdly the characteristics of television as a mass medium in society. We can now attempt a comprehensive description of the areas of knowledge required for television literacy.

1. PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES AND THEIR EFFECTS

The areas of knowledge for literacy at this stage are the following:

(a) The vocabulary of production

- * The various shots used in production. This means being able to distinguish between, for example, a close-up and an extra-close-up.
- * The vocabulary associated with the following areas of production: changes in focus; camera movements of various types (i.e. panning); tilting of the camera; variations in camera height; zoom-ins and zoom-outs; shot selection; body postures and placement of subjects in the shots; the way in which pictures are sequenced; the editing techniques such as the cut, mix and fade; lighting and colour; sound; and scenery.

What is proposed at this level is no more than an ability to describe the television shot in terms of the vocabulary of production. This is obviously a fairly mechanical level of understanding but it would seem to form an essential platform for further levels.

(b) The effects of production techniques and conventions

- * The effects on the viewer of the combination of production practices used in any one shot. Understanding of this level would imply, for instance, the appreciation of the general difference between longer and closer shots

in terms of the emotional responses evoked in the viewer. This would mean not only being able describe the length of the shot but also being able to say what particular emotion and mood it produced.

* The difference between shots taken with a short and long focus lens and the effects on depth and spatial impression these have on the viewer.

* The dynamic and dramatic relationships which are set up by various panning movements.

* The variation in interest and emotion produced by tilting the camera.

* The changes in emphasis and attention caused by zooming.

* The ways in which the television picture is composed, particularly the process of selection of specific images and the intercutting between them, and the influence this has on the viewer's perception of the picture. This is particularly important in modern music video productions, which feature rapid intercutting between briefly held images.

* The emotive effect of placing a subject in varying prominence in the picture.

* The importance of sequence in guiding the viewer's gaze from one centre of interest to the next.

* The effects and implications of editing. Obviously not all of the effects of editing are apparent, nor can they always be detected by analysing the broadcast image.

But the literate student should be able to appreciate that by the time the image is received editing may have manipulated the spatial and temporal paradigms of the images; it may have juxtaposed unrelated images; inserted and excluded material; and generally prepared the television message so as to determine a particular response from the viewer. Essential to this level of literacy would be an understanding of the effects of the principal editing techniques such as the mix, fade and cut; either separately or in combination.

- * The effects on the television message of lighting, where the effects are mostly in the emotive area.
- * The dramatic effects of sound.
- * The dramatic effects of scenery.

In summary, what this next level of literacy requires is the knowledge of, and ability to discuss, a wide range of effects that result from the many techniques used in producing the television image. These techniques may be used singly or in combination and are sometimes indiscernible to the viewer. The effects are also evolving and it is therefore necessary to continually update this knowledge of production techniques and their potential effects.

Reaching this level of understanding of television would provide the student with a working vocabulary of the

production techniques of television. This is obviously useful and forms a basis to the understanding of the medium. However, if a student is going to be able to do more than mechanically analyse or even imitate the production techniques of the medium, then it is important to understand the forms of television.

2. THE CONVENTIONAL FORMS OF TELEVISION

The following are the areas of knowledge for literacy at this stage:

- * The principles of flow and segmentation.
- * The principles and results of scheduling.
- * The stripped-down nature of the television image.
- * The unique relationship between sound and image.
- * The sense of immediacy produced by television.
- * The intimate nature of the medium.
- * The typically narrative form of television.
- * The ways in which it invites the complicity of the viewer.
- * The apparent realism of the images.

In summary, this stage requires a thorough understanding of those features of television which are unique characteristics of the medium.

3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TELEVISION AS A MASS MEDIUM

The following are the areas of knowledge for this stage.

(a) Intertextuality

* How programmes of the same type relate generically to one another.

* How the texts of television relate to other texts which are about television (e.g. publicity releases, magazine articles and television criticism).

* How the texts of the viewers relate to those of television.

(b) Ideology

* The ideological nature of television. This includes the polysemic nature of television; the hegemonic role; the use of myth.

(c) The Economic base of Television

* The need to produce programmes as cheaply as possible and the effects of this.

* The relationship between television broadcasting and advertising and the effects of this.

* The polysemic nature of television.

(d) Decoding Television

* The relative power of the viewer to make meaning and the importance of the viewer's discourses in interpreting television.

(e) Ownership and Control

- * The patterns of ownership and control in the medium.

The intention behind this detailed schedule of the areas of knowledge necessary for television literacy is to provide as comprehensive and wide-ranging a description as possible.

Having reached this stage it is appropriate to refer to the tentative description of television literacy reached at the end of the third chapter. It was suggested that there are four elements: understanding the language of television; expressing the contents of a television programme in another form; being able to use the technology of television creatively; showing critical literacy in being able to demythologise the television message and to interpret and describe the social and cultural context in which it is produced.

The discussion of the production effects and techniques of television demonstrated that there is a language of television and that this is the basic element in literacy in the medium.

The description of the conventional forms of television suggested that it is deliberately constructed to produce particular effects and that for a student to be television literate these effects and conventional forms

have to be understood and described. Implicit in this level is the idea of translation, in that the student would have to be able to use the vocabulary of the shot and the grammar of production to describe the television picture in words. Secondly, the element of critical literacy becomes evident in that the student would have to begin at this level to penetrate the "realism" of the medium and understand how the way in which television is constructed affects the way in which it is viewed.

This element of critical literacy is carried to its conclusion in the discussion of television as a mass medium. The "ability to demythologise the television message and to interpret and describe the social and cultural context in which it is produced" (Chapter Three) is clearly present. A thorough understanding of the most significant features of television as a mass medium in the modern world necessitates a rigorously critical approach.

The working definition of television literacy has thus been validated and substantiated. As a concept it is accurate in itself but perhaps not adequate to account for all the complexities of the medium.

Having determined the general areas of study for television literacy, it is now possible to outline a

suitable syllabus. Before doing so, it is of crucial importance to discuss the question of methodology. It is vitally important for the television teacher to have a solid theoretical basis for teaching television.

The following chapter thus explores the traditional approaches to media study. This is done, firstly, to illustrate the wide variety of approaches and, secondly, to provide a justification for the suggested methodological framework for the syllabus.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF TELEVISION

Overview

This chapter firstly reviews the historical approaches to the study of the mass media, based largely on the work of McQuail (1983). The chapter then reviews a wide range of more recent theoretical approaches to television, based on Allen (1987) and concludes with a suggested methodology for the study of television. It is proposed that the methods of the British Cultural Studies School combined with the theoretical framework of Hall (1980) should be used as a basis for the classroom study of television.

Any student of television cannot but be overwhelmed by the multitude and variety of the theoretical approaches to the study of the mass media. The methods of the mass media researcher are not necessarily those which the classroom teacher would wish to replicate but in the same way as the mass media researcher attempts to base his approach on a sound theoretical platform, so it is important that classroom teachers of television should form a clear understanding of the theoretical base for their teaching.

Accordingly, the chapter presents firstly a review of the earlier approaches to mass media study and secondly a detailed description of the development and source of current approaches to television itself.

The early history of mass communication research was dominated by the Effects Model. This concentrated on the

effects that the media have on the audience, supposing, as it did, that the media were capable of powerful effects on individuals in the audience. As the media were seen to 'inject' the audience with ideas, the model is also known as the Hypodermic Needle Model.

The model is best described as 'mechanistic and unsophisticated' (O'Sullivan et al. 1983, p.104). Howitt (1982, pp.6-7) also has a useful summary of the deficiencies of the model. He points out that the model is simplistic in its assumption that there is a measurable, direct effect on the audience. Secondly it narrows our attention to the effects of the mass media, ignoring analysis of the content of media messages. Thirdly it overlooks different, conflicting effects of the media on the individual in favour of measuring net effect. Finally he points out that the model depends on a view of the media as having effects of 'cataclysmic proportions'.

The failure of the effects model to adequately describe the processes of mass media communication led to the development of the Uses and Gratifications Model. This model remained concerned with the audience in mass communication but concentrated on the uses that people made of the media rather than the effects it had on them.

The model may be described as follows:

That approach to the study of media audiences which proposes that audience members' consumption of media output is motivated and directed towards the gratification of certain individually experienced needs.

(O'Sullivan et al. 1983, p.244)

The theory emphasised the active audience, composed of individuals selecting and using the media for their own gratification.

Uses and gratifications research has been a crucial and formative influence on thinking about the mass media. Over and over again we are guided to consider the audience as active users of the mass media rather than passive absorbers.

(Howitt 1982, p.13)

On the other hand, Howitt goes on to point out that much of the research in this area is banal, concentrating on producing classifications of the media function to provide gratification. (See O'Sullivan et al. 1983, p.245.)

Howitt (1982, p.15) highlights the most problematic area of the theory: that it is difficult to establish whether the users of the media arise out of needs or whether the needs arise out of use of the media. The theory has also been criticised because it neglects the contents of media messages.

The third major development in mass media theory is represented by the Cultural Ratification Model. In this approach the media are seen as one of the powerful institutions which control society.

That is, the mass media are so allied to the power structure of society that it is inevitable that they serve to support and maintain power structures and dominant ideologies.

(Howitt 1982, p.16)

This approach is based on the belief that the media have the capacity to manipulate people. The focus lies in the attention given to the mass media as an institution in society. Its particular concern is the way in which social divisions are made meaningful (O'Sullivan *et al.* 1983, p.60).

It could be said, then, that each of these three models focuses on a different aspect of the production process of a mass medium message: the audience, the message itself, or the society in which the mass medium functions.

McQuail (1983) similarly distinguishes between three general approaches to mass media study which reflect a focus on three different stages of the production of mass media messages. The three groups are described in some

detail to provide a general background for the more extensive description of approaches to television.

McQuail begins his categorisation with the Macro Approaches, which "presuppose a coherence or unity of the media 'system' and give more attention to 'society' as the source and determinant of this knowledge-producing and organizing institution" (1983, p.57).

Secondly, there are approaches which "tend to focus primarily on the content of the media, on the universe of texts and meanings that is typically or most frequently offered by the media" (1983, p.57). These are generally referred to as message-centred approaches.

Thirdly, "the complex of relationships and elements represented in the theory map has also been approached by way of the public, through studies of choice, preference, motivation and media use behaviour" (p.58). These approaches are usually labelled theories of audience and effect.

Mass society theory is historically the first of the macro approaches.

The theory emphasizes the interdependence of institutions that exercise power and thus the integration of the media into the sources of social power and authority. Content is likely to serve the interests of political and economic power holders and although the media cannot be expected to offer a critical or alternative definition of the world, their tendency will be to assist in the accommodation of the dependent public to their fate.

(McQuail 1983, p.58)

This view of the mass media is based on an essentially pessimistic world view. It sees the media as both causing and maintaining mass society and the audience being manipulated by the media while continuing to need to consume its products.

The second of the macro approaches which has had far greater impact on the development of theoretical perspectives on the mass media over the last thirty years is the Marxist approach. In fact there is no such thing as a single Marxist approach; there are simply a number of approaches which have their starting point in Marxism.

The inherently ideological nature of the media was discussed at length in Chapter Six. The study of the mass media from the ideological viewpoint becomes the attempt to elucidate the complex ways in which ideological content is disseminated and consumed in a

capitalist society. This effort has given rise to three main analytical trends which depend on the particular interpretations of the Marxist base.

Firstly political - economic media theory focuses more on the economic structure than on the ideological content of the media.

It asserts the dependence of ideology on the economic base and directs research attention to the empirical analysis of the structure of ownership and to the way media market forces operate.

(McQuail 1983, p.60)

Those groups in society which do not have a strong voice are excluded from economic power because they do not have access to the media. Thus the forces for change are minimised and those favoured by the system entrench their position in the society.

This theory is useful in that it does offer opportunity for empirical testing about market determinants, but as McQuail points out, these "are so numerous and complex that empirical demonstration is not easy" (1983, p.61).

Secondly, McQuail groups together a number of Marxist theorists under the label "hegemony theory".

This has concentrated less on the economic and structural determinants of a class-biased ideology and more on ideology itself, the forms of its expression, its ways of signification and the mechanisms by which it survives and flourishes with the apparent compliance of its victims (mainly the working class) and succeeds in invading and shaping their consciousness.

(1983, p.61)

This differs from the classic Marxist approach in that it gives greater independence to ideology from the economic base. Ideology is seen as more pervasively in the fabric of the everyday cultural lives of people. What is more, the working classes are seen as consenting in the legitimisation of ideology and in the reproduction of the relationships of capitalism. Thus there is an emphasis on ideological rather than economic causes. Typical methods employed by this approach are structural and semiological analysis.

The work of theorists in this third Marxist approach emphasised that the media acted as a powerful element for the containment of change. This was the view of the Frankfurt School whose views on ideology were discussed in the previous chapter.

Arising partly from the work of the Frankfurt School is the culturalist or 'socio-cultural - cultural' approach.

It is marked by a more positive approach to the products of mass culture and by the wish to understand the meaning and place assigned to popular culture in the experience of particular groups in society - the young, the working class, ethnic minorities and other marginal categories.

(McQuail 1983, p.63)

The approach is opposed to any simplistic base - superstructure model of the relationship between the ideal and the material. The culturalist analyst stresses both the message and the public, "seeking by a sensitive and critically-directed understanding of the real experience of people, to account for patterns of choice amongst media" (McQuail 1983, p.63).

Stuart Hall, one of the chief exponents of this approach, emphasises the crucial role of ideology in the formulation of media messages. He stresses that ideology forms part of a discourse which operates unconsciously through the broadcaster.

The ideology has "worked" in such a case because the discourse has spoken itself through him/her. Unwittingly, unconsciously, the broadcaster has served as support for the reproduction of a dominant ideological discursive field.

(Gurevitch et al. 1982, p.88)

McQuail mentions two further macro theories which are not Marxist based. Firstly, there are the theories of media structure and function, which see society as a "system of linked working parts or subsystems, of which media comprise one, each making an essential contribution to the whole" (McQuail 1983, p.64).

In this system the media are seen as a means of maintaining society.

Thus, structural-functional theory requires no assumption of ideological direction from the media (although it does assume ideological congruence) but depicts media as essentially self-directing and self-correcting, within certain politically negotiated institutional rules.

(McQuail 1983, p.64)

Finally, normative theories of the media refer to "alternative sets of ideas about how the media ought to be related to their society, both to the 'top' or power structure and to their audiences" (McQuail 1983, p.65).

Normative theories attempt to describe the criteria by which the media should be judged in society. As such, they are connected with the political system of the country in which they operate and theorists have tended to describe media in terms of the particular set of economic-political conditions in which they operate.

These, then, are the macro theories of mass communication.

The second major division in McQuail's description is Message-centred Theory. This focuses on the message itself, examining its internal structure and means of signification. The text itself is seen as accessible to analysis.

It is fixed, made public, and produced systematically according to the rules of its own code or language and by its careful analysis we can hope to derive inferences about its originating culture, its meaning, purpose, and probably use and effect.

(McQuail 1983, p.65)

The origins of this method lie in the fields of structural linguistics and semiology. The two most important modern figures in the area are Barthes (1972) and Eco (1977).

Any text is composed according to a set of rules, and the analyst can penetrate the meaning of the text if he is familiar with those rules and with the cultural setting in which the text is produced.

McQuail emphasises three major points in connection with this theory.

Firstly, he stresses that the meaning which may be derived from the study of any text is not necessarily the meaning of the originator of the text. "It is assumed to be a given, objective meaning derived from the logic of the symbol system in which it is encoded." Secondly this approach deals with the latent, connotative meaning of the message. Thirdly he points out that the method can be used to analyse a wide range of 'texts' not just the written language (McQuail 1983, p.66).

The third major body of theory which McQuail distinguishes is the Theory of Audience and Effect. Despite the fact that this approach has a long history there is no "unified body of effect theory" (p 67).

He points out that, despite there being many divisions of effect theory (McQuail Chapter 7), a distinction must be made between theories which emphasise the source, sender and message and those which emphasise the receiver and the active user of the media. He also points out that studies of the media audience have produced two distinct groups: the 'Marxists' and the 'liberal pluralists'. The differences between the groups can be largely ascribed to a fundamental difference in views of society.

According to Gurevitch et al. (1982, p.1) "pluralists see society as a complex of competing groups and interests,

none of them predominant all the time", while Marxists "view capitalist society as being one of class domination, the media are seen as part of an ideological arena in which various class views are fought out, although within the context of the dominance of certain classes; ultimate control is increasingly concentrated in monopoly capital."

This in turn gives rise to two models of the media. McQuail names these the 'dominance' and the 'pluralist' models. The former sees the media as subservient to other social institutions.

The media organisations are likely to be owned or controlled by a small number of powerful interests and to be similar in kind and purpose. They would be characterised by a high degree of mass production and mass dissemination of content in which a limited and undifferentiated view of the world, shaped according to the perspective of ruling interests in the society, would be offered.
(p.69)

The audience in this model is seen as passive and uncritical. The effects of the media messages are powerful and predictable and thus measurable.

The pluralist view stresses the opposite;

.... since diversity and unpredictability are stressed at every stage, beginning with the concept of a society which is not dominated by any unified elite and is open to change and democratic control. The model stresses in particular the capacity of the differentiated public to make its alternative wishes known, to resist persuasion, to react, to use the media rather than be used by them. (p.69)

If one examines these three major groupings of approaches to the study of the mass media it can be seen that they are not, in essence, different from those proposed by Howitt (1982).

In fact, an examination of any of the traditional approaches to the study of the mass media seems to produce these three divisions. There are those theories which concentrate on the institution and its role in society; those theories which focus on the nature of the broadcast message itself (i.e. message-centred theories); and those which emphasise the audience and its role (i.e. reception theories).

If one looks, more specifically, at methodological approaches to the study of television it is similarly possible to categorise them into one of these three groups. However, two things are noticeable. Firstly, there is a growing recognition, even by those who specialise in particular methods, that more than one

approach is necessary to analyse the complexity of television. Secondly, there have been attempts particularly by the Cultural Studies theorists to integrate various methodologies into a single approach to the study of television.

One of the most useful and influential recent books on the study of television (Allen 1987) does precisely this. It offers a wide variety of specialised approaches to elements of television and concludes with a description of the work of the British Cultural School, which attempts to integrate many of the other contributions in the work into a single methodology.

For this reason the methods of the individual contributors are described in detail, concluding with the cultural studies approach as outlined by Fiske. Based on this a methodology for the classroom study of television will be proposed and, in the following chapter, a syllabus outlined. (In the following section, unless indicated, page references are to Allen, 1987.)

The first of the methods is that of semiotics, described by Ellen Seiter. In her words;

Semiotics allows us to recognize the conventional and arbitrary relationship of signifier to signified in a whole range of signs that we take for granted in our everyday lives as natural, even necessary. It also allows us to describe the relationships among signs within a single system, such as television. (p.19)

Drawing on the work of Eco (1977) she describes the basic principles of semiotic analysis. Unfortunately this entails learning, what may be for a student, some initially complex terminology.

Eco's work is based, in turn, on that of Charles Peirce (1931-1958) and Ferdinand de Saussure (1974). For Saussure, the smallest unit of meaning is the sign, which he saw as being composed of a signifier and a signified.

Every sign is composed of a signifier, that is, the image, object, or sound itself - the part of the sign which has a material form - and the signified, that is, the concept it represents. (p.18)

Peirce broke the sign into three elements.

These were the representant (roughly equivalent to the signifier), the object (or signified) and the interpretant (the sign we use to translate the first sign). (p.19)

In other words, we need other signs to interpret the first sign. In the case of television we would use our

own words (themselves a sign system) to interpret the images.

Peirce further divided signs into three categories. Symbolic signs occur where the meaning attached to the sign is arbitrary, but through conventional use the connection between the sign and its meaning is established. This category of signs is particularly important for television analysis. Many of the conventional shots of television production, described in Chapter Four, are symbolic. Through repetition, they have become significant for us.

Basic classroom work in the semiotic analysis of television shots would thus focus on the symbolic nature of the conventional shots.

Semiotic analysis of television has as one of its goals making us conscious of the use of symbolic signs on television, so that we realize how much of what appears "naturally" meaningful on TV is actually historical and changeable. (p.21)

The second kind of sign is the iconic sign where the signifier is a direct representation of the signified. Maps and drawings are iconic signs. For instance, the weather chart on television is an iconic sign which we generally take for granted, but have learned to accept as a representation of South Africa. The aim of learning

about iconic signs on television is to make explicit the codes of representation which underlie them.

The third kind of sign is the indexical sign, where there is a direct connection between the signifier and the signified. For, example, the jingle associated with the advertising of Toyota motor cars in this country begins by being symbolic but becomes indexical. The initial connection between the music and the motor car must be established. Through repetition, the music begins to represent the car, to a point where we no longer need the presence of the car itself to know what is being advertised.

Most images produced by cameras belong to the class of "indexical signs" because they require the physical presence of the signified before the camera lens at some time for their production. (p.22)

The distinctions between these three types of signs is not always precise. As Seiter points out (p.23), television "constantly uses all three types of signs".

In addition there are a number of channels which may carry the signs of television. She indicates that television can be divided into five channels; image,

graphics, voice, music, and sound effects.

From a semiotic viewpoint, one of the most important characteristics of television in general (and one that is shared by many other genres) might be its tendency to use all five channels simultaneously, as television commercials typically do.

(p.26)

Consequently there is a high level of redundancy in television. This makes the work of semiotic analysis even more difficult.

In order to further describe the various signs, Seiter introduces several more terms. Firstly, she quotes the idea of Christian Metz (1976) that the shot should be used as the minimum segment for analysis of film. Secondly, the semiotic concepts of paradigmatic and syntagmatic are useful for analysing and grouping the shots of television.

A syntagm is an ordering of signs, a rule-governed combination of signs in sequence. A paradigm is a set of signs that are similar in that they may be substituted for one another according to the rules of combination.

(p.27)

A paradigm would consist of all close-ups in a particular programme, or all the close-ups of a particular character, or even of all television commercials. A syntagm would be a particular sequence of shots or the sequence of a group of commercials.

This further implies that there are generic paradigms. For instance, all the sports programmes on a television channel could be grouped into one paradigm.

Paradigms are thus synchronic, while syntagms tend to be diachronic.

Paradigmatic associations are synchronic: we group signs as though they had no history or temporal order. Syntagmatic relationships tend to be diachronic; they unfold in time, whether it be a matter of seconds or years.

(p.28)

Paradigms and syntagms are fundamental to the way in which television signs are organised. A particular programme has within it a number of paradigmatic and syntagmatic elements, but is itself part of a paradigm of other similar programmes and of a syntagm of an evening's or week's viewing.

An exploration of this brings us to an analysis of the ways in which programmes are similar and why they fill a particular slot in the schedule. This implies a study of genre and scheduling.

Two further terms are useful in semiotic analysis of signs. Barthes (1972) explored the difference between denotation and connotation. Denotation belongs to the first order of signification; where the signifier is what is in front of the camera: the object itself.

Connotation belongs to the second order of signification which attaches a second meaning to the object. To return to the example of the Toyota advertisement used above, the image of the car is denotative but the connotations are of safety and reliability.

It is the connotations of the sign which fix meaning for us. Seiter (p.30) points out; "Barthes argued that connotation is the primary way that the mass media communicate ideological meanings".

Fiske and Hartley (1978, p.41) put it as follows:

When a sign carries cultural meanings rather than merely representational ones, it has moved into the second order of signification.

These second order signs may have connotative levels of meaning which operate together with other ideological codes to gain cultural significance. When a second order sign acquires this cultural meaning, Barthes calls it a "myth". The exploration of cultural myths is another element of the semiological analysis of television as a mass medium.

This concept of the mythical nature of television was discussed in Chapter Six and is more fully explored in Fiske and Hartley (1978) and Barthes (1972, 1968). All of these authors, as well as Seiter, stress the fact that

myths are not static but form part of a diachronic or historical system.

The elements of the semiotic method have been described at some length because they offer us a key to the exploration of television texts and also point the way to analysis of other aspects of the cycle of television production and consumption.

As Seiter (p.32) indicates; "the study of connotation also directs us outside the television text and beyond the discourse of semiotics". It directs us to a study of the producers of television, the receivers of television, and to the context in which broadcasting and viewing takes place.

The essentially narrative nature of television has been described in Chapter Six. Narrative theory offers us a methodology for examining the narratives of television. Kozloff (pp. 42-73) sees the narrative analysis of television as a means of stepping away from the pull of the narrative and examining the nature of the stories on television.

She suggests that narrative theory can help us break every narrative into two parts; the story (what happens to whom), and the discourse (how the story is told), and

in the case of television; schedule (how story and discourse are affected by scheduling).

Stories are events where characters in settings are linked by temporal succession and causality. Stories are not arranged at random. Narrative analysis has revealed that stories follow predictable patterns.

In practice, narrative theorists have discovered that many, if not most, stories fall into predictable, discernable patterns.

(p.47)

Kozloff draws on the work of Vladimir Propp (1970, pp. 19-20), who studied Russian fairy tales and formulated four laws.

1. Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale.
2. The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited.
3. The sequence of functions is always identical; and
4. All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure.

Propp was able to compile a list of thirty one functions occurring in his fairy tales. (For a full list of these see Prinsloo 1991, p.135 and Fiske 1987a, p.134.)

Kozloff (p.49) draws two conclusions about the applicability of Propp's work to television. Firstly, that "American television is remarkably like Russian fairy tales" and secondly, that stories (even on television) are "governed by a set of unwritten rules acquired by all storytellers and receivers, much the same way we all require the basic rules of grammar".

Both Kozloff (1987) and Prinsloo (1991) have practical examples of the use of Propopian functions in the analysis of the elements of the television story.

Of the second major element of the television story; the discourse, Kozloff writes:

Perhaps the key factor in approaching narrative discourse is to comprehend that the story is indeed told. (p.55)

She suggests that literary narratives always have these six participants. REAL AUTHOR, IMPLIED AUTHOR, NARRATOR, NARRATEE, IMPLIED READER, REAL READER.

She points out that there are some difficulties when applying this framework to television. For instance, the question of the real authorship of television programmes is complicated because, even if there a single author, the production is a collaborative effort. Even the

implied author can only be inferred by the audience in a minority of cases.

What is particularly important in television is to investigate the various types of narrators and their on-screen stand-ins, the narratees.

She suggests a typology of six narrators and concludes that;

In short, point of view studies entail looking carefully at the narrators position vis à vis the tale and the consequences of this position to the discourse as a whole.

(p.62)

Another important element of television discourses is that of time. Kozloff quotes the work of Seymour Chatman (1978, p.68) who proposes five possible matches between story and discourse duration.

1. Summary: Discourse-time is shorter than story time.
2. Ellipsis: The same as summary except that discourse-time is zero.
3. Scene: Story-time and discourse-time are equal.
4. Stretch: Discourse-time is longer than story-time.
5. Pause: The same as stretch except that story-time is zero.

She suggests that the purposes of analysing time distortions are to see what lies behind the temporal choices and also to help characterise television narrators.

Finally, Kozloff suggests that an examination of scheduling also forms part of narrative analysis. There are two striking features of scheduling. Firstly, all television narratives form part of the 'metadiscourse' of the station schedule. Secondly, most schedules have to accommodate interruptions; the most common of which is the advertisement break.

This imposes certain restrictions on the structure of the discourses of television. For example, stories have to fit naturally round advertisement breaks and also reach a high point of interest before the break to ensure that the viewers will continue watching. During advertising breaks stories can also move ahead in time (ellipsis).
(See pages 67-68.)

Because of the constant need for material, television also uses a high degree of repetition. This means that many narratives continue from week to week or day to day.

These can be divided into two types:

"Series" refers to those shows whose characters and settings are recycled but whose story and discourse conclude in each individual sitting,....in "serials" both the story and the discourse continue after a day or a week's hiatus. (p.68)

In conclusion, Kozloff offers a list of television narrative's most common traits. It is worth repeating these because they are useful for teaching television narrative.

....one could hazard the following list of television narrative's most common traits: series or serial format; predictable, formulaic storylines; multiple storylines intertwined in complex patterns and frequently interconnecting; individualized, appealing characters fitting into standardized roles; emphasis on the interrelationships between these characters; endings of texts mark a return to the same state of affairs; settings and scenery either very showy or merely functional; substitute narratees; voice over narration, and direct address often employed; most narrators omniscient and reliable; reliance on ellipsis and scene; achronological order to entice (previews) or inform (flashbacks); accommodation of interruptions; lengths cut to fit standardized time slots; and a tendency towards universality, away from topicality. (p.70)

Allen himself reviews reader-oriented criticism. This form of television analysis rests on reader-oriented approaches to literature which "would deprive the text of its power to enforce meaning on the reader and, at the

very least, shift critical attention away from 'the words on the page' to the interaction between reader and textual structure" (p.98). The central preoccupation here is the degree to which the reader of a text is able to produce meaning from the text.

Drawing on the work of Culler (1981) and others, Allen attempts to apply theories which were originally developed for literature. Although the emphasis here is on the reader, Allen does try to put television viewing into a wider context.

Following a discussion of the multiplicity of the theoretical approaches to the reading activity, Allen claims that it is possible to apply to television theories of reading developed for literature. He suggests that television viewing "involves two quite different modes of viewer engagement" (p.90).

The first is the classical Hollywood narrative style, where the viewer sees the action from the viewpoint of the camera and the director cuts from one camera to another.

The second, which Allen calls the rhetorical mode, openly acknowledges the viewer and the person addressing the

viewer (the addresser and the addressee).

The means of presentation, particularly the technological means of presentation, are frequently emphasized rather than hidden.

(p.91)

The rhetorical mode on television also tends to make use of characterised viewers. These are on-screen characters who are directly addressed by the addresser. Thus it is possible to distinguish between the implied addressee (the home viewer) and the characterised addressee (the on-screen surrogate).

Sometimes the distinction between the addresser, the implied addressee, and the characterised addressee, collapses. This is particularly noticeable when television announcers use phrases such as "we did it".

(See page 95.)

Allen concludes by describing the theoretical and methodological conflicts between various reader-oriented critics. He says that the purpose of reader-oriented criticism is to ask questions such as; "What is a text? How is it made to mean? What is the relationship between the world in the text and the world brought to the reading experience by the reader? To what degree is the sense-making capacity of the reader a product of external

forces? In a world without texts determinative of their own meaning, what is the role of the critic?" (p.107).

Although there is no general agreement about the answer to these questions, Allen claims that the relationship between television and its viewers is the ideal area to test them.

He concludes:

The oceanic nature of television programming, its constant references to other texts, the close connections between television and other forms of textual production, all combine to plug any individual act of television viewing into a network of other viewing and other discourses, and to link us as viewers into the larger culture. (p.108)

Jane Feuer reviews genre study of television. For her, genre study deals "with the ways in which a work may be considered to belong to a class of related works" (p.113). She emphasises that the traditional literary approaches to genre have only limited application to film and television. She makes some interesting points about the different ways in which genres are named in literary criticism and in film or television criticism.

Literary criticism, which has been around much longer than either film or television, has described more genres from the theoretical or deductive perspective. Film and television criticism still tend to take their category names from current historical usage. (p.115)

As television studies are newer, the work of naming genres is still developing. Feuer describes, for example, how the term soap opera has been progressively redefined, particularly in relation to the more realistic British soap operas (p.115). Feuer discusses the development of genre theory including a review of the ideas of filmmakers such as Altman. (See pages 116-118.)

She concludes that "approaches to genre might be summarized under three labels - the aesthetic, the ritual, and the ideological approaches".

The aesthetic approach includes all attempts to define genre in terms of a system of conventions that permits artistic expression, especially involving individual authorship...the ritual approach sees genre as an exchange between industry and audience, an exchange through which culture speaks to itself....the ideological approach views genre as an instrument of control.

(p.119)

Feuer then continues with a description of the theories of Grote who takes a literary approach to genre, Newcomb who takes a ritual view, and Marc who represents the aesthetic view. (See Allen, 1987, pages 120-125.)

Preferring, herself, to take a more "synthetic approach", she concludes that genre theory might work better for

film than it does for television.

Television programs do not operate as discrete texts to the same extent as did movies; the property of "flow" blends one program unit into another, and programs are regularly "interrupted" by ads and promos.

(p.131)

She does suggest, however, that genre study has some relevance in the consideration of the ways in which genre combines across genre lines. In addition, although, typical 'vertical consideration' has its limitations, genre study as a whole can be useful in the study of television.

In the following section of Allen's book Mimi White reviews ideological analysis of television. In discussing the example of an advertisement for a cough medicine she concludes:

Ideological criticism is based on the assumption that cultural artifacts - literature, film television, and so forth - are produced in specific historical contexts by and for special social groups; it aims to understand the nature of culture as a form of social expression. Because of this social and historical specificity, artifacts express and promote values, beliefs, and ideas that are pertinent to the contexts in which they are produced, distributed, and received.

(p.136)

In the ensuing discussion she illustrates, though, that Marxist analysis is complicated by a number of difficulties and limitations, particularly if it is based

on some of the earlier historical versions of constituted ideology.

White reviews the development of the theory of ideology from its origins in classical Marxism. She discusses Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Althusser's revision of the base/superstructure model which included the concept that the individual is defined and positioned by a much wider variety of categories than allowed for in earlier versions of ideology (pp.137-141).

She deals too, with the ideas of Stuart Hall who stresses that we are all in ideology and that we cannot describe ideology without using ideological categories and concludes:

In other words, the point of ideological criticism is not to find unadulterated truth or unbridled manipulation "beneath" or "behind" a given text or system of representation, but to understand how a particular system of representation offers us a way of knowing or experiencing the world.

(p.141)

White points out, for example, that many of the conventional shots in television production, which we accept as natural, are systems of representation.

Traditional ideological analysis has concentrated on the economic and institutional analysis of media systems of

television. If, however, we realise that the conventional representations of television are not 'natural' or 'normal', then ideological analysis of the text itself is important.

This more recent ideological criticism is concerned with the ways in which a particular text or group of texts functions as part of ideological practice and offers a system of knowledge or way of experiencing the world for a viewer. (p. 142)

She emphasises that ideological criticism should firstly concentrate on the viewer as a consumer and as a commodity delivered to the advertisers. This leads, in turn, to an analysis of the reasons why people watch television.

In light of this, ideological critics have turned their attention to questions about the nature of the meanings and pleasures television offers through its programs.

(p.146)

This means that it is necessary to analyse individual programmes, groups of programmes and the relation of the viewers to these programmes.

White suggests that narrative analysis provides a useful starting point to explain how narratives naturalise and make sense of their themes.

She writes:

Thus, ideological criticism aims at an explanation of the narrative, visual, and generic strategies that support and sustain the overt values and messages that emerge at first glance. (p.152)

This approach is applicable to many television programmes, not only dramatic narratives.

One of the striking features of television is that a series of programmes may present a range of ideological effects and meanings. In part, this is to accommodate the wide variety of viewers. White emphasises the heterogeneous nature of television and the role of ideological criticism in explaining this.

Ideological analysis allows us to understand the strategies and mechanisms of television that produce these paradoxical and contradictory positions of knowledge within contemporary culture. (p.165)

Sandy Flitterman-Lewis discusses the application of psychoanalytical theory to television. She stresses that television and film are very different media and as a consequence urges caution in applying psychoanalysis to television. In fact the principal part of this chapter (pp.187-195) is devoted to an interesting discussion of the differences between television and film.

Flitterman-Lewis concludes that television viewing is very different from film viewing. She claims that; "both the cinema and television are combined technological and libidinal institutions, creating spectators insistent on perpetual return" (p.204). She also stresses the complexity of the network of ratings, consumption, and economic exchange in television.

There is clearly still a great deal of work to be done in psychological analysis of television but this is not to deny its usefulness. We need to understand the mechanisms in television which promote consumption and pleasure among a wide range of viewers.

And yet psychoanalysis, which provides a way of understanding how the cinema operates, can only provide us with a series of questions where television is concerned. The mechanisms that produce and regulate desire in television are infinitely varied, multitudinous, and complex. The field is open; while an elaborate psychoanalytic model of film spectatorship exists, the work in this area of television remains to be done.

(p.204)

In her description of feminist criticism of television, E. Ann Kaplan points out that there was little feminist work about television in the 1970's. She ascribes this to the fact that in Britain very few women were working in the television industry and that, "fewer women in Britain than America have academic positions that give

them the privilege to write" (p.213). She also suggests that American scholars tend to work more in the social sciences than in the humanities. Following this, she gives an account of the various meanings of the term "feminist" because, "understanding the different kinds of feminist work in allied humanities fields will both explain some of the work that scholars have been doing, and suggest future work we need to begin doing in television" (p.215). What becomes apparent from the discussion is that anyone attempting a feminist criticism of television needs a clear understanding of the term feminist before beginning.

Kaplan suggests that most of the interesting new work in feminist criticism does not simply try to study sex-roles in various programmes. Instead, the entire apparatus of television is the focus of attention. This involves studying the technological features of television, its various texts and the sites of reception. (See p.229.)

Of the study of the technical apparatus Kaplan has this to say:

We need to know how the televisual apparatus is used in any in any one TV genre to represent the female body - to see what possibilities there are for different kinds of female representation, and how bound by the limits of the apparatus are images of women on TV.

(p.233)

She claims that there is often a genderless address on television, but that people of both genders "are able to undertake multiple identifications" (p.235). What this indicates is that it is not always easy to determine whether the male or female discourse is dominant in any text.

She suggests that the focus of feminist criticism should be on the changing relationship of self to image on television.

Television - with its decentred address, its flattening out of things into an endless, unbounded, unframed network or system, the parts of which all rely on each other - is an apparatus urgently requiring more thorough examination, particularly in relation to its impact on women.

(p.248)

The final chapter in Allen (by Fiske), describes the Cultural Studies approach to television analysis. It must be stressed at the outset that this is not simply another approach to the study of television. Cultural studies attempts to integrate and synthesise many of the methodologies which have already been described.

Fiske points out that some basic Marxist assumptions underlie all the British work in cultural studies as well as the assumption that capitalist societies are divided societies.

He continues:

Social relations are understood in terms of social power, in terms of a structure of domination and subordination that is never static but is always the site of contestation and struggle. (p.255)

A further basic assumption which arises from this view of social relations is that culture is inherently ideological. In cultural studies there is not a static view of ideology; it is "a dynamic social practice, constantly in process, constantly reproducing itself" (p.258).

Fiske continues to describe the role of hegemony in the cultural studies approach. Theorists in this field see hegemony as "the process by which a dominant class wins the willing consent of the subordinate classes to a system which ensures their subordination" (p.259). This indicates that hegemony itself is not static but a constant process of struggle.

This definition of culture as a constant site of struggle between those with and those without power underpins the most interesting work in cultural studies.

(p.260)

The cultural studies approach is thus interesting in that it is based on a Marxist view of society (i.e. a 'macro' approach), but combines this with a focus on the meanings

that people make of television (i.e. an ethnographic or receiver-oriented approach). It also includes an examination of the message itself, using semiotic and structuralist analysis as a strategy.

Fiske claims that cultural studies offers two methodological strategies. Firstly, ethnographic analysis would focus on the meanings that the viewers actually make of television programmes. These meanings represent 'texts' which need to be studied.

Secondly, there is semiotic and structural analysis of the texts of television, recognizing that the meanings of these texts are located in the culture of the society which produces them.

Cultural analysis reaches a satisfactory conclusion when the ethnographic studies of the historically and socially located meanings that are made are related to the semiotic analysis of the text.

(p.272)

He illustrates the method with a lengthy analysis of a Madonna video and concludes that the "television text is a potential of meanings" (p.284), and that cultural analysis helps us realise that the television text is a site for struggle over meaning.

Finally, he emphasises that three 'levels' of texts and the relationship between them need to be studied.

Firstly there is the programme itself, seen in the context of the total output of the medium. Secondly there are the texts about television, produced by the television industry and allied agencies. These include studio publicity, television criticism, general articles about television and television fan magazines.

At the third level of texts are the meanings made and circulated by the viewers themselves.

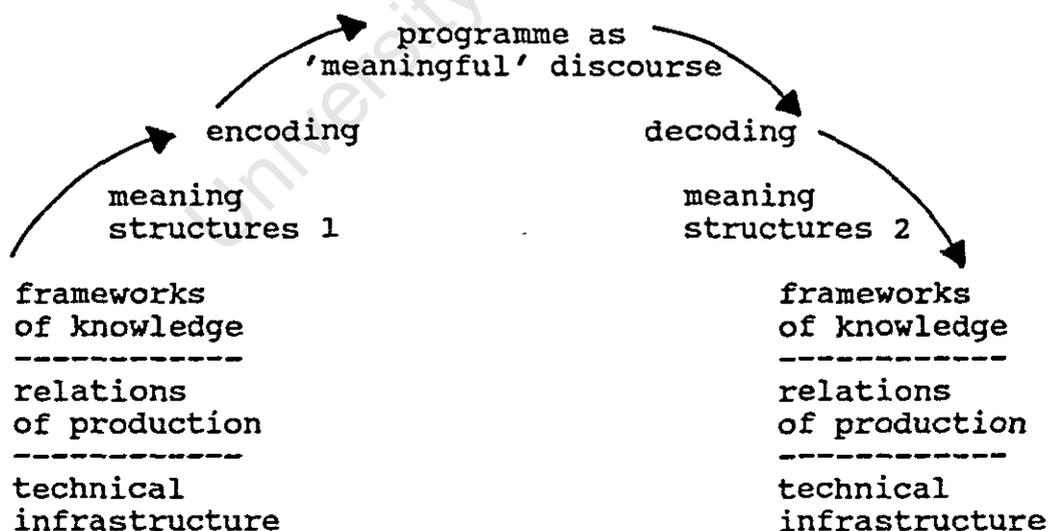
It is thus proposed that the cultural studies approach is the most fruitful for the classroom study of television for the following reasons:

1. The cultural studies approach to television analysis attempts to incorporate into its methodology many of the latest trends in television criticism.
2. Its methodology offers a comprehensive analysis of the many aspects of television described in Chapters Five and Six.
3. It is a flexible methodology, emphasising the study of the different aspects of the television production cycle.

In fact, Stuart Hall was one of the first to stress that analysis of television should focus on the entire television production cycle.

His celebrated article on encoding/decoding (Hall *et al.* 1980), has been used by many television theorists as a framework for analysis. In fact his ideas are a cornerstone of the British Cultural Studies theorists. Hall's ideas are thus extremely important in providing a general framework in which to locate the cultural studies methodology.

He offers the following diagram of the television production cycle:



(Hall *et al.* 1980, p.130)

Hall argues that the 'communication circuit' can be described in terms of three 'moments'.

Firstly there is the encoding phase where the "institutional structures of broadcasting, with their practices and networks of production, their organised relations of production are required to produce a programme" (Hall et al. 1980, p.129).

The second phase is the moment of the text itself. Here the broadcasting structures "must yield encoded messages in the form of a meaningful discourse" (p.130).

The third moment is that of reception where the receiver of the message 'decodes' the text. In Halls' words the text must be "appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded" (p.130).

When applied to television, analysis of the first of these moments would focus on the broadcasting institution itself. This would include a study of the typical practices of production, the organised relations of the television society, the networks of production of television messages, and the material instruments and technical infrastructure in which they are used.

In addition , study of this moment would include the frameworks of knowledge within which the messages are created. These frameworks include historically defined technical skills and professional ideologies, knowledge-

in-use about the routines of production, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions about the institution and the production process, and assumptions about the audience. (See Hall et al. 1980, p.129.)

It is significant that Hall believes that these assumptions are "drawn from other sources and other discursive elements" (p.129). This indicates that the audience themselves have a role in determining assumptions about themselves.

Studying the second moment of the television production cycle means concentrating on the texts of television, from the level of the shot, to programmes, and even a day's or week's programming.

A study of the third moment would explore the audience in television. This would involve firstly, the ideological analysis of television - of the pleasures and meanings that viewers attach to television and the ways in which they experience television. In addition, attention would have to be given to the context in which viewing takes place. In other words, viewing takes place in a technical infrastructure and the audience brings their own frameworks of knowledge and interrelationships to the viewing process.

The contributors to Allen (1987) offer a wide range of methodologies for the study of different aspects of the television production and consumption process. The cultural studies approach attempts to synthesise many of these methods into one where appropriate emphasis is given to the texts of television and to the manner and contexts in which the audience interpret these texts. Finally Hall's article provides us with an appropriate framework within which to order and classify the various activities of a syllabus for teaching about television.

It has been the purpose of this chapter to describe current methods of analysing television and to demonstrate how cultural studies uses many of these methods in an integrated approach to understanding television. As it seems to offer the most comprehensive and syncretic approach to the analysis of the many facets of television described in earlier chapters, it is offered as the method of choice for classroom study of television. The work of the final chapter will be to describe a syllabus using the methods of cultural analysis, located within a framework of Hall's three moments.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A SYLLABUS FOR THE TEACHING OF TELEVISION LITERACY

Overview

This concluding chapter draws together the dissertation in that it integrates the suggested areas of study for the syllabus on television literacy with the methodology offered at the conclusion of the previous chapter. It emphasises the fact that this syllabus should focus on developing television teaching in a local context.

The principal objectives of this thesis are primarily to describe what is really meant by television literacy and ultimately to suggest a syllabus for the teaching of television literacy in the South African classroom.

This has entailed a discussion of the nature of literacy (in Chapter Three), followed by a thorough exploration of the production techniques, codes, forms and conventions of television (in Chapters Four and Five). Chapter Six described the characteristics of television as a mass medium. Chapter Seven was devoted firstly to a description of a variety of approaches to the study of television and, secondly, proposed a particular methodology based on the British Cultural Studies movement within the general framework of Hall's three moments.

This methodology is offered as a framework within which to teach the detailed list of the areas of knowledge for

television literacy described first at the conclusion of Chapter Six.

Despite the fact that a rationale was given for the methodology suggested in the previous chapter, it must also be accepted that no methodology is perfect. It is vital though, to have a methodological approach which enables a systematic, critical and practical study of television to take place.

Furthermore this methodology must also be adaptable; firstly to accommodate the constantly changing nature of television and also to keep pace with the changing context in which television is broadcast in this country.

The way in which media studies is likely to be carried out in the classrooms of this country is bound to be inherently different from the experience elsewhere. This is so for a number of reasons. For a start it is highly unlikely that there will be full courses in media or television literacy for some time in the present educational context. Nor is there likely to be extensive spending in this area. The lack of equipment and the time restraints are thus likely to place severe limits on the nature of the teaching about television in the near future.

Secondly, the nature of the television experience must be unique in this country (as it is in every country), and so, in teaching about television, we must attempt to identify those features of the medium and consequently those activities which are likely to be most pertinent in our particular context.

In addition, we must not lose sight of the fact that the aim is to enable students to become critically literate. The description of television literacy outlined in Chapter Three, emphasised that the most important elements of consists of four elements: understanding the language of television; using this language in another form (i.e. decoding television); being able to use the medium creatively; and finally having the ability to demythologize the television message and to describe the social and cultural context in which it is produced.

At the outset it should be remembered that if students of television are to be creatively involved with the medium they should have a working knowledge of the technical equipment in a television studio and should be able to use that equipment themselves.

Visits to television studios might be useful in helping students learn about the technical apparatus of television production but this is unlikely to be

practicable on a large scale. Ideally, every student should have access to cameras, video recording equipment, a studio in which to film, equipment to edit and process film, and sound recording equipment. In fact, Masterman (1980, p.37) has an extensive list of requirements for a television teaching room.

1. At least one large television set.
2. Two, reel-to-reel videotape recorders.
3. A portable television and pack.
4. Equipment for simple studio work.
5. An acoustic area - carpeted and curtained.
6. Carpeting throughout.
7. Blackout facilities.
8. A 16mm film projector.
9. A screen.
10. A slide projector.
11. A large supply of videotapes and videocassettes.
12. A trolley.
13. A blackboard.
14. Comfortable easy chairs for every pupil.
15. Functional and easily stackable chairs and tables.
16. A large notice board.
17. A good aerial system.
18. A plentiful supply of electric wall plugs.
19. Six cassette tape recorders and as many cassettes as there are pupils in a group.
20. A good reel-to-reel tape recorder.

21. Space for storage.
22. A television resources area including:
 - (a) videotapes
 - (b) sound tapes
 - (c) a library of books about television and also spin offs from television shows
 - (d) boxed material on issues relating to television
 - (e) slides from television programmes.
23. A still camera.
24. Space for movement and flexible seating arrangements.

This extensive list is given not only for information, but also to illustrate a further point. For this kind of equipment to be available there needs to be a commitment to the idea of television literacy, which is unlikely to occur in the present educational climate in South Africa. This will mean that only wealthier schools will be able afford this kind of equipment. The consequences of this will be that television study will become unacceptably elitist and also that, without access to the equipment, students cannot reach the level of critical literacy where they are being actively creative.

This seems an almost insurmountable problem. Fortunately, there do seem to be indications that video cameras, at least, are becoming cheaper. Also an increasing number of families possess television sets.

However, a viable and positive solution to this situation might be to set up television teaching centres which could be shared by a number of schools.

THE SYLLABUS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In developing the syllabus according to the framework suggested at the end of the previous chapter, there are three natural divisions. Firstly there is the moment of the institution, which encodes the message; secondly there is the discursive moment of the message; and thirdly the moment where the viewers decode these messages in a social context.

The focus of this syllabus is not on developing a body of knowledge to be learned by students. In keeping with the thrust of the cultural studies approach, the focus is on decoding the texts of television and on the viewers' own experiences of television. It is impossible in a syllabus to cover all the many varied aspects of the complexities of television. This syllabus thus focusses on the major areas of television study using the methodologies described in the previous chapter. As the syllabus suggests fairly sophisticated analysis of television it is proposed that it should be aimed at senior secondary level.

SECTION 1. THE BROADCASTING INSTITUTION WHICH EVENTUALLY ENCODES THE MESSAGE.

If we are to follow Hall's diagram, we should deal firstly with the technical infrastructure, secondly with the relations of production, and finally with the frameworks of knowledge of the broadcasting institutions which produce television. What is important in this first section is that students should have the necessary background and appreciation of the factors which shape the television programmes.

1.1 THE TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Objective: for the students to become familiar with the equipment used in television production.

It is obviously not possible for students to be up-to-date with the technical aspects of television production, but the purpose would be for students to have a working knowledge of the equipment used.

Strictly speaking, a study of the technical infrastructure should confine itself to the equipment used to produce and reproduce television broadcasts. In practice it is difficult and even artificial to separate the strictly technical aspects of television equipment from the typical techniques and effects that result in

the use of that equipment. Nevertheless, it is important to try to separate the two so that students can grasp the basic technical infrastructure before exploring the texts of television.

1.2 RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

Studying the second moment, the relations of production, raises issues about the financing and ownership of television in South Africa. The general economic base of television was discussed in Chapter Six. However, in a broader context, television is an integral part of the capitalist mode of production.

For Inglis (1990) television forms part of the cultural industries. He says that there are four standard features of these industries:

- * mass production and distribution of commodities
- * capital-intensive technology
- * managerial organization of highly specialized divisions of labour
- * cost effectivity as the criterion of success, i.e. the maximization of profit or, in the production of state culture, competitive victory over rivals. (p.114)

In a capitalist society mass production depends on the successful production and distribution of goods. This is no less true for cultural production in a capitalist society. In the case of television this means that the

survival of the institution depends on the extent to which it can successfully market its programmes to the widest audience possible, an audience which is 'disobedient and fickle' (Inglis 1990, p.119), and for ever seeking novelty.

This means that the most important figure in television, as in all cultural industries, is not the controller of production but the figure who controls distribution. In the case of television this is the programme head or series editor. (See Inglis 1990, p.120.)

This suggests that there are four major areas of study in the relations of production:

1. the organisation of the skills and roles of the personnel in the television institution
2. the organisation and arrangement of programmes around the advertising of consumer goods
3. the general question of organisational profitability
4. the positioning of the institution within a national and international capitalist environment.

The first two of these could be regarded as internal relations of production and the latter two as the external relations of production.

1.2.1 THE INTERNAL RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

Studying the internal relations of production would involve an understanding of the way in which the personnel in a television studio are organised.

Objectives:

1. to become familiar with the roles and skills of the personnel in television.
2. For the students to understand that the consumerist nature of television tends to encourage conformity and discourage individual creativity.
3. to appreciate that television is arranged to accommodate advertising.

Internal relations of production deal with the relative positions and skills of the personnel in the television station and the ways in which they combine to produce programmes for consumption. The importance of those who control distribution has already been mentioned.

In studying the internal relations of production the students should be made aware of the roles of the various personnel in a studio. Firstly, we must remember that individual creativity in a television studio is generally subordinated to institutional needs. On the other hand, there are a number of specific roles that individuals play within the technical infrastructure.

At the end of a programme, and at the end of the evening's viewing there is usually a list of credits. Working from these, it should be possible for students to identify and describe the various jobs done by these individuals.

Beyond this level it is quite difficult to penetrate into the internal relations of production. It is important, though, that in studying them we should not lose sight of the fact that television is an industry generally aimed at producing items for mass consumption. This has the general effect of isolating individuals from their work and producing conformity.

In addition, industrial planning favours homogenised media - classically, in television, series and soap operas which are standardised products, and which make standardised demands upon personnel - rather than products which are different, experimental or cannot be accommodated within conventional production techniques.

(Masterman 1985, p.116)

In this sense the internal relations of production are to a large extent determined by economic considerations.

At this stage, students need a basic understanding of the fact that television is scheduled to accommodate advertising and maximise profit, but they should also examine how the medium promotes consumerism in more covert ways.

As an example of the kind of analysis possible we could consider, one of the most popular TV1 quiz programmes Telefun Quiz. The programme is, naturally, interspersed with conventional advertisement breaks. In fact, the format of the programme directly accommodates these; the breaks between the rounds of questions lend themselves to advertising slots.

In addition to this, the wide range of prizes on offer is mentioned (and shown) repeatedly by brand name. There is also a viewer's competition which offers luxurious prizes. The "question" for this is given towards the end of the programme, but the presenter (Martin Baillie) ensures that viewers continue watching by reminding them of this competition. His direct address to "the audience at home", creates a feeling of intimacy and involvement. Naturally, the prizes are only awarded at the end of a series.

Finally, it could be noted that even the presenter and his assistants are wearing clothes sponsored by various fashion outlets. This has become a feature of television, where even the newsreaders are dressed by clothing stores.

It becomes obvious that the consumerist nature of television is in evidence throughout the programmes and

not just in the advertisements. The principal area of study here would be to analyse programmes in order to identify the overt and covert ways in which consumerism is promoted.

1.2.2 THE EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

Objectives:

1. to examine the general question of the profitability of television institutions.
2. to examine the way that television is positioned in a national and international capitalist environment.

PROFITABILITY AND FUNDING

Here the students need to gain insight into the sources of funding. Besides the license fees there is the income from advertising. Here students need to understand that television depends on advertising. This was discussed at length in Chapter Six. Here students could research details of various advertising costs and, in particular why some programmes are more readily supported by advertisers.

Secondly, students should become aware of the relative costs of producing various programmes. For instance they should appreciate that imported programmes are relatively inexpensive. Also they could examine the ways in which a variety of programmes use sets and settings of varying

cost. A final factor would be a consideration of why some programmes are generally more expensive than others to produce.

The fundamental purpose in discussing the whole question of the general funding of television and the costs involved in producing television programmes, is to emphasise the fact that television depends for its profitability on delivering sufficient numbers of consumers to the advertisers.

THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POSITIONING OF TELEVISION

The purpose of this section is to discover which groups own the television institutions in this country. This is important to underline the fact that television is a capitalist undertaking.

For example, Harber (1991) claims that large sections of the media are controlled by three groups: "mining capital, the state and supporters of the National Party". In addition, the SABC enjoys "independent" status, but it is funded by public money. Finally the Argus Group controls the distribution of rival newspapers as well as many smaller independent publications. This same group has a large stake in M-Net.

Considerations such as these should lead the students to determine exactly who controls television in South Africa. A suggested activity here would be for the students to collect information published in newspapers and financial journals about the controlling bodies of television companies.

On an international level, Inglis (1990, pp.127-131), argues that the technological developments of cable television, direct broadcasting by satellite (DBS), and video have intensified the competition and distribution of programmes.

This has led to a concentration of distribution, in particular, in the hands of large multinational companies. However the expense of the new systems demands more viewing time to make them profitable. If this happens successfully, the result will be the destruction of national broadcasting institutions, which has serious economic and cultural implications.

Control over television will be removed from the grasp of the public.

Public service broadcasting belongs to the public: the public is the historical agent which should do all it can to retrieve its own best property for itself.

(Inglis 1990, p 131)

It is in this context that we should view the development of new television channels such as Contemporary Community Values Television (CCV-TV). If the channel is supposed to represent contemporary community values, then it is permissible to ask whose values are being represented and also who has made the decision that these values are those of the viewing audience.

This suggests that an important issue here would be an exploration of the ways in which television can be made more accessible to the public. This is particularly important in this country in the light of the current proposals of the Viljoen Task Force on Broadcasting. One of these is the establishment of a broadcasting institution "free of political or government control" (TV1 news 27 August 1991).

On the other hand, there obviously must be some controlling body which would have to ensure that the broadcasting institution was profitable. The danger is that economic considerations may well put the institution in the hands of the multinational distributors. In other words, the imperative might be to broaden the economic base of television rather than attempting to appeal to a wider range of local cultures.

1.3. THE FRAMEWORKS OF KNOWLEDGE

Studying the frameworks of knowledge involves an examination of the conventional ideas which shape, organise and create the messages of television. There are many factors which influence the frameworks of knowledge.

Firstly, there are the social and cultural influences from the society in which television operates. Secondly, there are the institutional frameworks of knowledge and thirdly, the perceptions and cultural leanings which the viewers themselves bring to the interpretation of television. The first two of these are of concern in this section.

In South Africa we have inherited the frameworks of knowledge of the overseas, generally English-language, networks on which our television is based, but there are also unique historical and social conditions which have determined the way in which television has developed locally.

The second major area of influence of the frameworks of knowledge occurs within the broadcasting institution itself. Firstly, the frameworks of perceptions among media personnel produce television in the conventional forms. Secondly, it is the way that media personnel

perceive television that determines the general characteristics that it shares with other mass media.

1.3.1 THE EXTERNAL FRAMEWORKS OF KNOWLEDGE

Objectives:

1. For the student to gain insight into the historical forces which controlled the inception of television.
2. For the student to gain insight into the many groups which currently have influence over the content and form of television in South Africa.

Some of the relevant issues here are: the reasons for the late introduction of television in this country; the forces which controlled its inception and development; and the reasons for the initial decision to broadcast in the two-language format.

Many of the ideological constraints which are part of South African broadcasting in general and which controlled the early days of television are described in Tomaselli et al. (1989).

What emerges from this discussion is that it is indisputable that SATV has been under government influence. What is also important is that there are

other frameworks of knowledge which are playing increasing roles in the media in this country.

The point is that whatever group has the control of the media must also have its own frameworks of knowledge which must directly influence what is published or broadcast.

It is important then, for purposes of the study of the external frameworks of knowledge in television to attempt to identify which groups have the controlling interest in the broadcast institution and in what ways these frameworks influence the content of television programmes. In addition, many public statements are issued, by a wide variety of groups about the control and content of broadcasting channels.

These groups would typically be representatives of the television organisation itself, government, political figures and groupings, the church, and even private individuals. A collection of cuttings of their statements would provide a springboard for discussion about ways in which television is controlled, as well as promoting an understanding of the external frameworks of knowledge which influence television.

There are continuing debates about the future of broadcasting in South Africa and some manoeuvring over issues of future control. For instance, it has been suggested that one of the reasons for the privatisation of the SABC might be to prevent its falling into the hands of a future ANC government (Gevisser 1991).

1.3.2 THE INTERNAL FRAMEWORKS OF KNOWLEDGE

Objective: to gain insight into the way in which the frameworks of knowledge of media personnel influence the content and form of television.

It is difficult to separate this area from a discussion of the encoding of the text. For obvious reasons, the practices and perceptions of media personnel are not readily accessible.

Students could invite media professionals to talk to them or read and discuss professional media practices.

However, it is really in examining the encoding of the text that students will gain insight into the ways in which the perceptions of media personnel frame television texts. This is covered in the following section.

SECTION 2. THE DISCURSIVE MOMENT-THE TEXTS OF TELEVISION

Objectives:

1. to examine and describe the conventional codes of television.
2. to analyse the ways in which the programmes of television are organised, scheduled and interrelated.

In order to achieve these objectives it is proposed that students should firstly undertake some preliminary activities to familiarise them with the basic production techniques, then secondly they should begin analysing the texts of television and finally examine the ways in which television programmes are typically composed and organised.

2.1 PRELIMINARY WORK.

Quite a lot of classroom work can be done to teach the ways in which images are encoded. Masterman (1985, p.146) suggests how ordinary still photographs can be used. They can be sequenced to produce a particular narrative. Selection from a range of photographs can be made to fit a theme. Photographs can be arranged to create a particular mood. They can be combined with text to produce varying interpretations of the images. In addition, photographs can be cropped and various aspects of the larger shot can be framed to emphasise various elements.

Both Masterman (1985) and Inglis (1990) suggest that working with ordinary cameras can be a valuable method of familiarising students with the technical aspects of cameras. Taking ordinary photographs can help students to understand concepts such as; framing, content, exposure and light, sequence, context, cropping, angles, and selection. Inglis (1990) even suggests using broken cameras to teach the students the concepts of framing and selection when taking photographs.

Inglis also suggests that studying old photographs can help students to understand the social significance of photographs and their context. They can also be sequenced, cropped and matched with dialogue or comments created by students. This helps to teach the important role of text in modifying the meaning of the camera image. This introduces the importance of the text in modifying the interpretation of the images.

These activities with still cameras are relevant and creative but they cannot teach the full range of television production codes. Beyond this level, students need to become familiar with the various technical events and effects which are unique to television. For instance, they cannot learn about panning and zooming from using ordinary cameras. They can learn these from working with video cameras, but at a simpler level they

can watch videos of programmes and identify and discuss particular technical events.

Van Zyl (1987, p.72) suggests exercises listing and timing shots and comparing the lengths of shots in various types of programmes.

At the end of this stage students should have mastered the vocabulary of production and the typical conventional effects discussed at length in Chapter Four.

The next stage involves consolidation of the work in this section. Here students would begin to analyse the texts of television using the methodologies described in Chapter Seven. It is here that we begin with the textual analysis of television.

Fiske (1987a, p.16) highlights the areas of study for the textual analysis of television.

A textual study of television, then, involves three foci: the formal qualities of television programs and their flow: the intertextual relations of television within itself, with other media, and with conversation; and the study of socially situated readers and the process of reading.

This points the way to the development of the rest of the syllabus.

2.2 THE SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF TELEVISION CODES

Objective: to analyse the shots of television and describe how these are typically encoded and combined

This entails looking at television itself and identifying the symbolic nature of the shots. The primary objective is to reveal the constructed nature of television; that what appears as a 'seamless flow' is an artificial construction.

The focus here is beginning with the shots of television and then looking at the way in which they are combined into the various codes which are in operation. This means employing the vocabulary and tools of semiotic analysis.

Fiske (1987a) says this of codes

A code is a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meanings in and for that culture. (p.4)

This means looking at the signs of television and trying firstly to identify whether they are symbolic, iconic or indexical. Students would have to consider the many channels of television which simultaneously carry signs

and understand why there is a high level of redundancy on television.

Students should give attention to the ways in which these signs are organised; their paradigmatic and syntagmatic elements. The purpose of this is to examine the ways in which television shots are organised so that they can learn about the constructed nature of the shots and also to recognise which shots are typically used to signify particular effects.

A further reason to look at the ways in which shots are typically organised is to provide a foundation for the later concepts of scheduling and similarity between types of programmes.

Here the semiotic concepts of the denotation and connotation of the signs must be introduced. Students need to explore what meanings are attached to the signs of television. This will also lead into a discussion of myth on television.

Fiske (1987a, pp.4-13) has an extended example of how semiotic analysis might be applied to a single television programme. Similarly Fiske and Hartley (1978, pp. 55-58) provide an analysis of a syntagm of five shots from one television programme. In addition, Van Zyl (1987,

Chapter 5) has a short, but succinct, account of iconic, indexical and symbolic signs together with some basic exercises in this area.

2.3 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Objective: to examine the ways in which the segments of television are organised and how the programmes of television use typically narrative forms.

2.3.1 SCHEDULING AND FLOW

Chapter Five described in detail how the codes of television are organised into small segments, with typically narrative forms.

Firstly, students need to make a study at this stage of the flow and segmentation of television. To some extent it is the frameworks of knowledge of the broadcasters which determine the whole of the week's scheduling and classification of programmes. In addition, economic determinants play a large part in the scheduling of programmes. So there is a complex balancing between scheduling according to the frameworks of perceptions, and scheduling according to the economic determinants.

Students need to view television programmes in order to identify the segments. They need to realise that television typically occurs in small discrete sequences,

after which there is a change of scene or an interruption. Each programme on television is made up of a number of these segments.

The codes of television are combined into segments which are then woven together into the 'flow' of television programmes which are in turn scheduled into a week's viewing. As students gain insight into this process they should begin to appreciate that television is repetitive and that programmes are organised across intertextual lines. This leads directly to a consideration of the ways in which the programmes of television are typically organised and consequently into a consideration of how the elements of different types of programmes are arranged. This implies firstly, a study of the narratives of television, and secondly, of genre.

2.3.2 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The point has already been made (in Chapter Five) that narrative forms predominate on television. The purpose of narrative analysis is to discover the ways in which narratives are typically organised into a particular sequence.

Structuralism and its developments are concerned to reveal and investigate the discursive nature of all cultural constructs, so structuralist theories of narrative have sought to explain the laws that govern its structure, not the accuracy of its representation of the real.

(Fiske 1987a p.131)

Following Kozloff's suggested approach, as discussed in the previous chapter, the study of this section would fall into three parts:

Firstly, students would look at the events and characters of the stories of television, secondly at how the stories are told and thirdly at how scheduling affects the stories.

THE EVENTS AND CHARACTERS OF TELEVISION NARRATIVES

An excellent general starting point would be Kozloff's list of the most common traits of television narrative quoted in the last chapter. The general aim is to realise that television fiction and non-fiction is arranged in formulaic, narrative patterns.

1. The Story

In this section it is suggested that students use the elements of Proppian analysis of narrative to examine the stories of television. Isolating the various elements and perceiving how they are sequenced, will illustrate how the narratives of television are constructed.

2. The Characters

This will naturally lead to a discussion of the characters of television stories. In examining

television programmes students will realise that they are primarily concerned with people.

Television is centrally concerned with the representation of people - its most typical image is a mid-shot or close up of someone talking or reacting.

(Fiske 1987a, p.149)

Fiske has an extensive discussion (Chapter 9) of characters on television. Because television focusses on characters they become larger than life.

The constant repetition of a character means that characters "live" in similar time scales to their audiences. They have a past, a present, and a future that appear to exceed their textual existence, so that audience members are invited to relate to them in terms of familiarity and identification.

(Fiske 1987a, p.150)

One of the areas which students could profitably explore here is the way in which television characters blur the distinction between reality and fiction.

For instance, Larry Hagman, who played JR Ewing in Dallas was not simply the character on the screen. Off screen he dressed the part and was widely recognisable. In this way characters not only promote the programmes in which they appear, but are also able to exploit their screen personae for personal profit.

In a local context, Marie Pentz is able to use the authoritativeness of her screen performance in Koöperasie Stories to advertise fabric softener.

Of course, characters who exploit this blurring between fact and fiction are not confined to those in fiction series. News readers such as John Bishop and Ellen Erasmus are household names and are able to exploit their celebrity status in other fields. Their role ensures that they are seen as people of integrity and sources of reliable opinion.

Of course, once the students begin to analyse character it is very difficult to separate this from their own responses to the characters of television. This would fall more readily into audience responses to television, which is the purpose of the final section.

THE NARRATORS OF TELEVISION

The starting point here would be to use Kozloff's (1987, p.60) typology of narrators, to examine the roles of the narrators in television. A particular feature of television emphasised by Fiske (1987a) and discussed in Chapter Five, is that it often directly addresses the audience and involves them in an intimate relationship.

TIME

Time is the next element in examining the narratives of television. This involves firstly a consideration of the match between time and discourse using Chatman's (1978) typology. (See Chapter Seven.)

Secondly, students need to examine the way in which television is typically arranged in short time segments in order to accommodate advertisements and the effect that this has on the narrative.

For a start the fact that programmes must be interrupted by advertisements places constraints on the way in which the programmes are made. Thus many narratives reach a climax before an advertisement break. In the case of other programmes, it may mean that the programme is neatly compartmentalised. For instance an analysis of a typical SABC-TV1 television news broadcast at 8 p.m. shows that "hard news", international and local, is followed by an advertisement break, before the local interest and general and human interest stories. A further advertising break will separate this section from sports news. There is another break before the weather.

A further element of time in the narratives of television programming is repetition. In other words the narratives of television continue in time from week to week.

Masterman (1985, p.175) stresses the importance of routinely considering the texts of the mass media as narratives and offers some practical classroom activities related to television.

Beyond this, students need to gain insight into the way in which programmes are scheduled. As a starting point they could examine a schedule of weekly programmes and discuss the reasons why certain programmes occur at specific times. Beyond this they could be involved in simulation exercises where they linked potential audiences with particular programmes and then scheduled these at times when they were most likely to be seen by that audience. Coupled to this could be the choice of suitable advertisements for the viewers at those times.

What must be emphasised is that television typically uses narrative forms across a wide range of programmes. The news, sports programmes, documentaries, and game shows can all be regarded as structured narratives.

Of further importance is that television has an enormous need for material and consequently uses a great deal of repetition. This is the appropriate time for the introduction of the concepts of series and serial and the analysis of these. Students need to look at typical

series and serials and the ways in which they are the same and different.

What should emerge from this is that narratives are organised according to rules and that many, if not most, television programmes are organised according to these rules.

2.4 GENRES

Objective: to study the generic forms of television

What should emerge directly from the previous section is that the signs of television are organised according to narrative rules and that these narratives fall into various categories. Chapter Six defined genre and pointed out that genres must be studied insofar as they relate to other programmes of the same kind, and in the ways that they represent culture.

If we follow Feuer's taxonomy of generic conventions, students need firstly to examine the narratives of television and attempt to classify them into different genres according to the way in which they are composed.

It is not possible to discuss all of the genres of television but students should examine a wide variety of different genres on television and attempt to elucidate

the characteristics of different genres. These would include sit-coms, soap operas, cop-shows, sports programmes, the news, drama, and game shows.

Secondly students need to examine how different genres are structured to appeal to different audiences and to invite different reading relations.

Put simply, different programs are designed (usually fairly successfully) to attract different audiences

(Fiske 1987a, p.179)

One of the typical ways in which genres appeal to audiences is to categorise them into masculine and feminine subjects. Fiske (1987a) explores this subject at length (Chapters 10 and 11)

Fiske (1987a) maintains that soap opera is a "gender specific narrative". He quotes Brown's (1987) list of "eight generic characteristics of soap operas" (p.215). These are useful in teaching about soap operas in general and, more specifically, about the differences in masculine and feminine narratives.

The eight characteristics are:

1. Soap operas not only lack narrative closure, but appear to actively avoid it.
2. Soap operas emphasise the process of problem solving, intimate conversation and the feelings that people undergo.

3. Soap operas have multiple characters and plots.
4. Soap operas make the correspondence between their time and real time as close as possible.
5. Segmentation is more pronounced in soap operas.
- 6 and 7. In soap operas major male characters are often sensitive men and major female characters tend to be professionals.
8. In soap operas the setting is home or a place which functions as home, a place where people meet, talk, and are established in their relationships.

Fiske contrasts these characteristics with those typically found in typically masculine programmes. Obviously this could provide a wealth of opportunities for discussion about the degree to which various programmes match these characteristics. Of greater importance are the responses (or reading strategies to use Fiske's term), of the students themselves to the various genres.

The crucial differences between cop adventure shows and soap operas are not to be found in their textual conventions, but rather in the reading relations they invite. Feminine genres, because they articulate the concerns of a gender whose interests are denied by the dominant ideology, must, if they are to be popular, be open enough to admit of a variety of oppositional, or, at least, resistive readings. The genre, then, has fewer attempts at closure or at centering the reading subject. Masculine genres, on the other hand, speak to audiences who are positioned quite differently to the dominant ideology, and whose reading strategy is more likely to be one of negotiation by which they seek to accommodate their social differences with patriarchy, rather than one of resistance.

(Fiske 1987a, p.222)

It is important that students should be aware of the hegemonic force of gender-specific narratives on television and of their own responses to these narratives.

Fiske further claims that differences in gender reflect the capitalist nature of television.

There are important differences in the social meanings of masculinity and femininity in capitalism, and it is not surprising that these differences are transposed into textual differences between genres.

(1987a, p.222)

Television reflects gender roles and the social relations of individuals in capitalism. However, it is not simply a case of simple correspondence. Television is forced to accommodate and adjust to changing social relations in society, because it must appeal to as diverse an audience as possible.

Thus, although there are marked differences between masculine and feminine genres they both allow for a diversity of readings to address a wide audience.

On a more general note, generic analysis could be applied to television news as well. Although news is often treated as different from the rest of television it is simply another genre, with strong narrative form.

Fiske (1987a, p.281) claims that "news is a high-status genre", and continues to point out that, despite its claimed objectivity and factuality, it is an expensive commodity which has to attract as many viewers as possible. Thus, although it attempts to control meanings, the news is forced to be multi-vocal.

Bertelsen (1991) has the following to say about news:

So: news is simply another TV genre, a linked set of repetitive , entertaining stories involving intrigue, violence, romance and revenge, in which a small cast of well-known characters go through the motions night after night. (p.177)

She continues to outline a useful approach to news analysis (pp.175-183).

Television uses categorisation and a dramatic narrative structure to attempt to contain the potentially disruptive elements of the news. In addition, there is strict control of those voices which have access to television news. Only those voices which are acceptable or suitably organised into social roles are allowed to speak.

News controls the multivocality of the real by narrative structure and a careful selection of which voices are accessed.

(Fiske 1987a, p.295)

In its attempts at control and closure the news, is a typically masculine genre. In fact it has been described as the male soap opera. Because news tries to control the many competing voices in society, and at the same time needs to maintain a dramatic narrative structure, the distinction between fact and fiction becomes blurred.

For all its attempts to impose a masculine closure and sense of achievement, the news shares many characteristics with such drama as soap opera - lack of final closure, multiplicity of plots and characters, repetition and familiarity.

(Fiske 1987a, p.308)

The news thus provides a fascinating study in itself. Students could study the narrative structure, the dramatic nature of the news, the masculine ethos and the way in which fact and fiction become blurred. Hartley (1982) presents a most useful account of semiotic analysis of news, together with numerous practical exercises.

In learning about the nature of genre in television and the ways in which it constructs meaning for the viewers, students are inevitably led into a consideration of their own response to the narratives, characters and generic conventions of television.

SECTION THREE: THE AUDIENCE

Objectives:

1. for the students to examine their own to explore the viewing situations
2. for the students to articulate their own responses to television

The previous section concentrated on decoding the texts of television, using the theoretical strategies outlined in Chapter Seven. In analysing programmes, students would naturally voice their own responses and feelings about television. The focus of this section is on the responses of the students themselves to the programmes of television. The aims of the previous sections have been directed at assisting students to gain the cultural competencies to understand some of the complexities of television. This final section concentrates on the variety of pleasures and meanings which the viewers make of television.

It is not proposed in this section that students should have to consider the theoretical aspects of ideology, psychological analysis, readership theory, or of feminist analysis of television. However, a brief reconsideration of all these approaches reveals that the emphasis in each case is on examining the texts of television and the viewers' responses to them.

In order for this to be carried out in a structured way it is proposed that two general frameworks should be used. Firstly the principles underlying the research into family television, carried out by Morley (1986) are extremely useful. He interviewed families in their own homes and investigated four aspects of television viewing: the uses to which television sets were put; the patterns of response and 'commitment' to particular types of programming; the dynamics of television use within the family; the relations between television watching and other dimensions of family life. (See Morley 1986, p.50.)

Secondly the students need to articulate their own responses to television, with particular regard to the pleasures and meanings that they find in viewing. It is hoped that the knowledge and skills gained in the first two sections will provide them with some of the tools for analysing television and enable them to talk in an informed way.

This is not to deny the importance of a study of the institution which encodes television, or of the usefulness of textual analysis. It is an attempt to underline the importance of the viewer in the television production cycle. This is in keeping with the most

recent trends in the cultural studies analysis of television.

3.1.1 THE USES OF THE TELEVISION EQUIPMENT.

Following Morley's lead students could firstly survey what equipment is to be found in the home and how it is used. Questions that could be considered here are: the positioning of the television in the home, the size and age of the television set, whether or not the viewer/family possesses a video recorder and video camera. It is also important to know whether the viewing group has access to other channels such as M-Net and the spare transmitter service of the SABC, whether the viewing group hires/watches videos, and the expenditure on television equipment and other related products such as video recorders and cameras.

A practical activity here would be for the students to draw up suitable questionnaires and carry out surveys among themselves and their families about the ways in which they use television and how much they spend on it. Processing and discussing the results of the surveys would help to make the students aware of the technical infrastructure in which they and others view television.

3.1.2 VIEWING HABITS

A second practical activity which would assist students to appreciate their own and others viewing patterns would be for them to keep a log of their viewing patterns over a period. In addition they could, they could keep a record of who controls the television viewing, who changes channels and switches on and off and so forth. The results of these observations could be discussed among the students.

Yet another area, which would be interesting to record and discuss, is the typical activities which students engage in while watching television.

3.2 ARTICULATING RESPONSES TO TELEVISION

Throughout Chapter Six it was stressed that the audience of television is an active one, bringing its own discourses to the viewing of television. Television is a powerful hegemonic force but it needs to produce a multiplicity of meanings because of its imperative to cater for the needs of a heterogeneous audience.

While the viewers are not entirely free to produce their own meanings there is a struggle over meaning. Morley (1986), Masterman (1985), Hall (1982) and Fiske (1987a) all stress the importance of the relative power of the viewers to make their own meanings of television.

This emphasis on active, socially constituted viewers, is of particular importance in the South African context. Individual viewers belong to a wide diversity of cultural and ethnic sub-groups. Thus the purpose of this final section is for students to articulate their responses to South African television.

They need to talk about their own responses to the conventions, codes, myths, narratives, genres and representations of television.

Bertelsen (1991a, p.19) writes:

We live in a situation where the most commonplace daily events bear witness (in the most obvious and "manifest" forms) to the contested process in which social meanings are produced, as different genders, classes, and ethnic and political groupings struggle to fix the ways in which reality may be signified.

This suggests a rich area of study in the syllabus where students are able to focus on representations of a certain type across a range of programmes. For instance it is possible to make a study of the ways in which age, or childhood, or the family, are typically represented in certain types of programmes and in television in general.

Students could find topics which interested them and study them across a range of programmes within a certain viewing period. Another approach would be for students

to select only a particular type of programme, such the soap opera, or advertisements, and examine representations of a particular kind. For instance a student who was interested in representations of women in advertisements could make a study of this and produce written, dramatic and visual material on the topic.

Within this context it becomes possible to understand the varying responses of pleasure as well. Those students who are comfortable within the dominant ideology will find pleasure which conforms more closely to the frameworks of knowledge underlying the programme. In Fiske's inimitable phrase, "this is pleasure acting as the motor of hegemony" (1987a, p.234).

For those students uncomfortable within the dominant ideology, an important element of pleasure would be resistance to the frameworks of knowledge shaping the programme.

Above all, students should talk about television. The analytic tools provided by the other sections of the syllabus should enable them to talk in an informed and insightful manner.

Conclusion

This dissertation, as a whole, has had four major objectives which are directly based on the hypotheses of the first chapter:

1. To describe the nature of print and television literacy.
2. To describe the nature of television itself.
3. To offer a methodology for the teaching of television literacy.
4. To suggest a syllabus for teaching about television.

In addition, it must be emphasised that there has been a strong focus throughout this last chapter on the students' own experiences of television. This ethnographic approach has become a more recent feature of the cultural studies approach and is in keeping with the principle that the students should use their own lived, experiences to become critically literate.

The dissertation has revealed that television is a distinctive medium which demands a specialised approach by an informed and dedicated teacher. In a rapidly changing social climate in South Africa there is every indication that there will be a battle for control of the media. Whatever the outcome of that struggle, the fact remains that television is the single most important mass

medium. In this context, education for critical television literacy is education for democracy.

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