
EDITORIAL



Hullo Television Studies, Bye-Bye Television?

Toby Miller

I take the field of television studies to encompass production and audience ethnography, policy advocacy, political economy, cultural history, and textual analysis. Television studies borrows from and contributes to media studies, mass communication, critical race theory, communication studies, media sociology, critical legal studies, queer theory, science and technology studies, cultural studies, feminist theory, and Marxism. These intersections with other areas are not always easily negotiated.

Within television studies itself, there are clear differences of method. But television studies' abiding preoccupation is to question power and subjectivity in terms of access to the means of communication and representation. This questioning recurs across sites, albeit with due regard to the specificity of different media and their social uptake—the occasionality of culture. Those emergent forms we currently call “new media” evidence many of the same discourses: concerns with soap-opera audiences, or broadcast ownership and control, have been transferred to e-mail discussions and domain names.

The intellectual genealogy of television studies is formidable. Consider the emergence of encoding/decoding from Umberto Eco's 1965 consultancy for RAI (Eco 1972) and Harold Garfinkel's 1967 critique of the “cultural dope” paradigm (Garfinkel 1992). A brief glance back at the foundational work of television studies, and books by Raymond Williams (1962, 1974), Herbert I. Schiller (1969), Armand Mattelart (1976), Horace Newcomb (1974, 1976), G. Cesareo (1974), Ed Buscombe (1975), James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Woollacott (1977), John Fiske and John Hartley (1978), Manuel Alvarado and Ed Buscombe (1978), Richard Dyer et al.



TELEVISION & NEW MEDIA
Vol. 1 No. 1, February 2000 3–8
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(1980), L. R. Beltran and E. Fox (1980), David Morley (1980), Tony Bennett et al. (1981), E. Ann Kaplan (1983), and Robert C. Allen (1985), clarifies that the field emerged from a need to address monopoly capital, cultural imperialism, conditions of production, textual meaning, gendered aesthetic hierarchies, audience interpretation, and pleasure. In other words, television studies has been at once both scholarly and committed.

The field has shown immense development in the past few years, marked by such breakthroughs as *Enlightened Racism* (Jhally and Lewis 1992); *Gender, Race and Class in the Media* (Dines and Humez 1995); *Encyclopedia of Television* (Newcomb 1997); *Feminist Television Criticism* (Brunsdon, D'Acci, and Spigel 1997); *TV Without Borders* (Goonasekera and Lee 1998); *Copycat TV* (Moran 1998); *International History of Television* (Smith 1998); *Good Times, Bad Times* (O'Donnell 1999); and *Television, History, and American Culture* (Haralovich and Rabinovitz 1999), along with events like Console-ing Passions and the once-and-perhaps-future International Television Studies Conference, not to mention sessions at the array of scholarly professional bodies where academia mavens line up to be seen and heard.¹

This success is a matter of due pride and recognition, and I hope *Television & New Media* (TVNM) will help to maintain and develop the field. But there are severe lacunae. I have excluded psychological effects studies and neoclassical economic models from this genealogy. But I think we need to enter the lists on these topics as well. The psy-complexes are clearly dominant in public discourse on the media, as measured by academic funding, policy anxiety, moral panics, and everyday meta-discourse. The psy-complexes pose such hardy perennials as, Does television rot your brain/educate you/make men violent/incite sexual desire? With the "new media," identical concerns have emerged—same discourse, different object. On the economic side, media policy is dominated by neoliberalism, in contest with national culture (the latter running a distant second on most occasions). And this matters. Cross-sectoral ownership, antiunion activity, control of distribution, hidden public subsidies, the rhetoric of technological determinism, and the new international division of cultural labor are achieved under the sign of economists, business journalists, corporate lobbyists, and agents of the state. TVNM invites work that addresses this hegemony, via a critical engagement with the analytic, financial, and governmental power of the psy-complexes and neoliberalism, in search of counterdiscourses. Such work can draw on what I see as the strengths of our field: close reading, ethnography, historicization, and political economy.

Of course, there have been noble attempts of this sort already. Bob Hodge and David Tripp's *Children and Television* (1986), Richard Maxwell's *The Spectacle of Democracy* (1995), Thomas Streeter's *Selling the Air* (1996), Stuart Cunningham and Elizabeth Jacka's *Australian Television and International*

Mediascapes (1996), and David Buckingham et al.'s *Children's Television in Britain* (1999) are important works that engage the twin monsters of knowing TV. But they have not received sufficient follow-up or prominence.

We are also faced with the claim that television has had its day, that the web is the future. That may be. But I suspect it will involve a transformation of television rather than its displacement. TV started in most countries as a broadcast, national medium dominated by the state. It was transformed into a cable and satellite, international medium dominated by commerce, but was still called "television." A TV-like screen, located in domestic and other spaces and transmitting signs from other places, will be the future. It may even be that *television* as a word comes to take over what we now call "new media." So there is intellectual and political value in using the knowledge gained from television studies to assess this transformation and intervene in it. Examples of such scholarship already on the books include volumes from Steven G. Jones (1998), Kevin Robins and Frank Webster (1999), and Wendy Harcourt (1999).

Why *TVNM*? There is no specialist television journal, apart from industry magazines. Existing academic journals that cover it are mostly omnibus communications, media, or cultural studies outlets.² Omnibus publications have limited space for television, given the competing demands of newspapers, magazines, radio, cinema, telecommunications, and the web. So, this is one difference between us and other serials. Second, *TVNM* is indebted to a different intellectual heritage, and to a political commitment.

TVNM covers several bases. The bulk of each issue will be an In Focus segment composed of full-length articles that can be grouped loosely together. Two further sections are designed for rapid responses to new policy, textual, and other matters (Editorial and Prime Time), and there will be a Book Review section. We are also interested in theme issues.

Here is a shopping list of subject matter for the journal: the past, present, and future of studying TV; digitalization; the new international division of cultural labor; political and economic sovereignty; active audiences; cable and satellite issues; language; religion; pedagogy; pornography; privacy; free speech; supply-and-demand web pricing; textual analysis; program history; public broadcasting; neoclassical economics and political economy; globalization; cybertarianism; violence; convergence between web and television ownership; ethnography; hacking; the psy-complexes; and social categories of race, indigeneity, diaspora, gender, class, age, sexuality, disability, region, and nation. The journal will be international in scope, in keeping with the global nature of much media output. It is edited from the apparent academic behemoth of the United States, but that does not signify a limitation on topics or authors.

In summary, television studies is alive, television is alive, television is changing, and so can we. I hope this will be a good place for contest and collaboration. It is up to us and other activists and teachers to make the means of televisualization more democratic and more accessible. In keeping with that project, this will be a journal of tendency.

Notes

1. I am thinking here of the International Association for Mass Communication Research; the International Communication Association; the Society for Cinema Studies; the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication; Screen Studies; the National Communication Association; the Canadian Communication Association; the Association for Media, Communication, and Cultural Studies; the American Communication Association; the International Association for Media History; the Society for Visual Anthropology; the Broadcast Education Association; and the International Visual Sociology Association.

2. My list of English-language journals reads like this: *Journal of Communication*; *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*; *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*; *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*; *Gazette*; *Cultural Studies*; *Journal of Radio Studies*; *Journal of Communication Inquiry*; *Journal of Popular Film and Television*; *Media, Culture & Society*; *European Journal of Communication*; *camera obscura*; *Canadian Journal of Communication*; *Convergence*; *Continuum*; *International Journal of Cultural Studies*; *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television*; *European Journal of Cultural Studies*; *Asian Journal of Communication*; *Quarterly Review of Film, Television, and Video*; *New Media & Society*; *Mass Communication Review*; *Feminist Media Studies*; *Media International Australia*; *Visual Anthropology*; *Visual Anthropology Review*; *Media Studies Journal*; *Resaux: The French Journal of Communication*; *Media History*; *Howard Journal of Communication*; *Women's Studies in Communication*; *Quarterly Journal of Speech*; *Communication Theory*; *M/C—A Journal of Media and Culture*; *Journalism History*; *Electronic Journal of Communication*; *International Journal of Communication*; and *Visual Sociology*.

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