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The meaning of pleasure and the pleasure of meaning:

Towards a definition of pleasure in 'reception analysis'

I   On the overabundance of meaning

Within the debates on popular culture pleasure has been consistently linked to mass culture and popular entertainment, to fiction, escapism and emotion. But is pleasure really something that only fictional productions can convey? Is the reception of nonfictional programs indeed ruled by categories such as rationality, responsibility, civility, that seem so far apart from mass entertainment and mere pleasure? Can there be genres in starker contrast than soaps and news? We will probe into the seeming oppositions of popular and public, of fiction and non-fiction, of soap and news, of pleasure and ideology in our attempt to clarify the scope of the category pleasure.

Studies of popular genres have identified a variety of forms, kinds and sources of pleasure as factors explaining audience activity, and regulating the motivation and commitment of becoming a member of a particular audience.But what does pleasure in reception analysis and cultural theory really mean?

Pleasure has emerged as a multi-faceted social and cultural phenomenon that needs to be carefully contextualized. Genre and genre variations as well as (sub-) cultural identity on the basis of class, gender, ethnicity or generation all seem to be instrumental in determining the kind and variety of pleasures experienced in the act of viewing and finding expression in the way people choose, watch and interpret what the media has on offer. By showing the scope of audience activity this body of research undoubtedly has contributed to a better understanding of the complexity of what we call reception, but it is exactly the diversity of the concept that is puzzling and poses a challenge to its further use.

Some of the fuzziness of the concept has to do with the fact that pleasure is ill-defined. This becomes quite obvious when we list all the synonyms for pleasure appearing in the literature. Mercer calls "entertainment, comic, laughter, enjoy-

ment" the "accomplices" of pleasure to which we could add motivation, enthusi-
asm and gratification.[1] In the psychoanalytic tradition there is the link of pleasure
with the satisfaction of needs, the relief of tension and stimulation. For Bourdieu,
Foucault and Barthes pleasure is sensual and related to lust, desire or bliss ('jou-
issance'). The large number of synonyms for pleasure in the literature corre-
sponds to the rather loose use of the concept in empirical research.

In order to retrace the origins of the concept we will first briefly highlight the
attempts to arrive at a theory of pleasure undertaken by cultural theorists. Their
work has paved the way for introducing pleasure in reception analysis.In the
second part we will sketch the main findings of reception analysis as regards to
pleasure. In the third part we will expolre the relationality between pleasure,
ideology and meaning and suggest ways of bridging the gap between the 'popu-
lar culture' project and the 'public knowledge' project.

II   Pleasure in cultural theory

The analysis of pleasure in reception studies has drawn to some degree on more
generalised theories of pleasure which were being developed by cultural critics
throughout the 1970s and '80s. Early on in this endeavour the difficulties of
theorizing the concept of pleasure had been acknowledged by writers such as
Frith who claimed that since pleasure is a socially embedded phenomenon, it
cannot therefore, be subsumed under a single, all-embracing theory. In his view,
there cannot be a single theory of pleasure because:

"the concept refers to too disparate a set of events, individual and collective,
active and passive, defined against different situations of displeasure/pain/reality.
Pleasure, in turn, is not just a psychological effect but refers to a set of experien-
ces rooted in the social relations of production."[2]

A number of theorists have recognized the social nature of pleasure and have
developed concepts, models and theories of pleasure within the contemporary
social formation of capitalism. Pleasure is linked here to utopian desires. Jame-
son has claimed that the products of both 'high' and 'low' culture:

"have as their underlying impulse, albeit in what is often distorted and re-
pressed, unconscious form - our deepest fantasies about the nature of social life,
both as we live it now, and as we feel in our bones it ought to be lived "[3]

Dyer, in the context of analysing popular entertainment, suggested that the en-
joyment of what is commonly regarded as entertainment is based on people's
utopian sensibilities and he developed a model of socially based pleasures in his
analysis of the entertainment value of musical films. He observed that media
forms acquire their signification 'in relation to the complex of meanings in the
socio-cultural situation in which they are produced' and went on to advance a
typology of social tensions and utopian solutions appropriate to capitalist socie-
ty.[4] The ideals of entertainment, he suggested, imply wants that capitalism itself
promises to meet, in other words, entertainment provides alternatives to capita-
lism which will be provided by capitalism. The solutions are offered through a
number of textual practices and representations. For example, he could see the
scarcity/abundance problem and solution being expressed in television news
through the technology of news gathering - satellites etc.; the doings of the rich;
spectacles of pageantry and destruction; and in serials through the conspicuous
material wealth and comfort of the characters' existence.

Starting from a different point of view, Lefebvre expressed similar ideas about
the role of utopian desire in media use by suggesting that popular media repre-
sentations responded to a very real need for happiness with fictitious happiness
and that radio and television presentations give the illusion of simultaneity, truth
and participation.[5]

A more specific and nuanced understanding of the pleasures of particular societal
groups and subcultures has been offered by those cultural theorists that have
examined the class-based pleasures of cultural consumption through an analysis
of the aesthetic form of popular cultural products. Lovell, in an attempt to diffe-
rentiate between the cognitive and extra-cognitive dimensions of art, proposed
the notion of 'structures of feeling and sensibility' as a starting point. She argued
that the term 'structures of feeling' originally used by Williams[6] should be
"complemented by the notion of 'structures of sensibility' which could also be
identified and described in class terms, and which would allow us to raise questi-
ons about the historically established properties of aesthetic form, and how these
class properties are established and maintained."[7]

Corrigan and Willis have commented more specifically on the media pleasures associated with working-class culture in Britain. They claimed that the pleasures of television for the working class are related to a mental/manual split and a rejection of the mental, which is embodied in "cultural forms, activities, symbols, interaction and routinized attitude."[8]. According to Corrigan and Willis certain features of popular television parallel working-class cultural forms and these features not only appeal to the working class audience but are also recognised and implemented by programme makers.

Bourdieu in a wide-ranging theoretical and empirical investigation of contemporary French society offers a class based theory of aesthetic disposition which helps us to understand some of the pleasures of media use. Particular cultural competences are acquired, in his view, through the setting of the family and/or school. The competences relating to the consumption of artistic and cultural products vary according to social class position. The bourgeoisie learn to value form rather than substance or function while the working class ('les classes populaires') learn to favour substance and function over the form of cultural products. The bourgeois or dominant class learn to like things which are distanced from the experiences and practices of the subordinate class, ie. from all they perceive to be common, vulgar, popular. The denial of the inferior, coarse, natural pleasures includes the affirmation of the sublime and the elevated character of those who find enjoyment in the sublime, sophisticated, distinguished and disinterested pleasures. The response, according to Bourdieu, is for the dominated or working class to reject the dominant culture of distanced contemplation and to construct, in opposition, an aesthetic which rejects form at the expense of subject and function. It refuses to judge works of art or cultural practices in their own terms but judges them according to the social and ethical values of the class ethos that values participation and immediate semi-sensual gratification.[9]

Sensuality is taken up by Roland Barthes in his influential "The pleasure of the text". His distinction between pleasure and bliss ('jouissance') affirms the value of unsublimated pleasures.[10] While mass culture – which Barthes does not equate with the culture of the masses – holds the possibility of pleasure, e.g. in the aberrant reading practices of stereotyped productions, it is a product of the petit-bourgeois and cannot convey bliss. The text of bliss is linked to a bodily sensation, it is a-social and always surprising, it is the "text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts, unsettles the reader's historical, cultural and physiolo-

gical assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation to language."[11]

For Barthes, this text cannot be created by the established genres, be it advertisement, soaps or news. As a consequence Barthes' distinction is theoretically insightful, but poses severe problems when used in audience studies.[12] Certainly, Barthes like the other theorists discussed so far was centrally concerned with the issue of the pleasure of popular culture which stimulated and informed empirical studies of media audiences, but at the same time was not engaged in reception analysis as such.

III   Pleasure in reception analysis

Reception analysis was characterised by the emergence of two distinct and separate paths. On the one hand the 'public knowledge' project grappled with issues of ideology and the public sphere, citizenship and the informational role of broadcasting. Corner described this strand of research as being "concerned primarily with the media as an agency of public knowledge and 'definitional' power, with a focus on news and current affairs output and a direct connection with the politics of information and the viewer as citizen."[13] On the other hand the 'popular culture' project explored the pleasures of fictional genres. It was primarily "concerned with the implications of social consciousness of the media as a source of entertainment and is thereby connected with the social problematics of 'taste' and of pleasure (for instance those concerning class and gender within industrialized popular culture."[14]

The 'Public Knowledge' Project

The initial theoretical emphasis in British cultural studies was on the ideological power and influence of the media rather than on media pleasures since the members of the Birmingham School were strongly influenced by Marxist and neo-Marxist theory and politics. Meanings/signification focused primarily on issues of hegemony and the dominant ideology. These concerns can be witnessed in Hall's seminal work on encoding and decoding which was to become the model for much subsequent empirical audience research within the cultural studies

tradition.[15] Hall's model proposed that media messages could be read in any one of three ways: dominant, negotiated or oppositional.

This framework informed Morley's *Nationwide* audience study which was the first study to empirically test Hall's decoding model. It was a benchmark study in reception analysis as it not only rekindled an interest in empirical reception analysis but also set the agenda for subsequent studies of audience responses to television news, current affairs and documentary programming.[16] Because Morley worked with the idea of a 'preferred reading' and of a dominant or hegemonic message, he concentrated by and large on audience decodings in terms of acceptance or rejection of specific ideological messages or, in other words, with the more cognitive aspects of audience signification.

Since the *Nationwide* study there have been a number of suggestions for improving and upgrading the decoding model.[17] Dyer was perhaps the first to suggest its application, or at least a variation of it, to fictional genres and in so doing claiming a relationship between audience pleasures (enjoyment) and the more 'ideological meanings'. He called for an expansion of the tripartite model of dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings following his analysis of the film, *Victim*, and posited at least six possible 'preferred readings' of the film based on enjoyment in addition to responses to its ideology. He thought that a distinction should be made between: "negative and positive readings of the text - that is, between those that reject it (dislike it, are bored with it, disagree with it) and those who accept it (enjoy it, agree with it, feel involved with it)."[18]

In a recent critique of what they term the 'Incorporation/Resistance Paradigm' Abercrombie and Longhurst have argued that audience activities cannot be reduced to a specific reading position, since this is not fixed but always depends on the wider context within witch it takes place. Since the different axes of power cross-cut each other, "it becomes difficult to determine what is being resisted and what an oppositional reading would look like. A great deal will depend on the context."[19] Abercrombie and Longhurst hold that audience research should abandon social power and ideology as the central research agenda and instead focus on processes of identity formation, stimulated by media-based spectacle and performance. While we are not convinced that the "Spectacle/Performance Paradigm" holds the solution to the problem of unruly audience activities, the authors acknowledge the weakness of a research endeavor focusing almost exclusively

on the ideological meaning of text-audience relationships. However, popular fiction was always treated differently from actuality texts.

The 'Popular Culture' Project

The interest in understanding the pleasures of fictional genres originated primarily from two sources in cultural studies. One source was a reaction to the idea of a dominant 'preferred reading' of media messages which claimed that audience meanings and pleasures were 'complicit' with a dominant ideology. Pleasure then was merely a function of ideology since it implied the acceptance of the ideological message of a text.[20] Fiske introduced the alternative model of 'active audiences' who, rather than passively accepting the 'dominant meanings' were engaged in constructing meanings around media texts which were alternative, resistive or progressive.[21] Media texts, he argued were sufficiently 'open' or polysemous to allow for this idea of a 'semiotic democracy'. While the idea of 'resistive' pleasures is a very useful one, Fiske's work has been widely critiqued mainly because of his lack of precision about what an 'active audience' is and the conflation of 'active audience' with resistance.

Feminist scholars were also interestes in media pleasures and dealt specifically with the pleasures derived from 'women's genres' such as television soap opera, women's magazines and romantic fiction. Throughout the 1980s a large number of theoretical and empirical studies were completed and a wide range of pleasures, textual and contextual were outlined and theorised. Ang however dealt in some length with the theoretical and historical aspects of pleasure though there were amazingly few attempts to arrive at a general definition of the concept and suggested that popular pleasure:

"is characterised by an immediate emotional or sensual involvement in the object of pleasure. What matters is the possibility of identifying oneself with it in some way or another to integrate it into everyday life. In other words, popular pleasure is first and foremost a pleasure of recognition."[22]

Studies of soap opera highlighted the diverse sources of pleasure afforded its recipients by what was then called the 'women's genres'.[23] Conventional or genrespecific pleasure is linked to the viewers' knowledge of the rules and the narrative style of a genre and its variations. The regularity of the showing and the

viewers' familiarity with time, setting and characters is an important source of soap opera fans enthusiasm. Another source of pleasure is contentspecific in that soap operas, at least in its traditional form, validate women's family roles and emotional tasks. Genre conventions and contentspecific pleasures both in turn stimulate the communicative involvement of the soap opera fans. Brown and others have shown how soap opera reception can be integrated into existing networks of women and then can serve as a means of interaction, of gossip and mutual reassurance.[24] Most prominently, however, fantasy and realism have been identified as sources of pleasure.

In her study of romance reading Radway has identified fantasy as a driving force of the reader's motivation. According to Radway romance reading is a way for its readers to reduce tension resulting from their life as caretakers since the escape into a fantasy enables the women to symbolically gratify specific needs that are not met in real life.

"By participating in a fantasy that they are willing to admit is unrealistic in some ways, the Smithton women are permitting themselves the luxury of self-indulgence while simultaneously providing themselves with the opportunity to experience the kind of care and attention they commonly give to others. Although this experience *is* vicarious, the pleasure it induces is nonetheless real."[25]

Radway clearly brought a concern with the pleasure in fantasy to the forefront of feminist studies, but for her fantasy remained a mere illusion and she focused her interest solely on the ideological function of pleasure. In a critique of this position Ang has called for an anlysis that loosens the unidirectional link between ideology and pleasure and takes the pleasurableness of pleasure seriously.[26] She held that fantasy was something between utopia and reality. It is neither simply illusionary nor political per se but can be a site of resistance to patriarchal demands since it entails a playful and enjoyable way to transcend reality.

Geraghty, drawing from Dyer's typology mentioned earlier, has elaborated on the fantasies afforded by 'women's genres' afford: Soap opera, the romantic novel and the Hollywood women's movie all stress intensity and transparency of feeling.[27] Two studies on the pleasure of Dallas viewing confirm Geraghty's analysis, but the authors phrased their findings somewhat differently when they identified the tragic and melodramatic 'structure of feeling' as the prime source

of the female viewers' pleasure.[28] Ang claimed that Dallas possesses an emotional realism for its audience. The fans are familiar with the dramatic changes in feeling due to their own life experiences and can evaluate the story against this background.

The realist pleasure of soap opera involves both emotional and cognitive-rational processes. Viewers bring their life experience and rational reasoning to bear when they judge the authenticity of the stories.[29] The pleasure of soap opera viewing is dependent on the plausibility of the characters, their emotions and their interaction, and on the possibility of the events happening in real life. As a consequence there are few social issues or political problems that soap operas do not address. Hobson claimed that the then prominent soap opera Crossroads could get viewers involved in the discussion of social and political events in a way that news programs could not.

"The combination of the familiarity of the characters with the unexpectedness of the events carries the ,message' more effectively than the same incidents happening to someone of whom the audience knows nothing, and which is reported and expected in a news program."[30]

While Hobson's phrasing can give the impression pleasure in the soap opera or other genres is *always* political, it is important to recognize that news and soap may be supplementary rather than contrary genres as far as the participation of audiences in society is concerned. While fiction and non-fiction may be useful categories in the production of programs they become fundamentally problematic when their implicit dualism is applied to the reception process.[31]

Summary: The politics of pleasure unresolved

Despite the large number of empirical audience studies devoted to women's media pleasures, the issue of the relationship between the pleasure in he 'women's genres' and feminist politics, and more generally between media pleasures and ideology, remains unresolved. Two main trends can be identified in the studies discussed above. One is a celebratory approach to women's media pleasures. Here one can detect a tendency to posit pleasure as exclusively positive in response to the trivialisation and marginalisation of 'female genres' both in popular and elite culture. The different sources of pleasure are then reinterpreted as

progressive. In this way pleasure in fantasy is seen as a utopian possibility[32], pleasure in the conventions of the genre as potentially liberating[33], the communicative pleasure as resistive[34], the contentspecific pleasure as politically subversive[35] and the realist pleasure as potentially feminist.[36]

Some scholars have acknowledged the complex and contradictory relationship between pleasure and ideology.[37] But even in these cases the discussion has largely remained at a speculative and abstract level and points to the need for more precise empirical investigation.

Gallagher and Livingstone have both criticized feminist media for largely neglecting the issue of social power that needs to be addressed.[38] Both have opted for a return to questions of politics by giving more attention to non-fictional genres. Feminist scholars, they argue by limiting their interest largely to the 'women's genres' and a concern with pleasure. Doing this certainly entails the danger of an essentialist reconstruction of gender and a stereotypical view on the gendering of the reception process. However, we do not consider a move toward the 'public knowledge' project an adequate response to these problems if this means abandoning the 'popular culture' project and the valuable insights gained from this research tradition. This would in no way challenge the dualism between pleasure and ideology, emotion and cognition and their gendered subtexts. Rather, we think the task is to bridge the gap between the two traditions in reception analysis both on the theoretical and empirical level.

IV   Pleasure and ideology, emotion and cognition

Within cultural studies the issues of media pleasures and media ideology have, as we have seen, developed in distinct and separate ways, with the 'public knowledge' strand focusing on audience readings of non-fiction media texts and paying little attention to the concept of pleasure, and, alternatively, the popular culture project being concerned centrally with 'tastes' and the pleasures of fictional genres and being less concerned with questions of ideology.

This separation of spheres wasn't arbitrary. Arguably, because the decoding model was developed with 'closed', direct-address actuality texts it was more difficult to apply to the relatively more 'open' fictional genres. But more importantly, the division was indicative of a more profound gendering of cultural

analysis generally and media reception analysis in particular. Hermes has convincingly argued that the public knowledge project is dogged by an implicit masculinist bias characteristic of modernism generally and theorised most influentially by Habermas.[39] The division which he claims between public and private spheres, and the association of the former with men, production, rationality, and the latter with women, consumption, emotion is both limiting and sexist as has been argued by Fraser and Benhabib.[40]

In media reception debates these divisions roughly correspond to positing men as citizens actively interested in accessing information for rational debate in the public sphere whereas women are posited as private persons turning passively to dubious fictional genres for entertainment and gossip.[41] One of the fundamental flaws of this model is the distinction made between reality and fantasy, between cognitive rationality and emotional sensuality in the process of knowledge acquisition and understanding. For example Corner has posited that fiction and nonfiction mark two distinctively communicative spheres.[42] According to him, text-viewer relationships in non-fiction genres are characterised by 'kinds of knowledge' and rational insights while those in fictional genres are characterised by 'imaginative pleasure', the particular pleasures of dramatic circumstance and character. While Corner is right to try to arrive at a more precise conceptualisation, his concept of 'knowledge' is extremely limited and does not include knowledge which is pre-reflexive and/or extra-cognitive, though rational.[43] The concepts also ignore the possible links between pleasure and knowledge.

At the same time as the studies of popular genres have revealed the realist moments and cognitive dimensions in the reception process, some suggestive and useful comments have been made on the pleasures of actuality/information/public knowledge. Analyzing the less valued news items such as stories on desaster, crime or human tragedy Langer has pointed out that this type of news offers real pleasure to its audiences.[44] On the basis of his textual analysis he argues that these pleasures are also involved in the reception of the more legitimate news items, but are less recognized. A study on news reception by Lewis confirms some of Langer's findings, but puts them into a somewhat different perspective.[45] Lewis found that audience groups could not recall many news items and generally found it boring (as has been found by many other studies of prime-time news programmes). The main reason for this, according to Lewis, is that one of the central pleasures of narrative television lies in the employment of

the hermeneutic code but that television news is an exception to the rule in that it adopts instead the structure of print journalism in which the main facts of the story are given at the outset. He compared audience response to two news stories and found that the audience groups had a greater recall and greater understanding of the one in which the reporter employed the hermeneutic code than in the story in which he didn't. Similar results were obtained in a German study by Hamm and Koller, but they in addition stressed the importance of educational level for recall and understanding.[46]

From an ideological perspective, then, there are 'weak moments' and 'strong moments' where the message makes either less or more sense to audiences and this sense making is dependent on the aesthetic forms and codes used in production as well as on the social and cultural positioning of particular audiences. The more television employs the codes with which people are familiar, the greater the likelihood that they will be able to construct news reports into a story which they understand and which will have a resonance for them, ie. which they will experience as pleasurable.[47] Dahlgren found that among a number of audience discourses around television news, one was associated with the pleasure of watching. - "TV news is simply an enjoyable experience".[48] According to Dahlgren:

"This goes beyond the dutiful citizen position, and actually conflicts with it, since the discourse of the dutiful citizen gains its legitimacy precisely in the idea of social obligation rather than pleasure. Sometimes this discourse will reveal an awareness of this discrepancy and express a slight embarrassment about TV news being fun to watch'."[49]

While Dahlgren himself is in danger of reconstructing the division between 'public knowledge' and 'popular pleasure'. from his study we have empirical evidence of a link between emotion and cognition. Theoretical evidence of such a link stems from the critical analysis of news as myth.

Quite a few communication scholars have hinted at the mythic quality of news, their symbolic-ritualistic meaning and their function as "society's story-teller".[50] Dahlgren put this in a broader perspective when he argued that TV news is better understood as a cultural discourse rather than as information: it has a ritualistic, symbolic and mythic rather than an informational manner and is characterized by extra-rational sense-making. He considers story-telling the primary link between

actuality programmes and popular culture. "To posit a story-telling continuum, between serious and tabloid news, between fact and fiction, between journalism and popular culture, is a subversive de-differentiation and contests the claims of journalism to anchor itself fully in the rational domain and be something wholly distinct from, say 'entertainment'".[51] This conceptualizing entails a move away from a primary interest in ideology in the tradition of the public knowledge project to a concern with sense-making and meaning construction.

Fiske intimately linked the two prototypical genres by pronouncing news a male soap opera.[52] While this contribution does question the idea of the private as the women's sphere and the public as the men's legitimate place, Fiske nevertheless suggests one way of overcoming the public knowledge/popular entertainment division. His analysis shows how fruitful it can be to examine the non-fictional genres with the categories and concepts applied formerly only to the fictional ones and vice versa. This view is supported by a study that showed that categories of conflict and topoi (themes) distilled from literary analysis can be applied to the news items of newspapers, magazines and television.[53] There is some evidence that the converse is also true. Buonanno applied news values to fictional programmes and found that they predict rather well the criteria for choosing story lines.[54] These findings suggest that we can begin to move away from a sole concern with ideology in the tradition of the popular knowledge project to a concern with sense-making and meaning construction.

Drawing from Corner's discussion[55], Hermes has defined the process of meaning construction as follows:

"By 'making meaningful' I mean the process of making sense of a text by recognizing and comprehending it and assigning it associative signification (...), as well as giving it a place in one's knowledge and views of the world. This last level of meaning production consists not only of cognitive thought processes, but also of a reader's imaginative response and the practical and/or emotional and fantasy uses to which she or he anticipates putting the text."[56] Emotion and cognition, entertainment and information, pleasure and ideology seem to be intimately linked in the process of sense-making. Pleasure directs cognitive processes and determines attention and selective awareness. It is the emotional, sensual and imaginative feeling that leads audiences to actively turn to and process a given content. This is a prerequisite for understanding – without selec-

tive attention no cognition would be possible – and at the same time limits the
scope of people's interpretative practices since pleasure is socially embedded and
intimately linked to social relations of dominance and cultural hegemony.[57]

Hermes has suggested the idea of 'cultural citizenship',[58] which she borrows
from Allor and Gagnon as a way of transcending the 'public knowledge' and the
'popular culture' projects.[59] By 'cultural citzenship' Allor and Gagnon mean that
the citizen can be seen as 'both the social subject, the sovereign subject of a
nation, and as the object of new forms of political power linking the distinctive
traits of the citizen with those of the cultural producer and consumer'.[60] Hermes
thinks that the concept could function as

"a crowbar to pry apart practices and identities, or as a means to mix in issues of
pleasure with issues of politics, it could help redefine the boundaries of the pu-
blic and the private in a firm insistence on how both are articulated on the level
of the everday and are reciprocally involved in how we constitute ourselves in
relation to society."[61]

Hermes, in relation to the consumption of popular media, argues that the kinds of
subjectivity and self-knowledge produced by women's magazines, romance
fiction etc, should be taken seriously rather than discounted in the public sphere.
These include hopes, fantasies and utopias. The concept of 'cultural citizenship'
embraces both aesthetic and emotional aspects in addition to rational and moral
argumentation and could expand and revitalise critical analysis of the public
sphere. Klaus has defined the public as that realm in which we spell out, enact,
reinforce or change ideological prescriptions and hegemonic meaning.[62] The
public then encompasses all those everyday activities and communicative events
through which people confirm their common culture, reconstruct their social
identity and rework the norms and values regulating behavior – thus holding
society together. This occurs in parliamentary debates as well as in the neighbor-
hood chat, in the news reception as well as in the soap opera fanship network.
Media offers the means for this ongoing endeavour both in its fictional and non-
fictional program since social and cultural communication on all levels is media
drenched. 'Cultural citizenship' then could integrate the more hidden aspects of
the formation of a public since it points to the everyday activities, its cognitive
and emotional aspects, by which we make sense of the world and construct a
common culture.

Pleasure and ideology can be conceptualized as two aspects of this wider social process of meaning construction and sense-making. Both are not inherent qualitities of a media text, but are products of the specific and contextualized interaction of text and audience. As yet empirical work that bridges the gap between the popular culture and the public knowledge projects is preliminary and fragmented. The concept of culture citizenship is promising but should encourage us to more systematically cross the boundaries drawn between the two projects.

Notes

[1] Vgl. Colin Mercer: Complicit Pleasures. In: Tony Bennett/Colin Mercer/Janet Woollacott: Popular Culture and Social Relations. Milton Keynes, Philadelphia 1986, p. 50-68.

[2] Simon Frith: 'Music for Pleasure'. In: Mass Communication Review Yearbook Vol.3, Beverly Hills 1982, pp. 493-503; p. 503.

[3] Frederic Jameson 1979: p. 147.

[4] Richard Dyer: Entertainment and Utopia. In: Rick Altmann (Ed.): Genre. The Musical. A Reader. London 1981, pp. p.3.

[5] Henri Lefèbvre: Work and Leisure in Daily Life. In: A. Mattelart/S. Siegelaub (eds): Communication and Class Struggle: Vol. One, New York 1979, pp. 135-141.

[6] Raymond Williams: Culture and Society. London 1958.

[7] Terry Lovell: Ideology and Coronation Street. In: Richard Dyer et al.: Coronation Street. (BFI TV Monograph, no. 13) London 1981, pp. 40-52, p. 45.

[8] P. Corrigan/ Paul Willis: Cultural forms and Class Mediations. Media, Culture and Society, 2/3 1980, p.306.

[9] Pierre Bourdieu: The Aristocracy of Culture. Media, Culture and Society, 2/3 1980, pp.225-54. In Bourdieu's analysis, there is the implicit dualism between the objective and the subjective, the rational and the sensual, echoing to some degree the split within media debates between the 'public knowledge' and 'popular culture' projects

[10] Roland Barthes: The Pleasure of the Text. London 1990. Cp. Steven Connor: Aesthetics, pleasure and value. In: Stephen Regan (Ed.): The politics of pleasure. Aesthetics and cultural theory. Bukkingham, Philadelphia 1992, pp. 203 – 220, p. 215.

[11] Roland Barthes: The Pleasure of the Text. London 1990, p. 14.

[12] Cp. Andreas Hepp: Fernsehaneignung und Alltagsgespräche. Fernsehnutzung aus der Perspektive der Cultural Studies. Opladen 1998, pp. 99-116.

[13] John Corner: Meaning, Genre and Context. The Problematics of 'Public Knowledge' in the New Audience Studies. In: James Curran/Michael Gurevitch (eds): Mass Media and Society. London/ New York/ Melbourne/ Auckland 1991, pp. 267-284, p.268.

[14] John Corner: Meaning, Genre and Context. The Problematics of 'Public Knowledge' in the New Audience Studies. In: James Curran/Michael Gurevitch (eds): Mass Media and Society. London/ New York/ Melbourne/ Auckland 1991, p. 268.

[15] Stuart Hall: Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse. (= CCCS Stencilled Paper 7. University of Birmingham) Birmingham, 1973.

[16] David Morley: The 'Nationwide' Audience. London 1980.

[17] David Morley: 'The Nationwide Audience: - A Critical Postscript'. Screen, 16/3, 1981, pp.6-18. J. Wren-Lewis: 'The Encoding/Decoding Model: criticisms and redevelopments for research on decoding', Media, Culture and Society, 5/2 1983, pp.179-197.John Corner: 'Textuality, Communication and Media Power'. In: H. Davis and P. Walton (eds), Language, Image, Media. London 1983.

[18] Richard Dyer: Victim: Hermeneutic Project. Film Form, Autumn 1977, pp.3-22, p. 20.

[19] Nicholas Abercrombie/ Brian Longhurst: Audiences. A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 1998, p. 35.

[20] This binding of pleasure to the acceptance of the existing power relationsship has a long tradition in critical theory. In Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis the cultural industry was a pleasure industry that prevented people from seeing the true nature of society and their place therein: it pacified people into accepting their domination.

[21] John Fiske: Television Culture. London 1987.

[22] Ien Ang: Watching "Dallas": soap opera and the melodramatic imagination. London/New York 1985, p. 20.

[23] Elisabeth Klaus: Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Geschlechterforschung. Zur Bedeutung der Frauen in den Massenmedien und im Journalismus. Opladen/Wiesbaden 1998, pp. 337-346.

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[42] John Corner: Meaning, Genre and Context. The Problematics of ‚Public Knowledge' in the New Audience Studies. In: James Curran/Michael Gurevitch (eds): Mass Media and Society. London/ New York/ Melbourne/ Auckland 1991.

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[47] In many ways this is similar to Morley's distinction between 'modes of address' and 'ideological problematic' but Lewis is posing the questions in terms of pleasure/enjoyment rather in terms of acceptance or rejection.

[48] Peter Dahlgren: 'What's the Meaning of This?: Viewer's Plural Sense-Making of TV News', Media, Culture and Society, 10/3 1988, pp.285-301; p.296.

[49] Peter Dahlgren 'What's the Meaning of This?: Viewer's Plural Sense-Making of TV News', Media, Culture and Society, 10/3 1988, pp.285-301, pp.296-7.

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[57] At this point in our discussion another issue arises. The role of displeasure and disgust in the reception process as yet has not been systematically examined in audience studies, (it has been addressed by Condit (C.Condit: The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy. Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 6/2 1989.) and Lewis (Justin Lewis: The Ideological Octopus: An Exploration of Television & Its Audience. London 1991) but would merit more attention.

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[60] Quoted in Joke Hermes:'Gender and Media Studies: no woman, no cry' in John Corner, Philip Schlesinger and Roger Silverstone (eds), International Handbook of Media Research. London 1997, p.76.

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[62] Elisabeth Klaus: Von der heimlichen Öffentlichkeit der Frauen. In: Institut für Sozialforschung Frankfurt (Ed.) (Redaktion: Katharina Pühl): Geschlechterverhältnisse und Politik. Frankfurt a. M. 1994, pp. 72-97.