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Television: a window open on the world? The presence of women in television news programmes¹

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Millions of citizens are aware of current events, have opinions and act in politics by means of their media experience of contemporary issues. Television has become a means of mediation between a reality too complex to understand altogether and citizens who are not able to comprehend socially by direct, organised experience. Television news programmes are the best example of this mediation function; they act as a kind of representation of current events in which social performers, institutions and social collectives have a direct access to the public sphere. This article intends to reflect on the mediation function of the television news programme in the framework of dominant audio-visual culture, and offers a case analysis: presentation of feminine and masculine gender in current television news programme discourse.

Television and audio-visual culture: a hegemonic representation of reality

¹ This article presents some findings achieved in a study titled *Woman and Television. Representation of women in television news*, carried out by three investigators from the Pompeu Fabra University (Jordi Farré, and Enric Saperas, Journalism and Audio-visual Communication Department, and Vicent Navarro, Political Science and Sociology) financed by the Catalan Women's Institute. To carry out our research, we studied a sample of two weeks chosen at random, and we proceeded to study news programmes presented from Monday to Friday so as to guarantee format homogeneity proper to working-day prime time formats. The sample used news programmes from 25–29 May and 1–5 June 1998. We selected two public channels (TV3 and TVE-1) and two private channels (Antena 3 and Tele 5) to set up the sample. The total time studied is 27 hours, 35 minutes.

Now that we are reaching the end of the twentieth century, we are making efforts to think, or perhaps it would be more adequate to assert, that we are making efforts to rethink, the culture of our time. During the whole century, debate and critique on our culture has been a need for Western thought, faced with a constantly changing reality in which the cultural system has undergone a continuous process of diversification at several levels, in a process of competition and supplantation within the framework of an accelerating series of mutations of the historical context. The cultural system has been an unstable system in which the great problems are still wide-open with no definite answers, and in which debate has been placed more on the questions than on valuing definitive solutions linked to stable cultural times.

In the last few years, two areas of debate have focused the interest of most analysts: audio-visual culture and digital technology. If culture has been a privileged observation point for the contemplation of and debate on our society, the one we have inherited and the one we are part of, audio-visual culture and progressive but radical mutation brought about by the technology of the Information Society have also become privileged observation points from which we can contemplate the main current cultural performers who, at the same time, have the leading role in the main questions. Any social group represented by individual actuants, social groups or institutions has, in these two forms of culture, an essential challenge to express itself socially and project itself onto the public sphere.

Audio-visual culture, as the most solid form of cultural production with the most wide-spread audience, has become a firstorder cultural system which reflects the position of these social groups in a widely-shared imagination framework. Audio-visual culture can be found associated to the culture industry, but it is part of a more generic visual culture system in which the media are added with their particular means of expression and, at the same time, adapt and transform other cultural referents. Audio-visual culture is a necessary referent for considering our society, as it has given a framework for constructing representations of social experience by means of all sorts of languages. This framework for constructing representations is a referent for the production of imagination frameworks and individual awareness. In audio-visual culture, and preferably by means of communications media, their audiences can see how a specific cultural industry and its professionals represent them socially, as they cannot

express themselves publicly without this institutional mediation. It is in this sense that we can assert that some groups, those social identities and individuals who are excluded from audio-visual culture, are represented as marginal to or outside cultural generality, which begins a process of distancing from the public sphere, in the manner of a process of progressive extinction. In the opposite sense, dominating the audio-visual sector opens the doors to a prevailing social hegemony.

Briefly, we can offer a first posit: audio-visual culture can also be understood as a relevant form of social mediation characterised by establishing dominant relations, inasmuch as they are a kind of cultural representation and presence among the performers acting and relating socially.

This perspective allows us to catch a glimpse of the current importance of the study on how social classes, group identities, collectives and institutions are represented in the media and in audio-visuals. From this perspective, we can achieve a strategic point of view which will allow us to analyse the relationship established between audio-visual culture and everything that is socially active or everything which is to be excluded. The concept of mediation becomes, at this moment, a central component of cultural reflection.

Television: mediation between reality and citizens

One of the main areas of development in current communication research is the study of mediation, which the media establish between reality and citizens. Research begins with an overall view of the entirety of current communication research: communication media, and preferably television, have become a central institution (an institutional institution) in the current makeup of the social system, given that they are the only mediation mechanism between citizens who need to know their social ambit and a progressively more complex social reality. Television news programmes have become the most powerful agents of this representation of social reality and the privileged meeting-point between the citizen and the social representation of reality.

Television, and television news programmes, has become the subject of intense and constant debate focused on discovering what its social influence is and what is the scope of its intervention in politics, the representation of reality, the shaping of public opinion, and

our current culture. Debate has been focused above all on the perspective of effects of television on society and studies on the reception by television audiences. To understand the social function of television, it will be necessary to take into account two basic factors in today's communications world: people use television according to their needs and according to their expectations (motivations, ends, attitudes) but, as users, they are limited to television offer (television models and formats). In other words, social uses of television, as those of other media, have their origin in the social system, but establish their limits in the communication system.

This dialogical relation between needs and offer leaves place for one of the most characteristic functions of mass communication, found in the very root of what people do with television: mediation. By mediation we understand the function of complementing carried out by media and by which the audience has access to social knowledge and cultural behaviour it cannot obtain by direct experience, but which it is forced to dispose of to carry out the multiplicity of everyday activities. The contemporary citizen does not dispose of free access to political institutions nor to the mechanisms which form majority opinion for exercising his condition as such; he must use communication media to have a constant knowledge of the evolution of political discourse and to promote an active civic attitude.

This new form of mediated representation was described for the first time in the 1920s by Walter Lippmann, American journalist and social psychologist. In his well-known work, *Public Opinion*², he proposed considering journalistic discourse as a representation of a pseudo-reality placed between reality and the citizen. Current events, in his words, are made up of 'fictions, but by fictions I do not mean lies'³. Mediation allows citizens to adapt to the complex reality of our society, making of the media an instrument which allows 'this same creature to invent ways of seeing what the eye cannot see, listening to what our ears cannot hear, thinking of immense and infinitesimal masses, explaining and separating more subjects than we are able to remember. It gradually builds inside its head a kind of mental image of the world that is beyond its reach'.⁴ From this point of view, the creation of a pseudo-environment—which we now call mediation—implies representing reality by means of media formats; and while representing, we come to construct social reality. Television and the television news programmes are the main model of this media logic: what is represented does not reflect

reality as it is but rather it constructs it in the way that a professional group and some media choose and treat segments of reality which reach the public in formats known beforehand by the audience. In the television news programmes, we must take into account that we are before a window open on the world, but with specific dimensions; in other words, the world will remain represented depending on the time, the rhythms, the way of presenting the genders, as well as by means of the selection routines by the professional group who carry them out. From this point of view, McLuhan's phrase 'the medium is the message' acquires an additional dimension (the channel plus the television format) which sheds a new light for understanding the function of mediation.

The presence of genders in television news

An example of the function of mediation (1). Brief notes on international research

The study of representation of feminine and masculine gender in the ensemble of research into communication media has given rise to an extended production of analysis and investigation even though it has begun only recently. The 1970s were the leading years of the first studies and their increase has been constant till now. In the first place, we can identify the succession of key dilemmas experienced by, and differentiating, the study of media and gender, with a special emphasis on women and femininity. As to the type of media, they have basically focused on cinema, women's magazines, and popular literature. The social construction and gender culture have also become one of the problems with more lead in television analyses. Very specially, culture studies have taken on the theorising on gender as one of their main priorities, to the point that it has become a main component of their analysis of television reception. At the same time, feminist theories have decisively contributed to continuing progress in conceptualising about gender discrimination. Specifically, in the field of television, we can follow general phases in which, firstly, there is an insistence on the underval-

² LIPPMANN, Walter (1922). *Public Opinion*. New York: The Free Press.

³ IDEM. *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁴ IDEM. *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

uation of women as they are shown on screen (in the 1970s); secondly, feminine identifications resistant to specific types of 'women's' programmes, especially the soaps (in the 1980s); and, finally, the trend towards making a problem of the closed categories which do not allow access of plurality of identities making up femininity, women, and the knowledge to be gained from them (in the 1990s).

The study of feminine and masculine gender has been the focus for analysing the relations among audiences in the television medium. In this sense, three levels of analysis have been established according to the degree of generalisation of their approach: the first refers to the medium as such and basically takes up the specificities of personal experiences of appropriation and the interactive traits belonging to television as a communication medium; in the second place, there is the research centred on the configuration of television contents in the framework of gender theory or conventional formulas of recognition and differentiation (fiction, entertainment, information programmes); and lastly, the strategy of approach to specific audio-visual products which allows widening sporadic reception practices, having previously gone into the ways by which contents are organised, selected, and presented.

Gender identities are neither unitary nor fixed, but are rather subject to historical, social, or cultural variation. Consequently, it is necessary to analyse the role of representation systems in the make up of masculinity or femininity characteristics as they are experienced by women and men. It is a question of approaching a reading of the meaning of the versions surrounding gender codified in the media imagination framework on the 'new man' or variants of 'woman'. Therefore, we must not underestimate the plurality of masculinities and femininities.

Some contributions on the construction of masculinity, even though they are scarce, make up an interesting counterpoint when defining typically masculine television contents in programmes 'for men'. In this framework we could mention as a paradigmatic example television news programmes, current events programmes or, in fiction, action, explicit sex, and violence products (Rose, 1986; Nixon, 1997).

In the ensemble of studies on representation of social collectives in television news, the presence of genders has become a first-order ambit of study and reflection.

The representation of women in current affairs programmes and, most especially, in television news programmes, has been investigated in terms of their ap-

pearing as presenters, reporters, and subjects of the news. First, we must begin with the division by gender of masculine reality programmes, on the one hand, and feminine fiction programmes, on the other. One of the reasons which confirms this division is that the news does not provide women with information that allows them to significantly apply knowledge close to their everyday experience. This would explain their lack of interest in such programmes. Morley (1988) shows how women prefer local news, which they follow much more attentively, because they consider it closer to them. Jensen (1986) observes that men get legitimisation from news programmes because they are an opportunity to ratify their feelings of belonging to an established social order. Women, on the other hand, feel excluded from this dominant social order and mainly avoid following 'serious' current events and information programmes (Holopainen, 1984; Thoveron, 1987).

Feminist viewpoints have shown a growing interest in women's relations with current events journalism and, more globally, with the world of public spheres. Traditionally, the news and everything surrounding it were considered by feminist critics as alien to the social and political interests of most women. Even though we can confirm that current television forms are far from women's style parameters, during the 1990s a succession of changes has been proposed which we must analyse.

One of the most innovative ambits has been the incorporation of women in the editorial staff of television news which has also incorporated a process of intimacy in its contents.⁵ These apparent changes in a field dominated by men manifest a struggle among feminist theoreticians for an evaluation of what women's participation can be in these new tasks. Obviously, television channels cannot be responsible for the low profiles of women appearing in the industrial, political, sports, and economic worlds. Perhaps reading the news for women stresses even more their exclusion as news subjects and their marginal intervention in the public spheres.

For women, enjoying the chance to take on an authorized voice as television news presenters can turn into a secondary way of participating as guests, as a merely decorative representation within the current events discourse. This greater visibility of women as reporters and presenters in television news programmes can also be read as an attempt to incorporate them into

⁵ ZOONEN, L. van (1988). 'Rethinking women and the news'. *European Journal of Communication*, 3, p. 35-53.

the public sphere under already-existing conditions set up by men, or it can be interpreted, on the other hand, that women should defend their own values and insist on the differences in relation to men. This dilemma faces several feminist versions as to whether it is necessary to participate in a bourgeois and sexist public sphere or, on the contrary, it is necessary to re-propose feminine contributions from a more particularist and contextual philosophy of public life. (Holland, 1987)

Do women have any possibility of intervening when making up a different way of organising and broadcasting the news? The detailed study of the process of intimacy in Dutch television news shows how some of the values of the private sphere have been transferred to the public sphere of conventional news. However, proof in the reception ambit is still an unknown. The way women from different social and cultural contexts, with different intellectual and political predispositions, look at television news programmes presenting new trends in their staging can only be explained if we recognise the growing heterogeneity of 'woman' as a social and cultural category.

Thus, it is difficult to propose a universal feminist model as a rule for public life. Even so, continuous re-orientation in the field of public discourse makes the issues of gender and difference emerge as basic. There is no doubt that the Dutch communication and social experience is far from being comparable to that of the Spanish state, for example. However, it is useful to establish the polemic directions which feminist academic literature, more up-to-date and innovative, addresses insofar as understanding the woman/television news relation. (Zoonen, 1991; 1994)

Media portraits do not correspond directly to public perception of gender roles. This limitation must always be present in any prediction to be taken only from television contents. This also causes the methodologies used in findings on television effects in gender stereotyping to be relativised and framed in a succession of other inducing context factors.

The presence of gender in television news

An example of the function of mediation (2). A case analysis: the presence of women in four television news programmes

Representation of women as social actuants in the lead in current affairs reporting has, in television news pro-

grammes, the central element in its projection towards public opinion. We will now present some results of the study applied to a sample of four evening news programmes which correspond to two public and two private television channels: Televisión Española (TVE-1), Televisió de Catalunya (TV3), Antena 3, and Tele 5, analysed during ten working days in two consecutive weeks.

A first form of representation: the presence of proper names

A first form of gender representation in current events discourse is the proper name. Even though it does not carry a determined semantics, it still allows us a first approach to the ensemble of social actuants who are present in television news programmes. In a general way, the television news programme follows a guide-line which is present in the whole of audio-visual culture: reality is represented by means of a process of personalisation of social institutions and collectives and, at the same time, a dramatisation of the forms of discourse. Individual and anonymous actuants not linked to institutions are practically non-existent. In other words, in the television news programme, social actuants in the lead are neither men nor women but rather, and preferently, institutions and diverse elites (scientists, sports stars, doctors). However, if we look at which gender is manifest in these institutions and social elites, we can assert that the great majority of their representatives are men, while the feminine gender remains in a very secondary position. Of the group of women in the lead in current affairs, we can mainly observe a high social status, except for women who are anonymous witnesses of current events occurrences belonging to other social sectors.

The proper name is the component of discourse most present in the news discourse and the most basic form of

Table 1. Presence of proper names in television news programmes (expressed in percentage)

	<i>Total proper</i>	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
TVE-1	765	88.23%	11.76%
TV3	749	86.24%	13.75%
Antena 3	516	88.56%	11.43%
Tele 5	634	85.8%	14.19%

contact with the receiver. This contact function allows the receiver to pay selective attention and recognise the stars in current affairs in a media discourse which is characterised by a high rhythm of image and sound. On the other hand, it is the discourse element which allows obtaining a certain uniformity in reception of a mass audience as a link between receivers of all kinds subject to a same format. Dramatisation is the second element which allows establishing an easy access to contents in current affairs news.

Table 2. Distribution of men's and women's proper names in television news summaries

Proper names	TVE-1		TV3		Antena 3		Tele 5	
	masc. %	fem. %	masc. %	fem. %	masc. %	fem. %	masc. %	fem. %
%	91	9	91	8.33	83	17	77.7	22.2

Table 3. Theme areas with most presence of proper names (more than 10 quoted)

	TVE-1		TV3		Antena 3		Tele 5	
	masc. %	fem. %	masc. %	fem. %	masc. %	fem. %	masc. %	fem. %
1	88.6	11.3	90.7	9.23	86.8	13.1	93.7	6.28
2	98.9	1.01	95	5	98.6	1.39	92.5	7.5
3	90	10	73.6	26.1	90.0	9.37	92.8	7.14
4	81.2	18.7	89.3	10.6	81.8	18.1	70.3	29.6
5	98.4	1.5	95	5	94.1	5.8	87.5	12.5
6	100		85.7	14.2	96.4	3.57	90.9	9.09
7	53.1	46.8	52.4	47.5	60.6	39.3	58.8	41.1
8	66.6	33.3	77.4	22.5	71.4	28.5	76.4	23.5
9	90.4	9.52	92.3	7.69	100		80	20
10	100		100		96.6	3.33	94.1	5.88
11	72.7	27.2	85.2	14.2	100		100	

1. Sports
2. Current events: law/crimes
3. Central government activities
4. Local politics and normal political activity
5. International politics and inter-State relations
6. Political party activities
7. Society
8. Culture
9. Mass culture and journalism
10. Current events: parliament and laws
11. Public administration

The presence of proper names, discounting the summary, is relevant in the entirety of news programmes, although they present some significant differences: TVE-1 (765 proper names), TV3 (749), Tele 5 (634) and Antena 3 (516). The primary gender representation established in this first indicator makes up a first representative datum of the general situation: the average presence of women's and men's proper names (once again, we exclude the summary) is 13% for the feminine gender and 87% for the masculine gender.

Only in areas such as society and culture do we observe higher indexes of a presence of feminine names, together with, although in lesser quantity, in the area of local politics and normal political activity and activities of the executive (the latter with much lower percentages than of masculine names).

In the same way as in titles in the written press, summaries have become the prime source of perception of current events in which the receiver makes contact with current issues making up the day's agenda. Maximum attention is produced in the three or four minutes which introduce the more significant information and the most strictly representational function. In the summary, inequality in gender representation increases in regard to the rest of the news. More specifically, the presence of men's names is much more dominant in public television network news programmes (91% on TVE-1 and 91% on TV3) than on private television networks (77,7% on Tele 5 and 83% on Antena 3). Women's presence in summaries was reduced to a sports reference in the Roland Garros tennis trophy and two Spanish Government Ministers.

The presence of proper names in the entire current events discourse is not homogenous in all theme areas present in television news programmes, in the same way that this similar distribution is not produced in all television networks in the analysis. Women's representation is highest in social issues, as well as in discourse on current events in political parties and culture. This distribution by theme areas can be seen in Table 3.

Social actuants present in television news: leads in current events and information sections

The representation of reality is a key indicator, and not in name only. When we speak of current events and public opinion, who are we talking about and

what sections will we find them in? The entirety of social actuants present in current events determines how the perception of reality is produced in individuals and institutions and an elite in sport, culture, and society which are represented by means of specific individuals. Public representation of institutions does not refer to their organisation, composition, or ways of institutional relations, but rather to specific individuals who are presented as part of a dramatised discourse in the general framework of these institutions. The leaders of social reality which take up most of journalistic discourse are concentrated in certain social actuants who, we can assert, star in current events: sports, government, heads of government or States, representatives of political parties, of the law, of police forces, terrorists, businessmen, and financial institutions. This ensemble takes in 72.48% of discourse on TVE-1; 63.24% on TV3; 70% on Tele 5; and 68% on Antena 3.

The presence of women in the sections which make up the news programmes is also unequal. Thus, if we take into account the sections, according to the number of news items presented, time on screen, and order or situation of news items in the whole of the news programme, and those which make up the nucleus of current events, they present a low index of representation for women leads, while other sections which are

Table 4. Principal information sections in the news: the presence of feminine social actuants (expressed in percentages)

	TVE-1	TV3	Antena 3	Tele 5
State	11%	9%	14%	14%
International	5%	5%	8%	20%
Current law	6%	7%	2%	8%
Economy, commerce, finance	15%	10%	13%	29%

Table 5. Secondary information sections in the news: the presence of feminine social actuants (expressed in percentages)

	TVE-1	TV3	Antena 3	Tele 5
Medicine, science, health	0	17	0	20
Crime	25	16	15	42
Culture	14	37	24	17
Society	0	0	60	38
Environment	11	17	13	15
Sports	3	6	6	7

constant, but of less prominence (society, science and technology, culture...) have leads with a higher index of feminine social actuants.

As we can see in Table 5, contrary to what we see in the principal sections which make up the television news programmes, the secondary sections present, on the whole, a much greater proportion of feminine presence (except in sports which, although they are a secondary section, enjoy a growing importance within the format of television news and in which the great majority of leads is for masculine social actuants). The presence of women in some of these sections gives proof of the more common roles they usually assume in the discourse of current events. Thus, for example, they often appear as victim leads in the framework of crime affairs where they are harassed and ill-treated (with an over-stated frequency due to masculine aggressions).

Final conclusions

The well-known phrase which gives television the quality of a window open on the world has no doubt come to be widely confirmed. For many citizens the television news programme format has become their preferred access to the understanding of their social and historical environment. On screen, we are presented with reality according to the necessities of the television format (minutes, rhythm, image, witnessing, spectacularisation, dramatisation...) and the ways of selection and treatment that a group of professionals (journalists and audio-visual professionals) applies, according to specific routines. The television news programme is currently the most significant instrument of what Lippmann identified, in the 1920s, as the need for inventing instruments that will allow us to listen to, look at, and pay attention to everything we need to know and have an opinion of, but which we cannot do by means of a personalised or organised act. The television news programme is a privileged window which shows us the current panorama and is, therefore, one of the most relevant instruments in current audio-visual culture. But, as we have seen, all the windows are oriented and represent a specific perspective of the surroundings. The case of gender presence in the representation of current events information is one among many of the meaningful examples of this orientation in the representation of society.

In a general way, we can say that television news programmes give a representation of current events in which neither women nor men are leads, but rather institutions and some professions which star in current events. We are not faced with a masculine or a feminine universe, but with an institutional universe and a professional representation. Sports and sports figures, the exercise of government power, the law system, the party system, the law-and-order forces and, to a lesser degree, financial sectors, constitute the institutions which are hegemonic in the news programme discourse. In a contrary sense, everyday life, and the citizen in everyday life, are practically absent, except when the anonymous citizen becomes present as a witness before the screen in any current events occurrence.

But these institutions and professions become manifest in the news by means of characters or social actuants who identify institutions and professions. It is in this element where we find a gender manifestation with a clear differentiation between a masculine and a feminine universe. The general average presence of masculine protagonists in the representation of current events is 78%, while the general average presence of feminine protagonists in the representation of current events is 22%. On the two extremes of representation of public affairs by means of the presence of feminine social actuants, we find a scarce representation in the state, international, current law, economy, and finance sections, while the more significant presence is placed in society, crime occurrences (basically as a victim or anonymous witness), medicine, science and health, culture and environment. The feminine representation is produced in a neutral manner, without manifest valuation in a positive or negative sense; both genders are present as a manner of objective and professionalised vision of reality by the television entities and the journalists carrying out their profession, but there is also a presupposition of a manner of gender presence rooted in social reality which is acted on by journalists and television news.

Thus, the analysis of television news programmes as constructing hegemonic current events discourse unfolds a succession of implicit meaning and tacit structure from which there is a reinforcement of a specific hierarchisation of social reality. Television news programme formats make up a realistic space conventionally defined by informative recontextualisations.

To be sure, news programmes build up everyday discourse as a result of professional practice derived

from applying some specific journalistic techniques designed for the achievement of prefixed aims (in a manner of speaking, we could assert that news programmes basically present 'talking heads' inserted into a flow of intermittent and varied flow of information). Also, placing it in the genre of information programmes, the news is a narration with a specific rhythm and tempo, developed in a framework of a strongly codified and easily-identifiable structure. Be that as it may, news programmes are a stereotyped and hierarchised construction of current events and they can be studied in their composition, intentionality, and representation.

The historical dimension of the news as a way of knowledge determines a symbolic system with its own logic by means of which certain aspects of reality are defined depending on specific regularities within a context of determined legitimacy. In this sense, text—and contents—analysis of the message becomes a basic necessity as, despite its polysemics, it contains its distinctive structure. There is no doubt that audiences do not merely see what they wish to see because a news programme is much more than a window open on the world; in fact, it is configured as an ensemble of significant mechanisms with a great institutional and discursive power.

Despite this more formal aspect of news programmes, we must not underrate the aspect of ambiguity, change, and constant differentiation in this television genre, which is apparently very stable. Actually, permanent processes of differentiation and bringing up to date in television genres assure their reproduction while adapting to new slants and making their analysis categories more flexible. It is due to this that generic formulae are not mechanical, but rather subject to great pressure and transformation because of the social practice of reception by audience groups which make up the result of a complex process of negotiation and conflict on what is represented and tries to be significant.

To the open, multivalent definition of television genres, we must immediately add the plural construct of gender identities. Ideally, however, the case of the news programme stresses its proximity to the theory of the public sphere from which well-informed citizens are disposed to participate in public affairs in the exercise of their democratic duty (Dahlgren, 1995).

We must recognise the need to introduce a historical explanation of interpretation activities, even though it cannot be taken up without a previous essay on a deeper interpretation of media texts as an object of

analysis. Thus, television news programmes as a communication phenomenon are considered as an intersection of discourse symptomatic of basic change (and, by extension, of systematic reproductions) in relation to masculine and feminine structures constructed by means of its communication format.

These trends towards constant change and reinforcement are inter-related and can be summed up as follows:

1. Television news programmes are not a static or innocent formula for constructing information reality. They act as a mirror before which social gender discrimination are reflected corresponding in a greater or lesser degree to the existing situation in society.
2. Current events discourse configured by news programmes tend to widen the distance between roles given to anonymous men and women in relation to the prevalent institutional logic. Within this institutional logic, women's invisibility when nearing power spheres (politics, economy, law, etc.) is especially acute.
3. It is perfectly possible to rethink strategies tending towards the transformation of television productions so as to approach citizens and, most especially, women as a collective which remains discriminated in the representation and reception of news programmes, far from their interests and identity expectations. We should also avoid falling into the usual trap of interpreting this possible feminisation of current events information as a loss of seriousness derived from the growing substitution of 'hard news' by other dimensions considered more 'soft', underrated as inferior and with less social prestige.
4. In fact, the traditional distinction by gender in the public and private sphere begins by the reproduction of falsifying dichotomies. It would be necessary to bring up measures to overcome sexism existing in gender culture, according to which masculine or feminine acts are privileged, so as to become citizen acts. Certainly, gender positions can be a starting point for political activity, while defining diverse interests and activities, but they should in no case be considered an arrival point. In consequence, the sexist public/private division should be eradicated while redefining frontiers and centering on the articulation of discourse spaces capable of understanding citizens as a specific form of identity

articulated by means of contextualised practice.

5. Gender divisions in the work force in media organisations bring up the dilemma of whether an increase of women journalists can improve or present alternatives in the ways of feminine representation. This introduction presupposes that production structures can be modified according to gender, thus affecting the codification process and, in the end, gender constructs in media texts. However, it would be necessary to shade this meaning: social and cultural constructs of femininity and masculinity do not necessarily imply a univocal interpretation, as audiences actively appropriate the multiplicity of media meaning, in an unforeseeable manner, according to their individual preferences, social conditioning, cultural peculiarities, and contingent historical circumstance. The fact of reinforcing the transcendence of audiences' interpretation activities does not underrate, but rather reinforces, the convenience of stimulating intervention strategies in the institutional production of diverse media contents.

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Renovar la mirada ètica per abastar la imatge televisiva

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L'objectiu d'aquest article és presentar alguns elements per introduir en la reflexió sobre la relació entre ètica i televisió, en els termes en què es formula al nostre entorn més proper. El debat ètic contemporani i la reflexió sobre els objectius de la televisió conflueixen en la necessitat gairebé irrenunciable de prendre com a punt de partida el paper que juga la televisió en les societats occidentals contemporànies.

Els estudis «crítics» de la cultura, especialment en l'àmbit televisiu, es revelen com a necessàriament ètics. Considerar l'individu des de la seva interpretació particular dels missatges televisius i no des de la quantificació per l'audímetre suposa desvetllar alguns dels «donats per descomptat» sobre la significació, però implica també una sèrie de compromisos ètics.

La situació de partida

Abastar la imatge televisiva en la seva complexitat des del punt de vista ètic és una tasca pendent a l'estat espanyol. Sovint les millors intencions tant des de l'ètica com des de l'intent de formulació de polítiques de «servei públic» queden matisades en principis abstractes, objectius massa genèrics o llistes interminables d'incompliments legals. La manca de debat i de consens sobre els objectius de la televisió pública més enllà dels criteris formals i la manca de polítiques instrumentals efectives per dur realment a terme uns objectius clars col·laboren a l'immobilisme d'una llarga indefinició de la televisió al nostre país.

No partim de zero. Teoritzar en l'aire i parlar en termes genèrics sobre el que és bo i el que seria desitjable segurament és necessari, però en cap cas suficient a l'hora de plantejar seriosament les mancances i els punts febles d'una situació social concreta. Per parlar d'aquesta situació ens hem de remetre d'una banda al punt de cruïlla en què es troba el debat ètic contemporani i, de l'altra, a la configuració actualment existent a l'estat espanyol de la relació entre ètica i televisió.