What future for interpretive work in film and media studies?
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Probably most people can think of at least one book which seemed, at the time of its publication, to highlight fundamental issues of its field and to signal evidently major implications for the future, but which was then not taken up with anything like the interest you might have expected. For me, David Bordwell's *Making Meaning* is such a book. Published in 1989 (1), it developed four key arguments in an extensively illustrated and always eloquent, if sometimes rather theory-weary, way.

First, it drew attention to the pervasiveness of 'a significant American industry' (2) of textual interpretation in film studies ('reading' films, or groups of films), even in theory-led rather than case-study or corpus-based approaches.

Second, it suggested that common characteristics of the practice of reading – what Bordwell calls an 'art' or 'craft', likening interpretation to 'quilting or furniture-making' (3) - dominate over the differing theoretical content of particular approaches, even in apparently highly divergent cases. The craft element, Bordwell suggests, consists of inductive procedures and heuristics (especially the 'representative heuristic': x stands for all x's, or x stands for y) which map semantic fields onto selected cues in a given film. Such mappings are then deployed in rhetorical arguments (using conventional topoi, metaphor, and enthymemes, or pseudo-deductive arguments) to build up a particular thematic explication or symptomatic reading.

Third, within this practice of interpretation, *Making Meaning* emphasizes an inescapable operation of inference, even in basic interpretive procedures such as constructing an apparently concrete, consistent world out of film images. Relatedly, the book drew attention to thematic and procedural schemata (or socially organized networks of cognitive material) on the basis of which such inferences are often drawn.

Fourth, in its final chapter ('Why not to read a film'), *Making Meaning* criticizes the pre-eminence of interpretive work - what Bordwell repeatedly calls, in a provocative reference to New Criticism in literary study, 'practical criticism' - and encourages

alternative directions for study. Specifically, he promotes a kind of 'historical poetics', which would examine the historical conditions of particular forms of film composition and reception, rather than simply ascribing meaning to particular films.

Together, the arguments summarized here amount to a powerful critique of the history and contemporary practice of film interpretation. Interestingly, too, the book's arguments connected closely with changes during the 1980s in debates about meaning in a number of fields relevant to film and media studies, including the philosophy of language and cognitive science. For a variety of both good and bad reasons, during the formative period of institutionalized film studies those debates had seemed mostly inaccessible or just plain unattractive.

Given Bordwell's reputation as a scholar - already well-established by that time - there is little doubt that *Making Meaning* was widely read. It was also reviewed and in some quarters rebuked. But it appears not to have been especially influential. As far as I am aware, there has been little or no serious engagement with the arguments Bordwell presented or with the conceptual frameworks he drew on. All in all, *Making Meaning* remains a book more read than heeded. Ten years on, inevitably the extent to which the issues it raised have not been pursued reinforces *Making Meaning*'s admonition regarding the future of film and media studies. Trends have become more fixed; and previously prominent critics and theoreticians have retired or moved on to other topics. A new settlement is visible within the field which was perhaps less evident at the time of the book's first publication.

As regards interpretive work, during the period in which *Screen* itself has been published the practices of interpretation Bordwell examined have undergone at least one major reconceptualisation: the widely described shift of interpretive paradigm from strongly textual-determinist approaches, making clear predictions about effect on viewers, towards more reader-based notions of meaning production, premised on diversity both of possible and of actually-occurring readings. Complications surrounding this major change of approach are the focus of my comments below.

From textual determinism to reader response

Whatever the historical and theoretical limitations of viewing film studies of the 1970s and 1980s as a textually-determinist orthodoxy, there was, as has been widely recognized, a tendency for arguments to rely on some version of at least the following cluster of claims.

By means of the organisation of their signifying features, film texts create subject positions and prompt a re-positioning of the spectator, understood as a non-unitary, 'radically heterogenous' subject. Such acts of re-positioning are achieved, for viewing in particular, by a set of unconscious processes and structures which can be best understood in terms of psychoanalytic concepts (c.f. voyeurism and fetishism in work on female spectatorship (4)). In turn, a close and potentially analyzable relationship exists between spectatorship, understood in this way, and more general processes of ideological interpellation; and because of the link between film viewing, ideology, and subject formation, the practices of cinema production and viewing may be considered political. Classic realism, for instance, stands as the dominant aesthetic of bourgeois cinema and television; but oppositional practices are nevertheless possible, especially in avant-garde cinema. So too are resistant, or otherwise perverse kinds of reading and pleasure. In general terms, interpretation in this synthesis of semiotics, psychoanalysis and politics involves demonstrating the power of discourse features to construct subject positions, which for want of other vocabulary in this area may be thought of as 'meaning'. (5)

What is so striking about the development of film and media studies over the last quarter of a century, however, is how intense the questioning of such positions has been. As regards 'meaning' in particular, three main shifts can be identified.

First, critiques of work on spectatorship based on psychoanalytic structures have contrasted theoretical structures of female spectatorship with reported diversity in women's viewing (6). In the face of such criticism, relatively abstract structures of spectatorship have tended to be down-played in favour of examining the differing kinds of significance given to texts by audiences. Over roughly the same period, distinctions made by Stuart Hall and later by others between different types of reading of the same

textual material on the basis of ideological positioning (dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings) (7) hit a corresponding wedge between texts and the subject positions they might be thought to prescribe. Such classification of readings drew attention instead to differences between encoding and decoding. As accounts of such structured, interpretive variation were then extended (in a series of studies offering rich descriptions of the surrounding social discourses inhabited by readers of any given text), an interest developed in audience diversity convergent with that inspired by critiques of spectatorship. A third major agent of change has been the simultaneous, more general intellectual shift towards postmodernism, presenting a fundamental challenge to the earlier, semiological ambitions of film studies. The *theoretical* possibility or likelihood of diversity of interpretation has been encouraged by work along such lines, especially on the strength of concepts suggesting indeterminacy of meaning such as polysemy, slippage of the signifier, dispersion and deferral of meaning, and heteroglossia. One incidental effect of investigations employing such concepts has been to confer oblique authority on empirical descriptions of interpretive diversity.

These mutually reinforcing elements of a broad intellectual shift offered opportunities for new kinds of interpretive writing. The implication of homogeneity of effect in textual-determinist accounts of meaning, for example, appeared to deny the experience of culturally marginalised interpretive communities, and could now be empirically discredited; and while the earlier theoretical formation urged political critiques of ideology within a broader, Marxist framework, more recent reception-based studies appear more consistent with a dispersed (often implicitly Foucauldian) field of sub-cultural identities, agendas, and resistance.

The resulting mix of interpretive approaches has coincided, however, with a down-grading of the *question* of interpretation in the list of investigative priorities. For many, the important arguments have moved on, from mechanisms for producing meaning (interpretation as a kind of 'work') into social issues of identity construction to which particular critical interpretations of texts can make a contribution. Against this trend, I want to suggest that displacing attention from mechanisms of meaning production (from understanding interpretation as a practice) onto what I will suggest are rather the determinants and rhetorical possibilities of interpretation (onto interpretations taken more

as outcomes or products of that practice) comes at what may prove a disastrously high price unless alternative directions are now explored.

Interpretation and audience studies

To the extent that they are considered in film and media studies, theoretical issues about how interpretations are generated are now usually formulated not so much in terms of meaning and interpretation as in terms of audience. This re-focusing – a consequence of the theoretical revisionism which nurtured the so-called New Audience Studies of the 1980s (8) –can seem so natural, even inevitable, that it is easy to miss implications of the different terminology and conceptualization.

There is little question that the New Audience Studies encouraged a sense of active reading: of readers making meaning. In doing so, such studies offered a useful counterpoint to earlier, textually-deterministic studies. They also sought to offer an account of communication which re-cast both the model of subject-positioning and also the canonical speech situation as typically described in linguistics, in order better to reflect collaborative or corporate production, as well as one-to-many discourse delivery systems and what have been called 'distanciated' reception contexts.

Surprisingly, nevertheless, little explicit consideration was given in such studies to the mechanisms of sense-making. Equally surprisingly, this omission seems to have attracted less criticism than other possible weaknesses: failure, for instance, to draw relevant distinctions between historical study of empirical audiences and selective presentation of contemporary readings, or to give due regard to media power and the formation of hegemonic readings as opposed to resistant ones. Occasionally problems surrounding meaning were acknowledged; but the terms in which such issues were discussed offered little prospect of specifying linkages between text, reader, and cultural context in any given act of interpretation (9).

For critical work of the 1970s and 1980s, Michel Pecheux's reworking of the Althusserian conception of interpellation (drawing on Frege and notions of preconstruction to develop the concept of 'transverse-discourse') had presented one model of how social assumptions might re-surface in discourse (10). In more recent,

reception-based debates, by contrast, reference is more likely to be made to notions such as variable 'access to social codes'. 'Social codes' themselves are abstract meaning-relations within a social semiotic system; talking merely about 'access' to such codes unfortunately says next to nothing about the psychological mechanisms of selection, retrieval, matching, or manipulation of such codes which are preconditions of any act of interpretation taking place.

Faced with this obstacle, one tendency among cultural critics has been to fall back on describing differences between the *bearers* of bodies of cultural assumptions: that is, describing determinants rather than mechanisms of interpretation. The range of social and situational variables involved in audience demographics has accordingly been extended from race and class and gender into ever-thicker descriptions of social and situational variables. Audience studies has, in effect, turned away from reception understood as interpretation towards reception understood as demographic description and lifestyle . For all the evident interest of new work this re-direction makes possible, a vacuum is left as regards understanding meaning.

Understanding meaning

A different way of making my last point would be to say that audience studies has largely abandoned considerations of meaning in favour of considerations of textual use. To which a common riposte is: if there's no such thing as stable textual meaning (either intended or formally-determined), then can it matter much whether you call use meaning, or meaning use? Or whether you bring both together under the rubric of textual 'effect' or some more evocative, but still inclusive phrase such as 'hermeneutic process of appropriation' (11)? Aren't such terms simply alternative names for properly contextualised interpretation? This is the issue which now needs to be considered.

One problem with not distinguishing meaning, use, and effect is that a whole range of different sorts of textual effect are flattened into a single catch-all. Besides 'represent' and 'signify', a cluster of other verbs are also widely used in media criticism to signal that meaning is being conveyed: 'communicate', 'express', 'evoke', 'impute', 'ascribe', and so on. Many terms in such a list have both an everyday and also one or

more technical senses; 'imply', 'infer', 'entail', 'presuppose', 'denote', and 'connote' are obvious cases. Such words are not synonyms, near-synonyms, or mere stylistic alternatives: they signify different claims as to agency within a complex division of communicative labour. They also signal effects which can differ importantly, for instance as regards susceptibility to contradiction or cancelleability, strength of intuition and so likelihood of variation among culturally-different audience groupings, and degree of responsibility fairly attributable to text-producer and text-interpreter respectively.

Boundaries accordingly need to be drawn both within the domain of meaning itself, and between what we consider meaning effects and other kinds of textual effect which are not usefully thought of as meaning (including visceral fear or shock, involuntary twitching with excitement, catharsis, laughter, fatigue, escapism, or long-term trauma). Using inevitably simplistic spatial imagery, we might for instance want a 'lower' or 'inner' boundary, between the complex object 'the material discourse itself' and perceptual, cognitive and affective consequences it prompts. Such a boundary serves to separate meaning from text, and also offers a reference-marker against which the varying degrees to which descendent representations of any given text can be judged as regards resemblance to that text's apparent sense. An 'upper' or 'outer' boundary might be drawn where textual interpretation merges into more general reaction, response, pre-existing opinion, attitudes, beliefs, or triggered memories – effects with less traceable links to the particular textual stimulus and greater likelihood of being prompted equivalently by other, different texts or experiences.

Even inside the class of textual effects we decide are 'meaning', the question arises whether all discourse processing forms part of what we want to call interpretation, or only those aspects which go beyond an underpinning level of comprehension (the latter involving at least image perception, voice recognition, sentence parsing of dialogue, etc). Clearly not everything which might be accurately or usefully said about one set of processes applies to the others; and few people would want to claim that film and media studies is the most appropriate discipline to investigate *all* of these kinds of effect.

Further distinctions need to be drawn as regards how far any meaning presented is assumed to restate or reconstruct some property of the text itself ('meanings embedded in'; 'the text shows') and how far that meaning is thought of as something attributed or

7

ascribed to it ('the audience will see this as..', 'your imputation is that…'). It is hardly surprising, given my comments above about the paradigm shift from textual determinism into audience studies, that reception-led work is less interested in the production of meanings by discourse than in an audience's search for 'meaningfulness'. In this context, 'meaningfulness' may be understood as kinds of significance which bring maximum relevance to the concerns of the interpreter, independently of links back to specific textual features or to an intention of (or effect anticipated by) a text-producer. Such meanings can of course be derived not only from texts, but from much else in our environment, and depend on the general capability of human cognition to interpret as a world of signs a world where most potential stimuli are nevertheless not there for the specific purpose of being interpreted by us. Problematically at the same time, though, for audience ethnography to sustain a claim to interest in text interpretation – rather than in belief systems of groups of people irrespective of their exposure to particular texts – some residual claim to meaning as a property of (or as something caused by) the discourse itself is essential.

The uncertainty about interpretation which results – between audiences making texts mean and audiences making texts meaningful – reflects a corresponding uncertainty within much ethnography. In that field, it is not always easy to separate what might be called descriptive aims (e.g. giving a voice to informants, as a corrective to accounts of them produced by others) and interpretive aims (e.g. selectively eliciting data on which to model some particular aspect of an informant's beliefs or cultural competence). Back in audience ethnography itself, the uncertainty cuts into research method as well as aim: reporting responses to texts gathered by means of elicitation and autobiographical narrative may be highly appropriate to descriptive aims characteristic of reception studies viewed as cultural demography (and such work may still serve theoretical purposes, including importantly contesting earlier, speculative rather than empirical claims about what a given audience might think). But interpretive aims are likely to require a more systematic research approach.

To explain how meanings are produced by readers as they interpret discourse, it is necessary to investigate the mechanisms of interpretation itself, in greater detail than is possible by reporting response in a holistic way: to investigate how, in a time-based

process which is also subject to species-level processing constraints, the mental store of code-meaning pairings and cultural assumptions represented by any individual reader are combined with a meaning potential specified by the form (or codes) of the discourse to produce a reading. In order to investigate a complex process of that kind, research must give attention to how meanings are generated by text segments of varying lengths and by techniques at many different levels, not just to the claimed significance of whole works. Experimental protocols (such as those developed in discourse comprehension research in psychology (12)), and perhaps a number of other methods, are likely to be needed alongside existing research procedures.

In the next section I move on to consider more practical issues regarding the future of interpretive work. Before doing so, however, I should respond to at least one line of criticism of the sort of arguments I have presented: that such arguments offer simply a return to formalism, fuelled by a fantasy of algorithmic solutions to social questions of meaning and disavowing two key insights of reception studies: first, how far meanings depend on the specific contexts in which they arise; and second, how far they are shared across populations, not just dreamt up by individuals (13).

For all their rhetorical appeal, neither of these criticisms seems to me justified. The 'return to formalism' criticism under-represents the difference between formalism's emphasis on decoding features of a text and the far more socially and historically anchored processes I am outlining: of inference operating on *a combination of* textual representations and culturally specific, contextual assumptions. And the 'populations not individuals' criticism undervalues the way in which different interpretive communities diverge as social groups exactly to the extent that they employ different interpretive strategies and/or different cultural assumptions (that is, presumably, what makes them distinct from *other* kinds of social community). One implication of this point is that, to trace a social circulation of meanings, we should examine exactly those processes: that is, we should look at the cumulative effect of local, individual cognitive events linked together in causal chains of repetition and modification across a given society, rather than jumping straight to a macro-scale interface between text and collective public mind. Some interpretations in the vast chain of individual mental representations - which are linked together by social practices involving specific media of text transmission - will

resemble one another closely (and will therefore appear to belong to an identifiable interpretive community); others will not. This general approach has been usefully characterized as an 'epidemiology of representations', and deserves fuller discussion in film and media studies than it has received so far (14).

Interpretive studies in future

But what about the future of text interpretation in practical terms? After all, I began by echoing an understated polemic from a book already ten years old. What reforms of practice or new directions for investigation do I wish to encourage?

One task, I believe, is to expose a degree of what might be called present interpretive complacency. Investigations into how interpretation takes place are needed which pick up threads from earlier interdisciplinary studies of signification, but without the hubris of a period in which the self-image of media studies was that of a vanguard discipline. Without losing sight of the power of post-structuralist and deconstructionist arguments, either, it seems imperative – if those positions are to be sustained - to argue them more directly in relation to other (widely unread) intellectual traditions of thinking about meaning, where necessary demonstrating, rather than taking simply for granted or on community authority, how and why fields such as modern linguistics, psychology, and large sections of philosophy are so intellectually or politically compromised as not to merit discussion.

A second task, in my view, is to sharpen features of established rhetorics for presenting interpretations, moderating idioms which encourage obscurity about or slippage in the claims being made. That cliché of media studies, for instance, 'Text X can be read as Y' needs particular attention. After all, if texts are polysemous in some way which makes serious study of meaning-production unimportant, then surely it goes without saying that Text X can be read as Y? Besides, where readings are offered following this formula, at least three fairly *distinct* possibilities of the modal 'can', involving three different claims (and requirements for evidence), are being brought together. One is the relativistic assertion that it is possible for Text X to be read as Y, alongside as many other readings of Text X as you care to propose. The second is that

reading Text X as Y is in some way permissible, valid, or legitimate in ways that other readings are not, with that reading sanctioned or warranted by some set of criteria which then need to be specified. The third is that our understanding of some issue (needs to be specified) is now improved because, while previously reading Text X as Y had been unlikely or impossible on account of some contextual or theoretical impediment (needs to be specified), it has now become possible to read Text X as Y.

If this attention to the instance of 'can' seems mere semantics - and introspective displacement from the public and engaged role of media studies - then I believe we must re-assess implications, for a field concerned with the importance, value (and also potential misappropriation) of textual representations, of not considering mechanisms at work in constructing 'meaning' to be a central concern. Issues about how texts create meaning seem after all to apply *especially* in the case of a medium surrounded by arguments as to textual effect, including sex and violence debates, allegations of blasphemy and defamation, and other vexed regulatory and standards issues (15).

This reference to public responsibilities involved in interpretation raises further issues about presenting or publishing interpretations. Clearly human beings are involved in construing aspects of their environment all day long, including a wide range of publicly-circulating texts. What makes 'interpretation' more interesting than such everyday activity is the greater reach and implications of interpretation by comparison with such routine processing. Reflecting on and talking about interpretation almost certainly play an important role, as a result, in socialization and in formal education. But unless specific claims are advanced about the benefits of presenting a reading as research, it seems unclear why anyone should propose that reading (and equally unclear why anyone else should publish or read it). Public, especially academic readings are part of a social, generally institutional activity: if they are to be 'interventions', then this will be because they are readings advanced for a purpose.

The main sorts of purpose which are possible – beyond local, professional needs and demands – can be seen in exemplary fashion by considering what are often called 'exemplary readings' (16). What gives such readings their critical influence and authority is an exceptional combination: the quality of unique, or at least distinctive, new insight which is at the same time grasped as somehow common property, revealing features of

the discourse or interpretive context as they can be recognized by us all. But the sorts of 'intervention' such readings make possible – in themselves and by example – depend exactly on problematic aspects of interpretation discussed above, as can be seen if we disentangle senses of the word 'exemplary' and note the process/product ambiguity inherent in 'reading'. Beyond the sense of 'exemplary' meaning just 'exceptionally good' lies the sense closer to 'example' and 'exemplar': that of a paradigm case, template, or model. Both senses combine with the different senses of 'reading'. On one construction, what is to be taken up as our template are procedural features, or the practice of reading, potentially leading in many different directions in new cases. On a different construction, however, it is more the conclusions, or product, of reading which are encouraged, prompting replication of routines already targeted on an anticipated outcome.

If this second construction is the more widely accepted – if emphasis is placed on canonical findings rather than on modelling process - then contemporary film and media studies risk simply proliferating readings. This will be especially the case unless thought is given to the role of a presented or published reading as a social action – not in the abstract, as part of a generally supportable or sympathetic cause, but explicitly, in terms of pedagogic, informative or polemical effects that presenting the reading in a given set of circumstances may have.

Conclusions

Let me emphasize: I am not proposing that studying interpretation rather than producing interpretations is the main task facing film and media studies. Other issues are as likely to be important, perhaps especially questions about new media technologies, and about media policy and regulation, in a period of rapid change and globalization.

The point I want to make is a different one. If accounts of films or television programmes are to be offered as scholarly work, in themselves, or are to be presented as the main illustrative material in theoretical arguments, then more serious engagement with the mechanisms of meaning production and meaning attribution are needed than is now common.

Such attention to meaning is essential, if media studies are to avoid two divergent but complementary excesses: first, presenting as textual interpretations empirical descriptions of cultural behaviour which have little to do with the texts they are deemed to be inspired by; and second, reading texts so creatively, for maximum relevance to the reader's own concerns, that readings become what Umberto Eco, calling for limits on interpretation, has dismissively called 'psychedelic trips upon a text' (17). More generally, renewed investigative vigour may be needed, if film and media studies are not in future to dissolve back into two broad strands associated with earlier disciplinary affiliations: one strand concerned with investigating money, policy and technology; the other strand – in practice if not in theory – simply a new production line in liberal studies.

Notes

(1) David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989). The paperback edition appeared in 1991.

(2) op cit., p.xi.

(3) op cit. p.xii.

(4) Most influentially, Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* vol.16, no. 3 (1975), pp.6-18. For broader discussion see, Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (Boston and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

(5) A summary exposition of this period of theoretical work (nevertheless far more nuanced than the account presented here) is Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, *Film Theory: an Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

(6) Much of this work has appeared, and been discussed, in earlier volumes of *Screen*; the relevant literature is now extensive. For a review and range of positions, with bibliography, see, E.Deirdre Pribram (ed.), *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television* (London: Verso, 1988).

(7) Much discussion has followed; the original paper is Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/decoding television discourse', Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies stenciled paper no. (1973), reprinted in Stuart Hall et al (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language* (London: Hutchinson, 1981). Later variants on the triad 'dominant', 'negotiated', and 'oppositional' codes – each with slightly different theoretical shadings – include 'preferred' and 'resistant' as regards positioning, as well as 'readings' and 'readers', as opposed to 'codes'.

(8) The name 'New Audience Studies' was acknowledged both by proponents and by critics. For a collection of his own work, charting development from the *Nationwide* audience to a more open-ended ethnography influenced substantially by Clifford Geertz, see David Morley, *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992). For a fairly comprehensive range of papers by researchers up to 1990 (which now seems the end of the main phase of the field's development), see, James Hay, Lawrence Grossberg and Ellen Wartella (eds.), *The Audience and its Landscape* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996).

(9) See comments in early chapters of Morley, op. cit. A highly perspicuous and prescient discussion, which nevertheless struggles slightly to find an appropriate vocabulary for meaning, is John Corner, 'Meaning, Genre, and Context: The Problematics of "Public Knowledge" in the New Audience Studies', in, James Curran and M.Gurevitch (eds.), *Mass Media and Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991), pp.267-84.

(10)   See Michel Pecheux, *Language, Semantics and Ideology: Stating the Obvious*, trans. Harbans Nagpal (London: Macmillan, 1982). See especially Chapter 9, 'The

Subject-Form of Discourse', pp.110-29. A recent re-working and development of many of Pecheux's arguments is Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Interpretation as Pragmatics* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

(11)   The phrase 'hermeneutic process of appropriation' itself occurs in John Thompson's discussion of the globalization of communication in, *The Media and Modernity: a Social Theory of the Media* (Oxford: Polity, 1995), p.171. Confusion between meaning and use is sometimes encouraged by invocations of Wittgenstein's 'the meaning of a word is its use in the language', or 'what do words signify, if not the kind of use they have' (both from *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M.Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), respectively paragraph 43 and paragraph 10). Such quotations sometimes lend doubtful authority to the view that meaning is readily re-defined by users, with no stable core. A brilliant attempt to disentangle issues of meaning and use is Umberto Eco's essay, '*Intentio Lectoris*: the State of the Art', in his *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press: 1990), pp.44-63.

(12)   For a critical review of, and significant contribution to, one major tradition of discourse research along experimental lines, see Walter Kintsch, *Comprehension: a Paradigm for Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

(13)   The most persuasive version of such arguments is to be found in writings by Stanley Fish since the 1980s, starting roughly with *Is There A Text in this Class: the Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980). The notion of 'algorithms' for interpretation, and of a 'moral algebra' which might follow from them, can be found in a number of Fish's essays collected as, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech – And It's A Good Thing Too* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

(14)   See Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). The theoretical account of interpretation implicit in Sperber's 'epidemiology', as in his earlier critiques of ethnography and anthropology, is Relevance theory. See Dan Sperber and

Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, second edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

(15)   Such issues can be traced throughout media effects, gratifications and use debates, as well as in relevant areas of media law. One interesting, recent argument concerning the contribution made by interpretation to the public reception and effect of texts is Jean-Jacques Lecercle, op. cit., see especially Chapter 5. So far, Lecercle suggests, media effects studies have overstated the case for direct causation, while audience ethnographies have their notions of textual causation far too weak.

(16)   The notion of 'exemplary readings' is incidentally illustrated and discussed by Bordwell, op. cit., pp.24-5 and p.83ff.

(17)   Umberto Eco, op. cit., p.52.