



**Publishing outside the RAE loop:
Jonathan Rutherford on Mediactive
Caspar Melville on openDemocracy.net**

**Peter Golding on Philip Elliott on TV
production**

**Katherine Sarikakis on the conditions of
doctoral students**

Brian McNair on politics on TV

Christine Fanthome on Channel 5

**Heather Nunn on the Women's Media Studies
Network**

Paddy Scannell pays tribute to David Cardiff

**Vicky Ball on the launch of MeCCSA
Postgraduate Network**

Martin Barker in Versailles

With only 1,171 days to go before the cut-off date for publications for the next RAE, excitement is building in media, communication and cultural studies departments across the UK. Anticipation is reaching fever pitch as authors wait to hear back from refereed journals about the fate of their lovingly-crafted submissions. In this issue, we pay tribute to the audit procedures which have done so much to improve the quality of Higher Education in this country.

No, we don't. Instead, we feature two pieces on outlets which provide a space for thinking about media, communication and culture, but which attempt to reach an audience beyond academia: a new journal called *Mediactive* and the web site *openDemocracy*. There are of course other such publications and sites (*Soundings* is one notable example).

Amongst numerous other items, this issue also features details of the next MeCCSA conference, which will take place in Lincoln next January. As many members will be aware, the last two conferences have taken place in that period in late December when

the exhaustion of a term just ended meets the rampant hysteria of a Christmas just about to begin.

The timing of the conferences in Reading and Brighton wasn't deliberately chosen in order to cause further stress and suffering to media, communication and cultural studies academics; it was just that conference accommodation on those campuses wasn't available in January.

Those who prefer to spend late December convalescing in front of re-runs, rather than analysing them in a conference setting, will be pleased to hear that the MeCCSA committee fully intends to make January the permanent home of the annual conference.

My thanks to those who have sent kind comments about the previous two issues of *Three-D*, to those who've contributed their time, and especially to Di Harris for designing it and sending it out.

Dave Hesmondhalgh teaches media studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University

Brighton Annual Conference

ESRC Chief sends apologies

The opening plenary speaker at our annual conference in Brighton in January, has asked that, via the Newsletter, we should convey to members his profuse apologies for failing to appear at the meeting.

As those who attended will know, his office had confirmed his attendance both prior to the event and on the day, and the non-appearance was very much regretted. He assures us that he will definitely make himself available for our next conference should we so require.

Stop Press: MeCCSA web-site

**The MeCCSA
web-site has been
redesigned, and
should be on-line
by the time this
edition of Three-D
reaches you.**

Mediactive

Jonathan Rutherford

Several years ago I was in the new LSE library when I came across a battered, roneo-stated pamphlet dated early 1970s, a polemic produced by some small leftist economics group. It seemed the antithesis of so much of our own contemporary, time-pressed, RAE-focused research efforts. It was engaged with public political issues, dissenting, and intended for a community of readers beyond the academy. Working in a post '92 university, in an age of ever decreasing resources it seemed like a good idea to try something similar.

It took eighteen months to publish the pilot issue of *Mediactive*. We collected money from various sources at Middlesex University, plus another £5000 from independent publisher Lawrence and Wishart and £1500 from a trust. As the text on the back cover stated: 'The first issue of *Mediactive* begins where its contributors find themselves: at the centre of revolutionary changes in the provision of public forms of education in the UK.' New Labour's market based reforms have created a new type of corporate university which privileges the exchange value of knowledge over its symbolic value. The big issues in life like justice, ethics, love, humanity which are the intangible public goods which bind societies together are being marginalised from education. Market forces and the audit culture are turning HE into a services industry and encouraging the standardisation of its delivery. Universities have become more risk adverse.

In the face of these changes, how do we articulate ways of organising and valuing learning, knowledge and culture which are rooted in a democratic as opposed to a market paradigm? The pilot issue on Knowledge/Culture focused on this question and on the impact of the marketisation of HE on our own practice as academics. It wasn't going to win prizes for being a popular read, but it seemed an appropriate place for the venture to start out from.

Mediactive engages with contemporary issues using theoretical concepts. Scholarly rather than academic it is designed for a non-fiction as well as academic and undergraduate market. Published in the Autumn, Winter and Spring, each issue is on a specific theme, sometimes using guest editors, or in association with another organisation or group. It is published by Barefoot Publications, a joint venture between the Media, Communications and Cultural

Studies Group at Middlesex University and independent publisher Lawrence and Wishart.

Issue 2 on Celebrity came out in February and, perhaps because of its topical subject, the first print run was snapped up by bookshops within days. The issue includes a discussion on Reality TV; an analysis of the Blair family's celebrity status; a debate about intimacy and what's real in 'keeping it real'; a look at cult TV fan cultures, and what it means when pop stars 'can't act'. Issue 3 on the Media and the Iraq War will be published in May. It will analyse the way in which the coverage of war has become a constant site of political struggle. The issue looks at war reportage as entertainment, investigates political activism and alternative war news, looks at children and war coverage and considers the gendered representation of women at war. It questions the value of embedding journalists, analyses media imperialism and 24/7 news and identifies the future roles of mediawars. Issue 4 takes on asylum and will be published in the Autumn. The issue asks what does it mean to be a good neighbour; analyses the dynamics of hate and xenophobia; addresses the politics of human security; argues that refugees/asylum seekers are the coming condition humaine; and sets out ideas for a new European identity.

We're now planning for the three publications for 2005. Ideas to date include an issue on gun culture, the rich, endings, alternative media. But we're open to ideas. The success of *Mediactive* will depend on its sales and that will mean getting the right topics and getting people to buy it and subscribe to it. *Mediactive* is peer reviewed so it will count toward RAE submissions, but it is not an orthodox academic journal which publishes research in progress for fellow academics. It is about taking on popular and not so popular issues and using our research and knowledge to communicate arguments and critical ideas to a broader public.

Jonathan Rutherford is Reader in Cultural Studies at Middlesex University. If you have an idea for an issue, are interested in writing something or if you want to help market and sell the journal, buy a copy or subscribe, you can find out more details about *Mediactive* at www.barefootpublications.co.uk or email Jonathan at j.rutherford@mdx.ac.uk.

openDemocracy.net

Free thinking for the world

Caspar Melville

OpenDemocracy.net is a global online magazine for discussion and debate. Our aim is to discuss the big issues of the contemporary world – globalisation, terrorism, social justice, cultural diversity – in an informed and accessible manner for a global audience. The content of the website is organised into ‘debates’. Notable recent examples include Iraq – the war and after, American power and the world, Journalism and war, Europe and Islam. Articles are published from across the political spectrum and across the world, and these engage with each other in order to give readers a sense of the scope of contemporary argument.

openDemocracy has no editorial line itself and seeks to provide the accurate, well argued and informed argument that allows the audience to make up its own mind. In addition to the wide range of commissioned articles, debates, stories and reports *openDemocracy* features discussion forums where our over 50,000 global members debate and discuss the ideas raised.

OpenDemocracy is not an academic journal – yet many of the authors we publish are academics, many world renowned. We provide an active space where theoretical argument, evidence, experience and opinion meet in an open public debate. We carefully edit our pieces so as to make them accessible to a wide non-specialist audience, but we believe in ideas – one of our recent debates pitted English philosopher Roger Scruton against German Green MP Antje Vollmer on whether Immanuel Kant would have supported the war in Iraq. We publish academics and researchers from a wide range of disciplines including media and communications, cultural studies, sociology, political science, comparative politics, international relations, architecture and design, human sciences, philosophy, Islamic scholarship and international security. Our debates and articles are used in teaching in universities and colleges across the world.

A far from complete list of contributors includes: David Held and Paul Hirst debating globalisation, Paul Gilroy on race and film, Saskia Sassen on migration, Fred Halliday on terrorism, Eyal

Weizman on the geometry of occupation, Mary Kaldor, Sami Zubaida, Faleh Jabar, Yahia Said, John Lloyd, Timothy Garton Ash on Iraq, Anatole Leiven on American neo-imperialism, Ousmane Sembene on African film, David Elstein, David Marquand, Tom Bentley on the Hutton Report, the BBC and after, Makram Khoury-Machool, Manuel Castells on networks after Madrid, Iris Marion Young, Charles Grant, Kirsty Hughes, Rienhard Hesse, Kalypso Nicolaides on the future of Europe. In addition we publish compelling eye-witness accounts, and global reports like Jo Wilding from Fallujah, Harun Hassan from Somalia, Wendell Steavenson from Iran, Sabine Frazier from Georgia.

Our regular columnists include Bradford’s Paul Rogers’ weekly monitor of the ‘war on terror’, Caspar Henderson’s globolog, and our World Diary. This year we feature a special package of columns focussing on America in election year from Todd Gitlin, Siva Vaidhyanathan and John Hulsman. This is just a sample of the over 1800 articles we have published – a new edition goes live on the web every week.

OpenDemocracy is independent. It has been funded up until now by individual and foundation grants. We are now trying to become self-sustaining through a combination of individual and institutional subscriptions. Visit the website – www.openDemocracy.net – to sign up as a member and receive the e-mail. You can also become a subscriber through the website. For academics wishing to use *openDemocracy* as a teaching or research tool, we have developed a special library product – Global Views and Voices - based on our content with links to 100 other web resources, semantically indexed, which can be purchased through your library.

The aim is to provide an active space where theoretical argument, evidence, experience and opinion meet in an open public debate

Caspar Melville is Executive Editor of *openDemocracy*. Find out more details on the site or contact caspar.melville@opendemocracy.net

Doctoral education in Communication, Culture and Media Studies in the UK

Katherine Sarikakis

This research represents the first ever investigation into the educational experience of doctoral students in communication departments in the UK. Funded by the Art, Design, Communication Learning and Teaching Support Network (ADC-LTSN), the project aimed to map the experiences of doctoral students in communication departments in the UK and identify the key factors affecting their performance. The major areas of focus are as follows: the degree and character of integration of the students in their departments and academic life in general, their involvement in teaching and the role of gender and ethnic background in forming their experiences. The data is based on the responses to a questionnaire sent to PhD students in communication, media and culture studies departments the UK.

In brief, it seems that the future faculty is overwhelmingly white and from a privileged background. A PhD is seen as a 'passport' to an academic career or as a means of 'advancing one's intellect' as nearly all respondents stated. The relationships between PhD students and supervisors are good, but the concept of a mentor or of a mentoring system is not prevalent in the field. Feelings of isolation are particularly widespread among women, while feelings of insecurity and doubt about the worthiness of the degree are felt by high numbers of PhD students of both sexes. More women than men show interest in teaching, while half of those currently teaching are not receiving relevant training. In contrast to the United States, for example, PhD students have very little opportunity to take initiatives in their own teaching as they are called to deliver pre-designed seminars and/or tutorials.

The respondents (70%) are between 25-35 years old. Only one in ten students would have been able to register for a PhD without financial support. The most popular research areas are audiovisual media (film and television being the single most strongly represented area studied), followed by studies in new technologies and new media and studies in identity and national media.

Two thirds of the respondents are supervised by one or more male supervisors; approximately 40% have one or more female supervisors, as in a few cases students have male and female supervisors. In general, students make positive statements about their supervi-

sors; the vast majority feels their supervisor is accessible and encourages them to 'think for themselves'. Approximately one in ten respondents has co-authored work with their supervisor. The vast majority of the respondents has no mentor (over 60%), and supervisors seem to undertake that role, as, according to 70% of the male respondents, their supervisor 'knows about their personal circumstances'.

In terms of mental health and feelings of belonging (in the department), one in two female students feels isolated; around one third of all respondents state that they have considered giving up their studies. One in two female students feels that responsibilities at home have an effect upon her research. Furthermore, one third of all respondents state that they have experienced conflicts based on their gender, age, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation in the classroom, in social gatherings and/or while conducting research. One third doesn't know whether their institution or university has a written policy against racial discrimination; 40% doesn't know whether their institution has a formal sex discrimination policy.

Nearly half of all PhD students are not involved in teaching, although approximately two thirds express an interest in teaching. More than half of those teaching are currently on a training programme or have received a training programme in teaching in Higher Education. Just over half of male respondents believe that teaching is an important part of academic life – 76% of female students gave the same answer. Nearly 70% of all respondents believe that research is an important part of academic life

Higher numbers of male than female students are unsure whether/disagree with the statement that the PhD degree will 'pay back the sacrifices they make'. Two in three women believe in the statement. This sense seems to be particularly strongly represented by non-white female and male students and among white European males. White British students (male and female) are almost equally divided between those who agree and those who are unsure or disagree with the statement.

Some Reflections

There are strong indications that one of the most important aspects

of reading for a PhD degree in the field is the degree of isolation felt by a very high number of students and the closely linked feelings of insecurity and lack of motivation. Currently, there is very little systematic support of PhD students, while a great deal of work seems to rest on the shoulders of rather overworked staff. The investigator created an electronic list dedicated to the discussion of issues related to the experience of PhD students/ junior scholars in CCM studies in the UK. In the long-term, this initiative could be undertaken together with MeCCSA and ADC-LTSN and possible sister associations for wider national presence and diversification of population. Currently the address of the list Future Faculty in Communication, Culture and Media Studies is <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/mediacomcult-phd.html> and it has over 100 subscribers.

Social and economic factors in the lives of PhD students are closely interlinked with the teaching and learning experience. PhD students appear 'disillusioned' with their degrees and the academia in general, its consumerisation, lack of support for social sciences, with the RAE/rating driven race that leaves little space for constructive academic relations and with mentoring and general working conditions. Feelings of gloom and uncertainty are mostly

found among female students. Some students make references to the 'unwritten rules' that academe is hostile to pregnancy and family.

Despite the fact that individual institutions may be strong in supporting PhD students, general lack of time on behalf of overworked staff (that is being noticed by PhD students), the lack of credit given to the supervision of PhDs in some departments/universities and the more general conditions of work in British HE today are discouraging for PhD students – the future faculty – and as one student put it, it can only lead to a 'brain drain'. These problems cannot be resolved by individuals or institutions alone as they point to a more general, structural problem rather than local difficulties. The analysis of qualitative data, which will become available through academic and other articles, will shed more light into the perceptions and opinions of PhD students.

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Channel 5: The early years

Christine Fanthome

Channel 5: The Early Years is the first full-length study of Britain's fifth terrestrial television channel, recently rebranded as Five

Drawing on a series of interviews with key TV figures such as Dawn Airey, Greg Dyke, David Elstein, John Hambley, Kevin Lygo and Nick Milligan, *Channel 5: The Early Years* presents an historical account of Channel 5 from its conception to the end of its fifth year of transmission, covering the licence application, the re-tuning of domestic receivers, its launch within a changing broadcasting environment, its marketing strategies, the public reaction to the channel, and a financial analysis of the business.

The book aims to bridge the differing perspectives of the media practitioner and the media scholar and is thus of interest to the

industry professional on the one hand and, on the other, to teachers and students of mass communication, cultural studies, marketing and advertising, and media history. My own background, before I became an academic, was as a broadcaster.

The arrival of Channel 5 in 1997 was an event of major significance in the history of British broadcasting. Put simply, it offered another network to most of the viewing population; but more significant was the fact that it was also the first terrestrial channel to be launched in the era of multi-channel television. Competition from satellite and cable had already begun to fragment the 'mass' audience, and digital television posed a

further threat to Britain's delicate broadcasting ecology. With both BBC 1 and ITV now suffering a drop in ratings, it was conceivable that Britain's system of regulated public service television would be unable to survive in the multi-channel era.

A combination of new technology, policy changes and market forces had altered not only the implicit attitudes of the broadcasters and nature of the programmes they transmitted but the habits and expectations of the viewers. There was the possibility of a huge expansion of viewer choice and the culture of television had been transformed by the gradual emergence of round-the-clock broadcasting.

The election of the Thatcher government in 1979 had begun a trend towards deregulation, and the increasingly global media market, itself an effect of advances in technology, had also had an impact on broadcasting economics and production. Increased viewing choice sharpened competition between broadcasters: an audience of finite size was now the battleground for a growing number of market players, each of them needing to establish a brand image, market position and rationale within the overall broadcasting framework.

It was into this unstable media environment that Channel 5 was launched as a new terrestrial channel dedicated to general entertainment, funded by advertising, regulated by the ITC, with limited reach, and with an additional and costly obligation to re-tune the viewers' receiving equipment. Re-tuning was required (it turned out unnecessarily) in order to prevent video recorders and other items from experiencing interference from the channel's signal.

As a new licensee, Channel 5 was able to create its own niche and corporate image without having to conform to tradition or conventional expectations. Since it is a network around which several current media issues coalesce, it is thus of special interest to media researchers and students.

Its arrival posed several interrelated questions. First, there were the practical and economic considerations which would ensure its survival within a difficult environment. Those who sought to

operate the channel were obliged to base their bids on unproven research and dubious projections. With mere estimates as to coverage, cost and viewer response, they were required to create a programming schedule and a business plan that would ensure a profit on the one hand yet satisfy the ITC's public service requirements on the other.

Opinion was divided as to whether the channel could do both, or indeed either, of those things. Moreover, quite apart from the practical dilemmas, complex ethical considerations arose. Was it right to offer a 'national' service that would not reach the whole nation? And in its invitation of bids for the licence, how would the ITC define notions of 'quality' and 'public service'?

This detailed case study of Channel 5 is set within the wider broadcasting context, analysing every development since the initial investigations into spectrum availability in the late 1980s.

The chronological approach shows how the channel developed from initial concept to working organisation.

Focusing on its scheduling decisions (including the controversial use of adult material), the final chapters reveal the lessons learnt by Five in trying to reconcile its need to make a profit with its public service obligations. It highlights the growing need to find a viable path between mass and niche markets, and explains the expansion in branding and marketing which the current broadcasting environment requires.

As it nears its seventh birthday, Five is at last making an operating profit and commanding about 7 per cent of the UK television audience. It has come a long way, and *Channel 5: The Early Years* provides an account of every stage of its progress.

Christine Fanthome worked in the television industry for ten years before returning to the University of London to take an MA and a PhD in Media and Communications. She now works as a freelance writer and media consultant.

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Brian McNair

writes about TV shows which attempt to give viewers access to politics.

With ITV recently confirming that it will produce a new reality TV show with a political theme — *Vote For Me* — and June's European and local elections confirming a downward trend in electoral turnouts, the relationship between the media and democracy continues to be high on the public agenda. It is estimated that barely 50% of the British people will vote at the next UK general election, and it seems unlikely that ITV's contribution will do much to overcome short-term apathy.

Perceptions of a crisis in democratic participation are not new, of course, with explanations ranging from public cynicism to apathy and disillusion. The media have been blamed too, most recently by Downing Street policy adviser Geoff Mulgan, who joins Alistair Campbell in accusing the media of corrupting the political process.

Concerns about the role of the political media in combating the democratic crisis have driven a number of research projects in recent years. The BBC's *Beyond the Sound Bite* (Kevill, BBC, 2002) and Hargreaves and Thomas's *New News, Old News?* (ITC/BSC/BBC, 2002) attempted to identify through audience and content research the deficiencies of political broadcasting in the UK, and to suggest ways in which they might be rectified. That research joined an ongoing effort to identify, as Robert Entman and Lance Bennett put it in their edited volume on *Mediated Politics* (2001), "the communication conditions that either promote or discourage broad citizen engagement".

The research reported in a book I have co-written, *Mediated Access* (for details, see below) contributes to that effort by focusing on one particular type of political communication — the forms of public participation, or access broadcasting to which our title refers. The research assesses the contribution political access programmes make to British democracy, as seen from the perspectives of programme producers, audiences sitting at home, and those members of the public who make up the participants in mediated access formats, whether as members of a studio audience, callers down a phone line, or e-mailers on the internet.

The interview and focus group-based study was funded by the ESRC as part of its Democracy and Participation programme, and was indeed the only media studies project to be included in what was largely a political science programme. Stirling's inclusion in

the programme was a welcome recognition from outwith the field of the role which media studies can play in the analysis and understanding of contemporary political processes.

Our conclusions are encouraging, in so far as the research shows that the provision of mediated access to politicians and political debate is regarded by producers, politicians and audiences as a potentially valuable tool in the re-engagement of public interest in and enthusiasm for democratic processes. ITV's decision to go ahead with *Vote For Me* is clearly an attempt to reflect that view in programming terms, and we wish it success, notwithstanding the predictable criticisms from some quarters about dumbing down, infotainment and the like.

We also, however, identify the need to support those broadcasters who wish to protect and strengthen the spaces for more conventional forms of political access programming which currently exist in British broadcast schedules, such as *Question Time*, *Any Questions*, *Dimbleby* and the rest, and to do so within a framework which recognises the difference between the legitimate ambition of political journalism to be popular, and the ratings-driven temptation to be populist.

At a time of intense competitive pressure on all broadcasting organisations, and with the Ofcom review of public service broadcasting's remit now in full swing as Charter renewal approaches in 2006, we wish to add our voice to the argument that, amidst perceived public cynicism about and apathy for institutional politics, well-designed political broadcasting of quality — access programming in particular — can play a potentially significant role in strengthening democratic participation.

Running through the study is the question of what makes a good access programme, given the normative role participation is expected to play in the public sphere, and the political, economic and technological conditions within which it is produced. While there will always be a strongly subjective dimension to the many different answers which might be given to that question, *Mediated Access* contrasts the measurable aspirations and achievements of radio and television producers with the perceptions of the public — both participants and audiences — about what has been achieved. We argue that, since the first edition of *Any Questions*

was transmitted in 1948, British broadcasting has encouraged a distinctive culture of political access, as seen in programmes such as ITV's *Ask the Prime Minister*, or in Tony Blair's live appearances before a public audience on *Newsnight* in the run up to the invasion of Iraq.

We argue, on the basis of our focus groups, that even if such moments of mediated access do not lead to an upsurge in voting, they are crucial to engaging citizens in public debate.

Brian McNair is Professor in the Department of Film and Media Studies at the University of Stirling, and a member of the Stirling Media Research Institute.

Mediated Access: Broadcasting and Democratic Participation in the Age of Mediated Politics by **Brian McNair, Matthew Hibberd and Philip Schlesinger** is published by **University of Luton Press.**

Credit Due

This regular feature highlights writers and books in the MeCCSA subject areas who haven't received the recognition they deserve. Here, **Peter Golding** examines a production ethnography from before the term was invented – Philip Elliott's *The Making of a Television Series*

Philip Elliott's tragically premature death in 1983 robbed the emerging UK field of media studies of one of its most original and distinctive formative voices. His work is now all too frequently and ruinously neglected. Yet he conducted production ethnographies well before the term was even current, astutely interrogated the relevance and decline of the public sphere before Habermas' translated work had yet settled into the English speaking landscape, and provided incisive and prescient analysis of news coverage of northern Ireland in particular, and terrorism in general, from which there is much still to be learned.

Philip's background in social anthropology made him a natural to undertake observational studies of television production. In 1967 he undertook a study of the making of a documentary series, *The Nature of Prejudice*, produced by ATV, the then midlands franchise holder for the Independent Television Network. Combining his sociological interest in occupations with a broader anthropological sensitivity to how culture is produced and maintained, the study uncovered the shared assumptions at work in television's

relatively closed world, its rules of thumb in production, the mechanisms of control and information flow, and how television producers deal with their audiences. The construction of social meanings, he argued, cannot be adequately assessed in terms of some pure correspondence with 'the facts', or otherwise understood merely as a distortion of 'the real'. Rather, in a term which he first introduced to the field, the mass media should be conceived of as constructing and continually modifying a 'media culture', a complex set of shared significances, which are crucially shaped by the dominant political, economic and cultural forces in society mediated through professional routines.

Philip used television journalism as a way of analysing the more general question of how mass culture is produced, and the consequent problem of meaningful communication. The themes of *The Making of a Television Series* inform much of the rest of his work. In the book's conclusions, Philip noted a secular shift in the media towards 'more mass characteristics in content and organisation'; that 'although the professional communicator has gradually

emerged as a new-style intellectual in society, the tendency is for him to be preoccupied with the form rather than the content of communication'; and that 'the unplanned product of following accepted production routines within established organisational systems' means that 'what is said will in the main be fundamentally supportive of the socio-economic structure of the society in which these organisations are set'.

Philip's patient and sympathetic manner gave him access where the more abrasive style of later, less successful, researchers would meet with rebuff. His ethnographic studies of production were only possible because of these personal skills allied to his ability to see in situations what most others, including many of the participants, missed. It was therefore somewhat ironic that his path-breaking study should have elicited such a hostile review from the then doyenne of television current affairs, Grace Wyndham Goldie, in the *Listener* (sadly, now, a defunct weekly, published by the BBC, to which Philip later contributed, for a period, a witty and perceptive broadcasting review column).

Wyndham Goldie's point was that generalization from a single television series is impossible since each production is unique. Furthermore, since television producers operate with shared professional understandings, which do not require articulating, their working premises and values are imperceptible to even the most careful of eavesdroppers. Sourly lashing at the Leicester Centre where Philip was based, and at the entire enterprise of mass communication research, it was the cry of a closed professional culture defending its practices from outside scrutiny. Elliott, typically, did not rise to the bait, but two colleagues, in a letter to the *Listener*, pointed out that her critique seemed to assume "that research is about what people say, not what they do, and that the covert intimacy of a production team is impervious to the naive outsider unaware of the implications of argot, gesture, and understanding.... Yet if she is right, her belief that generalisation from case studies of production is impossible is surely absurd, since only if there are recurrent problems met and resolved in similar ways can these common understandings she believes so mysterious, be workable, or even exist.... And if she is wrong, and the activities of people in the media are no more or less obscure than those in other industries, then the search for regularities and routines is a perfectly valid procedure"

But the methodology of research in sensitive settings remained an abiding concern for Philip. The appendix to *The Making of a*

Television Series deals with the problems both of generalization and of inference. Generalization is indeed hazardous but 'can be established not only by doing frequency research but by doing more comparative participant observation studies in a variety of settings', an injunction he was to obey in much of his later work. As he went on, 'The important test to apply to the analysis of participant observation data seems to me not to be simply how many other cases is this likely to be true for — a question which cannot be answered within the terms of the method; but how plausible is the posited relationship between belief, behaviour, and situation in the light of possible alternative explanations?'

In a later succinct and thoughtful conference paper he enlarged on these reflections. It is a masterly summary of the virtues and pitfalls of observational studies, in which he identifies the 'three "Cs" of creativity, confidence and chance which form the kernel of debate in broadcaster/researcher understanding, a particular instance of a general problem where 'one group's role is defined by the practical problems of processing an output, while the other group, the researcher, has the more diffuse responsibility of producing new knowledge'. His conclusions were profound and comprehensive. 'The important point to establish is that the basic aims of the research are to try and develop knowledge and understanding. These are better weapons with which to fight off criticisms of politicians and interested parties than the suspicions which grow from ignorance. Trying to batten down the hatches will only make the suspicions grow a little bit larger'.

Subsequently Philip developed these and other themes in a series of works which defied the pain and disruption of his increasingly severe illness. My first research job was working with Philip on the comparative news study which became *Making The News* (1979). His influence on and inspiration of an emerging generation of researchers was profound, and work like his seminal television production studies has never more urgently merited rediscovery, for both the pleasure and the insights that it provides in such abundance.

Peter Golding is Honorary Secretary of MeCCSA and Professor of Sociology at Loughborough University.

***The Making of a Television Series* by Philip Elliott was published by Constable in 1972.**

Martin Barker reports on a recent conference on reception research in Versailles

I was lucky enough to be invited to a fascinating conference at the University of Versailles in November 2003, on the current state and future of reception research. Across the three days, approaching 200 people — mostly from France, but with a few also from Germany, Switzerland, Norway, and the USA, along with a contingent of around 10 from the UK — struggled with language differences (helped by excellently-translated long abstracts of all the papers) but still managed to learn a lot about each others' respective traditions of enquiry into audiences.

And among the first differences to show was the interesting strength, in France, of enquiry into literary audiences — a phenomenon hardly present in Anglophone countries, unless it be the kind of work which appears in *Empirical Studies of the Arts*. A series of papers explored particular cases of literary reception, from responses to Michel Houellebecq's controversial writings, historical investigations of cross-national responses to the rise of naturalism, to young people's ways of taking up television adaptations of classic literature.

It quickly became apparent that French audience/reception researchers are currently engaged in what was at times a quite fierce debate — whose central opposition was a version of sociology deriving from Pierre Bourdieu, and a particular take-up of the cultural studies tradition. Partly, but by no means wholly, this turned on interests in class and the idea of class cultures. Some other complicated issues revolved around what is legitimate to research, and what are legitimate methods — and it was indeed interesting and also unusual to see statistical tables being presented and discussed.

One point of genuine overlap between Anglophone and Francophone traditions was an evident wish to shift from talk of 'audiences' to talk about 'publics', and to debate the role of the

media, including new digital media, in citizenship and democratic participation. But in the French context that permeated back into other debates, in for instance one presentation which employed Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' to explore the manner of male working class film-lovers' uses of their bodies. Indeed, it was striking how many researchers who were not from literary departments were rooted in sociology.

But oh, the style was distinctly different. The conference was open, free of charge, to anyone who wished to attend. It was all conducted in one series of plenary sessions, with fast-paced presentations interspersed with occasional debating sessions — where

positions were quickly taken up. A cavernous 550-seater modern room with excellent acoustics defeated us all with its audiovisual technology — and there was one hilarious moment when someone pressed a wrong button and a huge curtain proceeded to move in stately and unstoppable manner all the way across the back of the room.

The conference was, as far as I could tell, a first both in bringing together French reception researchers to debate among themselves, and in opening a dialogue with British audience research traditions. A strong selection of the

papers will be appearing in the second issue of the new on-line audience studies journal *Participations* (www.participations.org) in 2004.

But the French definitely do their conferences differently

One point of genuine overlap between Anglophone and Francophone traditions was an evident wish to shift from talk of 'audiences' to talk about 'publics'

Martin Barker is Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Aberystwyth.

Obituary: David Cardiff

by Paddy Scannell

David Cardiff, who has died aged 59, contributed to establishing the media as a subject of academic study in Britain. He joined the then Regent Street Polytechnic (now the University of Westminster) in 1969 to teach psychology and to take part in setting up a Diploma in Communication Studies. In 1975 this was upgraded to an honours degree in Media Studies the first, and for some years, the only undergraduate course in Britain on this topic.

There was little in the way of academic literature to go on when it came to teaching the course, and so staff had themselves to do much of the background research. David and I began our systematic investigation into the pre-war BBC because we wanted to know about the origins of radio documentary for a course on that topic which we had rashly offered to teach. The work grew into a large scale study of policy and programme making in all the major areas of radio output; news, features, talks, music, outside broadcasts and entertainment. It was eventually published by Blackwell in 1991 as *A Social History of British Broadcasting, 1922-1939*.

David's meticulously researched studies of the BBC Talks and Variety Departments in the 1930s made a fundamental contribution to the understanding of the development of broadcast talk and entertainment. In the 1980s he published a number of articles on these topics in *Media Culture & Society* and elsewhere.

He was born on June 1st 1944, and educated at Eton and New College, Oxford (1963-6) where he read Politics, Philosophy and Psychology. Why he chose these subjects is something of a mystery, since he was always far more interested in the arts and literature (he had an abiding love of Proust and knew countless poems by heart). He nevertheless succeeded in astonishing successive intakes of students with his lectures, accompanied by diagrams, on the relevance of Hegel to their understanding of contemporary media. These were counterbalanced by vivid accounts of experiments in authoritarian behaviour which seemed to prove that students would willingly inflict life-threatening pain on each other, when prompted to do so by academic psychologists.

Students loved him. It was not just that he was a dedicated and entertaining teacher. He was actually interested in them and their lives. He was a good and patient listener. He will be well remembered by a whole generation of students whom he taught.

His colleagues will miss him too. He was always good company; a notable raconteur and singer of music hall ballads. In the annual Christmas show, put together on video by the television students, he was always the star turn. His performances as Madonna (Material Girl) and Boy George (Karma Chameleon) were legendary.

He was course leader of the BA in Media Studies for a number of years. Later he played an important role in Westminster, chairing many validation panels of existing and new degree courses across the university. Though he found paperwork irksome, he applied himself to it patiently because he was concerned to maintain high standards and to ensure that students received a good education. He was a fastidious reader of academic prose, with a gimlet eye for flatulence and jargon in the many documents that came his way.

David took early retirement in 1996. After more than 25 years he was tired of teaching a subject which seemed to him by then to be in the intellectual doldrums, and he did not like the emerging audit culture of performance indicators and paper trails in higher education. He left Westminster without regret, eager to devote himself to his life-long passion for painting. He set up in studios, first at Hackney then in High Barnet, and worked all day improving his technique and discovering his own style and 'voice' in paint. Whenever he met his former colleagues he would say, quite simply, that he had never been happier in his life. An exhibition of his work will be held in the autumn.

Earlier this year he was diagnosed as having myelo-fibrosis, and advised that he needed a bone-marrow transplant. His brother, Charles, was the donor. He died of a stroke three days after the operation.

In 1971 he married the journalist Lynn Barber. They had two daughters, Rosie and Theo. He is survived by his father and two brothers, Charles and Luke.

David Cardiff, university teacher and painter, born 1 January 1944, died 10 August 2003.

Paddy Scannell is Professor in the School of Media, Arts and Design at the University of Westminster

Launch of the MeCCSA postgraduate network

Vicky Ball

MeCCSA, in conjunction with the Art, Design, Communication – Learning and Teaching Support Network, is launching a postgraduate network.

The aim of the Postgraduate Network is to bring together postgraduate students in media, communication and cultural studies from different intellectual traditions and cultural backgrounds in order to form research, and teaching and learning networks and also ensure peer support.

The Postgraduate Network's goals are to:

- Situate postgraduate researchers in the national landscape of media, communication and cultural studies
- Provide a national forum where postgraduates can participate in workshops/seminars related to teaching, learning and research
- Bring together members of the postgraduate community in order to debate contemporary issues in media, communication and cultural studies
- Provide a supportive environment where postgraduates can establish valuable contacts for the future

To launch the network, a half-day seminar for representative members of the postgraduate community to debate issues in media, communication and cultural studies postgraduate research and teaching and learning, was held at the University of Westminster on Thursday 13th May.

Material from this seminar will feed in to the national Postgraduate Forum that is being organised by the network in Birmingham, in September 2004.

Postgraduates interested in finding out more about the network or in participating in the seminar should contact Vicky Ball, at Vball@qmuc.ac.uk, or on 0131 3173159.

MeCCSA Women's Media Studies Network

Heather Nunn

There have been two network events over the last few months. The first was organised by Karin Wahl-Jorgenson and Rebecca Farley and hosted by the School of Journalism Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University on Monday 31st October 2003. This 'Women's Mentoring Day' consisted of two round table panels addressing the vital issues of 'Succeeding in the Academy' and 'Getting Grants'. Speakers included Terry Threadgold, Jenny Kitzinger and Cindy Carter (all from Cardiff) and Katharine Sarikakis (Coventry). This was a successful day that enabled both postgraduates and academics to share their experiences and expertise.

The second event, organised by Jane Arthurs at University of West of England, was held on Friday 23rd January 2004 at the excellent Watershed Media Centre. Provocatively entitled "The 'New Sexism'" the day consisted of illustrated presentations followed by an open debate focusing on the new formations of sexism in popular culture and feminist strategies of intervention.

This successful day addressed the resurgence of sexist forms of discourse and imagery in the popular media including advertising, romantic comedy and men's lifestyle magazines. A convincing case was made that we have now moved beyond the ironic sexism

of the 1990s into a new period of post-ironic 'retrosexism' in which factors such as nostalgia, postfeminism, permissive populism and so on have validated a reinvigoration of sexist language and imagery.

In her paper 'Down with Love: The feminine mistake' Kathrina Glitre (UWE) explored some of the continuities between the sex comedy, postfeminism and the 'new' sexism, and particularly the nostalgic return to the American iconography of the fifties and sixties through the resurrection of the sex comedy. In doing so she charted the retrogressive move from irony to 'insincerity' and surface and the transformation of a self-conscious gender performativity to a more overt emphasis on gender consumption and a de-politicised feminine space.

In 'Retrosexism in Popular Culture' Judith Williamson (freelance) challenged our unwillingness to name sexism in the present moment. She argued that this timidity has encouraged sexism to develop either as a form of nostalgia or as cutting edge radicalism. By locating sexism as a sign of the past, popular cultural images are emptied of political content. Using advertising as an example, Williamson suggested that at a time when sexist imagery not only persists but also flourishes we have deprived ourselves of the language to analyse it as such.

Kate Brooks' (UWE) presentation 'Loaded with Meaning: working with men researching men's lifestyle magazines' moved the debate into the domain of consumption by outlining her research on the dynamics of male consumer discourse. The talk usefully provided a broader context for understanding the new sexism by highlighting issues of class, tabloidisation and masculinity in post new-lad culture. Her account of the research ethics and strategies necessarily employed by a feminist academic in interviewing male readers and exploring gender politics also foregrounded the challenge of intervening in the production and consumption of sexist representation; a challenge which was the subject of much animated debate in the open forum that followed.

A number of people involved in the organisation of this day event are also members of the Gender and Culture Research Group in the School of Cultural Studies at UWE. The group aims to foster shared discussion groups, projects and public events. For more information please contact Jane Arthurs at jane.arthurs@uwe.ac.uk. Jane is also interested in continuing the debates raised at the WMSN event via the WMSN website.

Karen Ross (Coventry) is organising the next event on Wednesday 2nd June 2004, to be hosted by Manchester University, on the theme of gender and reality television. To register please email Karen on k.ross@coventry.ac.uk

Organising committee

The committee for 2004 is chaired by Heather Nunn and consists of Anita Biressi, Ros Brunt, Cindy Carter, Margaret Montgomerie, Karen Ross and Milly Williamson. Once again we would like to thank Ann Butler for managing the WMSN email list.

The committee met on Monday April 5th 2004. Present were Heather Nunn, Anita Biressi, Margaret Montgomerie, Karen Ross. There were apologies from: Ros Brunt, Cindy Carter, Millie Williamson, Ann Butler

Agenda items included:

- Strategies to prolong the life of events via email discussion and the posting of papers on line.
- The promotion of forthcoming WMSN events.
- Budgeting and charges for events.
- Call for papers for panels under the WMSN umbrella for the next MeCCSA conference to be held at Lincoln in January 2005.
- The scheduling of the Network meeting at Lincoln to optimise attendance.
- The return of Showcasing Women as a space to promote women's practice and scholarship for the Lincoln Conference.
- New initiatives to maintain and improve the WMSN webpage.

Future newsletters will feature progress reports on actions arising from these discussions.

If you would like to propose an event to be hosted by your institution please email Heather Nunn at: h.nunn@roehampton.ac.uk to discuss your ideas.

...cultural fast food with the Frankfurt School

Hey Karl, who were the Frankfurt School?

Not now Dave ... I'm texting my tutor my dissertation ... it's taken 157 texts so far and I've only done the introduction.

Oh go on ... you owe me. You drank my third loan last night.

Did I? Thought that was loose change. Okay... The early Frankfurt School were mostly a bunch of Germans who created and worked together in a kind of inter-disciplinary group that included sociologists, political economists, psychologists and more. You've probably heard some of the main names: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal, Max Horkheimer, among others, and then later on Herbert Marcuse.

So, what's the big deal with them?

Well, a curriculum often works in a kind of heroes and villains way, and for us the Frankfurt School are the bad guys. They're often a starting point for textbooks as a kind of line against which we can compare progress and see how far we've come, like a year zero.

Bad guys? What did they do?

Well, for one thing the Frankfurt School were The Smiths of cultural studies and Adorno was their Morrissey.

The who?

No, not The Who. The Smiths! 'Heaven knows I'm miserable now' and other such fun songs – you know? They're usually seen as pessimistic, all gloom and doom.

Well, that's how the Frankfurt School are seen. And they're often condemned for it. People say they thought audiences were doped up by mass culture, that it's like a

mental dummy keeping you docile and unthinking and people just take it in and are shaped by it. But that's a real caricature of a large amount of work that really aimed to tackle the huge issue of why Marx's prophecy of revolution hadn't come true. In working on this they made a lot of arguments, often in very complex language and it's not easy to unpick some of it.

But, and this is being very crude, in terms of culture they highlighted how culture was becoming an industry, that it was about selling as much as possible and that to do so it creates conditions that keep you buying.

They might have said that culture is now like fast food: instead being something that satisfies your needs, it gives you a little lift but leaves you hungry again pretty soon, and isn't very good for your health. It keeps you in a state of hunger so you come back for more. And the choices are limited because people tend to like what they know and because the industry needs to produce it en masse.

They said mass culture was 'like a multiple-choice questionnaire without a correct answer' – it doesn't matter what you buy so long as you keep buying. And so long as you keep buying you're keeping the whole thing chugging along nicely.

So were they a bunch of miseries?

Well you could say they certainly didn't paint mass culture as a bunch of laughs. But there are a load of misconceptions about them, such as the idea they never did empirical research, which is simply wrong, or that they hated all mass culture just because it wasn't high culture or that they were resigned to the terribleness of it all.

These ideas about them were particularly strong when cultural populism was rife.

What's cultural populism mean then?

**MeCCSA Media, Communications & Cultural Studies Association
AMPE Association of Media Practice Educators**

This first joint conference of MeCCSA and AMPE will bring together two leading media subject associations serving the United Kingdom's tertiary sector.

The conference will be non-thematic and we encourage submissions which demonstrate excellence in our given fields:

Research • Practice • Teaching • Enterprise

*Papers should be submitted in the form of 300–500 word abstracts
by 1 July 2004 to
meccsaampe2005@lincoln.ac.uk*

**MeCCSA and AMPE Joint Annual Conference
University of Lincoln
5–7 January 2005**

Further details available at www.meccsa.org.uk and www.ampe.co.uk

You what Guv?

In this issue, a doyen of American cultural studies compresses the entire history of modern philosophy into a paragraph. Slow down sir, you're going too fast for me!

The modern has often been identified as embodying a chronological logic as well as a specific temporality. But the relation goes deeper, for at the heart of modern thought is, I believe, the assumption of the difference between space and time, which plays itself out, for example, in the difference between structure and process. The bifurcation of time and space, and the privileging of time over space, was perhaps the crucial founding moment of modern philosophy. It allowed the deferral of ontology and the reduction of the real to consciousness, experience, meaning and history (and it allowed the articulation of subjectivity, identity and agency to become an identification).

Closing Credits

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Three-D is a publication of **MeCCSA, the UK national subject association for its field in higher education. The Association exists to represent the field of Media, Communication and Cultural Studies.** Except where stated, contributions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association, or its Executive Committee.

Chair: Christine Geraghty, University of Glasgow
Hon. Secretary: Peter Golding, Loughborough University

Full details of the Association, including how to join, along with a full list of the Executive Committee for 2004 can be found on the MeCCSA web-site at www.meccsa.org.uk