

◆ COMMUNICATION AND HUMAN VALUES ◆

TELEVISION AND WOMEN'S CULTURE

The Politics of the Popular

edited by Mary Ellen Brown

图书馆



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COMMUNICATION AND HUMAN VALUES



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For Kevin, Colin, Sean and Chris

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Acknowledgements

I began teaching classes about women and media in 1975. At that time, women teaching in newly formed Women's Studies Programs were self-educated. We had experienced the 1970's women's movement and subsequently applied its principles to our own areas of expertise. There were no textbooks, few articles and particularly none from the point of view expressed in this volume. I have subsequently used the work of this group of critics in teaching about women and popular culture to women's studies students and to media studies students, and I have found it to be an approach which not only rewards their scholarship in the present, but also gives them tools of analysis which are of continuing value.

Virginia Nightingale's chapter, *Women as Audience*, was presented to the 1988 International Television Studies Conference, London. Portions of *For Television-Centred Television Criticism: Lessons from Feminism* were delivered at the Iowa Symposium and Conference on Television Criticism in Iowa City, Iowa in 1986, and the International Communication Association Annual Conference in Montreal, Canada in 1986. A longer version of this chapter has appeared in *Communication Yearbook II*, edited by James A. Anderson, copyright 1988 by Sage Publications, Inc. The excerpts are reprinted by permission.

A version of *Consumer Girl Culture*, by Lisa A. Lewis, first appeared in *OneTwoThreeFour*, Number 5: Special Issue on Music Video (Spring 1987). A shortened version of *Motley Moments: Soap Operas, Carnival, Gossip and the Power of the Utterance* by Mary Ellen Brown was presented at the International Communication Association Annual Conference, in Montreal, Canada, 1986.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction: Feminist Cultural Television Criticism – Culture, Theory and Practice

Mary Ellen Brown

The perspectives on television criticism in the following chapters are grounded in theory from several streams and from the women's movement of the 1970s. In this introduction, I would like to summarise and contextualise these theoretical perspectives in the hope that this will enhance and clarify the reader's understanding and use of the book.

The evolution of the feminist television criticism in this volume was encouraged by the women's movement in general and mediated by several strands of critical thought. Primary in its evolution are two ideas, one is the use of theory and the other is the close, fresh and specific examination of television programmes and audiences.

The theory, which can be loosely labelled post-structuralist, makes clear but limited use of structuralist thinking while recognising its social construction. The works of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and Claude Lévi-Strauss apply here. In discerning what meaning is and how meaning is made, the theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, Umberto Eco, and Roland Barthes provide the semiotic underpinnings. Its Marxist social and philosophical position evolves out of the work of Louis Althusser in France, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall in England and Antonio Gramsci in Italy. Feminist theoretical underpinnings are harder to pinpoint.