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PROGRAMMING: DISTRIBUTION AND FLOW

We have looked at some uses of received cultural forms in the new technology of television, and we have looked also at some of the new and mixed forms which have been created within the technology. We ought now to look at the selection and association of these different forms in different kinds of programming. The concept of 'programme' needs, as we shall see, analysis. But it is useful, as a first step, to look in some detail at the distribution of varying forms of television within different kinds of service. We cannot properly speak of the uses of television until we have made these internal comparisons and contrasts. But it will then be all the more necessary to go beyond the static concept of 'distribution' to the mobile concept of 'flow'.

A. COMPARATIVE DISTRIBUTION IN FIVE TELEVISION CHANNELS

The distribution of types of television programme, in five channels – three in Britain, two in the United States – was analysed for a week in March 1973.

The channels are:

BBC 1, London.

BBC 2, London.

IBA, Anglia, Norwich.

KQED (Public Television), San Francisco.

Channel 7 (ABC), San Francisco.

The categories used are conventional, as follows:

- (a) *News and Public Affairs*: This category can be subdivided into news bulletins, general news magazines, news magazines for particular ethnic groups, and public affairs discussions. There is some overlap between these, at certain points, in that there are often magazine items within news bulletins, news announcements within magazines, discussion within bulletins and magazines, and so on. The significance of the figures, while occasionally interesting for the minor categories, is mainly in relation to the category as a whole.
- (b) *Features and Documentaries*: These are as defined in 3, B, (iv) (page 73 above). It is a category not always easy to separate from, for example, news magazines and public affairs discussions. The normal criterion used is that an item is classified as 'feature' or 'documentary' when a substantial part of it is offered as direct presentation of the substance of a problem or an experience or a situation, by contrast with the 'discussion' in which a situation or problem may be illustrated, usually relatively briefly, but in which the main emphasis falls on relatively formal argument about it.
- (c) *Education*: This is defined as items of formal educational

- intention, as distinct from 'educational' elements in other kinds of programme. It is subdivided into course-programmes for schools, colleges and universities; instructional programmes, not normally related to external courses, mainly on crafts, hobbies, etc.; and adult education of a more general kind – specific teaching of general skills, which is however not related to formal courses and qualifications. There is again some overlap between these categories, and the course programmes, for example, are available to and often watched by the general public. The total figure for education is thus more significant than the subsidiary figures.
- (d) *Arts and Music*: This is a difficult category to separate, since it depends on received definitions of 'the arts' – painting, sculpture, architecture, literature – and 'music' in the sense of the established classical concert repertory and opera. It is given as a separate category because it is usually planned in these terms and is then significant as a received interpretation and as a proportion.
 - (e) *Children's Programmes*: This is defined as programmes specifically made for and offered to children, at certain special times. Children of course watch many other kinds of programme, but this separable category is significant. It is subdivided into programmes composed mainly of cartoons and puppet-shows; other kinds of entertainment programme, usually 'live' stories and plays; and educational programmes. This last subdivision needs explanation. Such programmes – *Sesame Street*, *The Electric Company*, *Playschool* – often use cartoons or puppets, and are often entertaining. But they are separately listed because their formal intention is to help with learning, and much specific teaching of skills is included in them, though often in informal ways.
 - (f) *Drama*: This includes all kinds of dramatic work (other than the special categories found in education, children's programmes and commercials). It is subdivided into 'plays'

offered singly, even if under some general title such as *Play for Today* or *Armchair Theatre*; 'series', in which each play is normally self-contained but in which certain regular characters recur – principal characterisation, for example, thus building up through several items; and 'serials', in which a connected dramatic presentation is offered in several linked episodes.

- (g) **Movies:** This is defined as films originally made for distribution in cinemas and movie theatres. Plays, series or serials which may in whole or in part have been filmed have been included under Drama.
- (h) **General Entertainment:** This is a miscellaneous category, but as such significant; in Britain it is often grouped under a Light Entertainment Department. It is subdivided into 'musical shows' – where singers or groups are principally presented, at times with rather different supporting items; 'variety shows' – where the main emphasis is on comedy, in a number of cases with supporting musical items; 'games and quiz-shows' – where in many different forms there is some kind of overt game-playing or competition (often of the 'parlour-game' kind, in its many modern variants, often with members of the public participating) and question-and-answer shows of the same competitive kind; 'talk-shows' – a category not always easy to separate from 'discussions' and 'magazines' but conventionally defined as a separate form and presented as entertainment, usually late at night: in matter and manner usually strongly linked to 'show-business'.
- (i) **Sport:** Televised Sport and sports discussion.
- (j) **Religion:** Religious services, discussions and features, presented at specific times.
- (k) **Publicity (internal):** A channel's presentation of its own programmes, by trailers, advance announcements, etc.
- (l) **Commercials:** Advertising programmes of all kinds other than internal publicity.

The analysis is presented in table form, in hours and decimal fractions of hours. All timings have been carefully made, but it must be noted that in the absence of any published statistics of detailed programming, and in the absence also of any really adequate facilities for exact timing over several simultaneous channels, the figures are necessarily subject to some marginal errors. This is especially the case in relation to commercials and internal publicity, which break the form of the published schedules. In these cases spot-checks were made and then an average figure applied.

The figures as a whole are significant not so much for exact allocations as for purposes of general discussion and comparison.

Table 1: Programme Distribution by Hours

Sample week 3–9 March 1973	BBC 1	BBC 2	Anglia	KQED	Ch. 7
A. News and Public Affairs					
News	5.7	3.5	5.0	5.2	11.6
News mag. (gen.)	7.1	–	5.1	5.1	5.3
News mag. (ethnic)	3.1	–	–	2.5	0.3
Public affairs dis.	8.3	4.3	3.0	8.5	1.8
	24.2	7.8	13.1	21.3	19.0
B. Features and Documentaries					
Features	5.6	6.2	4.5	4.5	0.6
Documentaries	1.0	5.9	2.0	1.0	–
	6.6	12.1	6.5	5.5	0.6
C. Education					
Schools, colleges, etc.	17.9	16.5	10.7	18.6	–
Instructional	2.9	1.7	2.2	3.5	0.9
Adult education	1.9	–	–	2.5	2.0
	22.7	18.2	12.9	24.6	2.9
D. Arts and Music					
	1.2	1.7	–	4.5	–

Table 1: continued

Sample week 3-9 March 1973	BBC 1	BBC 2	Anglia	KQED	Ch. 7
E. Children's Programmes					
Cartoons, puppets	4.4	0.1	1.1	—	2.5
Other entertainment	1.4	0.7	4.6	—	2.0
Educational	5.7	3.3	2.6	25.0	0.8
	11.5	4.1	8.3	25.0	5.3
F. Drama					
Plays	4.4	3.1	3.5	—	—
Series	6.3	0.9	8.7	1.0	16.3
Serials	0.8	1.5	8.1	3.7	6.1
	11.5	5.5	20.3	4.7	22.4
G. Movies					
	6.7	6.6	12.3	5.2	23.8
H. General Entertainment					
Musical shows	2.7	3.0	2.0	—	1.1
Variety shows	1.2	0.5	3.7	—	0.4
Games, quiz shows	1.5	1.0	3.2	—	15.9
Talk shows	2.0	—	0.9	—	15.0
	7.4	4.5	9.8	—	32.4
I. Sport					
	5.9	1.1	6.7	2.0	6.4
J. Religion					
	1.1	—	0.6	—	0.8
K. Publicity (internal)					
	1.1	0.7	1.7	1.4	1.4
L. Commercials					
	—	—	10.8	—	18.4
Total Hours	99.9	62.3	103.0	94.2	133.4

Comment on Table 1

Of the five stations listed, three are public-service channels (BBC 1, BBC 2 and KQED), two are commercial channels (Anglia, Channel 7). There are differences to be observed quite generally, between television programming in Britain and the

United States, but the most striking fact is a certain similarity of distribution within the public-service channels on the one hand and the commercial channels on the other. Since total hours vary so considerably, it is useful to express the distribution, by categories, as proportions of the total material broadcast. This distribution is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparative Percentages in Programme Category Distribution (to nearest half-percentage point)

Sample week 3-9 March 1973	BBC 1	BBC 2	Anglia	KQED	Ch. 7
News and Public Affairs	24.5	12.0	13.0	22.5	14.0
Features and Documentaries	6.5	20.0	6.3	6.0	0.5
Education	23.0	29.5	12.5	26.0	2.0
Arts and Music	1.0	2.5	—	5.0	—
Children's Programmes	11.5	6.5	8.0	27.0	4.0
Drama - plays	4.5	4.5	3.1	—	—
Drama - series and serials	7.0	4.0	16.6	5.0	17.0
Movies	6.5	11.0	12.0	5.5	18.0
General Entertainment	7.5	7.5	9.5	—	24.5
Sport	6.0	1.5	6.2	2.0	4.5
Religion	1.0	—	0.6	—	0.5
Publicity	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.0
Commercials	—	—	10.7	—	14.0

Comment on Table 2

Certain striking particular variations can be seen from this table - in particular in News and Public Affairs, in Education, in Children's Programmes, in Drama series and serials, and in General Entertainment. Indeed it is possible to distinguish two broad types of programming, which might provisionally be called Public Service (Type A) and Commercial (Type B). A comparative distribution of these types is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Comparative Percentages of Types of Programming (to nearest half-percentage point)

Type A: News and Public Affairs, Features and Documentaries, Education, Arts and Music, Children's Programmes, Plays.

Type B: Drama Series and Serials, Movies, General Entertainment.

Sample week	BBC 1	BBC 2	Anglia	KQED	Ch. 7
3-9 March 1973					
Type A	71	75	42.9	86	20.5
Type B	21	22.5	38.1	10.5	59.5

Comment on Table 3

If comparisons are made only between the British channels or between the American channels, the distinction between Public Service Television (Type A) and Commercial Television (Type B) is especially clear. Yet when all five channels are compared, it is clear that the situation in American television is more sharply polarised. The American commercial channel (Channel 7) is a more complete representation of the predominantly commercial distribution than its British counterpart (Anglia) which shows some of the same tendencies but is midway between the British public-service type (BBC 1 and 2) and the American commercial type. Correspondingly, the American public-service channel (KQED) is more markedly of a public-service type, and in that sense less of a general broadcasting service, than its British public-service counterparts.

General comment on Tables 1, 2 and 3

Tables of distribution by categories can show us some significant features of the uses of television in different kinds of broadcasting institutions. Moreover, some of these features are significant

indicators of quality. But some are not, and we must try to make this clear, as a way of seeing beyond simple equations of quality and type.

Thus a category such as drama serials can vary from 'classic serials' and 'masterpiece theatre' to what is still, in very much the original terms, 'soap opera'. Movies, obviously, can vary enormously, from routine productions to significant works in the film repertory. It is true to say that distribution, in these respects, often follows the general tendency of the programming, but in the case of movies, especially, this is by no means universally so. A film on KQED is likely to be of the 'repertory' type, and serials on KQED and BBC 2 of the 'classic' type, while serials on Anglia and Channel 7 are quite often 'soap-opera'. But there is no such distinction between the selection of movies on, for example, BBC 1 and Anglia and Channel 7. The same general point holds for games and quizzes. In general those on BBC 1 and BBC 2 offer themselves as of a 'cultural' type, while those on Channel 7 are wholly commercial in conception and presentation, and those on Anglia vary between the two kinds. There is some real variation of quality here: *University Challenge* and *Top of the Form* are in real respects different from *The Golden Shot* and *Double Your Money*. But the difference does not necessarily hold for games like *Call my Bluff*, where the surface material – the meanings of rare words – is 'cultural' but the essential presentation is a matter of straight show-business.

What can be discerned, indeed, is not only a general distinction between 'cultural' and 'commercial' programmes – of the kind roughly indicated by Type A and Type B programming – but also an equally significant cultural 'set' in each type of programming. Thus Type A is based not only on assumptions about education and the learning process – though these are evident – but also on characteristic definitions of public and general interest which often, on analysis, show themselves as essentially abstract and at times merely passive. In Type B there are

evident assumptions of entertainment and distraction, but these involve definitions of interest which are sometimes more closely centred on individually presented persons and on a kind of participation (these elements are particularly evident in some of the serials and in some of the relationship games). It is then only on the assumption of a particular cultural 'set' – itself related to the character of education and daily life, and containing within it quite evident class characteristics – that one can assume that, for example, a documentary on international aviation is more serious than a serial or a game involving the presentation of a relationship between husbands and wives or parents and children. The mode of attention in each case has a specific character, and if the latter is trivialised or vitiated by a manner of presentation, so may the former be abstracted and in its own way trivialised by its more conventionally 'serious' abstract examination. That is why, though the distribution shown and the broad distinction between types are necessary elements of analysis, they are only one kind of analysis of real content, either generally or in terms of the particular television experience. It is then to another mode of analysis that we must now turn.

B. PROGRAMMING AS SEQUENCE OR FLOW

Analysis of a distribution of interest or categories in a broadcasting programme, while in its own terms significant, is necessarily abstract and static. In all developed broadcasting systems the characteristic organisation, and therefore the characteristic experience, is one of sequence or flow. This phenomenon, of planned flow, is then perhaps the defining characteristic of broadcasting, simultaneously as a technology and as a cultural form.

In all communications systems before broadcasting the essential items were discrete. A book or a pamphlet was taken and read as a specific item. A meeting occurred at a particular date

and place. A play was performed in a particular theatre at a set hour. The difference in broadcasting is not only that these events, or events resembling them, are available inside the home, by the operation of a switch. It is that the real programme that is offered is a *sequence* or set of alternative sequences of these and other similar events, which are then available in a single dimension and in a single operation.

Yet we have become so used to this that in a way we do not see it. Most of our habitual vocabulary of response and description has been shaped by the experience of discrete events. We have developed ways of responding to a particular book or a particular play, drawing on our experience of other books and plays. When we go out to a meeting or a concert or a game we take other experience with us and we return to other experience, but the specific event is ordinarily an occasion, setting up its own internal conditions and responses. Our most general modes of comprehension and judgement are then closely linked to these kinds of specific and isolated, temporary, forms of attention.

Some earlier kinds of communication contained, it is true, internal variation and at times miscellaneity. Dramatic performances included musical interludes, or the main play was preceded by a curtain-raiser. In print there are such characteristic forms as the almanac and the chapbook, which include items relating to very different kinds of interest and involving quite different kinds of response. The magazine, invented as a specific form in the early eighteenth century, was designed as a miscellany, mainly for a new and expanding and culturally inexperienced middle-class audience. The modern newspaper, from the eighteenth century but very much more markedly from the nineteenth century, became a miscellany, not only of news items that were often essentially unrelated, but of features, anecdotes, drawings, photographs and advertisements. From the late nineteenth century this came to be reflected in formal layout, culminating in the characteristic jigsaw effect of the modern

newspaper page. Meanwhile, sporting events, especially football matches, as they became increasingly important public occasions, included entertainment such as music or marching in their intervals.

This general trend, towards an increasing variability and miscellaneity of public communications, is evidently part of a whole social experience. It has profound connections with the growth and development of greater physical and social mobility, in conditions both of cultural expansion and of consumer rather than community cultural organisation. Yet until the coming of broadcasting the normal expectation was still of a discrete event or of a succession of discrete events. People took a book or a pamphlet or a newspaper, went out to a play or a concert or a meeting or a match, with a single predominant expectation and attitude. The social relationships set up in these various cultural events were specific and in some degree temporary.

Broadcasting, in its earliest stages, inherited this tradition and worked mainly within it. Broadcasters discovered the kinds of thing they could do or, as some of them would still normally say, transmit. The musical concert could be broadcast or arranged for broadcasting. The public address – the lecture or the sermon, the speech at a meeting – could be broadcast as a talk. The sports match could be described and shown. The play could be performed, in this new theatre of the air. Then as the service extended, these items, still considered as discrete units, were assembled into programmes. The word ‘programme’ is characteristic, with its traditional bases in theatre and music-hall. With increasing organisation, as the service extended, this ‘programme’ became a series of timed units. Each unit could be thought of discretely, and the work of programming was a serial assembly of these units. Problems of mix and proportion became predominant in broadcasting policy. Characteristically, as most clearly in the development of British sound broadcasting, there was a steady evolution from a general service, with its internal

criteria of mix and proportion and what was called ‘balance’, to contrasting types of service, alternative programmes. ‘Home’, ‘Light’ and ‘Third’, in British radio, were the eventual names for what were privately described and indeed generally understood as ‘general’, ‘popular’ and ‘educated’ broadcasting. Problems of mix and proportion, formerly considered within a single service, were then basically transferred to a range of alternative programmes, corresponding to assumed social and educational levels. This tendency was taken further in later forms of reorganisation, as in the present specialised British radio services One to Four. In an American radio programme listing, which is before me as I write, there is a further specialisation: the predominantly musical programmes are briefly characterised, by wavelength, as ‘rock’, ‘country’, ‘classical’, ‘nostalgic’ and so on.¹ In one sense this can be traced as a development of programming: extensions of the service have brought further degrees of rationalisation and specialisation.

But the development can also be seen, and in my view needs to be seen, in quite other ways. There has been a significant shift from the concept of sequence as programming to the concept of sequence as flow. Yet this is difficult to see because the older concept of programming – the temporal sequence within which mix and proportion and balance operate – is still active and still to some extent real.

What is it then that has been decisively altered? A broadcasting programme, on sound or television, is still formally a series of timed units. What is published as information about the broadcasting services is still of this kind: we can look up the time of a particular ‘show’ or ‘programme’; we can turn on for that item; we can select and respond to it discretely.

Yet for all the familiarity of this model, the normal experience of broadcasting, when we really consider it, is different. And indeed this is recognised in the ways we speak of ‘watching television’, ‘listening to the radio’, picking on the general rather

than the specific experience. This has been true of all broadcasting, but some significant internal developments have greatly reinforced it. These developments can be indicated in one simple way. In earlier phases of the broadcasting service, both in sound and television, there were intervals between programme units: true intervals, usually marked by some conventional sound or picture to show that the general service was still active. There was the sound of bells or the sight of waves breaking, and these marked the intervals between discrete programme units. There is still a residual example of this type in the turning globe which functions as an interval signal in BBC television.

But in most television services, as they are currently operated, the concept of the interval – though still, for certain purposes, retained as a concept – has been fundamentally revalued. This change came about in two ways, which are still unevenly represented in different services. The decisive innovation was in services financed by commercial advertising. The intervals between programme units were obvious places for the advertising to be included. In British commercial television there was a specific and formal undertaking that ‘programmes’ should not be interrupted by advertising; this could take place only in ‘natural breaks’: between the movements of a symphony, or between the acts in *Hamlet*, as the Government spokesman said in the House of Lords! In practice, of course, this was never complied with, nor was it ever intended that it should be. A ‘natural break’ became any moment of convenient insertion. News programmes, plays, even films that had been shown in cinemas as specific whole performances, began to be interrupted for commercials. On American television this development was different; the sponsored programmes incorporated the advertising from the outset, from the initial conception, as part of the whole package. But it is now obvious, in both British and American commercial television, that the notion of ‘interruption’, while it has still some residual force from an older model, has become

inadequate. What is being offered is not, in older terms, a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow, in which the true series is not the published sequence of programme items but this sequence transformed by the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real ‘broadcasting’. Increasingly, in both commercial and public-service television, a further sequence was added: trailers of programmes to be shown at some later time or on some later day, or more itemised programme news. This was intensified in conditions of competition, when it became important to broadcasting planners to retain viewers – or as they put it, to ‘capture’ them – for a whole evening’s sequence. And with the eventual unification of these two or three sequences, a new kind of communication phenomenon has to be recognised.

Of course many people who watch television still register some of these items as ‘interruptions’. I remember first noticing the problem while watching films on British commercial television. For even in an institution as wholeheartedly commercial in production and distribution as the cinema, it had been possible, and indeed remains normal, to watch a film as a whole, in an undisturbed sequence. All films were originally made and distributed in this way, though the inclusion of supporting ‘B’ films and short features in a package, with appropriate intervals for advertising and for the planned selling of refreshments, began to develop the cinema towards the new kind of planned flow. Watching the same films on commercial television made the new situation quite evident. We are normally given some twenty or twenty-five minutes of the film, to get us interested in it; then four minutes of commercials, then about fifteen more minutes of the film; some commercials again; and so on to steadily decreasing lengths of the film, with commercials between them, or them between the commercials, since by this time it is assumed that we are interested and will watch the film to the

end. Yet even this had not prepared me for the characteristic American sequence. One night in Miami, still dazed from a week on an Atlantic liner, I began watching a film and at first had some difficulty in adjusting to a much greater frequency of commercial 'breaks'. Yet this was a minor problem compared to what eventually happened. Two other films, which were due to be shown on the same channel on other nights, began to be inserted as trailers. A crime in San Francisco (the subject of the original film) began to operate in an extraordinary counterpoint not only with the deodorant and cereal commercials but with a romance in Paris and the eruption of a prehistoric monster who laid waste New York. Moreover, this was sequence in a new sense. Even in commercial British television there is a visual signal – the residual sign of an interval – before and after the commercial sequences, and 'programme' trailers only occur between 'programmes'. Here there was something quite different, since the transitions from film to commercial and from film A to films B and C were in effect unmarked. There is in any case enough similarity between certain kinds of films, and between several kinds of film and the 'situation' commercials which often consciously imitate them, to make a sequence of this kind a very difficult experience to interpret. I can still not be sure what I took from that whole flow. I believe I registered some incidents as happening in the wrong film, and some characters in the commercials as involved in the film episodes, in what came to seem – for all the occasional bizarre disparities – a single irresponsible flow of images and feelings.

Of course the films were not made to be 'interrupted' in this way. But this flow is planned: not only in itself, but at an early stage in all original television production for commercial systems. Indeed most commercial television 'programmes' are made, from the planning stage, with this real sequence in mind. In quite short plays there is a rationalised division into 'acts'. In features there is a similar rationalised division into 'parts'. But

the effect goes deeper. There is a characteristic kind of opening sequence, meant to excite interest, which is in effect a kind of trailer for itself. In American television, after two or three minutes, this is succeeded by commercials. The technique has an early precedent in the dumbshows which preceded plays or scenes in early Elizabethan theatre. But there what followed the dumbshow was the play or the scene. Here what follows is apparently quite unconnected material. It is then not surprising that so many of these opening moments are violent or bizarre: the interest aroused must be strong enough to initiate the expectation of (interrupted but sustainable) sequence. Thus a quality of the external sequence becomes a mode of definition of an internal method.

At whatever stage of development this process has reached – and it is still highly variable between different broadcasting systems – it can still be residually seen as 'interruption' of a 'programme'. Indeed it is often important to see it as this, both for one's own true sense of place and event, and as a matter of reasonable concern in broadcasting policy. Yet it may be even more important to see the true process as flow: the replacement of a programme series of timed sequential units by a flow series of differently related units in which the timing, though real, is undeclared, and in which the real internal organisation is something other than the declared organisation.

For the 'interruptions' are in one way only the most visible characteristic of a process which at some levels has come to define the television experience. Even when, as on the BBC, there are no interruptions of specific 'programme units', there is a quality of flow which our received vocabulary of discrete response and description cannot easily acknowledge. It is evident that what is now called 'an evening's viewing' is in some ways planned, by providers and then by viewers, as a whole; that it is in any event planned in discernible sequences which in this sense override particular programme units. Whenever there is

competition between television channels, this becomes a matter of conscious concern: to get viewers in at the beginning of a flow. Thus in Britain there is intense competition between BBC and IBA in the early evening programmes, in the belief – which some statistics support – that viewers will stay with whatever channel they begin watching. There are of course many cases in which this does not happen: people can consciously select another channel or another programme, or switch off altogether. But the flow effect is sufficiently widespread to be a major element in programming policy. And this is the immediate reason for the increasing frequency of programming trailers: to sustain that evening's flow. In conditions of more intense competition, as between the American channels, there is even more frequent trailing, and the process is specifically referred to as 'moving along', to sustain what is thought of as a kind of brand-loyalty to the channel being watched. Some part of the flow offered is then directly traceable to conditions of controlled competition, just as some of its specific original elements are traceable to the financing of television by commercial advertising.

Yet this is clearly not the whole explanation. The flow offered can also, and perhaps more fundamentally, be related to the television experience itself. Two common observations bear on this. As has already been noted, most of us say, in describing the experience, that we have been 'watching television', rather than that we have watched 'the news' or 'a play' or 'the football' 'on television'. Certainly we sometimes say both, but the fact that we say the former at all is already significant. Then again it is a widely if often ruefully admitted experience that many of us find television very difficult to switch off; that again and again, even when we have switched on for a particular 'programme', we find ourselves watching the one after it and the one after that. The way in which the flow is now organised, without definite intervals, in any case encourages this. We can be 'into' something else before we have summoned the energy to get out of the

chair, and many programmes are made with this situation in mind: the grabbing of attention in the early moments; the reiterated promise of exciting things to come, if we stay.

But the impulse to go on watching seems more widespread than this kind of organisation would alone explain. It is significant that there has been steady pressure, not only from the television providers but from many viewers, for an extension of viewing hours. In Britain, until recently, television was basically an evening experience, with some brief offerings in the middle of the day, and with morning and afternoon hours, except at weekends, used for schools and similar broadcasting. There is now a rapid development of morning and afternoon 'programmes' of a general kind.² In the United States it is already possible to begin watching at six o'clock in the morning, see one's first movie at eight-thirty, and so on in a continuous flow, with the screen never blank, until the late movie begins at one o'clock the following morning. It is scarcely possible that many people watch a flow of that length, over more than twenty hours of the day. But the flow is always accessible, in several alternative sequences, at the flick of a switch. Thus, both internally, in its immediate organisation, and as a generally available experience, this characteristic of flow seems central.

Yet it is a characteristic for which hardly any of our received modes of observation and description prepare us. The reviewing of television programmes is of course of uneven quality, but in most even of the best reviews there is a conventional persistence from earlier models. Reviewers pick out this play or that feature, this discussion programme or that documentary. I reviewed television once a month over four years, and I know how much more settling, more straightforward, it is to do that. For most of the items there are some received procedures, and the method, the vocabulary, for a specific kind of description and response exists or can be adapted. Yet while that kind of reviewing can be useful, it is always at some distance from what seems to me the

central television experience: the fact of flow. It is not only that many particular items – given our ordinary organisation of response, memory and persistence of attitude and mood – are affected by those preceding and those following them, unless we watch in an artificially timed way which seems to be quite rare (though it exists in the special viewings put on for regular Reviewers). It is also that though useful things may be said about all the separable items (though often with conscious exclusion of the commercials which ‘interrupt’ at least half of them) hardly anything is ever said about the characteristic experience of the flow sequence itself. It is indeed very difficult to say anything about this. It would be like trying to describe having read two plays, three newspapers, three or four magazines, on the same day that one has been to a variety show and a lecture and a football match. And yet in another way it is not like that at all, for though the items may be various the television experience has in some important ways unified them. To break this experience back into units, and to write about the units for which there are readily available procedures, is understandable but often misleading, even when we defend it by the gesture that we are discriminating and experienced viewers and don’t just sit there hour after hour goggling at the box.

For the fact is that many of us do sit there, and much of the critical significance of television must be related to this fact. I know that whenever I tried, in reviewing, to describe the experience of flow, on a particular evening or more generally, what I could say was unfinished and tentative, yet I learned from correspondence that I was engaging with an experience which many viewers were aware of and were trying to understand. There can be ‘classical’ kinds of response, at many different levels, to some though not all of the discrete units. But we are only just beginning to recognise, let alone solve, the problems of description and response to the facts of flow.

C. ANALYSIS OF FLOW

We can look at some examples of flow in television, in three different orders of detail. First, there is the flow (which is at this stage still, from one point of view, only sequence) within a particular evening’s programmes. For this we can use the general notation which has become conventional as ‘programming’ or ‘listing’. Second, there is the more evident flow of the actual succession of items within and between the published sequence of units. Here notation is already more difficult, for we have to move beyond the abstract titles and categories of listing, and yet we are still not at the stage of the detailed sequence of words and images. Flow of this second kind, however, is centrally important in our experience of television, since it shows, over a sufficient range, the process of relative unification, into a flow, of otherwise diverse or at best loosely related items. Third, there is the really detailed flow within this general movement: the actual succession of words and images. Here notation of a kind is available, but it is still subject to the limitation that it notes as discrete (if then related) items not only the planned combination and fusion of words and images, but the process of movement and interaction through sequence and flow. Some of these limitations are, in print, absolute. But my examples are presented, with some commentary, as experiments towards some new methods of analysis.

(i) Long-range analysis of sequence and flow

- (a) BBC 1, 14 JUNE 1973
- 5.15 Children’s programme: *Robinson Crusoe*
 - 5.40 Children’s puppet-show: *Hector’s House*
 - 5.45 National News
 - 6.00 News magazine: *Nationwide*
 - 6.45 American western serial: *The Virginian*

- 8.00 Film: Chaplin Super-Clown
- 8.30 Documentary: An Australian Mining Millionaire
- 9.00 National News
- 9.25 Series: Warship (KGB official defects in Mediterranean naval context)
- 10.15 Night Music
- 10.45 Public Affairs discussion: Midweek
- 11.30 Late News
- 11.35 Educational programme: Mammals

(b) BBC 2, 15 JUNE 1973

- 7.05 Series: Mistress of Hardwick (scenes from an Elizabethan life)
- 7.30 News
- 7.35 Gardeners' World
- 8.00 Money at Work: The Gold Rush
- 9.00 Film: Little World of Don Camillo
- 10.40 Film Night: Review of James Bond films
- 11.10 News

(c) BBC 2, 9 JUNE 1973

- 7.35 News
- 7.50 Feature: Saboteurs of Telemark (wartime)
- 8.40 Serial: Song of Songs (Sudermann); early twentieth-century Vienna
- 9.30 Feature: The Ascent of Man (history of science)
- 10.20 Farce: Ooh La La!; late nineteenth-century France
- 11.20 News
- 11.25 Film: The Razor's Edge

(d) ANGLIA, 15 JUNE 1973

- 5.50 News
- 6.00 News magazine
- 6.35 Serial: Crossroads

- 7.00 Quiz-show: The Sky's the Limit
- 7.30 American series: Hawaii Five-O
- 8.30 Series: Romany Jones (domestic comedy)
- 9.00 Series: Between the Wars (drama)
- 10.00 News
- 10.30 Magazine: County Show (ponies, vintage tractors)
- 11.00 Series: Theatre of Stars: The Enemy on the Beach (wartime)
- 12.00 Sport: tennis
- 12.30 Prayers for World Children's Day

(e) CHANNEL 7, 12 MARCH 1973

- 5.30 News Scene
- 6.00 National News
- 6.30 Movie: Annie Get Your Gun
- 8.00 Series: The Rookies (police)
- 9.00 Movie: Doc Eliot
- 11.00 News
- 11.30 Talk-show

(f) KQED, 5 MARCH 1973

- 5.30 Children's programme: The Electric Company
- 6.00 Children's programme: Zoom
- 6.30 Magazine: Mission and 24th Street
- 7.00 Newsroom
- 8.00 TV movie: Winesburg Ohio
- 9.30 Movie: Bergman's The Silence
- 11.20 Station publicity
- 11.30 Newsroom (repeat)

Commentary

These samples of 'an evening's viewing', on the five channels studied, correspond, in general, with the impressions gained

from distribution analysis. The types of programming already described can be seen in their detailed sequences (two examples are given from BBC 2, because it is, in general, more variable than the others).

The specific content is in some cases worth special notice. There is a significant frequency of military material (much of it retrospective) and of costume-drama in BBC and Anglia programming. Anglia and (to a lesser extent) BBC 1 carry important amounts of American material. The BBC 2 mix is more cultural (and international) in its range, as is KQED, but BBC 2 is also quite closely attuned to specific English middle-class interests. Channel 7, as has been noted, has a limited range of largely pre-made programming.

The problems of sequence and flow are already apparent. Sequences (b), (c) and (f) seem designed for more conscious selection of particular items than (a) and (e) and especially (d). In (d) there is an evident sequence – in effect a flow – from 6.35 to 10.00 (a series of comparatively brief programmes of essentially displaced events and dramatisations), and the same might be said of 6.45 to 8.30 or 8.30 to 10.15 in (a). It is worth considering what effect, for example, the documentary at 8.30, in (a), and the series at 9.25, have on the News which comes between them: a certain definition of interests, of a characteristic kind, seems indicated. There would be a different effect in (d), where the News is preceded by retrospective drama and succeeded by the *County Show*.

The problems of definition of mood and attention occur in several of the sequences. It is noticeable that the sharpest contrasts occur in (b), (c) and (f), while there is a relative homogenisation – the most evident specific feature of flow – in (d) and (e) and to some extent in (a).

We can next look at some specific problems of sequence and definition, and from these of attention and mood, in what is in many ways the binding factor of television programming: the news bulletins and news magazines.

ii) Medium-range analysis of flow and 'sequence'

(a) *Channel 7, San Francisco, 12 March 1973, from 5.42 p.m.*

... (News Scene; three announcers at desk; camera alternates between general shot of all three and medium shot of the one who is speaking; inset for stills or drawings above, left)

I (Announcer 1)

A government committee has reported that many claims in drug advertisements are false: one brand of aspirin is not 'much better than another'; one brand does not 'work faster than another'. (Inset: shelves of packets of drugs, still)

The committee recommends that 25% of the time of drug advertisements should in future be given to correcting these misleading claims.

II (Announcer 1)

A Senator has suggested that pharmacists should display comparative prices of drugs.

Interview (filmed) with a pharmacist: he disagrees; people should go to a store they trust.

III (Announcer 1)

(Inset drawing of food boxes and shopping bag) Consumers need all the help they can get, with all prices rising. A housewife, angry at rising costs, has sent the President four hundred peanut-butter sandwiches, in protest against the rising price of meat.

IV (Announcer 2)

(Inset, still, of Federal Building, San Francisco) There have been protests in the city against the Presidential impounding of funds for projects voted by Congress. (Film of Mayor and local Congressmen)

The Mayor and the local Congressmen say impounding is unconstitutional. The country should be

- brought to a halt until this unconstitutional action is stopped.
- V (Announcer 2)
(Inset drawing of wreath)
The oldest Catholic Priest in the United States has died in San Francisco. He was 102. He attributed his longevity to brisk early morning walks.
- VI (Announcer 2)
A mayor in Alameda County is working for a proposition to ban further apartment construction in his city. But his wife and six daughters are working on the other side.
(Reporter) (film of street in city; cars and houses):
The proposition is being voted on tomorrow. The issue is legal and environmental. Further development, it is said, will reduce open spaces and lead to extra traffic pollution.
- VII (Woman) (film of hand spraying from can; table dusted). Liquid Gold furniture polish; brings new sparkle to your furniture; it's like meeting an old friend again.
- VIII (Man) (film clip): The 6.30 movie is *Annie Get Your Gun*. Betty Hutton as the sharpest-shooting gal the Wild West ever saw.
- IX (Weather forecast; Medium, with charts). An area of high pressure, bringing in cold air.
- X (Announcer 2)
In Utah, for the second time in a month, an entire barn has been stolen.
- XI (Announcer 1)
Two strikes in the San Francisco area today; (Inset still of Golden Gate Bridge) one at an oil refinery; the other at a hospital.

- XII (Announcer 2)
News soon about a man released from China and about the situation at Wounded Knee.
- XIII (Man)
(Film of cats eating)
Little Friskies high-protein cat dinners.
- XIV (Man)
(Film of women in home)
Anacin relieves headaches.
- XV (Model of house, with gold coins inside it)
(Man and woman)
Loans available on house property in Bay Area.
- XVI (Woman)
One-day sale at Macy's.
- XVII (Announcer 2)
A former CIA agent was released today from China.
(Film of man crossing border)
- XVIII (Announcer 2)
Situation between Indians and Justice Department at Wounded Knee still tense.
(Still of Indian in headdress)
- XIX (Announcer 2)
(Still of Château)
Pompidou is still President of France.
(Still of hand and ballot-box)
- XX (Announcer 2)
Vice-President Agnew says there is no constitutional crisis.
(Film of Agnew speaking at meeting)
- XXI (Announcer 3)
A murder victim in San Francisco has been identified.
(Film of police at scene of discovery of body)

- XXII (Announcer 1)
Many reports of vicious dogs in the area.
(Reporter)
Farmers have reported attacks on animals.
(Film of dogs and film of sheep)
- XXIII (Announcer 2)
The sports news will be next.
- XXIV (Man)
If you didn't know this was freeze-dried coffee you
would take it for fresh.
(Film of can undoing itself; cup being filled with
coffee)
- XXV (Man)
Let United Airlines show you this great land you
live in.
Song: 'Come to your land.'
(Film of Golden Gate Bridge: girl singing
City street : girl and man
Country fence : two girls and man
Seashore : group singing
Group travelling in plane
Black face close-up
Group travelling: song ends)
- XXVI (Film of acted episode)
(Crook)
I used to be able to steal this kind of car. Now it has
an alarm system.
He opens door: Alarm sounds: Sheriff appears.
Crook shows key.
- XXVII (Announcer 3)
Sports news: winning run by basketball team.
- XXVIII (Man)
(film clip): On the 6.30 movie, *Annie Get Your Gun*.
Betty Hutton as the sharpest-shooting gal the West
has ever seen.

- XXIX (Network news: one man at desk; oblique medium
shot)
A former CIA agent has been released from
China.
(Film of group of men at border; ex-prisoner arrives
at airfield; interview - he is glad to be back)
(Still of his invalid mother)
- XXX (Announcer)
In Vietnam, many permanently disabled men have
been released from 'tiger-cages'.
(Film of disabled men in hospital; several emaciated
and crippled; one crawling on floor)
- XXXI Newsroom
(Title: ABC Evening News)
- XXXII Family camping in wood; children running under
trees: the wife has brought margarine instead of
butter; it is fresh and healthy.
- XXXIII Man at bank, in obvious pain. He is given a tablet in
each hand; he walks away.
- XXXIV (Map of Wounded Knee)
(Announcer)
Situation still tense.
(Film of car stopped and searched; close-up of Just-
ice Department spokesman; close-up of Indian
leader; Indian pointing to barricade)
- XXXV (Announcer)
(Stills of Bermuda street; flags)
Scotland Yard called in to investigate Bermuda
murders.
- XXXVI (Announcer)
A supporter of Peron has been elected President of
Argentina.
(Stills of Peron and Cremona)
- XXXVII Newsroom
(Title: ABC Evening News)

- XXXVIII (Film) Truckload of television sets; one taken out pictures shown on it, man talking; camera draws back to show more than twenty sets, each with same man talking.
- XXXIX (Cartoon) a fish jumps over the world; tinned tuna woman eating from plate; fish jumps again.
- XL (Announcer)
A government committee has reported that many claims in drug advertisements are false.
(Still of shelves of packets of drugs)

Commentary

What seems to me interesting in this characteristic evening news sequence is that while a number of important matters are included, the connections between them are as it were deliberately not made. Consider, as examples:

- (i) the lack of direct relation between I, XIV, XXXIII and XL, which in any normal perspective are directly connected;
- (ii) the lack of conscious connection between VIII, XII, XVIII, XXVIII and XXXIV, though one kind of connection had been made by the Indian demonstrations at Wounded Knee;
- (iii) the lack of connection between the directly related items of political controversy IV and XX;
- (iv) the lack of conscious connection in the various items about prisoners, XII, XVII, XXIX, XXX;
- (v) the apparent unconsciousness of contrast in XXX and XXXII.

More generally, the effect of indiscriminating sequence can be seen in IV-VI, IV-XI, as well as in the periods of 'interruption' by advertisements, e.g. XI-XVII or XXII-XXVII.

Nevertheless, if the overall flow is examined, it can be seen

that a range of news and views – some reported, some propagated, some dramatised – has in effect been fused into what can properly be seen as a sequence. Items such as XXV or XXXVIII are not incidental; they are among the controlling general images of the flow as a whole – the perspective of the society, the practice of the medium. The apparently disjointed 'sequence' of items is in effect guided by a remarkably consistent set of cultural relationships: a flow of consumable reports and products, in which the elements of speed, variety and miscellaneity can be seen as organising: the real bearers of value. Within this organisation, I, XIV, XXXIII and XL are not contradictory but are unpaired alternatives; as are also VIII, XII, XVIII, XXVIII and XXXIV, where the mediation, however, is more generally diffused. The organised exclusion of certain kinds of connection and contrast, as in XXX and XXXII, is part of the effect of the flow, with its own more compelling internal signposting and directions of attention.

(b) BBC 1, 13 June 1973, from 5.42 p.m.

- ... (Hector's House – children's puppet-show)
- I (Dog puppet)
'I'm a gentleman.'
- II (Local Announcer 1)
In Look East after the National News there will be a report on a new safety material for airfield runways. Also a report on a man who has broken the world speed record for beer drinking.
- III Clock.
- IV (National Announcer)
(Still of Lord Lambton)
Lord Lambton fined £300 on drug charges.
(Reporter: against background of Lambton still)
Report of case hearing.
(Film of car arriving at court, men entering by special back entrance)

- v (National Announcer)
The ten-week-old work-to-rule at a Peterborough factory continues.
(Aerial view of factory)
(Reporter)
Result of voting at workers' meeting.
(Film of crowd raising hands)
Interview with union official: 'We shall stay out.'
(Film of factory and engines, as reporter continues)
Interview with manager (office).
(National Announcer)
House of Commons reply to Peterborough M.P.
- vi (National Announcer)
Pay strike at Cowley.
- vii (National Announcer)
(Film of factory and pickets)
Dispute at Chrysler factory.
- viii (National Announcer)
Britain's largest monthly trade payments deficit ever.
(Graph of deficit over recent months)
(Economics Correspondent)
(Background still of docks)
Figures very bad; reasons include floating pound, imports for industrial boom.
- ix (National Announcer)
Prime Minister and TUC leaders have been discussing the economy.
- x (National Announcer)
Agreement signed in Paris, between USA, North and South Vietnam, 'Vietcong'.
(Film of Kissinger signing; others signing)
- xi (National Announcer)
Princess Anne's wedding date fixed.

- (Stills of Princess and fiancé; Westminster Abbey; Archbishop of Canterbury)
- xii (National Announcer)
Tribune Group of Labour M.P.s say nationalisation must be included in election manifesto.
- xiii (Still of Chief-Inspector of Constabulary)
Crimes of violence are increasing.
- xiv (National Announcer)
Commons statement about terrorism in Northern Ireland.
- xv (National Announcer)
Plans to disperse some government offices.
(Map and list of areas, with numbers)
(Still of Ministry and new town)
- xvi (National Announcer)
School bus accident.
(Film of crashed bus, firemen)
- xvii (National Announcer)
General Gawon of Nigeria has arrived in Britain.
(Film of reception)
(Film of his wife at children's hospital)
- xviii (National Announcer)
New safety material on runways.
(Film of aircraft running into foam bed).
- xix (National Announcer)
Rust makes car crashes worse.
(Film of test crashes of rusted and unrusted cars).
- xx (Weatherman)
(Maps)
Warm and sunny.
- xxi Nationwide titles: picture of baby in swing, lorry, baby lifted, car crash, man on phone.
- xxii (Nationwide Announcer 1)
Later: Meet a man who talks to flowers.

- XXIII (Nationwide Announcer 2)
Later: Two new reporters – children – report on toys.
(Film of children)
- XXIV (New Announcer 1)
'All that and more as you move in to your own programmes, nationwide.'
- XXV Titles: *Look East*
- XXVI (Local Announcer 2)
Decision at Peterborough dispute meeting.
(Film of meeting; voting)
(Film of workers giving reasons for their vote)
Interview with union official.
(Film of factory)
Interview with manager (office).
Interview with President of local Chamber of Trade.
- XXVII (Local Announcer 1)
Work-to-rule at Wisbech; rail services disrupted.
- XXVIII (Local Announcer 1)
Demonstration (film) against motorway plan.
- XXIX (Local Announcer 1)
Claim of irregularities in local council election.
- XXX (Local Announcer 1)
Bird's Eye factories expanding (film).
- XXXI (Local Announcer 1)
A grave in Colchester desecrated. Black magic suggested.
- XXXII (Local Announcer 1)
Two men rescued from dinghy.
- XXXIII (Local Announcer 1)
Explosives found in pit in Cambridgeshire.
- XXXIV (Local Announcer 1)
Norfolk deputation about by-pass.

- XXXV (Local Announcer 1)
Huntingdonshire road accidents caused by uncut grass verges.
- XXXVI (Local Announcer 1)
Peterborough Development Corporation selling houses.
- XXXVII (Local Announcer 1)
Date of football match.
(Still of captain)
- XXXVIII Bishop of Ely arrives at a ceremony by boat.
Challenges another bishop to tug-of-war.
(Film of tug-of-war)
- XXXIX (Local Announcer 2)
A young girl still missing.
(Still of policeman; still of girl)
(Film of road she walked on)
(Map of area)
- XL Reporter: New runway safety material.
(Film of aircraft testing new runway safety material)
Interview with pilot.
- XLI (Local Announcer 2)
Beer-drinking speed record.
Interview: how fast? how many? why? – 'to break the record'.
- XLII Rupert the Bear at Yarmouth.
(Film of man dressed as bear on beach with children)
- XLIII Closing titles: *Look East*.
- XLIV Regional weather map.
- XLV National weather map.
- XLVI (Nationwide Announcer 1)
(Reporter)
Pyramid selling; new legislation.
(Still of calendar)

- XLVII (Nationwide Announcer 1)
(Reporter)
A community in Scotland where people talk to plants to make them grow; extraordinary success no other explanation.
(Film of gardens)
Interview: director.
Interview: man who has seen an elf, the little people who live in plants.
Interview: gardener – he talks to plant.
Song: 'I dreamed a dream . . . of natural harmony.'
(Film of flowers)
- XLVIII (Nationwide Announcer 1)
'Back with a bump': decentralisation of government departments.
Regional reporters: Glasgow, Newcastle.
(Film of existing offices)
Interview with junior minister involved.
Regional reporters asked for comment (3-way discussion).
- XLIX (Nationwide Announcer 2)
Children (boy and girl) reporting on new toys; test them and give prices.
- L Closing titles.
(Film of flowers repeated with song, ' . . . natural harmony')

Commentary

This is a characteristic British news and news-magazine sequence. It is more deliberately arranged than the American example in (a), and there is less apparently spontaneous reporting and commentary. The flow characteristics are strongly marked, e.g. II, XVIII, XL, or XXII, XLVII, L. The more intensive use of visual

material assists a different kind of flow, with correspondingly less emphasis on the personalities of the readers (though in the magazine this emphasis is made). Within the flow, a characteristic set of priorities emerges, e.g. in IV to XIX. An item of scandal (IV) is placed first, followed by a group of items (V to VII) on industrial disputes. The most important item of general news (VIII) is then placed in a context indicated by this flow (though the direct commentary on it offers different reasons) and this underlying perspective is confirmed in IX. A related item, XII, occurs at a different and unconnected point. There is an interesting possible interaction, on a separate theme, between XIII and XIV. State ceremonies are dispersed between XI and XVII; accidents between XVI, XVIII and XIX (returned to in XXI, XXXV, XI).

There is a more general point about the overall emotional tone. Compare I, part of II, part of XXI, XXII, XXXVIII, XLI, XLII, XLVII, L with V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, XXVI–XXXVI, XLVI or again with IV, XIII or X, (XIII), XIV, XXXIX. The sequence XXXVIII–XLI is particularly interesting for its apparently extraordinary fluctuations, but the point is that this is contained – as are the other alternative normal sequences – by the fact of overall flow. A confirmation of this is given in the enclosure of the diversity and extreme unevenness of items within the playful emphasis of the initial XXI–XXII and the closing XLIX and L. This, essentially, is how a directed but apparently casual and miscellaneous flow operates, culturally, following a given structure of feeling.

(iii) Close-range analysis of flow

(a) (Items XI–XXI from (ii) (a))

(Inset: still of Golden Gate Bridge)

Announcer 1 Well, there's still no progress to report on two major strikes in the San Francisco Bay Area today. The news from that Shell Oil strike at Martinez is –

there is no news. All News Scene has heard unconfirmed rumours of negotiation not far away. Inside the plant supervisory employees are keeping the thing running smoothly, they say – in full operation as a matter of fact. Strikers were also out today at San José Hospital,

(Inset still of hospital building and pickets)

and late this evening News Scene had unconfirmed reports that Engineers' Local No. 39 have also walked out.

(Medium: announcer)

and in Martinez today too two doctors are back on the job after they had initially been fired by the County Human Resources Agency. The County Board of Supervisors has agreed to rehire them and the terms of that negotiation were hammered out in an informal session over the weekend.

Announcer 2 (Medium) Legal proceedings are now going on against the Indians at Wounded Knee, and a man in prison in China for twenty years is a free man tonight. We'll have film stories on those and other events as News Scene continues.

(Film, music: cats walking in different directions)

Male Voice Chinese or Persian, Calico or American Blue, Angora or mixed, all cats want variety. And Little Friskies has six delicious high-protein dinners with a flavour that isn't artificial. It's made from real beef liver, real chicken, real seafood.

(Cats eating)

That's Little Friskies, the best tasting high-protein cat dinners.

(Film of young woman at telephone, older woman putting dishes in cupboard; rattle of crockery)

Young Woman Will you please stop that racket?

Male Voice When headache pain and the tension it can build bring out the worst in you, take Anacin. Compared to Anacin –

(Diagram of circle, with segment cut out)

– simple aspirin tablets would have this much pain reliever. Anacin has –

(Rhythmic bleeps of sound; segment closes until circle is complete)

– all this extra strength to every tablet, rushing relief power to your headache. Anacin relieves headache and so its tension, fast.

(Film of women again; younger woman brings coffee to older woman; they sit down together)
Anacin!

Young Woman I had the worst headache . . . (smiles)
(Model house)

Male Voice 2 If you own a house anywhere in the Bay Area, you're sitting
(Model lifts and gold coins pour out from front)
on a goldmine

Young Woman 2 (smiles) and Pacific Plan will help you get the gold out. If you need from 1000 to 15,000 dollars, you can turn your equity into instant cash
(smiles invitingly)
by calling the girl at Pacific Plan. So, house-owners, dig into your white pages
(Still of telephone directory, focused on number)
and get the gold out.

Young Woman 2 Call the girl at Pacific Plan today (smiles) or tomorrow.

Male Voice 2 Home Owners
(Model house: gold coins pouring out. Metallic tinkle)
get the gold out.

Woman (with flower on hat) This Thursday is White Flower Day at Macy's. It's one of the biggest one-day sales of the year, at all Macy's. (Waves) Don't miss it.

Announcer 2 (Medium) In international news today, the very good news coming out of the Republic of China because a man who had been there for an awful long time is finally out. Another prisoner of war free today, only this former prisoner (Film of man at border post)

is ex-CIA agent J- D-. He was a warrior of the Cold War, he was captured in '52 in the People's Republic of China, on a spy mission. Today he arrived at Clark Air Force Base in Manila, a free man again on his way home to his sick mother.

The battle of Wounded Knee continues. The Sioux, who are holding a tiny piece of reservation, say they no longer recognise the United States Government (Still of Indian, with headdress) they say they've seceded. Meanwhile the Justice Department is considering legal action and it is very tense and touchy at this moment in Wounded Knee.

(Still of French Château)

And in picturesque France Georges Pompidou is still President of the Republic. Most of the Gaullist support came from the conservative French countryside. Still the communist and socialist representation doubled.

(Still of hand and ballot-box)

They cut the Gaullist majority to sixty seats. Big and sweeping social reforms now predicted for the Republic of France after this election.

(Medium: announcer)

Some very tough words today from Vice-President

Agnew here in San Francisco. He told an audience it's up to Congress to hold back spending if inflation is to be halted, and then he also attacked those who say the President is getting too strong and usurping powers from the Congress. That's just not true, according to

(Film of meeting)

Vice-President Spiro Agnew.

Some members of Congress, abetted by certain eternally despairing commentators and columnists, are working diligently to persuade the country that a constitutional confrontation

(Applause begins; voice rises)

is at hand.

(Loud applause)

And to support this thesis the Congress, according to a Washington newspaper, the other day brought in a collection of scholars for advice on its Constitutional crisis with Richard Nixon, and was taught that there really isn't any crisis at all.

(Medium: announcer)

Announcer 2

The Vice-President also wanted to say that he isn't aware that any Congress has ever felt sufficiently loved by a President to fully approve his exercise of power invested in him by the United States Constitution.

Steve.

Announcer 3

(Medium)

Well, we have more details now of that grisly murder in San Francisco last night in which the body of a man was discovered by police

(Film of police in street)

in a metal container this morning. The victim's throat had been cut . . .

Commentary

It is only as we come really close to the substance of what is spoken and shown that we see the real character of television flow. A newscast is, of course, a particular case, but the kind of flow which it embodies is determined by a deliberate use of the medium rather than by the nature of the material being dealt with. As in the earlier analysis ((ii), (a)) the lack of demonstrated connection between items is evident. Yet connections of another kind are continually used:

... power invested in him by the United States Constitution.
Steve.
Well, we have more details now of that grisly murder ...

This order is predetermined, but is handled in such a way as to suggest the continual arrival of reports. Most evident, perhaps, is a sense of the announcers spinning items along, following a rough schedule. They are clearly not reading from scripts (this is a specific differentiation in American television news) but they have certain cue formulas. At times these are of a distancing, placing kind:

... the very good news coming out of the Republic of China ...
... And in picturesque France ...

(In this latter case the phrase is determined, however curiously, by the illustration.) Over much of the actual news reporting there is a sense of hurried blur. The pace and style of the newscast take some priority over the items in it. This sense of hurried transmission from all points is then in sharp contrast with the cool deliberation of the commercials. At one level the average length of a news item is in effect determined by the time-unit of attention which the commercials have established. Nothing is at

all fully reported, though time had been found for the theft of a barn in a distant state. Yet the flow of hurried items establishes a sense of the world: of surprising and miscellaneous events coming in, tumbling over each other, from all sides. The events are caught as they fly, with a minimal and conventional interpretative tag. The most ordered messages, with a planned use of sight and sound, are the recorded commercials, which clearly operate in the same communicative dimension. Voices are used in both news and commercials to catch passing attention. Devices of repetition to sustain emphasis within flow are common to both:

The news from ... Martinez is – there is no news ...
Anacin ... Anacin ... Anacin ... Anacin ... Anacin ...
Get the gold out ... get the gold out ... get the gold out ...
The Battle of Wounded Knee ... at this moment in Wounded
Knee ...

The sense (in general, false) of instantaneous, simultaneous⁸ happening is similarly sustained:

today ... today ... today ... now ... fast ... today ... or
tomorrow ... don't miss it ... today ... coming out ... today
... today ... at this moment ... today ... now ...

It is indeed the day's news, but taken emphatically on the wing. If an interest can not be satisfied ('unconfirmed rumours', 'unconfirmed reports') it is nevertheless stimulated. In and through all this, certain nodal references of meaning and value are given emphasis:

strikes ... running smoothly ... fired ... rehire ... free man
... variety ... extra strength ... gold ... free man ... sick
mother ...

The selected preoccupations are the dominant *internal* currents of what might seem, at first hearing (and there is usually only one) a miscellaneous, even casual, *externally* determined flow.

The implicit meanings and values of the commercials require a brief final comment. There is mutual transfer between their formulas and those of separate programmes. The encapsulated information of the news item is transferred to the mode of recommending a cat food: 'high protein . . . isn't artificial', compare 'tiny piece of reservation . . . very tense and touchy', 'still President . . . big and sweeping social reforms'. The mode of the domestic serial interacts with that of the headache-tablet commercial, with the significant interpretation 'tension . . . the worst in you'. The property-loan company relies on memories of the historical film (this is in California): 'sitting on a goldmine . . . get the gold out'. The breeds of cat, in the cat-food commercial, are shown as in animal interest films. The 'instructional device' of the 'extra strength' in the headache tablet is interactive with educational television and diagrams. The model house with gold coins pouring out of it is interactive with children's entertainment television. The girl inviting a telephone call (from a money-borrower to a money-lender) uses the look and accent of a generalised 'personal' (partly sexual) invitation.

In all these ways, and in their essential combination, this is the flow of meanings and values of a specific culture.

Raymond
Williams

Television

Technology and cultural form

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