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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the unobtrusive ways in which broadcasting sustains the lives and routines, from one day to the next, year in and year out, of whole populations, and reflects on some of the implications of these processes by accounting for the ways in which the times of radio and television are organized in relation to the social spaces of listening and viewing. Topics discussed include: (1) three intersecting planes of temporality that are intrinsic to every moment of social reproduction and a fourth plane which occurs in broadcasting; (2) the process of modernization, after 1834, that demanded new time-keeping habits and work disciplines from whole populations, and with it the necessity for reconstruction of images and emblems of nationhood; (3) the development of radio broadcasting in the 1920s and 1930s and the role the broadcast "year" played in stitching together the private and public spheres in a whole new range of contexts; (4) the narrative features of broadcast serials and the subtle ways in which broadcasting runs parallel and intersects with the life and times of our actual world; (5) program building in these decades, and the historical development of radio in the organization of the rhythm of work and leisure; (6) The Peoples' Activities and Use of Time, a survey of people's time paths through the day, including the data analysis and conclusions; and (7) phased patterns of (in)attention, of listening and viewing, during the day, and how broadcasting is inextricably implicated in these patterns. (37 references) (CGD)

RADIO TIMES:

The temporal arrangements of broadcasting in the modern world.

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Introduction

Imagine a world without broadcasting. What would we miss if, from tomorrow, say, there were no more radio and television? The nightly news; favourite soaps or comedy series; the ways in which listening and viewing help to pass the time, especially in the evenings or at weekends; the live coverage of big programmes (the Olympics or a royal wedding); the special programmes on special days such as Christmas.... these losses we might point to quite readily, but they would not begin to account for the effects on our lives of the absence of broadcasting. The media are, today, one taken for granted element in the day to day life of all members of our societies. In this paper I want to pay attention to the unobtrusive ways in which broadcasting sustains the lives and routines, from one day to the next, year in year out, of whole populations, and to reflect on some of the implications of these processes. To do so I will try to account for the ways in which the times of radio and television are organised in relation to the social spaces of listening and viewing.

Anthony Giddens has stressed that attention to the structuring of time and space must be a central concern of any social theory that wishes to take account of the actual conditions that shape and are shaped by the social activities and interactions of human beings. He distinguishes three intersecting planes of temporality in every moment of social reproduction (Giddens 1981: 19). First the temporality of immediate experience, the

continuous flow of day to day life, which I will refer to as *clock time*, bounded by the twenty four hour day. Second, there is the temporality of the life cycle of living organisms, which I will call *life time*. Third, there is the *longue durée*, the slow, glacial movement of institutional time (Braudel 1980). I will consider this plane of temporality in broadcasting as *calendrical time*.

All three are inextricably entwined in each other, for the flow of events, in their immediate present circumstances, are always and inescapably implicated both in the 'passing away' of life time and in the motionless *longue durée* that outlasts generations. These different planes of temporality permeate all aspects of broadcast programmes and programming. By exploring the relationship between the present moment of programmes in their particularity, and their unceasing iteration in the flow of each day's schedules across the months and years, I will try to render more explicit the connections between the social work of production and reproduction in broadcasting. But this in turn, cannot be detached from the social spaces from within which and for which broadcasting produces its programmes and schedules. The places from which broadcasting speaks, and the places in which it is heard and seen, are relevant considerations in the analysis of the communicative contexts that broadcasting establishes as part of the sociable fabric of modern life.

The broadcast calendar and the national culture

The calendar is based on natural temporal cycles - the lunar month or solar year - and is a means of regulating, in the long term, the manifold purposes of religious and civil life. It not only organises and coordinates social life, but gives it a renewable content, anticipatory pleasures, a horizon of expectations. It is one means whereby 'the temporality of social life is expressed in the meshing of present with past that tradition promotes, in which the cyclical character of social life is predominant' (Giddens 1979: 201).

Modern bureaucratic forms of administration coupled with the rigours of factory capitalism demanded new time-keeping habits and work disciplines from whole populations (Thompson 1967). Older task oriented work habits with their irregular time patterns were gradually driven out, though the persistence of the feast of St Monday in many trades throughout the nineteenth century shows that older habits died hard. These changes made huge inroads on the many feasts and holidays of the old religious and working year. The new civil calendar was pinched and threadbare in comparison. By 1834 there remained only four annual holidays where eighty years earlier there had been seventeen (Clarke and Critcher 1985: 56). This draining away of tradition contributed to that sense of 'meaninglessness' and loss of identity which characterized the experience of modern social

life as it was profoundly reshaped in the course of the last century. Modern man 'feels as if he has been dropped from the calendar. The big-city dweller knows this feeling on Sundays' (Benjamin 1973: 186-7).

Yet the collapse of tradition necessitates its reinvention. And as fast as particular ceremonies and symbols lose their resonance and are relegated to the lumber-room of history, others replace them. In the process of modernization ritual and tradition shed their intimacy with religion as new secular traditions were rapidly and prolifically invented. Nowhere was this more diligently pursued than in the reconstruction of images and emblems of nationhood (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 14).

In Britain, as part of this process, the monarchy was thoroughly revamped and refurbished with a whole new deck of ritual functions and ceremonies (Cannadine 1983). The components of a national culture were beginning to converge in the early twentieth century. There was a national educational system to inculcate, as part of its curriculum, the glories of British history (Chancellor 1970) and of English literature (Mathieson 1975). The land itself began to be reclaimed, by the National Trust, as part of the national heritage (Bommes and Wright, 1982). Nationalism found musical expression in the Savoy Operas and more profoundly in the music of Elgar (Vaughan Williams 1963). In this period many sports, often of quite recent origin, laid down annual competitions and events. But the full convergence of these developments, their synthesis as elements of a single corporate national life available to all, awaited the establishment of broadcasting in its applied social form and the quite new kind of public - a public

commensurate with the whole of society - that it brought into being (Scannell and Cardiff 1982).

Consider the FA Cup Final, the Grand National, or the last night of the Proms. None of these events was created by broadcasting for broadcasting, and all preceded the coming of radio. But whereas previously they had been accessible as live and real events only to those immediately present, radio made them available to anyone with a receiving set within the range of reception. Millions began to listen to the Cup Final or the Grand National who had very little interest in soccer or racing as such. These events became, and have remained, more than just sporting events. They have become taken for granted traditions, rituals, part of national life.

In the course of the nineteen twenties and thirties BBC engineers arranged thousands upon thousands of outside broadcasts from a wide variety of sources for the growing listening public. They included religious services and sacred music from churches; opera and plays from the theatres and entertainment from variety halls; dance music from cafes and concert music from the concert halls; public speeches by public persons from all sorts of public places; and ceremonies and events that ranged from royal occasions to the song of the nightingale. Added to all these was the coverage of sporting events - football, rugby, cricket, horse racing, tennis, boxing and so on.

In presenting this material the broadcasters did not intervene to restructure it. Most programmes observed real time, the length of the

broadcast corresponding to the duration of the event. Radio sought to minimise its own presence as witness, claiming simply to extend the distribution of the event beyond its particular context to the whole listening community. Their appeal, which was very great to an audience unlike todays which takes such things for granted, was that they admitted listeners to public events, to their live presence, in a way no previous technology had been able to do:

> Many of your readers must be office workers. They must know what sort of a life is that of a clerk in a provincial city - a tram-ride to the office, lunch in a tea-shop or saloon bar, a tram-ride home. You daren't spend much on amusements - the pictures and that - because you've got your holidays to think of. We have no Trade Unions and we don't grumble, but it's not an easy life. Please don't think I'm complaining. I'm only writing to say how much wireless means to me and thousands of the same sort. It is a real magic carpet. Before it was a fortnight at Rhyll, and that was all the travelling I did that wasn't on a tram. Now I hear the Boat Race and the Derby, and the opening of the Menai Bridge. There are football matches some Saturdays, and talks by famous men and women who have travelled and can tell us about places.
>
> (letter in *Radio Times*, 20 January 1928)

Such broadcasts unobtrusively stitched together the private and the public spheres in a whole new range of contexts. At the same time the events themselves, previously discrete, now entered into new relations with each other, woven together as idioms of a corporate national life. Nothing so well illustrates the noiseless manner in which the BBC became perhaps *the* central agent of the national culture as this calendrical role of broadcasting; this cyclical reproduction, year in year out, of an orderly and regular progression of festivities, rituals and celebrations - major and minor, civil and sacred - that marked the unfolding of the broadcast year.

The cornerstone of this calendar was the religious year: the weekly observances of the Sabbath through church services and a programme schedule markedly more austere than on other days; the great landmarks of Easter, Pentecost and Christmas; the feastdays of the patron saints of England, Scotland and Wales which occasioned special programmes from the appropriate 'region', though what to do with St Patrick's Day was an annually recurring headache for the programme makers in Belfast (Cathcart 1984). Bank holidays were celebrated in festive mood while the solemn days of national remembrance were marked by religious services and special feature programmes. Sport of course developed its own calendar very quickly. The winter season had its weekly observances of football, rugby and steeple chasing, climaxing in the Boat Race, the Grand National and the Cup Final. Summer brought in cricket and flat racing, the test matches, Derby Day, Royal Ascot and Wimbledon.

Threaded through the year was a tapestry of civic, cultural, royal and state occasions: the Trooping of the Colour, the Ceremony of the Keys, the Lord Mayor's Banquet, the Chairing of the Bard, the Dunmow Flitch, the Shakespeare memorial celebrations as Stratford and much, much more. From the late twenties onwards programme makers kept a watchful eye on impending anniversaries as occasions for a potential talk or feature. The two thousandth anniversay of Virgil's death produced a talk on Virgil in English Poetry, while some of the more radical elements conspired to remember republican causes - May Day, the Fall of the Bastille, or the hundredth anniversary of the first great Chartist march.

The broadcast year fell naturally into two divisions: the indoor months of autumn and winter and the outdoor months of spring and summer. One of the first things the radio manufacturers discovered was the seasonal nature of the sale of radio sets which increased sharply as winter came on. Hence the annual trade exhibition, Radiolympia, was held in the autumn as heralding the start of the 'wireless season' (Hill 1978: 67). By the late twenties output was being planned on a quarterly basis, and the autumn quarter was always carefully arranged to woo the fireside listeners with a varied menu of new plays, concerts and variety programmes. The fireside months were generally more well stocked with 'serious' listening matter, but from Whitsun onwards the lighter elements in the programmes were expected to have an increasingly wide appeal. At the same time the broadcasters claimed to have redressed the balance between the seasons of the year, making it possible now to hear good music and plays throughout the summer months when the theatres and concert halls were closed (*Radio Times* 11 May 1934). Thus the programme planners tried to find broadly appropriate material to suit the climate of the year and the mood and leisure activities of the audience. The highpoint of these activities were the annual arrangements for Christmas Day.

From the very beginning Christmas was always the most important date in the broadcast year. It was the supreme family festival, an invocation of the spirit of Dickens, a celebration of 'home, hearth and happiness ' (*Radio Times* 20 December 1924). It was no coincidence that Reith had worked hard for years to persuade the King to speak, from his home and as head of his family, to the nation and empire of families listening in their homes on

this particular day. The royal broadcast (the first was in 1932) quickly became part of the ritual of the British Christmas, and is a classic illustration of that process whereby tradition is reinvented. It set a crowning seal on the role of broadcasting in binding the nation together, giving it a particular form and content: the family audience, the royal family, the nation as family (cf Cardiff and Scannell 1986).

Though not all this material recurred with predictable regularity, I have tried to convey a sense of an underlying stable temporal framework for broadcasting, working through the weeks and months of the year. Programme output had a patterned regularity that grew stronger in the National Programme in the course of the thirties. The effects of this process are incremental. They accumulate in time as they are reproduced through time. In the course of many years, over generations, broadcast output becomes sedimented in memory as traces both of a common past and of the biography of individuals. I would like to illustrate one way in which this process works by an examination of the narrative features of broadcast serials and the ways they connect with the lifetimes of individuals.

Broadcasting, memory, lifetime.

In a nostalgic essay on the enchanting Russian tales of Leskov, Walter Benjamin laments that the art of storytelling is coming to an end. The communicability of experience is fading away as it is replaced by new forms of communication whose object is information: 'Every morning brings us news from all over the world, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with information. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information' (Benjamin 1973: 89). I should like briefly to reflect on the implications of this distinction between experience and information in relation to continuous serials and news, and their underlying social functions, as I see them, of remembering and forgetting.

They are surely remarkable things, these stories told two, three or five times weekly, and continuously, ceaselessly for twenty years or more, in some cases, and still going strong; stories moreover, distributed on national channels accessible to whole populations. The art of storytelling, far from vanishing in today's societies, here reaches a universality undreamt of by Walter Benjamin.

These stories are unlike all others in that they have neither a beginning nor an ending. There is no narrative movement towards resolution and

closure. Nor is there any originary point of departure. The first episode of *Coronation Street* or, more recently, *East Enders*, already presupposes its own narrative world as fully given and in being and motion: the first episode simply 'cuts in' on this world as the last episode 'cuts out' of it. It is rare for these stories to die, but Christine Geraghty notes that when *Waggoners Walk* (Radio 2) was brought to an untimely end in 1980 by BBC economies, there was no attempt to tie up all the loose ends in the last episode. 'One is left', she comments, 'with a sense that the serial has not stopped but is still taking place' (Geraghty 1981: 11. cf Modleski 1984: 90). This effect, of a fictional world without end or beginning that exists in parallel with the actual world, is the most powerful and distinctive feature of this kind of narrative, and is the basis of the cumulative pleasures it offers its audience.

A sense of 'unchronicled growth' - of the objective, continuing existence outside the narrative of Ambridge or the Crossroads Motel - is partly an effect of the way time passes between one episode and another. Between times the characters pursue an 'unrecorded existence' that is resumed in the next episode. In other words, we are aware, Geraghty suggests, that day to day life has continued in our absence, an awareness that is powerfully enhanced by the way in which time in the fictional world runs in parallel with the actual world. Serials vary in the scrupulousness with which they observe real time. *The Archers*, Geraghty claims, is the most punctilious in this respect. So if a character says it is Thursday it is usually Thursday in the outside world. Both *The Archers* and *Coronation Street* refer regularly to actual events and persons in the real world, and bank

holidays, royal weddings and other public events are woven into the programmes as they occur in reality (Geraghty 1981: 10).

It is a strange experience to watch the first ever episode of *Coronation Street,* recorded in grainy black and white back in 1960, and to follow this with an episode in colour from the recent past. There, twenty five years ago, is Ken Barlow played by William Roache, then just turned twenty one, an anxious grammar school boy in his first year at college. Now here he is years later and with a chequered career and personal life behind him, an anxious middle-aged, married man. Such an abrupt time lapse immediately makes visible the way in which actor and character (the two are inseparable) have aged over a quarter of a century. And this confirms the truth of the time' of the tale as corresponding in all particulars with the movement of lifetime and its passing away.

'A striking and robust feature of all soap operas is their focus on interpersonal relationships' (Cantor and Pingree 1983: 132). Unlike classic narrative which centres on the person of the hero and on other characters as they impinge more or less directly upon him, the narrative interest in serials is much more evenly distributed amongst a number of permanent characters whose interrelationships constitute the social world of the story. Again where classic narrative pursues a single storyline with the odd subplot alomg the way to a final denouement, serials maintain several stories running in tandem and overlapping. Thus viewers or listeners are presented with a rich pattern of incident and characterization in which 'the dramatic is mixed in with the everyday, the tragic with the comic, the

romantic with the mundane' (Geraghty 1981: 12). The materials from which these narratives are interwoven are drawn from the recognizably predictable (and occasionally unpredictable) situations and circumstances of interpersonal life: family relations, friendships and enmities, the emotional ups and downs of married life - in short, the stuff of daily life and experience.

To maintain the continuity of the densely textured social world of the narrative calls for unremitting 'backstage' teamwork by the actors and production team. The actors portray the characters whom they play as 'real people', as persons in all particulars. It requires considerable art to bring off this artless effect, and the care with which actors attend to the fine details of the management and maintenance of the self-same identity of the characters they play emerges very clearly from Dorothy Hobson's discussions with the cast of *Crossroads* (Hobson 1982: 87-105). The longest running programmes include an archivist in the production team to ensure that no discrepancies appear between past and present, that characters retain consistent biographies, and that birthdays and anniversaries are remembered on the right day from one year to the next. For its is certain that if mistakes creep in they will be spotted by regular listeners or viewers.

When all these things are taken together we can begin to understand how it is that the characters that people these fictional worlds are knowable *in the same way* as people in the actual world are known. This I believe to be the remarkable characteristic of such stories (I cannot think that it is

true of any other kind of fictional world in any other medium), and it enables us to account for their well known effect as real and lifelike for their many devotees - for that indeed is what they are. The key is the correspondence between the movement of time in the fictional world and the actual world: for, since these move together and at the same pace, it follows that the lifetime of viewers and listeners unfolds at the same rate as the lives of the characters in the stories. Thus we stand in the same relation to them as we do to our own family, relatives, friends and everyday acquaintances. Moreover access to this fictional world corresponds quite closely to the forms of access we have to people in the real world, and just as in our own lives we acquire, through the years, our own incremental biography as well as an accumulating familiar knowledge of the biographies of those around us, so too, in the same way, we come to know the people in the serials. We can recall past incidents in their lives with the same facility as we can remember events in our own lives and in the lives of those we know and have known for years. And we can drop out of the narratives for a while and later return and pick up the threads in the same way as we resume real life situations and relationships.

All these points are confirmed, I think, in Dorothy Hobson's sympathetic study of the *Crossroads* audience. Here is Marjory, an elderly widow who lives alone, talking about the marital problems of Glenda in the programme:

> Oh well, that kind of thing, her marriage is not satisfactory, is it! That's the answer to that. Well, I'm going to say something to you. I never thought mine was when I was young. So I can understand how she felt, and it's rather a worry to you. In other words, well of course, in my day they were terribly innocent, weren't they? We didn't really know what was what and what wasn't. And I think we were all a bit frightened. Well, I said tonight, you never felt you could really

> let yourself go, you were frightened of having a kid and all that sort of thing. Well I can understand that, you see. Now *that* is a thing, when I'm listening to that, I think, 'I can remember I used to be a bit like that'. So what I mean to say, whatever they put in *Crossroads*, it's appertaining to something that could happen in life. It doesn' seem fiction to me.
>
> (Hobson 1982: 134-5)

It can readily be seen that the characters in the programme are spoken of as real people while recognised as fictional. Moreover the connections that Marjory makes between circumstances in the story and in her own life are interactive and reciprocal. It is not the case, as some uses and gratifications studies suggest, that viewers use these stories in some simple way as role-models to guide their own conduct (Cantor and Pingree 1983: 122-132). More interestingly, in moving between both worlds, they use their own life-experience critically to assess the life-world of the story just as much as the reverse (cf Hobson 1982: 106-137).

Benjamin's view of stories is essentially passive. They counsel us, we absorb their wisdom. But these audiences have counsel for the people in the stories. Far from dying out in today's societies, the communicability of experience is sustained and augmented by such tales. 'Popular fiction *should* connect with life and reality, indeed it is meaningless if it does not achieve this end, for fiction has always grown from experiences in life' (Hobson 1982: 136). I have tried to show *how* these connections work in continuous broadcast narratives. I regard them as exemplary illustrations of the subtle ways in which broadcasting runs in parallel with and interacts with the life and times of our actual world. The repetitiveness of day to day life, crosscut by the irreversibility of

lifetime, is continuously reproduced by these stories without beginning or ending.

Such programmes resonate in memory in a double sense: they are both a cultural resource shared by millions, and yet are particular to the lives of individuals. Talk about them is part of the staple currency of the tabloid press and the small change of everyday conversation (cf Penacchioni 1984 and Geraghty 1981: 22-25, on gossip in and about these stories). In many other ways broadcasting accumulates a past-in-common to whole populations. Ask anyone what they remember of wartime radio and the answer is Tommy Handley and *ITMA;* from the fifties, the Coronation and Hancock; from the early sixties, the assassination and funeral of Kennedy... a serial world punctuated by singular events.

Popular music in particular is rich in past associations. Dorothy Hobson, in her study of housewives and the media, observes that radio can be seen as 'providing women with a musical reminder of their leisure activities before they married. It also, as they say, keeps them up to date with new records' (Hobson 1980: 109). There is evidence that the overall musical profiles of the BBC's popular music channels quietly readjust to the changing tastes of their gradually aging audiences (Sabine 1982).

The dialectical movement of time always involves more than the continuous presencing of the past in current output. There is also, and necessarily, the simultaneous business of 'letting go' of its clutches in the forward momentum of change and the turning towards the future. Geraghty puts her

finger on much wider issues when she observes that 'although the accumulated past is important to a serial, one could also say that the ability to 'forget' what has happened in the serial's past is also crucial. If the serial had to carry the heavy weight of its own past it would not be able to carry on' (Geraghty 1981: 18). This work of filtering and discarding the past, while orienting the present towards emerging and future events and processes, is accomplished daily and routinely by broadcast news.

Philip Schlesinger, who has written most illuminatingly of the 'time culture' of news production, speaks of the way in which the whole process 'is so organized that its basic dynamic emphasizes the *perishability* of stories' (Schlesinger 1978: 105, my emphasis). The whole emphasis in the newsroom is on 'pace' and 'immediacy'; on news as new and 'up to the minute'. When a story carries over from one day to the next, it is assumed that the audience will be familiar enough with the topic to allow its background to be largely taken for granted. 'It is always *today's* developments which occupy the foreground' (Schlesinger 1978: 105). The professional stress is always on *discontinuity*; on upheaval, suddenness, unpredictability. Thus news lacks any *chronologic*, any continuity between 'then' and 'now', past and present, which is the mediating basis of experience.

News then, is the negation of history. It confirms the existence of a parallel world of public events that is removed from the mundane day to day world of listeners and viewers. The continuous presencing of this world

cannot adequately be accounted for by rationalist explanations of its information function within the mass democratic politics of nation-states. It is as much, if not more so, a means whereby populations keep 'in touch' with a world external to their own immediate circumstances because this world can - sometimes in cruelly unexpected ways - impinge directly upon day to day reality. Over and beyond any particular content, the conventions of daily news practices are geared to the routines and structures of the twenty four hour day, giving it substance as the domain of the bounded present in our societies.

Broadcasting and the routines of day to day life

The critics of mass society and its culture have always chided broadcasting for adjusting to rather than enriching everyday life: 'It takes the flow of time for granted and is received by audiences who are not attending particularly to particular moments of communication. Continuity thus serves to compound the trivialising tendencies of the universality of the media... Time, which could have been forcibly punctuated by broadcasting, has instead been patterned to a rhythm of acceptability' (Abrams 1973; 113). In fact in Britain the broadcasters initially adopted a viewpoint identical to such critics.

In the twenties and early thirties, listeners were frequently admonished to listen attentively and selectively to BBC output. Programme building (ie

scheduling) was carefully arranged to discourage casual, continuous listening. There were no continuity links between programmes; no announcer's chat, previews of what was to come later, to maintain a smooth flow from one item to the next. Instead the spaces between programmes were left as little oases of silence, save for the tick of a studio clock, to allow people to switch off rather than stay on, or to recompose themselves after a particularly stirring play or concert. Fixed scheduling (placing programmes at the same time on the same day from one week to the next) was, with few exceptions such as the nightly nine o'clock news bulletin, deliberately shunned. It was hard to keep track of, say, a talks series when its day and time varied markedly from week to week - but that was what *Radio Times* was for. Readers were advised to use it as a means of selectively planning their week's listening.

At first then, the broadcasters suppressed or misunderstood the particular characteristics of their medium and its social implications. They treated radio as an *occasional* resource like theatre, cinema or the concert hall. But radio has no sense of occasion, of a time and place set apart from ordinary life and affairs. On the contrary, its distinctive features are the reverse of occasionality. Because it appears as a domestic utility - always on tap like water, gas or electricity - it must always have an available content. Thus the momentum of broadcasting has always been towards a continuous uninterrupted flow of programme output. Round the clock transmission is the logical completion of this tendency, though its realization in this country is still held back by economic, cultural and, until the mid-seventies, political constraints.

During the thirties the BBC was obliged to admit that for most people most of the time, irrespective of class or education, radio was regarded as no more than a domestic utility for relaxation and entertainment - a familiar convenience, a cheerful noise in the background - which in moments of national crisis, mourning or celebration became compulsive listening for the whole population. Modifying the content and structure of the programme service to take account of this discovery entailed greater attentiveness to the circumstances in which listening took place, and to the phased activities of the population through the hours of the day. The pleasures of listening developed on the National Programme were designed to support the new and modest utopia of the suburban nuclear family. The tired businessman or weary office worker were models frequently invoked to typify the ordinary listener, for whom relaxation after a hard day's work was a well earned right. Radio was beginning to play a significant role in the organization of the rhythm of work and leisure (Frith 1983).

By 1936 under a whole range of pressures, there was less emphasis on cultural enrichment and a greater recognition (reluctantly in some official quarters) that the fireside audience wanted not much more than cheerful, undemanding entertainment. New kinds of programmes were introduced: parlour games and quizzes, light drama serials, and the beginnings of situation comedy with *Bandwagon*. Greater care was taken to organize the daily output on more routinized, regular lines. Popular programmes were increasingly given fixed time slots. *Monday Night at Seven*, as its name implies, was an early and succesful attempt to produce a fireside show that recurred at a known time and could pleasurably be

anticipated as a predictable enjoyment in the week. By the late thirties programmes planners were adjusting daily output to chime in with the time routines of day to day life through the weekend and the working week.

Today the pattern of output is carefully arranged to match what is known of the daily working, domestic and leisure patterns of the population. Since 1936 when the BBC set up its Listener Research Unit this department has conducted many enquiries into the time use of the British people, the earliest being in 1939 and the latest, *Daily Life in the 1980s*, in 1983. This however is not generally available and the most recently published study is *The People's Activities and Use of Time* (BBC 1979). This detailed survey of people's time-paths through the day, of when they are in or out of the home, is based on diaries kept by nearly 1400 households from all over the country, selected at random from electoral rolls. The diarists were asked to record the 'main' and 'secondary' activities in half-hour units from 5 am one day to 2 am the next of all household members including children of five and over (for a brief critical comment on this method, see BBC Data 1984: 61).

The survey construes time, based on the twenty-four hour clock, as linear through each day and cyclical from one day to the next. Within this cycle three major 'bundles' of time-use are easily discerned. First, necessary or reproductive time for sleep and bodily self-maintenance; second, coercive or work time at office, factory, school or home; third, discretionary or free time for personal activities, leisure and relaxation. The amount of time available in the last category is determined by the

prior claims of the first two, which are therefore of great interest to broadcasters who need 'first and foremost to know how many - and what kinds of - people are available to listen or view' (BBC 1979: 9).

The diary data was analysed in two ways: 1) to show what people of different kinds were doing at different times of the day, and 2) to assess how much time people of different kinds spent on different kinds of activity. The results were tabulated in great detail and care is needed in generalising from them. But the overall implication to be drawn, I think, is that the axes of difference both for daily activities and the proportions of time spent on them are determined primarily by age and gender, with occupation and marital status as major determining differences between adults before the age of retirement (for a much fuller discussion of time budgeting and the BBC surveys, cf Science Policy Research Unit, 1980). Class is not a major point of difference in the overall distribution of these time 'bundles' for the British population, though it is *within* the relatively constant amount of discretionary time and the ways in which it is disposed of. It is *life-position* (a cluster of factors: age, sex, occupation etc. Rubin 1985) that shapes the overall 'time-geography' of people's daily routine (cf Giddens 1984: 110-119).

Thus what emerges from the study is the interlocking of lifetime with the time-structures of the day. For what is mapped here synchronically are the different disposals of time-in-the-day by individuals at different stages in their life-cycles. And beyond this are the motionless structures of

longue durée. After surveying changes in the activity patterns of the British population since before the war, the report concludes

> In 1975 fewer people got up earlier on weekdays than in 1939, but the changes over the last forty years have not been great. The proportions out at work have also varied a little and the working day may well have become a little shorter. Considerably less time is spent on domestic activities and meals in the evenings, and bedtimes have become later by an average of rather more than half an hour for adults, and one hour for children.
>
> (BBC 1979: 644)

Though patterns of time use may vary according to circumstances, age or generational factors (SPRU 1980: 32-33), their overall structures, boundaries and content change much more slowly.

Broadcasting has moved a long way from its initial demands of careful attention to its programme offerings. Audience research now confirms that listening and viewing have phased patterns of (in)attention through the day. 'During the day, when the radio audience is at its height, the great majority (over 95%) treat listening as only a secondary activity to personal, domestic or work activities. In contrast, viewing audiences reach their maximum during the evening and for over three-quarters of them it is their main activity, only about a tenth doing something else at the same time' (BBC 1979: 522). Two moments of the day are of particular interest - the crossover points from home to work in the morning and from work to home in the late afternoon. In these moments of departure and return how do broadcasters design their programmes to correspond with what they know of the patterns and routines of their intended audiences at such times?

In the early years of television competition both sides observed the so-called 'toddlers truce' - the period between six and seven o'clock each evening when there was no television partly, it was said, to make it easier for parents to get their young children to bed. In 1957 the BBC decided to fill this gap with a programme that chimed in with what viewers were thought likely to be doing at that time. Enquiries were made.

> They would be coming and going: women getting meals for teenagers who were going out and preparing supper for men who were coming in; men in the North would be having their tea; commuters in the South would be arriving home. There was no likelihood of an audience which would be ready to view steadily for half-an-hour at a time. What seemed necessary was a continuous programme held together by a permanent staff of comperes, reporters and interviewers, but consisting of separate items so that any viewer who happened to be around could dip into it knowing that something different would soon follow and that he had lost nothing by not being able to watch from the beginning.
>
> (Goldie 1977: 210)

The result was *Tonight*, the first major topical magazine programme to be presented five nights a week in this country, and its successor throughout the seventies, *Nationwide*.

Work on the conditions of reception for cinema has shown it to be a visually overwhelming experience that demands, and gets, a concentrated and psychically charged gaze (Elsaesser 1981, Ellis 1982). By contrast listening to radio or watching television are distinctively underwhelming experiences. Their usage is interrelated, interactive with other activities and interests, and a means of maintaining sociable contacts between family members, as Bausinger has shown in his account of a typical German household's weekend (Bausinger 1984). The characteristic look that television produces is the glance, and many of its programmes are designed

to be understood by people who are only half watching, popping in and out of the room, or even channel zapping. Thus broadcasting recognizes a distracted listening and viewing subject, pre-eminently figured in the housewife/mother who in Britain tunes in to Radios 1 and 2, and in America to daytime soaps.

Tania Modleski has most suggestively related the formal properties of daytime television in the USA to the rhythms of women's work in the home. The housewife, she argues, functions by distraction and she quotes Tillie Olsen's *Silences* to support this claim: 'More than in any other human relationship, overwhelmingly more, motherhood means being instantly interruptable, responsive, responsible... It is distraction, not meditation that becomes habitual: interruption, not continuity; spasmodic, not constant toil' (Modleski 1984: 100). Daytime television accords closely with the rhythms of women's work in the home and their disrupted, discontinuous work routines. The narrative structures of daytime soaps as well as the flow of other material and commercials tend to make repetition, interruption and distraction pleasurable.

Hobson's study of British housewives and their use of radio and television points in the same direction. Domestic work is, in contrast with office or factory routines, essentially structureless. The rolling, continuous daytime popular music programmes on radio provide structures, time boundaries and 'breaks' that help women to organize their routines. The personality of the male DJ provides a point of interaction and release from

their situation of 'collective isolation'. In the early evening they switch to television:

> Yes, in between half five and eight, that's me busiest time, feed him, change him, sometimes bath him. I don't bath him very often, erm, get Richard's dinner and I always clean up straight away, the washing up, and then I get everything settled and that takes me up to about eight o'clock, 'cos I stop at half-past six to watch *Crossroads* (laughs). And then from eight onwards I just sit and watch the box (laughs).
>
> (Hobson 1980: 110)

It is beside the point, Modleski argues, to condemn such programmes for distracting the housewife from her 'real' situation. At this level broadcasting and its so-called distractions, along with the particular forms they take, are intimately bound up with women's patterns of work and relaxation (Modleski 1984: 103).

It is in such instances - and this is but one of many - that production and reproduction converge; that the 'recursive ordering of social life' (Giddens 1979: 216) is routinely sustained by radio and television; that the essential *continuity* of the patterns of day-to-day life are unobtrusively maintained. It is not, of course, that broadcasting creates or determines these patterns, but it is inextricably implicated in them, giving them substance and content, 'a texture of relevances', presencing in the mundane here-and-now a multiplicity of actual and imaginary worlds, and yet always oriented to, speaking to, the immediate contexts and circumstances of listeners and viewers.

Broadcasting: a world in common

Throughout this paper I have spoken of *broadcasting*: radio and television together. The privileging of television at the expense of radio in media studies has created a wholly artificial distinction that has distracted attention from the ways in which both are routinely used by populations at different times in the day for different workaday purposes. I have tried to draw attention to this interactive use of both media by people in the phased management of their daily routines, as well as the ways in which the schedules of radio and television, and the form and content of much of their programming, is unobtrusively arranged to fit in with, and to sustain, those routines. Although I have illustrated my arguments with examples drawn mainly from the development of the British system, and of the BBC in particular, I regard the features I have described as characteristic of all national systems of broadcasting in fully developed, modern industrial societies. It does not matter whether they are organised along public service or commercial lines. Such systems are fundamentally oriented - irrespective of motive or intention - towards the maintenance of the recognizably routine features of day to day life for whole populations. At the same time they provide a service attuned to the changing interests, needs and circumstances of people at different phases in their life cycle. Broadcasting, whose medium is time, is profoundly implicated in the temporal arrangements of modern societies.

The fundamental work of national broadcasting systems goes beyond any ideological or representational role. Their primary task is the mediation of modernity, the normalization of the public sphere and the socialization of the private sphere. This they accomplish by the continuous production and reproduction of public life and mundane life (nationally and transnationally) not as separate spheres but as routinely implicated in each other, and as recognizable, knowable and familiar. Modern mass democratic politics has its forum in the radically new kind of public sphere that broadcasting constitutes. At the same time radio and television sustain, in individual, interpersonal and institutional contexts, the taken for granted accomplishment of all the things we normally do every day of our lives, such as getting out of bed in the morning, washing and dressing ourselves, grabbing a bite to eat and getting off to work or school on time.

Earlier in this paper I referred to the chronic anxieties produced by the draining away of tradition in the transition to the modern world. The literature of the last century portrayed its mundane world as fraught with tension and danger. For Marx the domain of civil society, and for Dickens the untamed wilderness of the great city, were experienced in the same way: as a hostile environment, 'the sphere of egoism and of the *bellum omnium contra omnes*' (Marx 1975: 221), in which Jonas Chuzzlewit's precept - 'Do other men, for they would do you' - is the best practical advice for survival. Similar themes emerge in Benjamin's study of Baudelaire's work as the poetry of *shock:* a traumatised response to the restless tumult of the metropolitan city. The motif that Benjamin finally selects to encapsulate

the essentially modern experience caught by Baudelaire is not that of the *flâneur* (who possesses the streets), but the individual jostled and buffeted by the anonymous crowd (Benjamin 1973: 195) - a theme explored by Poe and with which Dickens memorably ended *Little Dorrit*.

If the public world of work and city life seemed strange and threatening, then the private world - the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois home as defence and bulwark against these intrusive pressures (so brilliantly explored in the contrast between Wemmick at work and home in *Great Expectations)* - could scarcely prevent those anxieties from penetrating the domestic hearth. Raymond Williams has acutely caught the social inflexions of such tensions in the late nineteenth century European theatre of Ibsen and Chekhov: 'The centre of interest was now for the first time the family home, but men and women stared from its windows, or waited anxiously for messages, to learn about forces 'out there', which would determine the conditions of their lives' (Williams 1974: 26. Cf Williams undated: 11-22). The gap between these two worlds, the public and the private, 'the immediate living areas and the directed places of work and government', created both the need and form of new kinds of communication, of 'news' from elsewhere, from otherwise inaccessible sources' (Williams 1974: 26,27).

I think of broadcasting's development as a mediating response to such large scale displacements and readjustments in modern industrial societies where custom, tradition and all the givenness of social life has been eroded. Giddens regards routinization, which he sees as fundamental to any society

no matter how simple or complex, as the basis of 'ontological security' for individual social members. By this he means that individuals have confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity (Giddens 1984: 375). In class-divided nation-states, radio first and later television unobtrusively restored (or perhaps created for the first time) the possibilities of a knowable world, a world-in-common, for whole populations. The social world was rendered sociable, and the manifold anxieties of public life were greatly eased. Broadcasting brought together for a radically new kind of *general* public the elements of a culture-in-common (national and transnational) for all. In so doing, it redeemed, and continues to redeem, the intelligibility of the world and the communicability of experience in the widest social sense.

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