

THE ROLE OF 'FILM STUDY'
WITHIN THE ENGLISH SYLLABUS
IN WHITE ENGLISH MEDIUM SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN THE TRANSVAAL, 1977-1990

Jennifer Jane Ballot

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Introduction

'FILM STUDY' AND VISUAL LITERACY IN TRANSVAAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Prior to 1986, there was no media studies of any type prescribed at secondary schools in the Transvaal. However, individual teachers and schools had recognised the need for children to receive instruction in the media. This saw the introduction of varying forms of informal media studies into the classroom.

Prescribed, formal instruction in the media began in 1986, with the introduction of a revised syllabus for English First Language by the Transvaal Education Department (hereafter TED). Included in this syllabus, under the "Reading" section, was a sub-section entitled "Visual Literacy". According to the explanations given in the syllabus, this was to be the study of "screen material" - to be undertaken as an extension of the reading techniques.

There is a semantic problem associated with the use of the term "visual literacy" in the syllabus. The term is broad in its implication, but is employed in the syllabus as a label for what is really only 'film study'.

"Visual literacy" should refer to the understanding of all visual communication. In fact, in a world that is dominated by visuals¹, visual literacy could even come to be regarded as an essential skill.² Such a general study must involve visual material of all kinds - from media that communicate

only via photographs or pictures to media that have a written component, but whose overall appeal is visual. As film, television and video are primarily visual media, the term must also refer to the study of these "screen" media.³ It should not, however, be used to refer to these media only.

"Visual literacy" as used by the TED syllabus does not have a broad implication. The use of the term is really a misnomer - the section should be entitled "Film Studies". Although the syllabus refers to the study of film, television and video, the prescribed visual texts and the practice of "Visual Literacy" reduces the general study to the study of film only. The insistence on the term "visual" limits the approach to this medium even further by placing the emphasis on the image track only and generally ignoring the importance of the sound track. In practice, therefore, "Visual Literacy" studies in Transvaal secondary schools are a limited 'film study'.

The approach to this 'film study' concentrates on individual completed products, not on the processes and circumstances of production/reception, and is thus text-bound. Pupils study complete films (short or long), with the emphasis on the content. Issues typically studied in the analysis of written literature are stressed. The techniques of the film medium are considered, but are not regarded as being particularly important.

This approach does not see films as constructions and undertakes no specific analysis of the subjective processes that affect the construction of a final film product. Nor are the circumstances and contexts of reception considered in any depth.

The pupils are unproblematically incorporated into the prescribed reading of a text, rather than regarded as being individual readers and makers of meaning.

From a practical point-of-view, the product-orientated, text-bound approach to 'film study' is easy to "slot into" both the existing school system and the syllabus. The emphasis that the approach places upon the evaluation of individual film texts parallels the existing study of written literary texts present in the English syllabus. In both cases, examples of 'good' texts are selected and the pupils are guided as to how to interpret the films and books/plays. This method of teaching does not acknowledge that each pupil is an individual receiver involved in interpreting a text. The learning situation is very controlled - where teachers give, and pupils receive, set interpretations of texts.

The decision to teach film in this manner allowed for the new genre of literature to be introduced into the syllabus without disrupting either the traditional, teacher-as-expert style of teaching practised in Transvaal schools; or the structure of the syllabus. Tomaselli (1985) explores how the selection of this approach could also aim at persuading whites to accept the social system. Only 'good' films are selected primarily for their strong narrative and pupils are encouraged to develop a "critical and discerning attitude" (TED, 1986, p19) towards these 'works of art'.

I would like to argue for an approach to the media (here specifically film) that aims at developing in pupils an awareness that all texts are

constructions and that reality is mediated via various discourses that operate in their world. The approach must also consider individual viewers as being actively involved in engaging with these discourses and making their own meanings.

In this thesis, I shall explore the history, context, theory and practice of the study of film in English-medium secondary schools in the Transvaal. I shall also consider the theories underlying media education - in particular the question of a basic media studies pedagogy.

END NOTES

1. In the form of television, advertising hoardings, computer-generated graphics etc.
2. In the United Kingdom during the mid-1970s, the idea was explored of replacing "Film and Television Studies" with a broader "visual literacy" - to be considered as a core skill alongside verbal literacy and numeracy (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983, p24).
3. It must not be forgotten, however, that these media are not exclusively visual, they also have an important audio component.

Chapter One

THE MEDIATION OF REALITY

A Basic Theory of Ideology

Althusser and Poulantzas see ideology as the representation of the imaginary relations of individuals towards their real existence (Heck, 1980, p122). Ideology is a lived experience and is 'real' in the extent to which individuals experience it. It also has a material existence in that it exists as sets of practices that constitute State apparatuses (Tomaselli et al, 1987, p7). These are either repressive or ideological and function to reproduce submission to the rules of the established order; and to make the view of the ruling groups appear as 'common sense' (Tomaselli et al, 1987, p7). The dominant ideology functioning through these apparatuses is structured to work in such a way that the dominant classes benefit (Lodziak, 1986, p69) and subordinate classes are incorporated into the system.

The Notion of Consent

This theory of ideology is highly deterministic (Lodziak, 1986; Fiske, 1987; Eagleton, 1991). It is also unable to account for social change because it does not allow for the existence of living counter-ideologies (Tomaselli et al, 1987, p9). In addition, Althusser's notion of interpellation¹ places too much emphasis on the influence that ideology has in shaping individual identities (Lodziak, 1986, p122).

Gramsci's notion of hegemony² is generally a more useful theory (Fiske, 1987) as it is a notion of a process - "whereby the subordinate are led to consent to the system that subordinates them" (Fiske, 1987, p40). It is crucial for the 'hegemonic bloc' to win some form of consent so that the granting of legitimacy to the ruling class will appear to be spontaneous, natural and inevitable (Tomaselli et al, 1987, p15). The theory of hegemony can also account for resistance (Fiske, 1987, p40).

The acceptance of the dominant system takes place on two levels:

"pragmatic acceptance, where the individual complies because he perceives no realistic alternative, and normative acceptance, where the individual internalizes the moral expectations of the ruling class and views his own inferior position as legitimate" (Mann in Loziak, 1986, p85).

Both these levels imply an acceptance that is not completely consciously motivated.

Ideology and the Education System

As ideology is lived social practice, it must involve the unconscious dimension of social experience, as well as the workings of formal institutions (Eagleton, 1991, p115) - such as schools, which can be organized specifically to ensure that they can be used to 'persuade' pupils into accepting the social system.

The State control exerted over the education system is the control of the organization of the functioning of schools, as well as the content and method of teaching. Each subject in the curriculum

is specifically structured by a syllabus that determines what the pupils should study - and, to a certain extent, how they should go about doing so. These syllabuses generally reflect different discourses operating within the education system - discourses that originate within specific social and historical contexts.

The system of education in South Africa that prevailed during my research period (1977-1990) was based upon racial segregation. White children attended white-only schools and the question of apartheid in schooling was never confronted during their education. The schools were organized so that teachers and pupils all occupied specific roles - the teachers being the authority, by virtue of their 'achievement' of knowledge and age. In addition, the curriculum was organised to ensure that the knowledge that was taught presented to the pupils a world view no different from that in which they were living.³

When the processes and practices of schooling are ideologically distorted in this way, children learn how to relate to society according to the way they are slotted into the system. This is essentially a process of socialization, where the society is unproblematically presented to the child through the process of schooling (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983, p23). This is particularly effective in compulsory education, where the educators have a large, free and 'captive' audience.⁴

The Functioning of Discourses

In addition to the organization of schools making

sense of the pupils' world for them, they are also not taught pure knowledge. They are actually taught chosen discourses that present specific representations of the world. For example, in "History", pupils are not taught the real history of the world, they are taught a "representation of the world that is 'historical'" (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983, p25). Similarly, in all subjects, pupils are not taught 'pure' knowledge. Rather, the knowledge is constructed or framed within specific discourses. This is done in order for the knowledge to be of use (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983, p29).

The same knowledge can be presented in different discourses and used to lead to different conclusions. Thus white South Africans were taught a history that focused on the achievements of the Afrikaner (such as in the Great Trek), but never encountered the history of the development of black consciousness. The discourse that was foregrounded ensured that the knowledge would be used to the benefit of the dominant party.

The Functioning of Ideology through the Media

Individuals often experience the working of an ideology via the discourses of the media, which play an important role in the struggle over signification (Hall, 1982, p83). The ideology of a dominant class aims to establish dominant discourses (Hall, 1980, p134), which operate via certain, preferred associated meanings of signs having been made to appear as natural, universal and eternal (Eagleton, 1991, p194). This is effectively achieved via the technique of closure, where certain significations are highlighted and

others blocked out (Eagleton, 1991, p194).

Although certain meanings of signs can be foregrounded within cultural and discursive representations, closure is never complete - oppositional readings of texts are possible. Media texts cannot impose a meaning on an audience, as the individual members of that audience come up with many meanings that are influenced by their contexts (Fiske, 1987, p93, p37). This variety of meanings is a manifestation of the individual identities making up an audience.⁵

The Argument for a New Pedagogy

Alvarado and Ferguson (1983) argue that there is a need to look at the basics of the curricula of education and to develop a new, critical pedagogy. Such a pedagogy must deal with the ideas of abstract concepts, theoretical models and modes of discourse (Alvarado, 1981, p65). The basis for the pedagogical shift would lie in the acknowledgement that there are several discourses at work that order the pupils' world (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983). The task of the teachers would then be to "denaturalise various discourses rather than to endlessly validate them by a complicity with the unspoken norms of a powerful ideological state apparatus" (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983, p29).

Implications of Media Education for the Curriculum

The spread of the mass media has ensured that the school is no longer the sole authority via which experience and expertise are mediated for the children (Schludermann, 1987, p21). The media are

definers of nations' intellectual agendas and are contesting the place traditionally given to schooling alongside the family and home⁶ (Lusted, 1991, p4-5). Due to this and similar views of the media, it became necessary for schools to introduce some form of media education into their curricula.

One of the basic tasks of media studies is to investigate the production of meaning through engaging with media texts. If pupils are taught one 'correct' interpretation of a text, this engagement is not valuable. The pupils should be encouraged to explore their own interactions with, and interpretations of, texts. Such an exploration of the manners in which meanings are negotiated would undoubtedly result in the students looking beyond the media to begin to raise questions about the production of meaning in classrooms (Buckingham, 1986, p32-3).

If the pupils are encouraged to explore media texts in depth, media studies can also lead pupils to look specifically at questions about ownership, in whose interests the media texts are produced, processes and results of the media (Masterman, 1980, p30). An inevitable result of this is that pupils will begin to ask similar questions about schools and curricula. In this way, the pupils would become involved in exploring their own contexts.

It is thus characteristic of the study of the media to question the way in which reality is mediated. With such an emphasis, media studies would present a point of entry into a new critical pedagogy - where the pupils would be more actively involved in their own education. This pedagogy could affect the

entire curriculum (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983, p25).

Limitations of the TED's Overall Approach

One of the mistakes that has been made by the TED in the introduction of media studies is that media texts have been approached as being unproblematic reflections of parts of reality. When treated as such they can be analysed and appreciated as examples of 'literature'. However, media texts are not unproblematic reflections of reality, they are constructed representations of a version of a part of reality (Ferguson, 1991, p19). They are the results of processes of selection and determination and have been produced with specific goals in view. Choices - influenced by questions of power and ideology - are made in the structuring of the 'raw reality' into the specific media discourses, such as television (Hall, 1980, p129).

For these reasons, it is necessary to approach media texts as constructions, not unproblematical reproductions.

"To see the media as symbolic systems or signifying practices which deal in representations rather than reflections of reality, is to understand the necessity for 'reading' the media rather than passively accepting them as substitutes for experience. It is to recognise....that the ideological power of the media resides in their plausibility, and in the ability of media owners, controllers and workers to pass off as 'real' or 'natural' what are inevitably partial and selective constructions"

(Masterman, 1980, p38).⁷

Another mistake made by the TED has been to continue to place the emphasis on the text and to

generally disregard the importance of the act of reading; and also the role that individual readers play. A text-bound media studies is similar to the 'traditional' analysis of literary works and is also easy to control. However, any pupil involved in analysing a media text is an individual receiver engaged with that text - and should be regarded as such.

There is, as Masterman argues, a need to read the media, not just accept them. And when students of the media become aware that they are actively interacting with texts, they must learn to analyse that process of reading.

Paradigms Exercising Hegemony over Media Education

Discussions about the field of media education have dealt repeatedly with the issue of changing the method of teaching from the direct teaching approach to one based essentially on dialogues.⁸ Connell (1983, p52) argues that such discussions have assumed that paradigms (such as literary-style textual analysis) that have exercised hegemony over the field of study have been dislodged, but that this is not in fact not so. These paradigms continue to influence the way media studies is taught at both schools and institutions of higher learning.

The discriminatory approach towards film adopted by the TED is one of the paradigms that continues to influence media studies. It reinforced for pupils in the Transvaal the notion of 'good' and 'superior' - positions which they occupied in the social system. The pupils were not allowed to

explore their own reactions and their own contexts and thence to learn to make their own value judgements. They learnt criteria against which to judge films and were encouraged, through the choice of setwork material, to study only the 'best' films. The result of this was that the pupils could be said to occupy supposedly elevated positions as they then possessed 'superior' standards of judgement.

In this manner children were taught to accept the notion of an elite and were discouraged from the arguably more useful contact with 'popular' culture. The system of schools was thus being used to teach children notions of elitism that were essential to the continued functioning of their social system.

In the following chapter, I explore the broad context in which 'film study' in the TED was located during my research period (1977-1990) - the context of education in South Africa.

END NOTES

1. Addresses/charges individuals as subjects, or those who come to accept the presented reality as the truth (Althusser, 1971, p160-163).
2. "The ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates" (Eagleton, 1991, p112).
3. With the introduction of "Model C" schools in South Africa, education is slowly becoming integrated. However, the position of authority which the teacher has always occupied in schools has not, as yet, been fundamentally challenged.
4. During the study period, primary and secondary school education was not compulsory in South Africa. However, white education was and, as

this thesis is concerned with 'film study' at white secondary schools from 1977-1990, this is the system of schooling with which I will be concerned.

5. I explore this point in Chapter Five of this thesis.
6. Others of Althusser's (1971) Ideological State Apparatuses.
7. I explore the argument that Masterman is concerned only with the ideological dimension of the media in Chapter Four of this thesis.
8. See my discussion in Chapter Four.

Chapter Two

THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Education for Domestication vs Education for Liberation

Freire (1972, p173) argues that education cannot be neutral, but always serves to either domesticate or liberate the public. Education for domestication is understood to adapt new generations into the social system in order to preserve it (Freire, 1972, p175). This system of education imposes the "mythification of the world" - where people are taught to view their society in specific ways that are not necessarily exact, true reproductions of the system that they live in.

In contrast, education for liberation is understood to empower the students and to teach in response to their real needs (Freire and Shor, 1987, p25). Liberating education is based on communication between students and teachers via dialogues (Freire, 1987, p97) and the teachers become learners too as they relearn knowledge. The dialogic process of inquiry should be situated within the pupils' contexts, as material to be studied must be understood historically and socially (Freire and Shor, 1987, p104-5).

There is a historical relationship that exists between the state (and society) and education (Chisholm and Sole, 1981, p112). This relationship is also dialectical and so the focus of the education system of a society is likely to change as the structures of power do.

One of the main tasks of a system of education can become to reproduce the ideology dominant in the society (Freire and Shor, 1987, p36). This is achieved via education for domestication. In South Africa this has been the case, where the system of white education was structured according to Christian-Nationalist principles and functioned essentially to reproduce the dominant ideology of apartheid permeating all spheres of the social structure. The roots of the education system for white South Africans lay in the class relations of a society where issues of race had been used to obscure the real relations of power (Chisolm and Sole, 1981, p110).¹

Christian National Education

The concept of a Christian-Nationalist system of education in South Africa was first born in the early 1800s (Hofmeyer, 1982, p19). Changes in emphasis from this original conception resulted in the Christian National Education (hereafter CNE) "Beleid", drawn up by members of the Broederbond in 1948 (Malherbe, 1977, p105), emphasizing the principle of nationalism above all else. This was in order to ensure that the system of education would adhere to the dominant social system introduced upon acquisition of power by the National Party (Shingler, 1973, p149)², where the divisions of society were based upon racism.

The Nationalist principle then aimed at the domination of Afrikaners over other groups (particularly the non-white racial groups); and the Christian principle was to serve the doctrine of state controlled education. The political system

was thus being served by the education system.

"Without the application of the system of Christian-National Education, the political history of South Africa over the last 30 or 40 years would have been entirely different". (in Malherbe, 1977, p147).³

Although the CNE directive was not instituted as the national policy of education (Malherbe, 1977, p106), there was increasing government control in white education. The National Education Policy Act passed by Parliament in 1967 (Malherbe, 1977, p141) further entrenched this control with a framework of ten principles upon which the educational policy for provincial schools was to be based (Malherbe, 1977, p696). The first two, and most important, of these principles were that education in South Africa should be of a Christian, and of a National, character.

The CNE principles of education permeated the education system for whites to such an extent that "white education in South Africa became almost identical to Christian-National Education formulations" (Rose and Tunmer, 1975, p142).⁴ The principles of CNE were "manifested in a number of ways from youth preparedness programmes to censorship" (Dugard, 1978, p32).

The education system for whites was thus structured to serve the goal of the National Party - the maintenance of white domination and the preservation of the Afrikaans cultural heritage (Dugard, 1978, p29). This system would broadly aim to domesticate pupils by imposing morals and values upon them that complied with the requirements of the dominant party. However, as I discussed in Chapter One, the question of freedom of consent

suggests that such an aim could never be achieved absolutely.

'Traditional', Transmission Models of Education

Education for both domestication and liberation consider the relation of wo/man (and his/her consciousness) and the world. Freire (1972, p181) describes education for liberation as reproducing the dynamism of historical social processes and not separating theory/consciousness from practice/the world. Pupils thus encounter knowledge within specific contexts, which encourages dialectical thinking and wo/men function more competently as subjects in their historical reality.

In contrast, education for domestication does separate consciousness and the world - and regards pupils as possessing empty consciousnesses which need to be filled (Freire, 1972, p276). This echoes the CNE view of method - that the pupils need to be moulded/formed by the teacher, who is the authority transmitting knowledge to respectful recipients/pupils (Tunmer, 1982, p11; Hofmeyer, 1982, p30).

The straight transmission of knowledge to pupils is an alienating and domesticating action. Pupils are removed from the practice of discovering knowledge for themselves and "we reduce the act of knowing the existing knowledge into a mere transference of the existing knowledge" (Freire, 1987, p8). This structure is the basis of the transmission-model of education (Tunmer, 1982, p11) that existed in South African schools during my research period.

Freire (1987, p10) argues that, to ensure the

overall control of the process of education, the pedagogical methods practised in schools are limited. The curriculum, syllabus and methodology of schools are structured in such a manner that pupils and teachers are contained within the official consensus. Tunmer (1982, p14) argues that the curriculum and syllabus will eventually become overcrowded as the hegemony seeks to control all the input the pupils receive. Nevertheless, the schooling system is formal - pupils are taught by teachers in a structured environment according to the requirements of carefully compiled syllabi.

"The lecture-based, passive curriculum is not simply poor pedagogical practice. It is the teaching model most compatible with promoting the dominant authority in society and with disempowering students" (Shor, 1987, p10).

Accordingly, CNE empowers teachers, as parent replacement figures (Hofmeyer, 1982, p31), who, by virtue of their training and age, impart information to supposedly receptive pupils.

Freire (1987, p8) argues that teachers, bound in the system of merely transferring existing knowledge, lose the qualities of action, critical reflection and curiosity that are essential to the production of knowledge. The pupils too do not have the opportunity to exercise their critical abilities. There is, in fact, only one critical dimension to this "transmission model of education" (Ferguson, 1991, p20) and that is based upon the pupils accepting the premises of their guide, or teacher.

The Conditioning of Teachers

As the success of a domesticating education system

is largely dependent upon teachers presenting preferred views, they must be persuaded to fulfil this role. Thus the education system aims to inculcate in teachers many of the decisions they make in their presentation and selection of material in order that such choices become essentially automatic. The teachers themselves have been taught specific discourses of the world - and so tend to accept unproblematically the view of the society with which they have been presented. Any choices that they make are usually in agreement with their acceptance of their world.⁵ Thus teachers often function unknowingly as transmitters of specific discourses and are unaware that they are actually presenting a preferred view. Alvarado and Ferguson (1983, p29) argue that the aim of educators should be for liberating education to work to expose the preferred discourses - and perhaps to offer alternative discourses that present different views of the world. This has, of course, important implications beyond the limitations of the schools.

The Influence of Setwork Material

One of the means in which the 'conditioning' of pupils is attempted at schools is via the prescription of setwork material. Pupils have values imposed upon them when they are told that they must analyse specific works that are considered 'good'. For example, in Transvaal schools specific films were chosen so that pupils were presented with 'good' examples of the use of English in various forms (Grové, May 1991). Prescribed material is most often considered as being 'good'/'suitable' when it presents a view of

the world in accordance with the discourses that have been foregrounded by the education system. The appreciative analysis of the carefully selected network material will not empower the pupils to ask questions about the structure of society and so bring the system into question.

When pupils are taught specifically selected information they are not being allowed to explore for themselves. They are presented with 'correct' facts that have been carefully selected and prescribed for study in schools in order to ensure that they are 'fed' existing knowledge that will perpetuate the view of the society as being natural and unquestionable. The presentation of preferred discourses in schools is generally conducted in ways that do not encourage questioning and/or individual thought. In a similar manner, the media are also used to foreground certain discourses that present the dominant view of the social system as being natural.

Implications of Transmission-Style Teaching of Films

When the traditional, teacher-as-expert approach was used to teach films in Transvaal schools, the teacher assumed the role of expert standing outside of the process of communication as an objective observer. Sless (1986, p30-1) has argued that it is impossible for a researcher to be outside of any act of communication, as all communication is, in fact, subjective - and all researchers are part of the process that they are analysing. It should therefore be fundamental to any media studies programme to begin the analysis of texts from the

point-of-view of the reader and to study all the possible interpretations of that text.

Another basic point that should be fundamental to the study of the media is that any knowledge that is encountered in a media text is mediated via certain discourses.

These issues of reception and discourse are central to any discussion of the media and education and I have dealt with them in greater detail in Chapter Five of this thesis.

In the following chapter, I shall look more closely at the history of teaching 'film study' in Transvaal schools.

END NOTES

1. With the dismantling of the structures of apartheid since February 1990, the educational system is beginning to undergo developments that should change its structure again. However, this thesis is concerned with white education in the Transvaal during the period 1977-1990, when apartheid was still dominant and the education system reflected this.
2. Quoted by Hofmeyer, 1982, p19.
3. Published in the Transvaler, official mouthpiece of the National Party on 7 November 1967. Quoted by Hofmeyer, p77; but taken from the original quotation in Malherbe, 1977, p147.
4. Quoted in Hofmeyer, 1982, p83.
5. This process is not always successful as individual teachers do endeavour to present 'new' information in a manner that challenges the pupils and leads them to question for themselves. There are also individual pupils who do not unproblematically accept everything with which they are presented.

Chapter Three

THE HISTORY OF 'FILM STUDY' IN TRANSVAAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Media studies is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa and, as such, is still in an unstructured state of becoming. Processes and experiments that have taken place in educational institutions - and that still continue to do so - endeavour to establish, amongst other key issues, a definition of what constitutes media; and criteria for the design of a media education/media studies curriculum.

"Visual Literacy" (including 'film study') was introduced to the National Core Syllabus for English first language in 1976 (Gosher, 1991, p32). The Transvaal was the first province in South Africa to formally introduce the media into the syllabus - and this was in the form of a "Visual Literacy" section being inserted into the English syllabus (Gosher, 1991, p32). The first questions on film appeared in the English matriculation examination paper in 1988.

Even though the formal teaching of "Visual Literacy" has existed for only a short period, the issue of 'film study' in Transvaal secondary schools has a longer history.

Background to the Introduction of 'Film Study' into Transvaal Secondary Schools

During the late 1970s, the emphasis in syllabus

design in the Transvaal moved from a content-based curriculum to a child-centred curriculum (Grové, May 1991). In order to establish the effectiveness of this shift, experiments in various subjects were conducted at secondary schools in the Transvaal. These were run by the TED with the approval of the Joint Matriculation Board.

A member of Curriculum Development at the Transvaal Education Bureau, Johann Grové, was appointed to the working committee responsible for conducting one such experiment. From previous teaching experience, Grové was familiar with using individual films as works of literature to be studied.¹ He saw film as part of a curriculum that focused on the child.

With Grové's initiation, and the support of the Superintendent of English at the time, an experiment in 'film study' was instituted at six secondary schools (Gosher, 1991, p32), all of which wrote internal matriculation examinations.

Originally, the idea was to introduce 'film study' in Standards Eight, Nine and Ten, but the focus of the experiment was reduced and film only was introduced in Standard Eight in 1977 (Grové, 1981, p4-5). It was subsequently extended into Standards Nine and Ten, with the pupils writing the "historic first film study paper" (Grové, May 1991) in November 1979. The results of this experiment

"...were such that the inclusion of film study into the Joint Matriculation Board Core Syllabus for English First Language, binding on all schools throughout South Africa, was recommended to the Board by the Working Committee" (Grové, 1981, piii).

The original experiment was conducted at specially

selected 'better' schools. A second experiment was run at schools where the pupils were considered to be not as capable (Gosher, 1991, p33). The aim was to confirm that 'film study' did, in fact, work everywhere. The second experiment was also successful (Gosher, 1991, p33). A further confirmation of the effectiveness (and necessity) of some media studies, even if only 'film study', is that all the schools involved in the original experiment continued to offer the 'subject' at the time when Grové wrote his dissertation (1981) - and they all continued to do so at the end of my research period.²

One of the premises that the Committee had worked on in the 'film study' experiment was that, before the child produces (speak, write), s/he must be exposed to (listen, read) good examples of the use of the language (Grové, May 1991). It was a skills-based syllabus with the emphasis on listening and reading; and then speaking and writing with a purpose to/for a specific audience, who would then evaluate the product. The input models for reading and listening were considered to be fairly limited - and so there was a turn to the media. Thus films were approached as works of literature - acceptably and relatively easily studied by children.

After the completion of the experimental 'film study' courses, Grové left the Education Bureau. The Superintendent of English was also replaced - and everything was left "in a shambles" (Grové, May 1991), as no-one knew what was going on.

Although he wished to pursue the idea of 'film study', the new inspector was not familiar with

film. He therefore consulted various sources, including Grové on "what to do and how to do it" (Grové, May 1991). One approach with which the inspector was presented involved the pupils learning a "taxonomy of terms" (Grové, May 1991) to be applied to film. However, as Grové considered it unnecessary for pupils to learn all the elements of film, this was not accepted.

The results of, and recommendations emerging from, the experimental 'film study' courses suggested the value of the approach to film adopted during these experiments (Grové, May 1991). In addition, John van Zyl of the School of Dramatic Art at the University of the Witwatersrand vouched for the effectiveness of the approach. With this "backup" Grové managed to persuade the inspector to adopt the literary approach to film. This resulted in "Visual Literacy" being added onto the Reading section of the English syllabus in a way that ensured that films could be studied as alternative forms of literature. Consequently, the practice of "Visual Literacy" in schools became a literature-type 'film study'.

The TED's Approach to Teaching the Media

I argued in the introduction to this thesis that the TED's "Visual Literacy" is, in practice, only 'film study', involving mostly the appreciatory, 'critical' analysis of individual film products. The approach favoured by the TED may, in fact, be summed up by one aim present in the English syllabus - for pupils to "develop a critical and discerning attitude towards film and television" (TED, 1986, p19).

In his report on the 'film study' experiment, Grové (1981, p10) includes an account of how the academics who supervised the course and the exam paper viewed 'film study' at school. The result of their rather conservative views (in conjunction with Grové's own approach to film) was that the study of film in secondary schools was orientated towards literary, rather than filmic, aspects of the medium. This was the approach adopted by the TED.

The manner in which the TED approached visual literacy/'film study' was reminiscent of the manner in which media studies in the United Kingdom began, with film studies based on the approach of F.R.Leavis (Alvarado et al, 1987, p16-17), one of the more influential researchers involved in the mass society tradition. This was a loosely defined outlook on culture and communication (Bennet, 1982, p32).

The mass society tradition identified many cultural, political and social effects of the media (Hall, 1982, p57-8), in response to which, it was necessary to conduct research into the role of the media in society. The parameters within which this research could be conducted were, naturally, determined by the dominant outlook of the tradition. Leavis and Denys Thompson argued for "the value of an artisanal and organic 'culture' against the mass production 'culture' of the mass media" (Alvarado et al, 1987, p16).

After this view, media studies began in the classroom in the United Kingdom in order that pupils be taught to discriminate against the media (Alvarado et al, 1987, p16). The main aim was to

alert pupils to the threat of false values presented by the media in order that they might be "led to better things" (Alvarado et al, 1987, p16). This approach became the dominant approach to media teaching, where pupils were introduced to popular culture only in order that they may be led to appreciate and consume a "healthier cultural diet" (Ibid). It is this "innoculation approach to the media" (Ferguson, 1991, p20) - concentrating solely upon the text - that the TED adopted in the introduction of "Visual Literacy" into the English syllabus.

In the United Kingdom, however, the "innoculation approach" has since been expanded upon. The practice of teaching film appreciation was developed to attempt a more analytical linguistic study method, but it was discovered that all the elements making up a film were "straitjacketed by such prosaic, analytical attempts" (Alvarado et al, 1987, p19). Problems also arose with an exclusively film studies. Developments in the 1960s extended film studies in the United Kingdom to include the analysis of television and the other media. The nature of the study also changed to begin to look not only at the texts themselves, but at issues of ownership, underlying values etc. (Alvarado et al, 1987, p19-20).

Not only did the TED's general approach to 'film study' hearken after the early media studies in the United Kingdom, but the short history of "Visual Literacy" in Transvaal schools echoed other aspects of this time. For example, teachers perceived a lack of useful published material about film.³ This was also a problem in the United Kingdom in the 1960s (Alvarado et al, 1987, p23) - subsequent to

which there has been much work done on the subject. In addition, it was the English teachers who were leading the progressive reforms in media studies in the United Kingdom in the 1960s (Alvarado et al, 1987, p24). And it was the English teachers in Transvaal secondary schools who were already teaching about the processes and structures of film, rather than simply 'feeding' the pupils guided interpretations of individual products that aimed at a specific discrimination.⁴ This is the irony of what must inevitably be seen as the TED's choice to disregard the vast developments in media studies - that the change in the Transvaal is most likely to come from within.

The TED had the history of, and developments made in, media studies in the United Kingdom and other countries (particularly Australia and America) to draw upon in its development of a syllabus for "Visual Literacy". Many of the processes and problems that have taken, and are still taking place, in South Africa at this time have, in fact, already been experienced - and largely solved in the United Kingdom (Ferguson, 1991, p19). However, the TED continued to cling to the analysis of film only - an approach that has been proven to be limiting and virtually useless in its isolation.⁵

The TED have placed a further limitation upon the study of iflm by having appeared to have ignored the vast developments made in research into the importance and functioning of media audiences. This omission has resulted in a 'film study' that does not regard the pupils as being members of a media audience whose interactions with a text are important. Rather, the pupils are treated as a mass who must be told what a text means.

The Experimental 'Film Study' Course that "Paved the Way"

Little written work has been done on the subject of 'film study' in Transvaal schools. Published work includes short articles by teachers on some approaches to the subject.⁶ There have also been several articles and studies dealing with film/media studies in general - but written prior to the introduction of "Visual Literacy" into the curriculum. The most noteworthy, and influential, of the works concerning 'film study' in the Transvaal is a Masters' dissertation written by Johann Grové in 1981, entitled "The Theory and Practice of Film Study at the Secondary School Level".⁷

Chapter One of Grové (1981) reports on the first experimental 'film study' course, which was conducted between 1977 and 1979, and to which I have previously referred. Grové's report presents the outline and results of, and comments upon, this course. No details are given as to the sources of the comments or results; or of notable successes or failures at individual schools. These exclusions are a direct result of the limitations placed upon researchers by the TED, which stipulates that no names of any employees of the TED may be given in published studies. Grové does not acknowledge this rule anywhere in his dissertation - and so the exclusions appear to be his. Grové's failure to acknowledge this ruling indicates that he accepts it without considering any of the ideological implications.

An important result of the TED's rule is that, generally, the readers of a dissertation are

prevented from learning about the context of origin of the information supplied. Knowledge of the author of a piece of information presupposes knowledge of context and ideological standpoint. This leads to the making of informed choices to accept or reject information. The offering of information without acknowledgement of, or reference to, the individual author/s ensures that the information appears to be the sole and ultimate authority and the only possible version of the truth. This ruling acts as an ideological filter to curtail criticism of research documents provided under the auspices of the TED.

The Case for Media Studies

Grové (1981) begins his report on the 'film study' experiment by considering the reasons for the need for some media studies at schools. The major rationale given was that children spend 92% of their leisure time watching television and become "over-exposed" to the medium.⁸ Grové also notes - with reference to Alan Purves (1972, p99) and Kevin Tindall (1976, p35) (Grové, 1981, p2)⁹ - that pupils are generally more orientated towards, and familiar with, visual, rather than written, texts. Under-achievers are argued to spend more time watching television than overachievers. The results of these practices is that the achiever is more familiar with the print medium - and does well in an education system geared towards the study of print media (Grové, 1981, p4).

Grové presents a limited account of the possible reasons for studying film/the media. His only South African reference is in a quote from David Blake

(Grové, 1981, p3)⁹, a teacher from the Cape. However, it is television that Blake notes has an impact on South African school children. He does not elaborate upon what form this impact takes - he refers only to the amount of time children spend watching television.

Although Chapter One of Grové is only a report on an experiment, that experiment broke new ground in Transvaal schools - and established an effective base for the introduction of new, but necessary, material into the syllabus (Gosher, 1991, p32-33). Grové could, therefore, have established even more conclusively why the study of the media is so important.

A convincing argument in this regard is provided by Masterman in Teaching the Media (1985, p1-17). He provides a detailed and comprehensive list of reasons for any media studies. These include the fact that the world is saturated by the media; the way/s in which the media influence individuals; and the way/s in which information is manufactured and managed via the media. Similar reasons to Masterman's are also found in other references.¹¹ Absent from all these reasons, however, is any mention of the need to study the media in order to understand how pupils make sense of their world by actively interacting with media texts.

The Foregrounding of 'Film Study'

Grové never deals with the question of why film was chosen to be studied over all the other media. In addition, he never considers the question of whether film should be studied as a subject on its

own, or as one of the mass media.¹² More recently, Grové has explained the choice of film only. The most important thing to remember when approaching film, says Grové (May, 1991), is that "meaning precedes form". That meaning is communicated by the content of a film. For him, "the distribution medium is incidental" (May 1991) - the main distinction being between 16mm film and video, not television.

Grové regards television as a way of marketing a product; and television studies as necessitating consideration of programme choice and scheduling - issues outside of the content-based study of the visual media possible with film. The possibility of a study of film with the stress falling on content was the main reason for the choice of film (rather than television) as the subject of study (Grové, May 1991).

A content-based analysis of film effectively paralleled the existing literature study in schools and was therefore attractive. In addition, by largely ignoring the film medium, the TED effectively ignored the constructed nature of film products and therefore avoided questions being raised about ownership and control of the media - and related issues about the structuring of knowledge in general.

Grové (1981) favours video over film as it has advantages in the classroom. Video is much more suited to the discipline-orientated classroom situation than is film, which requires darkness for effective viewing. In Image Wise, John van Zyl (1987, p21) notes that video facilitates discussion of film/television much better than film itself

does. Indeed,

"One of the greatest attractions of video for the teacher is that it may be used without interrupting the discipline of the classroom" (Ballot, 1989, p16).

Masterman (1980, p62-189) also considers the practical value of video - and its applicability to the classroom situation.

A mistake is made at schools when no distinction is made for pupils between a study of film and of television/video. There is one concept taught - the visual media (Gosher, 1991, p33). This attitude ignores the important differences between the large- and small-screen formats. The perception of content presented upon a big screen differs from the perception of the same content presented on a television screen.

These differences are central to an analysis of media texts concerned with the contexts of individual readers and their subjective interactions with texts. The differences are not taken into account in a study of the visual media that effectively chooses to ignore the role of the audience as well as the importance of the actual channel of the communication.

Pupils in TED schools were taught the basic techniques of motion pictures (Gosher, 1991, p33), but were not made sufficiently aware of the fact that, although the basic techniques operating in film and television are similar, the use of these techniques differs between the two.

The absence of such discriminatory study in schools tends to lead to both teachers and pupils considering "film" as the term to use with regard

to any form of the motion picture medium in use (Ballot, 1989, p16). Grové makes the same error when he equates "film" and "television" and is unaware, or unconcerned with, the differences between the two media.¹³

The confusion of the various terms is perhaps one of the reasons for the lack of effort by the TED to approach a general study of media other than film. If there was a common misconception amongst all members of the Project Group working on the original experiment that "film" equals "media", then it was fairly natural for "visual literacy" to have been understood to mean only 'film study'.

Media Studies in a Context

One of the major advantages of studying television, as opposed to film, is that television is more a part of the children's everyday lives, and environment, than is film (Purves, 1972, p99).¹⁴ Grové seems to see no need to relate the study of the media to the pupils' immediate experience. This is a result of his failure to acknowledge the role that the audience and the contexts of reception play in communication.

Grové (1981) fails to approach the question of a social education through film/media studies, except in terms of an unstated universalism. Masterman (1980, p176-189), in contrast, takes television education beyond the classroom and beyond television itself. He moves to a general social education because television is indexical of the societies which produce and consume it. Masterman also pays far more attention to the role of the

audience than does Grové.

In Real Images (1987), Barry McMahon and Robyn Quinalso adopt a socially-orientated approach, which draws on Australian examples. One of their major concerns is

"to develop the understanding that film and television are systems of communication and that as such they interact with society - " (McMahon and Quin, 1986, p1).

The conclusion to Real Images suggests to pupils that they must

"continually apply the skills you have acquired, seek out meaning and form your own opinions. Only then will you really understand the relationship between the cinema and television and your society" (McMahon and Quin, 1986, p231).

Thus the emphasis is placed firmly on the audience in communication. This issue that is important to established teachers of media is absent from Grové and other work done in the Transvaal.

It becomes apparent from the omissions in Grové's report that the original experiment in 'film study' was only concerned with establishing some form of media studies in schools. However, more than ten years after this time no move had yet been made by the TED towards a more socially-conscious/general media studies, and schools still studied a film as a self-contained text.

The question of a general media studies was not absent from all South African education situations. The responsibility for this rested, however, with individual teachers. In a proposal for a media education programme, a teacher from the Cape, H.J. Mentz, expressed the aim to "give pupils an insight

into the media and to show them how they are influenced and shaped by the media" (1984, p13).

The majority of English teachers wished to familiarise pupils with the media in general (not only film) and for them to become aware of how these media can manipulate (Ballot, 1991, p68). There was a real need for a media, rather than only film, studies, which was recognised by practising teachers, yet never considered in the early stages of establishing "visual literacy" studies in the Transvaal.

The need to consider the audience in more depth was not - and has not yet been - identified by either teachers or the TED.

Comments by Participants in the 'Film Study' Experiment

The inclusion of "COMMENTS BY TEACHERS AND PUPILS" in his report presents Grové (1981, p12) with an opportunity to offer a more balanced and general (and therefore perhaps relatively more objective) view of the experimental course. However, the exclusion of names of schools/individuals who contributed comments, as well as an account of the subjective choices made in selecting the comments, removes any impact from them as a systematic evaluation.

This section is a record of what must be recurring comments gathered from all involved at the six schools. It is apparent that the comments are merely recorded, not structured in any manner and, as the overall tone of the comments is positively

orientated towards 'film study' at school, one may assume that the comments gathered were possibly carefully selected from a broader universe.

The comments were divided under four sub-headings:

- + The Relevance of the Film Medium
- + Literature and the Film
- + The Fostering of Critical Awareness
- + Film Study in the English Classroom.

Grové's choice of sections under which to group the pupils' and teachers' comments is informative with regard to his influence in the approach adopted by the TED towards 'film study'. Perhaps the most revealing sub-heading is "The Fostering of Critical Awareness" (Grovè, 1981, p15). Grové identifies the "approach to Film Study adopted in the TED pilot course on Film" as being

"an aesthetic-theoretical-critical analysis of prescribed films, the purpose of which is to cultivate and foster critical viewing in a media audience" (1981b, p79).

Grovè uses "critical" to mean able to discriminate between 'good' and 'bad' films. This is very different from Alvarado's (1981) and Masterman's (1980, 1985) usage of the term, where it refers more specifically to the ability to uncover the various levels of meaning of texts; and to investigate the construction of meanings.

The approach towards 'film study' adopted by the TED in the English syllabus (1986 to the present) was the same as Grové's:

"Class and group discussions of films and video material, as well as relevant written work, should always be aimed at encouraging pupils to develop a critical and discerning attitude towards film and television" (TED, 1986, p19 - my emphasis).

Such aims are both valuable in, and necessary to, the educational development of children. They should not, however, be the only aims of a media studies programme. It is the nature of the media to invite interaction and to involve the audience in active responses and the making of judgements based on personal reactions. To aim to teach a "discerning" attitude to the media is actually denying the nature of the media themselves. These aims would be more valuable if they were to be linked to a development of social awareness in the pupils - and if "critical" were to be understood in a broader usage.

Concluding Comments on Grové's Report

In the final stages of his first chapter, Grové has an opportunity to develop his dissertation from being merely a report to evaluating the content of the experimental 'film study' course in order to facilitate a study of value, or the posing of an argument with regards to 'film study'. He fails, however, to make use of the opportunity.

While still adhering to the TED's limitations on naming individuals, Grové could have considered some of the implications of what went on in the six schools over the three year period. An exploration of these events would have been more informative in terms of the effect of the experimental course and the approach adopted towards film.

In addition, it would have been of great interest and benefit to the many English teachers who were suddenly to be faced with the task of teaching

film. No such evaluation is present, however, and it emerges that, in Grové's work, there is a general lack of insight into exactly what the implications of teaching 'film study' would be.

Overview of Articles on 'Film Study' Subsequent to the Experiment

Until this thesis, there have been no follow-up reports/evaluations on 'film study' in secondary schools in the Transvaal. A few articles were published as guidelines to English teachers tackling film, or as commentary on the ideas of teaching film at schools. Overall, the emphasis in these articles remains on the text and does not stress the role of the audience.

Mentz (1984), working in the Cape, proposed a study of the media in general. He includes the visual media (film and television) in his course as introductions to concepts such as parody and cliché; as subjects for comprehension; or as inspiration for creative writing projects. He did not include any study of individual film products, or the processes of producing a film.

Jonathan Paton (1978) was involved in the training of teachers of English at the University of the Witwatersrand. Although he was not directly involved in teaching film, he was involved with material that presented student teachers with ideas on how to use the visual media in teaching English. One method he used was to elicit dramatic or visual responses to literary texts. If pupils are similarly taught to work with these media to respond to themes etc., they must learn about the

media themselves at the same time.

Jennifer Christie's enthusiasm for including film in the English syllabus followed on from Paton's approach. She claimed it was exciting that ideas on studying film

"..have spilled over into several different areas of English teaching, and as a result, seemingly unrelated aspects such as poetry, literature, oral work, and written work, have, I think, benefitted" (1979, p10).

She specified that

"to those who have difficulty teaching (imagery)...., may I suggest that you try the visual approach, and then watch the concept gel in practical terms" (Christie, 1979, p10).

Christie considered the role of 'film study' more specifically with various references to the fact that

"The cinema can indeed be a dark world of manipulation and there are several ways in which we can alert out pupils to this fact" (Christie, 1979, p10).

Thus, even from the earliest stages of non-formal media studies in the Transvaal, one of the chief concerns of teachers was to alert the pupils to the fact that the media manipulate. This notion is problematical with its conspiracist overtones. The media are not all-powerful and their effects not absolute. I argue that it would be a more valuable educative process for teachers to address issues of discourse and for pupils to become aware of the manners in which reality is mediated for them and to study how they make sense of that reality by interacting with texts. It is useful, though, that teachers have all along been concerned with the deeper meanings of media messages and have not just

looked at media texts in terms of their literal level of communication only.

In addition to expressing a concern with the manipulative effects of the media, Christie (1979) also considered the value of learning film appreciation. She proposed that

"with the introduction of the film and its appreciation in our schools, it should be possible to sharpen (even awaken!) the critical faculties of the young" (1979, p11).

Christie uses "critical" here to mean "discriminatory", rather than the way in which Alvarado and Masterman use the term. The concern with fostering a "critical awareness" in pupils that she expresses has consistently characterised 'film study' in Transvaal secondary schools.

In an article concerned with "some ideas about where to begin" (studying film) Johan Pienaar (1987,p12) outlined a way of dealing with a film to be studied. Once again, the approach he adopted was essentially 'top-down' (dealing with the film as a product) and text-bound. The inclusion of a suggestion to "consider how the director has chosen to tell the story" does move into the area of the film-process. Once again, however, no emphasis is placed on the audience.

Reference Books for Teachers

Up until the end of my research period there was a marked shortage of reference material that offered English teachers practical examples of questions on films and/or visual literacy. Books on film and the media that were available had been extensively

consulted by teachers as reference material on the new discipline. Many of them did not, however, deal with the study of the visual media in practical, useful terms. These books, along with training seminars organised by universities and/or the TED formed the basis of the training in this medium that most teachers received.¹⁵

Image Wise (1987) by John van Zyl was one of the original, local books of this nature available to assist teachers. This book filled the role of textbook for the "Visual Literacy" section of the English syllabus in the Transvaal. And the majority of teachers and pupils - predominantly at the Standard Ten level - used Image Wise in their visual literacy studies. Due to the influence of John van Zyl on 'film study' in the Transvaal, I have considered his book and his approach to film more closely in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

"Legacy" of the 'Film Study' Experiment

Although he was no longer directly involved in the teaching of 'film study', Grové's influence was still felt in this section of the syllabus. He had been the major force behind the choice of film as the focus of the newly-introduced media studies in the Transvaal. His influence also largely determined the choice of approach to be adopted towards films as the subject of study. The majority of writing and commentary upon 'film study' in the Transvaal echoed Grové and the TED's product-orientated, text-bound analysis of films.

Grové's legacy determined the practice and, largely, the development of 'film study' in

Transvaal secondary schools. I will, therefore, analyse Grové's approach to 'film study' closely in Chapter Six of this thesis. Prior to this analysis, however (in the following two chapters), I will consider the general theories surrounding the media and media studies.

END NOTES

1. Grové taught English at Lowveld High, where they studied films as alternative literature networks (Grové, May 1991).
2. Empirical research conducted in the course of this study from January to April 1990.
3. In response to the empirical research conducted in the course of this study, the same limited number of books was listed as sources that teachers consulted. In addition, my personal experience and contact with teachers of English and film studies have established that teachers found that there is a lack of helpful texts easily available to them.
4. See my report on the research conducted into 'film study' at Transvaal Secondary schools in Chapter Ten of this thesis.
5. Alvarado et al (1987, p20-22) explore the emergence and importance of television studies in the lives of pupils. Masterman (1980, p12) has identified television as the most important medium. Personal experience with children has revealed that they spend far more of their time watching television and videos than they do at the cinema.
6. Pienaar, 1987; Christie, 1979; Paton, 1978 et al.
7. Although it was written as a research dissertation, Grové's work lacks a central argument. It appears to fall somewhere between functioning as merely a report, and a somewhat helpful resource document on film. In the context of the present study, it is as a report that the first chapter is most useful - in outlining the history of film study in Transvaal secondary schools.
8. These figures were taken from a survey undertaken by the T.E.D. in 1978 (Grové, 1981, p3).

9. Purves, A.C. How Porcupines Make Love, Xerox, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1972.
Tindall, K and Reid, D. "Television's Culture", Education News 15,8: 32-35, February, 1976.
10. Blake, D. "The Educational Significance of Television", Education Journal, 13-23, November, 1979.
11. Pungente, J.J., 1985, p19-30; Izod, J, 1984, p5-16; During, C & Craig, D, 1990, p3-6; Outlines, 1989, p4-10.
12. This distinction is explored - amongst others - by Masterman in Teaching About Television (1980, p1-2).
13. Throughout his dissertation, Grové fails to adequately distinguish between "visual literacy", "the visual media"; and "film" and "television". The title of the dissertation includes the specification that it is about 'film study'. He constantly interchanges all the relevant terms, however, without defining parameters for the usage of each.
14. Quoted in Grové, 1981, p2.
15. See my findings on this area in the report of my research in Chapter Ten of this thesis.

Chapter Four

THEORETICAL DEBATES ABOUT MEDIA EDUCATION

The Importance of Theoretical Debates

The introduction of 'film study' into Transvaal schools in 1986 was the first form of prescribed media studies at the school level in South Africa. Despite the fact that there was a long history of media studies in other countries, the TED did not consult any of the related theory when the "Visual Literacy" syllabus was developed.

In Great Britain in particular, where learning about the media has taken place in schools since the 1960s (Alvarado et al, 1987, p3), teachers have been involved in theorising about media education - and some of their conclusions have affected the development of the curriculum.

As I mentioned in Chapter Three, the first form of media studies in Great Britain was film studies that focused on developing the pupils' ability to discriminate against the media and to appreciate 'good' films (Alvarado et al, 1987, p17-18). This approach developed from the work of F R Leavis and Denys Thompson, who argued for "the value of an artisanal and organic 'culture' against the mass production 'culture' of the mass media" (Alvarado et al, 1987, p16). This is the approach that has been adopted in the Transvaal. However, media studies in Great Britain has developed as problems with this type of film analysis were identified and solved. Thus far, such a process has not taken place in the Transvaal, where little or no theorising about 'film study' has occurred; and no

substantial changes have been made to the syllabus.

In the absence of local theoretical debates, those emerging from other countries should be consulted in order to address the problems associated with 'film study'. In fact, many of the problems facing media studies in South Africa at this time have already been solved in Great Britain (Ferguson, 1991, p19). These developments have been due to the interest and activities of practising teachers (Alvarado et al, 1987, p3). This resulted in media studies programmes being forged from a range of often contradictory materials (Durant, 1992, p416).

One of the effects of media studies has been to challenge the established educational curricula (Alvarado et al, 1987, p3). These challenges have often been levelled via articles and debates appearing in journals and other publications. The education authorities have taken note of such theory and have subsequently applied the principles in the development of curriculum statements.¹ These changes would then be introduced into the schools via the restructuring of syllabus and subject content. In this way, the theory is used to transform teaching practice.

Little material has been published on the situation of school media studies in South Africa, with the exception of Media Matters in South Africa edited by Prinsloo and Criticos (1991). Most published articles have not dealt with conceptual problems in any depth, but with specific problems encountered in the teaching of 'film study'. However, the theoretical debates that have taken place in Great Britain deal with general issues of media studies, and these points could be applied to the

development of media studies in South Africa too.

The 'Theory' of Media Studies

Media studies lacks a basic theory². However, an understanding of the issues that have been addressed by theorists provides at least a theoretical basis for discussions about media studies. The most important debate regarding the theory of media studies in Great Britain has been conducted since 1980 and is ongoing. This debate focuses specifically on the question of a media studies pedagogy.

In this chapter I will give an account of this debate. As the text by Criticos and Prinsloo, and a recent handbook on the media by Young and Regnart, both deal with the main points raised by the debate, I shall consider the contributions of these texts later in this chapter. I will then apply this theory in the rest of this thesis as I analyse the situation of teaching 'film study' in Transvaal schools.

The Initial Stages of the Debate

In 1980, Len Masterman published Teaching About Television. The book was written for the information and use of teachers of film/media studies. It contains an account of Masterman's theoretical base for media studies and the concepts upon which television studies should be based; as well as an account of ideas and suggestions for the practical teaching of television. Masterman's central argument is for the study of the medium of

television only, while still regarding it as one of the mass media. He chooses to focus on television as it is an integral part of the experience of the pupils. It would also allow for a more focused analysis of the media; and a starting point from which issues of control could be studied.

Alvarado (1981, p56) describes Teaching About Television as being the first book-length attempt to tackle the problems of teaching the media. It is a key text for all teachers involved in film and television studies - and would be useful for teachers in related disciplines.

Other books on the subject of media studies³ appeared prior to the publication of Teaching About Television, but this was the first book to move beyond descriptions of classroom practices to engage in debate about the question of pedagogy with regard to media studies (Alvarado, 1981, p57). For these reasons alone, it was likely to prompt some reaction amongst teachers of the media. In fact, its publication was the starting point of the ongoing debate about media pedagogy.

The debate began with a review of Teaching About Television by Manuel Alvarado that appeared in Screen Education (1981). It was developed with reactions from Masterman (1981-2), Judith Williamson (1981-2; 1985) and Ian Connell (1983). These exchanges formed the basis of the debate.

Publication of a second book by Masterman, Teaching the Media (1985) introduced developments, that were picked up by Lusted (1986) and Buckingham (1986, 1987, 1991). These authors also addressed issues raised in the original stages of the debate that

had also been raised by Robert Ferguson (1981).

The Basic Issues of the Debate

There are five basic issues that the debate addresses. I shall deal with them separately in relation to the chronology of the debate. These issues do have certain points in common and so my discussion shall not consider them to be mutually exclusive.

The first issue is the most effective approach to teaching the media - the direct-teaching approach of the 'traditional' pedagogy; or the more co-operative approach of the 'progressive' pedagogy. The second issue considers whether alterations should be made to the 'form' or to the 'content' of teaching. The third issue addresses the question of the experience of the pupils and the fourth is the role that ideology should, and does, fulfil in media studies. The final issue investigates the questions of theory and practice: on the one hand, the problem of applying theories about teaching and learning to the practical classroom situation; and, on the other, the question of teaching pupils to deal with theoretical concepts or active media production. This last issue, in particular, has been informed by more recent developments in the debate.

'Traditional' vs 'Progressive' Pedagogy

As I discussed in Chapter One, 'traditional' pedagogy refers to the entrenched education system where the school is structured so that pupils and

teachers are contained within the official consensus; and teachers transmit knowledge to supposedly receptive pupils. This is what Paulo Freire (1972, p46) has described as "banking education". 'Progressive' education refers to a child-centred approach to education, based on co-operative teaching situations, where the pupils are actively involved in their own education. This assumes the primacy of the experience of the learner.

Masterman (1980, p22-26) proposes a study of television based on a system different from the institutionalised 'traditional' learning that exists in schools. He draws on the theory of Paulo Freire (1972) to criticise this approach to teaching. Masterman (1980, p25) uses Freire's argument that the student-teacher contradiction can be resolved through dialogues to argue for a more co-operatively structured learning situation. The structure of the classroom should become non-hierarchical and organised around discussion situations, where the focus of the learning is on the group rather than on the individual. Under these circumstances, the teacher becomes a kind of "senior colleague" (Masterman, 1980, p28) rather than the one source of information - and the person through which all knowledge passes in the classroom. The aim of such a system is to "demystify" (Masterman, 1980, p26) television - involving the study of how television mediates reality by making use of constructed meanings that are made to appear as natural. These meanings are influenced by ideology.

Alvarado (1981, p59) argues for a flexibility in the approach to method that acknowledges that

direct teaching can be used not only as the basic approach to teaching, but as an alternative method. Some areas of information, such as the structures of control of the media (Alvarado, 1981, p62) and instruction in the use of the video camera (Bowker, 1991, p20), are better communicated directly. The teacher acting thus as an authority is not the same as the traditional view of the authoritarian teacher (Alvarado, 1981, p63). A balance should be achieved between the teacher putting across some information directly, and pupils being allowed to think for themselves (Williamson, 1985, p93).

Williamson (1981-2) and Connell (1983) both argue for a more co-operative pedagogy. They develop the debate by arguing that, in a 'progressive' pedagogy, where classrooms are structured according to discussion situations and pupils are encouraged to participate, the teacher's opinion can also be challenged (Connell, 1983, p54; Williamson, 1981-2, p87). A final emphasis on the value of group work is the constructive expression of dissent within a group (Connell, 1983, p54).

Alvarado (1981, p60) identifies problems with discussion situations that may require a more direct approach. One of these problems is that the situation may arise where everyone has their own opinions and no specific conclusions are reached. There may also be delicate situations that would require the teacher to confront them head-on, rather than attempting to address them in a rather vague discussion.

One issue of 'traditional' versus 'progressive' pedagogy is that of evaluation. Masterman (1980, p27-29) argues strongly against the use of formal

examinations to evaluate media studies, whereas Alvarado (1981, p61) sees the examination system as central to the structure of schooling. He suggests that one reason for Masterman's opposition to formal examinations is the emphasis on competition and hence individuals. This is at variance with Masterman's aim for media studies to concentrate upon the group and not the individual. However, examinations can divide up groups, as well as individuals (Alvarado, 1981, p61).

Masterman (1981-2, p91) criticises Alvarado for confusing his opinion of examinations with functionalist criticisms that argue that the examination system functions to divide pupils up in order to reproduce a workforce with reproductive skills.⁴ Masterman argues that he is concerned that formal examinations, like the 'traditional' pedagogy, are a method of teaching pupils about control and socialisation.

'Form' vs 'Content' of Education

The second issue in the debate on media education concerns the relative importance of the 'form'/method and 'content' of education. Masterman (1980, p26-7) stresses the importance of method in the education of a child. He suggests that teachers must recognise that the most powerful meanings are communicated via the form, and not the content, of what is taught. He explores the idea that pupils are taught information other than obvious subject matter in the classroom - they are taught about control and socialisation. As these meanings are carried by the method of teaching, it is therefore necessary to address the question of 'form' when

one considers changes to be made in education.

Both Masterman (1980) and Alvarado (1981) regard the method of teaching to be linked to the content. However, Alvarado links actual, obvious content to the method, while Masterman (1980; 1981-2) presumes method to be inseparable from "real content" (issues of control and socialisation), as opposed to ostensible subject matter, (which would be the level of content with which Alvarado is concerned).

Masterman (1980, p22) explores the idea that method itself teaches behaviour, while Alvarado (1981, p59) considers the effect of the choice of method on the teaching of specific subject matter. Masterman considers that the direct teaching approach (or 'traditional' pedagogy) will have one effect, no matter what content is being taught. In contrast, Alvarado draws attention to the range of methods dependent upon the content of the education - and to the effects that each of these methods can have on the subject matter that is taught.

Alvarado (1981, p64) provocatively argues that 'method' specifically does not mean direct teaching. He also argues that 'progressive' pedagogy has concentrated on the question of method and failed to regard content. As a result, the only developments that have been made in education are changes in classroom structures and teacher-pupil relationships. He feels both subject matter and method must be addressed in theories of education.

Connell (1983) and Williamson (1981-2, 1985) contribute to this debate on 'form'/method versus 'content' - both advocating that more attention be paid to method, although teachers tend to

concentrate on content. It is important that greater attention be paid to the method of teaching as part of the meaning in education is determined by method rather than subject matter (Connell, 1983, p50; Williamson, 1985, p90).

Concern has been raised about developing a 'progressive' teaching method without considering the implications to the rest of the curriculum (Connell, 1983, p51). Media theorists should look beyond media studies to consider the teaching styles of other subjects and other questions concerning its relationship to the curriculum (Connell, 1983, p52-3; Durant, 1992, p421). 'Progressive' theorists may simply result in establishing a "radical enclave" (Connell, 1983, p52) where pupils are taught 'progressively', despite their conditions of education in the rest of the curriculum. Critical thought must be related to the pupils' general experience of education. Teaching 'radically' within only one subject without addressing similar problems in relation to the rest of the curriculum results in loss of effect (Williamson, 1985, p90).

The Role of the Pupils' Experience

The pupils' experience is central to the debate on media education. Masterman (1980, p18) presents a case for this in his criticism of the "discriminatory" approach towards film, which leaves out media material valued by children and concentrates on that preferred by the education authority, thus attacking the children's preferences. In addition, his argument for television study is based on the fact that

television is much more a part of children's experience than film and some of the other media.⁵ However, Masterman's theory extends beyond the children's exposure to, and enjoyment of, television. He is concerned with the way in which reality is mediated for children via the apparent naturalness and transparency of television. He thus argues for the need to "demystify" this part of their experience in the study of television (Masterman, 1980, p12).

Masterman thus demonstrates that he is mainly concerned with the ideological aspect of television. He does not ignore issues of the institutional bases and structures of ownership of the media, but notes that such information is more likely to be of interest to teachers than pupils (Masterman, 1980, p5).

This opinion assumes that it is difficult for teachers to relate the issues of institutions and control of the media to the experience of pupils - who, Masterman contends, are really more interested in media products. He notes, however, that if these issues are to be studied as part of media studies, then teachers must find ways of relating them to the concrete experiences of the pupils.

Alvarado (1981, p64) suggests that if pupils find information on structures and control of the media boring, it is most likely due to the fact that the teachers have not contextualised this part of media studies carefully enough. If, as Masterman seems to suggest, all subject matter is taken only from the pupils' experience, this would limit the potential for media studies to move beyond this realm (Alvarado, 1981, p64).

Experience is neither neutral nor objective (Alvarado, 1981, p59). It is therefore difficult to analyse one's own experiences in terms of abstract concepts that would teach about ideological or conceptual problems. Alvarado (1981, p64) suggests that it is thus necessary to construct a pedagogy that is not dependent upon experience - and, in fact, critiques it.

Williamson (1981-2, p83) queries whether such a pedagogy would still teach about issues like cultural hegemony - which can become too abstract for pupils to understand if not linked to their lived experience. Some concepts need to be related initially to the pupils' experience to enable them to understand the role of ideology. Williamson (1981-2, p84-5) argues, as Masterman (1980, p26) does, that this can be effectively achieved in the analysis of the pupils' experience of education. Pupils should talk about their experiences in order to understand the structuring thereof, and perhaps to transform them (Alvarado, 1981, p59; Connell, 1983, p53; Williamson, 1985, p91).

Some authors may consider the pupils' experience to be inadequate⁶, but the pupils' ideas must be dealt with before they can move on to considering broader issues (Williamson, 1981-2, p86). Connell (1983, p53) suggests that both Alvarado and Williamson take some experiences to be inadequate and therefore in need of mediation by the teacher. Approaches to teaching must be rooted in all experience, not only that with which the teacher feels comfortable (Connell, 1983).

More recently, the British Film Institute (hereafter BFI) Curriculum statement specifically

draws attention to the question of the pupils' experience, stating that "Media education sets out to develop what pupils enjoy and experience in their everyday media culture" (Bowker, 1991, p90), so the emphasis is placed firmly on the primacy of the experience of the learner. As I have discussed above, though, this is not an entirely unproblematical notion.

Williamson (1981-2, p83) argues that, in order to bridge the gap between theoretical ideas and personal experience, ideology must be understood. However, as a pupil learns how the ideological processes work and that there are no absolutes, s/he must inevitably question his/her own premises. This process could threaten an individual's identity (Williamson, 1981-2, p85).

People's sense of self is embedded in certain ideologies and, as they learn to deal with concepts - and not just live with them - their sense of self will change (Williamson, 1985, p92). Thus, the importance of the pupils' experience in education is not only to aid their learning, but also to add to the shaping of the pupils as social subjects.

Although this debate has dealt with the question of the learners' experience, the theorists do not take particular note of the function of the pupils as individual members of an audience. Buckingham (1986, p87-8) argues that Masterman regards ideology as belonging only to the text and does not consider the consumers to be actively involved in making meanings and therefore also involved with ideology. Masterman (1986, p97) replies that he looks closely at audience-text relations; and at the implications of recent audience research for

teaching. His main concern remains, however, with the readers uncovering the 'real', underlying meanings of texts; and not with each actively engaging with the texts in order to arrive at their own meaning/s.

The Role of Ideology

All the writers involved in this debate on media education consider ideology to be an important concept to be taught, but differ on exactly what role it should fulfil in media studies.

Masterman's (1980) notion of "demystification" requires the analysis of the ways in which an ideology is disseminated via the media. Pupils must study how the world is presented to them by the apparently transparent media (particularly television) in 'mystifying' terms that conceal the real underlying relations and meanings.

Masterman is also concerned with the functioning of ideology through the education system, where both pupils and teachers are "ensnared within material educational mystifications" (Masterman, 1980, p26). He explores how the explicit content of the curriculum has little to do with what pupils really learn in schools. One of the things that they do learn is about behaviour patterns and attitudes - from the way they're treated in the classroom (Masterman, 1980, p24). It is for these reasons that he suggests that pupils will learn more about the functioning of ideology if an ideological awareness is brought into school situations.

Alvarado (1981, p58) criticises Masterman's notion

of "demystification" for suggesting that ideology is disseminated via the media. This creates an impression that the media are neutral channels through which an ideology can be communicated. Alvarado argues that ideology is part of the media themselves, and so, whatever is communicated via them, is affected by the ideology belonging to the channel of communication.

Buckingham (1986, p82) criticises Masterman for conceptualising of ideology as false consciousness, which results in him seeing media education as a process of freeing students from false beliefs through the "demystification" of the media in order to uncover their 'real' meanings. The result is that pupils learn to read against the ideology as they are forced to position themselves against texts (Buckingham, 1986, p91). They thus learn to produce 'ideologically correct' answers, perhaps without ever properly exploring their own positions (Alvarado, 1981; Williamson, 1981-2; Buckingham, 1986). Masterman is thus regarding ideology as belonging to the texts, not to the process of production.

Alvarado (1981, p58) argues that recent research has shown "demystification", with its connotations of conspiracy and deliberate falsification, to be an inadequate technique of analysis; and that it is more useful to analyse the workings of media institutions.

It is not enough to only study the workings of ideology in the media, one must teach about the material and economic bases of television institutions (Alvarado, 1981, p62). In addition, media studies should move beyond the confines of

only the media, to consider the structures of other institutions. This is necessary as questions concerning the control of the media must inevitably lead to the same questions being asked about the control and organization of the social system (Alvarado, 1981, p65).

Masterman (1981-2, p92) refutes Alvarado's interpretation of his priorities. He considers it essential to uncover with the pupils the institutional bases of the media. He argues that the study of media products is of no value if the constraints that are placed on the media are not considered. He does, however, restate that it is difficult to teach these concepts.

More recently, Masterman (1985) has assigned a greater significance to the economic bases of the media. When he argues for the study of all the media, he notes that they function as consciousness industries, but they also have structures of ownership and control in common. He has thus become concerned with the ideological, as well as the economic, properties of the media. Buckingham (1986, p85-6) argues, however, that Masterman still hides all the issues under demystificatory terms. By equating 'real' with 'economic' and 'mystificatory' with 'ideological', Masterman negates the materiality of ideology (Buckingham, 1986, p86).

Masterman (1981-2, p91) also assigns an ideological function to his choice of co-operative approach to teaching. Group work allows the potentialities of groups to be developed, as well as channels for the expression of dissent to be expressed. Schools are not likely to encourage such pedagogies for

ideological reasons. This is, however, a valuable aspect of "political literacy" of which Alvarado, amongst others, should take more note.

The dominant party attempts to exercise a hegemony over the education system, largely by persuading teachers and pupils to consent to its ideological preferences. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Connell (1983, p51-2) feels that discussions about education have assumed that some of the paradigms that succeeded in exerting a hegemony over education have been dislodged, which actually have not. Thus, instead of fundamentally questioning this hegemony, the discussions simply negotiated it and the radical potential of any developments based upon the discussions was defused.

Theory vs Practice

Durant (1992, p414-5) identifies one major problem with the formation of media studies programmes as being the ways in which reflective theory and ongoing practice are related. One side of this problem is the question of the manner in which theorising about education relates (or fails to relate) to the application of those theories in the classroom. The other side concerns the meanings of 'practice' - learning a theory, or doing critical discourse analysis, or researching an industry, or making films (Durant, 1992, p414-5).

In the debates about media education there is a huge gap between theory and practical teaching (Williamson, 1981-2, p81; Buckingham, 1986, p93). Alvarado (1981, p64) considers the problem to be that teaching has been regarded as such a

practically-orientated activity that it was useless to theorise about it. This resulted in 'method' being accepted as equivalent to 'theory' - usually discarded by practising teachers. He proposes a theory that sees method as directly related to content - and the two affecting what occurs in the classroom. Other authors consider this point of view to be too abstract (Masterman, 1981-2, p89; Williamson, 1981-2, p85; Connell, 1983, p50-52) and not as useful or effective as the analysis of real, practical classroom situations (Masterman, 1981-2, p92).

Masterman (1980, p25-6) specifically addresses the gap between theory and practice when he stresses the need for the practical application of his theories in order to change the ways in which the media are taught. In Teaching About Television, he offers specific ideas and concrete suggestions for the implementation of his approach.

Williamson (1981-2, p85) argues that people do not learn in the abstract, they need to be able to relate theories to practical situations in order to understand them - therefore educational theory must be grounded in real classroom situations. Pupils can only gauge theories by putting them into practice. "Theories may be abstract, but change is concrete" (Williamson, 1985, p94). In order for any theories to be effective and to bring about change, they must be put into practise in the classroom.

The difficulty is that teachers are faced with real problems that have to be solved (Williamson, 1985, p91) before they can implement any new ideas in the classroom. The two most common problems are how to deal with a noisy, even aggressive bunch of pupils'

and how to get shy students to gain confidence and to participate (Williamson, 1985, p91). It is difficult to structure discussion situations under these circumstances and, therefore, also difficult to teach progressively.

Connell (1983, p53) considers Williamson's theory to be useful as most discussions about pedagogies have only briefly considered real teaching situations - a practice that is not conducive to developing a progressive education, or to ensure the adoption of any new ideas (Connell, 1983, p53).

The key, therefore, to redressing the balance between theory and practical teaching must be to integrate any theorising about media studies with research done into real classroom practice.

The second problem with the relations between theory and practice concerns the relationship between the pupils learning theoretical concepts and them becoming involved in practical work with the media.

Buckingham (1991, p26) argues for the value of practical work, noting that

"Media studies aims to demonstrate that the language of the media is not natural or neutral, and to investigate the ways in which it is socially and historically produced. It is therefore necessary for students of the media to look more closely at their use of language - both as a reader and as a producer of media texts" (Buckingham, 1991, p27).

This means that there must be some production of media texts by students in order for them to be able to question their own use of language.

Ferguson (1981) describes early media studies

courses as being established for students who had problems understanding abstract concepts. Pupils were encouraged to work practically with the media and the subject was looked down upon.

Practical media production by students either takes the form of individual, usually creative, exercises; or group productions aimed at an audience (Bowker, 1991, p18). It is difficult to analyse - and therefore evaluate - individual free expression (Collins, 1992, p55). And the only really effective way of judging group productions is by comparing them to professional productions (Groviè, 1981; Collins, 1992). It is therefore more valuable for pupils to engage in exercises that experiment with conventions of media production to defamiliarise them in order to understand how they work (Masterman, 1980; Ferguson, 1981; Collins, 1992, p55).

The focus of recent research into the media has resulted in the recognition of the important role that the audience plays in communication (Lodziak, 1986; Sless, 1986). The influence of this refocusing of ideas can be observed in the more recent theories about practical work by pupils. The dominant thought is that, when pupils produce their own media texts, they should do so for specific - even real - audiences. They would thus have to confront realistic issues such as those of cost, appropriateness for that audience, and time constraints (Bowker, 1991, p7). The pupils would also then be able to evaluate their productions effectively in terms of their intentions (Buckingham, 1987, p36). This could be developed to involve the pupils working with the teacher to establish criteria according to which their

productions should be evaluated. This would serve to a certain extent to close the gap between the theory and the practical (Ferguson, 1981, p32).

Another way in which this can be achieved is by linking practical work with the media with the analysis of texts at all levels. Masterman (1980) argues that pupils learn more by doing. Alvarado (1981, p59) feels this may be applicable to primary level pupils, but at the secondary school level, children need - and are more capable of - more cognitive and mental activities.

There is generally a consensus amongst theorists more recently that practical production should be carefully integrated with critical and analytical activities (Williamson, 1981-2; Masterman, 1985; Buckingham, 1987; Bowker, 1991). Buckingham (1992, p68) argues that media studies can - and must - combine the theoretical and the practical. It is for this reason that practical work must be informed by critical analysis of the media - and the pupils' analyses must be influenced by what they learn from their own practical work (Buckingham, 1992; Williamson, 1981-2, p84).

Key Issues in Media Education

The debate on media education began with Masterman (1980) and is ongoing. Some of the main points that have emerged from the debate can be seen to influence recent curriculum recommendations. In considering the core concepts suggested by Masterman in comparison to those included in the recent BFI curriculum statement, it is possible to observe some of the major developments in media

education theory.

The core concepts that Masterman (1980, p11) proposes are those of total communication, connotation, and mediation and ideology. These all suggest that there are deeper meanings associated with media texts; and concentrate upon the role of ideology. Masterman does not include the audience as one of the core concepts.

In contrast, the BFI Curriculum Statement lists the following key areas of understanding: Media agencies, media categories, media technologies, media languages, media audiences and media representations (Bowker, 1991, p5). Rather than confronting ideology in the media as a separate issue, the BFI assumes that the workings of ideology underpin all the other key areas. Unlike Masterman (1980), the BFI does concentrate on the issue of institutions and structures of control of the media. They also assume the audience to be centrally important.

Masterman (1985) did develop his theory of media studies to concentrate more specifically upon questions of the control of the media; but he does not consider the audience to be as important as recent research into the media has shown it to be.

The early stages of the debate about media education concentrated upon teaching about the media and did not consider questions about the process of learning. Buckingham (1991, p13) argues that any theorising about media and education must be grounded in an understanding of the children's experience of the media. And should be based on the view that children are active producers of meaning,

which is fundamentally a social activity. It is this view in particular that appears to have informed the establishment of the key areas of understanding in the BFI curriculum statement.

South African Theory on Media Education

South Africans have only just begun to engage in debates about media education. The first effective moves in this direction were made during a conference held in Durban in September 1990. The proceedings of this conference have been published in Media Matters in South Africa (MRC, Durban, 1991) edited by Jeanne Prinsloo and Costas Criticos, which addresses many of the issues raised by the debate on media education that I have discussed above. Most of these points also emerge, implicitly if not explicitly, in Media and Meaning (OUP, London, 1992), a handbook on media studies by Douglas Young and Claudia Regnart. This book is the most recent useful work on media studies to emerge from the South African context.

The first point from the debate that the texts pick up on is the question of a media studies pedagogy. Young and Regnart do not present an explicit statement of their preference for teaching approach, but the organisation of their content, as well as the nature of the actual activities suggested by the book, indicate a preference for a learning situation that would encourage pupils to be actively involved. There is an emphasis in the text on the learners' experience of - and interactions with - the media.

The arguments against 'traditional', transmission-

style teaching - and for 'progressive', co-operative learning situations - are more explicitly articulated in Media Matters in South Africa.⁷ Sutherland (1991, p51) specifically argues that pupils should take on some of the responsibility for their own education. Ferguson (1991, p20-1) argues for the need to teach the pupils to develop critical thought. This is similar to Masterman's (1985) argument for the development of a critical autonomy in pupils.

The associated problem of evaluating co-operative media studies programmes⁸ is also addressed by Sutherland (1991, p54). She argues that this assessment should remain true to the aims of 'progressive' education, but still meet the requirements of the education department. This remains, however, an unresolved problem.

Both Media and Meaning and Media Matters in South Africa consider the issue of theory and practice in media education. Young and Regnart (1992) arrange the contents of their chapters in such a way that the reader is presented with information, and then invited to participate in activities that involve the application of/interaction with that particular information. This implies that they see a need for the theory to be linked to the practice of media studies, although there is no explicit statement to this effect.

Criticos and Prinsloo (1991, p12) introduce a new problem in the question of relating theory to practice when they address the issue of attempting to teach about the media in schools that do not have the necessary technical equipment. This problem was particularly important in the

segregated education system in South Africa.

The British theorists (particularly Buckingham, 1992 and Williamson, 1981-2; 1985) argue that greater consideration should be taken of actual classroom practice in any theory about media education. In Media Matters in South Africa Johnson (1991, p35) describes how the introduction of any form of media studies into the curriculum of the Natal Education Department (hereafter NED) was preceded by experiments conducted at schools. The findings of the practising teachers involved were vital to the development of any theory about teaching the media.

It is interesting to note here that, although the NED was the first education authority in South Africa to approach the question of media studies, they did not immediately prescribe it, but left it as a choice for teachers. In contrast, although the TED did attempt to research classroom experience of media studies before prescribing the study thereof, the experiments that they conducted imposed approaches and subject matter on the teachers. The results of the experiments were not used to inform the theory. Rather, the 'success' of the experiments was regarded as being proof of the usefulness and suitability of the approach that had already been theoretically selected.

Ferguson (1991, p74-5) describes media education as being a subject engaging in critical enquiry - and seeking the practical application of all its findings. He argues strongly for there to be a theoretical base to media education, but also notes that these theoretical concepts must be used in work with the media.

The issue of grounding media studies theory in practical classroom experience is substantially developed in Media Matters in South Africa by Robinson and Mentor (1991) and Criticos (1991). Robinson and Mentor (1991, p218) argue convincingly for the need for teachers to become involved in changes that must be made to the system of education, however, teachers tend to regard educational methods that actively involve students as impractical (Robinson and Mentor, 1991, p219). There are practical problems that have to be solved before teachers can easily structure discussion situations and allow pupils to participate constructively in classrooms.⁹

Robinson and Mentor (1991, p221) also describe that teachers are often not eager to evaluate their own performance. Despite these problems, there is a real need for teachers to become actively involved in order that new resources can be developed that will be really useful; and so that the education structures can ultimately be altered (Robinson and Mentor, 1991; Criticos, 1991). This is particularly important to the future of education in a post-apartheid South Africa (Robinson and Mentor, 1991, p219).

Young and Regnart (1992,p4) consider that it is vital for pupils to become actively involved with the media. This picks up on one of the main points of the British debate. In the context of recent research that has stressed the importance of the audience in communication, Young and Regnart significantly develop this point. The activities that the book suggests for pupils involve their active engagement with the media on all levels - often relating what they produce to specific

audiences. This is based on the view that consumers are actively involved with the media to make meanings and also to search for the meanings that the media wish to communicate (Young and Regnart, 1992, p4). The aim of these activities is to lead to a more creative, careful and effective use of the media.

The issue of the experience of the learner is important in Media and Meaning - and fundamental to many of the arguments in Media Matters in South Africa. Young and Regnart (1992) constantly link any activities involving the media to the pupils' experience. In addition, the majority of the media material utilised in their handbook is taken from various South African contexts, thus effectively assuming the primacy of the local context.

The arguments in Media Matters in South Africa develop the notion of the learners' experience to look carefully at the relationship between media education and social environment. Van Zyl (1991, p57) deals with the idea of teaching the media in a specific context. As I have discussed above, Robinson and Mentor (1991) and Criticos (1991) are specifically concerned with the relationship that the media teacher has to the development of education in the social context. It is also necessary to relate investigations into the ideologies of media texts to the social context of the pupils (Chapman, 1991, p82). Louw (1991, p234) explores the ways in which media production and the understanding of the media are linked to the changing society. The ultimate aim for a fully democratic social dialogue with the media must begin with teaching the members of the audience to become critical receivers (Louw, 1991, p238-9).

The role of ideology in the media is not confronted explicitly by Young and Regnart (1991). Rather, the notion of the influence of ideologies on media messages is integrated into the text and pupils are guided to interact with questions of ideology and preferential decodings. For example, one exercise invites the pupils to interpret a photograph from the point-of-view of a different ideology. This also draws on their understanding of ideology and the way in which they relate this to their experience.

In Media Matters in South Africa Ferguson (1991, p80-1) describes ideology as being a central concern in media studies, particularly because ideological theories are interwoven with the study of language, discourses and signification. Study of the ideological dimension can also lead pupils to see how the media attempt to perpetuate the relations of power and subordination by making them appear as natural. The process of deconstruction of texts will reveal the underlying ideologies, which must then be related to the contexts of the learners (Chapman, 1991, p83). Louw (1991, p240) describes how the notion of ideology can be useful when studying the ways in which the media can be used to manipulate the audience by those with vested interests. It is also a useful notion to be studied when the relationship between ideas and context is explored.

Thus Young and Regnart in Media and Meaning, and some of the arguments presented in Media Matters in South Africa, have actually addressed all of the main points emerging from the debate on media education conducted by British theorists. These points have been significantly developed in these

two texts - a result of the authors having been influenced by more recent research that has focused on the importance of the consumer being actively involved with the media.

Any conclusions reached by either the British or the South African theorists have not yet been used in order to address the inherent problems of 'film study' in South Africa, specifically in the Transvaal. One of the most important of these problems that I identified while researching this thesis was the lack of adequate training of teachers. This problem was identified in Natal and was one of the main reasons for the NED deciding to delay the introduction of prescribed media studies (Johnson, 1991, p36). It is also a problem that Robinson and Mentor (1991) and Criticos (1991) address specifically - and for which they provide some solutions.

This example serves to illustrate that there is a need for the theoretical debates about media and education to be consulted and applied in the structuring of an effective media studies in South Africa.

In the following chapter, I will consider the role of the active consumer more closely; as well as issues of discourse.

END NOTES

1. See the BFI Media Education Curriculum statement, 1991.
2. Identified by Masterman, 1980; Buckingham, 1990; Lusted, 1986; Grovè, 1981 amongst others.

3. For example The Popular Arts by Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel; Talking About the Cinema by Jim Kitses and Ann Mercer; Talking About Television by A J P Higgins; Film Teaching by Stuart Hall, Roy Knight, Albert Hunt and Alan Lovell; Mass Media and the Secondary School by Graham Murdoch and Graham Phelps; Film and English Teaching by Roy Knight (Alvarado, 1981, p56)
4. See Alvarado, 1981, p61.
5. It is interesting to note here that Pungente (1985) identifies pop music as the medium experienced most widely by children.
6. Such as Alvarado - see Williamson, 1981-2, p86.
7. See particularly Ferguson, p21-1; and Sutherland, p53.
8. Debated by Masterman (1980, 1981-2) and Alvarado (1981).
9. See my discussion of Williamson above.

Chapter Five

THEORIES OF DISCOURSE AND RECEPTION

Research into the media and audiences has conventionally been based on scientific psychology methods (Lodziak, 1986, p22). This essentially behaviourist research is quantitatively orientated (Jankowski and Wester, 1991, p44). Lodziak (1986, p10) argues that it does not take into account interactions and changes that occur in 'everyday life', but involves the analysis of controlled experimental situations. Jankowski and Wester (1991, p44) indicate that more qualitative research would take place in natural settings.

'Traditional' Communication Models

The original communication model materialized by Shannon and Weaver (1949) was based on electronic transfer of information (Sless, 1986, p12). Lodziak (1986), Sless (1986) and Tomaselli and Shepperson (1991) are amongst those who have criticised the manner in which human interactions were likened to electronic transmission procedures. Sless stresses that, if the 'traditional communication model' is to be used, it must be remembered that it is a metaphor, and not a prescriptive model (Sless, 1986, p12).

Hall (1980, p128) criticises the traditional communication model for concentrating almost exclusively on the exchange of messages, without looking at the process of communication as a complex structure of relations. The model also

placed more emphasis on the production and encoding of messages than on the comprehension thereof.

The traditional communication model saw the receiver as a mass that communicated their comprehension of at least part of the message back to the producer via feedback of various kinds. However, more recent analysis of communication has revealed that the receivers play a more important role than that with which they have been credited.¹

The Role of the Audience in Communication

Research into the reception of messages revealed two important points that affected the manner in which the receiver was considered. The first was the realisation that an audience is not a mass, but a group made up of individuals - each bringing to the communication situation their own backgrounds, contexts, preferences etc. Secondly, these individuals do not unproblematically and passively receive - and comprehend - information as presented to them in a message. Each individual is actively involved in reading messages in order to decode the information and to arrive at a meaning. The variety of individuals and contexts involved in this active process of reading means that a variety of meanings will be derived from one message.

Receiving communication is not as unproblematical as traditional communications research has suggested. Receivers of communication read messages actively and construct meanings for themselves (Kress, 1983, p5), that generally satisfy their needs (Liebes and Katz in Seiter et al, 1989, p204).

Morley (1989, p29) cautions against taking the idea of an audience actively involved in the reading of texts too far. Members of an audience are not always actively involved in communication. For example, the television is put on for various reasons (Brunsdon, 1989, p119) - often merely as a routine activity (Lodziak, 1986, p31). This suggests that an audience may not be active constantly and deliberately. However, neither is an audience a passive mass submissively receiving whatever messages are sent out.

Audiences and Producers

Although the importance of the role of the readers in communication must be stressed, this must not mask the importance of the producers of texts.

Sless (1986, p63) argues that, in any analysis of the production of meaning, one cannot research the audience and make conclusions without those affecting conclusions reached about other elements in the communication process. All these elements are linked and so any analysis of the one must lead to some information becoming relevant with regard to the other.

In the production of messages, the producers use the fact that individual receivers become engaged with texts and make their own meanings. Eagleton (1991, p201) proposes that producers shape the information in a message so that it is aimed at eliciting certain effects in the recipients. In this manner, all messages are constructed from subjective positions and are the results of specific social and material processes.

Kress (1983, p3) stresses that choices are made and these processes find their expression in discourses, which are "organizations of meanings which are prefigured in, determined by and existent in social and material structures and processes".

All discourses operate according to formal structures (Kress, 1983, p5). These structures, according to Pecheux (in Eagleton, 1991, p195), have two parts: the set of rules governing the discursive process and determining what can be included from certain positions within a society; and the form of discourse embedded in the ideological formation of the society. Thus discourse analysis becomes concerned with language in social use and in the manner in which it is organized to give meanings (Kress, 1983, p3).

Sless (1986, p118) describes how authors of messages use discourses to fashion meanings and then the readers generate meanings by reshaping the information into texts.² These two sets of meanings are generally not identical, as readers bring different rules of interpretation to a text to those that the producers did (Kress, 1983, p5).

Sless (1986, p37) argues that, in order to be considered a text, something must have an author or reader project onto it their absent counterpart. This involves the construction of messages by producers to satisfy imaginary readers; and readers projecting authors onto texts when they are reading, in order to make more sense of the information and to give structure to the texts (Sless, 1986, p55). The authors that individual receivers will project onto the text will satisfy their ideological positions. This means that a

variety of authors are projected onto one text, and these authors are not necessarily similar to the actual producer/s of that message.

The texts that individual readers produce connect the discourses of producer and consumer. Although these discourses are generally not identical, there has to be a degree of commonality to the process of communication for it to be successful.

Lodziak (1986, p31) describes how Hall proposes that individual participants in an act of communication interpret messages within a shared framework - thus there is some degree of sharing between the producer and the consumer of a text. The encoding and decoding of a message are not necessarily similar, but the encoding will determine some parameters within which decoding must occur (Hall, 1980, p135). If this were not so, there could be no effective communication (Hall, 1980, p136).

An affinity between speakers/authors (producers) and audience/readers (consumers) of texts can also be illustrated by the fact that discourses shaping communication tend to leave out bits of information, yet comprehension does occur (Kress, 1983, p5).

Eagleton (1991, p195-6) identifies the affinity between producers and consumers as being mostly in the channel of communication - often a language with which all the participants are familiar. However, the notion of all members of an audience sharing a language must not be accepted unproblematically (Sless, 1986, p18-9).

The possibility exists that all members of a

culture do not understand a common language equally well and misunderstandings can occur. However, the arguments that I have presented indicate that some common base must exist between producers and consumers, or no communication would take place. Despite this necessity having been identified, discourse analysis has considered the question of whether the producer and consumer of a text do, in fact, know and use the same discourse (Kress, 1983, p5).

The Importance of Contexts in Communication

The context/s of both the discourse/s and the participants in the act of communication are of vital importance when one considers the comprehension of a text.

Due to the developments in communications research, the audience must be viewed from a new angle that takes into account the importance of the individuals and their social contexts (Lodziak, 1986, p31). This is essentially 'ethnographic' audience research as proposed by Morley and described by Ang (1989, p96).

Fiske (1987, p48) sees the subject as central to the processes involved in making meaning. He considers the meanings that individual members of audiences produce as being linked to their social contexts and experience (Fiske, 1989, p57). Sless (1986, p109) echoes Fiske's view: "Media texts are not autonomous, they have an existence (and meaning) dependent on their users".

The manner in which the meanings that an audience

derives from a text can be linked to, and influenced by, their social and historical contexts is important in communication (Bonney, 1983, p15 and Fiske, 1989, p57). These contexts are perhaps even more important than those of the producer of a message as,

"...what finally determines the meanings and pleasures provoked by a text is the social situation of the viewer-reader.." (Fiske, 1989, p61).

The Making of Meanings

Kress (1983, p3) describes messages as the results of specific social and material processes, which find their expression in discourses. Lodziak (1986, p118) argues that the ideological effect of texts lies in the materiality of discursive practice. When ideology is viewed thus - as a discursive/semiotic phenomenon - its materiality is emphasized. This shows that ideology is essentially concerned with meanings (Eagleton, 1991, p194).

Lodziak (1986, p105) notes that ideology is most effective when its operations are invisible. As an extension of this, Fiske (1987, p41) describes discourses as functioning ideologically when they hide their discursive nature and appear as natural, rather than being culturally specific.³ Hall (1980, p132) identifies the ideological effect of discourses as being hiding the act of coding⁴ - achieved by the codes used by discourses becoming naturalized through having been used often in a specific social context.

The basic elements of these codes are signs, which stand for certain signifiers. Hall (1980, p133) describes the full ideological value of signs

operating at the level of associated/hidden meanings, where the intervention of ideology is most easily visible. At this level, the ideology dominant in a social formation aims at making the connotations of signs - and therefore the meanings that are produced - appear as 'natural' and obvious (Eagleton, 1991, p199). This is an attempt at closure - a matter of fixing meanings around dominant signifiers that are supportive of the dominant ideology (Eagleton, 1991, p196).

The production of dominant meanings is not the production of set interpretations. It is rather an attempt to establish a decoding of events and signs within a range of socially dominant definitions (Hall, 1980, p134-5). This control is not generally exercised over the content of messages, but functions through the structure of a text.

Kress (1983, p7) notes that an analysis of content only - as practised in the TED - tends to be limited because one cannot uncover important links between meanings and their origins in specific contexts. These links can be uncovered in an analysis of the structure of a message in terms of the specific discourses that function ideologically.

Discourse analysis is concerned with studying the ways in which language is organized in texts to give certain meanings that are determined by the context of social use (Kress, 1983, p3). Sless (1986, p75) suggests that semiotics could be an effective tool for the analysis of these meanings.⁵ Semiotics would then become partly political, as discourses are dependent upon (and shaped by) social contexts.

Sless (1986, p117) notes that the investigation of meanings is always in someone's interests. What professes to be an 'objective' analysis of the ways in which messages are decoded can be an attempt to constrain the various interpretations that are possible (Bonney, 1983, p15). In this attempt at closure, the meanings associated with messages are restrained and the production of meaning can be guided by specific interests (Sless, 1986, p101).

The control and prescription of meaning by producers of texts is not always as effective and complete as has been assumed. Sless (1986, p16) suggests that discourse analysis draws inferences from texts that lead to certain conclusions being drawn. There is often not evidence for those conclusions and, to a certain extent, the ideological implications of a text are 'read into' the text by the analyst. Lodziak (1986, p117) argues that the analysis of hidden meanings of texts produces new meanings that may be a product of the method of analysis, rather than the actual hidden meanings.

When meanings are read into texts, they are not always those intended by the producers - as I discussed in Chapter One, oppositional readings of any text are always possible.

Hall (1980, p136-8) describes three ways of reading a text. First is the dominant/preferred reading, which is consistent with the ideology of the ruling class. The text is read uncritically and the status quo remains unquestioned. The second, a negotiated reading of a text, does not change the status quo, but the reader negotiates his/her rights. The third is a radical alternative/oppositional reading of a

text - conducted according to the interests of the oppressed classes - and one which may result in changes to the status quo.

Fiske (1989, p71-2) argues that an audience's ability to make its own meanings becomes a power in the awareness that every text has a dominant meaning built into it and the audience's meanings can be oppositional to that preferred meaning. By inserting themselves into the process of representation, individuals are not subjected by the process, but become empowered by it (Fiske, 1987, p239). However, Lodziak (1986, p121) argues that the majority of readers unproblematically accept the dominant meanings of texts, because they perceive themselves as powerless to change their conditions of existence.

Discourse analysis must look at what it is about individual texts that constructs positions for the audience (and attempts to prescribe meanings). Sless (1986, p110-1) reminds us that every text contains the potential for a multiplicity of readings, including 'oppositional' interpretations and thus become sites of ideological struggle aiming for the control of meaning. Thus, as stressed by Bonney (1983, p15), the analysis must also look at what it is in the texts that allows for alternate readings.

When pupils become involved in the study of visual texts at schools, they are potentially engaging with the analysis of how meanings are made. However, when single films are studied as products (as with the TED) - and no notice is taken of the processes of construction of a text or of the active role that the readers assume - the pupils

are generally involved in learning what Hall (1980) describes as the "dominant/preferred reading". They are not being allowed to explore any form of other meanings - specifically their own, individual interpretations - be they via a negotiated, or even an oppositional, reading of a text. The pupils are thus effectively not allowed to exercise their power as active readers of a text.

In the next chapter, I will look more closely at Grovè's theory of 'film study' - which was the theoretical base for the limiting, text-bound analysis of films adopted by the TED.

END NOTES

1. Masterman in Pungente, 1985; Sless, 1986; Lodziak, 1986; Fiske, 1987; Seiter et al, 1989; Hall, 1980.
2. I refer here to Morley's (in Seiter et al, 1989, p23) use of Fiske's and Barthes' notion that a "text" is the meaning that readers produce from a work. These meanings can differ according to individual "contexts of consumption" (Morley, 1989, p26).
3. This action is the basis of realism and myth - both presentations of the world that appear natural, but are actually discourses shaping the world.
4. This is the process whereby 'raw' material is structured into discourses with the use of various codes.
5. I have looked at the use of a semiotic analysis more specifically in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

Chapter Six

Grové: FILM AS A PRODUCT

In South Africa, where the system of education under apartheid was structured so as to focus on the importance of nationalism and an awareness of the fatherland (Hofmeyer, 1982; Malherbe, 1977; Behr, 1984), pupils were not likely to be encouraged to become involved in explorations and inquiries that may have resulted in them questioning the social system and organization of their world too closely. Media/'film study' in Transvaal schools was thus generally discouraged from being co-operative and reader-orientated - and an analysis of social contexts.

Grové, by decision or circumstance subscribed to the overall approach preferred by the TED, operating under a system of Christian-National Education. Indeed, Grové's rather curious reference to 'Film Study' rather than 'Studies' suggests that only one approach - Grové's and, by extension, the TED's - is the legitimate, valid and 'True' one.

In Chapter Two I argued that the TED adopted a text-orientated approach to 'film study' on the recommendation of Johann Grové (Grové, May 1991). This was one of the final stages of his involvement with formal 'film study' in the Transvaal. However, his influence in the early stages necessitates a closer consideration of his understanding of 'film study'.

This chapter critiques Grové's (1981) theory of

film as set out in the body of his Masters' dissertation. The chapter that follows examines how Van Zyl's book Image Wise (1987), though emphasizing the filmic rather than literary elements, in fact, continues the Grové emphasis on text-bound literary analysis.

The Need for Media Studies

Grové establishes the need for some education in the media by drawing on media effects theory which argues that viewers are extremely vulnerable to media, especially film and television, in determining behaviour patterns¹. In concentrating exclusively on the effects of television and unproblematically accepting this behaviourist thesis, he located his theory - and ultimately the TED syllabus - within a discredited paradigm.² By appropriating semiotics into his approach, he concealed the raw behaviourism of effects research (Lodziak, 1986, p6, 15-16) by varnishing it with a method which examines how media messages are constructed.³

Grové's research results were, to some extent, anticipated by his objectives, as the reasons that he draws upon for introducing media studies into schools rely almost solely on his acceptance of their effects in everyday life. He assumes the effects of the media, which have not been irrefutably proven - and uses these as an argument for pupils to learn how to be discriminating in their viewing habits in order to maintain their individuality and integrity (1981, p32).

Grové assumes that television and the media result in the public developing a "new mode consciousness

and altered social realities" (1981, p23) based upon images, rather than on real experience. Although he does reference Gerbner (1972), he does not take sufficient note of arguments that media did not cause behaviour in the mechanistic way suggested by effects theorists, but rather shaped social responses over long periods of exposure.

In his argument for media studies, Grové deals with the issues of content and form. He considers them merely as elements of film, without addressing the form vs content debate important in the history of film theory.

Grové accepts that content is important, but structures an argument that it is, in fact, form, which determines reception (Grové, 1981, p27). He fails, however, to explore the process of reception of communication in any depth. The result of this is that he is unable to illustrate his claim that form influences reception; and he effectively neglects a whole - vital - area of film studies.

There is an inconsistency in Grové's approach to studying film. He begins by arguing fairly strongly for an awareness of the importance of film form and develops his point by suggesting that it is necessary to study the form of any media communication in order to understand the content fully. Grové's approach to film contradicts this emphasis on form, however, as his preference remains for content.

I would argue that in an almost exclusively literary-style analysis of film products, as practised by the TED and structured by Grové, the form of the films becomes of secondary importance -

merely a channel via which the content is communicated. This is primarily a result of this approach concentrating almost exclusively on the text and therefore having failed to consider the role of the audience and the process of receiving media messages in any depth.

The content of a text is important in any analysis, but individuals are involved in interacting with both content and form when they read texts. If these interactions are ignored (as by Grové's and the TED's approach) and the pupils treated as passive receivers of a meaning, the emphasis is placed so specifically on the content and its literal meaning that the form appears to be virtually worthless. This process also tends to ignore the connotative meanings of a text.

On a superficial level, the codes of motion pictures are entrenched in the minds of an audience and accepted without question (Fiske, 1982, p82) and literal understanding of a text is almost automatic. However, as Friedburg (1977)⁴ argues, merely understanding "a simple image on the screen is not good enough." The members of an audience must be able to explore the deeper level meanings (connotations) of a text.

Many of the connotations are present in the techniques of film and not just in the content. These connotative meanings tend to be influenced by the culture and context of the receivers as they make sense of the texts for themselves. Therefore, any worthwhile analysis of a text must concentrate upon the individual receivers' interactions with both form and content in order to study all levels of meaning of that text as it is understood in a

specific context.

Ferguson (1991, p21) argues that the constructed nature of media texts is such that the study thereof must link form and content to methods of production and the institutions which create media. As I discussed in Chapter Five, this type of analysis will inevitably result in pupils beginning to question the structuring of media products and whose interests they serve - and to begin to become aware of the discourses ordering their entire world.⁵ Pupils must then begin to question those systems and representations.

The pupils should, of course, be able to explore these issues fully as they examine their relations with a text. If they are not allowed this opportunity, however, they are unlikely to ever explore the broader issues associated with film discourses.

Grové's approach to film is identical to that described by Buckingham (1991) as the dominant way of approaching media studies in its initial stages. In this approach, pupils are "innoculated" against the negative influences of the media (Ferguson, 1991, p20). The 'authority' of the teacher and the prescribed film text are allowed to entrench preferred views in the minds of the learners/viewers, who are actively discouraged from exploring any alternative, individual interpretations.

The inoculation approach is also true to the traditional view of education held by the system of CNE (Hofmeyer, 1982, p30). As a result, the choice of setwork films by the TED had to perpetuate this

debased version of the original Leavis project (Mulhern, 1979). The teaching approach also had to be structured in a manner that would ensure the teacher instilled (perhaps even unknowingly) criteria of what was 'good' and 'acceptable' in terms of elitist cultural rankings in the pupils.

Masterman's (1985, p6) overall approach to the visual media is different from Grovè's. However, Buckingham (1986, p83) has argued that, like Grovè and the TED, Masterman sees teachers occupying a position of moral responsibility between pupils and the media.

The fundamental difference between Masterman and Grovè is that Masterman sees texts as constructions. Where Grovè approaches his 'film study' as the unproblematical analysis of individual films, Masterman (1980) is concerned with the ideological dimension of the media and the way that this is manifest in the layers of meaning of individual texts.

Masterman also studies issues of ownership and control of the media to uncover the forces behind the meanings that are constructed in texts. In addition, Masterman considers the role of the audience in communication, where Grové fails to do so.

Masterman's notion of "mystification" - both through the media and the education experience - is similar to ideas appearing in Real Images (1986) by McMahon and Quin, who argue that

"... film and television are seen as carriers of ideology ... the dominant belief system of a culture ... closely linked with the means of production of the society's images of itself.

Who gets to produce the images is a matter of social significance" (McMahon and Quin, 1986, p7).

These questions are ignored by both Grové (1981) and Van Zyl (1987).

Masterman (1980, 1985) and McMahon and Quin (1986) were writing in and about countries whose education systems allowed for more liberal approaches by teachers. Grové was working within a system of Christian-National Education designed to privilege whites and the hegemony of capital at the expense of the black proletariat and the mass of the population. Grové doesn't even allude to the ideological issues associated with the ways in which the media reconstruct dominant realities for the viewer and the way this was taken for-granted by the TED "Visual Literacy" syllabus.

The Methodology of 'Film Study'

Having established the need for some form of media studies in terms of TED philosophy, Grové (1981, Chapters One and Two) deals with how this need was being met at the time of his writing. He discusses the actual teaching of film, but fails to explicitly contextualise the discipline in a general theory of education.

In contrast, Masterman (1980, p21-38) roots his theory of media studies and media education methodology in a discussion of education in general, thereby presenting his strategies more carefully and precisely. Grové does not offer examples of specific methods, or exercises⁶ and so implicitly assumes the TED pedagogy through which teachers may have been interpellated - the

assumptions of which they may transfer to their teaching of visual literacy.

In his account of 'film study' Grové (1981) surveys the media teaching situation at the time of his writing. He fails, though, to consider the importance of the local context. Grové considers the United States, United Kingdom and Australia, as these countries have an established, successful history of media studies. However, at the time of Grové's study, media studies was going on in South Africa - in particular in the Transvaal. In addition to the broad outline of a number of ways in which film was being approached by various teachers overseas, Grové could have looked at what individual teachers were doing in South Africa too.⁷

In addition to disregarding the local context by ignoring media studies in South Africa, Grové also fails to consider the contexts of texts. I discussed in Chapter Five the importance of the members of an audience and their individual contexts in communication. Pupils are part of this audience and they receive media messages in their own, specific contexts.

Grové only hints at the need to contextualise 'film study' in the pupils' experience, but does not develop this point. He never looks carefully at the role of the audience, nor at that which the contexts of production and consumption play in the process of communication.

The result of this is that Grové appears to be unaware of the importance of the local context in terms of media studies in South Africa at that

time; and of the question of reception within specific moments of history.

In contrast to Grové, McMahon and Quin (1986) constantly relate the study of the media to their local Australian context. The exercises outlined in Real Images make use of local press clippings, programmes with which the pupils are familiar, and other related material originating in their social context. Even though this is not an analysis of the media's relation to society, such methods must inevitably lead to the pupils becoming more familiar with how the media relate to, and interact with, their social situations. It must also allow them the opportunity to explore their relations to texts and their functioning as active readers of those texts.

Grové's and the TED approach is geared to suppressing concerns and methods that McMahon and Quin (1986) and Masterman (1980, 1985) focus on. Where these authors aim to make pupils socially aware of how the media shape perceptions, Grové's objective is to rank certain films above others as fit and proper cultural products which deserve attention by virtue of their 'art' status.

Like Grové, Masterman (1980, p1-7) also examines the contemporary situation of media education. He critically examines the two major trends in teaching film that were being practised in secondary schools in the United Kingdom at the time: the idea of film as a subject; and the question of media studies, with television at the core. This distinction in the possible role of film within the classroom is an important issue in theories of media studies.

In South Africa, the most dominant role of the media in the classroom has been as a teaching aid - often used as a substitute for the teacher. In the light of this traditional practice, Grové tends to assume that the introduction of film as a subject of study within the English literature course would be relatively unproblematical. Even the use of audio-visual media in the classroom is not that simple, requiring thorough integration into teaching methods (Tomaselli, 1976). Grové glosses over the problem of the role of film by merely mentioning in passing that film could be an aid in the classroom (1981, p36), or studied for itself (1981, p37-8).

Approaches to Teaching Film

As I discussed in Chapter Four, there is not one pedagogy for media studies. This is, in fact, an issue about which there has been much debate, from which little/no consensus has been reached. Grové wrote his dissertation before the various British authors that I referred to in Chapter Four began debating this issue. However, his work was essentially the theoretical base from which a 'film study' syllabus was developed. As such, it is not comprehensive, nor is it clearly structured.

Grovè makes no attempt to problematise the question of a media studies pedagogy. Nor does he present a clear argument for the method he favours. What Grové does offer is a quasi-theoretical account of three approaches to teaching film with no practical examples to illustrate the theory. In addition, these reports are too brief to be informative or conclusive.

In contrast to Grovè is Masterman's approach in Teaching About Television (1980, p39-74). This book was also published prior to the debate on media method and so contains no discussion of the issues that arose from this debate.⁸ What Masterman does offer in Teaching About Television is a carefully structured argument for his approach to teaching the media. He clearly outlines not only approaches to, but ways of teaching, television. He gives an explanation of the theory; and practical exercises and suggestions for exercises. The inclusion of actual methods - and even specific exercises - ensures a clear understanding of the method/ approach.⁹

The first approach to teaching film that Grovè discusses is thematic. He describes this as the most common approach employed by teachers of film (1981, p38); and as being essentially content-orientated. Film is used to illustrate situations, concepts etc. - which indicates that this is not truly film studies, merely the use of film in the classroom. The elements of the thematic approach are not outlined. This report is simply an overview of how the approach has been used by a few sources.

The second technique Grovè deals with is film-making in the classroom (1981,p41) - the other pole of 'film study'. For the first time, Grové roots the study, however briefly, in the South African context with comments on one South African case (Walters, 1980); as well as two American examples (Freeman, 1979; Potter, 1976). Once again, however, the basic elements of this approach to teaching film are not covered and so it cannot be evaluated. Grové does, however, give a fairly comprehensive account of an American film studies workbook¹⁰.

Under the section on film-making in the classroom, Grové describes Jonathan Paton's (1978) use of visual stimuli in teaching English Method at university. This information is out of place as an example of film-making at school, but it does raise a point again that I covered in Chapter Four - the question of the validity (perhaps necessity) of some image production on the part of students of film at any level.

Grové tends to dismiss the idea of pupils engaging in practical film-making. He later acknowledges that pupils can gain tremendous insight into the products they have to view by working with the medium and producing their own, short productions (May 1991). The danger lies, he says, in the fact that teachers tend to expect such productions to be very good - which they are not. He points out that such 'productions' are only exercises forming part of the learning process, not film products themselves.

It is possible for successful and valuable experiments with the film medium to be conducted at schools, but such opportunities are almost wholly dependent on the innovations and determination of individual teachers. A restriction is placed upon even these individuals, however, by the difficulty of involving twenty-five to thirty pupils practically and productively in "film production" during a thirty-to-fifty minute session.

Short exercises could be derived, however, that would fit into the limited time. If these exercises concentrated on experimenting with the conventions of film and exploring how various audiences receive them, they would be immensely valuable in

illustrating basic points about the reception and understanding of film.

The third approach to 'film study' considered by Grové is literary/aesthetic, which he claims to be more worthwhile for language teachers to use. Grové lends to this technique his personal approval for the local context when he refers for the first time to a couple of South African teachers who have found it valuable.¹¹

Grové's choice of the literary/aesthetic approach as being most worthwhile developed into the practice of teaching critical appreciation of 'good' films in TED schools and thus became the basis of the syllabus. As an illustration of this, the contents of the 'film study' sections of past matriculation papers indicate a need to concentrate on the content and literary aspects of films, rather than be concerned with the more 'technical' elements, or with issues of production and consumption of films.

The choice that Grové made not to evaluate any of the approaches to teaching film, allows him to avoid mentioning any criticisms against his favoured approach. In addition, he presents the literary/ aesthetic approach in a 'universal' tone as being most worthwhile. This, of course, effectively ignores any problems associated with it. One of the problems that does exist is the tendency for teachers and scholars to treat film as some kind of visual novel where the techniques of studying novels are applied directly to a film (Van Zyl, 1987, p1). This occurs - when

"film study begins with viewing the film and experiencing the film director's meaning. Then follows a discussion and analysis of that

meaning, a traditional literary activity.." (Grové, 1987, p1).

Later work by Grové has seen him move away from the analysis of content only. In Study Guide No.43 (1988), he does look at the ideas of studying different shots in film. The TED syllabus also includes the study of some technical elements. These are generally analysed in isolation from the film content, though; and are regarded as being of secondary importance to that content. Although Grové's view of 'film study' developed in this manner, he continues to favour a text-bound analysis and virtually ignores the role of the audience.

A variation upon the literary approach to film that is rather more effective than anything offered by Grové is present in Real Images (1986). McMahon and Quin look at films as narratives. Those elements of narrative common to both films and novels are separated out, and the elements belonging chiefly to film are analysed. Even though the same elements as occur in novels do feature in the analysis of film, this is a consideration of a film as a work of literature in itself, not as some "visual book".

To approach films as narratives is an important (and effective) technique. It is an essentially holistic approach, yet one which allows for an analysis of all the separate elements of a text. The approach should be extended, however, to take into account the audience's interactions with the narratives.

Grové concludes his report of the methodology of 'film study' with the statement that the syllabus for a film course should not "deviate too far from

the curricular norms observed in the design of the syllabuses followed in other subjects" (1981,p52). Even a cursory examination of the TED syllabus reveals that, in order to satisfy this condition, 'film study' was merely slotted into the existing structures of the Reading section, with no attempt having been made to integrate the new content into the subject. It was fairly unproblematical to structure the study of a film as an alternative work of literature as part of the existing Reading section, without really deviating from the 'norms' of reading a text. The structure of the "Visual Literacy" section thus effectively paralleled that of the rest of the syllabus.

The Analysis of Film

Grové begins his account of the theory of 'film study' at secondary school with a note that 'film study' is not taught from any position of theoretical certainty. Masterman (1985, p7), states a similar problem - that the study of television in schools generally lacks a sound theoretical base; and Robert Ferguson (1991, p74) notes that there is a need first to establish a theory of media education before syllabuses can be developed. As I discussed in Chapter Four, the question of theory - and practice - is one of the central points in the debates around media education.

Grové offers no explanation for the problem of there being no theoretical conformity to school film teaching, nor does he suggest a solution. This lack of fundamental theory identified by Grové is manifest in the practical situation by the fact that teachers surveyed in the course of my

study¹² could not agree on the content and approach of a 'film study' course. As may be observed from the debates around media and education, these problems may not be solved immediately. However, the formalisation of some theoretical base for 'film study' would at least enable teachers to operate from a sound, common basis - and thus ensure that the approach to studying film, if not the content of the courses, is standardised.

In his account of the theories of film and 'film study', Grové includes a section entitled "Visual Literacy" (1981, p60) - an account of the analysis of pictures. The implication is that Grové is to consider "visual literacy" in its broadest sense¹³, as he begins with the analysis of still photographic images. However, the content of his account reveals that he equates "visual literacy" with 'film study' only. This is first observed when Grové identifies the still photographic image, not as an example of a basic visual medium, but as "the smallest unit of film" (1981, p60). This assertion misses the linguistic and semiotic debates on this question, and therefore how to define the basic unit of analysis (Tomaselli, 1980)

Van Zyl also begins his study of films with an analysis of photography (1987, p5-14). Thus the two influential local 'theorists' begin their analysis in the same manner. Van Zyl does not, however, identify a still image as the smallest unit of film. Rather, he begins with photography as it is allied to the other visual media. His focus in the book remains on film, however. Van Zyl looks at how photography can influence the 'viewer', but does not consider the ways in which viewers interact

with visual stimuli and make sense of them.

Both Grovè and Van Zyl point out that subjective and objective distortion occurs in still images. Grové even highlights the importance of the pupils realising that the camera is selective (1981, p60). He describes a need to teach "visual literacy" systematically due to the largely subconscious effect of photographic images. He also identifies ways in which photographic images distort. Yet neither Grovè, nor Van Zyl, explores in any detail how the distortions of images occur or what forces determined their construction and whose interests they serve. Neither author even mentions the need to study the ways in which individuals interact with photographic images.

Grovè's Choice of Critical Models for Film Analysis

Grovè concludes his account of the theories of film and 'film study' by looking at Tudor's and Haber's critical models for film analysis.

The elements of Tudor's model are:

- * The factual, emotional and normative meanings of the film world.
- * The events of, emotional involvement and normative meanings in the thematic structure.
- * The factual meanings, emotional consequences and normative meanings of the formal structure. (Grovè, 1981, p85)

The elements of Haber's model that Grové provides are:

- * The use of technical elements.
- * Type and extent of emotion generated.

- * Character development; and interest and unity of plot.
- * The credibility of the plot and characters.
- * Actors' ability; and extent of realism.
- * Theme or message.
- * Relation to the pupils' lives. (Grové, 1981 p88).

Grové describes Tudor's model as the most directly useful critical model for the practical teaching situation. This is the first time that he links film criticism and film teaching. He does not explore any comparative models/categories of film criticism that would conclusively prove or disprove his opinion about the model. Although he also considers Haber's model for film analysis, he draws no comparisons between this and Tudor's.

The only criticisms of Tudor's model that Grové mentions are that it does not allow for flexibility; and that it is designed to analyse works of literature, not film. However, he still approves of it as a model for film analysis - and suggests that its application should be moved away from a literary, to a filmic, perspective (1981, p89). Grové is apparently unaware of the limitations of Tudor's model - perhaps as its emphases agree with his overall approach to film.

Grové explains his choice of Tudor's model for teaching by indicating that it highlights the fact that much of film's communication is sub-conscious. Teachers must therefore concentrate upon the connotations of films in their teaching. A closer consideration of Tudor's model indicates that the connotations with which it is concerned are those communicated mostly by the content of the texts

being analysed, not via the whole message. As I argued previously, many of the connotations of a film are communicated via the form; and are generally understood as receivers interact with, and make sense of, the whole film.

Grové also describes Haber's model as being particularly useful in the film classroom (1981, p88), as the main aspects of film to be discussed according to this model are useful in schools. As with Tudor's model, however, this is not proven, or clearly illustrated. Nor does Grové provide the reasons for having selected Tudor's model over Haber's as the most effective model of film analysis.

Both Tudor's and Haber's models study the themes of films, as well as the question of emotions operating through/in films. The elements of Haber's analysis indicate that the pupils should address the issue of how well the 'reality' of a film has been reproduced. This remains a surface analysis and is not extended to consider films as constructions of versions of reality. Tudor's model analyses the various meanings of the film world, but there is no indication that it considers films as constructions either. In fact, the stress on emotion and themes suggests that this model emphasises content above all else.

Grové's choice of these two models for film analysis is interesting in the light of his preferences for 'film study'. Although both Tudor's and Haber's models include the study of the technical elements of film, the focus of both - like Grové - remains on the film as product, rather than on films as constructed representations of

parts of reality. Neither Haber's nor Tudor's model draws attention to the role of the audience receiving the film message.

Grové does mention the question of the relevance of film to the viewer very briefly in his account of Haber's model, but does not expand upon the importance of this aspect of film analysis. As I have argued - and with reference to the evidence in Grové's dissertation - it appears that Grové is either unaware of the importance of the audience and the viewing context, or he does not consider them to be important to the analysis of films. This is despite the importance of the role of the audience that has been stressed in communication theory.

Thus concludes Grové's account of the theory of 'film study'. John van Zyl adopts a different approach to the analysis of film, yet his emphasis remains, like Grové, on the text. The following chapter contains my analysis of Van Zyl's theory.

END NOTES

1. Grové references Culkin, 1978; Erich Fromm - referenced by Culkin; Wilson, 1975; Smythe, 1972; Esslin, 1976; Postman, 1979; Salomon, 1979; Gerbner, 1972 in his exploration of this area.
2. See my argument in the previous chapter - and Lodziak, 1986, p5-20.
3. Van Zyl also does this but manages to exclude the behaviourist dimension.
4. Quoted by Tomaselli, 1987 - taken from SAFFTA News 1977.
5. Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983; Ferguson, 1991; Masterman, 1985.
6. This is the result of a weakness in the structure of Grové's dissertation that reduces

its overall impact as a comprehensive account of the theory of 'film study'. The subject of Chapter Two of the dissertation is the theory of teaching 'film study' at secondary schools. As the contents of Chapter One were essentially practical, it is possible to assume that this information could be integrated into the theory in order to illustrate various concepts. Due to the absence of specific methods and examples in Chapter One, however, it is difficult to make direct links between the practice and the theory. Although Chapter One serves as a source for an argument for teaching film taken from actual experience, the contents of the report are virtually ignored for the duration of the dissertation. Specifically, only twice during the ensuing chapter is reference made to the experimental film course.

7. Christie, 1979; Paton, 1978; Blake, 1979; Walters, 1980; Grové himself taught films as setworks in a Transvaal school.
8. In fact, as I discussed in Chapter Four, Masterman's book gave rise to some of the main issues in this debate.
9. The more practically useful content is appropriate in a book such as Masterman's - intended to be of use for teachers of the media. Grové's work is not a practical handbook for teachers of film. His is intended as a dissertation upon the theory of teaching 'film study' - and thus the contents are not required to be able to be applied immediately. And yet, the contents and tone of Grové's work indicate a confusion of purpose. The titles of the chapters and sections in Grové suggest that the contents will be of practical value, but the contents themselves belie this impression. Conversely, the title of the dissertation indicates a theoretical account of how film is studied, yet Grové includes sections that suggest how one should approach the teaching of film. Even as a report, it lacks the holistic arrangement of Teaching the Media (1985) (a handbook for teachers of media) and Real Images (1986) (a handbook on media study for the student) where each section is integrated into the basic structure.
10. Morrow, J&J, Student Workbook, 1978.
11. Uytrecht, 1978; Williamson, 1979, Sayer, 1979; Van Der Walt, 1979.
12. See Chapter Ten and Appendix.
13. See my argument about the understood definition/s of "visual literacy" in the Introduction to this thesis.

Chapter Seven

VAN ZYL: FILM AS COMMUNICATION

Van Zyl approaches 'film study' as communication. Although he considers the processes of encoding and decoding, his emphasis tends to fall, like Grové, on the text, rather than on the processes of production and reception and how meanings are made. In addition, Van Zyl does not take note of the contexts underlying/influencing the construction and reception of the film products.

Van Zyl (1987, p25) analyses film according to a conventional Sender-Message-Receiver communication model (hereafter the S-M-R communication-model), assuming the elements of sender (or transmitter), message and receiver present in transmission communication models from Shannon and Weaver's onwards (McQuail, 1975, p27; Fiske, 1982, p7). This model also includes feedback - from the receiver to the sender (Van Zyl, 1987, p26) - as any form of communication is a two-way process.

Although neither Grové nor the TED syllabus refer explicitly to models of communication, an analysis of their approaches to teaching 'film study' reveals that they are in fact based on the same assumptions as is the S-M-R communication model. These include the view of the flow of information as being essentially, but not exclusively, one-way - from sender to receiver; and the receivers as being a homogenous mass.

These are the same basic assumptions upon which Van Zyl bases his theory of the analysis of film. He

expands the skeleton model minimally - to include only the processes of encoding the message by the sender; and the decoding of the message by the receiver.

As I noted in Chapter Six, the S-M-R communication-model has been discredited by Stuart Hall (1980), David Sless (1986) and David Buckingham (1986) amongst others as being incapable of accounting for human communication.

Hall and Buckingham criticize the model for being too linear and therefore unable to account for the complexities of inter-human communication. Sless criticises the model chiefly because it treats human communication as if it were an electronic transmission (1986, p12), where the machinery of the communication has been taken as the model of the entire process (Sless, 1986, p18-19).

Sless argues that human communication involves concepts beyond the mechanical transfer of information - including the range of language and the role of the researcher within the communication process (Sless, 1986, p16-17).

The Message in the Communication

Van Zyl initially states that "...by message we understand the whole film, not just the content" (1987, p30). Although he is concerned with the elements of form and content, like Grovè he does not address the form vs content debate inherent to film theory. This failure to problematise the situation is a weakness of his account of film analysis.

Further on in his book, Van Zyl divides the film into message and text (1987,p40) - where the message is the form/medium of film itself and the text is the film content once it has been interpreted by a viewer. This description of a "text" is almost identical to Peirce's notion of the interpretant¹, a concept that specifically considers the fact that individual members of audiences make sense of texts through actively interacting with them. Each individual's interpretation will be dependent upon and influenced by their particular context. Van Zyl does not refer to the interpretant. Nor does he make any attempt to develop his description of a "text" - or to apply this notion in his analysis of film and communication.

Although he mentions the importance of the whole film, Van Zyl's analysis is really only concerned with the content of films. The result of this is that he does not present films as representations of recreated realities. This is also a result of his text-bound analysis of films.

Van Zyl does not focus on the importance of the processes of construction and deconstruction of messages. These processes are selective - inevitably involving the translation of material into and out of discourses that affect the interpretation of the overall message. All the elements of the image- and sound tracks of film have connotative significances associated with their usage that are additional to their function of representing a reality. The structuring of the medium carrying the message can influence the way in which viewers perceive the message, and therefore modify their responses. However, Van Zyl

is not concerned with either the specific structuring of messages, or the actively involved viewer.

Van Zyl's failure to confront the issue of all reality being mediated for the receiver of a communication means that his readers are encouraged to think - as he appears to - that what is presented to them by a film is real; and that they can stand outside of the act of communication and analyse it objectively. It is impossible, however, for anyone involved in communication to remove themselves from that communication (Sless, 1986, p30-1).

When Van Zyl divides the message/form into the image and sound tracks of film, he argues that it is possible to describe this message objectively (1987, p40). He seems to be unaware that no analysis can be truly objective. Different semiotic methods or other kinds of analysis will generate different 'objective' messages. Each message deciphered will depend on the method of analysis applied. Indeed, it is almost impossible for there to be any degree of objectivity in the reading of messages by so many individuals. I will return to this point later in this chapter.

An interesting inclusion in Van Zyl's analysis of film is that of the soundtrack. This is unusual as the role of sound in a film is generally ignored in schools. Despite considering it in his analysis, though, Van Zyl (1987) does not appear to regard the soundtrack as being very important. One of the most specific functions that sound can perform is to place images in a context and to make the images appear to be 'real'. The joining together of images

and sound creates a meaning, a sense of familiarity and reality, which can be distorted through the juxtapositioning of otherwise inappropriate visual and aural elements.²

The manner in which Van Zyl glosses over sound is once again likely to be a result of his preoccupation with film as a text only and not with the processes of production. For it is in the process of constructing a film that the essentially subjective choices of image, sound, and image-sound juxtapositioning are made. And new (often specific) meanings are produced.

In contrast to Van Zyl's brief consideration of sound, Young and Regnart (1992, p27-35) consider sound separately as a fundamental element of the media - linking it specifically to languages and codes.

Encoding the Message

After considering the message, Van Zyl discusses the encoding³ of that message (1987, p30-35). This is achieved through the use of conventional signs, codes and genres (Van Zyl, 1987, p31, 74-75), which will be understood by the viewers. Van Zyl assumes a general level of competence amongst the public. Sless (1986), however, argues against such an idea. He says that communication is based upon the belief that there is a shared "infrastructure of understanding" (1986, p19).

This "infrastructure" has some loosely defined conventions that are called codes. However, not all of the public are equally familiar with these codes

and so not all communication is equally effective to all members of the public (Van Zyl, 1987, p20-21).

Van Zyl deals with encoding very superficially. For him, the process involves only the casting of information into forms that the public will understand (1987, p31). He thus considers the process to be purely mechanistic and removed from all possible influence of social pressure, save for a brief mention of the fact that certain "crazes" can inspire the production of certain types of films (1987, p31).

In this manner, Van Zyl is taking what Hall (1980, p128) considers to be the traditional view of the S-M-R communication-model that fails to conceptualise the different moments of communication as being a complex structure of relations.

Communication is not a process that takes place independently of social pressures and structures. It is, in fact, a process arising out of, and influenced by, the social context. On a simply mechanical level, raw material has to be encoded into a discourse in order for it to be communicated (Hall, 1980, p129). Hall (1980, p127) argues that these discourses must then be translated into social practice for the circuit of communication to be complete. This naturally involves the active interaction of individual readers with texts.

When Van Zyl (1987, p31) introduces the concept of codes he is concerned only with the denotative level of meaning, as he considers only the 'type' of film - why one film is a newsreel and another a

narrative. He fails to make the distinction between the initial, denotative level of understanding and the deeper, connotative level.

Hall (1980, p133) argues that all signs are at once denotative and connotative. Communication first occurs on the denotative level, but it is at the connotative level that ideology intervenes and the communication becomes more complex and more potentially influential. These denotations and connotations cannot be separated from each other, and in failing to consider the connotations of signs in any depth, Van Zyl is specifically ignoring the more important levels of meaning of messages.

Decoding the Message

After considering encoding, Van Zyl looks at the decoding of the message by the receiver. He notes that, in the case of film, "... it is the viewer who must try to make sense of the film" (Van Zyl, 1987, p36). The way in which Van Zyl deals with the process of reading here is similar to the manner in which he mentions the notion of a negotiated "text", but does not develop it further.

Although he mentions that viewers must make sense of films, Van Zyl assumes the receivers to be basically a homogenous group and does not deal in any way with the active process of reading. This precludes him from considering that individual receivers all interact differently with texts and so many meanings can be read into one text. Van Zyl assumes, rather, that there is really only one reading of a text possible - derived from an

'objective' analysis of that text.

Unfortunately, Van Zyl does not refer to, or seem to be aware of, Stuart Hall's (1980) seminal article on encoding/decoding which outlines the different ways in which readers/viewers 'read' or negotiate media messages. A discussion of Hall's theory would have provided teachers with a means of dealing with what semioticians call 'aberrant' decoding. This occurs where viewers disagree with, reject or modify, the semiotic - or what Van Zyl would call the 'objective' - interpretation of a film (Fiske, 1982, p84-85). Various decodings of this kind will inevitably result when many individuals are involved in interpreting a text.

Feedback

The final stage of Van Zyl's (1987, p39-40) account of the communication process of film is feedback. Once again, his failure to address issues of reception and audience means that he deal only briefly with this section.

Van Zyl describes how feedback (1987, p39-40) is usually performed from a distance and that, in cinema, there is little or no feedback. The only indicator would be reviews or box office earnings. However, as Tomaselli (1989) has shown, box office income or the popularity of a film may have more to do with the marketing of the film than with the appreciation by the public of any intrinsic artistic value.

Feedback in communication does not always make its way back to the sender of a message - it may also

take the form of the reactions to a text by individual viewers. This type of feedback is observed by others than the producers of the message - and should be studied in an analysis of a text. Van Zyl fails to consider this level of feedback, however, as well as its usefulness to film analysis.

Problems with the S-M-R Communication Model

Van Zyl, like Grové, deals with semiotics as the method for an effective analysis of film. Due to the importance of this method to both authors, I have considered it more closely in the following chapter. One central mistake that both Van Zyl and Grové make is to offer only a single formalistic, text-bound semiotic method. In presenting this as the only semiotic, Van Zyl fails to mention any of the problems associated with the S-M-R model of communication (Hall, 1980; Sless, 1986) or the structuralist paradigm in which it is located (Shepperson, 1991).

Perhaps the major problem with analysing any act of communication according to an S-M-R model is that it makes communication seem "natural and uncontentious" (Sless, 1986, p12), whereas human communication is affected by many pressures that can influence the flow of information and the nature of the communication.

As I have mentioned, according to Sless (1986, p12), models such as Shannon and Weaver's (similarly Van Zyl's) should be regarded as metaphors for the act of communication, not models. When they are interpreted as being models, they

make communication involving people appear as electronic transmissions (1986, p12) and they also imply that it is possible for the researcher to stand outside of the act of communication and analyse the process objectively.

This problem is evident in Van Zyl (1987, p23-40) where he outlines how to analyse film as communication, but does not approach the question of the pupil's (researcher's) position within the act of communication. Rather, he creates the impression that the student can 'stand back' from a film and analyse its various elements. This ignores the fact that the pupils are actually part of the communication, and are not able to stand outside of the act (Sless, 1986, p17).

Sless (1986, p24) identifies the location of the researcher (pupil or teacher) in terms of the logic of position. Like figures in a landscape, "what they see depends on where they are standing" (Sless, 1986, p39). Individuals' readings of a text will differ. A researcher is actually studying his/her interpretation, not the only reading of the text. S/he must first acknowledge that s/he is part of the communication; and then take note of his/her position within the process and how that point-of-view will affect the reading of a film (Sless, 1986, p38-9).

As I have mentioned, Van Zyl also fails to consider the audience and the contexts of films in any detail. He mentions the existence of elements outside of the immediate concerns of a film that tend to influence the shape of the message, but he does not explore the nature or effect of these elements. The student of film is thus not

encouraged by Van Zyl to explore the importance of social contexts and pressures in the structuring of a film message, or their influence upon the various interpretations of a text that are possible. Van Zyl merely neatly breaks up the text according to the specific requirements of the traditional S-M-R communication model.

Van Zyl's Analysis of a Film

At the end of Image Wise, Van Zyl offers an "in-depth analysis of Chariots of Fire" (1987, p91-108). This could have provided him with the opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of the analysis of film as communication. However, by failing to analyse the film according to the S-M-R communication-model, he does not do so. In fact, he makes no attempt to consider any of the technical elements of the medium in any detail - and certainly in no depth.

Van Zyl's 'in-depth analysis' is, in fact, a series of very general comments about the chronological action in the film. It also includes observations about characters. This is really an almost literary-style analysis of the content of the film and illustrates most conclusively Van Zyl's priorities with regard to 'film study'.

Comparing Books

Image Wise (1987) has been the dominant 'film study textbook' in the Transvaal. It is relatively easily accessible to both pupils and teachers and therefore appears to be intended to function as a

useful handbook. In order to more easily assess the effectiveness of this book for use in schools, I have undertaken a comparison between it and another handbook on the analysis of the visual media. This book is Real Images by McMahon and Quin - published in Australia in 1986.

Image Wise (1987) and Real Images (1986) both deal with the study of the visual media, but the focus of each book differs. In Image Wise, Van Zyl is concerned with "visual literacy" only. He groups film and television together as one entity, the content of which can only be understood clearly if the viewers become visually literate. In Real Images, McMahon and Quin are concerned, rather, with the visual media as one of the mass media operating within a specific social context.

The differing focuses of Real Images and Image Wise each indicates clearly the approach to media studies existing in the two contexts of origin of the books. Van Zyl's approach is clearly linked to the TED's text-bound study of a film removed from a social context. McMahon and Quin write within a context long exposed to media studies in schools and they thus adopt a more general, process-orientated approach to the media.

Secondary school pupils encounter the media and interact with media texts in their own specific social contexts. However, as I have argued, Van Zyl includes no study of the audience, nor does he analyse the visual media in relation to contexts - which would assist pupils in rooting the study of these media in their own environment and experience; and in understanding their own interpretations of a text. McMahon and Quin (1986)

acknowledge the central importance of a viewer interacting with a text within specific contexts.

As I explored in Chapter Four, one of the general aims of media studies is for the learning situation to be co-operative. McMahon and Quin's method aims to be such and they present a way of teaching the visual media. The pupils are involved in a problem-solving situation; and then guided through a process that should result in them understanding various aspects of the media relating to the original problem. Any information that is given is included in order to be of assistance in the solving of the questions and exercises present in the separate chapters.

Van Zyl adopts a more didactic tone than do McMahon and Quin when he states how one should go about studying the visual media - as though his is the manner in which to do so. Image Wise is not structured in a manner that can function effectively as a handbook. It is really just a source of information about various aspects of film; and the exercises given are merely to test the pupils' understanding of the information. However, these exercises do point to ways in which the main ideas presented in each chapter can be applied in other contexts.

The need for a complete study of all component parts of the visual media has been raised by teachers of film, who regard the study of all aspects of the medium necessary for the effective analysis of a product.⁴ A consensus on the amount of detail required in such a study has not yet been reached.⁵ However, a consistent absence has been a call to study the role of the audience.

Van Zyl includes a very specific, detailed (and therefore ultimately confusing) breakdown of the more useful technical terms of film. McMahon and Quin do include references to similar terms, but they are not clearly laid out and individually explained for the student. Where Van Zyl's book is intended for the novice student of film, McMahon and Quin write for the more media-literate student and so such definitions are perhaps not as necessary for this book as they are for Image Wise.⁶

Like Grovè, the one method of film analysis that McMahon and Quin have in common with Van Zyl is the Semiotic method, which I have considered more closely in the following chapter.

Developments in Van Zyl's Approach to Analysing Film

Van Zyl collaborated on a chapter dealing with the analysis of moving images in Media and Meaning by Douglas Young and Claudia Regnart (1992). The contents of, and approach adopted in, this chapter reveal important developments that have occurred in Van Zyl's approach to analysing film.

As he does in Image Wise, Van Zyl once again approaches film as communication in this chapter (Young and Regnart, 1992, p95-105). However, he does not strictly apply all the elements of the S-M-R communication model. This allows for a broader analysis of all the processes involved in producing a film.

The first of these is a consideration of the

variety of motivations that influence the production, and shape, of the film product (p96-7). This acknowledges the importance of the context of production. Linked to this is the explicit explanation of the fact that the sender of a film message is a group made up of individuals, all contributing to the final product (p98). The inclusion of the notion of gatekeepers in the process of sending the message (p102-3) draws attention more specifically to the choices that are made in, and the pressures that affect, the construction of a message.

The most important development in Van Zyl's approach, however, is that he now places a greater emphasis on the process of reception of the message. He draws particular attention to the fact that the receivers of film communication are all individuals, each interpreting the text according to their own contexts (p107). In addition, he considers the ways in which the ideological beliefs and cultural experience of each receiver affect their decoding of a message (p121-2).

Although it is not explicitly stated, Van Zyl now understands that many readings of a text are possible, not only one. This indicates that his approach to film analysis has taken note of media theorists' recent concern with the active audience - and has developed accordingly.

Once again in this chapter, Van Zyl deals with visual representation and introduces the concepts of 'icon', 'index' and 'symbol'. This again draws attention to the usefulness and relevance of the semiotic method - which I consider in the following chapter.

END NOTES

1. See my discussion of this and other semiotic concepts in Chapter Eight.
2. I have conducted experiments with pupils with the use of different sound tracks with the same images that have demonstrated this effectively.
3. The structuring of raw material into a form that viewers will be able to recognise.
4. This concern of teachers emerged as the result of research into 'film study' conducted by at Transvaal secondary schools during 1990.
5. The contents and results of the 1988-90 Transvaal matriculation examinations including the study of film, contained indications that it is not necessary for pupils to have a detailed and extensive technical vocabulary of film in order to deal competently with the medium. However, familiarity with the terms does enable them to talk more knowledgably about the visual media.
6. Although Van Zyl's book is aimed at first-time students of film, and he utilises a step-by-step approach, my classroom experience shows that it is too theoretical for pupils to manage easily. There are also problems, as discussed, associated with the analysis of film according to a simple S-M-R communication-model.

Chapter Eight

SEMIOTICS: AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF FILMS

Part of the content of "Visual Literacy" in the TED English syllabus was the introduction of the concepts of "Icon", "Index" and "Symbol" at the Standard Eight level. These are basic terms of a semiotic analysis of film labelled by C.S. Peirce (Peirce, 1.369, 2.285, 2.247) as the Second Trichotomy of Signs.¹ Part of Grové's (1981) contribution to the syllabus was the inclusion of these terms.

As an elementary application of semiotics was present in the syllabus, and as both Grové and Van Zyl consider the approach, I have found it necessary to consider the semiotic method of analysis more closely.

The Usefulness of the Semiotic Method

One of the points upon which most theory about education and the media agrees is that there is a need to educate viewers to explore the media of presentation more closely. Recent theory has extended this exploration to concentrate more specifically upon the act of reading and the ways in which individual readers engage with a text.

The use of semiotics as a basic method would aid pupils in their analysis of media texts (in the case of the TED, films) that use signs and codes to communicate. The method would enable pupils to

analyse the various levels of the signs to understand how it is that the products have been constructed.

A semiotic method such as that practised in TED schools is text-orientated and considers only one part of the communication process. If the semiotic method were to be extended to analyse not only the texts, but the whole process of communication, the final understanding would be fuller - and the analysis more useful. This semiotics would be reader-, rather than text-orientated. It would be a semiotics that considered Peirce's notion of the interpretant to be central to any analysis.

C.S. Peirce sees signification as occurring in a triadic relationship - between the object/sign (signifier); that which is signified; and the interpretant (Fiske, 1982, p45; Fitzgerald, 1966, p72-3; Kevelson, 1987, p8). This latter concept is the final idea that the signification produces within the mind of each individual. "This interpretant is another sign that translates, explains, stands for the first sign" (Seiter, 1987, p19).

The notion of interpretant acknowledges that a signifier may represent a certain signified, but also supposes that the exact nature of that signified will be affected by each individual's context. Signification is not absolute, but is dependant upon context. Signs are inherently unstable and shift their meanings in terms of class, culture, experience, gender and history. Only the concept of the interpretant is able to deal with this semiotic dynamism (Williams, 1988/9). The notion of the interpretant also takes

into account the contexts of individual readers of a text.

Although Grové expresses some concern with studying the contexts of reception of a film, he does not establish this as an extremely important consideration in the analysis of films. He achieves this by ignoring Peirce's notion of the interpretant. In Image Wise Van Zyl (1987, p40) talks about the "text" as being the film content once it has been interpreted by a viewer. He fails to develop this notion, however, and therefore assigns it no importance. Despite his reference to 'text', Van Zyl - like Grové - ignores Peirce's notion of the interpretant.²

When Grové considers the viewing context, he emphasizes the physical school environment only, he is apparently not concerned with the pupils' social contexts. In contrast, McMahon and Quin (1986) stress the importance of social contexts. They note that all films and television programmes present a coded version of the real world. As a viewer reacts to and interacts with the values presented by these programmes, his/her behaviour patterns tend to be affected.

Study of the language of film and television facilitate the analysis of how values are constructed by the two media (McMahon and Quin, 1986, p61). The constructed values and the real world can then be compared and evaluated. Thus the reader and his/her relationship with society are central to the analysis of any media texts.

Grové's failure to consider the social context of the viewer/reader is only one of the shortcomings

of his account of semiotics and the analysis of communication.

Grové on Semiotics

Up until the early 1980s, there was little information on Semiotics available in South Africa and so Grové (1981) relied heavily on James Monaco (1977) as his source. Inevitably, because of the neo-Marxist approach of Masterman (1980) and John Fiske and John Hartley (1979), these authors were considered "irrelevant". Grové's emphasis on formalist semiotics thus creates the impression that there was only one semiotics, whereas various versions exist.³

Even within Grové's preferred formalism, various studies had been applied in South Africa.⁴ In addition to Grové's narrowness, he introduces semiotic concepts almost at random after Monaco, but provides no definitions.

Although Grové (1981) considers Semiotics in some detail, his view is unidimensional and didactic. In addition, he concentrates exclusively on the analysis of the text and does not consider the reader in any detail.

Grové identifies three steps in semiotic analysis (1981, p66-68): the literal meaning; the latent content ('real'- i.e. 'TED meaning'); and uncovering the code making the link between the literal meaning and the latent content. These are analagous to the three levels of 'reading' an image that he also identifies (1981, p69-70): saccadic (optical); semiological (the analysis); and

cultural (semiotic analysis reveals cultural codes).

Grové makes no attempt to stress the importance of the cultural level of reading, which would reveal the social context of the link between the two levels of meaning of a sign. This is a result of his emphasis on the text and the consequent disregard of the importance of the reader and his/her contexts.

Van Zyl on Semiotics

Van Zyl (1987) approaches Semiotics as a formal method of studying images. He discusses the topic in two separate sections of his book. The first time is as a part of the analysis of photography (Van Zyl, 1987, p12), where he mentions various semiotic terms and explains some of them cursorily. The lack of a clear explanation suggests that this should be revision of previous exposure to the method and/or terms. There is, however, neither an explanation of, nor an introduction to, semiotics present in Image Wise.

The second time that Van Zyl deals with semiotics, it is in the form of an explanation of the terms "icon", "index" and "symbol" (Van Zyl, 1987, p60-61). In this section he does not mention the term, "semiotics", but he does provide a context for the terms by first introducing the concept of representation in a language. Van Zyl then develops this to introduce - and explain - "icon", "index" and "symbol" as being examples of such representation in a visual language. The tone here is discursive, rather than referential - and the

explanations of each term are lucid and useful in a formal analysis of film.

Like Grové, Van Zyl's emphasis remains on the text, rather than considering the reader's interaction with the text as the starting point of a semiotic analysis.

Semiotics at the School Level

Grové argues more recently (May 1991) that semiotics is not necessary for 'film study' at school. I would argue that it can be a valuable approach to the analysis of visual media - being a method suited to, and necessary for, the analysis of media texts as social constructions.

Semiotics offers a means via which the techniques of the media that operate together to produce a message can be analysed and broken down. And, if the semiotic method that is applied in schools were to be reader-orientated (rather than being exclusively text-orientated) the pupils could work from within their own social contexts and their consequent understanding of a text would be more personally specific.

The pupils would also understand that various interpretations of one text are possible and be able to evaluate their version by comparing it to others. This would be a far more useful analytical experience than being unproblematically presented with one, 'correct' interpretation of a text.

Grové (May 1991) identifies one problem with semiotics at the school level - the use of the

formal semiotic terms "icon", "index" and "symbol". These, he argues, bear colloquial meanings that are removed from their strict semiotic interpretations. The term "Symbol", for example, semiotically refers to a conventional arbitrary sign with a culturally determined link between signifier and signified. Tomaselli (1980, p16-17), after Peirce, shows how a symbol operates at the level of relations and a habit of association. There is no motivated or existential connection to that to which it refers. The difference between an "index", which has an existential relation to that to which it refers; and a "symbol" is not easily understood by teachers or students.⁵ This is a result of the colloquial usage of the term "symbol" by TED teachers who conflate "index" with "symbol".

This problem, which is also found in the academic literature, is not resolved in the prescribed text by Van Zyl either. In fact, Van Zyl (1987, p60-1) is even more confusing as he tends to equate symbols with political films or films that are interested in ideas rather than the story.

From my experience of teaching 'film study, I agree with Grové that the use of these terms in a specifically semiotic sense does present a problem. However, this is not the only problem with semiotics in schools.

In the Transvaal, semiotics is not used as an overall method to specifically and comprehensively analyse the communication by a text, including specific consideration of the role of the reader. Rather, one aspect of the approach has been appropriated out of its fuller context and adopted as the way of analysing all levels of meaning of a

text. Individual viewer/reader's interpretations of a text are not considered.

In Real Images McMahon and Quin (1986, p60-64) seem to solve the problem of "symbol=index" in the manner in which they deal with the concept of Semiotics. They do not approach it as a formal topic. Rather, they introduce the main ideas of Semiotics as part of the conventions of film, without ever mentioning the term "semiotics". These main ideas constitute the "symbolic codes" that are one of the conventions of film. The absence of the underlying conceptual theory makes the ideas more accessible and therefore easier to deal with.

McMahon and Quin on Semiotics

The idea in Real Images (1986), is to build the notions of visual representation into all aspects of film studies (shots, camera movements etc.) without having to come to terms with the theories of Semiotics. The book also looks at how the different codes of film and television operate in actual visual texts. In this way, representation is not merely a concept, but is rooted firmly in the pupils' own experience. And the study thereof is structured so that the pupils work from experience out to the theoretical concepts. Thus, as they learn the semiotic terms and concepts, the pupils have examples from their own context to relate to. McMahon and Quin thus effectively consider the reader and his/her experience of a text in his/her context to be central to any analysis of media texts.

McMahon and Quin's presentation of semiotics (or

the analysis of symbolic codes) is more general and useful than either Grové's or Van Zyl's as they draw specific attention in this way to the role of the viewer/reader and his/her contexts:

A conscious comprehension of the largely invisible language of film and television is crucial to your understanding of yourself and your relationship to society" (McMahon and Quin, 1986, p61).

The Importance of Contexts

A text must not be separated from its contexts - of production and consumption, as these contexts influence the communication that occurs. All images have been constructed so that they have both a literal and a figurative meaning, which cannot be separated from each other. These meanings are first shaped by the context of production and then re-interpreted in the context of consumption. The figurative meaning of an image is most often dependant upon the culture for interpretation so the context of consumption is more important. It is, after all, in the active interaction with a text that a viewer/reader interprets the information they have been presented with and communication occurs.

The Value of Semiotics

Semiotics presents an opportunity to look more closely at the signs operating within the world and to unravel the levels of signification of a media text. A semiotic analysis can be either text-, or reader-orientated.

A text-orientated analysis presents a means via

which the ways in which sense is made of the world for us can be analysed. A more valuable analysis would concentrate on the reader and reveal how we make sense of the world. This analysis would be more realistic as an individual's experience of a text is primarily subjective and any subsequent analysis will be affected by the initial, personal understanding.

It is impossible for a researcher to stand outside of the process of analysis and to consider an act of communication objectively, as they themselves are part of the communication (Sless, 1986, p30-1). Further, semiotics assumes that the relationships between signifier and signified are often associative and rely on the acceptance of culture and convention. By rooting the semiotic method in the experience of the reader, the analysis is assuming the importance and effects of the social and cultural contexts of the reader.

Semiotics is an essential method of analysis of any media that use signification to communicate. However, it must be a semiotics that places the emphasis on the reader and not on the text.

In the following chapter, I shall consider the TED's approach to 'film study' in more detail.

END NOTES

1. Also see Fiske and Hartley, 1979; and Fiske, 1981, p45-6, p50-52.
2. Fitzgerald, 1966, p73; Tomaselli, 1980; Savan, 1977-88, p40-48.
3. See Tomaselli and Shepperson, 1991a, 1991b.
4. See Tomaselli, 1980, 1981, 1985; Van Zyl, 1977;

Pavis, 1981.

5. Grové's observation is confirmed by my personal experience.

Chapter Nine

EVALUATION OF THE TED ENGLISH SYLLABUS

This chapter contains an analysis and evaluation of the TED syllabus for English First Language that was implemented in 1986, with the introduction of "Visual Literacy". I refer specifically to the "Visual Literacy" section.

I have based this analysis and evaluation upon three main points about media studies that I have derived from my reading on the subject¹ and from participation in discussions and seminars conducted on the subject.

These three points are:

1. Media studies should take place in a more co-operative learning environment.
2. Media studies should be a critical study of the processes of all the media and not just 'film study'.
3. Media studies should take into account the contexts of production of media texts; and the contexts of consumption of those texts, where the pupils should be regarded as being active readers.

The TED syllabus for English First Language was divided into three sections: Standards Five to Seven - Ordinary Grade; Standards Eight to Ten - Higher Grade; and Standards Eight to Ten - Standard Grade. This critique will be confined to the Ordinary and Higher Grade syllabuses.

Assumptions Upon Which the Syllabus was Based

The syllabuses all began with a list of Assumptions for the teaching of English: (TED, 1986, p1-2)

"The underlying assumptions of this syllabus are

- 1.1.1 that language is an essential expression of the life of the pupil and that questions of value for the pupil's life are implicit in all language experiences.
- 1.1.2 that pupils cannot learn to use the receptive skills (listening and reading) or the expressive skills (talking and writing) in isolation.
- 1.1.3 that an integrated approach to language activities requires, in addition to the combination of language skills, the recognition of interrelations within the pupil's personal experience.
- 1.1.4 that languages reflect communities, cultures and nationalities which deserve full acknowledgement and respect.
- 1.1.5 that language is best explored and experienced in an atmosphere of free and open enquiry.
- 1.1.6 that all language activity should proceed from perceived and anticipated needs of pupils.
- 1.1.7 that it is through language that most learning takes place across the curriculum.
- 1.1.8 that responsibility for the development and extension of the pupil's ability in English First Language is not confined to the teacher of the language as a subject, but is the collective responsibility of all teachers teaching subjects through the medium of the language."

Despite the fact that the syllabus utilised generalised statements about the language, and the terms usually used to refer to the visual media ("film", "television", "screen material" and "visual literacy") were absent from the Assumptions and Aims, it was possible to read them as being relevant to 'film study'/visual literacy and thence

to evaluate the role that 'film study'/visual literacy was intended to fulfil within the syllabus. Most obviously, as "Visual Literacy" was part of the "Reading" section of the syllabus, it had to fit in where the reading skills did.

The Assumptions quoted above refer to the "questions of value implicit in all language experience" (TED, 1986, p1). The questions surrounding who determines what is 'valuable' were not addressed by the syllabus. The implications were, however, that this function was performed by the Department, fulfilling its rôle of moulding the receptive pupils.

The incorporation of a form of media studies into the syllabus allowed the TED a means by which 'discernment' and 'critical awareness' could be taught - and by which the pupils could learn how to assess situations according to learnt values and standards.

The text-bound study of the film medium in schools did not allow pupils to encounter the choices that are made in the production of media products - and so they did not truly encounter the "questions of value" behind media messages. In addition, pupils were not encouraged to engage in activities that could result in them becoming aware that their perception of values was being shaped by the system, syllabus content and teaching method.

An approach to the media that focused on the processes involved in the construction of texts would have allowed children to encounter - and begin to understand - the fact that the media do involve questions of value and judgement. Further,

if their analysis of texts had at least acknowledged - preferably begun with - the concept of the active reader, the pupils would have encountered the questions of value involved in the range of specifically individual interpretations that each active reader of a text will come up with.

The TED syllabus (1986) did state that pupils were to be encouraged not to just view films passively, but to speak and write about them too. However, in a school system that concentrated on written work and on teaching specific meanings, any pupil responses were most likely to be in the form of aesthetic evaluations of media products.

In the 'traditional', teacher-as-expert, transmission of knowledge style of teaching, pupils are not encouraged to experiment and to establish their own standards. They would therefore not be allowed to explore their own interpretations of texts. The pupils' aesthetic evaluations of film products would thus have had to employ learnt standards and not draw upon personal responses.

Although the critical evaluation of products is valid, it should not have been the only active response allowed/encouraged in pupils. They should have been allowed to experiment with different values and criteria of judgement in different contexts and to explore their own reactions to a text. The pupils should specifically have been allowed to respond personally to the media.

Assumption 1.1.3 emphasized the importance of a study of language rooted in the pupils' personal experience. Part of this experience is vicarious,

via the media - particularly television.² Thus the inclusion of the visual media into the syllabus could be said to have satisfied, to a certain degree, the demand for a language study that took into account the pupils' experience. However, this remains only a brief consideration of only a part of a child's real experience.³

Assumption 1.1.4 pointed to the study of foreign cultures and could be said to have been satisfied by the choice of setwork films such as Chariots of Fire and Witness. The depicted worlds of the films were removed from the pupils' own contexts and yet they dealt with issues not totally removed from their lives. Language should, however, also reflect the pupils' community and culture. The ways in which language, in the form of media products, operated within their societies should have been studied. Also, the ways in which the pupils - living in these contexts - interpreted these texts should have formed a basic part of the analysis, but was ignored by the syllabus.

It was possible, of course, that a personal, socially-orientated analysis would have prompted the pupils to ask questions about what the products were required to achieve - and how they functioned within the society - which would undoubtedly have led to questions being asked about the structures of the society itself. And so such a level of analysis was not present in the syllabus.

The idea in Assumption 1.1.5 that "an atmosphere of free and open enquiry" (1986,p2) should exist within Transvaal schools was out of context in the syllabus. The system of education itself was neither open, nor did it encourage open enquiry. In

such a system, "Visual Literacy" became text-orientated and very controlled via setwork material that dealt with foreign cultures and 'safe' issues. Such films could be discussed at a distance, without encouraging pupils to question their own society and to explore their own culture. The disregard of pupils as readers also achieved this.

The Assumptions upon which the syllabus was based indicated clearly that language teaching should have related to the pupils' "real" needs. This notion is problematic. As with the questions of who determines what is of value to pupils, questions must be asked about who identifies the pupils' needs. And have all the real needs of the pupils been identified? The strong possibility exists that institutions select 'needs', the satisfaction of which will serve their interests.

In societies in the Western world, one of the most important needs of a child of the "video age" has been the need to be educated in the media. Pungente (1985, p1) argues that:

"The mass media have a pervasive impact on the lives and attitudes of contemporary secondary school students. They are seen as a dominant force in creating an image of the world and of society. Stating this is, however, no substitute for finding ways to help prepare students to handle the world of media in a creative and discriminating manner. Media literacy is as vitally important in the schooling of young people as is the mastery of basic linguistic or mathematical skills".

The decision to introduce "Visual Literacy" into Transvaal secondary schools was a move to meet the need for a generation of pupils exposed to so many of the media for so much of the time to be educated in the media.

The pupils' need for instruction was supposed to be satisfied by the fostering of "critical awareness" in them in order for them to make reasoned choices when selecting material to view. Educators thus saw a need to foster sensitivity and selectivity in pupils, as film and television are said to present false values and states of happiness.

The text-orientated study of only one visual medium practised by the TED did not serve to meet the pupils' needs fully in terms of equipping them to understand how the media work; and their own interactions with the media. According to the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in Australia (in Pungente, 1985, p20):

"Very special attention must be given by parents and all educators to the right formation of the young in relation to those all-pervading media of communication".

It is not enough to merely study products, the need exists for a study of the media that acknowledge that:

"....film and television are systems of communication and that as such they interact with society - reinforcing values, developing new values, and helping to shape the society's understanding of itself and the larger world" (McMahon and Quin, 1986, p1)

This study of the media must look most specifically at the pupils' interactions with media texts.

Assumption 1.1.7 stated that most learning across the curriculum takes place through language. As an extension of this language, film has been used as a teaching aid in many subjects. The value of the screen as a learning medium has, in fact, been recognised by many schools who have utilised educational films, slides, videos etc. in a variety

of subjects for many years.

Film is a valuable educational tool, via which pupils are generally presented with a clear depiction and/or explanation of certain facts/events. They need to understand, though, that what they're watching is a version or an explanation. With film there is no 'only' or absolute truth. Pupils need to become familiar with how the medium of film works. Through this, they can understand how the depiction of events/facts they are shown has been constructed and begin to develop more informed opinions of the accuracy/relevance of the depiction; their interpretation thereof; and its relationships to them as individuals within a specific historical context.

I would argue that, in order for visual literacy skills to be applicable across the curriculum, there would have to be a change in the general approach to the subject. A literary-style study of film texts could perhaps be seen as appropriate for films studied as English setworks, but such a method would not help pupils in understanding Maths films. A more process-orientated approach acknowledging the role of the viewer is more generally valuable and applicable. This approach would aid learning via films across the curriculum through enabling pupils to become aware of - and to analyse - the various interpretations of events possible in film. If the pupils approach a film as a construction, not a reality, they would then be better able to analyse the depiction of the content, as well as their interpretation of that content. Knowledge of the contexts within which a film was produced, as well as an awareness of their own contexts, can further inform the pupils'

judgements about the content.

The Aims of the Syllabus

There was one general Aim in the English syllabus, followed by five explanatory aims for the teacher.

The general aim was:

"to help pupils to develop their potential as individuals and as members of society through developing their competence and performance in using language and through enriching their experience and enjoyment of language"
(TED, 1986, p2).

An important and interesting omission from this aim is any mention of the pupils engaging with, and interpreting parts of, the language. Although the use of language is mentioned, the emphasis remains firmly on the enjoyment of that language.

Although one of the explanatory aims in the syllabus was to

"promote the pupils' ability to use language as a means of communication essential to their intellectual, social and working lives" (TED, 1986, p3),.

the pupils were not given the opportunity to use film/video in order to express themselves and to develop a competence with that part of the language. When dealing with the visual aspects of English, the pupils responded to the film language, they did not use it.⁴

The value of the pupils learning about the language by using it was identified by the syllabus, the structure of which was such that the pupils used both their interpretative and expressive skills. They studied works of literature and poetry, which

are products, and they wrote and spoke themselves, thus actually working with the language. The study of the products should have aided their ability to use the language; and their use of the language should have informed their study of the product.

This suggests that pupils should, as far as is practical use film in order to learn more about it. Yet, the inclusion of any such experimentation in schools has been the result of the initiative of individual teachers only, not a Departmental requirement.

I would argue that, if the aim was for pupils to be able to communicate in order for their intellectual lives to develop, there should have been a change in the approach to the media. Pupils should have learnt how media products are constructed and explored how they were deconstructed by themselves, the audience. They could have then begun experimenting with simple versions of their own constructions and specifically analysing their peers' interpretations.

Through such an approach, the pupils could have begun to understand that reality was mediated for them via the media and that the meanings produced from a text are negotiated by individuals.

It's fairly easy to interpret a product, particularly using a prescriptive, 'top-down' (Criticos, 1988), text-bound approach. To truly understand a media text, however, one needs to study how the specific medium works, how the representation of a reality in a product has been constructed and how the readers go about interacting with that text.

The reference in the general aim to pupils developing their potential as "members of society" (TED, 1986, p2) implied that their education would take place within a specific, structured, social environment. This was belied by the actual practice of visual literacy studies where the pupils were not encouraged to explore either their own society through studying media products that reflected that context, or their own interactions with media texts.

Costas Criticos argues that the practice and content of media studies "should be indigenous to local context and interests" (1988,p5). However, an overwhelmingly high percentage of setwork material studied in Transvaal schools was inclined towards presenting an "out of South Africa" view.⁵

It may have been that there were not many South African films considered 'suitable' for study. Grové reports that, at the time of prescribing Chariots of Fire, this was indeed the case (May 1991). There may also have been a lack of shorter South African films that were more easily managed in the short class periods. Despite these limitations, there were some films that deal with fairly benign (non-political) issues, yet whose depicted world is South African - and are at least part of the pupils' physical experience. And then there was television - dramas and series that were rooted in a South African experience, as well as documentaries, news etc. - material which could have been used effectively in the classroom.

Individual teachers did look outside of the prescribed framework and used situation comedies, other feature films and advertisements for

analysis. However, there was a distinct 'flavour' of non-South African subject matter. It may have been argued that films such as Chariots of Fire and Witness deal with issues that are universal and therefore valid study material. However, the study of any such universal issues depicted in a foreign context and by events unfamiliar to the average South African child, was not a rooting study of the language in the pupils' experience.

Although there was no strict prescription by the TED of setwork material below the matric year, teachers did not tend to use South African orientated material - perhaps as setwork visual material linked to a South African context was not encouraged from the top.

As I have mentioned, there were five explanatory aims for the teacher. Three of these expressed noble notions of promoting the child's development, enhancing their dignity and ability to sustain confidence in themselves in order that they may understand themselves and live more fully (TED, 1986, p2). The study of the visual media could prove to be valuable in achieving such aims. Most teenagers are more familiar with viewing videos than they are with reading books, and may be said to be far more 'visually-', than 'print-literate'. It is, therefore often easier to encourage pupils to respond to visual material than to print.

The study of the visual media also provides a way to reach children who are visually orientated. Further, those pupils who are not as 'print-literate' as others, are often able to achieve in the study of visual texts and, thereby, are able to a certain extent to retain their dignity and to

sustain confidence in themselves.

The explanatory aim for teachers most pertinent to the TED's approach to teaching visual literacy was the fourth, which was to help the pupils

"to extend their ability to observe, to discriminate and to order their thoughts coherently" (1986, p3).

I argued in Chapter One that the TED approached films as works of literature, where certain 'better and acceptable' examples were specifically selected for analysis. The pupils were thus presumably taught how to discriminate between media products according to learnt standards. They should also, supposedly, have learnt to choose to view only those products of similar standards to those studied at school. In this way, the attempt was made to set value standards in schools that pupils would hopefully adhere to. This practice completely ignored the pupils as readers of texts - and therefore strove to negate the value of their individual interpretations.

The final explanatory aim contained the terms "observe" and "discriminate", which created an impression of the pupils being able to stand back from the products and make generalised comments about the overall impression - which is mainly carried by the content.

As I have argued previously - per Sless (1986) - it is not possible for anyone studying a text to stand back from that text and be objective. Pupils should rather be made aware of their role within the communication and their perspective on the films before they evaluate them. They should be aware that all interpretations are inherently subjective.

Although the terms "observe" and "discriminate" were not used in the explanation of the "Reading" section of the syllabus, the same impression was presented of the possibility of an objective evaluation of films. Here it was stated that work on visual material

"should always be aimed at encouraging pupils to develop a critical and discerning attitude to film and television" (1986,p19).

The type of discernment that the pupils were taught was in the making of choices of what to view - and in interpreting the content of that which they did view. The syllabus did not lead the pupils to question the relevance of what they were watching to their lives, or of their own understanding of those products. Setwork products were elevated only to be admired and perhaps critiqued. Thus, through "Visual Literacy" the syllabus was actually entrenching a prescriptive opinion of value.

I propose that a more useful and valuable skill would have been for the pupils to have learnt how to understand and interpret the processes of, and to evaluate their own responses to, the film products in which certain values were depicted. Their analysis would thus have been based upon a broader understanding of context; and would have been rooted in their personal responses.

One of the aims in the syllabus expressed the idea of encouraging the pupils to order their thoughts coherently. This could have been interpreted as a way of moving towards a more effective study of the media. If pupils did, in fact, begin to understand that the media have the ability to engender certain responses in an audience through their construction, they could have begun to understand how their thoughts could be ordered for them - by

discourses operating in the media and schools (Alvarado and Ferguson, 1983, p25). This could only have been effectively achieved if the pupils had been encouraged to explore their own interactions with media texts.

The "Reading" Section of the Syllabus

Although "Visual Literacy" was a sub-section of the "Reading" section of the syllabus, there was no mention of the inclusion of visual material in the introduction to, and aims of, this section. All the points that were made referred to reading skills and reading material only and not to viewing skills and visual material too.

The presence of "Visual Literacy" in the "Reading" section necessitated a broader understanding of the term "reading". To begin with, the interpretation of visual texts then had to form part of the practice of analysis, or reading. The syllabus did not stress the importance of pupils actively reading visual texts, it simplistically indicated the need to extend pupils in all aspects of reading (TED, 1986, p20).

Part of the "Subject Content" was a statement that the pupil should be introduced to visual literacy as an extension of the reading technique (TED, 1986, p31). This should have involved the reader analysing the ways in which s/he interacts with a text - characteristic of a truly active reading of a visual text.

Despite the absence of direct references to the study of visual material, the aims of the "Reading"

section contained the clearest indications of the role of visual literacy in the syllabus. The first two aims were for pupils to "develop good reading habits and a love of reading" (1986,p19) and "to develop discrimination in the choice of reading material" (1986,p19). The approach adopted to the visual media consequently paralleled that adopted towards written texts. And the overall aim was to teach pupils what was 'good'.

In the syllabus for Standards Eight to Ten there was a fairly clear statement of the proposed role of visual literacy. At first, teachers were encouraged to regard the visual media as being separate from other literary setwork material:

"Screened material should be studied in its own right...teachers would be wise not to treat screened material as being merely supplementary to literature" (1986,p19).

The outline went on to say, however, that study of visual media

"should always be aimed at encouraging pupils to develop a critical and discerning attitude towards film and television" (TED, 1986, p19).

This is effectively achieved through a method of analysis similar to that adopted with print networks.

The emphasis in the matriculation examinations was also useful in indicating the approach towards the visual media favoured by the TED. These examinations were the ultimate goal towards which the school system worked, and so the emphases therein guided teachers in how to teach the various sections of a subject. For example, there were two questions on the film Chariots of Fire in the 1989 examinations - one essay and one contextual. The essay question focused exclusively on the content

of the film:

"In CHARIOTS OF FIRE, Eric Liddell is depicted as a man of integrity who will not compromise his principles by running the 100 metres heat for the Olympic Games on a Sunday. Argue the case either for or against this decision not to race" (Literature paper, 1989, p11).

The only acknowledgement that the material was primarily visual was when the pupils were asked to refer to certain scenes. The contextual question did request some consideration of the filmic aspects of the source material, but the emphasis was still on the content. And also on the more traditional, literature-type elements of the film, such as theme and plot.

The third aim of the "Reading" section suggested the only relatively clear explanation for the inclusion of "Visual Literacy" into this section. According to this aim, teachers should have helped the pupils to become aware of the "range and power of language" (1986, p20) - and, of course, part of the range of English was its visual component. Thus an extended encounter with various examples of the visual media would have enabled pupils to become aware of a greater range of the language. Later in the section a statement that "reading and viewing are part of a continuum" (TED, 1986, p21) firmly linked the two processes together.

In the syllabus for Standards Eight to Ten, the idea was expressed in the aims for the pupils to develop their awareness and understanding of themselves, others and society. This could have been achieved effectively through the study of the visual media, particularly as "Movies tell us much about the society in which we live" (Pungente, 1985, p8). Television, too, reflects upon the world

around us. This is not a record of the real world, but a reflection of the concerns most prevalent in a society. These are reflected in programme content, programme selection and scheduling.

I would argue that pupils could only have become aware of such issues if they had been allowed/ encouraged to study the processes of the media and their role within a specific socio-political context. In addition, the pupils would have had to study the ways in which they themselves - living and studying within specific contexts - interacted with media texts.

A further aim indicated that the pupils should "develop an understanding and appreciation of their literary and cultural heritage" (TED, 1986, p18). Some South African books and plays were studied at secondary schools, but the absence of South African films/video programmes from amongst networks - and also from amongst material available from the TED - must be noted.

The first time that any visual media were mentioned in the syllabus as sources for study was in the list of "Reading Resources" for Standards Five to Seven. This list comprised five subheadings - "Print, Sound, Stage, Screen, Prose" - with explanatory examples. The subheading, "Screen", referred to television programmes, news, films, advertisements. Thus pupils should read visual material as well as printed matter.

No indication was given of the possibility of, or need for, studying the processes involved in the construction and interpretation of the 'recommended' visual material.

The "Subject Content"

The "Subject Content" of the syllabus indicated what was to be studied in each year, but was not very useful as a guide to the approach to the visual media.

Although Standard Five did not form part of the secondary school, it was relevant to consider the content of this section of the syllabus as (for the large part) the syllabus content for Standard Six and Seven read:

"The subject content listed for Standard(s) Five (and Six) must be repeated, revised, reinforced and extended, and the additional content given below should be dealt with" (TED jnr., 1986, p19).

The syllabus stated that the study of the visual media should be as an extension of the reading skills. The process of a child learning to read written texts was set out clearly as a developmental familiarisation with all the elements of texts - to result in the ability to read and comprehend a text, while encountering and decoding all those elements in the process.

This was a very atomistic approach to reading, which was often not strictly adhered to in the practical school situation. In Standards Five, Six and Seven, the pupils were expected to study, use (and presumably learn) the reading skills.⁶ In these, then, lay the basis of reading.

Some input was added in Standard Six and Seven, but the teacher was told not to ignore the basic skills in the senior years - and these were built onto as the child developed an ability to read. These skills could be divided into two broad categories -

one to do with the delivery of the reading and the other to do with recognising, using and understanding the components of the language when reading.⁷ Added to these skills in Standard Six were the teaching/application of the reading technique; and the encouraging and training of pupils to increase their reading speed without sacrificing comprehension.

There was no parallel account of how the process of learning to read visual texts should have been approached. There was also no indication given of the elements of film that paralleled those of written texts. Nor was the possibility mentioned that perhaps there could be no exact parallel between written and visual texts. The application of comprehension skills in reading both type of texts was perhaps the only possibly direct parallel.

A further parallel between reading print and visual material was the total absence of any mention of the central importance of individual readers' interpretations of texts.

Secondary school pupils learning reading were presumably supposed to be involved with extending all the basic skills taught to them in Standard Five - ie a pupil who was beginning the secondary phase of schooling had already learnt at least the basic skills of reading.

If the visual literacy skill was to be an extension of reading, there should surely have been a greater stress on the basics of visual literacy in Standard Five than the statement of "Very elementary filmic techniques may be analysed" (TED, 1986, p32).

Indeed, I found it to be a weakness of the "Visual Literacy" section that there was no clear developmental structure of the Subject Content which would have ensured that a Standard Five pupil was truly conversant with the basics, which could then have been developed upon in the secondary school. These 'basics' need not have been the basic elements that make up a film. Pupils could have been taught the first steps in considering films as constructions, or begun to look very simply at how they responded to a text.

The syllabus required that junior readers, being able to communicate effectively when reading, and to make sense of unusual or unseen passages, should have learnt in secondary school to read for the express purpose of understanding fully. They were no longer reading to master/practise the skills, but were actively involved in what they read - and in a dialogue with others through it.

The pupils should have been encouraged to apply similar skills when viewing texts, but were never encouraged to become so actively involved with visual texts.

In Standard Six and Seven pupils were taught a specific application of the skills already mastered - not how to read, but how to use these methods to learn from reading. They developed from working on individual skills to using the skills together for an extended purpose, which was clearly a developmentally-structured process. The approach to the visual media was perhaps not able to follow an identical structure, but it should have been more carefully structured for maximum educational benefit.

The "Visual Literacy" Section

The "Visual Literacy" subsection of the English syllabus (TED, 1986) began with the statement: "Pupils should be introduced to visual literacy as an extension of reading techniques" (TED, 1986, p31). This was followed by a statement that "the skills listed for reading are applicable to the study of visual material" (TED, 1986, p31). The syllabus did not point out the different natures of print and visual material. One had merely to assume that the skills to do with the delivery of reading were not applicable there,⁸ but that the skills to do with recognising, using and understanding the language were relevant.

The reading skills listed by the syllabus in this context were concerned with understanding and using the technical aspects of the actual language. I would argue that the direct transposition of these skills onto reading a visual text would have been impossible. It was thus necessary to devise parallel skills that were concerned with mastering the technical aspects of the visual medium. There was no statement made of the need of this, however. Nor was any detailed account given of which aspects of the visual medium needed to be covered. The statement that "very elementary filmic techniques may be analysed in Standard Five" (TED, 1986, p32), was not useful due to its vagueness.

In the Standard Seven syllabus "flashback" and "panning" were listed as being necessary for visual literacy studies. This was a sudden inclusion of two specific aspects of film. Without having clearly understood shots, camera movements and continuity, the pupils would not be able to deal

with these two aspects of the visual medium. The "subject content" required a clear structure.

The setting out of the syllabus in the manner I have described could, in part, have accounted for the methodology of "Visual Literacy" studies that emerged. Faced with a syllabus that equated the analysis of film texts with the straightforward reading of written texts, teachers were apt to draw a parallel between how one goes about teaching written and visual texts.

The syllabus listed the visual material to be studied:

"pictures, cartoons, advertisements incorporating pictures, tape-slide programmes, film, television" (TED, 1986, p31)

and "At least one film or short film" (TED, 1986, p32). This offered a broad choice from various visual media, which could have enabled the teacher to really develop the visual literacy studies. According to the syllabus, the focus of this study had to be for the pupils "to develop a critical and discerning attitude". (TED, 1986, p32). The point was, once again, to encourage children to choose their viewing material 'sensibly', rather than allowing them to interact with the visual media - and to learn how they work.

In the syllabuses for Standard Eight to Ten, a lot of the work on reading was set out under the Standard Eight column and the relevant areas of the Standard Nine and Ten syllabuses read:

"The Subject Content list for Standard Eight (and Nine) must be reinforced and extended" (TED, 1986, p32).

For the first part of the subject content list, though, the requirements for each standard were

clearly set out. These included the recommendations for the literature networks to be studied. In this, there was an immediate contrast to the junior syllabus, in which the reading material was very open - being a wide variety of material, a wide selection of poetry and six-to-nine books to be read and considered in class.

In Standard Eight, the prescribed content started with an introductory note. It said that the emphasis in the "Reading" section of English, was moving from "learning to read to reading to learn" (TED, 1986, p20), but that teachers should always be aware of the reading skills and techniques "outlined in the syllabus for Standards Five to Seven" (TED, 1986, p20).

The requirement for Standard Eight was that the pupils should be encouraged to read extensively - mostly at home so that class time could be used for discussion and analysis. These principles could easily have been applied to the visual media, with pupils becoming involved in really worthwhile discussions about their reactions to the vast amount of visual media of their own choice that they did view.

From all appearances there were no developments in the syllabus from Standard Eight to Nine. However, developmental inferences could be drawn. Because those reading skills were "to be remembered" in Standard Eight and accepted in Standard Nine, one could assume that the reading and study of literature (and also, presumably, films) in Standard Nine should look beyond the form to concentrate more specifically on meanings. Also, simply because the pupils would be a year older and

have a year's experience, they should be considered as being able to analyse and understand all types of literature more fully.

The majority of pupils watch far more television than they read books. They are easily able to understand what they watch, even if only on the superficial level of following the plot. To this extent, children are 'visually-literate'. It is not necessary, therefore, to emphasize the understanding of plot in visual literacy studies at school.

It should have been the task of visual literacy studies to undertake an analysis of media texts that looked beyond the level of plot. This analysis should have studied the connotative meanings of texts and the way in which they had been constructed. It should also have explored the interpretations of texts negotiated by the pupils as they interacted with the texts.

However, such an approach would undoubtedly have been viewed as threatening to an education system that wished to avoid empowering pupils so they could not question events as they were habitually presented to them - by either the media, or the school.

Although the syllabus stated that "screened material should be studied in its own right" (TED, 1986, p19) - setting apart visual literacy studies from other reading activities - it was possible for the skills outlined by the syllabus to be applied equally in the reading of written texts and in the analysis of visual texts. If this had been done, visual literacy would have been a true

extension of the reading skills.

Conclusions

Although careful interpretation of the syllabus as it was written could work a visual literacy study in at various levels, no attempt was made to truly integrate the visual aspect of the language into the syllabus. It was apparent from the syllabus that the section of "Visual Literacy" had been added on to the end. As a result, it was merely structured as parallel to the existing syllabus content, instead of having been specifically structured to meet the needs of a useful study of the media.

The ultimate aim of education should perhaps be to rethink and restructure the entire curriculum, as argued by Alvarado and Ferguson (1983). Any restructuring could have its roots in media studies. This is an option that would take a long time to accomplish.

I would argue that, without attempting to achieve this greater aim, it would still have been possible to make some changes in the "Visual Literacy" section of the TED syllabus that could have resulted in a more useful study of the media.

This section should have been re-evaluated and restructured more developmentally. And the study of the visual media should have taken into account the contexts of production and reception. A more co-operative teaching method could also have been suggested. In addition, the visual media should have been approached as examples of constructed

media texts, not as extensions of the written genre. And the active process of reading these texts should have been studied more specifically. Having thus analysed the syllabus, in the next chapter I report upon the practice of teaching 'film study' in Transvaal secondary schools.

END NOTES

1. Particularly with reference to the contents of Chapter Four and Five of this thesis.
2. As Masterman (1980) and Grovè (1981) have argued.
3. The question of the role of the learners' experience is far more complex than I have suggested in my discussion of this Assumption. I have, already covered this point in much more depth in Chapter Four.
4. As I have mentioned previously, one of the reasons for the continued absence of active production by pupils is a practical one.
5. Recommended and available films included: The Lady or the Tiger, The Rocking Horse Winner, The Red Kite, Big Henry and the Polka Dot Kid amongst others.
6. Understanding how words work, the meaning and use of punctuation marks, understanding words in context.
7. The skills that fell into the first category were: punctuation marks, speech skills, paralinguistic or supplementary skills, mechanical skills. The skills that fell into the second category were word attack skills, punctuation, context, sentence reading skills.
8. This too because - as I have already argued - pupil production of visual material is not always practical.

Chapter Ten

THE STATE OF 'FILM STUDY' IN THE TRANSVAAL, 1977-1990

I have argued that the TED placed the emphasis upon the more traditional "literary" aspects of films, which were studied for their aesthetic qualities in an essentially text-bound approach. The syllabus and study guides did contain indications that the technical aspects of film should be studied, but only as adjuncts to the content. However, in the practical method of 'film study', teachers did not necessarily adhere to the 'official' approach.

This is one of the areas in which the intention of visual literacy studies as proposed by the syllabus; and the actual practical teaching of "Visual Literacy" in Transvaal Secondary schools differed. Other discrepancies occurred in the method of teaching setwork films - a number of English teachers in Transvaal secondary schools were already attempting to teach film in a more co-operative environment.¹

There was generally a degree of ambiguity in the ways in which "Visual Literacy" was approached in the practical teaching situation. A number of schools taught screen material as a separate discipline. Because they were concerned that the media tended to manipulate the viewers, the teachers utilised an essentially process-orientated approach. However, none of the schools studied the questions of selection and ownership underscoring the way in which a text had been constructed. Other

schools adopted the product-orientated methods suggested by the syllabus. Whichever dominant approach they favoured, most schools taught the basic elements of the film medium.

These general observations are part of the results of a programme of research conducted in Transvaal secondary schools on the subject of visual literacy.

This research was conducted during the period January 11th to April 3rd 1990 at English medium secondary schools in the Transvaal. The subject hereof was "'Film Study' in English Medium Secondary Schools in the Transvaal".²

Film Study' at Respondant Schools in 1990

All of the schools involved in the research programme offered 'film study' or "Visual Literacy" in 1990. Eighty-three percent of these schools offered the subject from Standard Six to Ten. Most of the remaining seventeen percent offered it in the senior standards only. One school offered "film appreciation" in Standards Six and Seven and 'film study' in Standards Eight to Ten.

The school only offered film from Standards Six to Ten, as the headmaster deemed Witness (the 1990 metric network film) to be inappropriate due to the violence present in the film. One school did not officially offer 'film study', as their equipment had been stolen. The matric pupils in that school did for their 'film study' themselves. Of all the schools that studied the film in matric, only one specified that the pupils were doing the film and

the play option (A Man for all Seasons).

Reasons for Introducing 'Film Study'

The dominant reason for any school having begun to study film was that the TED had already introduced, or were going to introduce, "Visual Literacy" into the syllabus.³ The new syllabuses for English first language, which included "Visual Literacy" as a subsection, were first implemented in Standard Eight in 1986 (in preparation for the first matric network film in 1988). Fifty percent of the schools began teaching visual literacy between 1984 and 1986. Seventy percent of those schools gave, as one major reason for introducing "visual literacy" into their curricula, the fact that film was to become part of the matric syllabus. Forty percent of schools that introduced 'film study'/"visual literacy" after 1986 gave this as a reason too. Thus, the major reason that schools began to do "visual literacy" studies was the forthcoming introduction of a network film in matric, as well as "visual literacy" in other standards.

There were other reasons given in addition to the syllabus requirement that were common to many of the schools. None of these included any reference to the need for children to undertake an in-depth analysis of how the media work in their society. They were all confined to considering the achievement and appeal of film products. This indicated that teachers, thrust immediately and inadequately prepared, into teaching a new discipline, simply adhered to whatever approach and guidelines were offered to them. They did not explore the options and alternative approaches

themselves.

As a result, not one of the schools had referred to the curricula of any overseas institutions in order to establish a scheme of work for 'film study'. This is also due to the fact that media education theorists such as Masterman, Buckingham, Alvarado and Ferguson were (and generally still are) unknown to South African teachers.

The indications were that the teachers' only sources for reference were the TED's guidelines and recommendations from university training courses. These institutions were generally involved with rearranging and re-presenting knowledge that had been greatly developed by theorists working overseas.⁴

The second most dominant reason given by schools for beginning 'film study' was the need to teach pupils to be discerning in their viewing - as they were exposed to so much film and television in their everyday lives. One response indicated that the TED had initiated the "visual literacy" studies because of the "visual onslaught" that pupils are subjected to. The emphasis in all the reasons given was on accepting that children were media-orientated and there was a need to shape and train the way they interpret those media (particularly television).⁵

A third reason given for teaching film was the appeal of the visual media. The first appeal was that film was enjoyable and interesting - for teachers and pupils. It was also observed that film was an exciting new medium to study. Then there was the comment that "visual literacy" and 'film study'

were challenging to the teacher. According to one particular school, they allowed the English teacher to extend his/her repertoire. Another appeal of film and television was evident in the many references made to the manner in which pupils responded to the study thereof.

Various schools noted that pupils responded well to, and found it easy to write/talk about, film and television. It was also noted that weaker pupils found it easier to respond to the visual media and this boosted these pupils.

There were few objections given against teaching visual literacy. One objection was that the teachers felt insecure with the new section of the syllabus. A second school noted that the Head of Department felt out of her depth. In contrast to this, two other schools noted that teaching visual literacy offered teachers the opportunity to implement new knowledge learned at various training courses offered through universities and by the TED. Not one school objected to the manner in which 'film study' was being approached by the TED.

Two schools suggested that teaching "visual literacy" provided the opportunity to prepare the pupils for future trends in teaching. As the structure of education in South Africa changes, television could be used as a means of reaching a massive schoolgoing audience. Visual literacy studies could then realise a more valuable role in education in South Africa as children who know how to deal with the visual media would be at an advantage when taught via the media, as they interpret all the levels of meaning of what is communicated. Visual literacy studies could also

help to prepare the teachers to cope with these future educational trends.

A small percentage of schools indicated that visual literacy studies would help pupils to become aware of career opportunities in the field. This could perhaps be considered as part of education's aim to prepare a child for life. As an extension of this, one school indicated that 'film study' emphasized the importance of languages beyond school.

Out of the responses gathered, only two schools gave as the reason for introducing 'film study' that 'film study' and "Visual Literacy" appear to be natural extensions of advertising - which had been a part of the English syllabus for a long time.

Some schools introduced 'film study' in order to study comparisons between film and written forms of literature in matric. Four schools approached the question of film as an additional form of literature. One school actually began with traditional literary analyses of films; and this led naturally to the study of Chariots of Fire in matric. A second school indicated that visual literacy allowed pupils to understand the differences between film as literature and film as art. This was developed by a third school that used film to move away from the idea of elitist literature to a literature for all. This was validated by another school's report that there was resistance to reading amongst the pupils and so the school turned to teaching discernment in the visual media with which the pupils were so familiar. The final 'literature-related' reason for introducing visual literacy was that 'film study'

offered a perfect foil for traditional literature studies.

The Allocation of 'Film Study' into School Years

The ways in which 'film study' was allocated into the years at secondary schools indicated that most schools aimed to introduce the new 'subject' into the lower standards and allow the pupils to develop their abilities of analysis through the years to matric. The majority of respondent schools began the "Visual Literacy" study in Standard Six and continued through to Standard Ten. This developmental approach to allocating 'film study' was not accompanied by a structured, developmental analysis of all the stages of constructing a film text.

The practice of 'film study' in the matric year was particularly important to consider in the research as this would be the culmination of all 'film study' experience in the lower school years. Only twenty percent of the schools did not offer 'film study' in matric during 1988. A few schools gave no reasons for this. Others, however, provided an explanation - one school had a lack of facilities; another was a new school and had no matric pupils at the time; and a third stated the Head of Department's lack of confidence as the reason.

Those schools that did choose to study film in matric in 1988 gave various reasons for this choice. Twenty percent of the schools stated outright that the film (Chariots of Fire) was a better option than the short stories (To Kill a Man's Pride). Twenty-nine percent studied the film

because it was a setwork. No clear indication was given as to whether those schools taught both options or only the film. Twenty-three percent restated the common reason for teaching "visual literacy" at any level - that pupils are exposed to so much film and television in today's society that they need to be taught discrimination.

One school viewed the studying of a film in matric as a way of validating "Visual Literacy" taught in the other standards. Another school indicated that pupils were familiar with the visual media and would therefore find the film easier to comprehend than the short stories. In contrast, however, another school suggested that pupils would cope with the short stories on their own, but they would need guidance with the new genre.

Twenty-nine percent of the schools recounted again the appeal of film as the reason for studying film. This appeal involved the enjoyment for teachers and pupils; the challenge to teachers; and the general interest aroused by film. Only a few schools indicated the specific appeal of Chariots of Fire as a setwork film, and two of these schools pointed out the relevance and appeal of the film to boys.

Questions have been raised in workshop and private situations about the choice of Chariots of Fire as a setwork film. Pupils found the film boring and so its validity as a school setwork has been questioned. The availability of so much material more appealing to children has also been noted. In addition, the historical period of Chariots of Fire has been regarded as being far removed from the pupils' experience. Not one of the schools mentioned any similar issues in response to this

programme of research.

'Film Study' in the Existing Curriculum

As 'film study'/"Visual Literacy" formed part of the syllabus of the subject, English, I requested that the schools indicate how they had integrated "Visual Literacy" into this syllabus. All responses essentially adhered to the dominant, product-orientated approach to film. The majority of respondents interpreted this question as requesting the methods used to study film. Not many looked at the actual integration of the two disciplines. Those schools that did integrate 'film study' into the study of English used film as a source for oral work, or original writing. A film was also used as a setwork, as per the matric syllabus; and some schools studied the films of set books or stories. Various schools reported that there was an overlap with the study of film/s and the established study of advertising in the English syllabus.

Where a setwork film was not studied, film was used to introduce/illustrate concepts in English - such as the study of themes in film. Specifically, one school used writing exercises based on the themes in films; while another selected films where the theme/s could be linked to the theme/s of the written setworks. Short films were studied at one school parallel to the study of short stories; while another school used films and short stories for cross-media comparative study. Films were also described as being useful in theme teaching.

The "rub-off" effect of 'film study' on other subjects in the curriculum appeared to have been

minimal. The majority of schools indicated the "rub-off" effect of 'film study' within English - and not within the overall school curriculum. Two schools indicated the fact that the study of films had enabled pupils to develop their ideas of bias and propaganda.⁶ A third school indicated that the study of film had reinforced the ideas of connotation and denotation, genre, style, tone, characterization and intention.

Two schools indicated the value of 'film study' with regard to History - pupils developed a greater historical perspective through film; and some pupils occasionally produced their own videos for history.⁷

The development of skills applicable in media user guidance were also noted - as well as a developed awareness of the effect of body language in, say, History; and of Close-ups in Biology. One respondent school also indicated the observable development of the pupils' ability to discuss the various techniques of film in many subjects.

Elements of Film Studied

In the research, I attempted to establish what elements of film were studied at the respondent schools. Although all schools analysed the elements of film, this was generally considered to be a convenient way of breaking up a product, and not extended into looking at films as constructions. I suggested five areas of film that could be studied at school: the language of film, the history of film, visual representation, genre, and auteur directors.

The first element, the Language of Film referred to the terminology necessary to talk about film - involving terms such as "shot", "panning" and "cut". One hundred percent of the schools studied this element, though only one third did so in all standards. In the remaining schools, the language of film was generally studied in the senior standards. The schools all agreed that it was necessary for pupils to be familiar with this terminology to be able to talk about film.

Only fifty-percent of the respondents included the study of the History of Film. And none of these tied film history to the broader historical, social and cultural contexts of either the time of production, or of the depicted period. The majority of reasons for the inclusion of this section were to contextualise 'film study', or to supply background information to the study of the visual media. One school indicated that it would lead to the appreciation of film as an art form.

Eighty-five percent of the schools included the study of Visual Representation, including the concepts of "Icon", "Index" and "Symbol".⁸ Two schools offered this section from Standard Six to Ten, but the majority did so in the senior standards. Most schools gave as the reason for this study that this knowledge is necessary to the study of film. Two schools referred to the TED recommendations. Only one school mentioned the insight into levels of meaning that this particular study offers.

No school took the study of visual representation

beyond the level of just a deeper analysis of images - ie. to consider the ideological implications of the meanings produced by and/or uncovered in analysis.

The concept of Genre was studied by Eighty-Five percent of the schools, once again mostly in the senior standards. Few schools referred to the necessity of including this section, or to the TED requirements. It was indicated that the study of genres of film linked successfully to the study of genre in literature and that this was important as television was so dominant in the lives of pupils.

The concept of Auteur Directors was approached by only forty percent of the schools - particularly in connection with the 1990 setwork film, Witness and director Peter Weir.

When schools were requested to add to my list of film elements, most indicated that they had become involved in a more in-depth study of the process of film production (how films work). This included the study of the scripting process and film techniques - including camera shots and movements, sound, effects, editing, lighting etc. Schools also included the study of characterisation; the differences between film and television; and how a film may operate as a text.

The reasons given for the choice to study these aspects were that it was necessary to study all aspects of film; they explored the links that film has to literature; and they would enable the pupils to understand how film manipulates reality.

And so teachers practising 'film study' in schools were beginning to move beyond the strictures of the

syllabus and look at film for reasons other than its aesthetic appeal.

The Elements of Film Language

In this regard, all schools studied the "meta-language"/jargon necessary to talk knowledgeably about film.

Most of the schools included the study of shot types, camera movements and camera angles in Standard Six, as well as the basic principles of lighting and sound. One school began the study of plot and theme at this level. To have begun the study of film in Standard Six with these basic principles was in keeping with the claim made by the respondents that one required the resultant vocabulary in order to talk about film.

The elements of film language offered in Standard Seven at most of the schools was a development upon, or revision of, Standard Six work. This included looking at sound and lighting; how shots are put together (editing); effects shots; the effect of different lenses; the creation of atmosphere; and genre. These and similar elements were studied, and/or developed, in Standard Eight at many of the schools.

All concepts taught in junior standards belonged to the "meta-language" necessary to talk about film. Only one school mentioned the study of "Icon", "Index" and "Symbol" at the Standard Eight level. Two other schools did indicate that they had studied symbolism at this level, while a fourth school had included a study of connotations of

shots. There was an indication that these studies were confined to a more traditional literary meaning, with the emphasis on the symbolism in context of the content.

At the Standard Nine level, however, 'film study' moved into considering intention, attitudes and the effects of the various elements. One school indicated that the Standard Nine year was the time of consolidation of all aspects studied in the lower standards. Only one school indicated that it was at this level that representation ("Icon", "Index", "Symbol") was studied. This consolidation of the elements of film became linked with the study of a network film in Standard Ten at most of the schools. No school indicated that they studied questions of ownership and selectivity connected to their study of the elements of film.

Visual Material Studied by Schools

The selection of network visual material in Matric and junior years was informative of the issues with which teachers were concerned. Eighty-five percent of the schools studied Chariots of Fire, the TED network film. One school studied The Violin in addition in the matric year; and another school studied When the Wind Blows in connection with the book of the film. Fifty-percent of the schools did not study any additional network material in Standard Ten.

Two of the remaining schools used the television series Minding Media in the matric year. One school viewed a made-for-television series on the history of film, while two utilised two separate short

films on filmic terms and visual literacy. A final school studied the film of the matric Shakespeare network, A Winter's Tale. The inclusion of this additional network material was motivated by the need to present the language and techniques of film in actual visual terms; and to provide background to the study of film. All other network material was described as being available examples of 'good' short and long films.

Alterations to 'Film Study' Courses After 1988

The majority of participating schools indicated that there had been some change in the structure of their 'film study' after 1988. Four of the schools had allowed the study of film to develop into the matric year, while one school moved from only teaching film in Standard Nine and Ten to include the junior standards. One school generally broadened the existing 'film study' to "comply with syllabus requirements", but did not explain what this entailed. Another school introduced new ideas, such as studying still photographs.

At one school, the teachers streamlined the study of visual literacy by concentrating on 'film study'. One school chose to concentrate upon the basics of film in the junior standards, and to move away from studying one network film per standard; while another school introduced a network film in each of the senior standards (Std 8-10). The importance of the film component in the exam influenced one school to "study film as film".⁹

The reasons given for these alterations were that, as the teachers themselves became more confident in

film, they could develop and broaden their 'film study' courses. Also, experience led to reassessment and development of existing courses. One school indicated that it was necessary to establish the study of film more firmly in the lower standards in order to thoroughly prepare the pupils for the matric examination. And another school indicated that any developments in their courses were made in order to comply with syllabus requirements.

The majority of schools broadened their 'film study' by increasing the amount of material studied. Also, the depth in which each film was studied was increased. One of the motivations for this was the development of knowledge and confidence in both teachers and pupils. In addition to this, as pupils became aware of the power of the visual media that they are so exposed to, they became more capable of dealing with them. One of the major developments was the study of additional visual material prior to the analysis of a single film.

Aims and Objectives of 'Film Study'

There were common aims for 'film study' that emerged from the participating schools, which I have correlated and listed below:

1. To enable the pupils to interpret the bombardment of the visual media and to alert them to the manipulative powers of these media. Thus to prevent the manipulation of the pupils by the media and to enable pupils to avoid falling prey to propaganda.

2. To foster critical attitudes towards visual media in pupils in order for them to view selectively and to cultivate critical faculties. To develop "critical awareness" in the pupils.¹⁰
3. To make pupils more aware of the visual media and to develop their ability to express themselves knowledgeably and to discuss the media intelligently. To encourage the pupils to become visually literate.
4. To increase the pupils' awareness of film as a meaningful and valuable art form and to heighten their enjoyment through awareness.
5. To reach the visually-orientated child.
6. To prepare the pupils for the matriculation examination.

None of the schools indicated that these aims and objectives had been altered after 1988, with the exception of three schools who mentioned that a greater effort was now being made on their part to achieve their aims - assisted by experience in the field.

Training of 'Film Study' Teachers

All the schools indicated that at least some of their staff had received some sort of training in film. Only two schools had teachers who had read for a university degree that included the study of film. Teachers at one school had studied a postgraduate diploma. The majority of teachers of film, however, were either self-taught through the study of relevant books, or had been 'trained' through participation at various one-day seminars and/or lectures offered by the TED or universities.

One school called for the introduction of a structured 'film study' syllabus to serve as a guideline for teachers.

As I mentioned in Chapter Four, the lack of training that 'film study' teachers had received was a problem that had not been identified, and therefore not addressed, by the TED.

Conclusions Arising From Research

Considering the results of this research programme, it would appear that the overall approach to "Visual Literacy" in Transvaal secondary schools was to integrate it into the overall study of English. This was undoubtedly due to the text-bound approach to film utilised by the TED. However, as the responses to my research revealed, there were a number of teachers who had begun to realise the limitations of this type of approach. Many of these teachers had at least begun to teach about the processes of film, even if they had not specifically considered films as constructions.

If the syllabus had focused more specifically on the processes of the visual media and how they worked - thus emphasizing them as constructions of various realities - teachers might have begun to remove screen material from the rest of English and study it as a separate entity. "Visual Literacy" could have thus been developed as part of, but not subordinate to, the subject English.

Although the overall focus of visual literacy studies was on teaching the film-product, a number of individual teachers did teach the elements of

the medium - moving towards a more process-orientated study. They did not develop this, but it was a valuable step towards a more useful media studies syllabus.

A more process-orientated study of the visual media would have pointed the children more carefully towards how films and television work, and therefore have enabled them to view visual texts as versions of reality, not as being real. The importance of this sort of analysis has been identified by teachers, but not emphasized strongly enough to have an impact.

The overall most common aim of teaching "Visual Literacy"/'film study' supplied by teachers themselves was to enable children to be able to deal with the media through becoming aware of manipulation by the media. This indicated that teachers were themselves still victims of the view of the media as manipulating the 'innocent' viewers. Issues of discourse and preferential readings of texts had not been encountered by teachers.

A potentially valuable result of English teachers in the Transvaal being concerned with the manipulative powers of the visual media was that some had begun to teach the elements and processes of producing screen material. This indicated an unformulated awareness amongst teachers that a product-orientated study of individual film texts was not an adequate analysis.

I argue that it is not enough to simply aim at developing specific, predetermined responses to media texts in pupils - particularly when these

responses masquerade as true discrimination and critical awareness. Children should be allowed to discover how the media function to order their thoughts and their world. They need, too, to explore their interactions with the media and study how these affect the ways in which they make sense of the world.

Children should not be led simply to develop a guided appreciation of individual examples of film texts. They need to discover how the media work.

END NOTES

1. Information gathered as part of research for this thesis, as well as personal experience have revealed this to be true.
2. Full details of this research programme are contained in the Appendix to this thesis.
3. The reasons for the TED having taken such a step have been discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation. The major reason was that, because pupils are so exposed to, and familiar with, the media they need to be taught to view with discrimination.
4. See my discussion in Chapter Four of this thesis.
5. It is important to note that all the schools, and the TED, are not concerned with media studies, but with the study of the visual media.
6. Neither of the schools elaborated upon this phenomenon. It is interesting to consider the implications of the statement, however. In order to look at notions of bias and propaganda in films, the pupils would have had to study how the films had been constructed - and for what purpose. The teachers at these schools must therefore have moved away from only studying the products to encouraging the pupils to look at the processes of construction that go into films.
7. Whether or not these pupils experimented with presenting facts from different perspectives was not indicated.
7. As I noted in Chapter Eight, this does form a

part of the TED syllabus requirements for "Visual Literacy" study.

9. What exactly the school meant by this approach was not explained.
10. None of the schools elaborated on what they exactly meant by "critical awareness". The meanings associated with the word "critical" can be problematical. The danger exists here that teachers regarded the development of an awareness that would "innoculate" against the influences of the media as being "critical". As I have discussed previously, Grovè assumes "critical" to have such implications, while Masterman and Alvarado understand the term to have a different meaning. This problem also prompts questions to be asked about who determines what is 'good' and 'bad' - judgements on which a "critical awareness" would be based.

Conclusion

'FILM STUDY' IN TRANSVAAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The recognition of the need for pupils to study the media resulted in some form of media studies being introduced into the curricula of English-medium secondary schools in the Transvaal. I have argued, however, that there are many problems associated with the manner in which pupils in TED schools have engaged with a limited 'film study'.

These problems are similar to issues that have been, and still are being, debated by media studies theorists in other countries. Specifically, they are similar to the basic issues of the ongoing British debate that I discussed in Chapter Four. These similarities serve to highlight - again - the necessity for the theoretical and conceptual framework of media studies to be confronted and discussed in the South African situation. At the least, media studies practitioners and theorists in South Africa should take more careful note of the debates in other countries - and particular note of the way/s in which these debates can and have been used to effect useful and necessary changes in educational curricula.

The first of the problems in the Transvaal is that the insistence on 'film study' was very limiting. It meant that the pupils were not studying all the media and thus excluded a consideration of the ways in which all the mass media relate to each other.

One of the most important things that the media

have in common is that they are not unproblematical reflections of reality and need to be actively read. Media texts are constructed and reality is mediated through the careful - and generally motivated - use of the techniques of the media. The texts are actually representations of versions of reality and must be specifically read in order to be understood fully. The intention and contexts of production of texts should be considered too.

The second problem with 'film study' is that the approach to teaching film adopted by the TED, in concentrating on teaching the pupils to appreciate 'good' films and to be 'discriminating' in their viewing habits, did not teach them to analyse their individual interpretations of a text. Rather, they learnt to evaluate texts according to learnt standards.

This prescription was generally easily achieved via the use of the 'traditional', teacher-as-expert pedagogical approach. In TED schools, pupils were not allowed to take any form of active role in their own learning process. The effect of 'traditional' teaching meant that they could easily be taught specific knowledge. The teacher retained control over what films the pupils studied, as well as what criteria of evaluation they brought to bear on those texts. This insistence on the 'traditional' pedagogy was another problem with 'film study'.

There are strong arguments for a move away from the 'traditional' hierarchical education structure when the media are the subjects of study. Despite Alvarado's (1981) preoccupation with direct teaching methods, the majority of theorists on

media studies agree that this subject needs to be taught in a co-operative learning environment. The teacher should not teach set interpretations of texts, but must rather facilitate the learning process so that pupils have the opportunity to explore their own interactions with, and responses to, media texts. And to learn to evaluate these personal interpretations and the texts themselves in a truly critical manner.

Due to the fact that members of an audience are actively involved with media texts, as well as the fact that the pupils are often more familiar with the media than their teachers, media studies necessitates such changes in pedagogy. A more productive learning experience would exist if the teacher became a learner too, involved in a dialogue with the pupils.

In the Transvaal, the 'traditional' structure of teaching situations was not only prevalent in the classroom, but also characterised the 'training' that 'film study' teachers received. They were not trained to teach any of the media specifically and were also not taught in a co-operative learning environment.

The 'training' that the teachers received was mostly from one-day workshops and lecture presentations, where they were taught to approach the media in the way in which the TED preferred. Then, having no other experience, they went into the schools and taught the pupils according to the same approach.

Although the teaching situation in secondary schools in the Transvaal was formal, it would have

been possible to apply some of the principles of a non-formal style of education in the 'film study' classroom. This would, however, have been dependant upon individual teachers, who would have had to have been able to allow for a greater flexibility of pace and method. These teachers would also have had to recognise that readers are actively involved in interpreting texts.

The system of Christian-National Education influencing the attitudes and approaches of the TED held an image of pupils as a mass receptive to the teachers' 'wisdom'. It was easy for this image to be extended so that the pupils became regarded as a mass passively watching the films that they studied. This view was another problem associated with the TED's 'film study'. In failing to regard the pupils as individuals, the TED thus also ignored the fact that they were actually interacting actively with the films and constructing their own meanings.

Any form of media studies must acknowledge that the audience (or class of pupils) is not a mass, but a group of individuals - each of whom is actively involved in engaging with texts in order to make their own meanings, which are dependent upon their contexts.

The positioning of the members of the audience in relation to a media text is also very important. As Sless (1986) argues, any analysis of the media must take note of the fact that the researcher cannot be objective, but is part of the communication process.

A further problem with 'film study' lay in the

approach to teaching film adopted by the TED. One of the most specific results of this approach was that the films were treated unproblematically as alternative forms of literature networks, the study of which concentrated on such traditional literary categories as plot, character and theme. In this way, the emphasis was placed on the content of the films and the pupils did not study films as constructions. Consequently, they did not confront the issue of the mediation of reality.

The pupils were also not generally encouraged to engage in practical production of their own media texts. Most media studies theorists argue for the value of practical work by the pupils - which must be linked to a study of the theory of the media. Indeed, one of the most effective ways for pupils to learn how the media work is to experiment with them themselves. Pupils in TED schools were not allowed this opportunity to experiment with presenting reality in various ways - and to learn how the presentation affects the interpretation of a text.

The result of the pupils being restricted from exploring their interactions with texts - and from encountering texts as constructions - was that they did not have the necessary exposure to ask questions about the structures and forces determining the shape and interpretations of media texts.

The media as channels of communication are not neutral/natural and there is a need to investigate how media texts are historically and socially produced and consumed. This should involve a study of the sources of construction of the media; the

dominant techniques used to convince the public of the truth; the values implicit in the constructions; and the ways in which they are read and received. This would be facilitated by an approach that analyses media texts as constructions that need to be actively read.

Pupils should be led to discover how the media work and how specific 'truths' can be constructed via certain significations having been made to appear as natural. They also need to understand that the choices that are made in producing these constructions are influenced by economic and ideological relations.

The main need in educating pupils in any of the media is to help them to understand how meaning is constructed. They should also be led to uncover the structures of control of the media.

In addition, as the media are indexical of the society that produces them, an analysis thereof should also be extended to consider the broader issues of the social contexts that influenced the production of the texts. When media studies at school takes note of such issues, it must inevitably become social and political, even unconsciously. And pupils should be actively encouraged to extend their judgements about the media into society in general.

In South Africa, with the divisions in education specifically - and society in general - having been based on racial segregation, pupils were discouraged from exploring the ideological and economic relations underpinning much of their experience of reality.

In fact, the TED's 'film study' did not consider the learners' experience to be very relevant to the study of the media. This was manifested in the fact that 'film study' was not related to either the pupils' experience of the media, or to their social contexts.

The developments that have been made in the field of media education overseas have begun to be recognised by media studies practitioners in this country¹. In addition, with the dismantling of apartheid since February 1990, the structures of education have slowly begun to be altered. There are therefore indications that the problems associated with 'film study' can begin to be addressed and solved.

In order for this to occur effectively, and for the necessary alterations to be made to syllabi and curricula, there must be a development in the understanding of media education theory in this country. To achieve this understanding, the theoretical debates emerging from other countries - especially Britain - should be addressed. In addition, the way/s in which these debates have been used to make alterations to the educational curricula in Britain must also be studied. This information should then be used to effect changes in schools and curricula in order to achieve a more effective form of media studies in the Transvaal.

END NOTES

1. Specifically, the first conference on media studies was held in Durban in September 1990. This conference and the book Media Matters in

South Africa (arising from the proceedings of the conference) are the first steps towards addressing the question of a theory of media studies in this country.