

# 6 Structuralism and post-structuralism

Structuralism, unlike the other approaches discussed here, is, as Terry Eagleton (1983) points out, 'quite indifferent to the cultural value of its object: anything from *War and Peace* to *The War Cry* will do. The method is analytical, not evaluative' (96). Structuralism is a way of approaching texts and practices that is derived from the theoretical work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Its principal exponents are French: Louis Althusser in Marxist theory, Roland Barthes in literary and cultural studies, Michel Foucault in philosophy and history, Jacques Lacan in psychoanalysis, Claude Lévi-Strauss in anthropology and Pierre Macherey in literary theory. Their work is often very different, and at times very difficult. What unites these authors is the influence of Saussure, and the use of a particular vocabulary drawn from his work. It is as well, then, to start our exploration with a consideration of his work in linguistics. This is best approached by examining a number of key concepts.

## Ferdinand de Saussure

Saussure divides language into two component parts. When I write the word 'cat' it produces the inscription 'cat', but also the concept or mental image of a cat: a four-legged feline creature. He calls the first the 'signifier', and the second the 'signified'. Together (like two sides of a coin or a sheet of paper) they make up the 'sign'. He then goes on to argue that the relationship between signifier and signified is completely arbitrary. The word 'cat', for example, has no cat-like qualities; there is no reason why the signifier 'cat' should produce the signified 'cat': four-legged feline creature (other languages have different signifiers to produce the same signified). The relationship between the two is simply the result of convention – of cultural agreement (see Table 6.1). The signifier 'cat' could just as easily produce the signified 'dog': four-legged canine creature.

On the basis of this claim, he suggests that meaning is not the result of an essential correspondence between signifiers and signifieds; it is rather the result of difference and relationship. In other words, Saussure's is a relational theory of language. Meaning is produced not through a one-to-one relation to things in the world, but by establishing difference. For example, 'mother' has meaning in relation to 'father', 'daughter', 'son',

**Table 6.1** Words for 'cat', various languages.

Chinese	mao
English	cat
French	chat
German	katze
Japanese	neiko
Spanish	gato
Russian	koska

etc. Traffic lights operate within a system of four signs: red = stop, green = go, amber = prepare for red, amber and red = prepare for green. The relationship between the signifier 'green' and the signified 'go' is arbitrary; there is nothing in the colour green that naturally attaches it to the verb 'go'. Traffic lights would work equally well if red signified 'go' and green signified 'stop'.

The system works not by expressing a *natural* meaning but by marking a difference, a distinction within a system of difference and relationships. To make the point about meaning being relational rather than substantial, Saussure gives the example of train systems. The 12.11 from Bochum to Bremen, for instance, runs every day at the same time. To each of these trains we assign the same identity ('the 12.11 from Bochum to Bremen'). However, we know that the locomotive, the carriages, the staff, are unlikely to be the same each day. The identity of the train is fixed not by its substance, but by its relational distinction from other trains, running at other times, on other routes. Saussure's other example is the game of chess. A knight, for example, could be represented in any way a designer thought desirable, provided that how it was represented marked it as different from the other chess pieces.

According to Saussure, meaning is also made in a process of combination and selection, horizontally along the syntagmatic axis, and vertically along the paradigmatic axis. For example, the sentence, 'Miriam made chicken broth today', is meaningful through the accumulation of its different parts: Miriam/made/chicken broth/today. Its meaning is complete only once the final word is spoken or inscribed. Saussure calls this process the syntagmatic axis of language. One can add other parts to extend its meaningfulness: 'Miriam made chicken broth today while dreaming about her lover.' Meaning is thus accumulated along the syntagmatic axis of language. This is perfectly clear when a sentence is interrupted. For example, 'I was going to say that . . .'; 'It is clear to me that David should . . .'; 'You promised to tell me about . . .'.

Substituting certain parts of the sentence for new parts can also change meaning. For example, I could write, 'Miriam made salad today while dreaming about her lover' or 'Miriam made chicken broth today while dreaming about her new car'. Such substitutions are said to be operating along the paradigmatic axis of language. Let us consider a more politically charged example. 'Terrorists carried out an attack on an army base today.' Substitutions from the paradigmatic axis could alter the meaning of this sentence considerably. If we substitute 'freedom fighters' or 'anti-imperialist volunteers'

for the word 'terrorists' we would have a sentence meaningful in quite a different way. This would be achieved without any reference to a corresponding reality outside of the sentence itself. The meaning of the sentence is produced through a process of selection and combination. This is because the relationship between 'sign' and 'referent' (in our earlier example, real cats in the real world) is also conventional. It follows, therefore, that the language we speak does not simply *reflect* the material reality of the world; rather, by providing us with a conceptual map with which to impose a certain order on what we see and experience, the language we speak plays a significant role in *shaping what constitutes* for us the reality of the material world.

Structuralists argue that language organizes and constructs our sense of reality – different languages in effect produce different mappings of the real. When, for example, a European gazes at a snowscape, he or she sees snow. An Inuit, with over thirty words to describe snow and ice, looking at the same snowscape would presumably see so much more. Therefore an Inuit and a European standing together surveying the snowscape would in fact be seeing two quite different conceptual scenes. Similarly, Australian Aborigines have many words to describe the desert. What these examples demonstrate to a structuralist is that the way we conceptualize the world is ultimately dependent on the language we speak. And by analogy, it will depend on the culture we inhabit. The meanings made possible by language are thus the result of the interplay of a network of relationships between combination and selection, similarity and difference. Meaning cannot be accounted for by reference to an extra-linguistic reality. As Saussure (1974) insists, 'in language there are only differences *without positive terms* . . . [L]anguage has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system' (120; original emphasis). We might want to query this assumption by noting that Inuits name the snowscape differently because of the material bearing it has on their day-to-day existence. It could also be objected that substituting 'terrorists' for 'freedom fighters' produces meanings not accounted for purely by the linguistic system (see Chapter 4).

Saussure makes another distinction that has proved essential to the development of structuralism. This is the division of language into *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* refers to the system of language, the rules and conventions that organize it. This is language as a social institution, and as Roland Barthes (1967) points out, 'it is essentially a collective contract which one must accept in its entirety if one wishes to communicate' (14). *Parole* refers to the individual utterance, the individual use of language. To clarify this point, Saussure compares language to the game of chess. Here we can distinguish between the rules of the game and an actual game of chess. Without the body of rules there could be no actual game, but it is only in an actual game that these rules are made manifest. Therefore, there is *langue* and *parole*, structure and performance. It is the homogeneity of the structure that makes the heterogeneity of the performance possible.

Finally, Saussure distinguishes between two theoretical approaches to linguistics: the diachronic approach, which studies the historical development of a given language, and the synchronic approach, which studies a given language in one particular moment in time. He argues that in order to found a science of linguistics it is necessary to adopt a synchronic approach. Structuralists have, generally speaking, taken the

synchronic approach to the study of texts or practices. They argue that in order to really understand a text or practice it is necessary to focus exclusively on its structural properties. This of course allows critics hostile to structuralism to criticize it for its ahistorical approach to culture.

Structuralism takes two basic ideas from Saussure's work: first, a concern with the underlying relations of texts and practices, the 'grammar' that makes meaning possible; second, the view that meaning is always the result of the interplay of relationships of selection and combination made possible by the underlying structure. In other words, texts and practices are studied as analogous to language. Imagine, for example, that aliens from outer space had landed in Barcelona in May 1999, and as an earthly display of welcome they were invited to attend the Champions League Final between Manchester United and Bayern Munich. What would they witness? Two groups of men in different coloured costumes, one red, the other in silver and maroon, moving at different speeds, in different directions, across a green surface, marked with white lines. They would notice that a white spherical projectile appeared to have some influence on the various patterns of cooperation and competition. They would notice a man dressed in dark green, with a whistle that he blew to stop and start the combinations of play. They would also note that he appeared to be supported by two other men also dressed in dark green, one on either side of the main activity, each using a flag to support the limited authority of the man with the whistle. Finally, they would note the presence of two men, one at each end of the playing area, standing in front of partly netted structures. They would see that periodically these men engaged in acrobatic routines that involved contact with the white projectile. The visiting aliens could observe the occasion and describe what they saw to each other, but unless someone explained to them the rules of association football, its *structure*, the Champions League Final, in which Manchester United became the first English team in history to win the 'treble' of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup, would make very little sense to them at all. It is the underlying rules of cultural texts and practices that interest structuralists. It is structure that makes meaning possible. The task of structuralism, therefore, is to make explicit the rules and conventions (the structure) that govern the production of meaning (acts of *parole*).

## Claude Lévi-Strauss, Will Wright and the American Western

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1968) uses Saussure to help him discover the 'unconscious foundations' (18) of the culture of so-called 'primitive' societies. He analyses cooking, manners, modes of dress, aesthetic activity and other forms of cultural and social practices as analogous to systems of language; each in its different way is a mode of communication, a form of expression. As Terence Hawkes (1977) points out, 'His quarry, in short, is the *langue* of the whole culture; its system and its general

laws: he stalks it through the particular varieties of its *parole*' (39). In pursuit of his quarry, Lévi-Strauss investigates a number of 'systems'. It is, however, his analysis of myth that is of central interest to the student of popular culture. He claims that beneath the vast heterogeneity of myths, there can be discovered an homogeneous structure. In short, he argues that individual myths are examples of *parole*, articulations of an underlying structure or *langue*. By understanding this structure we should be able to truly understand the meaning – 'operational value' (Lévi-Strauss, 1968: 209) – of particular myths.

Myths, Lévi-Strauss argues, work like language: they comprise individual 'mythemes', analogous to individual units of language, 'morphemes' and 'phonemes'. Like morphemes and phonemes, mythemes take on meaning only when combined in particular patterns. Seen in this way, the anthropologists' task is to discover the underlying 'grammar': the rules and regulations that make it possible for myths to be meaningful. He also observes that myths are structured in terms of 'binary oppositions'. Dividing the world into mutually exclusive categories produces meaning: culture/nature, man/woman, black/white, good/bad, us/them, for example. Drawing on Saussure, he sees meaning as a result of the interplay between a process of similarity and difference. For example, in order to say what is bad we must have some notion of what is good. In the same way, what it means to be a man is defined against what it means to be a woman.

Lévi-Strauss claims that all myths have a similar structure. Moreover, he also claims – although this is by no means his primary focus – that all myths have a similar socio-cultural function within society. That is, the purpose of myth is to make the world explicable, to magically resolve its problems and contradictions. As he contends, 'mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution. . . . The purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction' (224, 229). Myths are stories we tell ourselves as a culture in order to banish contradictions and make the world understandable and therefore habitable; they attempt to put us at peace with ourselves and our existence.

In *Sixguns and Society*, Will Wright (1975) uses Lévi-Strauss's structuralist methodology to analyse the Hollywood Western. He argues that much of the narrative power of the Western is derived from its structure of binary oppositions. However, Wright differs from Lévi-Strauss in that his concern 'is not to reveal a mental structure but to show how the myths of a society, through their structure, communicate a conceptual order to the members of that society' (17). In short, while Lévi-Strauss's primary concern is the structure of the human mind, Wright's focus is on the way the Western 'presents a symbolically simple but remarkably deep conceptualisation of American social beliefs' (23). He contends that the Western has evolved through three stages: 'classic' (including a variation he calls 'vengeance'), 'transition theme' and 'professional'. Despite the genre's different types, he identifies a basic set of structuring oppositions, shown in Table 6.2. But, as he insists (taking him beyond Lévi-Strauss), in order to fully understand the social meaning of a myth, it is necessary to analyse not only its binary structure but its narrative structure – 'the progression of events and the resolution of conflicts' (24). The 'classic' Western, according to Wright, is divided into sixteen narrative 'functions' (see Propp, 1968).

**Table 6.2** Structuring oppositions in the Western.

Inside society	Outside society
Good	Bad
Strong	Weak
Civilization	Wilderness (49)

1. The hero enters a social group.
2. The hero is unknown to the society.
3. The hero is revealed to have an exceptional ability.
4. The society recognizes a difference between themselves and the hero; the hero is given a special status.
5. The society does not completely accept the hero.
6. There is a conflict of interests between the villains and the society.
7. The villains are stronger than the society; the society is weak.
8. There is a strong friendship or respect between the hero and a villain.
9. The villains threaten the society.
10. The hero avoids involvement in the conflict.
11. The villains endanger a friend of the hero.
12. The hero fights the villains.
13. The hero defeats the villains.
14. The society is safe.
15. The society accepts the hero.
16. The hero loses or gives up his special status (165).

*Shane* (1953) is perhaps the best example of the classic Western: the story of a stranger who rides out of the wilderness and helps a group of farmers defeat a powerful rancher, and then rides away again, back into the wilderness. In the classic Western the hero and society are (temporarily) aligned in opposition to the villains who remain outside society.

In the 'transition theme' Western, which Wright claims provides a bridge between the classic Western, the form that dominated the 1930s, the 1940s and most of the 1950s, and the professional Western, the form that dominated the 1960s and 1970s, the binary oppositions are reversed, and we see the hero outside society struggling against a strong, but corrupt and corrupting, civilization (Table 6.3). Many of the narrative functions are also inverted. Instead of being outside the society, the hero begins as a valued member of the society. But the society is revealed to be the real 'villain' in opposition to the hero and those outside society and civilization. In his support for, and eventual alignment with, those outside society and civilization, he himself crosses from inside to outside and from civilization to wilderness. But in the end the society is too strong for those outside it, who are ultimately powerless against its force. The best they can do is escape to the wilderness.

**Table 6.3** Structuring oppositions in the 'professional' Western.

Hero	Society
Outside society	Inside society
Good	Bad
Weak	Strong
Wilderness	Civilization (48–9)

Although, according to Wright, the last 'transition theme' Western was *Johnny Guitar* in 1954, it appears clear, using his own binary oppositions and narrative functions, that *Dances with Wolves*, made in 1990, is a perfect example of the form. A cavalry officer, decorated for bravery, rejects the East ('civilization') and requests a posting to the West ('wilderness') – as the film publicity puts it, 'in 1864 one man went in search of the frontier and found himself'. He also found *society* among the Sioux. The film tells the story of how 'he is drawn into the loving and honourable folds of a Sioux tribe . . . and ultimately, the crucial decision he must make as white settlers continue their violent and ruthless journey into the lands of the Native Americans' (Guild Home Video, 1991). His decision is to fight on the side of the Sioux against the 'civilization' he has rejected. Finally, considered a traitor by the cavalry, he decides to leave the Sioux, so as not to give the cavalry an excuse to butcher them. The final scene, however, shows his departure as, unbeknown to him or the Sioux, the cavalry close in for what is undoubtedly to be the massacre of the tribe.

If we accept *Dances with Wolves* as a 'transition theme' Western, it raises some interesting questions about the film as myth. Wright (1975) claims that each type of Western 'corresponds' to a different moment in the recent economic development of the United States:

the classic Western plot corresponds to the individualistic conception of society underlying a market economy. . . . [T]he vengeance plot is a variation that begins to reflect changes in the market economy. . . . [T]he professional plot reveals a new conception of society corresponding to the values and attitudes inherent in a planned, corporate economy (15).

Each type in turn articulates its own mythic version of how to achieve the *American Dream*:

The classical plot shows that the way to achieve such human rewards as friendship, respect, and dignity is to separate yourself from others and use your strength as an autonomous individual to succor them. . . . The vengeance variation . . . weakens the compatibility of the individual and society by showing that the path to respect and love is to separate yourself from others, struggling individually against your many and strong enemies but striving to remember and return to the softer values of marriage and humility. The transition theme, anticipating new social values, argues



that love and companionship are available at the cost of becoming a social outcast to the individual who stands firmly and righteously against the intolerance and ignorance of society. Finally, the professional plot . . . argues that companionship and respect are to be achieved only by becoming a skilled technician, who joins an elite group of professionals, accepts any job that is offered, and has loyalty only to the integrity of the team, not to any competing social or community values (186–7).

Given the critical and financial success of *Dances with Wolves* (winner of seven Oscars; fifth most successful film in both the UK and the USA, grossing £10.9 million and \$122.5 million in the first year of release in the UK and USA respectively), it may well (if we accept Wright's rather reductive correspondence theory) represent a 'transition theme' Western that marks the beginning of a reverse transition, back to a time of less mercenary social and community values – back in fact to a time of *society* and *community*.

## Roland Barthes: *Mythologies*

Roland Barthes's early work on popular culture is concerned with the processes of signification, the mechanisms by which meanings are produced and put into circulation. *Mythologies* (1973) is a collection of essays on French popular culture. In it he discusses, among many things, wrestling, soap powders and detergents, toys, steak and chips, tourism and popular attitudes towards science. His guiding principle is always to interrogate 'the falsely obvious' (11), to make explicit what too often remains implicit in the texts and practices of popular culture. His purpose is political; his target is what he calls the 'bourgeois norm' (9). As he states in the 'Preface' to the 1957 edition, 'I resented seeing Nature and History confused at every turn, and I wanted to track down, in the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying*, the ideological abuse which, in my view, is hidden there' (11). *Mythologies* is the most significant attempt to bring the methodology of semiology to bear on popular culture. The possibility of semiology was first posited by Saussure (1974):

Language is a system of signs that express ideas, and is therefore comparable to a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf mutes, symbolic rites, polite formulas, military signals, etc. . . . A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable . . . I shall call it semiology (16).

*Mythologies* concludes with the important theoretical essay, 'Myth today'.<sup>1</sup> In the essay Barthes outlines a semiological model for reading popular culture. He takes Saussure's schema of signifier/signified = sign and adds to it a second level of signification.

As we noted earlier, the signifier 'cat' produces the signified 'cat': a four-legged feline creature. Barthes argues that this indicates only primary signification. The sign 'cat' produced at the primary level of signification is available to become the signifier



1. signifier > signified = sign
  - \
  2. signifier > signified = sign
- (1. Primary signification or denotation)  
 (2. Secondary signification or connotation)

**Figure 6.1** Signification.

'cat' at a second level of signification. This may then produce at the secondary level the signified 'cat': someone cool and hip. As illustrated in Figure 6.1, the sign of primary signification becomes the signifier in a process of secondary signification. In *Elements of Semiology*, Barthes (1967) substitutes the more familiar terms 'denotation' (primary signification) and 'connotation' (secondary signification): 'the first system [denotation] becomes the plane of expression or signifier of the second system [connotation]. . . . The signifiers of connotation . . . are made up of signs (signifiers and signifieds united) of the denoted system' (89–91).

He claims that it is at the level of secondary signification or connotation that myth is produced for consumption. By myth he means ideology understood as a body of ideas and practices, which, by actively promoting the values and interests of dominant groups in society, defend the prevailing structures of power. To understand this aspect of his argument, we need to understand the polysemic nature of signs – that is, that they have the potential to signify multiple meanings. An example might make the point clearer. I discussed in Chapter 1 how the Conservative Party presented a party political broadcast that concluded with the word 'socialism' being transposed into red prison bars. This was undoubtedly an attempt to fix the secondary signification or connotations of the word 'socialism' to mean restrictive, imprisoning, against freedom. Barthes would see this as an example of the fixing of new connotations in the production of myth – the production of ideology. He argues that all forms of signification can be shown to operate in this way. His most famous example of the workings of secondary signification (see Photo 6.1) is taken from the cover of the French magazine *Paris Match* (1955). He begins his analysis by establishing that the primary level of signification consists of a signifier: patches of colour and figuration. This produces the signified: 'a black soldier saluting the French flag'. Together they form the primary sign. The primary sign then becomes the signifier 'black soldier saluting the French flag', producing, at the level of secondary signification, the signified 'French imperialism'. Here is his account of his encounter with the cover of the magazine:

I am at the barber's, and a copy of *Paris Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on the fold of the tricolour. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the



**Photo 6.1** Black soldier saluting the flag.

Source: IZIS/Paris Match Archive/Getty Images

zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so called oppressors. I am therefore faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (a black soldier is giving the French salute); there is a signified (it is a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally there is a presence of the signified through the signifier (2009: 265).

At the first level: black soldier saluting the French flag; at the second level: a positive image of French imperialism. The cover illustration is therefore seen to represent *Paris Match's* attempt to produce a positive image of French imperialism. Following the defeat in Vietnam (1946–54), and the then current war in Algeria (1954–62), such an image would seem to be of some political urgency. And as Barthes suggests, 'myth has . . . a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us' (265). What makes this a possibility are the shared cultural codes on which both Barthes and the readership of *Paris Match* are able to draw. Connotations are therefore not simply produced by the makers of the image, but activated from an already existing cultural repertoire. In other words, the image both draws from the cultural repertoire and at the same time adds to it. Moreover, the cultural repertoire does not form a homogeneous block. Myth is continually confronted by counter-myth. For example, an image containing references to pop music culture might be seen by a young audience as an index of freedom and heterogeneity, while to an older audience it might signal manipulation and homogeneity. Which codes are mobilized will largely depend on the triple context of the location of the text, the historical moment and the cultural formation of the reader.

In 'The photographic message' Barthes (1977a: 26) introduces a number of further considerations. Context of publication is important, as I have already said. If the photograph of the black soldier saluting the flag had appeared on the cover of the *Socialist Review*, its connotative meaning(s) would have been very different. Readers would have looked for irony. Rather than being read as a positive image of French imperialism, it would have been seen as a sign of imperial exploitation and manipulation. In addition to this, a socialist reading the original *Paris Match* would have seen the image not as a positive image of French imperialism, but as a desperate attempt to project such an image given the general historical context of France's defeat in Vietnam and its pending defeat in Algeria. But despite all this the intention behind the image is clear:

Myth has an imperative, buttonholing character . . . [it arrests] in both the physical and the legal sense of the term: French imperialism condemns the saluting Negro to be nothing more than an instrumental signifier, the Negro suddenly hails me in the name of French imperality; but at the same moment the Negro's salute thickens, becomes vitrified, freezes into an eternal reference meant to establish French imperality (2009: 265–6).<sup>2</sup>

This is not the only way French imperialism might be given positive connotations. Barthes suggests other mythical signifiers the press might use: 'I can very well give to French imperality many other signifiers beside a Negro's salute: a French general pins

a decoration on a one-armed Senegalese, a nun hands a cup of tea to a bed ridden Arab, a white schoolmaster teaches attentive piccaninnies' (266).

Barthes envisages three possible reading positions from which the image could be read. The first would simply see the black soldier saluting the flag as an 'example' of French imperialism, a 'symbol' for it. This is the position of those who produce such myths. The second would see the image as an 'alibi' for French imperialism. This is the position of the socialist reader discussed above. The final reading position is that of the 'myth-consumer' (268). He or she reads the image not as an example or as a symbol, nor as an alibi: the black soldier saluting the flag 'is the very *presence* of French imperialism' (267; original emphasis); that is, the black soldier saluting the flag is seen as *naturally* conjuring up the concept of French imperialism. There is not anything to discuss: it is obvious that one implies the presence of the other. The relationship between the black soldier saluting the flag and French imperialism has been 'naturalized'. As Barthes explains:

what allows the reader to consume myth innocently is that he does not see it as a semiological system but as an inductive one. Where there is only equivalence, he sees a kind of causal process: the signifier and the signified have, in his eyes, a natural relationship. This confusion can be expressed otherwise: any semiological system is a system of values; now the myth-consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system (268).

There is of course a fourth reading position, that of Barthes himself – the mythologist. This reading produces what he calls a 'structural description'. It is a reading position that seeks to determine the means of ideological production of the image, its transformation of history into nature. According to Barthes, 'Semiology has taught us that myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal. Now this process is exactly that of bourgeois ideology' (ibid.). His argument is that 'myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made' (ibid.). It is what he calls 'depoliticized speech'.

In the case of the soldier Negro . . . what is got rid of is certainly not French imperialism (on the contrary, since what must be actualised is its presence); it is the contingent, historical, in one word: fabricated, quality of colonialism. Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. If I state the fact of French imperialism without explaining it, I am very near to finding that it is natural and goes without saying. . . . In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts . . . it organises a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves (269).<sup>3</sup>

Images rarely appear without the accompaniment of a linguistic text of one kind or another. A newspaper photograph, for example, will be surrounded by a title, a caption, a story and the general layout of the page. It will also, as we have already noted, be situated within the context of a particular newspaper or magazine. The context provided by the *Daily Telegraph* (readership and reader expectation) is very different from that provided by the *Socialist Worker*. The accompanying text controls the production of connotations in the image.

Formerly, the image illustrated the text (made it clearer); today, the text loads the image, burdening it with culture, a moral, an imagination. Formerly, there was reduction from text to image; today, there is amplification from one to the other. The connotation is now experienced only as the natural resonance of the fundamental denotation constituted by the photographic analogy and we are thus confronted with a typical process of naturalisation of the cultural (Barthes, 1977a: 26).

In other words, image does not illustrate text, it is the text which amplifies the connotative potential of the image. He refers to this process as 'relay'. The relationship can of course work in other ways. For example, rather than 'amplifying a set of connotations already given in the photograph . . . the text produces (invents) an entirely new signified which is retroactively projected into the image, so much so as to appear denoted there' (27). An example might be a photograph taken in 2016 (see Photo 6.2) of a rock star looking reflective, and originally used to promote a love song: 'My baby done me wrong'. In late 2017 the photograph is reused to accompany a newspaper account of the death by a drug overdose of one of the rock star's closest friends. The photograph is recaptioned: 'Drugs killed my best friend' (see Photo 6.3). The caption would feed into the image producing (inventing) connotations of loss, despair, and a certain thoughtfulness about the role of drugs in rock music culture. Barthes refers to this process as 'anchorage'. What this example of the different meanings made of the same photograph of the rock star reveals, as noted earlier, is the polysemic nature of all signs:



**Photo 6.2**

Rock-a-day Johnny 'My baby done me wrong' from the album *Dogbucket Days*.



**Photo 6.3** Rock-a-day Johnny ‘Drugs killed my best friend’.

that is, their potential for multiple signification. Without the addition of a linguistic text the meaning of the image is very difficult to pin down. The linguistic message works in two ways. It helps the reader to identify the denotative meaning of the image: this is a rock star looking reflective. Second, it limits the potential proliferation of the connotations of the image: the rock star is reflective because of the drug overdose by one of his closest friends. Therefore, the rock star is contemplating the role of drugs in rock music culture. Moreover, it tries to make the reader believe that the connotative meaning is actually present at the level of denotation.

What makes the move from denotation to connotation possible is the store of social knowledge (a cultural repertoire) upon which the reader is able to draw when he or she reads the image. Without access to this shared code (conscious or unconscious) the operations of connotation would not be possible. And of course such knowledge is always both historical and cultural. That is to say, it might differ from one culture to another, and from one historical moment to another. Cultural difference might also be marked by differences of class, ethnicity, gender, generation or sexuality. As Barthes points out,

reading closely depends on my culture, on my knowledge of the world, and it is probable that a good press photograph (and they are all good, being selected) makes ready play with the supposed knowledge of its readers, those prints being chosen which comprise the greatest possible quantity of information of this kind in such a way as to render the reading fully satisfying (29).

Again, as he explains, ‘the variation in readings is not, however, anarchic; it depends on the different kinds of knowledge – practical, national, cultural, aesthetic – invested in the image [by the reader]’ (Barthes, 1977b: 46). Here we see once again the analogy with language. The individual image is an example of *parole*, and the shared code (cultural repertoire) is an example of *langue*. The best way to draw together the different elements of this model of reading is to demonstrate it.





**ONE GIRL WANTS TO GO TO UNIVERSITY.  
THE OTHER WANTS TO LEAVE AT 16.  
HOW DO YOU KEEP THEM BOTH INTERESTED?**

Jackie on the right is motivated to learn at school by her long-term goals. However, contrary to appearances, Susan on the left may see little point in paying attention at all.

MY 'SL'... Jobs and how are the sort of things 14-year-olds like Susan are usually most interested in. Education, grammar, genetics and Charles Dickens' non-fictionals... are not. Unless, of course, the teacher makes them interesting.

If you think that sounds dull, you're right. The trick is to make whatever you're teaching relevant to the interests of less-motivated pupils and, most important of all, make it enjoyable.

Remembering at the same time you have to keep your lessons stimulating and challenging for the keener ones.

This is where a strong imagination and a sense of humour come in handy. And if you've these skills, there are all sorts of interesting teaching aids to help you as well, many of which you will learn about in your training.

You'll also need a lot of energy, as any teacher will tell you, but it's rewarding when you see all your efforts pay off. For example, when pupils like Jackie go on to do well in higher education, especially if they choose to go into your subject.

And equally, when pupils like Susan go on to do well at work, it's better still, especially if they leave at 16 after all.

But it is rewarding when it comes to the end of the month's Well, you may be surprised to learn that teachers' starting salaries now compare well with those of graduates in general.

From December, teachers at inner London with a good honours degree will start on around £34,000, including inner London supplement and allowance. And if you take it to the top of your profession as a Head teacher of a large secondary school in

inner London, you could earn up to £48,000.

Interested? For more information, fill in the coupon or call 0345 400327, quoting the department code 55555.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHING BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN PEOPLE.  
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (DES)

**Photo 6.4 Advertising for teachers.**

Source: Department of Education, Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller, Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI)

In 1991 the Department of Education and Science (DES) produced an advertisement that they placed in the popular film magazine *Empire* (see Photo 6.4). The image shows two 14-year-old schoolgirls: Jackie intends to go to university; Susan intends to leave school at 16. The poster's aim is to attract men and women to the teaching profession. It operates a double bluff. That is, we see the two girls, read the caption and decide which girl wants to go to university, which girl wants to leave at 16. The double bluff is that the girl who wants to leave is the one convention – those without the required



cultural competence to teach – would consider studious. It is a double bluff because we are not intended to be taken in by the operation. We can congratulate ourselves on our perspicacity. We, unlike others, have not been taken in – we have the necessary cultural competence. Therefore we are excellent teacher material. The advertisement plays with the knowledge necessary to be a teacher and allows us to recognize that knowledge in ourselves: it provides us with a position from which to say: ‘Yes, I should be a teacher.’

## Post-structuralism

Post-structuralists reject the idea of an underlying structure upon which meaning can rest secure and guaranteed. Meaning is always in process. What we call the ‘meaning’ of a text is only ever a momentary stop in a continuing flow of interpretations following interpretations. Saussure, as we have noted, posited language as consisting of the relationship between the signifier, the signified and the sign. The theorists of post-structuralism suggest that the situation is more complex than this: signifiers do not produce signifieds, they produce more signifiers. Meaning as a result is a very unstable thing. In ‘The death of the author’, the now post-structuralist Barthes (1977c) insists that a text is ‘a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture’ (146). Only a reader can bring a temporary unity to a text. Unlike the work that can be seen lying in apparent completion on library shelves and in bookshops, the text ‘is experienced only in an activity of production’ (157). A text is a work seen as inseparable from the active process of its many readings.

## Jacques Derrida

Post-structuralism is virtually synonymous with the work of Jacques Derrida. The sign, as we have noted already, is for Saussure made meaningful by its location in a system of differences. Derrida adds to this the notion that meaning is also always deferred, never fully present, always both absent and present (see discussion of defining popular culture in Chapter 1). Derrida (1973) has invented a new word to describe the divided nature of the sign: *différance*, meaning both to defer and to differ.

Saussure’s model of difference is spatial, in which meaning is made in the relations between signs that are locked together in a self-regulating structure. Derrida’s model of *différance*, however, is both structural and temporal; meaning depends on structural difference but also on temporal relations of before and after.

For example, if we track the meaning of a word through a dictionary we encounter a relentless deferment of meaning. If we look up the signifier ‘letter’ in the *Collins*

*Pocket Dictionary of the English Language*, we discover that it has five possible signifieds: a written or printed message, a character of the alphabet, the strict meaning of an agreement, precisely (as in 'to the letter') and to write or mark letters on a sign. If we then look up one of these, the signified '[a written or printed] message', we find that it too is a signifier producing four more signifieds: a communication from one person or group to another, an implicit meaning, as in a work of art, a religious or political belief that someone attempts to communicate to others, and to understand (as in 'to get the message').

Tracking through the dictionary in this way confirms a relentless intertextual deferment of meaning, 'the indefinite referral of signifier to signifier . . . which gives the signified meaning no respite . . . so that it always signifies again' (1978a: 25). It is only when located in a discourse and read in a context that there is a temporary halt to the endless play of signifier to signifier. For example, if we read or hear the words 'nothing was delivered', they would mean something quite different depending on whether they were the opening words of a novel, a line from a poem, an excuse, a jotting in a shopkeeper's notebook, a line from a song, an example from a phrase book, part of a monologue in a play, part of a speech in a film, an illustration in an explanation of *différance*. But even context cannot fully control the relentless, intertextual deferment of meaning: the phrase 'nothing was delivered' will carry with it the 'trace' of meanings from other contexts. If I know the line is from a song by Bob Dylan, this will resonate across the words as I read them in a shopkeeper's notebook.

For Derrida, the binary opposition, so important to structuralism, is never a simple structural relation; it is always a relation of power, in which one term is in a position of dominance with regard to the other. Moreover, the dominance of one over the other (a matter of, say, priority or privilege) is not something that arises 'naturally' out of the relationship, but something that is produced in the way the relationship is constructed. Black and white, it could be argued, exist in a binary opposition, one always existing as the absent other when one of the terms is defined. But it is not difficult to see how in many powerful discourses, white is the positive term, holding priority and privilege over black. For example, television historian David Starkey's comments on BBC 2's *Newsnight* programme (13 August 2011) about the riots in English cities in 2011 articulates this logic. When condemning what had happened, he said, 'The whites have become black', further compounding this logic by adding, 'Listen to David Lammy [Labour MP for Tottenham], an archetypal successful black man. If you turn the screen off, so you were listening to him on radio, you would think he was white.' In both cases, white is positive, black is negative. Even leaving aside racism, there is a long history of black connoting negatively and white connoting positively (see further discussion in Chapter 9).

The DES advertisement I discussed earlier contains what Derrida (1978b) would call a 'violent hierarchy' (41) in its couplet: 'good' girl, who is interested in electromagnetism, genetics and Charles Dickens; and 'bad' girl, who prefers music, clothes and boys. We noted also in Chapter 1 how high culture has often depended on popular culture to give it definitional solidity. Derrida's critique alerts us to the way in which one side in such couplets is always privileged over the other; one side always claims a position of status (of pure presence) over the other. Moreover, as Derrida also points out, they

are not pure opposites – each is *motivated* by the other, ultimately dependent on the absent other for its own presence and meaning. There is no naturally ‘good’ girl who stays on at school, who can be opposed to a naturally ‘bad’ girl who wants to leave at 16. Simply to reverse the binary opposition would be to keep in place the assumptions already constructed by the opposition. We must do more than ‘simply . . . neutralise the binary oppositions. . . . One of the two terms controls the other . . . holds the superior position. To deconstruct the opposition [we must] . . . overthrow the hierarchy’ (1978b: 41). Instead of accepting the double bluff of the DES advertisement, a ‘deconstructive’ reading would wish to dismantle the couplet to demonstrate that it can only be held in place by a certain ‘violence’ – a certain set of dubious assumptions about gender and sexuality.

A deconstructive reading could also be made of *Dances with Wolves* (discussed earlier in this chapter): instead of the film being seen to invert the binary oppositions and narrative functions of Wright’s model, we might perhaps consider the way the film challenges the hierarchy implicit in the model. As Derrida (1976) points out:

[A deconstructive] reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses. This relationship is . . . a signifying structure that critical [i.e. deconstructive] reading should produce. . . . [That is, a] production [which] attempts to make the not seen accessible to sight (158, 163).<sup>4</sup>

## Discourse and power: Michel Foucault

One of the primary concerns of Michel Foucault is the relationship between knowledge and power and how this relationship operates within discourses and discursive formations. Foucault’s concept of discourse is similar to Althusser’s idea of the ‘problematic’; that is, both are organized and organizing bodies of knowledge, with rules and regulations that govern particular practices (ways of speaking, thinking and acting).

Discourses work in three ways: they enable, they constrain, and they constitute. As Foucault (1989) explains, discourses are ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (49). Language, for example, is a discourse: it *enables* me to speak, it *constrains* what I can say; it *constitutes* me as a speaking subject (i.e. it situates and produces my subjectivity: I know myself in language; I think in language; I talk to myself in language). Academic disciplines are also discourses: like languages, they enable, constrain and constitute. Table 6.5 outlines the different ways film may be studied. Each discipline speaks about film in a particular way and in so doing it enables and constrains what can be said about film. But they do not just speak about film; by constructing film as a particular object of study, they constitute film as a specific reality (‘the real meaning of film’). The game of netball is also a discourse: to play netball (regardless of individual talent), you must be familiar with the rules of the game; these

**Table 6.5** Film as an object of study.

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Economics	= commodity
Literary studies	= artistic text similar to literary text
History	= historical document
Art history	= example of visual culture
Cultural studies	= example of popular culture
Film studies	= textual object of study
Media studies	= particular type of media

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both enable and constrain your performance. But they also constitute you as a netball player. In other words, you are a netball player only if you play netball. Being a netball player is not a 'given' (i.e. expression of 'nature'): it is enabled, constrained and constituted in discourse (i.e. a product of 'culture').

In these ways, discourses produce subject positions we are invited to occupy (member of a language community; student of film; netball player). Discourses, therefore, are social practices in which we engage; they are like social 'scripts' we perform (consciously and unconsciously). What we think of as 'experience' is always experience in or of a particular discourse. Moreover, what we think of as our 'selves' is the internalization of a multiplicity of discourses. In other words, all the things we are, are enabled, constrained and constituted in discourses.

Discursive formations consist of the hierarchical criss-crossing of particular discourses. The different ways to study film discussed earlier produce a discursive formation. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1981) charts the development of the discursive formation of sexuality. In doing this, he rejects what he calls 'the repressive hypothesis' (10); that is, the idea of sexuality as something 'essential' that the Victorians repressed. Instead he follows a different set of questions:

Why has sexuality been so widely discussed and what has been said about it? What were the effects of power generated by what was said? What are the links between these discourses, these effects of power, and the pleasures that were invested by them? What knowledge (*savoir*) was formed as a result of this linkage? (11)

He tracks the discourse of sexuality through a series of discursive domains: medicine, demography, psychiatry, pedagogy, social work, criminology, governmental. Rather than the silence of repression, he encounters 'a political, economic and technical incitement to talk about sex' (22–3). He argues that the different discourses on sexuality are not *about* sexuality, they actually *constitute* the reality of sexuality. In other words, the Victorians did not repress sexuality, they actually invented it. This is not to say that sexuality does not exist non-discursively, but to claim that our 'knowledge' of sexuality and the 'power-knowledge' relations of sexuality are discursive.

Discourses produce knowledge and knowledge is always a weapon of power: 'it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together' (Foucault, 2009: 318). The Victorian invention of sexuality did not just produce knowledge about sexuality, it

sought to produce power over sexuality; this was knowledge that could be deployed to categorize and to organize behaviour; divide it into the 'normal' and the unacceptable. In this way, then, 'power produces knowledge . . . power and knowledge directly imply one another . . . there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (1979: 27). Power, however, should not be thought of as a negative force, something that denies, represses, negates; power is productive.

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (194).

Power produces reality; through discourses it produces the 'truths' we live by: 'Each society has its own regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth – that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true' (Foucault, 2002a: 131). One of his central aims, therefore, is to discover 'how men [and women] govern (themselves and others) by the production of truth (. . . the establishment of domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent)' (2002b: 230).

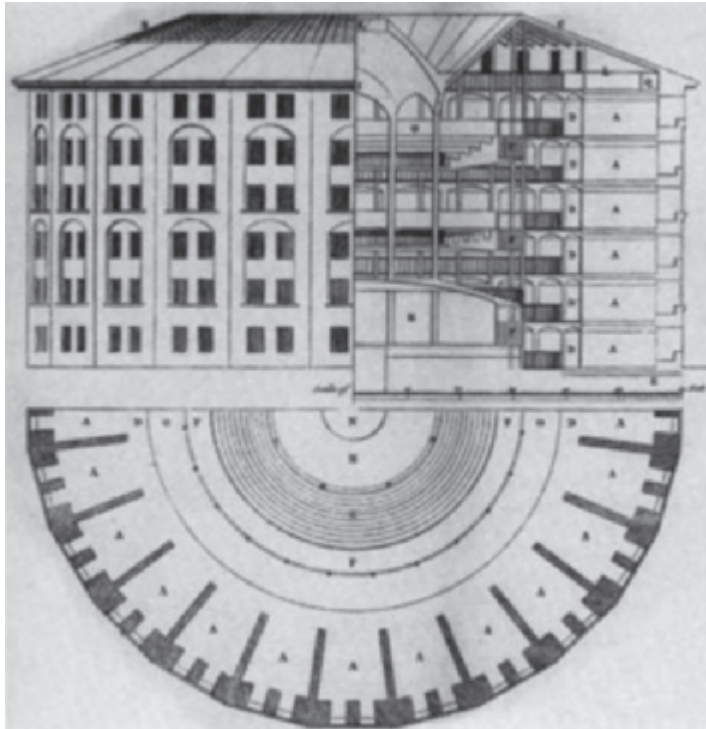
What Foucault calls 'regimes of truth' do not have to be 'true'; they have only to be thought of as 'true' and acted on as if 'true'. If ideas are believed, they establish and legitimate particular regimes of truth. For example, as late as the seventeenth century the prevailing regime of truth placed the earth at the centre of the universe. In 1632 Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) was charged with heresy for his support of the theory of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) that the earth moves around the sun, eventually being sentenced to life imprisonment for something that is now taught to school children as an obvious fact of nature. In Chapter 9 we will examine Orientalism as a powerful regime of truth.

Discourse, however, is not just about the imposition of power. As Foucault (2009) points out, 'Where there is power there is resistance' (315).

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also an hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (318).

## The panoptic machine

The panopticon is a type of prison building designed by Jeremy Bentham in 1787 (see Photo 6.5). At the centre of the building is a tower that allows the governor to observe



**Photo 6.5** The panoptic machine.

all the prisoners in the surrounding cells without the prisoners knowing whether or not they are in fact being observed. According to Bentham, the panopticon is 'A new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example: and that, to a degree equally without example' (Bentham, 1995: 31). He also believed that the panopticon design might also be used in 'any sort of establishment, in which persons of any description are to be kept under inspection, [including] poor-houses, lazarettos, houses of industry, manufactories, hospitals, work-houses, mad-houses, and schools' (29).

According to Foucault (1979),

the major effect of the Panopticon [is] to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. . . . [S]urveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary. . . . [T]he inmates . . . [are] caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers. . . . He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation

in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (201, 202–3).

In other words, inmates do not know whether or not they are actually being watched. Therefore, they learn to behave as if they are always being watched. This is the power of the panopticon. Panopticism is the extension of this system of surveillance to society as a whole.

Bentham's panopticon is, therefore, profoundly symptomatic of a historical shift, from the eighteenth century onwards, in methods of social control. This is, according to Foucault, a movement from punishment (enforcing norms of behaviour through spectacular displays of power: public hangings and torture, etc.) to discipline (enforcing norms of behaviour through surveillance); a shift from 'exceptional discipline to one of generalised surveillance . . . the formation of what might be called in general the disciplinary society' (209). As Foucault explains, the panopticon is 'a generalizable model [for] . . . defining power relations in terms of the everyday life. . . . [I]t is a diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form' (205). The movement from spectacle to surveillance turns 'the whole social body into a field of perception' (214). The intersecting gazes of power criss-cross the social body, drawing more and more aspects of human existence into its field of vision. But it is not simply that power catches us in its gaze, rather power works when we recognize its gaze. As Foucault makes clear, using a theatre metaphor, 'We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of the mechanism' (217). In this way, then, he argues, surveillance has become the dominant mode of the operation of power. 'Panopticism is a form of power . . . organised around the norm, in terms of what [is] normal or not, correct or not, in terms of what one must do or not do' (2002c, 58–9). It is a fundamental aspect of what he calls 'normalisation' (79).

An obvious confirmation of his claim is the widespread use of surveillance technologies in contemporary society. For example, it was claimed in 2013 that there are six million CCTV cameras in the UK; roughly one for every eleven people.<sup>5</sup> This stands in direct relation to Bentham's panopticon. But the discipline of surveillance has also had a profound influence on popular culture. I can think of at least four examples of surveillance media. Perhaps the most obvious examples are television programmes such as *Big Brother* and *I'm a Celebrity, Get me Out of Here* – surveillance is a fundamental aspect of how these programmes work. In many ways *Big Brother* is panopticon television in its most visible form. Undoubtedly, part of its appeal is that it appears to enable us to assume the role of Bentham's imaginary governor, as we take pleasure in the ability to observe without being observed, to be involved without being involved, and to judge without being judged. However, in the light of Foucault's point about the production of regimes of truth, we should not assume that we are really outside the reach of the standards and norms that *Big Brother* promotes and legitimates. In other words, it might be possible to argue that the gaze of *Big Brother* is reciprocal; it disciplines us as much as the contestants we watch being disciplined: we are in the cells and not in the governor's tower.



The increasing number of celebrity surveillance magazines, such as *Reveal*, *Closer*, *Heat* and *New*, work in a similar way. Celebrities are monitored and scrutinized, especially in terms of body size and sexual and social behaviour, for our supposedly anonymous pleasure and entertainment. But again, the norms and standards that are used to criticize and ridicule celebrities are the same norms and standards that can be used to discipline us. Similarly, in 'make-over' and 'talk-show' surveillance programmes such as the *Jerry Springer Show* and the *Jeremy Kyle Show*, and *What Not To Wear* and *Ten Years Younger*, advice is freely combined with abuse and ridicule, as subjects are encouraged, often aggressively and to the smug self-satisfaction of the presenters, to embrace self-discipline in order to comply with currently accepted standards of aesthetic and behavioural normality.<sup>6</sup> The fact that we are on the other side of the screen does not mean that we are safe from the demand to conform, or safely outside of the panoptic machine.

## Notes

1. Barthes's 'Myth today' and Williams's 'The analysis of culture' are two of the founding texts of British cultural studies.
2. Barthes's formulation is remarkably similar to the concept of 'interpellation' developed, some years later, by Louis Althusser (see discussion in Chapter 4).
3. Myth works in much the same way as Foucault's concept of power; it is productive rather than repressive (see later in this chapter).
4. This is very similar to the argument made by Pierre Macherey (see Chapter 4).
5. These figures were broadcast on the BBC programme Sunday Morning Live (21 July 2013).
6. If you enter Jeremy Kyle/Jon Culshaw in the search engine on YouTube you will find Jon Culshaw's wonderful parody of Jeremy Kyle. Culshaw quite brilliantly captures the aggression, the discourse of social class and the smug self-satisfaction of this type of programme.

## Further reading

Storey, John (ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 4th edn, Harlow: Pearson Education, 2009. This is the companion volume to the previous edition of this book. A fully updated 5th edition containing further readings is due for publication in 2018. An interactive website is also available ([www.routledge.com/cw/storey](http://www.routledge.com/cw/storey)), which contains helpful student resources and a glossary of terms for each chapter.

- During, Simon, *Foucault and Literature: Towards a Genealogy of Writing*, London: Routledge, 1992. Although the focus is on literature, this is nevertheless a very useful introduction to Foucault.
- Eagleton, Terry, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983. Contains an excellent chapter on post-structuralism.
- Easthope, Antony, *British Post-Structuralism*, London: Routledge, 1988. An ambitious attempt to map the field. Useful chapters on film theory, cultural studies, deconstruction and historical studies.
- Hawkes, Terence, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, London: Methuen, 1977. A useful introduction to the subject.
- McNay, Lois, *Foucault: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994. An excellent introduction to Foucault's work.
- Norris, Christopher, *Derrida*, London: Fontana, 1987. A clear and interesting introduction to Derrida.
- Sarup, Madan, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, 2nd edn, Harlow: Prentice Hall, 1993. An excellent introduction to post-structuralism.
- Sheridan, Alan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, London: Tavistock, 1980. Still the most readable introduction to Foucault.
- Silverman, Kaja, *The Subject of Semiotics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983. An interesting and accessible account of structuralism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, feminism and post-structuralism. Especially useful on Barthes.
- Sturrock, John (ed.), *Structuralism and Since: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. Contains good introductory essays on Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault and Derrida.
- Thwaites, Tony, Lloyd Davis and Mules Warwick, *Tools for Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994. Presents an informed account of the place of semiotics in the field of cultural studies.
- Weedon, Chris, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987. An interesting introduction to post-structuralism from a feminist perspective. Helpful chapter on Foucault.