WATCHING THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL:
RECEPTION OF AN AMERICAN SOAP OPERA

BY WOMEN IN INDIA

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Master of Arts in the
Graduate School of the Ohio State University

by

Sauli Chaudhuri, B.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1995

Master's Examination Committee:

Judith Mayne
Valerie Lee
Poonam Pillai

[Signature]
Adviser
Women's Studies Graduate Program
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and most of all, I must express my appreciation to the women in Bombay, who have given me so much of their time and feelings.

I am grateful to my teachers at OSU, for inspiration and for introducing me to numerous trends of thought. For, as Roland Barthes has written, "[t]he writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original" ("The Death of an Author," in *Music-Image-Text*, p. 46). This thesis reflects a process that was both dynamic and satisfying. I owe a lot to those who stood by me along the way during my Master's study here, especially Professor Judith Mayne whose advice has been valuable to me in every sense of the word. She has read my work with so much care and sensitivity (also editing with tremendous patience) that I often found myself writing to her. Every once in a while, generally when I needed it most, she told me that it was good. This work is indebted to many of her ideas. I am extremely grateful to Professor Valerie Lee for agreeing to be a member of my committee. Her general encouragement and enthusiasm has sustained me throughout my Master's study. Professor Poonam Pillai has provided me with enormous intellectual stimulation and I have learned much from my conversations with her. As a friend, she has been a remarkable fund of companionship, courage, and comfort. Professor Jennifer Terry took time from her busy schedule to read part of my work and was very
generous with her insights. Her suggestions have been very helpful and she has helped me in many more ways than she would realize.

Many of my friends and colleagues, especially Maureen Smith, have seen to it that I had distractions and a good time. From my colleagues in the thesis seminar, Rose Bremer, Maria Galindo, Jill Hornick, Marit Legler, and Kim Sanders, I have learned much and I am very grateful.

Many other people have made my work possible. My family has shown both patience and interest in my work and helped me a great deal throughout my research process. I particularly want to thank my mother, Mridula Chaudhuri, father, Sib Chaudhuri and sister, Susupta Chaudhuri, for their confidence in me. And I thank my husband, Manas Deb, for his loving support and encouragement all the time.

When it comes to acknowledging my debts, I am moved by how much this seems to be a collective inquiry.
VITA

December 30, 1969 ................................................. Born - Rourkela, India

1991 ................................................................. B.A., Lady Shriram
College, University of Delhi

1993-Present ....................................................... Graduate Teaching
Associate, Center for
Women's Studies, The
Ohio State University

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Economics, B.A.
Women's Studies, M.A.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................. ii

VITA ........................................................................ iv

LIST OF TABLES ....................................................... vii

CHAPTER ................................................................. PAGE

I. INTRODUCTION .................................................. 1
   Research Issue ........................................................
   Television Audience Research ..............................

II. RESEARCH METHODS ......................................... 25
   Administration of Interviews ............................... 27
   Informants and Research Design ......................... 32
   The Interviewing Instrument ............................... 34

III. WATCHING *THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL* OF
     'ANOTHER WORLD' IN INDIA ............................. 39
   Reality or Fantasy ................................................ 58
   Resistive Readings .............................................. 64

IV. "THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL" AND THE
    CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION ............................. 67

V. TELEVISION: NARRATIVES CROSSING NATION ........ 79
   Messages Taking Off from U.S. and Landing in India 80
   The Television and the Indian Woman .................. 84
   Conclusion ......................................................... 90
APPENDICES

A. Latest Estimate and Distribution - Data Relative to Chapter I ............ 98
B. Questionnaire ................................................................. 99
C. Responses to Questions 8 and 9 - Data Relative to Chapter III .......... 106

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................. 108


LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Viewers Response to question number 16</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Responses to questions 8 and 9</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Research Issue:

Television demands to be studied in detail. Not only has it transformed the political, economic, and technological organization of our society, TV has begun to alter our ways of seeing and knowing. Framed by the medium of television, contemporary discourses of art, knowledge, and reality have shifted in ways that radically alter the epistemological, aesthetic, and ideological spaces of our culture. Clearly this has serious consequences for all aspects of our society. In analyzing the specific space of television in any culture, the question of sexual difference arises with an urgency. The inscription of gender, though often masked, is key to the reception of television -- the positioning of the TV viewer as well as television's critical reception -- and crucial to the industry's own strategies of production and distribution. Historically, mass culture has often been figured as feminine and denigrated for its supposed threat to the stability of the (masculine) dominant order of high art.\(^1\) While television is clearly fundamental to the maintenance of contemporary

\(^1\)For an analysis of gendered imagery in mass culture criticism, see Tania Modleski, "Femininity as Mas(s)querade: A Feminist Approach to Mass Culture," *High Theory/Low Culture: Analyzing Popular Television and Film*, ed. by Colin McCabe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).
dominant ideologies of society, it too has been figured as feminine and has thus been slighted by academic critics. Because the conditions of TV spectatorship are incompatible with classical notions of aesthetic contemplation and instruction, some critics are led to think of viewers (especially viewers of feminized genres such as soap operas), themselves as the problem: the typical viewer is imagined as lazy, passive or stupid--a bored housewife! Behind many critiques of the medium as exploitative, sensational, trivial, and inane lies an unacknowledged disrespect for an audience that is deemed feminine and inherently passive.

Inherent in the trivialization of television are attacks on its programs, especially those targeted at a predominantly female audience. It is not surprising that the texts most disparaged by criticism in traditional discourses of evaluation are those that position and address themselves to an audience of women or youths. It is my contention, however, that these texts are in many ways the most telling, revealing the specific textual conventions, discursive configurations and dynamics of viewing and consuming invoked by the television apparatus. While these and other texts are attacked for their triviality, television is not just a critical diversion. It is an important part of the cultural language which defines us, a principle component of the mass media which saturate our society with signs and images that attempt to articulate, define, and determine the reality of life. Rather than disparaging the medium for its disordered aesthetic, TV narratives for their lack of development and resolution, and television viewers for their effeminate and infantile passivity, we need to understand how television constructs the relations between the audience, text, and culture in entirely new ways. Television thus requires a theory that will
analyze it in all its complexity: as an economic and political institution, as a specific collection of narrative and textual strategies, as a technological agency, and as an ideological apparatus that is interwoven with the language of culture as well as unconscious desire.

One of the forms most disparaged by TV critics is the soap opera -- a genre historically associated with a female audience and intimately linked to the demands of today's consumer culture. The soap opera can be considered as a potentially powerful source of information for its viewers. I say this not only because of the current theory and research indicating that television (or television fiction) is a forceful instrument of learning in society, but also because it is highly conceivable that the continous-intimacy that seems to be unique in the relationship between the serial and its viewers may have special implications of its own. In concluding a demographic study and content analysis of soap opera viewers and themes respectively, Katzman states:

The almost-realism of the characters and themes, the repetition due to slow pace, and the extremely large number of hours spent viewing soap operas indicate that these shows have great potential power. They can establish or reinforce value systems. They can suggest how people should act in certain situations. they can legitimize behavior and remove taboos about discussion of sensitive topics such as drugs and premarital sex...... They help women pass their days in the house by providing almost real-stories that are highly involving. The clothesline and the neighborhood store have been replaced by the washer-dryer and the supermarket. Soap opera characters have replaced neighbors as topics of gossip. To some extent, the programs may have replaced gossip itself. The big question is to what degree the daytime serials change attitudes and norms and to what extent they merely follow and reinforce their audience. A study of viewers is an obvious step toward an answer.

(Katzman 1972, p. 212)
Since Katzman's observations there have been a number of studies on precisely this issue. However, a study of how viewers in postcolonial, third world countries like India use western soap operas in their daily lives and how serials like *The Bold and the Beautiful* or *Santa Barbara* fulfill certain social and personal needs of the viewers (e.g., reinforcing values, learning about another culture) in these countries, has not been conducted. Certainly, one would have good reason to believe that this area requires examination in the light of the popularity that these soaps enjoy despite cultural differences such as language and ethnicity.

There has been a considerable amount of work on the question of the "uses and gratifications" of television and other media. The "uses and gratifications" perspective emerged as a method of research in the social sciences. An emphasis was placed on monitoring the manifest content of television's output in order to determine either how the content of the message affected the audience or how individual audience members made use of these messages in order to actively fulfill their needs (for information, aesthetic experience, stability, reassurance, contact with others, leisure or escape). However, these studies tended to isolate certain abstract variables from the total viewing experience while maintaining an image derived from communications analysis of an individual viewer in one-to-one contact with a message sender. Through such contact, the receiver is directly hit with an overt and obvious message which then either takes effect or fails. Some of the current research in cultural studies done by feminists, draws on and modifies the basic "uses and gratifications" perspective as related to women audiences (specifically the
pleasure derived by the spectators from the television texts) and their perceptions. They have combined empirically-based research such as these, with textual and cultural analysis in order to better understand the specifically social contexts in which mass culture is used. Much of this work, while interviewing audiences on their patterns of mass culture consumption, treats the viewer/reader responses themselves as texts to be read and interpreted.²

As I have pointed out above, there has not been any research on audiences of American soaps broadcast in India. These soap operas should be designated for particular consideration not only because of their tremendous popularity with the women audience in India, but also because they create for the viewers there, a very special environment not provided by other television genres - the indefinite serialization, the almost daily presentations, and the constant exposure of both the banalities and the extreme intimacies of the characters' lives. Thus soap operas in both content and form present a very definite and unique television genre for investigation.

However, it is not only with regard to "uses and gratifications" that these western soaps, broadcast in India, present an interesting case for study. The issue of the extent to which the viewers treat the serials as "real-life" versus "fiction" is also significant. Briefly put, it can be said that when the viewer perceives the events to be fictional, she demonstrates an awareness of the "authored" control behind the soap opera events - that

²Examples of such scholarship include: Ien Ang, Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination; Janice Radway, Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Culture; and several of the essays in Boxed In: Women and Television, ed. by Helen Baehr and Gillian Dyer.
writers and/or director/producers and/or sponsors, but not characters, are responsible for the day to day occurrences that she witnesses on television. For the most part, she is also aware of the fact that what she views in these soaps are actually fantasy aspects of American culture. When the viewer perceives the events to be real, on the other hand, she does not demonstrate this kind of awareness. Rather she is a spectator to the ongoing soap opera activities much the same as if she were vicariously experiencing the activities of a wealthy, upper-class American family.

The attributes that characterize the soap opera form -- open-ended plots, the daily presentations and the mixture of both life-like and highly artificial interaction among characters -- are influential in terms of this reality/fiction issue. For example, the continuous-intimacy aspect may create a special situation for viewers which is very unlike the relationship established between viewers and other types of television programs. In this case, the ability to see certain people (characters) of a different culture everyday, and to be able to observe, in some fashion, their social activity as well as their thoughts, provides a sense of reality not experienced with other close-ended forms of television drama. Conversely, because this sort of intimacy may not even be available to viewers in their real-life relationships with others, the soap operas may be viewed as incredibly artificial or unreal. In either case, the special characteristics of the serials are possibly uniquely influential in determining the particular orientation the viewer adopts. In turn, the extent to which a viewer adopts a reality orientation (i.e., a perspective that treats the serialized events as real-life) or conversely, the extent to which a viewer adopts a fictional orientation
(i.e., a perspective that treats the serialized events as fiction) may determine, at least in part, how that viewer will use and be gratified by the soap opera she watches.

The age and educational levels of the viewers interviewed for this study are significant in the investigation of the interpretive patterns found in this research. It has been suggested that the educated individual is generally more sophisticated about media issues, more analytic, and more oriented to the structure of mediated events than the less formally educated person. As I will point out later, these analytic abilities bear most directly on the reality/fiction question, and it will be interesting to investigate whether or not the interpretive patterns found in the research with regard to other media and genres are confirmed with respect to the soap opera viewers in this case.

Questions about audiences and related notions like interpretive communities, reception and identity formation loom large within cultural studies. There has also been a substantial body of feminist work on these issues. In this thesis, I will employ a cross-disciplinary approach of cultural analysis wherein questions about identities, pleasure, consumption and cultural ideals will be examined through a study of the particular group of Indian female viewers of the American soap, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, currently being broadcast in India.

Studying ‘actual’ spectators, instead of the text, presents a multitude of methodological problems. Who to study, how to collect the material, what methods of interpretation to use and how to generalize the conclusions, whether the latter should be done or not - all these questions need careful consideration. The next chapter (Chapter II)
tells my research narrative and analyses the methodological issues raised in doing this kind of research. In this chapter, the entire design of the study will be presented.

Chapter III will discuss the specific appeal of the soap *The Bold and the Beautiful*, for the Indian women, what purposes (if any) the soap serves for the viewers and what meanings the viewers produce out of the text. Preferences for particular kinds of heroines and heroes, and likes and dislikes for specific characters in the serial, articulate issues of identity and cultural ideals for these women. The basic question of why women like to see this soap will be dealt with in this chapter. It explores the argument that soap opera viewing is a beneficial form of escape because it sparks hope, reaffirms identities and helps the viewer to look through a window into a "fantasy" about a culture.

Chapter IV deals with the contention that television as a medium is intimately tied to consumerism. It explores the possibility that a program such as *The Bold and the Beautiful*, aligned with the rise of multinational investments in India, might be instrumental (in some ways) in the reproduction of dominant, capitalist patriarchal ideology. This chapter discusses ways in which the logic of commodity culture is articulated with the concerns, values and meanings of everyday life as shown in this soap.

Chapter V starts with a description of the technology of television as a "globalizing" medium with its capacity to transmit cultural narratives from U.S. to India. It then discusses the significance of television as a technological tool available to urban housewives in Indian society. As will be seen in the discussion, there are differential relations to domestic technologies for men and women based on the codification of the tools as "masculine" or
"feminine." I am not suggesting that these differences are attributes of essential biological characteristics; rather my argument stems from the fact that these differences are the effects of the particular social roles that men and women occupy in Indian society. The chapter concludes the entire study by careful thought to the implications of its findings.

Television Audience Research: A Critical History

*Like sands through the hourglass, so are the "Days of Our Lives."*

Each weekday afternoon, most Americans are able to supplement the days of their lives with endless vicarious experiences of love, loss and libido, courtesy of network daytime dramas....or, as we commonly refer to them, "the soaps." Soap operas have been a staple in American broadcasting since the early thirties, and are likely to continue for a very long time to come. An estimated fifty million people are considered to be regular soap opera viewers, including two-thirds of all American women in households with television (Allen 1985, p. 3). This figure translates into some seven million women (those who have access to viewing American soap operas) in the Indian context, and this figure is expected to increase in the near future. In the wake of increasing foreign investment in India, the government has realized the importance of developing a strong telecommunications infrastructure. Due to this, the number of cities connected by microwave links are expected to rise considerably.

---

3According to the latest estimates, out of a total number of 28.3 million urban TV homes, 7.3 million homes receive satellite programs. Only these homes receive the broadcast of foreign television programs. See Appendix A.
As the world races toward the commercialization of technologies such as high-definition, closed-circuit, and interactive television, we are concurrently witnessing the multiplication of broadcast frequencies via satellite, cable, pay-per-view, and terrestrial transmission systems. A similarly dramatic transformation has been, the privatization and internationalization of television programming and network infrastructures throughout the world. This has enabled texts to be carried across the American frontiers into the homes of the people in the Indian subcontinent. Viewers in India are now watching American soaps like *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Santa Barbara. Mash, Remington Steele, Wonder Years, Picket Fences* and *Neighbors* are some of the other American television programs that enjoy considerable popularity with the Indian television audience.

Despite the popularity and profitability of soap operas, they were never considered an important vehicle for prolific academic research until quite recently in broadcast history. Although it is easy to explain the "soap" half of the epithet -- continuing from the days of the radio, soap manufacturers have largely assumed the sponsorship of these shows -- the "opera" half of the label surely seems to facetiously point to that which the serials supposedly are not: "high culture." Aside from those individuals who are particularly enamored of the products of mass or "pop" culture, established critics and experts would not usually be found regarding these serials as a sophisticated art form, until very recently. It can be argued that a possibility which logically might account for the stigma attached to the soap opera form is the fact that since their origin, these serials have been a genre associated with women. Therefore the belittling of this genre was seen by feminist scholars
as just one more example of power-oppression politics. Despite considerable recent theorization on soap operas and their audiences, in dominant discourse, these serials are often still spoken of as trash. But if women's lives and stories are to be taken seriously, then women's genres need a serious look.

This gap has been bridged by scholars in various disciplines such as Film Studies, Women's Studies, Communication and Sociology. Recently there has been a considerable amount of feminist work that has taken place within cultural studies of the media (e.g., Brown 1994; Hobson, 1990; McRobbie, 1992; ). Much of it is ethnographic work on women's television genres like soap operas. Ethnographic research looks at an issue from the inside: it attempts an insider's point of view even though it is tempered by the perspective of the researcher herself. Feminist ethnographic research in cultural studies uses a series of techniques developed originally by anthropologists and also used by sociologists. Although sometimes reader response and reader reception theory and research are often seen as separate from cultural studies and feminism, much of this emerging body of work centers on the reception of media and popular culture by women and other subordinated groups. In audience studies, the interaction between text and reader, program and viewer, has been foregrounded in order to look at the meanings produced in specific contexts.

A central concern within feminist work on the relationship between particular audiences/readers and specific genres such as the romance or the soap opera has been the pleasure of these popular forms for women. Questions of how and why these particular
forms are popular with women, have been analyzed in a variety of ways that challenge the usual dismissal of these pleasures as 'foolish escapism'. Laura Mulvey has done groundbreaking work in the realm of visual pleasures for the cinema spectator (1975). She uses psychoanalytic theory to offer an analysis of the deep-rootedness of the structures of the patriarchal unconscious in the pleasures of popular cinema. One form of pleasure that Mulvey discusses is the identification with the image on the screen. According to her, pleasure in looking involves both sexual drives and ego identification—we take others as objects of the sexual gaze and also identify with screen surrogates in a (mis)recognition of the self. For film pleasure to be successful, the contradictory aims of libido and ego must both be satisfied. As Mulvey demonstrates, this balance is only securely achieved for the male spectator—in classical film, as "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female (Mulvey 1975, p. 11). The male spectator can identify with the active male protagonist, who in turn looks at the female characters within the story. The coincidence of these looks grants a sense of power to the male and any possible threat posed by the female figure (due to the threat of sexual difference and castration anxiety this provokes) is handled through the mechanisms of fetishism and voyeurism, making the female form work to assure rather than threaten a masculine sense of mastery. As Mulvey concludes, women's image in classical cinema is made to uphold male desire and signify a masculine discourse. The subject/object opposition inherent in film spectatorship is thus articulated along lines of sexual difference, reinforcing a particular social hierarchy. It is through the cinema's textual strategies and
signifying codes that such ideological relations are inscribed within narrative film, and as the film spectator is positioned according to these codes, he or she is implicated in these relations.⁴

Television, however, involves a different set of codes, signifying strategies, and textual mechanisms, thereby constructing a different viewer-media relation. Because of this, the ideological dynamics of television differ from film so that while TV clearly reinforces the dominant gender and economic system, the spectator is positioned as a gendered and consumerized subject in a slightly different way. Television abolishes the "distance" between subject and object—a distance which is crucial to the construction of spectacle and the mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism that uphold a sexual opposition in looking. Comparing television to film, for instance, John Ellis argues that while cinematic narration constructs a scenario of voyeurism, centering the look on the female body and granting the spectator power over the image, TV offers itself as an immediate presence lacking the "present absence" central to cinema's voyeuristic regime. Rather than the cinematic gaze, TV involves what Ellis calls the "glance," a domestic, distracted, and powerless look. The TV viewer then delegates her or his look to television itself, forging a sense of intimacy and co-presence as events are shared rather than witnessed.⁵ The

⁴Mulvey's conception has been criticized because of its presumption of a totally male or male-identified, homogeneous spectator.

⁵See Ellis, Visible Fictions, pp. 57-61. According to Ellis, TV has little narration in the cinematic sense and the narrative enigma is usually incidental. Instead there is an open-ended repetition which defies closure—the continuity with difference theorized as "flow" by Raymond Williams (See Raymond Williams, "Programming: Distribution and Flow," Television: Technology and Cultural Form, pp. 78-118.)
pleasures of viewing films based on the experiences of a darkened theater are not totally applicable to the domestic viewing situation where the television is usually part of many activities going on (or available) concurrently. Even in houses with a separate television room, they are seldom black boxes or velvet light traps. Moreover, the commercials, newsbreaks, and network spots mediate the process of identification or desire involved in television spectatorship. It is because of the absence of viewer distance from the image as well as the weakening of the oppositions passive/active and subject/object that television spectatorship has been discussed in relation to theories of feminine subjectivity. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the way in which analyses of the spectator have evolved in television studies is different than in film. While discussing the ethnographic approach in film studies, Judith Mayne delineates the way in which it differs from that of television studies. She notes:

The ethnographic approach to the audience has been more of a horizon of research in film studies than an actual practice. Perhaps because television watching is the most representative, typical, and common spectating activity in contemporary industrial societies, the ethnographic approach has been more visible in television studies than in film studies.

(Mayne 1993, p. 59)

A significant contribution to the re-evaluation of popular pleasure and feminine subjectivity has been done by Tania Modleski (1982). She analyses the pleasures of daytime soap opera in terms of the construction of the female spectator as a kind of ideal mother, trying to have her family happy and united, but continually thwarted by the arrival of new traumas. However, Modleski's study does not tell us anything about how texts are read differently by specific groups of women. Seiter et al. challenge Modleski's
conclusions about the soap opera viewer as ideal mother (1989). But Modleski's implication of a specific social identity -- that of a middle class woman, most likely with a husband who earns a family wage -- is important in specific cases of audience analysis.

In an important shift toward situating the pleasures of the popular within a specific context, Janice Radway's ethnographic exploration of women's pleasure in reading romances marked a new direction within feminist analysis of popular culture (1984). She argues for an analysis of the pleasures of romance within the broader social meanings of the genre to the women readers. The practice of reading, Radway concludes from her ethnography, is, indeed, a way for women to assert their much-prized autonomy, normally undermined by their roles within households in which they are so frequently defined as being there for others. Thus despite the content of the romance novel, which defines women as ultimately dependent on men, the assertion of independence nevertheless takes place through the act of reading itself. Like Modleski, Radway is unwilling to dismiss the readers as necessarily being as conservative as the forms they enjoy. Radway's analysis can also be extended to cover the soap opera text and its viewers.

Ien Ang has attempted to analyze the diversity and contradictions of female audience of television texts, specifically with reference to the serial, *Dallas* (1985). An important theme explored by Ang is the question of fantasy. She argues that the pleasure of popular culture for women as "a flight into a fictional fantasy world": "is not so much a denial of reality as playing with it. A game that enables one to place the limits of the fictional and the real under discussion and make them fluid" (Ang 1985, p. 49). Ang draws
upon Pierre Bourdieu's work on sources of pleasure in consumption practices of popular culture. According to Bourdieu, she argues, popular pleasure:

is characterized by an immediate emotional or sensual involvement in the object of pleasure. What matters is the possibility of identifying oneself with it in some way or another to integrate it into everyday life. In other words, popular pleasure is first and foremost a pleasure of recognition. (Ang 1985, p. 20)

Studies of audiences in cultural studies have traditionally given a voice to what particular groups of people have to say about the media and what they mean in their everyday lives. Within this perspective, the media experience is seen by the researcher as a part of the lived experience of the audience. Their whole cultural pattern, the socioeconomic context, and above all, the political context in the broad sense of the term are seen not just in terms of the formal political institutions of voting, parties, and governments but also in the sense of the relative power to make decisions about one's future or the expression of one's own identity as a member of a less powerful group in society. Cultural studies has had a long-standing commitment to understanding popular culture in terms of consumption. Its association with radical politics of resistance in the 1970s and 1980s, together with the influence of the Gramscian model of power which emphasized negotiation and struggle, rather than entirely successful domination, may have made it particularly receptive to the study of how consumers, rather than producers, make cultural meanings. Theorists and critics (Grossberg, 1988; Radway, 1988) have also conceptualized the reading or viewing process and people's involvement with the text as the product of multiple layers of various discourses. This notion of what has been called the nomadic subject or the traveling subject posits that a reader does not interpret from a position that
is clearly defined and stable. Rather, this subject (or person) changes over time and according to the multiple influences with which she or he comes into contact.

Combining both feminist film theory and cultural studies audience research in *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*, Jackie Stacy has argued in her work that recent work in cultural studies has helped to promote a sense of female agency through its work with audiences which has shown the need for an interactive model of text/audience/context to account for the complexity of the viewing process (1994). Within much cultural studies work, pleasure and activity have been conflated with the resulting assumption that women's pleasure can be equated with their activity as audiences, and activity in a way that is necessarily the opposite of passivity. Three key processes of spectatorship has been investigated by Stacy -- escapism, identification and consumption -- in detail, in terms of their multiple and changing meanings for female spectators. Her work has particular significance in demonstrating the importance of cultural and national location for the meanings of female spectatorship.

In his influential work on encoding and decoding, Stuart Hall argued that meanings do not reside in texts, but rather in the negotiation between reader and text which may produce one of three possible decodings: dominant, negotiated or oppositional (1980). By extending Hall's claims further, Morley offers an analysis of the process of decoding by a particular audience in his study of the British TV series, *Nationwide*. This particular study of *The 'Nationwide' Audience* marked an important shift from textual analysis to a critical analysis of the audience itself (1980). Morley's analysis incorporates a discourse theory
model and provides a general framework for conceptualizing "viewers" and "texts." He sees television viewing as a practice in which viewers play an active role. Later, Morley furthers this position with the claim that the viewer cannot be "extracted" from her/his viewing context. In his ethnographic study *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*, in 1986, he analyses viewing practices within a specific context (that of the family) and also introduces the importance of the social relations of television watching. His study highlights issues of power and control in relation to the sexual division of labor, patriarchal authority, and gendered viewing practices.

John Fiske, in *Television Culture* has developed a schema for theorizing audience meanings (1987). He draws on Bourdieu to theorize audience investments in programs as "being theirs" -- their "cultural capital;" and for generally theorizing the political power of the TV audience. His schema opposes "social power" to "semiotic power." Social power is "the power to construct a socio-economic system," and semiotic power, "the power to construct meanings, pleasures and social identities" (Fiske 1987, p. 309-26). The exercise of semiotic power is politically efficacious in that it introduces difference into the social formation. It also challenges the domination of social power. As Fiske writes, "resistive reading practices that assert the power of the subordinate in the process of representation and its subsequent pleasure pose a direct challenge to the power of capitalism to produce it's subjects-in-ideology" (Fiske 1987, p. 326). Although Fiske refers to issues of viewer pleasure and spectator/text relationships, he tends to emphasize Annette Kuhn's "social audience" character of the viewer.
In her theory of audiences, Annette Kuhn has designated subjects constituted by the context--"social audience," and the subjects constituted by the text--"spectators." In defining the "social audience," Kuhn writes, "constructed by discursive practices, both of cinema and TV and of social science, the social audience is a group of people who buy tickets at the box office, or who switch on their TV sets; people who can be surveyed, counted and categorized according to age, sex, and socio-economic status." With regard to spectators, Kuhn writes, "social audiences become spectators in the moment they engage in the processes and pleasures of meaning-making attendant on watching a film or TV program." The phrase "social audience," emphasizes the status of cinema and TV as social and economic institutions. "Spectators," on the other hand, emphasizes their statuses as "regimes of pleasure." Kuhn's work is important to this field because it clarifies the implications of the "spectator"/"viewer" problem. The work which emphasizes context, whether tacitly or overtly, posits a female viewer who is already formed, by social and cultural discourses, as an a priori gendered subject. This feminine subject then interacts with the text which is directed or targeted towards her. The work, which emphasizes text on the other hand, overtly posits a feminine subject who is constructed in and by the operations of the text.

The question of social relations of media consumption and the issue of gendered audiences has also been addressed by Ann Gray in her ethnographic study of women and

---

6See Annette Kuhn's article "Women's Genres" in Screen (Vol. 25, No. 1, 1984), for an explanation of her analysis of the split in viewer theory between work which emphasizes "context" (often TV studies) and that which emphasizes "text" (often film studies).
the domestic use of VCRs (1987). Some of the women interviewed in Gray's study described their television viewing practices as integral to their domestic routines: a daytime soap opera may be watched as a reward for the successful completion of particular domestic tasks. Similar to the women in Radway's study discussed above, the women in Gray's study used soaps to signify a breathing space from the demands of others in the family. According to Gray and Radway, women audience's pleasure in soaps and romances can frequently be felt to be embarrassing or foolish by the women themselves who have had to defend their taste against male derision.

Until very recently, feminist critics have used stable categories of gender; that is, they have studied the category of woman as if that category were unproblematic. However, there have been changes in the way the audience members have been conceived of by the critics, according to Charlotte Brunsdon (1993). She has looked at soap opera criticism since the 1970s, when soap operas began to be revalued by feminist critics working in the cultural studies tradition. Brunsdon has developed a method of looking at feminist cultural criticism and research concerning soap opera audiences in which she differentiates critical responses based on the critic's relationship to women as social subjects. Her study 'Crossroads': Notes on Soap Opera, is one of the first to take the audience and their viewing context seriously (1981). Her examination highlights the active participation of the Crossroads audience. By challenging the myth of the passive viewer and replacing it with an active and more diverse model, Hobson lends supremacy to the audience's own perception of the program. The reading of the program, she argues, extends far beyond the
text itself and depends upon knowledge and experience outside the viewing situation. Thus she emphasizes the activity of the viewing process itself.

The theorization of gendered audiences in the contemporary postmodern research environment has come under attack because it often takes white, middle-class First world women (and presumably men) as a norm. In addition, the idea of gendered viewing seems to smack of biological essentialism. Recognizing the pitfalls of this form of theorizing, Mary Ellen Brown posits in her recent work, *Soap Opera and Women's Talk: The Pleasure of Resistance*, that gendered viewing needs to be conceptualized in terms of specific cultural, social, and historical notions of what appropriately is viewed, enjoyed, and valued as masculine or feminine viewing practices (1994). Brown explores many of the facets of soap opera discourse networks, or gossip networks, by looking at the social context of women's talk and by considering how soap opera, as a genre of television and radio programs, developed around a preexisting women's culture. Her analysis suggests that through the enjoyment of viewing soap operas, women create the opening that for them serves as a wedge into dominant culture. She claims:

By exposing an everyday, mundane, and generally devalued media form to serious scrutiny and by examining its hegemonic position in women's lives in certain parts of the Western world, I hope to connect this research to an international trend in which televised melodrama and soap opera have begun to be examined and their serious contribution explored, not only in relation to gender-power issues but also to class-power issues. For many, the politics of pleasure begins at home.

(Brown 1994, p. 20)

As Brown points out, lately there has been an emerging body of research in other countries on popular television serials and how their audiences view them. The emergence of pro-
development soap operas throughout the Third World countries opened a new chapter on study of television programs and audience studies. Unlike traditional soap operas produced in the West, pro-development soap operas are dramatic serials with educational content that are designed to promote specific social beliefs and practices. There were a number of studies on the audience reception of the first such soap produced for national television in India in 1984 -- *Hum Log*.

William Brown studied the broadcast of *Hum Log* in India in order to evaluate the effect of the exposure to the serial on the respondents' beliefs in women's equality, women's freedom of choice and family planning (1988). His findings demonstrate that television programs in India significantly affect the cognition of viewers there. A similar study was conducted by Amita Malwade-Rangarajan in 1992. Her ethnographic study of audiences and identity formation through this serial revealed that while audiences played an active role in the process of viewing, the latter was affected by group dynamics such as language, education, occupation and personal experiences in the world. She demonstrated that while the non-professionals were more likely to come up with oppositional or dominant readings, the professionals were more likely to come up with negotiated readings of the soap opera. Most of her respondents saw Indian identity as made up of certain Western customs and modes of behavior, on the one hand, and regional customs and modes of behavior, on the other.

*Hum Log* ushered in the age of commercial television in India and paved the way for the proliferation and popularity for dramatic serials. Some of the soaps based on stories
from Hindu mythology have been very popular with both female and male audiences. Examples of such serials are *The Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Ananda Mitra has looked at these "religious soap operas" for an in-depth analysis of the role of television in Indian households, in re-informing the popular cultural activities of the viewing members (1992). Specifically, the serialization of the epic *Mahabharat*, which consisted of ninety three episodes, is examined for its textual and representational characteristics. Following this analysis, a series of conclusions are drawn about the role that television played in re-defining and re-producing the national image of India around a predominantly Hindi speaking, Hindu male center.

Arvind Rajagopal has examined how contemporary viewers in India re-narrativized *The Ramayana* in terms of their own lives (1992). Studying the uses of the televisual broadcast of this epic and its reception in Indian society illuminates and furthers analyses of how hegemony and national identity are achieved and contested in a post-colonial society through spectatorship. Purnima Mankekar's recent work is a feminist ethnography of how a certain class of women interpreted dramatic serials broadcast on state-run television in India (1993). While focussing on the role of these serials in the creation of women viewers as gendered and national subjects, she has interrogated the relationship between popular narratives and the construction of subjectivity for women. Based on repeated, in-depth interviews, participant observation, and life-narratives constructed by women viewers, textual analyses, and interviews with Doordarshan officials, critics, activists, producers, scriptwriter and actors of serials, her work is extremely significant in
charting how viewers actively engage with television texts, and it also foregrounds the manner in which "ordinary" men and women appropriate, negotiate, and sometimes even subvert hegemonic discourses.

Thus, important work has already been done in the realm of television and audience studies in India. Lately there has been a great diversity of themes and settings for soaps in India. Foreign, especially American, models for television serials have been important in local productions, with transformations in the light of the specific nature of local audiences, class configurations, and particular national cultural traditions and practices. In the 1990s there has been a heavy import of American television programs which enjoy immense popularity with the television audience. However viewership of these programs has been restricted to a certain section of the population because the programs can be viewed only in the major cities which have access to satellite links and by the households therein, that have cable television. So far there has not been any study undertaken on the reception of such programs, and their importance in the lives of women viewers who constitute the bulk of audience for the American soaps aired by Star (Satellite Television Asia region) Television in India.

Within the limited framework of this thesis, I propose to explore a select group of women in India and their pleasures and displeasures of watching American soap operas, specifically The Bold and the Beautiful. I will also explore briefly how this soap encourages a form of subjectivity associated with both traditional notions of femininity, and consumerism.
CHAPTER II

Research Methods

Studying 'actual' spectators presents a multitude of problems and is loaded with methodological challenges. Who to study, how to collect the material, what methods of interpretation to use and how to generalize the conclusions -- all these questions need careful consideration. Is it possible to be descriptive without either using the writer's interpretation as a prototype or suggesting a representative or typical interpretation (from quantification or an inferred consensus or a creative deduction)? To put it in another way, can we communicate an event without subjecting it to interpretation? It is not that the scholar is uniquely qualified to make these interpretations but that the text can only be known through the eyes, ears, and opinions of a viewer. Is that viewer to be the academic analyst or a prototype/consensus constructed by the analyst?

It may be that any representation of audiences is inescapably univocal. "...It is important to acknowledge, from the outset, that any analytic conception of the audience involves a considerable amount of projection, myth-making, and fabrication" (Mayne 1993, p. 158). However much we may aspire to a more democratic mode of explication, to providing people the opportunity to speak about their own perceptions, in their own voices with their own understanding of events/characters, what we generally get are not
Page 26 does not exist
ethnographic studies. It is empirical research that is cognizant of and problematizes the relation between the scholar and those who are being studied. These methods are based on an understanding of the researcher as involved in interpretation (not explanation) and a struggle that must be both self-conscious and dialogical. It offers a symptomatic reading, one that is sensitive to the conceptual structures that informs the thought of both the researcher and the women being studied and attempts to uncover hidden levels of discourse, a reading not just for facts or opinions but, as Louis Althusser puts it, for "insights" and "oversights." These methods relate to some of the larger political and epistemological debates on representation and authority that have been discussed in the arts as well as the social and natural sciences.

Administration of Interviews: How to 'Produce' Meanings

Meaning is not only in the text itself but is inferred by individual viewers from the means of representation and narrative strategies of the text and the wealth of experience that the viewer carries into the viewing situation. While watching soaps, the viewer brings private associations to the specific sounds and images broadcast. Knowledge of past episodes, other soap operas, publicity, promotion, a friend's interpretation, or real-life events, can all contribute to the construct we think of as the story. Meaning is a social and

---


8For a discussion on ethnography, see James Clifford, "Introduction To Partial truths," Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, Clifford and George E. Marcus, ed. (Berkeley: University of California, 1986). Other essays also in this collection deal with some of the ethnographic writing/representations.
cultural phenomenon. In this conception, television is not an object; it is a multi-dimensional activity. However, the production of meaning is not totally individualistic or totally a matter of independent choice. The production of meaning must be seen in its social and historical context and within a specific social and historical tradition. People are not independent identities existing in isolation. We are social beings and we construct our interpretations, in part, from our beliefs and assumptions (generally shared, to some extent, by the community or communities to which we belong and of which we are a function) and from the social and material experiences that make up our life practices. The interpretive operations are constrained by not only the narrative strategies, but also the systems of intelligibility, the norms, and the values of the interpretive community. People who watch soap operas everyday and over years, are formed in part by this practice and this practice is part of what has contributed to their interpretations, desires, and pleasures. In the audience, some consensus is quite likely, not only because the viewers have watched the same show (and been affected in some degree by its narrative strategies), but also because norms and beliefs are partially communal and conventional. No meaning is without a context or completely spontaneous; however, interpretive communities are not always in agreement, stable, inflexible, closed, or complete. The viewing experience can, in practice, reveal incoherence, instabilities, and possibilities for change.⁹

Therefore I have tried to think of television as a lived practice, as a part of a social process, not as a product. The emphasis here is on the American soap operas aired in India, specifically *The Bold and the Beautiful*, as it has been experienced by the women I have spoken to. This study has been based on my discussions with 30 viewers in the city of Bombay, India. The discussions ranged from informal conversations to a more formal format of a questionnaire. In some cases, I visited the informant on more than one occasion, sometimes watching television with her. The interview was not an attempt to construct a quantitatively typical viewer, or a quantifiably representative experience. I haven't aimed for any 'absolute truths,' for in order to reflect on or illuminate experience it is often important to retain and savor the ambiguities, the variety of meanings, the arena of diversity. These visits to viewers' homes were not an attempt at participant observation because it seemed to me that the presence of the researcher in the home is too intrusive to expect the situation to be similar to ordinary (especially in cases where the viewer watches alone). Rather they were treated as opportunities for dialogic interplay. My presence as a researcher provoked and affected a new situation -- discussions about the soap opera, descriptions of characters, recounting plots. In other words, I wanted to use the interaction between the researcher and the informant, while remaining cognizant of my own role as an interested (in both senses of the word) partner. The interviews are not evidence; they are data--an opportunity for discursive analysis and interpretation. The informants didn't speak in the abstract but to the researcher and with the researcher and inasmuch as the information is disseminated through the researcher, it is very important to analyze the dynamics (and
the politics) that produce these events. Research conceived as simply a conversation with fans about matters of common interest may be as naive as a conception of research as 'capturing' attitudes and beliefs without the informants being aware. The informant's responses were, after all, created to answer the questions I was curious about and in some cases the informant probably had not thought much about the issues discussed until presented with the interview event. So in a large measure the informant's views can be seen as a response to my views. The questions I asked or did not ask helped to form the structure of the interview and were grounded in my consciousness of the subject and the event, as much as the informant's answers to the previous questions. It is not that my informant's thoughts necessarily preexisted and were communicated to me, but they may have actually taken form when presented with the opportunity to articulate them. For example, in the group discussion with college students I was greeted with a barrage of questions on which "my" informants seemed to want a scholarly opinion. Sometimes I was asked by other respondents one or two thoughtful questions that had obviously been troubling the viewer for some time -- specially questions about which character, or what characteristics in the female actresses of the soap, could be considered feminist in nature (because of my identity as a researcher/scholar and a master's student in Women's Studies, my responses were always considered as 'correct'). And certainly most of my own a priori assumptions were crystallized through my talks with the viewers. The interview dynamic, then, includes the relationship between the informant and the interviewer/interpreter; it also includes, however, the relationships of the informant with her own consciousness and the
researcher with her consciousness. 10

Though it was sometimes tempting, I have not tried to transform the viewer's experience into a coherence. 11 The material may be sometimes unruly, unintegrated; however, I wanted to respect the discursive complexity, the contradictions and paradoxes. I have tried to be sensitive to differences among viewers and within viewers. And while I tried to be careful not to reduce viewers' multiple relations with soap operas to a single statistic or set of statistics, or reduce the audience to a life-style or value system, it seems to me that if there are shared interpretive strategies or a sense of community, this might be a way to describe them. Therefore, besides being responsive to social issues (such as class, age and education) and psychological factors that affect individual viewers, my methods also attempted to be sensitive to shared concerns.

The college women sample was asked to fill up the questionnaire at home. The students had a period of two weeks in which to complete the questionnaire and return them to me. I also had the opportunity to have an informal group discussion on the topic with the respondents. 12 The interviews were orally administered in the case of the sample of

10 Valerie Walkerdine has noted the lack of "any account of the ethnographer's own position in the web of power/knowledge/desire," in much ethnographic work. See her essay, "Video Replay: Families, Films, and Fantasies," (In V. Burgin, J. Donald and C. Kaplan ed., Formations of Fantasy) p. 192.

11 Wide ranging agreements among the respondents is not necessarily the evidence of a similarity of interpretation; it may indicate the prevalence of a conventional belief.

12 Professor A. Vinayak at St. Xavier's college gave up a class period of 45 minutes so that I could get the whole group at one place for a considerable length of time.
housewives. Each session generally lasted for an hour to an hour and half. The questions were presented, more or less, in the order in which they appear on the interview form and the responses were recorded on the form immediately. Since each interview was open-ended, and since some of the questions are only logical extensions of prior questions, a respondent would sometimes answer more than one question in a single response.

**Informants and Research Design: Who are the Women?**

I have often wondered about the appropriateness or adequacy of the term "informant." Appreciating the relationship between the researcher and the respondent as outlined above, it may be said that the word "collaborator" would be better, but that does not really recognize the lack of equality between researcher and informant. The ideal of a transcendence of disparity is a happy fiction that seldom exists in real life. Not that the relationships are static. They continually shift with many co-existing elements, especially during a long-term research project. To a certain extent, though responding to the instigating force of the researcher, any dialogical research is also partially directed and/or circumscribed by the informants. On the other hand, the uses of the research—and its purpose—is generally decided by the researcher (although she may have the tacit support of an academic community) and it is generally for the benefit of the researcher (or her career or status). Research conceived as conversations about shared convictions is a

---

13Initially this group was also asked to fill up the questionnaires and return them at a later date. However, when I went around to collect the filled up forms, I discovered that most of the questions, especially the open-ended ones, had not been answered. So I requested each of the respondents for an appointment -- a time when she would feel comfortable to sit with me and respond to my questions orally. In fact, I met with some of them a number of times.
romantic ideal. However, it is possible that a recognition of the interdependency and interaction might be a bridge to greater understanding.

My informants came from two relatively homogeneous groups in terms of class and age. The first group of 15 college students is from St. Xavier's college in Bombay, India while the second group also of 15 respondents, mainly housewives, is from a suburban locality -- Juhu -- also in Bombay, India. It was necessary to make certain selections in order to limit the focus of my research and these selections have determined the results produced here. Thus the arguments I have made in this study relate only to a particular group of women. The specific locality of Bombay was chosen because of the fact that the distribution of *Star TV* is highest in the western region of India. Also, the TRP (Television rating Program) of *The Bold and the Beautiful* is highest in this particular region of India.

The groups varied in the following obvious ways:

1. Age. The college students were in the age group of 19-24 and the housewives were in the age group, 25-64. Most of the respondents in the latter group were between the ages of 25-44.

2. Educational Level. The two groups were divided also on the basis of the amount of formal education they had received: while all the students obviously had an undergraduate degree at least, most of the older respondents had a high school degree or had accomplished some amount of undergraduate college work. There were a few who had undergraduate and even graduate degrees.

---

14See Appendix A for the distribution figures.
3. Specific Serial. A serial specific orientation facilitates the interview style by giving focus to a respondent who might ordinarily have several serials in her repertoire. As can be seen from the interview form, being serial-specific helps to point out specific liked and disliked characters. In addition to watching *The Bold and the Beautiful*, most of the college students rated American serials (for example, *Mash, Remington Steele* and *Santa Barbara*) as the top three serials most frequently watched by them. Most of the housewives mentioned *Santa Barbara* along with *The Bold and the Beautiful*, when asked to list their favorite American soaps. They also mentioned several Indian soaps as their top three serials.

The soap opera chosen for specific focus -- *The Bold and the Beautiful* -- was selected for three reasons: First and foremost is the obvious reason, that of the soap being an American one. My study deals with the specific effects of an American soap on Indian women viewers. Second, it is one of the most popular American soaps watched in India and commands a high TRP among *Star TV* viewers. Third, it is also currently aired in the United States (older episodes are in progress for the Indian audience) and thus presents an opportunity for a future project that could be a comparative study of audience reception of this soap in India and in the U.S.

**The Interviewing Instrument: Research Tool**

The research tool used in this ethnographic study is an oral questionnaire. The questionnaire format is useful for gathering data about the participants themselves in a form that can be easily compared in one of the following ways: across groups within the study,
with groups from previous studies, or concerning specific issues. In the present study, the
questionnaire (see Appendix B) was used to gain knowledge about the group rather than
to make direct comparisons with other studies. Using Radway's and Stacy's structured, but
open-ended questionnaires as models, an interview form was created.\(^\text{15}\) Approval of The
Ohio State University Human Subject Review Board pertaining to procedures and rights
of participants was obtained in June 1994, before the data collection process was
undertaken in India. Data were collected during a 2 month period -- July and August -- in
1994. Out of 46 women approached, 30 provided usable data. The rest (16 women)
could not be considered for purposes of this study because they did not watch American
soaps. Two specific samples of college women and housewives were chosen in order to
investigate the theoretical relationships among the variables of age and education, rather
than to generalize the results in connection with the interpretive patterns found in this
research. In addition, besides housewives, college students are major television viewers.
Studies have shown that college students also are active soap opera fans (Lemish, 1985).

The design of the questionnaire enabled me, first, to assess television viewing
habits of the respondents. Specifically, the first section had questions that were devised to
determine the mechanics of television serials viewing, e.g., How frequently they watched
soaps, how many did they watch regularly, how often did they see B&B (The Bold and the
Beautiful), how did they compare soap opera viewing to their other leisure activities, etc.
The second section is devoted to determining the degree to which the viewer treats soap

\(^{15}\)See Janice Radway, Reading The Romance, Appendixes (p. 223) and Jackie Stacy,
Star Gazing, Appendix 2 (p. 243)
opera material as real-life, or conversely as fiction. Following this section is the section comprising questions which are concerned with the extent to which viewers seek out socially reinforcing material in the soap operas. In other words, to what extent are viewers most interested in soap opera material involving issues of sex, violence, morality and character traits of both men and women. These questions are also designed to indicate the degree to which viewers identify with the American female characters on the screen. The response to questions that involve asking the respondents to rate the qualities that they like to see in a heroine, suggest their perceptions of ideal womanhood and also the qualities that they value most in women. Other questions in this questionnaire are designed to explore the interactional function of viewing *The Bold and the Beautiful* -- how often the viewers talk about the soap opera and the extent to which they see the soap as providing a one-way mirror through which they can peek in order to see how people in a different country live their day-to-day lives. The last section of the questionnaire consisted of demographic questions that helped to describe the sample and to control possible effects on the dependent variables.

Spending two months in India was not really enough to address adequately, certain questions that spring to mind in connection with the coincidence of television broadcast of Western soaps and the 'consumer boom' in the country. Recently the government of India opened up the economy (as part of its effort to 'liberalise' the economy) to Western capitalist interests. Due to this, there has been an expansion of the consumer markets in India. This has undoubtedly resulted in a shift in discourses of glamour and
commodification. Certain questions that need to be investigated in this context are, for example, what does it mean to watch certain ideals of femininity and womanhood embodied by the soap opera characters in the scenario of an expanding consumer goods market? How does it affect female spectators and their perceptions of being "well-dressed" and independent? Do these soaps encourage commodity consumption? I have tried to deal with some of these issues in the next two chapters.

Engaging in research for this thesis has been a very productive experience, often generating new questions and new problems. The goal hasn't been to offer final truths as much as to grapple with the ways that we might explore experience. On rereading my work, I have noticed changes of writing style while switching from one mode to the other: a tension between theory and experience that is hard for a scholar to avoid--or not enjoy. In some parts, certain linguistic structures, academic language, and abstraction have been difficult to avoid and are disturbing. In retelling and in some cases, translating some of the women's experiences, I regret that I might have lost the orality of the original, the inflections, timbre, volume, and rhythm of women speaking. It has also not been possible to record most of the actions and postures of the conversations, the widening of eyes, raised eyebrows, waving of arms, and blushes. The written representation misses both the nuances and gestures of the live encounter. Gesture and laughter often accentuate the emotional content of what was said. However, it is not simply this lack of resonance that worries me. Gesture and laughter might also express an attitude towards the material, perhaps an attitude that the speaker might not be able (or willing) to express otherwise. A smile or a
nod can sometimes indicate the recognition of contradictions or perhaps modify a complaint in such a way that recognizes the necessity to contain it. A smile or a nod can sometimes be an indication of a shared understanding, part of what must be used to make sense of both our dialogue and their experience.

It is also difficult for a written account to include the gaps and silences. What is not said might be, at times, more expressive than what is reported. I raise these issues not as a question of the purity of the representations. It is a point of theoretical importance, a question of interpretation: the way the speaker and her narrative has affected the present writer. It would be wrong not to acknowledge both the fascination of confessional revelation and the pull of theoretical argument. Research is always historically and socially located. We should not claim either privilege or neutrality. The areas we choose to explore, the very questions we choose to ask, are informed by the place and moment we inhabit. But however much our personal autobiography inflects the research, we can't assume that it corresponds in any real way with the experiences of the informants (McRobbie 1982, p. 52). Like many other research studies, this one began as a modest inquiry and, at times, seemed like it was going to encompass the world. What you have before you contains the traces of several challenges, interruptions, and compromises.
CHAPTER III

Watching The Bold and the Beautiful of "Another World," in India

Hundreds of years ago in the ancient world, there was a monastery near the ocean, run by a group of old and wise nuns. Those who joined the monastery had to relinquish emotional contact with the world outside the monastery and lead a life bereft of luxury and worldly pleasures. Among the nuns in the monastery, there was a young nun who had shown great promise and dedication in performing the daily rituals. One day, the head priestess found the young nun alone in a corner and in deep contemplation. She asked the latter what was bothering her. The young nun replied that she was wondering what the world looked like outside the walls of the monastery. "I would like to see the world outside, perhaps take a voyage on one of the great ships and see various places and different people," she said.

The old priestess said, "Go to the rooftop at noon tomorrow and you will be able to see the world from there."

Next day, at noon, the bewildered young nun climbed on to the rooftop and spent hours staring at the view that unfolded before her. Frustrated at not being able to see anything besides the waters of the ocean and a ship on the dock, the nun went back to the head priestess. "I sat there for hours and all that I could see was the water extending beyond the horizon," she said. "Was that all you saw?", asked the older nun. The young nun replied, "Well, I also saw a huge ship docked at the harbor and people in the ship, wearing strange clothes and shouting in a foreign language."

"My daughter," said the priestess, "the ship you saw was from a foreign land and the people in it are from that land. Everyday at noon, you will find a different ship anchoring at the harbor, carrying people from far away lands. Just by going to the rooftop everyday, you will be able to see people from different parts of the world. Why would you want to go on a long voyage to see the world when you can have the world come to you?"

Such was the wisdom in the nun's words, that all over the world, people still follow her advice. However, we no longer need to climb onto our rooftops or go to the harbor. Instead, we sit on a comfortable couch and fiddle with a small gadget (the remote control) to open our window – the television – to the world outside.
So now in India, we can just turn on the T.V. and draw America into our world. At the end of the twentieth century, communication has become the paradigm of the new global society in an economy based on non-material flow. Technologies and networks have taken root to push back ceaselessly the frontiers of the nation-state. Television as an industry has been one of the most active participants in this world-wide technetronic revolution and has been the leader in taking cultural narratives across nations. The 'global village' concept of yester-years is a fact now. As the first 'global society' in history, United States has succeeded in proposing patterns of behavior and values that are considered to be "modern," universally. The broadcast of U.S. soap operas in other countries can be considered a vehicle for this purpose. International television plays an important part in defining and clarifying the realities of the rest of the world beyond the viewers' own geographical borders. The increasing internationalization of television programs has made it possible for women in India to turn on their television sets and select the channel which airs The Bold and the Beautiful, in order to be able to "look into"U.S. culture - the clothes, the products and the way of life in 'another world.'

In the 1990s, there has been a heavy import of American television programs in India. Soaps, particularly The Bold and the Beautiful, met with an immediate success with the women viewers. Broadcast of this soap started in July 1992 in India (five years after

---

16With the emergence of global networks and satellite links, television has been sharing Hollywood's role as the chief purveyor of the American image abroad.

17Though we know that soaps like the Santa Barbara and The Bold and the Beautiful convey only fantasy aspects of the U.S. culture, certain aspects are perceived as "reality" by some viewers in India.
it was started in the U.S. ) and has continued ever since. *Star* (Satellite Television Asia Region) *Plus* airs this soap from Monday to Friday evenings at eight p.m. and at eleven thirty a.m. in the mornings, each episode being a duration of thirty minutes.\(^{18}\) The two families who are the major forces behind most of the happenings are the Forresters, and the Logans. The Forresters are one of the very wealthy families in Los Angeles. Stephanie, wife of Eric Forrester, is portrayed as an elegant and wise socialite (forever concerned about the reputation of the family as well as the well-being of each of the members) and they have a daughter named Kristen. Their sons are Ridge and Thorne. Ridge is shown as the primary male character who is very sought after by many of the women. One of them is Brooke, who is part of the Logan clan. Brooke's primary contender in terms of a relationship with Ridge is Caroline Spencer, who was earlier married to Thorne Forrester (but she had always been deeply in love with Ridge). The other 'important' characters of the Logan family are Donna, Stephen, Katie, Storm and Beth. Beth is Brooke's mother, who had a romantic relationship with Eric Forrester once upon a time. There is a continuing mutual attraction between the two, much to the dismay of Stephanie Forrester. The Forresters own a prestigious and glamorous fashion designing company called "The Forrester Creations." Sally Spectra is another key character in this soap, who is also a fashion designer. However, Sally's firm, known as "Spectra Fashions," is not associated with the prestige that "The Forrester Creations" is linked with because Sally Spectra's designs are generally, copies (or even cheap imitations) of the unique Forrester designs.

\(^{18}\)The morning episode is a re-run of the previous night's broadcast.
So far in India, the episodes of this soap have been within the context of the traditional fare of romance, courtship, marriage, and blackmail.

Part of the success of this soap can be attributed to its 'foreign' nature. Devoted viewers faithfully follow the lives and loves of the characters. They even turn to magazines such as the E-TIMES to find out "what's going to happen" in the future episodes.\(^{19}\) Obviously there is a certain degree of pleasure involved for the women who watch this soap daily, in India. In this chapter I have attempted to develop an understanding of how this soap, how the psychic and cultural pleasures (and displeasures) involved therein, work in the women viewers' lives in India.

_They who live to pleasure—must find their enjoyments, their happiness in pleasure!_

Mary Wollstonecraft

Our desires, pleasures, and discontent are generally private and, because they are often rooted in and draw upon unexpressed or unrecognized feelings, are sometimes difficult to acknowledge or talk about. Our feelings and what things mean to us, besides being difficult to know, may also be too important to share. Understanding, reporting and interpreting subjective experience is certainly a difficult task. Yet to avoid interrogating the personal is to miss the specificity of how our conflicts and contradictions are lived and deny the political in our daily lives. Accounts of subjective experience can point to senses of pleasure and displeasure that, though they certainly have a material bias, might be

\(^{19}\)"What's going to happen in the popular soaps The Bold & The Beautiful and Santa Barbara this week? Find out inside." The quote is from the contents page of the E-TIMES (Aug 27 - Sept 2, 1994). E-TIMES is a weekly entertainment plus TV guide, published and distributed in India.
difficult to articulate in other than subjective terms. There may be some insights in the tension between how we live and feel and what we feel we are allowed or able to express.

I have attempted to be sensitive to differences within viewers—there may be both diversity and contradiction in our thoughts about our lives. It may sometimes be difficult to recognize the deep ambivalence around the construction of subjectivity, around memory, fantasy, pleasure, and desire. They are not simple processes structured around fixed 'selves' which we either are, or are not, nor are they sites of autonomous identification. Much as there is a struggle between forces of domination and resistance, there is also a dialectical tension between how we live and how we would like to live. Therefore it is important to recognize that we may be conflicted about many of our emotions.

The experiences that the viewers of The Bold and the Beautiful have communicated to me are the result of very complex processes of identity, interaction, and interpretation. We should keep in mind that for some people, both housewives and college students, watching soap operas has not attained the same respectability that writing about soaps has attained recently, in academic circles. It is possible that the concern about women's free

---

20See "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory, Showalter, ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) p. 262. Elaine Showalter writes that all people generate beliefs and order ideas of social reality at the unconscious level, but dominant groups control the forms and structures in which consciousness can be articulated. Thus, women are a "muted group," precisely because we must mediate our beliefs through the permitted forms of dominant discourse. For Showalter, this is a problem of both language and power.

21In Janice Radway's study of women who read romance novels, the informants cited the social legitimacy of reading, yet seemed to need to apologize for reading romances. To them, romances were understood to be a devalued genre. Watching soap operas seems to be associated with a similar kind of stigma.
time and the many derisive comments and jokes made about women watching soap operas have not only helped to sustain soaps as gendered discourse in the popular imagination, but may also have helped to 'politicize' them, as in the case of United States. However in India, despite feminization of certain specific forms of television serials, there hasn't been an effort at politicization of these forms. So there hasn't been extensive theorization on turning these forms of serials into a 'resistant' discourse.

For many viewers soap opera watching involved complex emotions and what they chose to talk about and how they discussed themselves and their activities often involved feelings of guilt, boasting, justification and/or apology. One of the college-student viewers said, "I don't know who has time to take such nonsense seriously." This attitude was prevalent among more of the college students than the housewives. In fact most of them (and even one housewife) denied that this soap was important to them, but seemed nonetheless excited to speak about it in the group discussion. Interestingly, the college students' frequent disclaimers about soaps being unimportant, reflect the moralism of the academic community in which they thrive and perhaps that of the popular press: watching these kind of programs should not be taken seriously because they are not worthy of serious attention. Such an evaluation is itself produced discursively. It is, at root, a representation which comes into existence within a process of exchange and reflects not only a sensitivity to the values of dominant aesthetic discourses in India but also the consciousness of the viewer's position as a consumer.
It is not easy to articulate a coherent politics of pleasure because pleasure is not static, and neither can it be attributed to one dominant cause. There could be a multitude of reasons behind the pleasure that women viewers in India experience while/after watching *The Bold and the Beautiful*, and the reasons could be changing constantly. "Spectatorship is not only the act of watching a film, but also the ways one takes pleasure in the experience, or not; the means by which watching movies becomes a passion, or a leisure-time activity like any other" (Mayne 1993, p.1). Though Mayne is talking about film spectatorship here, her point could very well be extended to include television spectators also. The pleasure that Indian women experience while watching *The Bold and the Beautiful* can have to do simply with the enjoyment of the activity itself, that is, active pleasure. Most of the women I spoke to like the soap very much and would try not to miss even a single episode, if possible. Twenty-two respondents said that they watch this soap everyday. For these women, there could be any number of "contradictory impulses that comprise pleasure" (Mayne 1993, p.3). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight some of the seemingly obvious ones because the everyday practice itself, of taking pleasure into one's own hands can be seen as a political act for the women. They nominate, value, and regulate their own pleasure. In a more political context, these can be the tools for recognizing one's own oppression. Women usually function in our society as givers, not takers, of pleasure. Claiming one's space could be considered as part of this process of pleasure. Women who watch the soap everyday said that usually they did not let any other engagement take precedence over their viewing activity. A number of them said that this
time - eight till nine in the evenings - was specially reserved for watching television serials. Because women are silenced in many aspects of interaction, claiming one's space can thus be considered tantamount to gaining one's voice.

Most of the housewives I spoke to were very forthcoming about watching this soap and extremely willing to talk about it. I had a sense that my interest in what they were doing made them feel important and even gave them the sense that they were engaging in an activity that conformed to academic interests and thus was associated with a certain prestige value. In this sense, the interview situation might be seen as not only an instance of validation but also one of solidarity. All the women asked me at one point or another about my own viewing practices and many asked if I watched this soap or other soaps for enjoyment, or for my work only. The motivations for answering an interviewer's questions are complicated and the answers should be seen as politically and metaphorically complex. Do the pleasures involved grow out of a more basic and systemic displeasure with daily life? Perhaps their cooperation, forthrightness and sometimes even pleasure in the interview situation should be interpreted as an indication of housewives' loneliness and powerlessness in their personal family set-up. Most of the husbands were engaged in business or held top executive positions which kept them away from home till late in the evenings.

For some women, viewing seemed an area of autonomy or time of their own. Although there are many prescriptions of valuable ways for a woman/homemaker to spend

---

22 The Bold and the Beautiful is broadcast from eight to eight-thirty p.m. followed by Santa Barbara which goes on till nine p.m. Most of the regular viewers of The Bold and the Beautiful also watch Santa Barbara.
free time (such as crafts, etc), watching this soap seemed to be one of the most important ways of spending their evenings. None of the viewers conveyed the impression that watching it involved violation of duty or a serious transgression from other work. Though almost all the respondents said that they had other leisure activities as well, twenty-three of them chose either "a" or "b" as their option to the following question:

Question: Do you have any other leisure activities? Yes No

If yes, do you enjoy watching soap operas:

---a. a lot more than any other leisure activity
---b. equally with other leisure activities
---c. less than other leisure activities.

Many of the women I spoke to said that they watched the soap alone. Even though two housewives mentioned watching with their husbands, and several mentioned watching with daughters, none mentioned watching with their sons. One mother-daughter duo said that they often speculated together about what's going to happen next. There is a certain kind of pleasure in this; this anticipation and the ability to run ahead of time, to see into the future, to play with the predictable, is a form of mastery, transforming the uncertainty of future into readable spaces. It is a stage for memory and a stimulus for making connections. Lacking someone to talk to also means lacking the input that allows us to experience and appreciate our own perceptions. Our talk provides others with information and expressions that are meant to dispose them to act in ways that serve our interests. That is, dialogue is a transaction—sometimes altruistic, more often selfish—generally to secure sympathy, assistance, gratitude, or perhaps is simply a response. The fear of becoming bored and
lonely and thus alienated, unresponsive, and torpid, is a real fear of many homebound women and others who work alone. The soap invites the viewer to enter into a social world where she is implicitly obliged to respond.

"Talking back" to the characters was not uncommon for many of the viewers, despite the knowledge that they cannot affect the characters or their actions. Of course, in practical everyday life there are social constraints that inhibit staring at, eavesdropping on, or talking back to the real people who share our ontological space. bell hooks in her essay on back talk writes of having been brought up in the "old school" where she was meant to be seen and not heard, where the act of expressing herself was daring, an act of courage. She writes of the socially-imposed silences that break our spirit and of talk that is not only the expression of creative power, but also an act of resistance, "a political gesture that challenges the politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless." (hooks 1986, p. 126). And she decries the silences, the unheard voices of those wounded, tortured individuals who do not speak or write. Aloneness and isolation, the very state of almost all the housewives I spoke to, is pictured on the single images on the screen, yet at the same time constantly subverted as the characters talk things out and as their stories tell of endless commingling, caring and sacrifice for others.

If our life is the result of both free choice and oppressive circumstances, we have to look at the ways we try to push out of and beyond the constraints and how our illusions of independence are nourished. We should also look at the effects of our constraints. Perhaps when we don't have what we want, we begin to need or to want what we have.
Fantasy can structure our expectations. It can also be an act which creates the space that makes survival possible. Almost all the housewives and college students indicated that they approved the quality of "independence" in female characters of soap operas. Some of the housewives seemed to express feeling of discontent with their lives in terms of being financially dependent on someone else all their lives —— first their fathers and then, their husbands.

It is not easy to write off our activities simply as "escape" and not affecting us in any way. For however much we may desire an escape (physically, mentally, and/or emotionally) or to relax, we also form ourselves in part through our diversions, or fictions, and thrills. Our attention may be captured and distracted from the demands of ordinary life, but the activity cannot help but exert some force on our lives and become a part of the way we see ourselves and our world. As a respondent said, "It makes me think at times, of the way I have led my life so far and what I have achieved - whether I have really done anything worthwhile apart from being a good daughter, daughter-in-law, wife and a mother" (translated from Hindi). Since the acts of response and interpretation we perform are an inextricable part of our identity, it would be best to acknowledge the crucial place this type of fantasy has in our mental life.

Though the idea of watching this soap as "escape" grossly simplifies the complex pleasures that the women get from watching and the complex reasons for such pleasures, when I asked the viewers why they watched The Bold and the Beautiful, many often mentioned that they feel a need for a break, a fantasy, some excitement, relaxation, or a
moment for themselves. Many described watching this soap and others as therapeutic, a source of distraction and escapism from their daily routines. The regularity, constancy, and familiarity of soaps are surely part of the pleasure and comfort. The seriality lends itself to a scheduled, ritualized viewing experience and perpetuates the entrenchment of habit. One woman noted:

Priya Kumar: *Since the stories continue daily, I like to keep tabs on it.*

My contention is that the soap opera form itself may be a source of pleasure for the viewers. Though each of the story lines seems to progress in some understandable temporal order, the exact relation one story's segment has to another story's segment is seldom clear. Sometimes there is no way of knowing which story's segment will come next. This discontinuous flow, thwarted expectation, and temporal disjunction create an attenuated and artificial suspense, a constantly delayed closure. According to one viewer:

Shukla Saigal: *I like it because it makes me anxious/curious about the next episode.*

Each everyday moment is always incomplete, posed between beginning and end. Time has always existed and will not stop. The interruptions, the interweaving of stories, the constantly shifting point of view, the ongoing process of ordering, call to mind and probably reinforce the traditional role of the homemaker. And the traditional role is how many of the older women that I interviewed described their lives. Tania Modleski quotes a moving testimony from Tillie Olsen's *Silences*: "Motherhood means being instantly interruptible, responsive, responsible..... It is distraction, not meditation, that become habitual: interruption, not continuity; spasmodic, not constant toil."(Modleski 1982, p. 100)
Part of the pleasure in watching this soap could be attributed to the story motif. It differs from the usual theme of the Indian serials in many ways. Some women noted:

Neelam Ahluwalia: *It is an interesting story-line.*

Shivani Kachru: *I like the way emotions are expressed and displayed and the confused relationships which always leaves you in a state of wanting to find out what will follow next.*

Though the concept of "family" is central to this soap, the families shown are perpetually under question and reconstituting themselves. In this soap, family life is more emblematic of splitting, separation and struggle than of a narcissistic merging or an imaginary unity of parents and children. In *Bold and the Beautiful*, cases of displaced familial relations are more benign yet are close enough to imply a moral transgression. For example, Thorne Forrester's obsession with his brother's fiancée is part of 'forbidden desire'.

It has not been easy to identify a process of identification or a neat separation of cognition and effect between the viewers and the characters of *The Bold and the Beautiful*. For the Indian viewers, the characters do not seem so ordinary or accessible, or even "normal" as one viewer puts it. This is perhaps because of the nature of the soap being foreign in terms of the characters' appearances (all of them are white and blond), clothes, language and specific behavioral patterns. The characters have significant qualities and

---

23 In *Affirmation and Denial*, Prabha Krishnan and Anita Dighe note that traditional values have a stranglehold over the manner in which women's images are portrayed on Indian TV. In serials and soap operas traditional, culture-bound stereotypes of Indian womenhood are given precedence, wherein the public realm (in the media) is the male space while the woman is relegated to the private sphere. Her importance is usually defined within the context of 'family.'
significant circumstances. Their lives are very concentrated, so they can be, at the same time, out of the ordinary (in relation to another culture) and outrageous. Also this soap articulates subject-positions that are often multiple and contradictory, but identification can operate in relation to difference as well as to resemblance. It is not simply that we "are" or "want to be," or that we can put ourselves in the place of or occupy the perceptual space of a particular character. Our feelings for a character are certainly other than simply feeling "at one" with that character; they involve both psychological processes and critical ones. When asked whether they preferred female characters who were like or unlike women in everyday life, seventeen women said that they liked to see characters that are like "real" women because then they could "associate with them" and "understand them" better. Thirteen said that they preferred characters unlike everyday women because:

Sally Travasso:...it adds a bit of unusualness in a day's viewing. Female characters who are unlike women in everyday life are unpredictable, thereby adding a touch of spice.
Malavika Agarwal: ...it makes it more interesting. I like to watch people and life totally different from ours.
Swati Deshmukh: ...it is nice to see them like that.
Meena Broca: ...they are uncommon. Then I am curious about them and their way of life.

The process of identification is not too complex because in this soap, the characters are generally represented as good or bad, without too much ambiguity. They seem to embody clear attributes and refer to absolute moral imperatives. The characters who are seen as "good" are generally wise and reliable, often protective and helping as seen in the case of Stephanie Forrester, who usually are the guardians of rites and tradition. Embodied in the "good' character of Donna Logan are the traits of patience, receptiveness, and relative
passivity as well. "Villains" like Angeia and even Sally Spectra (because of her alleged stealing of the Forrester designs) in their aggressiveness seem to offend the middle-class norms. It is possible that these women are both recognized as bad and found intriguing because of the violation of norms - find their personal needs more important than social norms. Under the practical demands of many people's daily existence, the contradictions between our personal needs and social norms are often restrained or repressed.

We can say that these multifocal identifications only serve to increase the pleasure of this soap. If this soap's splendid characters and eventful moments are believed in (or desired and/or emulated) then do the viewers become, by definition, increasingly dissatisfied with the finiteness of their own lives? It may be that this soap thrives on precisely these varied sorts of satisfactions and dissatisfactions.

Are different viewing attitudes indicative of different viewers, or different postures, or the complexity of the viewing relationship? Are there not only differences between viewers and between interpretations, but also sometimes within viewers? When asked to rank in order the three most important qualities (out of a list of nine) they like to see in a heroine, most of the viewers listed intelligence and independence in the first and second places. However, there were considerable variations in the answers when asked "which types of female characters they liked" in this soap.
Table 1. Viewers' Response to Question number 16.

Question: What qualities do you like to see in a heroine? Please select three and rank them in order of your preference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Most imp.</th>
<th>Second-most imp.</th>
<th>Third-most imp.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intelligence</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independence</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beauty</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a sense of humor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assertiveness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>femininity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggressiveness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>virginity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other (please specify)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note here that none of the qualities like beauty, femininity, and virginity are considered as important as independence and intelligence. Although it is hard to say why intelligence and independence were ranked so high by the viewers, it is possible that the choice is consistent with the high value they place on female superiority in terms of education, and the ability to gain upward mobility by virtue of financial independence. The strong preference to see women who are smart and independent, is repeatedly indicated by many of the viewers during my conversations with them. In addition, their answers to the question, "Which types of female characters do you like seeing most and why?", show the same inclination.

Babli Dutt: *I like Stephanie and Brooke. They are smart, think independently, and are realistic about life.*

Vimla Khanna: *I like to see women who are intelligent, smart, and can stand on their own feet.*
Anagha Deol: *I enjoy watching women who are well-dressed, smart, and independent.*
Meena Broca: *In this serial, I like to see the women because they are smart and efficient.*
Alpana Purohit: *I like to see women who are independent, smart, and assertive.*
Barkha Patel: *I like strong, goal-oriented women who are evocative of femininity. They appeal to me simply since they embody what I think women as a breed are - today.*

Though some were very clear about their preferences, there were a number of viewers who were clearly paradoxical in terms of their response to this question. While almost all agreed that they liked the character of Stephanie Forrester, most were divided about their opinions on why they liked her:

Anupa Notani: *I like Stephanie. She is shrewd and strong and looks very aristocratic.*
Richa Goel: *She takes the right decisions and has a very good personality.*
Shukla Saigal: *She runs the family well.*
Benu Deb: *She is level-headed, intelligent, caring and smart.*

For some of the respondents, gentleness and tenderness - the qualities traditionally associated with true femininity - were decisive characteristics in determining their preference for some of the female characters of *The Bold and the Beautiful.*

Ferzin Patel: *I like some of the characters like Christine and Donna in this serial. They are soft, vulnerable, yet exude confidence of inner strength.*
Nirali Patel: *Donna - she is sweet, caring, and affectionate.*
Shivani Pandya: *I like the confident, likeable, honest characters who are faithful in love.*
Saroj Muzumdar: *I like Stephanie and characters like her who are loving, efficient and think about the welfare of the family.*

One of the paradoxical responses indicated a liking for independence along with a dislike for aggressiveness.

Eva Bhaskar: *I like female characters who have a sense of humor, are independent, but not aggressive.*
The five responses above could be a reflection of the internalization of the dominant cultural norm in India that dictates certain "desirable" characteristics for women. According to such norms, women are liked for their "inherent" qualities of nurturance, honesty and amicability. However, it was intriguing to see that one of the viewers dislikes the character of Donna Logan precisely because of the reasons that some of the viewers above like her.

We must also consider the plurality and multiplicity involved in the representations of certain female characters in this soap, and the variety of interpretations which emerge in their receptions by the viewers. The character of Sally Spectra whose public sphere power causes her to be represented as unscrupulous, may be seen as someone who provides great pleasure for women viewers, because fictional engagement with her provides vicarious revenge on a social order which represses woman's power and sexuality. Thus, while some women voice their dislike of Sally Spectra in strong terms, some actually describe in great length why they like her and enjoy her character tremendously. Viewers also seemed totally divided in terms of their likes/dislikes for Brooke Logan.

Dipali Chemburkar: I dislike Sally Spectra-she's disgusting in her manner of speaking and appearance.
Benu Deb: Sally Spectra is totally unethical in the way she runs her firm.
Aparna: I don't like Sally Spectra at all.
Neelam Ahluwalia: I find Sally Spectra very funny and entertaining. She is not serious like the others and is very humorous.
Aarti Mishra: Sally is bold and independent and does not depend on anyone. I also like her because she is funny in a way.
Rani Dutt: Sally Spectra takes care of her own firm. She does not depend on men and she is not competing to gain men's approval all the time. (translated from Hindi)
Brooke Logan seems to be liked because she looks good and dresses well but she also seems to have incurred the dislike of many of the viewers, especially among the college students group because of her "obsession" with Ridge Forrester and the lengths to which she is willing to go in order to win him over from Caroline Spencer.

Sally Travasso: *I dislike Brooke and Caroline because they are disgustingly all over Ridge, no sense guiding their actions.*

Neelam Ahlawalia: *I find Brooke very irritating. Her whole life revolves around Ridge and how to get him.*

Aarti Mishra: *I like Brooke because she is smart and beautiful and knows what she wants.*

Rakhi Deb: *Brooke is beautiful and so much in love with Ridge that she will do anything for him.*

Several women cite some of the same reasons (that they use for Brooke) for their favorable attitude toward Caroline but there seems to be a general agreement that Caroline is preferable to Brooke because she has not been as devious as the latter in her romantic attachment with Ridge. Thus for most, a certain standard of morality is desirable and all is not fair in love and war (over men). The standard of morality becomes quite obvious when the viewers' attitude toward Angela is noted. There seems to be a totally negative response toward this character. Everybody seems to dislike her because "she tries to blackmail people for her own benefit" and because she is "cunning and dishonest" and takes "advantage of Stephanie."

There was a certain wistfulness among many of the respondents when they talked about the beauty and clothes of the characters in the soap. Glamor seemed to be one of the appeals that this soap enjoys with women viewers in India. Most of the women emphasized the female characters' appearance in terms of clothes. Terms like "sophisticated" and "smart" seemed to go hand-in-hand with good clothes, according to
many of the respondents. Some of the typical responses were:

Manjusha Verma: *It is a sophisticated serial; Smart men and women and a different lifestyle.*
Rakhi Deb: *I like many of the characters because they are smart, well-dressed and intelligent.*
Shivani Kachru: *There's a certain element of class in the characters.*
Shukla Saigal: *The women are all well-dressed, intelligent, smart, and good-looking.*

As I will show in the next chapter, these attitudes have implications for consumerism and commodification in the emergent economic scenario of India.

**REALITY OR FANTASY?**

Rather than simply an escape from reality, this soap might be seen as a site for fantasy, fantasy that serves to celebrate, and perhaps even perpetuate, certain of the emotions, values, and needs of traditional family life reflected in a foreign culture, while at the same time giving noise to complaints about that very situation, especially aspects specific to the social life of the women in India. Though traditional family values are reinforced by this soap, it is possible that the fictional adventures it portrays—fantasies (though not always considered as such)—provide a channel through which to explore or imagine desires that exceed the social possibilities for the viewers.

One of the more popular images of a soap opera viewer is someone who can't tell the difference between reality and fiction. Given the responses of the viewers, I would like to investigate whether there is a coherent relationship between the age and education levels of the respondents with their reality/fantasy orientation.
Question: How closely do you think the characters in B&B resemble the people you meet in real life?

Response options:  
   a) they are not at all similar  
   b) they are somewhat similar  
   c) they are very similar  
   d) they are almost identical

Question: How closely do you think the events in B&B resemble those which occur in real life?

Response options:  
   a) they are not at all similar  
   b) they are somewhat similar  
   c) they are very similar  
   d) they are almost identical

As observed from the nature of responses (see Appendix C for a detailed breakdown of the responses in terms of age and education) to these two questions, it would be misleading, I think, to even begin a discussion here with the implication that there were respondents with a complete reality-orientation or fantasy-orientation toward The Bold and the Beautiful, that was dependent on factors such as age and education. Although there were women who seemed to treat this soap as a reflection of "life" in the U.S., it was quite clear to me, during the interviews, that if directly confronted, all thirty women would be able to tell anyone that what they viewed in this soap, is acted, scripted, produced presentations. Thus regardless of the proverbial bottom line (in this case, that each informant 'knows' the serials to be fiction) certain women, in viewing and assimilating the events of The Bold and the Beautiful, treat them as if they were indeed real depictions of a U.S. family saga. These women apply the same attributional strategies generally used in real-life contexts, in order to evaluate and, in general, make sense of the fictional material.
Conversely as seen from the responses, some of the viewers do not connect it to their life and are more oriented toward treating the soap opera events as fictitious when relating them to their own life events.

There is usually an assumption that more educated viewers are more 'aware' of the mediated nature of forms of presentation. There are, of course, certain responses which, when considered apart from the interview as a whole, cannot justify labeling an entire interpretive strategy on the variables of age and education. However, when an entire constellation of responses indicates among other things that, for example, there are viewers who express an intense desire to see "immoral" characters change for the better just because they are wreaking havoc on the "good" characters, it certainly leads one to believe that these perceptions and desires are rather peculiar for those who are actively treating the events as real. So, what begins to make a great deal more sense here is that these perceptions are perhaps an indication of more of a reality-orientation toward the soap. It does not seem surprising that the college-educated informants were more cynical about considering this soap as a real depiction of American culture. I am not evaluating the quality of any of the women's syntax here nor am I asking any intellectually demanding questions to evaluate their perceptions. It is only an exploration of the fact that the more educated informants tend to be more critical in interpreting media events. The underlying reason here, of course, is simply that of academic training. Even the most basic English composition course in metropolitan college curricula in India demands that the student begin to approach written works of fiction from a point of view that emphasizes authorship.
To the extent that knowledge is irreversible, the individual who has been trained to always consider a 'work' in terms of its creator cannot easily abandon that training -- in the case of TV viewership or anything else. It is not simply that such individuals are generally bound to consider authorship, but the conditioned recognition of the creating agents sometimes serves to prevent the viewers/readers from treating fictional events as real or depictions of reality. Thus, it stands to reason that individuals without this training or those without this 'awareness' have little or no compunction to attend to the mediated aspects of a soap opera broadcast and hence, they, at times, relate to the serial as if it were real.

However, I think it is important not to consider the issue of reality and fantasy as comprised of polar opposites. In this analysis, at least, it is particularly germane to consider them as reciprocal processes. What we think of as a knowing suspension of our disbelief, or our simultaneous interest in characters as people or story as event and characters or story as fictional devices, or our appreciation of the suspense of a tale whose ending we already know, involves a certain gap in our viewing experience, but one that is seldom disconcerting.

Performance has a special relation to our feelings and our fantasies. It is familiar, and as its familiarity adds to its plausibility, it becomes true. Soaps are fictional and yet are about the world. We imagine, get immersed but never really leave familiar ground. Soaps might be seen as both representing and interfering with (or challenging) our formulations of the world. They are, for many, both the product of our thoughts and a departure from the limitations of those thoughts. In fact, these plays of fantasy may come
to signify a provocative arena of truth. Our real is seldom very static - a sense of possibility is always present! What is real is not universally acknowledged but is problematically at stake with each viewing and each viewer. As literary theorist Micke Bal has noted, each interpretation is a proposal, a well founded proposal which makes logical connections, if it is to be accepted (Bal 1985, p. 10). We speculate, form propositions, formulate views of our worlds. Is there a blurring of the distinctions between illusion and reality? It seems to me that it is not a matter of failing to distinguish between fact and fantasy or a narrowing of the distance between reality and fiction; they coexist. If there is a blurring of distinctions it is because neither fact nor interpretation can be taken as given. The more detailed our experience is with the subject or similar subjects, the more likely that pieces of what we know from the real world will infiltrate the screen.

Nineteen women chose the option "to learn about Western people and culture" as one of their three most important reasons for watching this soap. When asked to briefly describe what makes The Bold and the Beautiful an interesting T.V. serial to watch, the responses usually centered around the fact that the soap portrayed a different country, different people and different lifestyles.

Aarti Mishra: ...Since it is to do with daily lives of the characters, it seems more realistic especially about life in the U.S.
Nirali Patel: I like it and also "Santa Barbara" because these are some of the very few foreign soaps we get to see and I love them. Especially, this one. It is the story of life there.
Priya Kumar: It is nice to watch "B&B" and see the LA life.
Thus one reason this soap is so compelling is because it makes lot of the women believe that they are actually getting to know about American people and their life. However, we do know that it's not the same as our lived experience and the characters are not "real" people. Many of the women I spoke to seem to take a playful stance, eschewing narrow-minded seriousness and dogma, seeing humor, gaiety and mocking the outrageousness. On the other hand, many believed what they watched to be true enough to draw moral conclusions, to form opinions and to compare to their lives. Others seem to take a critical position that tests the stories against their stories and those of others. But neither stance seemed to prevent the viewer becoming involved in the fiction. Thus, fantasy and reality are not opposed dualities, but co-exist in a dialectic, as differentiations. In trying to come to terms with our lives we are always trying out new possibilities. If new information makes any of our beliefs problematic, the displaced beliefs do not cease to exist; they continue as mutual complements of the new. Difference, as Trinh T. Minh-ha points out, is an ongoing process. New positions, new "authenticities," need displaced ones as opposition which give meaning, to assimilate their difference. Perhaps, then, the notion of reality/fantasy can be considered not in terms of dualities or conflicts, but in degrees within the same concept, as inter-relating. There has been scholarly concern with how popular culture shapes our perceptions of reality, but it is equally important to consider how our

---

perceptions of reality shape how we view our fictions. Our fictions are as much infused by our opinions as much as our opinions are formed by the fictions we view. What I am implying here is that our understanding, to a certain degree, exists because of our previous knowledge and experience. So reality and fantasy can be seen within a network of reciprocating processes. If we see fantasy and pleasure as critical practices or as creative self-expression (maybe not always positive or unambiguous), then perhaps we can understand the importance that these factors have in this specific case -- in the dialectic of experience and consciousness of the women viewers.

RESISTIVE READINGS?

I could sense the beginning of a tendency to break the rules - both narrative and social-and to question established boundaries, among most of the college women I spoke to. One of the college students said, "I don't approve of the way they portray women......I dislike Brooke and Caroline because they are disgustingly all over Ridge." Their awareness of the narrative constructions of the relationships between men and women in this soap, and their willingness to challenge dominant notions of feminine dependency on men, may indicate that these young women are using this soap in ways that may support a resistance to the ideology of dependence and traditional, patriarchal heterosexual romance that is shown in the soap. The hegemonic necessity to win over subordinated groups to particular dominant ideological stances that in turn support their own subordination seems to be at least partially subverted by this kind of awareness. Thus it is the ideology in question that
constitutes the opening for a resistant reading. So while it is not possible to say that this soap provokes a resistant reading, it is also not possible to predict how and why a resistant reading might take place. Ideologies can change their inflection as do the people who watch the soap. Many inflections of various ideologies exist within a given audience structured as it is by their social or cultural position.

It was interesting to note that some of the viewers, especially the older women, regarded this soap (and other American serials) as a threat to one's own, "distinctive" national culture and as an undermining of Indian cultural values. According to one of the respondents,

Vimla Khanna: These serials teach our children that it is alright to have loose morals, and to be modern, one should look and behave like the people in these serials. Just because it is American, it is considered to be fashionable.

Thus the threat of "Americanization" lurking over Indian culture, now fully implicated in consumerism, poses serious problems for those desperately trying to retrieve and maintain traditional aspects of Indian culture which serve to keep the latter distinct from others. However the fact that the soap is giving them an opportunity where they can discuss cultural concerns is also an issue of pleasure tied intimately to the experience of viewing. It is giving them space and opportunity to acknowledge and/or voice their concerns on issues such as identity and culture. The women can use it to set their own boundaries: reimagining their roles and feeling what it is to be a woman in the family, especially in Indian society.
So it is not that watching *The Bold and the Beautiful* is ideologically inflected all the time; it could be an ideological act in itself. Thus sometimes, social contradictions on the TV screen can serve to make the existing, dominant order more palatable and comfortable and at the same time, in reacting seriously to these social contradictions, we might be expressing our desires/fantasies, which do not necessarily deviate from the norms offered by the existing order. Ordinary life is structured through domination and subordination at its most intimate and banal level. Despite the fact that we sometimes recognize our situation, we do not challenge or confront it. However, many have devised resistances in order to survive the experience of living contradictions. For these viewers the individual, psychological, and social possibilities of watching *The Bold and the Beautiful* seem to offer a mixture of fascination, frustration, pleasure and displeasure. And for many of them, it is not without conflict.

Watching soap operas may be one of the discursive sites where social classification and psychological processes intersect, where ideology and fantasy conjoin, and where longing and loss are produced and reproduced through one another. They are a permissible world where desire is transversed with contradiction. While it does not seem very helpful to dismiss this soap simply as commodification of desires, many of the conversations reflected conflict about the unstable and suspect nature of our pleasures and there often seemed more a sense of regulation than fierce abandon. Pleasure is, by definition, always carried to its limits. And these limits are not stable.
CHAPTER IV

"The Bold and the Beautiful" and the Culture of Consumption: The Consumer-ized Woman

......woman’s place in the labor market tends to become traditionally defined and, whenever possible, related back to woman’s role at home.... Necessity may be the mother of invention, but invention is best packaged as being a new version of an old custom.

Elizabeth Janeway (1971, p. 183)

When looked at as an economic institution or an industry, television may be seen as an apparatus for the production of consumers. It is not a new contention that television as a medium is intimately tied to consumerism. In his germinal work on the development and effects of television technology, Raymond Williams observes that:

The ‘commercial’ character of television has then to be seen at several levels; as the making of programmes for a profit in a known market; as a channel for advertising; and as a cultural and political form directly shaped by and dependent on the norms of a capitalist society, selling both consumer goods and a ‘way of life’ based on them, in an ethos that is at once locally generated, by domestic capitalist interests and authorities, and internationally organized, as a political project, by the dominant capitalist power. (1974, p. 41)

In extending this position to focus specifically on the women viewers of The Bold and the Beautiful, in this chapter I want to investigate the reproduction of dominant, capitalist patriarchal ideology by this text, in India. The analysis of television’s role in the
articulation of the ideology of consumerism is quite crucial, for as Robert Dunn suggests: "It is primarily the visual form of television which exemplifies the commodification of culture.... As a sign system within a sign system, television mirrors consumerism's master code only to reinforce it at a deeper logical and psychological level" (Dunn, 1986, p. 53, p. 55). One can certainly argue that television does indeed provide in its programmes, through its narratives, its genres, and its rhetoric, one way in which the logic of commodity culture is articulated with the concerns, values and meanings of everyday life. Programs and advertisements can hardly fail to provide an expression and a reinforcement of the dominant and dominating ideologies of consumer society.

The economic basis of the television industry is that the networks sell viewers in groups of one thousand to advertisers. The more groups of one thousand the networks can deliver, the more the network can charge for advertising time.25 Thus, the industry, including the networks and the producers who create shows for them, creates prime-time programming that is designed to appeal to a particular 'market' or target group of viewers. Television programs are the attraction by which viewers are drawn into this economic enterprise. When a television program is successful, it can attract more advertisers and collect additional revenue. Two things are desirable: First to expose the viewers to the advertisers' commercials, and second, to expose the viewers, by means of the program, to a panorama of products and particular life-styles. Clothes, cars, furniture, appliances as well

---

as upscale life-styles and attitudes are on display. Thus the purpose of any popular television text, from the point of view of the industry, is to deliver an audience for the messages of advertisers. Advertisers, in turn, have two goals: "to reach the largest possible audience, and to reach the ideal (target) audience for their products" (Jameisan and Campbell, 1988, p. 123). Ratings for television programs demonstrate how many people are watching the show, and the demographic research conducted by the networks (or by organizations such as the IMRB - Indian Market Research Bureau- in India) indicates what social sub-groups are watching that program.26 Both of these factors are crucial in selling the program to advertisers. According to Eileen Meehan:

Television always and simultaneously presents a vision for interpretation and an ideology for consumption to a viewership that is always and simultaneously a public celebrating meaning and an audience produced for sale in the market place. (1986, p. 449)

Working with this assumption, I would infer that all television programs will, in some fashion, offer an ideology that is favorable to the maintenance of patriarchal dominance and the economic interests that are tied to it.

Television is so intertwined with consumerism that the relation of programming to advertising goes well beyond the obvious role of the TV show as frame for the commercial and enticement for a particular (commodified) way of life. Aligned with the rise of multinational investments in India, texts such as The Bold and the Beautiful create a congenial economic atmosphere for the promotion of multinational and consumer

26Todd Gitlin has discussed this phenomena in his book Inside Prime-Time. See p. 58-60.
capitalism. TV's ability to present intimate detail in a small and familiar space, combined with the current "availability" of the kind of products seen in this text, leads to the presentation of the fiction as "real" and "attainable." Thus the role of TV in this case, both in its "realistic" and "imaginary" form, provides the illusion of actuality and bolsters viewers' sense of reality. Not only do we "consume" television texts, we are encouraged to consume the products advertised as well as the "lifestyle" image promoted by both. The "feminization" of the TV viewer thus relates to women's role as primary consumer (both of the soap opera text and the consumerist lifestyle image promoted by it) in modern societies of the world. Television as it is currently organized employs its specific text-viewer relation for a goal consonant with capitalist patriarchy—the encouragement of consumption.

The emphasis on commercial viability of television programs has special implications for women. First, women age 18-49 are the prime consumer group that advertisers wish to target because this group makes the majority of consumption decisions (Jameison and Campbell, 1988).27 In other words, television executives and producers strive to create programming that is attractive to women. However, advertisers also require that the programming directed at this audience should provide a suitable forum for their messages, limiting the creative choices. In essence, this means that television is not as interested in finding out what appeals to women as in constructing (or reinforcing) an

27The women in this study are also within this age group.
identity for women that is favorable to what television hopes to sell. This function is obvious in the case of *The Bold and the Beautiful* being shown in India. The program was produced with an American audience in mind when it was first aired in the United States in April 1987. Hence it can be clearly inferred that one of the reasons for its broadcast being extended to include a primarily women audience in India from July 1992, was to widen the "market."

While television spectatorship posits a closeness of the viewer to the text that ruptures the boundary between subject and object, allowing a multiplicity of identifications, this same proximity is also bound to consumer desires. Thus, the very lack of distance involved in TV spectatorship—the desire to identify with the image—creates a perfect consumer culture; one in which the spectator desires to emulate the "lifestyle" of the characters of the soap. It makes the female subject susceptible to the lure of consumerism. The focus on self-image invites the consumer to attend to the images of advertised products, and the woman viewers, whose role it is to purchase in order to enhance her own status as valued item, becomes the prototypical consumer—the same overpresence that ties her to the image allows her to be situated as both the subject and the object of consumerism at once. As Mary Ann Doane writes, "the increasing appeal in the twentieth century to the woman's role as perfect consumer (of commodities as well as images) is indissociable from her positioning as a commodity and results in the blurring of the subject/object dichotomy." (Doane 1987, p. 13). Thus, women's social role under capitalism gets "desired" and defined as the perfect consumer.
As seen in the previous chapter, personality holds a lot of weight with the viewers. In the current cultural scenario of India, where a specific kind of personality is "desired," what emerges clearly is the fact that "personality" as a characteristic has become a new value and at times, the sole referent to a status of personal achievement—a condition central to today's consumer culture in which TV takes the leading role. For the women in this study, the preoccupation with attractively-dressed characters who exude an aura of "well-being," is tied to the rise of a consumerist discourse that has been created, in part, by television. Personality, is thus, one of the primary selling points of _The Bold and the Beautiful_, the basis of its performers' appeal. It is constructed as an outer layer, readable to all and there for us to have—or, as product commercials imply, to buy. Producing a sense of intimate contact, the television personality thus seems immediately available to the viewers' because of the possibility of having/using/wearing the products that the viewers see on the frame. In this way, the text becomes a key element in the marketing of almost all the commodity goods that are brought within reach of the female viewers, by multinational corporations. Ann Kaplan notes that "television's reliance on constructing numbers of viewers as commodities involves reproducing female images that accommodate prevailing (and dominant) conceptions of 'woman,' particularly as these satisfy certain economic needs" (1987, p. 223). This means, for example, that women on television tend

---

28 A feminist perspective grounded in assumptions drawn from Marxist theory holds that television, because of its commercial nature, functions primarily to disseminate the ideology of the dominant cultural group for economic profit. Although I am going to emphasize gender more than class, the general focus on the reproduction of dominant
to dress well, to wear make-up, and generally to project the message that attractiveness, particularly to the opposite sex, is important. Similarly, dominant patriarchal ideals of family values are reinforced on this specific program because a great deal of consumption is done on the basis of family needs. To undermine heterosexuality, for instance, subverts these needs. Maintaining traditional notions of a woman's place is also an important part of constructing women's identities as consumers. Although women's place may no longer be solely in the home, a number of qualities associated with "home" are still expected from women. Such qualities include caretaking behaviors ranging from cooking and child-rearing to more general qualities of nurturance and emotional support. The reinforcement of these qualities through television programming not only helps to sell products, but also reduces the possibilities for women to pose an economic challenge to men. As long as women are willing to perform the support functions associated with "home," men are able to devote energy to maintaining economic dominance and public power. To encourage rejection of these roles for women is to encourage their economic competition with men. Thus, television is filled with images of women as nurturers, caretakers, and supporters. In contrast, programming seldom offers images of professional women that are not tempered capitalistic ideologies through television that guides this type of feminist inquiry is important in understanding the constraints of television as a commercial institution.

29 All the women characters in The Bold and the Beautiful dress well and wear make-up. In fact, most of my respondents commented on this aspect as one of the reasons for their approval of the women in this soap.
with difficulties, lessening the attraction of such a position.\textsuperscript{30}

Reinforcing women's concern with traditional tasks and behaviors inhibits them from participating in activities that are more valuable in terms of public power. While television programs like \textit{The Bold and the Beautiful} may imply that it is important, even vital, for women to perform traditional roles, both in television and in society, those roles are less powerful socially, economically, and politically than the roles associated with men. Keeping women in a particular 'place' in programs such as these reinforces the values that allow television to maintain its existence as a commercial and ideological institution. In the process, this television program contributes to the devaluation of women that perpetuates patriarchy and helps multinational corporations to further their capitalist interests in Third World countries like India.

Obviously, the belief that women are suited to a realm separate from that of men, a realm that includes different interests and concerns, did not begin with television. But TV works to reinforce such beliefs not only for economic reasons but also to avoid offending viewers who hold such beliefs (and perhaps sponsors as well). Another result of television's commercial nature is the tendency of its programs to avoid controversial themes. Thus challenges to traditional notions about women's roles or explicit treatment of women's issues such as abortion, birth control, wife abuse, or sexual assault have received almost no attention on this soap.

\textsuperscript{30}A point to be noted here is that images of professional women were perhaps first seen in soaps.
Most of the representation of female characters in *The Bold and the Beautiful* does not deviate in any way whatsoever from the television industry's conventional meaning of the term "feminine." The "woman" in this serial is usually shown as the love interest, sex object, wife, or mother of the protagonist. She operates primarily in the private or relational spheres and functions narratively in a helping or love relationship with the male star. If she has any kind of power at all, it is often limited to the private sphere or represented as problematic. It may be, as Stephanie Forrester's, limited to the family rather than the business world. Or if a woman has significant public sphere power such as Sally Spectra, she is represented as unscrupulous. Also, woman's sexuality as sex object, is continually evoked by the representations of women through characters such as Caroline and Brooke, and their positions in the narrative. This sexuality is just as continually harnessed by domestication—by being positioned in relation to the active, male subject of the narrative, Ridge Forrester, or being limited to the family and motherhood as in the case of Stephanie. The soap does not threaten traditional family roles in any way. Though at times, the storyline expresses the need for more liberated heterosexual relationships and confronts women's need for companionship and emotional support within the family, the family is always shown as ultimately redeeming. It might be redefining some of the traditional family roles, but certainly within conservative structures. However, it supports the centrality of marriage and the sanctity of the family. Many aspects of the woman's roles may be questioned but in a way that precludes radical change. Thus, the soap entices the viewers to care by weaving webs of relationships, relationships on which they in turn rely. However, despite
being able to arouse desires, it is not able, in itself, to satisfy the viewers or to liberate them. By naturalizing and valorizing the domestic and the personal, this soap serves to reinforce the existing situation.

Finally, upper-class characters are featured more prominently and positively in this program, because this is the class to which most of the viewers (of this specific soap) in India either aspire to (if they belong to the middle-class) or identify with (if they belong to the upper class). It is in the industry's interest to encourage such aspiration because these segments of the population consume more, reinforcing the consumer-oriented messages that are delivered on screen. While on one hand the program The Bold and the Beautiful, as a "popular" cultural form, works as an advertising vehicle targeted essentially to the middle class, on the other hand, it is engendering upscale and even upper class desires.

Several responses of the viewers indicated the value they placed on the upper-class lifestyle portrayed in the soap. According to one viewer, the characters had a certain "class" and "sophistication" which made them attractive. Consumption of certain goods/objects expresses taste, and taste, life-style. Certain differences in material possession are distinct in demarcating class positions in Indian society today. These differences can be considered to be ultimately expressive of class position, but of class position that is precisely constructed in consumption rather than simply by its position in the relations of production. I do realize that the value of objects are neither pre-given nor inherent. Value is granted through practice, and through the practices of informed consumption. However, in
consumption of practices/objects that are socially defined as our needs and desires, we communicate our class. We buy and display what we value; and we value according to our social position. This communication is real in its consequences because it provides the fundamental matrix for the conduct of our everyday lives, and for a politics of difference which maintains bourgeois culture as arbiter of taste and distinction, guaranteeing its place in the hierarchy by virtue of education, tradition and wealth. Though our social position is the product not just of income or wealth, but also of the relatively independent influence of education and family culture, it is increasingly getting defined in terms of distinction; a distinction that is achieved by certain discriminating values and practices by and through which one's own "culture" can be distinguished from those above or below one socially.

A TV program like The Bold and the Beautiful is a product of the dominant culture, and it ensures its success by staying within the constraints dictated by that culture. It exercises its hegemonic function in varied and subtle ways. Much of the ideology disseminated through such texts is already so much a part of the public consciousness that its hegemonic role is basically transparent. The way that we understand our lives and the way that we understand our pleasures implies creative choices, and responsibilities that are interpellated by ideology, whether spoken or not.

Thus, it is clear that the form of The Bold and the Beautiful provides yet another route to consumer culture (one that is defined by its ties to patriarchal, capitalist ideology),

---

31By informed consumption I mean that which is informed by the demands and statuses, the geo-specifically socially defined needs and desires of those who consume.
offering itself as a medium of choice to a more or less active/passive spectator. On the one hand, upward mobility and consumerism are a mandate; on the other hand, "middle class values" go with this territory of popular entertainment. The representations of wealth and profit are therefore problematic in a number of ways. Even in this brief discussion of articulation through a specific TV program, it is important to recognize the limits involved, because such arguments perhaps raise the specter of total passivity, of views of the audiences making artificial and meaningless choices under the illusion that they are meaningful. To talk of the culture of consumption from TV programs, as if that was the end of the story, as if there was no room for difference, no room for transformation, negotiation or denial, obviously mistakes things.\textsuperscript{32} Here too there is an essential tension: a tension between structure and the possibilities for action; between representation and reading; between public commodities and private objects.

\textsuperscript{32}During my discussions with the viewers, I realized that some of them were aware of the "dangers" (as one of them said) involved in trying to emulate the female characters of the serial, in terms of clothes and the products that they saw on the screen. While couple of them saw it as a threat to their own cultural identity, some also recognized the expenditure involved therein.
CHAPTER V

Television: Narratives Crossing nation

One of the most dynamic sectors of the international economy since the early 1970s became that associated with the production, transmission, management, and dissemination of 'information' in its multiplicity of forms. Fundamental to this was the expansion of information activities whether understood as the production and distribution of communications and information technologies, and in particular those based on the microchip, or production and distribution of cultural commodities ranging from books, records and tapes, to films and television programs. The international expansion of information activities may be seen as part of two highly interrelated processes of transnationalization and informationalization. The former has at its core the activities of transnational corporations, while the latter process involves radical shifts in the means of storing, processing and retrieving information, the rapid development of telecommunications hardware (microwave, fiber optic, satellite technologies) and software, and television. The combined process of transnationalization and informationalization

33The term 'informationalization' is interesting when seen in the context of television technology. What kind (and to what interest) of information does TV broadcast. Specifically in relation to this study, the question that comes to mind is what kind of
raises fundamental questions for all societies, regardless of whether they are advanced capitalist, 'peripheral' capitalist, or socialist ones subject to strong, insistent disintegrative pressures and economic liberalization tendencies. The questions relate to a number of basic issues: cultural domination and subordination; the control of communications, cultural production, and distribution; access to economic, political or other information; the creation of a new global information order and the regulation and control of transborder data/information flows.

One of the first global broadcasts from the U.S. was the Vietnam war. McLuhan and Fiore asserted that the whole world was experiencing "the first television war," which meant "the end of the dichotomy between civilian and military. The public is now participant in every phase of the war, and the main actions of the war are now being fought in the American home itself." This "participation in depth," according to the two authors, explained why "all the non-industrial areas like India, China and Africa are speeding ahead by means of electric technology" (McLuhan and Fiore 1968, p. 128, 136). In this vision of the 'global society' everything occurred by sole virtue of the technological imperative.

Messages taking off from the U.S. and landing in India:

The first transmissions of television programs to cross national frontiers came from the United States. In the late 1940s, television stations in U.S. cities bordering Mexico and Canada began attracting large audiences across the border. By the early 1950s, the process and retrieving information, also suggests a new commodity form: "information." It could be located in relation to capitalism, and international relations.
became reciprocal as Canadian and Mexican television entrepreneurs began building stations with an eye on nearby U.S. audiences. This across-the-border eavesdropping became common in other parts of the world as well. These operations, whether random or international, were a small part of the new international character of television. There was, then, a major emphasis on binational, regional and intercontinental agreements to connect television systems at all levels.  

The role of space communications is significant in the step to intercontinental television linking from regional television networking. A worldwide television system formed by the combination of communications satellites and interlocked regional networks was a major step in the formation of a 'global village.' The United States had, of course, an important stake in these developments. Using this gift - the internationalization of television - in ways that strengthen the prospects for a democratic world order was increasingly important for American leadership. Brzezinski notes that for the U.S., "reliance on television - and hence the tendency to replace language by imagery which is international rather than national, and to include war coverage or scenes of hunger in places as distant as, for example, India - creates a somewhat more cosmopolitan, though highly impressionistic, involvement in global affairs" (Brzezinski 1970, p. 13).

The Western policy of "modernization," through the use of international television, selected India as a theater for experiments in 1976. To the strategists of space technology,  

---

India had seemed the ideal country for this type of experiment, since at that time it had practically no television system - in fact, only one channel received by 10,000 sets - and 550,000 villages to be linked. The promotional literature for the project vaunted the enticing prospect that a satellite could complete in only ten years a task that a conventional system would require thirty years to accomplish, and for an equal rate of annual investment.\textsuperscript{35}

The first such experiment in India, touted as 'modernization' and 'development,' was dubbed SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment) and made use of the American satellite ATS-6. It reached about 2,300 villages belonging to six states, which were equipped with sets for collective viewing. Relayed by the satellite, SITE was inaugurated on August 1, 1976, and lasted one year. The objective of the project was to transmit instructional programs on family planning and improvement of agricultural practices.\textsuperscript{36}

Meanwhile, between the agreement (signed by India and the U.S. for the SITE experiment) and its realization, India had the opportunity to air its ambition to transform itself into a space and computing power. A year before SITE came to fruition, a Soviet rocket had launched its first satellite built by Indian engineers. In the late 1970s, Indian television opened up to commercial advertising and its \textit{profits} shot up. The state proposed

\textsuperscript{35}See A. Frutkin, "Space Communications in the Developing Countries" in \textit{Communications Technology and Social Policy}.

\textsuperscript{36}See articles on the SITE experiment in \textit{Journal of Communication}, 29 (4), Fall 1979.
a plan under which industrialists could buy half-hour slots of airtime, in exchange for which they would sponsor a serial of 25-minute episodes and have the right to one-minute of free advertising of their products. The entertainment function of television gained more and more space, which it would share with video catapulted into importance by pirating operations organized out of Singapore. In 1990, television covered more than three-quarters of the territory and almost half the people could watch its programs and videotapes.

There was a growing popularity of television entertainment programs, (with the strong gravitation toward entertainment in television programming in India) especially soap operas based on stories from Hindu mythology (examples are the serials, Ramayana and Mahabharata). Whereas soap operas had long been the most popular genre of programming in other countries like those of Latin America, in India they did not appear on national television until 1984. The first of such serials was Hum Log, an "entertainment-education" soap opera committed to the "development of prosocial attitudes and behaviors." 37 (Nariman 1993, p. 105 and 52). The educational motif embedded in the soap centered on issues of family planning and female equality in the family.

However, lately there has been a great diversity of themes and settings in soaps. Foreign, especially American, models for television fictions have been important in local productions, with transformations in the light of the specific nature of local audiences, class

---

configurations, and particular national cultural traditions and practices. In the 1990s however, there has been a heavy import of American television programs. The choice of shows exported from the U.S. to India is significant when seen in terms of campaigns to 'modernize' and 'integrate' India in a global world order. In the Indian post-colonial scenario this raises questions of ideological imperialism, economic imperialism and cultural/media imperialism. Herbert Schiller describes cultural imperialism:

The concept of cultural imperialism today best describes the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating center of the system. (Schiller, 1976 p. 9)

In the 1950s and the 1960s, television was central in articulating a culture of, and for, suburbia in the U.S.: principally for the white middle-classes and for those who could aspire to that status. In the current landscape of overseas broadcasting, television (through its programs) is instrumental in articulating cultural and materialistic ideals (as discussed in Chapter IV) that people should aspire to have.

The Television and the Indian Woman:

As mentioned before, soaps such as Santa Barbara and Bold & The Beautiful enjoy immense popularity with the television audience. The bulk of the audience in India for

---

38 An specific example of this is the Hindi soap called Khandaan, which was based on the serial Dynasty.

39 Lynn Spigel discusses the ideology of television in that period in her article,"From Domestic Space to Outer Space: The 1960s Fantastic Family Sit-Com."
these soaps are women - the average viewer of these programs is the urban housewife. Considering the fact that most of the women in my study stated watching The Bold and the Beautiful as one of their leisure activities (one that is so important for them that they try not to miss even one episode), it can be inferred that they spend a considerable amount of time everyday with the television set itself. Thus it is important to discuss how the Indian women interact with the medium and what importance it has in their daily lives.⁴⁰

According to David Morley, TV studies must attempt to situate individual viewing within the household relations in which it operates and insist that individual viewing activity only makes sense inside of this frame (Morley, 1986). Brunsdon and Morley argue that while the domestic sphere is also a sphere of domestic labor (the reproduction of labor power), it has come to be centrally defined as the social space within which “individuality” can be expressed. The central point, they argue, is that the workings of this private sphere cannot effectively be understood without attention to the "specific role of women and their central space in the domestic sphere" (Brunsdon and Morley 1978, p. 78). Men and women are positioned in fundamentally different ways within the domestic sphere in India. If for men the home is fundamentally a site of leisure and recuperation from work (in the public sphere), for women - whether or not they also work outside the house - it is also a site of work and responsibility. As the overall social location of leisure moves increasingly into the home, the contradictions experienced by women in this sphere are correspondingly

⁴⁰This discussion will consider the housewives' in India and their relationship to television in terms of the viewing situation in their families.
heightened.

The domestic sphere is not simply a physical space - it is also a socially organized space. In this context, it is important to be attentive to the incorporation of domestic communications technologies (like the television), within preexisting social domains - in particular within different gender domains - and also to the particular role of such technology in the construction and reconstruction of these domains. Women's particular positioning in the domestic sphere is of great consequence in determining differential relations to domestic technologies for men and women. The significance of gender in organizing the domestic uses of one particular technology, in this case television, has been developed by various authors such as D. Hobson, A. Gray, D. Morley and M. Haralovich, among others. Haralovich offers a fascinating account of the role of the suburban family "situation comedy" on American television in the 1950s in "the construction and distribution of social knowledge about the place of women" (Haralovich 1988, p.39). Her argument is that television representations worked in close parallel to the material supports of housing policies, which were focused on organizing the interior space of the home so as to reinforce the gender-specific socializing functions of the family. Hobson's work on housewives' television-viewing habits demonstrates that for the women she studied, their sense of home as a site of continuing domestic work and responsibilities leads to a quite distinctive form of television consumption. Hobson suggests that men's and women's differential positions in the domestic sphere - home as fundamentally a site of leisure for one, but more contradictorily, a site of both leisure and work for the other - determines their
differential relation to television. Similarly, David Morley's analysis of viewing patterns in working-class London households reveals the structuring effect of gender relations. Here, gender was consistently associated with distinctive viewing patterns, amounts and styles of viewing, distinctive program preferences, and control over these issues were in the hands of the men, in almost all the cases.

I posit that the “gendering” of television technology is most apparent in relation to the medium itself - the handling of the tool, the ability and control over program choice, the power over being “able” to view the program one wants to and having one's own space while doing so. In this sense television itself has been coded as “masculine” in most of the studies mentioned above, because it was the men in the family who had control over the remote and thus, over the program choice. In my study of the Indian housewives, it was noted that a significant number of them watched their favorite soaps, especially *The Bold and the Beautiful*, every evening and usually, by themselves. The nature of viewing indicated by the women did not imply a distracted form (unlike the women's experience in studies by Morley, Brunsdon and Gray, where household activity distracted the spectators from concentrating on television), in fact most of them said that they kept their viewing time for the soap exclusively for viewing. The fact that these programs were being aired during prime-time when most of the family members were present at home, is a significant factor. It shows that these women, in their families, have a certain degree of power and autonomy in deciding which program to view and also a certain amount of control over the “operation” of the television set itself. Also the prime-time evening slot has an effect on
how the women watch the show. If the soap was aired in the middle of the day when chores are being done, it might be watched more casually (and perhaps with the children around) as in the case of viewership of day-time soaps in the U.S. The issue of assigning time slots to particular audiences is important and shapes the terms of viewing, especially vis-a-vis the role of the home as leisure for some and as work-site for the homemaker. The differential positioning of men and women in relation to television technology assumes greater significance as the home becomes increasingly defined as the “proper” sphere of leisure, with the decline of public forms of entertainment and the growth of home-based leisure technologies in India such as the television, video, etc.

Most of the time, the use or non-use of technologies is not a matter of technological complexity. In her analysis of the use of home videos, Gray notes that while the women she studied did not use their domestic videos, they routinely operated other extremely sophisticated pieces of domestic technology such as washing or sewing machines. This was in part, due to the way certain technological tools are coded as “masculine” or “feminine.” (Gray, 1987). The determining principle (in Gray's study) behind the women’s alienation from the video seemed to have less to do with its technical complexity and more to do with its incorporation, alongside the television, into what they felt to be a principally masculine domain of domestic leisure. Even in the Indian context, where the domestic setting is still largely seen as a sphere of women’s work, the operation of equipment (within the private as well as the public sphere), such as the television and the video, is a function that men are expected to perform in families. The responsibilities, pleasures and functions that men have
with all these pieces of equipment gives them some degree of control over them and over other family members along the way.

So it becomes especially important when the women in my study are actually in control of both the equipment and the time that is spent with it, in relation to their other responsibilities within the household. Their control (in terms of viewership) over a technological tool that is coded as “masculine” enhances the importance of the time and space that they spend with it (because of the essential assumption that “masculine” technologies are superior to “feminine” ones. Assumptions like these are tied in with the secondary status of women in Indian society) and adds to the element of pleasure involved in watching television programs. However, use of this technology has not served to reconfigure or reconstruct the private domain in terms of division of labor. It has not intervened to create disruptions in the traditional work patterns across gender, within the household. In order to be able to have the time to watch the soaps daily, women have engaged in effective time management which would enable them to incorporate the viewing time within their schedule of housework and social life.

The fact that television is often the viewer’s only “window” to another culture - a fantasy American culture - adds another dimension of importance to her interaction with this form of domestic technology. It is no longer the “idiot-box” in this case! Television has the power of being a cultural agent, particularly as a provoker and circulator of meanings. It is important to note here that while mass entertainment can be considered as a provider of diversion only, it also has the potential to touch people on the profound level
of 'experience'. Not every person relates to a television text in the same way as seen in Chapter III, however, there is a certain determinant level at which the receiver interprets and admits symbols. Some of the Indian women treat the American soap operas solely as "diversion." But again for some, the America that they see on their living room screens is "reality." Thus as seen in my discussion before (in Chapters III and IV), this might lead to the promotion and/or adoption of certain dominant capitalist ideologies and behavioral patterns that are considered to be 'modern.'

Women who watch these soaps and are 'addicted' to them usually watch TV regularly. What is striking here is the veritable dailiness of television in their lives. As a technology and medium, it has found its way profoundly and intimately into the fabric of their lives. The palpable integration of the television into their daily schedules -- its emotional significance, both as disturber and comforter; its cognitive significance, both as an informer and a misinformer; its spatial and temporal significance, ingrained as it is into the routines of daily life; its visibility, not just as an object, the box in the corner, but in a multitude of texts - journals, magazines, newspapers, hoardings; its impact, both remembered and forgotten; its political significance as a core institution of the modern state -- this integration is both complete and fundamental.

Conclusion

Until now, I have deliberately refrained from the formulation of a definitive conclusion. Had I looked solely at the issue of (dis)pleasure as it is understood by the
viewers themselves, or, alternately, at the covert significance of the narrative structure of
*The Bold and the Beautiful* or even engaged specifically in a textual analysis of the soap,
I might have been able to provide one clear-cut, sharp-focus image. However, by looking
at the broadcast of the soap in India through several lenses in the last three chapters, I have
consciously chosen to posit multiple views of the viewers' and their relation to the soap in
terms of the issue of pleasure for the women, the ideological functions of the soap in the
current economic scenario of India, and the act of viewing in relation to the technology of
television. This is not to imply that one should not do a particularized audience study or
textual or institutional analysis. It is simply to say in examining cultural products such as
television programs, we need to understand the ways in which the various aspects of
reception, context and economics function together. Although it will be difficult to use this
conclusion to bring a single, large picture into focus simply because there is no context-free
position from which to emphasize the role that *The Bold and the Beautiful* plays in the lives
of the women in my study, I will try to use it to provide a brief summary of the complicated
nature of the connection between this American soap and the culture within which it is
viewed by women in India.

While any theory of television spectatorship must take into account the material
conditions of reception, we should not assume that all spectators watch in the same ways
or that each spectator watches the same way all the time; that is, we should not suppose that
there is monolithic television reception. Our social use of television is different at different
times and for different reasons. We would not expect to watch a newscast the same way we
watch a murder mystery. Similarly, in this case we cannot expect that an Indian soap opera is viewed in the same way or perceived in a way akin to an American soap opera.

After laying down the theoretical groundwork for my project in Chapter I, I discussed my research experience in Chapter II. I have analyzed the methodological issues raised in conducting this kind of research and discussed the procedures that I have followed including a detailed description of the questionnaire that I used during the interviews. In Chapter III, I have tried to uncover (through the interviews) some of the different discourses embedded in *The Bold and the Beautiful* viewing experience, the systems of pleasure and power that inflect the experience, and the forms within which the women are able to recognize and acknowledge themselves.

Any narrative is a social transaction, "a medium of exchange," writes Roland Barthes (Barthes 1974, p. 90). More than structures, it is an act. In this study, it was seen that an act of viewing is also an act for interpretation, an act wherein our insights and perceptions are produced in part, from our viewing experiences, from a sensitivity to the subtleties of our own life specific to a certain culture, and from the worlds we observe and dream about. The relation of the viewing-self to other experiences of self and other aspects of experience is a complex, often contradictory, relation. Some of the multiple interacting conditions that form and constrain this practice specifically for some of the women viewers of *The Bold and the Beautiful* in India, were explored in Chapter III. As seen in my discussion, watching *The Bold and the Beautiful* is not in any way an unified experience for the women I spoke to. Viewing attitudes and experiences differed from woman to
woman. Viewers produced different meanings from the soap and varied diversely in terms of their likes and dislikes for specific characters. Thus it was seen that discursive authority with regard to the production of meanings from this soap fluctuates widely, is different for different contexts of reception, and can probably never be tackled down with precision.

In Chapter IV, I identified some of the reasons which cause television to structure or mediate social discourses (through this soap) regarding woman and her 'place' in life, along particular lines - ways that serve to maintain and perpetuate ideologies conducive to patriarchal, capitalist interests. As a dominant social institution and a major economic industry, TV tends to have stakes in the social and cultural status quo and its reproduction. This tendency, I have argued, influences from the outset the investments of the industry in traditional and institutionalized meanings of 'woman,' especially those meanings connected to large structural institutions such as the family, the economy and patriarchy. Considering the TV program, The Bold and the Beautiful as an example, I showed how it accentuates the traditional and common sense meanings (woman as married, as mother, as heterosexual, as functional in the private sphere) in its representations of the female characters. I also discussed how this soap creates a culture of consumerism and this takes on special significance when seen in the context of current multinational investments in India.

However, to prove this point effectively one might need to investigate the correlation of specific product sales and purchasing behavior among the women who watch the soap. This correlation would certainly point to the motivational affectivity of the soap. The relationship between this affectivity and that of constructing women as consumers is
an area that needs more consideration. There might be a number of reasons behind the construction of women viewers as 'ideal' consumers and this needs to be investigated within the context specific to India. Since so many of the respondents indicated that one of the reasons for viewing *The Bold and the Beautiful*, was "to learn about Western culture," it is important to see whether this particular aspect is affecting the viewers' lives and if it is, then one needs to examine the ways in which it might be doing so. In this context, a discussion of 'traditionalism' and 'modernity' and how these issues play out in the lives of upper-class and middle-class women in India could be helpful in constructing an effective argument about the soap encouraging behavior and values that are perceived to be American and thus, 'modern'.

Last but not least, I have tried to delineate the role of U.S. in drawing India into a global media village - how 'messages' took off from the U.S. and 'landed' in post-colonial India. Here I have given a brief overview of the earliest cases of transmission of television programs to occur 'across the borders.' Then I proceeded to discuss how India was chosen as a site for 'modernization' by the U.S. via satellite transmission of instructional programs, aimed to cover almost the whole area of India. Then I discussed give the viewing context within the family in India - the relationship between the viewers and television as a tool which enables them to 'look into' another culture, another land, albeit a fantasy one. It was seen that the viewers had a considerable amount of control over the operation of the set itself and did not consider their viewing practices as a violation or neglect of other household duties. In fact their viewing time was especially reserved, and this gave them their own space and boundaries for entertainment. It must be noted, however, that this
viewing practice is specific only to the upper-class women of this study. The dimensions may change considerably when lower middle-class women are taken into account. Further investigation needs to be done in this area. A deatiled audience study including women across different class and religions/ethnicity would help in the analysis of various viewing practices of women within different social groups in India.

The way we conceptualize our work, our time, our bodies, our gender are intricately linked to our cultural environment and must be interpreted in relation to the social contexts in which these conceptualizations occur. The social dimensions and determinations of our language, the way our behavior is shaped by shared ideals and collective experiences, is a part of how we interpret our psyches. We are both subjects and objects--and oppression is both institutional and experiential. Family life is not the cause of economic or emotional failure or success; however, for certain homebound women, the family is where they experience economic and emotional life. It may be through isolation that women experience most oppression. The isolation and oppression are real enough; they exist. The task for us is to explore how and why women can survive under such (oftentimes, difficult) conditions. And paradoxically, how and why, under such conditions, many are able to live vigorous, textured, and sometimes lyrical lives. However, many do not. They express restlessness, refusals, and rebellion in their own ways and at a number of sites.

Thus, on the one hand, there are obviously many reasons for women's investments and pleasures in watching The Bold and the Beautiful in India. On the other hand, gender-based divisions in this program point to its operations as a gender-producing medium, and the actual ways in which representations are delimited. Although, on the surface, it appears
at times that women are consuming this soap and the products advertised by it, one could also argue that if the women use the soap to question their status rather than confirm their status, then they are restructuring ideological norms for themselves. As I have pointed out before, the social and cultural constructions of the 'family', in the case of women, are central for the control of meaning for woman in society. However, when patriarchal meanings are left unquestioned, women's position in society remains unchanged. It is only through the questioning of such meanings that hegemonic control can change. Some critics have argued that hegemony is a critical perspective that sees the viewer as disempowered, asserting that she/he cannot resist the ideology offered by television (Fiske, 1987). However, as seen in my analysis, a hegemonic perspective does allow for different interpretations by viewers. But those interpretations are bounded by the text. While viewers may choose to emphasize some portions of the text more than others, it is unrealistic to assume that the ideology in a text can be completely evaded. Thus, television can be viewed as offering mixed messages which make its ideological function less obvious. In the end, these mixed messages make television successful, because they allow it to attract diverse audiences. As Gitlin notes, "TV entertainment takes its design from social and psychological fissures.....If the messages are susceptible to divergent interpretations, that is no failure for television" (1983, p. 217).

Some theorists insist that a critique of popular cultural forms (in terms of promotion of hegemonic ideologies), for example a soap opera, takes away the important aspect of pleasure that women derive from it. However, in my opinion one should try to engage in
an exploration both in terms of the 'pleasure' involved in watching a soap as well as providing a critique of the ideologies perpetuated by it. In the broadest sense criticism is justified by what it can reveal about the culture in which we live. All television texts contain the themes that define a culture. Feminist criticism of television posits that many of those themes are organized and turn on the axis of gender. In television discourse, definitions of women's place, pleasure and resistance, the context of viewing, perpetuation of patriarchal ideologies, creation of a consumer culture - all these must be examined with equal intensity. Only through such scrutiny can we understand the power of these definitions: their limitations, possibilities and capacities for change.

Feminism means finally that we renounce our obedience to the fathers and recognize that the world they have described is not the whole world.

Adrienne Rich (1979, p. 207)
APPENDIX A

LATEST ESTIMATES  (In Thousands)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV Homes</td>
<td>28300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable Homes</td>
<td>8280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* STV Homes</td>
<td>7278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISTRIBUTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North</th>
<th>West</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Satellite Television

Source: *The Economic Times* (Media and Research Section)
August 24, 1994, India.
APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

"BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL" VIEWER SURVEY
Please Read the Following

I would be very grateful if you could take a brief amount of time to answer the questions on this form. This survey is part of my thesis project on Indian audiences (of the soap opera, "Bold And The Beautiful"), I am conducting at Ohio State University. The questionnaire is designed to discover your personal ideas and opinions about this particular soap opera. Some of the questions are open-ended, asking you to put your answers in your own words; the others require you to place a check in the space next to the answer which seems most appropriate to you. This information will remain confidential and I ask that you understand your participation is completely voluntary.

FOR EACH QUESTION, PLEASE SELECT ONLY ONE ANSWER UNLESS THE QUESTION SPECIFIES OTHERWISE.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sauli Chaudhuri
The Ohio State University

1. When did you first begin watching B&B?

   ___a. Three months back
   ___b. Six months back
   ___c. One year back

2. At what age did you first begin watching T.V. regularly?

   ___a. 5-9 years
   ___b. 10-14 years
   ___c. 15-19 years
   ___d. 20-24 years
3. About how many serials/soap operas do you watch regularly?

____ a. 1-4
____ b. 5-9
____ c. 10 or more

4. Do you watch B&B everyday?

____ a. yes
____ b. no

5. If you watch other serials/soap opera besides B&B, please list the top three that are most frequently viewed by you:

a. ______
b. ______
c. ______

6. Do you have any other leisure activities?

____ a. yes
____ b. no

If yes, do you enjoy watching soap operas:

____ a. a lot more than any other leisure activity
____ b. equally with other leisure activities
____ c. less than other leisure activities

7. How often do you discuss B&B with others?

____ a. never
____ b. rarely
____ c. sometimes
____ d. often

Give reasons for your answer:

8. How closely do you think the characters in B&B resemble the people you meet in real life?

____ a. they are not at all similar
b. they are somewhat similar
   c. they are very similar
   d. they are almost identical

9. How closely do you think the events in B&B resemble those which occur in real life?
   a. they are not at all similar
   b. they are somewhat similar
   c. they are very similar
   d. they are almost identical

10. Which types of female characters do you like seeing most, and why?

11. How closely do you think the any of the female characters' reactions and feelings towards people and events resemble your own?
   a. they are not like mine at all
   b. they are somewhat like mine
   c. they are very much like mine
   d. they are almost identical to mine

12. After you have finished watching an episode, what do you do? (you may check more than one option)
   a. discuss the episode with someone else
   b. think about what happened in that episode
   c. forget all about it till the next episode
   d. eagerly await the next episode

13. Do you prefer female characters who were like or unlike women in everyday life? Please say why.

14. Are there any female characters in this soap, you dislike?
   a. yes
If yes, which ones? Why?

15. Which of the following do you feel should *never* be included in T.V. serials?

___ a. rape  
___ b. explicit sex  
___ c. physical abuse  
___ d. premarital sex  
___ e. bed-hopping

16. What qualities do you like to see in a heroine? Please select three and rank them in order of your preference.

___ a. intelligence  
___ b. independence  
___ c. beauty  
___ d. a sense of humor  
___ e. assertiveness  
___ f. femininity  
___ g. aggressiveness  
___ h. virginity  
___ i. other (please specify)

17. What qualities do you like to see in a hero? Please select three and rank them in order of your preference?

___ a. intelligence  
___ b. tenderness  
___ c. protectiveness  
___ d. strength  
___ e. bravery  
___ f. a sense of humor  
___ g. independence  
___ h. attractiveness  
___ i. other (please specify)

18. Which of the following reasons best describe why you watch B&B? Please choose the three reasons which are closest to your reasons and rank them in order of importance.

___ a. to escape my daily problems  
___ b. to learn about Western people and culture
__ c. for simple relaxation
__ d. because it never saddens or depresses me
__ e. because I wish I had a life like the characters
__ f. because watching it is just for me. It is my time.

19. Does anyone else in your family watch B&B?

____ a. yes
____ b. no

If yes, who?______________________________

20. Name:

21. Are you:

____ a. female
____ b. male

22. In what age group are you?

____ a. 15-18.
____ b. 19-24
____ c. 25-34
____ d. 35-44
____ e. 45-54
____ f. 55-64
____ g. 65 or above

23. What is your current marital status?

____ a. single (never married)
____ b. married/partnered
____ c. widowed
____ d. separated
____ e. divorced
24. If married/partnered, what is your spouse's/partner's occupation?


25. If you have children, what are their ages and sex?


26. Last week, were you working full-time, part-time, going to school, keeping house or what?

___ a. working full-time
___ b. working part-time
___ c. keeping house and/or caring for children
___ d. in school
___ e. in college
___ f. looking for work
___ g. retired

27. If you have a job outside the home, what is your occupation or job title?

28. What is your total household income per month?

___ a. less than Rs.2,999
___ b. Rs.3,000-5,999
___ c. Rs.6,000-8,999
___ d. Rs.9000 or more

29. What is the level of your education?

___ a. less than class 10
___ b. through class 10
___ c. graduated class 12
___ d. some college work
___ e. graduated with Bachelor's degree
___ f. graduated with Master's degree
___ g. Ph.D.
___ h. other (please specify)
30. Could you briefly describe what makes B&B a better T.V. serial to watch, than others being shown currently?
APPENDIX C

Table 2: Responses to Questions 8 and 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option (Q. 8)</th>
<th>No. of Women</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>Less than B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>Less than B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>Less than B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>M.A. level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>Doing M.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (continued),

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option (Q. 9)</th>
<th>No. of women</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>Less than B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>Less than B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>:&quot;</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>Less than B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>Doing M.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY


University.


