

Inventing Television Culture



Oxford Television Studies

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Men, Women, and the Box

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During the fertile decade 1955-65 the television institution emerged in a form which would be familiar for the next half century: this book attends to two aspects of its formation. The first entails the production strategies, programmes, schedules, and emergent generic modes as these were invented through a process of trial and error, allied to a close attention to building the mass audience - in short the question of how television invented itself. The second aspect concerns the place of women and the concept 'feminine' in the new institution. Television offered women access to the public sphere in ways that were potentially disruptive of the order prevailing in mid-1950s Britain. Apart from new employment opportunities, images of women and definitions of the feminine were purveyed nightly to an heterogeneous audience of millions, an audience that was itself under construction throughout the period. Through close attention to three discrete areas of programming (women's programmes, news and current affairs, and popular drama), the book aims to convey a sense of the excitement entailed in establishing the institution and to ask where and how it may have posed challenges to the prevailing patriarchal hegemony. Hence the productive interplay of two terms, television and the feminine, both of which were evolving rapidly during the period, is explored in the context of the contemporary discursive climate.

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