

Elective One - telling the truth

My understanding of events, personalities and situations has been shaped by the representation of texts as I have come to realise that the truth is not a definite thing.

I have come to realise that often a truth may be presented in the guise of the truth (Peter O'Connor, Good Weekend 03/11/01).

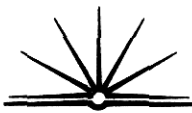
The truth is often manipulated or misrepresented for many reasons. These include personal or corporate gain, rating or advertising. The basis for the representation of an event, personality or situation is the combination of three factors: motive, context and technique.

Through the study of *The Frontline episodes* The Siege, We Aint got Dames and The Night of Nights (Rob Sitch et al.)

and the related material of an article by Mike Carlton called Disdain for truth shows disdain for the people (Sydney Morning Herald 16/02/02), Peter O'Connor's article from Good Weekend (03/11/01) and Catherine Dumbby's book Bad girls (chapter six: The News without underpants) my understanding of truth has developed.

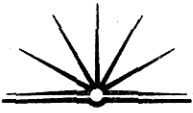
The Siege is an episode based on the real-life event known as the Cangai Farmhouse Siege. This serious episode confronts ~~an~~ ^{the} issue of responsibility and the moral ethics of journalism.

Mike Moore ironically asks the gunman Gavin "Maybe you're taking matters a little too far?". This is ironic as the crew at Frontline have gone too far to get a good story, risking the



lives of the children by stalling negotiations by instructing Gavin to leave the phone off the hook.

He Aint got Dames is concerned with rating and advertising, in other words, personal and corporate gain or, money. In this episode the crew try to "dumb down" the stories to appeal to a female audience. Mike Moore speaks out of character (he is the stereotype, superficial ~~and~~ current affairs host) saying "I just don't believe this 'women don't understand politics' crap. It's so patronising". While it is patronising, the fact that women aren't interested in certain issues, is evident. However, this episode makes the audience question whether this makes it acceptable for the media



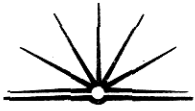
to decide what people should see.

In The Night of Nights, Marty runs a story called "Sweet Aid or Cheat Aid?" despite the charity's pleading the media not to expose a scandal which will decrease the donations. This episode highlights that journalists must make conscious decisions of what they believe should be shown. They must also deal with the consequences of their decisions. The episode also makes an audience question the role of the media and their moral obligations regarding the representation of events, personalities or situations. Brian attempts to comfort Marty who has self-doubt about his morality and his decision to show the story saying "We as the media have a responsibility to report



what we learn.. not to sit back and decide what people should ~~and~~ should not know". However, it is apparent that the responsibility of the media is much much more as they shape an audience's understanding of events, personalities and situations.

Mike Carlton asked "is it the mendacity or the incompetence? Or the cowardly attempt to spray the blame here, there and everywhere" in relation to the Tampa issue in Australia which started on the 26th of August last year (2001). This issue relates the media's responsibility to a government's responsibility. In this case, the Howard government disregarded his responsibilities and was re-elected on the grounds of lies.



One must ask why a society would reward ~~an~~ in a collective group for presenting lies in the guise of the truth.

Perhaps it is the recognition of the ambiguous morals in our own lives?

Despite ambiguous morals, the media does certainly have a responsibility. As Catherine deunby said "News as we understand it today is simply a refined form of gossip... however, journalism is supposed to have a dual role: to provide a forum for public opinion while also acting as a watchdog over our institutions". Through the episodes of Frontline and the Tampa issue of August 2001, I have come to understand that despite this responsibility, the media may ~~not~~

present a truth as the truth.

My understanding of events, personalities and situations has been shaped by representations and manipulation of texts. I have come to realise that there is no one truth but rather, many truths which are presented in the guise of ~~the~~ an absolute. Though telling the truth is a responsibility of the media, external influences such as personal + corporate gain, rating and advertising influence individual's sense of morality. The ~~the~~ misrepresentation of images (The Tampa) and the labelling of opinions as "the truth" reflects how motives, context and techniques can blur what may appear to be the clear truth.