

(reconstructing) the "bias of grouping and the rhetoric of picturing." This advance will not remove the albatross from working reporters' necks. But perhaps in time it will increase their sensibilities to the ways this burden skews their vision. But whether increased self-awareness will allow reporters to moderate their grammar of assertion is questionable. Even the voice of the adversary culture must continuously prove its resonance in the proper column of the accountant's ledger. Nevertheless the texts of Schudson and Company are invaluable aids in decoding the grammar of journalistic assertion. They warrant the attention of all members of the adversary culture: journalists, sociologists, and civilians.

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Television: Ideology and Exchange, edited by John Caughie (London: The British Film Institute, 1978).

This short but provocative collection of essays from French, Belgian, Finnish, Mexican, Columbian, and American sources is organized around two central themes. First, the theoretical and concrete implications of Althusser's assumption ("Ideology and State," in *Lenin and Philosophy*, 1971) that television functions broadly and effectively as an "ideological apparatus" (IA) are examined. Second, it considers the extent to which television operates as a commodity and as an agent of cultural imperialism in international exchange. The first thesis is explicitly postulated in two rather tendentious essays by Armand Mattelart and the Lu Hsun Group for Ideological Intervention. The companion thesis is affirmed by implication and example rather than by apology. The presentation of the Althusserian formula is more systematic and ingenious, but the evidence supporting the exchange theorem is more convincing.

According to Althusser, television "produces ideological representations, constituting its subject-spectators as unified consciousness, offering them positions from which they and the world can be held 'in perspective', 'in place', and from which contradiction can be represented as plurality" (Caughie). The relation of the IA to the ISA ("ideological state apparatus") is conceived as relative, variable, and historical. Television technology defines the way in which messages enter circulation, but the impact of these messages is determined by the ideological and institutional formation of a particular state. Thus, no comprehensive theory of media impact can be formulated, and comparative undertakings are to be regarded as at best hazardous. The theoretical deck is thereby arranged (if not stacked) so that the total control imputed to French transmissions ("On Equal Terms: Analysis of a Television Programme") and the relatively autonomous transmission supported by the professional values of an American news-producing organization against the interests of the American ISA ("Rough Justice on a Saigon Street: A Gatekeeper Study of NBC's Tet Execution Film") can both be regarded as affirmations of the Althusserian insight.

Mattelart's essay, "The Nature of Bourgeois and Imperialist Communication," is saved from what he refers to as a "too Machiavellian" construction of the ISA by the moderating influences of Barthes and Enzensberger, and to a lesser extent by his rereading of Althusser's concept of "the authorless theatre." Mattelart acknowledges that members of the ruling class do not consciously think out the structures of their domination; their class cohesiveness is a function of common interests rather than secret agreements and conspiracies. They do not create the myths (ideologies) disseminated by the media, but merely manage the "authorless theatre" that sustains their domination. Caughie implies the concept of an "authorless theatre" is not Machiavellian enough to explain the Chilean experience under Pinochet. I would point out, however, that it remains too Machiavellian to account for the occasional dialectical openings that existing contradictions in the media structures of liberal societies can sustain. Mattelart's essay underscores the rhetorical appeal of Althusser's concept. Nevertheless, the "authorless theatre" is a metaphoric cousin of Marcuse's "one-dimensional society" and is therefore vulnerable to the same criticisms. However, compared to the jargon-packed Leninist doxology espoused by the Lu Hsun Group, Mattelart's essay is a model of temperance and clarity. Yet, even the abstruse offering of Lu Hsun is perversely fascinating. The subject of their analysis is a series of French television debates, *On Equal Terms*, featuring prominent political adversaries. According to Lu Hsun, the French ISA uses television to fix the acceptable limits for the development of contradictions within the informational system. The French ISA requires censorship but "the dictatorship of the bourgeois" is saddled with a liberal democratic ideology forcing it to hide its repressive character. Overt censorship would expose the class basis of bourgeois power. Therefore, censorship can only function effectively under the mask of morality (good taste), as "censorship exercised in the wings". In the case of *On Equal Terms*, this censorship is manifested in the "objective" format of the program — hierarchization, compartmentalization, and circulation — which reproduces, legitimates, and re-ideologizes the conditions of production in bourgeois society. Thus, according to the Lu Hsun deconstruction, there is a kind of double determinism whereby the program serves as a synecdoché for the existing state apparatus. The filtering mechanism of the format (censorships and codes) produce a kind of vanity portraiture: the function of television "is to relate the various ideological practices and discourses to each other, to bind together this disparity, to seal their union, to affirm their coherence: to re-ideologise the ideological texts produced on the different ISA's" (cultural, juridical, etc.). These televised cameos are designed to sustain the illusion of a functioning pluralistic system. Thus, the agenda-setting function of television news and public affairs programs is to direct attention away from the real political issues (conflict and contradiction) to false (manageable) issues: "the political problem 'posed' is never really there: one is about to come to it, one strays from it. . . . We are allowed glimpses, it is conjured away."

If my simplification of Lu Hsun's analysis is not a violation, I still consider their analysis of *On Equal Terms* both plausible and compelling. However, I vigorously reject the epistemological dogmatism of their historicism. Specifically, I object to the silence they impose upon all attempts to generalize

their thesis beyond the bourgeois context ("this structure and the forms it puts into place, the elements of representation it brings into play, cannot be taken – from a structuralist or formalist point of view – as a self-enclosed signifying system outside of history and indifferent to political determinations"). This proscription (censorship) prohibits raising the obvious critical question. What would a similar analysis of the format of a public affairs program produced within the monolithic media structure of a socialist state reveal? By insulating themselves against the embarrassing ramifications of a reflexive stance, they blind themselves to the limits of their position. They fail to see that the "fiction" of pluralism allows for a residual amount of competition among elites (a competition which, to be sure, falls miserably short of the equalitarian ideology professed by the bourgeois ISA). This competition leaves some holes in the structure of capitalistic domination, whereas the alternative marxist-leninist perspective endorsed by Lu Hsun totally rationalizes domination and thereby legitimates repression (censorship). Additionally, Lu Hsun refuses to consider the possibility that members of the bourgeois ruling class may also be captivated (and inhibited) by the cameras they project.

The remaining essays are, to quote Caughie, "relatively untheorized – informative rather than analytical." Abelard Rodriguez ("Chilean Television") provides a balanced account of the role of Chilean television in three periods: from the introduction of television technology in Chile up to Allende's election; the Allende era; and the period after the Military Junta takeover. Rodriguez contends that the Chilean experience demonstrates the inadequacy of the technocratic point of view (that television is simply a tool in the service of those who control it financially), and affirms the historicist perspective, that television "is an institution conditioned by its own ideological and historical dynamic, whose function changes with the political context, with the expectations of the viewer, and with his need and opportunities for participation in its contents." Baily and Lichy present an intricate accounting of the decision-making processes which resulted in the NBC broadcast of General Loan executing a captive Viet Cong soldier. The authors see their narrative as supporting a "cybernetic" model of journalistic gateskeeping – a non-linear model which takes into account feedback from several sources in arriving at an organizational consensus on the news-worthiness of the film. They regard the communication-decision network as an expression of the values, priorities, and professional autonomy of the journalistic subculture. Caughie althusserizes this interpretation into an instance of an IA "by-passing the mediation of government, tying itself directly to the apparently more objective needs of capital."

Nordenstreng and Varis' "International Flow of TV Programmes" documents two dominant trends in international media exchange: one-way traffic from big exporting countries (USA, Britain, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany) to the rest of the world, and the dominance of entertainment in the flow. These trends represent a tendency toward concentration. The flow follows the network of relations established by colonialism. The one-way traffic pattern even penetrates Eastern Europe where approximately 3000

hours flow from Western Europe to the socialist nations of Eastern Europe compared to a return flow of about 1000 hours. However, the disparity in the flow of news items from West to East is ten to one. Nordenstreng and Varis contend this imbalance in news exchange can be explained, in part, by the different conceptions of news in Western and Eastern Europe; the West (Eurovision) emphasizes the sensational (disasters, accidents, and sports), while the broadcasting union of socialist nations (Intervision) devotes more space to culture, science, economics, and technology. This is an excellent essay, one of the finest non-polemical examinations of the media imperialism thesis presently available in English.

Two short extracts complete the collection. Luis Ramiro Beltran's "TV Etchings in the Mind of Latin Americans: Conservatism, Materialism and Conformism" is a brief statistical fact-sheet documenting patterns of US media dominance in Latin America. Augustin Girard, in "Cable Television and Cultural Policy," challenges the utopianism that has pervaded much of the discussion of cable technology. His examination of the economics of cable transmission indicates that commercial considerations also dominate the new technology. Further, Girard contends that the technical expertise required for the production of quality television precludes equalitarian access. The idea that cable technology can serve as a medium for a participatory revolution in social communications is therefore clearly untenable. Experience in the US and Canada demonstrates that audience ratings for community produced cable transmissions seldom climb above one percent.

The stated intent of this collection is to "challenge, complicate, and extend" by "combining empirical instances with theory, to point towards the need for a more adequate theory." In my view, a more adequate theory (or theories) would: dispense with dogma or theoretical imperialism, and recognize the uses and limits of comprehensive metaphors like "ideological state apparatus" and "the authorless theatre" (e.g., taken literally, the metaphor of an "authorless theatre" obscures the role of creativity and innovation in negating codes of domination). Regarded as an extreme type, the "authorless theatre" is, however, a useful sensitizing concept. It allows the theoretician to sketch a rough draft of what the imprimatur of market censorship would look like if it were not blurred (diluted and constrained) by other forces. A more adequate theory would also need to consider whether there are autonomous residues (e.g., aesthetic or professional standards) not wholly subsumed, contained, or "managed" by state or capital. It would further analyze the implications of the cameo effect, outlining the constituents of a comprehensive morphology of the censorships imposed by media formats, and rigorously exploring the viability of the proposition that the format of a program can serve as a microcosm or synecdoche of the power structure in which it is embedded. (In this effort, the media theorist would be wise to avoid the hieroglyphic formalism that has drained "the structuralist movement" in literature of much of its critical relevance.) Further, a fuller theory would: examine the impact of media output on members of "the ruling class"; explore ways of gauging the impact of cultural imperialism; consider the utility of economic models for analysis of international exchanges in cultural

commodities; and stress the importance of historical analysis because the "technological perspective" of prominent schools of communications theory have underemphasized its relevance. (A more adequate theory would avoid all arbitrary foreclosures of its analytic frame. It would fully exploit both diachronic and synchronic resources.) These complications and extensions suggest, but do not begin to exhaust, the dialogical possibilities raised by *Television: Ideology and Exchange*.

W.H. Auden maintained that brilliance always contains an essential error -- a distortion of vision which informs that vision. Caughie's collection underscores the brilliance of Althusser's metaphoric vision. But the essential error of that vision -- its sweeping gloss of all nonconfirming evidences -- seriously impairs its penetration.

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Reading Television, by John Fiske and John Hartley (London: Methuen, 1978).

Gender Advertisements, by Erving Goffman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising, by Judith Williamson (London: Marion Boyars, 1978).

The mass culture system is now sufficiently entrenched to inspire dense, intelligent, and careful efforts at comprehensive interpretation, theory, and critique. These three books, each impressive in its singular way, together establish beyond doubt that mass culture deserves theoretical notice. The web of symbolic representations in which our culture lives, breathes, and suffocates is not to be dismissed as proof of the irreversible, monotonic decline of the Western world; rather, mass culture is rich and complicated material to be understood freshly. If, in their considerable successes, these books raise questions about the workability of systematic theory as such, that is because together they help advance the field to the point at which such questions can be entertained. Indeed, these books belong to, and further, a third wave of mass culture criticism in English. The first, in the late Thirties and early Forties, brought interview and content-analysis methods to the aid of critical theory, especially in the work of Leo Lowenthal, Herta Herzog, and Robert K. Merton. The second, in the Fifties, emphasized the divisions among high, middle, and low brows; it was partly a resurgence of Tocquevillian dismay about the level of popular taste, and partly a radical intellectuals' response to the political failures of the Old Left and the working class it championed. The current wave is inspired partly by French structuralism and semiology, partly by the rediscovered Gramsci (especially the Anglicized elaborations by Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall), and partly by the political attempt to comprehend the persistence of capitalist ideologies in the West after the incandescent insurgencies of 1968. The new wave is finding its ways. Its excesses are partly the products of heady new starts, but partly too -- as I shall argue later -- the products of a fundamental predicament.

Reading Television is the first protracted attempt at a semiology of television.