

by technicist corruption; there is nothing one can do about the institutional and cultural diffusion of "technicism"; and in this hopeless (fated) situation individuals can only retain their "agency" by improving their abilities for "world-making". How do individuals improve their abilities? Through education; if need be, through Education. The only problem is that the educational system is determined by factors extrinsic to it, factors deeply embedded in the social and economic structures of a technologically advanced society. Stanley belittles all this and advances a course of action which comes down to good old American institutional meliorism, the false consciousness that tinkering away at various beams and girders of the social edifice can create institutions favorable to generating "new humans" capable of creating a new social order suited to their expanded needs. Indeed, he explicitly assigns the first world a vanguard role in this new stage of moral evolution:

I believe that the evolution of creative and responsible power over language among democratic polities is the next great challenge of moral progress. If this challenge is not met, democracy itself will succumb to subversion through linguistic self-mystification (xiii).

For the rest, the book is designed to be maximally transparent to the reader, with frequent helpful summaries of the "where have we come from and where are we going" variety. Stanley is concerned that the reader not lose the forest for the trees and rightly so, for the text digests a generous quantity of rather diverse literature. Nonetheless, many of the discussions are plagued by a kind of compulsive Aristotelianism, in which taxonomy and the cataloguing of causes, interpretations, factors, and consequences run riot, often to the detriment of considered theoretic analysis. Sadly, what should have been a *critique* of technicism thereby dissolves into mere criticism and classification. Style, it seems, always mirrors the limits of the argument it conveys. At times Stanley is lucid and even eloquent and he scores points; when he gets to taxonomizing, however, the feeling that grave and important questions are being glossed will not go away.

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*Discovering The News: A Social History of American Newspapers* by Michael Schudson (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

In *The Mechanical Bride*, McLuhan describes a page of news as "a symbolist landscape." A compelling metaphor! Sufficiently ambiguous to imply the innocence and inevitability of a natural development, yet pregnant with innovative possibilities. It suggests an impending breakthrough in decoding a revolutionary new technological grammar that has quietly but profoundly altered the social and cultural universe of industrial man. A seductive but misleading image, it exudes an effusive scholarly optimism creating broad opportunities for academic empire-building. But it defocalizes and thereby distorts the significance of human initiative, power-relations, and creative resources in communication processes and products. Contrary to technological and natural history interpretations, phenomenological and critical theorists have underscored the

importance of recontextualizing analysis. The work holds little glamor; it is often a plodding effort with no Copernican (or even McLuhanesque) breakthroughs anticipated. For Schudson, it means combining the documentary strategies of social history with the epistemological perspective of the sociology of knowledge to provide an account of the social conditions and human decisions which brought into being the modern newspaper. More specifically, it entails tracing the genesis of the ideal of journalistic objectivity from its inception during the presidency of Andrew Jackson through its development into a quasi-scientific and professionally sacrosanct ideology after World War I.

For such an ambitious undertaking, Schudson's book is succinct, carefully organized, and lucidly written. Schudson's central thesis is that contrary to the assumptions of Tocqueville and "revisionary" historians, America did in fact undergo a democratic revolution between 1815 and 1840 in which the aristocratic political culture of a liberal mercantilist republic was transformed into that of an equalitarian market society. This transformation dramatically expanded the role of the press in America. Before 1815 newspapers catered to mercantilist and political elites. But by the 1840s the "penny press" had established itself as the most resonant voice in American journalism. The penny papers endorsed equalitarian values in culture, politics, and economics. Their essential function was to make money: to sell papers and advertising space. Members of the old elites considered the enormous and unwarranted power of the mass presses to shape public opinion a direct threat to Jeffersonian ideals. James Fenimore Cooper predicted the advent of a "pressocracy". In his view, the penny press embodied all the negative qualities of bourgeois institutions: parochialism, grasping self-interest, and complete disregard for the sanctity of private life.

Cooper's assessment of the situation in the 1830s was exaggerated. But by the time the press wars of the 1880s and 1890s had reached their peak, his prediction could not be so easily dismissed. Press historians generally agree that the power of the American press was most thoroughly and unscrupulously misused during the Spanish-American War. Some even suggest competition between Hearst's *New York Journal* and Pulitzer's *New York World* actually escalated the war (see Robert Desmond, *The Information Process*, 1978). But the press wars did not produce any serious questioning of the naive realism of the prevailing journalistic ethos. On the contrary, they glamorized and dramatized the role of the reporter. Indeed, one contemporary described the 1890s as the "Age of the Reporter." Reporters were increasingly recruited from among the college-educated and career-oriented: "Reporters in the 1890's saw themselves, in part, as scientists uncovering the economic and political facts of industrial life more boldly, more clearly, and more 'realistically' than anyone had done before. . . . The idea of science as a process of data collecting open to all expressed a democratic epistemology." However, journalistic innocence did not survive World War I. Wartime propaganda and censorship and later their bureaucratic and commercial counterpart, public relations, transformed reporters into professional cynics. During the war many of America's

most prominent journalists were conscripted into the service of the emerging propaganda machine. The *New York Times* described the European conflict as “the first press agents’ war”.

Reporters had long seen themselves as more knowing and more skeptical than ordinary citizens. But Schudson contends that “in the war and after, journalists began to see *everything* as illusion since it was so evidently the product of self-conscious artists of illusion.” Out of this profound sense of disillusionment the modern ideal and ideology of objective journalism emerged. Walter Lippmann attests, “As our minds become more deeply aware of their own subjectivism, we find a zest in objective method that is not otherwise there.” Schudson maintains that objectivism in journalism (as well as in law and the social sciences) has contained an ideological component since its inception:

It became an ideal in journalism... precisely *because* subjectivity had come to be regarded as inevitable. From the beginning, then, criticism of the ‘myth’ of objectivity has accompanied its enunciation... [The] ground, on which both advocates and opponents of ‘objectivity’ in journalism stand, is relativism, a belief in the arbitrariness of values, a sense of the ‘hollow silence’ of modernity, to which the ideal of objectivity has been one response... Surely, objectivity as an ideal has been used, and is still used, even disingenuously, as a camouflage for power. But its source lies deeper, in a need to cover over neither authority nor privilege, but disappointment in the modern gaze.

This quasi-defense of objectivism should not be read as a neo-conservative retreat. Schudson’s closing chapter is the most incisive and balanced critique of government “news-management” presently available in a general history of American journalism. Methods of government news-management reached optimal technical efficiency (invisibility) during the cold war. But these methods could not contain the civil rights and anti-war movements. Some chroniclers of the sixties suggest “the media” created the counterculture (Mark C. Miller, “What Happened in the Sixties,” *New York Review of Books*, August 4, 1977). An overstatement. But there is little doubt that the young reporters assigned to cover demonstrations and the campus beat were deeply affected (and in some cases radicalized) by the experience (Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study In The Construction Of Reality*, 1978). The innovative reporters of the 1960s came to regard the antidote to bias embraced by Lippmann and his contemporaries as “the most insidious bias of all.” It was the era of the “pseudo-event” (Daniel Boorstein, *The Image*, 1961). News became theater. And the term “objective” appeared with chilling frequency in the scripts of Pentagon officials, bureaucrats, media executives, and university administrators. To the advocates of the “new,” existential, or investigative journalism it became a pejorative term. They maintained that “objectivity” systematically deflected attention away from the political and economic structures in which daily happenings (“the news”) are embedded. It decontextualizes communication and thereby disguises the influence of power-relations upon ideas.

Despite some setbacks, the mavericks of the sixties succeeded, Schudson contends, in establishing a permanent “adversary” or “critical” culture within

the journalistic establishment. In his view this culture can now be muzzled only by covert repression — a prospect he does not regard as imminent. He acknowledges that members of the adversary culture frequently overstated their case: “The adversary culture’s attack on objectivity conjured up a more unified and univocal Establishment culture than in fact existed. Still, there *was* an ideology of technique and neutrality, and it *did* conceal other values that, the critical culture demanded, should be open to question.” In their attempts to demystify objectivism, members of the adversary culture pursued three general lines of attack: they asserted that the content of a news-story rests upon a set of substantive assumptions, assumptions never open to question; they argued that form constitutes content, that the format of a news story contains a built-in bias; and they pointed out that the process of news-gathering itself, which relies heavily on information obtained from institutional sources, constructs an image of reality reinforcing official viewpoints.

The adversary culture has not yet replaced objectivity with a new ideal of journalism. But, in Schudson’s view, “there is a hope for something new, a simmering disaffection with objective reporting.” Yet there is also an unprecedented skepticism about everything new. Schudson does not pretend to resolve this conundrum. What he offers instead is a plea for a reflexive journalism that will neither “surrender to relativism” nor “submit uncritically to arbitrary conventions established in the name of objectivity.” This plea is framed in prose of such extraordinary eloquence that it almost passes as a solution. Yet as much as I admire Schudson’s literary gifts and share his enthusiasm for reflexivity, I cannot let it pass. He offers no clue how the epistemological moorings of a reflexive journalism are to be secured within the present organizational arrangements of news-producing agencies.

Reflexivity is barely tolerated within the academy; it simply consumes too much time and produces too few immediate results, frequently becoming a nuisance, inhibiting rather than advancing inquiry (Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 1974, 12). The daily press is a time-machine. The clock is the reporter’s albatross. What is most remarkable about the journalism reviews of the sixties is not that they failed to survive the return of more placid times, but that they managed to come into existence at all. They were an extraordinary development. Like “teach-ins,” they were busmen’s holidays that could not long be sustained without suspending the normal business of the day. The weekly column, the magazine, the press club, the weekend seminar, and the inevitable bar near the press building are as close as news-producing organizations come to routinely sanctioning outlets for afterthoughts. If the new ideal of journalism is to assume a reflexive cast, these are the places where it will be articulated. But developing viable standards of journalistic “truth” is not a parochial concern to be decided by an emerging consensus within press clubs and schools of journalism. We all have a stake in the issue, for as Schudson notes, “the daily persuasions of journalists reflect and become our own.” The evidence suggesting that the press has the power to set the agenda for discussions of public affairs is strong (Bernard Cohen, *The Press And Foreign Policy*, 1963). Cooper’s question, “How is this power warranted?” has not been satisfactorily answered. Lippmann’s “objectivity,” too, no longer satisfies. To

date, the answers furnished by dissident members of the working press have been peculiarly prone to "Mailerization," to staking claims for privileged insight grounded only in the cleverness of macho-savvy and hip language. The albatross, the approaching deadline, still extracts its toll. The professional ideology of mainstream adversary journalism remains anti-theoretical and ahistorical. As Carl Bernstein put it in a recent interview, "Reporters are only concerned with facts. . . Psycho-history? It's garbage!"

Thus our view of the "symbolist landscape" is incomplete. It lacks critical perspective. Max Weber tried to provide this perspective when he outlined an ambitious program for developing a sociology of the press ("Towards a Sociology of the Press," *Journal of Communication* 26). So did Robert Park when he called for an account of the "conditions" which brought into being the newspaper as we know it ("The Natural History of the Newspaper," *American Journal of Sociology* 29). Similarly, this deficiency aroused Everett Hughes to assert that the sociologist's proper concern is yesterday's news: "the calling of the sociologists is to push back the frontier of the news so as to get at the news back of, or below the news, not in the sense of getting the lowdown, but in that of giving the reported events another dimension, that of the perspective of culture and of social processes" ("The Improper Study of Man," in *Frontiers Of Knowledge In The Study Of Man*, ed. Lynn White, 1956, 82). Until recently American sociologists have been reluctant to accept this challenge. A few studies were done within the naturalistic assumptions of the Chicago school. But there were no comprehensive attempts to analyze the latent structures of news construction. Perhaps sociologists knew that they could not emerge from such an inquiry unsullied — that it would force them to enter a hall-of-mirrors in which the distortions of their own professional image would have to be exposed to public view. Whatever the source of this reluctance, I am pleased to note that it finally seems to be coming to an end.

There is something new and exciting going on in "media sociology". Not only has Schudson self-consciously taken up Park's challenge (without its naturalistic premises) and proven himself equal to the task, but also an emerging network of highly talented maverick (or "adversary") sociologists, influenced by phenomenological and/or critical perspectives, is effectively challenging the conventional ("administrative") paradigm of media research. In addition to Schudson, scholars such as Carl Jensen, Gaye Tuchman, Todd Gitlin, and David Altheide are bringing the disciplines of theory and history to explorations of the epistemology of news-worthiness. Tuchman and Altheide (*Creating Reality*, 1976) have used field-work situations to document the constituents of news construction. Gitlin ("Spotlight and Shadows," *College English* 38 and "Media Sociology," *Theory and Society* 6) has examined processes of backgrounding and highlighting in news reports, and dissected the ideological assumptions of the "two-step" model of media influence. Jensen and his students at Sonoma State have provided a highly suggestive approach for developing indices of censorship in American news coverage (Geoffrey C. Ryan, "USA — Ten Best Censored Stories," *Index On Censorship* 8). These contributions move us closer to a sociology of the press that will be able to make visible the "news back of, or below the news" by systematically exposing

(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.