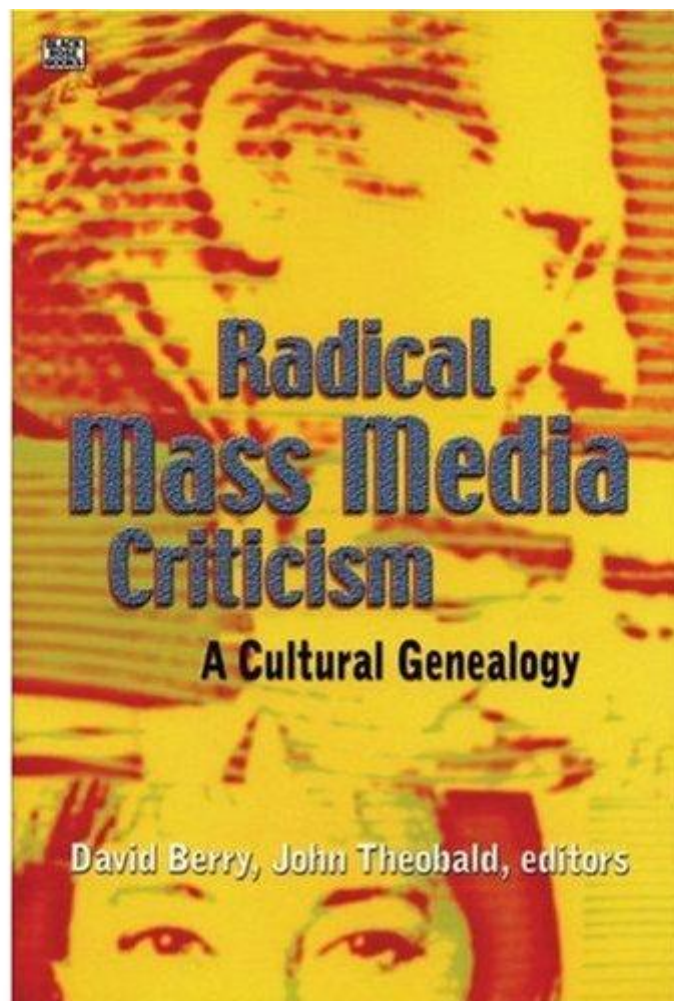


The Intellectual Tradition of Radical Mass Media Criticism: A Framework

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Abstract

This paper presents an evaluation of some of the central figures concerned with Radical Mass Media Criticism (RMMC). This evaluation is far from complete and therefore should be seen as a starting point in tracing the intellectual tradition of RMMC. The investigation here is therefore a key part in the ongoing process in revealing other relevant figures in this intellectual field. The historical roots of RMMC can be traced from the mid-nineteenth century, and the beginnings of modern mass media. We will see that such traditions exist to the present day. This paper highlights 'five periods' of intellectual contribution to RMMC beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, with the other four marking a progress of generations through the twentieth century up to the present.

Keywords: Radical Mass Media Criticism (RMMC), Mass Media, Intellectual Tradition.

Note: This paper is taken from Chapter Two of *Radical Mass Media Criticism: A Cultural Genealogy* (2006). There are minor modifications to adjust it to the style of this journal. Throughout the paper there are references made to other chapters in the aforementioned book.

Introduction

Radical mass media criticism has over the last decades frequently been reduced to a caricature of itself and consigned to the margins of media analysis. It has been given short shrift, misjudged as 'simplistic' and labelled 'discredited'. There has grown up an erroneous critical consensus that radical mass media criticism started with the 'Frankfurt School', and has been on a downhill trajectory ever since. From the 1950s onwards, it is perceived to have collapsed in the face of revisionist, liberal and audience centred studies, and never to have recovered. A typical account of this kind of packaging can be found in Graeme Turner's *British Cultural Studies* (1996). Here he reports:

The first phase of media research (from the 1920s to the 1940s) can be exemplified by the work of the Frankfurt School [...] Researchers in this phase saw the media as a powerful and largely unmediated force that had entirely negative effects on mass culture [...] The Frankfurt School's warnings about the manipulative potential of mass culture were made redundant by pluralism (Turner 1996:184-5. *JT's italics*).

James Curran's authoritative account in *Media and Power* (2002) confirms this more objectively:

Thus there was a cumulative implosion within the radical tradition. The view that power is concentrated in society was challenged by the claim that it is fragmented. The portrayal of the media's full integration into the power system was attacked by an alternative account of the media as a 'contested space'. Analysis of media mystification gave way to textual studies of media ambiguity. The traditional radical view of the audience as conditioned and controlled was 'superseded' by another stressing audience autonomy and power [...] However, the more important point for an account of the development of media studies is that revisionist argument was strangely one-sided. Its fire-power was directed mainly at the fundamentalist left positions of an older generation of radical academics (= the Frankfurt School. *JT*), and was rarely aimed at the liberal pluralist tradition which this generation sought to overthrow. Partly as a consequence, the liberal tradition grew in influence almost unchallenged (Curran 2002:146).

Missing from this perspective (Curran later points this out) is the fact that there is a continuous radical intellectual tradition which maintains its momentum through the twentieth century and to the present, and that this tradition did not just stop thinking as the original Frankfurt School generation died out, but continued and developed its challenge to the liberal orthodoxy, refining its position and answering the attacks made on it. As Ben Scott and Robert McChesney affirm later in this book, and their position in relation to the USA can be extended at least to Europe:

Our argument here reaches much further than simply highlighting the existence of a rich tradition of radical press criticism. We also argue that this rich tradition, rather than being a marginal or fringe phenomenon in opposition to the dominant mainstream perspective, can make a legitimate claim to being the mainstream tradition of thought about the press [...] The critique has been ever present, assuming ferocious proportions every few decades when systematic abuses reached the critical

mass of intolerable corruption (see Chapter 11 of *Radical Mass Media: A Cultural Genealogy*).

Curran concludes along comparable lines:

This tradition still offers the most persuasive general account of the media. Radical analysts are entirely right to insist that the media are, in general, subject to strong elite pressures which propel the media towards the sphere of established power [...] In sum a reconstituted radical perspective needs to be championed against the advancing tide of revisionist argument, which overstates popular influence on the media and understates the media's influence on the public (Curran 2002:165).

This paper will attempt two things. First it will, in its limited space, provide an extremely concise sketch of the historical and intellectual contours of radical mass media criticism. Second, and in doing this, it will furnish a context for the other chapters discussed in *Radical Mass Media Criticism: A Cultural Genealogy* and the figures and themes which it highlights. This account makes no further claims than to be the briefest of résumés of an extensive subject. Brevity is a virtue with its corresponding failings, but I hope to avoid excessive listing of names and over-crude reduction of sets of ideas to thumbnail descriptions. Furthermore, this is a patchily researched subject; my sewing together of the patchwork may not meet with the approval of all, and will, without doubt contain omissions. My account has grown substantially as I have investigated the field, and it is more inclusive than other published accounts, but I am still far from having a sense of completeness. A longer account would, for example, have to take in further thinkers from a wider geographical area (e.g. Australia), the whole under-researched fields of radical journalism and popular collective activity opposing mass media abuses, and a fuller treatment of the explosion of activity in the last fifteen years.

The framework within which this account is pieced together stretches from the mid-nineteenth century, and the beginnings of modern mass media, to the present, concentrating on significant radical thinkers in the history of mass media criticism. Within this, five periods are distinguished, the first taking us up to around the turn of the twentieth century, and the other four marking a progress of generations through the twentieth century up to the present. These correspond for analytical purposes approximately to the four quarters of the twentieth century. While the longer opening period is devoted to precursors of the main tradition during the high tide of nineteenth century capitalism with its accompanying range of inventions and developments in the field of communications, the other four are each punctuated by major historical traumata, intertwined with successive revolutions in mass communications and media technology.

Thus in the second period, the 1914-18 war is inextricably associated with the press, the telegraph and telephone, the camera and early industrially produced mechanised transport and weapons systems. In the third period, the 1939-45 war is coupled with the addition of radio and cinema to the mass media, the addition of air and submarine travel to more technologically advanced and faster land travel, and the development of diversified, more destructive weaponry. In the fourth period, Cold War and the nuclear age interlink with the television era, mass ownership of the private motorcar, high speed and long distance civil air travel and the early days of satellite communications technology for military and civil purposes. In the fifth period, the end of the Cold War, the construction of the Islamic enemy, economic globalisation and global resource wars centred on oil intermingle with the

computer age, the Internet, the mobile phone and media globalisation as major additional factors in mass communication. It is essential to remain aware that, within this picture, there are huge regional differences in exposure to 'development' and its consequences, and that there occurs an increasingly gaping disparity between the 'most developed' and the 'least developed', with many functioning at intermediate stages and some leap-frogging them.

Attempts to come to terms intellectually with the significance of these rapid waves of change need to contain fundamental mass media analysis as a key component within the interplay of ideas. It is evident and no exaggeration to say that interpreting the crucial role of mass media is a *sine qua non* for a more general historical and social understanding as well as cultural self-understanding.

Radical mass media criticism, like mass media analysis as a whole, splits into four main interacting categories. Against the backdrop of rapidly increasing multiplicity of speed of media output, and of change from a predominantly verbal (reading and listening) to a predominantly visual (seeing and listening) culture, analyses focus on:

- The political economy of the mass media
- Media discourse
- Audiences and media effects
- The impact of new technologies.

Each of these subdivides into a range of approaches, from the system sustaining to the radically critical.

In the following account, as it moves through the five periods identified, the radical edge of each of these categories will be reviewed, and stable factors, that is, critiques which remain powerful and valid despite the rapidly changing scenery, set against transient or dynamic factors, which demand corresponding development in critical analysis.

The First Period: Precursors

Although one could trace the history of ideas of communication back to its origins in antiquity, this account opens with the period of unprecedented socio-economic change in mid-nineteenth century Europe, which, among many other developments, saw the invention of modern mass media. This was the moment when communications technology and industry developed to the point where mass production and distribution of newspapers became possible, and to the point where entrepreneurs realised not only that mass media (then the press) could make them huge profits, but also that owning the means of mass communication enabled them to control the contents, and thence the consumers thereof in their own interests and in those of the emerging ruling class to which they belonged. Elite control of information and ideology had always existed, wielded not least over previous centuries by the churches, but the difference here was that the medium of communication became big business, and the language of the medium became a commodity, subject to the laws and practices of the free market and the political and economic interests of the entrepreneurial class.

It was the young Karl Marx (1818-1883), with his statement in 1842 that the primary freedom of the press was not to be a business, who opened the debate. A later insight from Marx, of direct relevance to the press, clarifies the new kind of interaction he observed between capitalism and intellectual production (e.g. journalism) within it:

There corresponds to the capitalist mode of production a type of intellectual production quite different from that which corresponded to the medieval mode of production. Unless material production itself is understood in its specific historical form, it is impossible to grasp the characteristics of the intellectual production which corresponds to it, or the reciprocal action between the two (Marx 1956:82).

Questioning of the role of the first mass medium and its producers was from the start not limited to the usual suspects associated with the radical left tradition. Writing in the late 1840s, the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) made a series of excoriating remarks, based on Christian ethics, about the corrupting influence of the press in the decadent society he perceived around him: 'If Christ returned today', he wrote, 'there can be no doubt that it would not be the high priests that he pilloried, it would be the journalists' (1849) (Kraus 1925:1-28). Kierkegaard's critique envisaged the poisonous impact of the press to be so great that it would cause the downfall of European civilisation on account of its structurally inbuilt corruption and distortion of the truth, and its pursuit of the sensational in the interests of distraction and profit:

The evil of the daily press lies in the fact that it is concerned to inflate the moment and make it a thousand or ten thousand times more important than it actually is. But the task of all moral education is above all to wean people away from a life of instant gratification. Just as Chinese civilisation came to a halt at a particular stage of development, so European civilisation will come to a halt on account of its press, stopped in its tracks as a reminder of the fact that here a discovery was made which finally overwhelmed it (1848) (ibid).

In Britain, a couple of decades later, Matthew Arnold also fulminated against the press from the standpoint of Christian morality.

In 1863, Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864), founder of the reformist wing of German socialism and the major precursor of present day social democracy, also launched a powerful polemic against the press. For him, the press was a business enterprise seeking, like any other business, to maximise profits by any means. Thus he described the newspaper as 'a highly lucrative investment for those with a talent for making money' (Lassalle 1874:14). 'Newspapers', he said, 'while still retaining the appearance of being campaigners for ideas [had] changed from being educators and teachers of the people into lickspittles of the wealthy' (ibid). 'Some Newspapers', he continued, 'have their hands tied by their current subscribers, others by those whom they wish to gain, but both are always shackled by the real financial foundation of the business - advertisements' (ibid).

He concluded that newspapers had become:

not only the commonest of vulgar commercial operations, no different from any other, but also they became something much worse, namely totally hypocritical businesses, run with the pretence of fighting for great ideas and the good of the people [...] The true enemy of the people, its most dangerous enemy, and the more dangerous since it appears in the guise of a friend, is today's press! Be sure to remember with burning soul this motto which I hurl at you: hatred and contempt, death and destruction to today's press! (ibid).

The earliest book length critique of modern press power and journalistic practice appeared in Leipzig in 1875, Heinrich Wuttke's *Die Deutschen Zeitschriften und die Entstehung der Öffentlichen Meinung* (German Journals and the Creation of Public Opinion). This contained a lengthy critique of the corruption and corruptibility of contemporary press enterprises, and pointed to Vienna at this time (see chapter 4 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) as the location of the worst abuses.

The Second Period

Accounts of radical media criticism at the turn of the twentieth century and into its early decades show a continuing preponderance of German language thinkers. In particular, Carl Bücher (1847-1930) and Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) (see Chapter 3 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) founded and developed the 'political economy' perspective, while the Viennese Karl Kraus (1874-1936) (see Chapter 4 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) became the first, and in many ways still the greatest, cultural-linguistic critic of mass media discourse and unmasker of media power. Despite the prominence of these figures, it is not intended at this point to pre-empt the fuller assessments of their work in later chapters of *RMMC*. It should be noted however that, although they radically opposed the abuses of capitalism and its accompanying intellectual production in relation to the media, none of these figures perceived themselves as Marxists. Marx's original insights took hold across a broad swathe of social criticism, not least because they fitted what could be observed.

Of seminal importance as a founding father of social psychology and early thinker on the nature of publics and media audiences, the decoders of mass media output, was the Frenchman Gabriel Tarde (1843-1904). Armand Mattelart in particular (see Chapter 8 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) has drawn attention to the importance of Tarde's book *L'opinion et la foule* (Public Opinion and the Crowd) (1901) which appeared the year after his appointment to the chair of contemporary philosophy at the Collège de France, Paris, and was an important influence on Tönnies's later writing.

According to Mattelart, Tarde's analysis was the first to take into account the importance for collective psychology of the socio-cultural revolution brought about by the development of mass communications and particularly the mass media. Other contemporary work on audiences saw them principally in terms of 'the crowd' - a physical gathering of people and their interactions. Tarde's contemporary, Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), with his book *Psychologie des Foules* (Crowd Psychology) (1895) (and to some extent Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in his *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* (Mass Psychology) (1921)) exemplified this, portraying a threatening image of the crowd as 'delirious', subject to 'mental contagion' or mass hysteria, and consisting of 'automatons no longer guided by their will'. Tarde understood that this represented only a partial analysis in the mass media age, leading to simplified models of public behaviour. He observed the formation of new kinds of audiences, which he named 'publics', corresponding to the media age and its new modes of spreading information at unprecedented speed to unprecedented numbers of people. The new media 'publics' were virtual crowds (or 'imagined communities') with the readers of any given newspaper consuming the same words and the information they communicated, but without a common physical location or direct psychological interaction. Tarde called journalism a 'suction pump of information', an increasingly powerful social force, disseminating its versions of new stories to its publics across the world:

The winged words of the papers easily cross borders which were never crossed by the voice of the famous orator, or the party leader. Certain large newspapers, the Times, the Figaro, and certain journals have their public spread throughout the entire world (1901) (Tarde 1969:286).

Thus 'publics', in Tarde's sense, corresponded to the virtual community of a newspaper's subscribers, created by 'regular communication of those associated by a continual flow of common information and enthusiasms' (ibid).

Furthermore, Tarde identified in the relationship between mass medium and publics a control of the latter by the former, given the public's inclination to 'imitation'. Public opinion is seen as a more or less accurate or successful imitation of ideas propagated by the media. It follows from this that he perceived problems concerning the power of the media in mass democracy.

Although writing at a time when the press was still the only or predominant mass medium, Bücher and Tönnies, Kraus and Tarde are all figures whose writings have had a seminal direct or indirect impact on subsequent thinkers within the genealogy of radical mass media criticism set out here. For example, links between Bücher and Tönnies, and the writers associated with the Frankfurt School are evident. The American Robert E. Park, who studied in Europe, took Tönnies's and Tarde's ideas across the Atlantic (see his doctoral dissertation *The Crowd and the Public* (1904)) decades before the 'Frankfurt' writers arrived in the USA as exiles from Germany in the 1930s. Further evidence of early media critical thinking in the USA is provided by Upton Sinclair in *The Brass Check* (1920), and in others quoted by McChesney & Scott (2004). Critical ideas on the political economy of the mass media, already enriched since these early thinkers, re-emerge, updated, expanded and given new relevance, from the 1980s onwards in the work of, for example, Edward Herman, Noam Chomsky, and Robert McChesney in the USA (see Chapters 11, 14 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*). In the UK, they follow through to James Curran, Nicholas Garnham, Graham Murdock and Peter Golding via a different route.

Likewise, Kraus's influence is acknowledged by the Frankfurt writers, and his ideas can be seen reflected in the writings of George Orwell and later Neil Postman, as well as in the cultural ideas of the Leavis's, and more recently in the elegant essays of George Steiner. It is conceivable that Wittgenstein, who recognised Kraus as a significant influence, provided a link here; it is only in the case of Steiner that a direct knowledge of Kraus can be shown. Further indirect development of the Krausian heritage can be seen in the development of Critical Linguistics in the UK in the 1980s and Critical Discourse Analysis in various European countries - notably Vienna - in the 1990s.

Tarde's early influence can be traced through to fellow Frenchman Jules Rassak, whose book *Psychologie de l'opinion et de la propagande politique* (*Psychology of Opinion and Political Propaganda* (1927) criticised commercialised news, but was also the first work to observe how publics see through and reject over-didactic messages. Rassak concluded from this that the most effective persuasion or propaganda disguises itself as fact (see previous quote from Lassalle). With this insight he pointed to the most successful manipulative technique of mass media discourse through to the present, already exploited by Goebbels, but employed most effectively in 'free' societies across subsequent decades. Tarde's insights into 'publics' identify him as a key early influence on the 'strong effects' wing of the subsequently much contested area of media effects research. Traces of his heritage may thus be perceived in the UK in Stuart Hall's position within the Cultural Studies tradition, and in some work of the Glasgow

Media Group (see Chapter 7 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*), as well as in Germany and Jürgen Habermas's work on the public sphere (see Chapter 6 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*).

Observation of these examples of thematic links through from seminal thinkers to more recent and present day writings has its speculative side, and scholarly writing to demonstrate the nature of such connections is scarce. Some apparent similarities may be little more than coincidentally comparable responses emerging from parallel social contexts. The aim of the present narrative is merely to identify broad contours and notice thematic connections within a clearly recognisable tradition.

We return now to the second quarter of the twentieth century to identify major intermediate contributors to this tradition.

The Third Period

Overshadowed in Europe by the aftermath of the 1914-18 war, and then by the rise of fascism with all that accompanied it, thinkers, and particularly media critics, of the second quarter of the twentieth century lived through the most depressing of times. They observed with increasing pessimism the fulfilment of their worst fears as the rise to power of the mass media at the centre of totalitarian rule was realised. Yet they also launched ideas which were subsequently to suggest ways of moving beyond the cultural impasse created by the abuses and atrocities of those years.

Although they are not remembered primarily as media critics, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) have, each for their own reasons, to be included in a genealogy of radical mass media criticism. Centre stage is, however, occupied by Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Theodor Adorno (1903-1969). In their different ways, George Orwell (1903-1950) in the UK, Harold Innis (1894-1952) in Canada and John Dewey (1859-1952) in the USA also need to be named in this context.

Given his subsequent impact, Antonio Gramsci must be acknowledged as one of the most influential thinkers within the orbit of radical mass media criticism. A founder member of the Italian Communist Party, and member of its Central Committee, he spent the last eleven years of his life in Mussolini's prisons, from where he produced his *Lettere de Carcere* (Letters from Prison) (1947) and *Quaderni del Carcere* (Prison Notebooks) (1948-51). From his harsh political and journalistic experiences emerged his ideas on dominant discourses, hegemony and discursive struggle. These, however came to prominence outside Italy with delayed effect since it was not until the 1970s that translations of his main work appeared. Of central importance within a genealogy of radical mass media criticism is his view that current bourgeois control of society, while certainly manifest in material modes of production, is culturally embedded and naturalised in the minds of the people via its hegemony over discourse. Dominating ways of thinking, speaking, assuming, coping and fearing, that is to say through language, the ruling elite controls by creating normalisation and acceptance of the status quo in the minds of those being exploited by it. Gramsci's answer to this is the creation and dissemination of counter-hegemonic discourses, that is, new ways of thinking, speaking and feeling, leading to new perceptions of 'normality' which will challenge the old, and build the practical processes for overcoming it.

Gramsci is today a strong presence in writings on the mass media and mass communications, particularly in the UK. A trail of influence can be observed in Britain from Raymond Williams through to Stuart Hall at the radical edge of British Cultural Studies, and to Norman Fairclough (see chapter 14 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Bertolt Brecht, while principally occupied in Weimar Germany with revolutionising theatre, poetry, film and song, was among the first to turn their attention to the new medium of radio. His text *Rundfunk als Kommunikationsapparat* (Radio as an Apparatus for Communication) (1932) summarises concisely the debate that he initiated. Constantly concerned with promoting art forms and media as being in dialogue with active publics, rather than imposed on and delivered to them ready-made, Brecht saw radio, at that moment, unlike the press, to be not yet controlled by power elites. It was still conceivable as a genuinely interactive and subversive medium and potential space for popular dialogue in the interests of the many rather than the few. There is some irony in the fact that the text appeared on the eve of the Nazi takeover of power in Germany, and that that regime went on to appropriate radio as its chief centralised propaganda medium. Yet the ideas put forward by Brecht here, and taken up in the 1970s by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, nevertheless sparked off a significant line of thought about who should control the emerging electronic media, and how they might function within a genuinely democratic culture. Contemporary debates and forebodings about control of the Internet, with its even greater potential as a genuinely popular, interactive medium, reflect these concerns.

Thinkers associated with the early Frankfurt School, in particular Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (see Chapter 5 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) all acknowledged their indebtedness to Karl Kraus and were also inheritors from Bücher and Tönnies of the 'political economy' approach to mass media analysis. They are thus seen in this narrative not as founders of radical mass media criticism, but as significant contributors to a developing intellectual continuum with their antecedents, successors and modifiers. This started with Marx but was by no means exclusively Marxist, and led through to Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas (see Chapter 6 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) and others previously noted.

The early 'Frankfurt' writers wrote under the shadow of, and were inevitably deeply affected by, the rise of Nazism and the centrality of propaganda, and media power and corruption, in the fascist project. The success of Nazi propaganda and the techniques utilised by Goebbels and his Ministry in the effective practice of mass thought control using the most advanced techniques and technology of their day can be seen to justify the pessimistic impasse into which these thinkers were driven. All subsequent media writing has to be seen in the light of this, and can be interpreted as a wide range of largely unsuccessful, or only partially convincing attempts to escape from, avoid, contradict or transcend this impasse. In the historical context of this trauma, the more optimistic and superficial work of those who have set out to minimise or relativise the powerful effects of the mass media and their messages needs to be constantly tested against the recalcitrant evidence and the strength of the analysis of the Frankfurt writers and of those who have refined and updated their work in subsequent and ongoing media debates. We shall return to the Frankfurt thinkers in the following section.

The Anglophone world at this time produced some resonant formulations and cogent critiques on both sides of the Atlantic, some of which further challenge the view of radical media criticism as the unique property of the political left. Particularly those for whom,

following Kraus, media debasement and corruption of language are central to their critique, occupy a wide range of positions in terms of conventional political classifications. On the one hand, George Orwell on the critical left, fulminated in his 1946 essay *Politics and the English Language* against the mass media's reduction of language to a succession of clichés, and saw ready-made phrases to be anaesthetising the brains of their consumers and repeaters. On the other hand, F. and Q. Leavis and T. S. Eliot, are associated with a radical conservative aesthetic intellectualism (of a type estranged from the free market conservatism of the mainstream political right). They bemoaned the debasement of language in popular public usage and particularly in the media as a root cause of deep cultural decline. If the former is dubbed as 'radical', it is hard to see why the latter should not also be, since both ascribe a central and powerful negative role in human affairs to the exploitation of language by the mass media for base purposes. Orwell is significant not so much for the originality of his ideas as for his resonance. His writing became a reference point for subsequent media critics such as Neil Postman in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985) and Edward Herman in *Beyond Hypocrisy* (1992).

Across the Atlantic during this period, John Dewey's writing on the mass media and journalism was influential, with his essay *Our Un-Free Press* (1935) providing the title for McChesney and Scott's 2004 anthology of US radical media criticism. In Canada, Harold Innis's late work on communication (see Chapter 9 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) had a strong impact on Marshall McLuhan (see chapter 10 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) and other Canadian writers.

The Fourth Period

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno published their *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (*Dialectic of Enlightenment*) in 1947, ushering in the post-war period with one of its key texts of cultural analysis (see Chapter 5 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*). Adorno followed this in 1963 with his essay *Résumé über Kulturindustrie* (*Summary of the Culture Industry*). Horkheimer and Adorno famously rejected the concept 'mass culture', as also manifest in the phrase 'mass media', preferring the term 'culture industry'. If 'mass culture' could be (mis)construed as referring to an authentic culture of the people, 'culture industry' left no doubt that what was being referred to was, first, a business, and second, culture propagated by, and in the interests of, the economically and politically powerful. For Adorno, in his essay, culture industry consumers are literally 'stuffed' with its products, in which considerations such as truth and quality are subordinated to the central aim of maintaining the socio-economic status quo by constantly creating and recreating a conformist, uncritical public. The overall effect of the culture industry was to bring about 'mass deception' and the 'impoverishment of consciousness'. While much of the consuming public may be unaware of its deception and imprisonment, some, and this is worse, see through them but nevertheless continue to desire them, accepting fabrications in full knowledge of the motivations behind them, while closing their eyes to them in a kind of self-contempt.

Also writing in post-war West Germany was Günther Anders (1902-1992), with his essay *Die Welt als Phantom und Matrize*. *Philosophische Betrachtungen über Rundfunk und Fernsehen* (*The World as Phantom and Matrix. Philosophical Observations on Radio and Television*) (1956). For Anders, news and information are pumped into households via mass media in the same way as electricity or gas. Raw events, like raw energy, are converted into prepared commodities which are supplied to consumers in a constantly available and indispensable stream. The achievement of the mass media is that people now no longer go outside to

discover the world. They go inside and have what they are told is the world delivered to them behind locked doors. They become voyeurs of a phantom world which is delivered to them without the possibility of dialogue or interaction. Anders posits a culture in which untruth has triumphed. Untrue statements about the world have become 'the world'. He concludes that media audiences are trapped in a phantom world, that they have given up their freedom to see outside it, and that they end up wanting to stay in it. This position both draws on Kraus, and prefigures Baudrillard.

Among the Frankfurt thinkers, Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) chose to remain in California rather than return to Europe after the war. He rose to international prominence in the late 1960s, along with Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), and, more modestly in Europe, Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1929-) and Guy Debord (1931-1994), as a leading intellectual associated with the revolutionary student politics of those years. His 1964 book *One Dimensional Man* reiterates points about monopoly capitalism's power to control the formulation of public desire for commodities through language. Consumers are seen as manipulated objects. The rhetoric of individualism and freedom is seen as a deliberate concealment of underlying patterns of 'imitation' (remember Tarde and Lasswell). The rhetoric and experience of pluralism and democracy are in fact manifestations of 'repressive tolerance', in which circumscribed permitted freedoms disguise underlying control. Marcuse's popularity at that time, however, was based on his belief in the possibility of emancipatory escape from the perceived one-dimensional society and thus from the impasse into which the earlier Frankfurt thinkers had been driven. He saw a revolutionary potential in an alliance between critical intellectuals and radical students who have been able to step outside the system, and various groups of the oppressed who had never even had access to it. Ultimately, one-dimensional consumers can be led by such an alliance to break away from the repressions which hold them captive.

Back in West Germany, the poet, critic and thinker Hans Magnus Enzensberger's 1970 essay *Baukasten zu einer Theorie der Medien* (published in *New Left Review*:12/70 as *Constituents of a Theory of the Media*), emerged from a similar zeitgeist. Building on Brecht's writings, Enzensberger advocates public action to convert the existing one-way, top-down mass communication into an interactive one, controlled by its users. He sees media structures and flows, as currently constituted, to be hindering rather than promoting communication, and ascribes this not to technical limitations, but to the kind of provider-consumer relationship desired by the industrial and political power elites. Enzensberger's view is that it is for the people to treat the opportunities offered by the media as an emancipatory challenge. Genuine public or community owned media can produce a view of society and the world which reflects ordinary people's reality rather than that of the elites. Enzensberger sees democratic social movements taking over broadcasting frequencies and building their own emancipated counter-cultures.

Louis Althusser (1918-1990) would not have seen this as realistic. He operated from the French structuralist tradition in territory adjacent to that of Gramsci and the Frankfurt thinkers to the extent that that he adapted Marx to allocate a relatively autonomous rather than a subordinate role to the cultural superstructure and to ideology. Ideology thus becomes in itself a determining, consciousness-shaping force. This, however, does not imply independent choice of ideology by individuals, seen as free, self-determining agents. In practice people's consciousness is determined by 'ideological state apparatuses', including the mass media. In Western capitalist societies, ideological discourse leads individuals to perceive themselves as autonomous, when in fact they are shaped by ideological processes.

This resembles Adorno's position, which sees the manufacture of individual consciousness to be like the manufacture of Yale locks, each one differing by only a fraction of a millimetre from the rest. Despite this virtually closed system, Althusser's thought acted as a catalyst for further developments in France, right through to the mirrored impasse of Jean Baudrillard (1929-), who also drew strongly on McLuhan and the situationists. In Britain, by contrast, his writing, along with that of Gramsci, influenced Raymond Williams (see below) and the more equivocal analytical framework of Stuart Hall (1932-).

Although he too cannot be simply delineated as a 'radical media critic', Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) work is salient here insofar as discourse, history and power are central to it. Foucault relates to Marx and the Western Marxist tradition in that he turns Marx's metaphor of foundation and superstructure on its head. He takes the step of placing language, the discursive/cultural 'superstructure' beneath the technical/economic 'foundation'. Returning to the vicinity of Kraus's language-based perspective, Foucault sees that Marx's structure is precisely that, a structure or discursive formulation, a truth of its time and place within a genealogical process which comes down to our present through the linguistic archive which it has generated. With discourse at the centre of our historical perspective, knowledge and consciousness, it follows that the control of discourse brings power. Those with power operate 'regimes of truth' which sustain them. Power struggles are ultimately discursive struggles. In *L'ordre du discours* (*The Order of Discourse*), he wrote: 'Discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but it is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized' (Foucault 1971. Translation from Shapiro 1982). Along with Gramsci, Foucault's work was a key influence on the development of the theorisation of critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough, Wodak and others in the 1990s.

The événements of 1968, which emanated across Europe from Paris, and led to Marcuse's celebrity in California, also led to the popular expression of revolutionary thoughts on the mass media. One of the several 1968 posters which highlighted mass media power, produced by students in the Paris art and design schools, the Atelier Populaire, showed a human being crouched on all fours like a sheep, the body divided up by dotted lines, as in butcher's shop posters showing the different cuts of meat. The various 'cuts' are labelled 'radio', 'television', 'press' and 'sheep'. The eye is in the form of the Gaullist Croix de Lorraine (symbol of the governing regime). The caption is: 'On vous intoxique' ('They're poisoning you'). Countering the hegemonic power of the mainstream mass media in Paris 1968 were revolutionary wall newspapers in the streets and in the metro, read and discussed in public by the crowds which gathered around them.

One of the key cultural forerunners of the 1968 events was Guy Debord, prominent among the Situationists. Polemically branding grand structuralist theorists such as Althusser as 'anaemic gods', and drawing inspiration from the Dada and Surrealist movements, Debord promoted a liberating anarchism which would bring about spontaneity and a genuinely innovative state of mind. In his book *La société du spectacle* (*The Society of the Spectacle*) (1967) he expressed a radical critique of affluent mediated society. Debord's 'society of the spectacle' is one in which commodification of mass media and culture has the effect of alienating its consumers from reality rather than connecting them with it. Ahistorical image production, supposedly informing us about events, in fact makes them unreal, inducing the spectators of all sorts of atrocities and inhumanities to be just that, spectators. They are rendered passive, distracted and unaware of the concealment of the social relations which produce what they are watching. Debord perceives social power elites, in the form of capital,

the nation state and media professionals, as creators of one-way discourse, from them to us, constantly maintaining us in a state of organised 'ignorance of what is about to happen, and, immediately afterwards, forgetting of whatever has nonetheless been understood' (Debord 1990:13-14). The situationist way out of this entrapment starts with the artistic and cultural (see also Chapter 5 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*), envisaging the production of alternative images through posters, street art, graffiti etc, which inspire resistance to and rebellion against the dominant imagery. Debord's scorn of the over-intellectual, comparable with that of Kraus in his satirical performances, can also be detected in parts of Pierre Bourdieu's 1996 essay *Sur la télévision* (On Television). It can certainly be maintained that, alongside serious critical models, the qualities of humour, satire, polemic and the unexpected combine to inspire and attract in a way which is absent from heavier theoretical contributions.

In Britain, the pivotal figure of this period was Raymond Williams (1921-88). His work finally provided the impetus to shift critical studies away from high culture and a literary-moral approach towards the acceptance of popular culture, manifested in particular in the mass media, as a legitimate object of study, and towards an anthropological-historical approach. Where previously the literary text centred approach associated with F.R. Leavis had dominated, Williams's approach involved seeing the cultural process as a whole, and thus conducting textual analysis, which remained crucial, in the context of the institutions and socio-historical structures and processes which produced them. In the 1960s and 1970s, Williams assimilated ideas from mainland Europe in the form of Lukács's and Goldman's Marxist literary criticism, Saussure's and Barthes's semiology, and again, the key inputs of Althusser and Gramsci. If Althusser left Williams, and contemporaries Richard Hoggart and Edward Thompson, uneasy with what they saw as an over-rigid approach, it was Gramsci's ideas which enabled them to reconcile critical Marxist ideas with their Culturalist position. They needed to find space for individual experience and the complexities of actual life, whose contradictions they could not see as always fitting into theoretical structures. The dynamism of Gramsci's formulations on continuous counter-hegemonic struggle at the everyday level provided them with the sought-for space between constricting theory and unstructured individual action and initiative. Comparisons in this 'search for space' may be made with Enzensberger and with Habermas (see Chapter 6 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*).

Williams was dismissive of the work of the Canadian Marshall McLuhan, levelling at it the frequent criticism of 'technological determinism', and indeed McLuhan stands apart from the main radical tradition as perhaps more of a radical media visionary than a radical media critic. Influenced by fellow Canadian Harold Innis (see Chapter 9 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*), McLuhan's radical contribution was his placing of technology at the determining centre of media analysis. It was the medium that determined the message and the consciousness of its consumers, transforming their perception of the world in terms of time and space. Chapter 10 (RMMC) re-examines McLuhan and argues the case for his inclusion within the radical tradition.

The Fifth Period

There can be no doubt that radical mass media criticism gathered an immense momentum in the last two decades of the twentieth century, which continued into the first decade of the twenty-first. As noted at the beginning of this paper, this was a contested development which drew stimulus from attempts to discredit it. It also regenerated its own tradition, producing a large volume and variety of work which, in historical perspective, recycled, or better,

developed in an upward spiral (like a spring) previous insights for a new generation and in the context of new technology.

This is not to undervalue it. What we observe is a healthy reiterative process within a live critical tradition. Previous ideas should nourish subsequent ones; new formulations should emerge from accumulated cultural compost in a situation where the fundamental issues remain broadly constant. It is the case, however, that some write as if they were discovering something entirely new. The sheer quantity of material, welcome in itself if often repetitive, prevents a comprehensive overview in a concise account such as this. Thus reference will be limited to a small number of significant figures representing the important trends. While apologising to those omitted or given short shrift, I hope, notwithstanding, to supply a general mapping within which both those highlighted and those left out can be located. It has to be left to future scholarship to provide a fuller picture.

It needs also to be added that while separate categories of radical media criticism have been distinguishable throughout this account, contemporary writers frequently cross those artificial lines, correctly indicating ways in which the threads are interwoven. Thus, for example, those emphasising the political economy of the media often introduce elements from the discourse analytical approach, and media discourse analysts invariably integrate the political economy perspective into their analyses.

If there is a bias in the selection made, it is explained by my belief that the most significant trend of this fifth period lies not so much in the emergence of new ideas as in the growth of a sense of crisis, a need to translate ideas into action, and in an increasing convergence between intellectual and political activity (see Chapter 14 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*).

The most internationally resonant work on the political economy of the mass media is found in the writings in the USA of Ben Bagdikian (1920-), Edward Herman, Noam Chomsky (1928-) and Robert McChesney. Building for the most part on the US tradition (see Chapter 11 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) they have produced a number of key works. Among these are Bagdikian's *The Media Monopoly* (1983) updated as *The New Media Monopoly* (2004), and Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent. The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988). Following these came, from Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions. Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (1989) and among many others with relevance to the media debate, *Deterring Democracy* (1991), *Profit over People* (1999), *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New* (2002) and, importantly, *Hegemony or Survival* (2003). Herman and McChesney collaborated to produce *The Global Media. The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism* (1997), then Herman published *The Myth of the Liberal Media* (1999). McChesney wrote *Rich Media, Poor Democracy. Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (1999), and followed this (with John Nichols) by *Our Media, Not Theirs. The Democratic Struggle against Corporate Media* (2002). This important cluster of titles testifies to a focus in the USA on the struggle against powerful media corporations and their anti-democratic use of propaganda to control minds in their own commercial and political interests. In the early twenty-first century, as discussed in Chapter 14 (RMMC), these writers combine academic writing with social engagement and public campaigns, particularly within the polarised cultural climate of the George W. Bush presidency. They have thus, perhaps by ignoring rather than by engaging with the intense theoretical concerns that marked many of their mainland European counterparts of the post-war generation, been able to focus increasingly on current imperatives rather than historic failures, and build up a broad based campaigning infrastructure through websites and local organisations.

The hub of discourse-based radical media criticism remained in Europe, sustained in the UK, with varying methodologies, by the Glasgow University Media Group (see Chapter 7 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*), Critical Linguists, Critical Discourse Analysts and others, notably the journalist John Pilger (see Chapter 14 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*). All of these work at or close to the interface between scholarly work and political engagement.

An exemplary case from France is that of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2001) (see Chapter 14 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*). For him, language functions centrally as 'an instrument of action and power' (Bourdieu 1991:37), and:

Integration into a single 'linguistic community', which is a product of the political domination that is endlessly reproduced by institutions capable of imposing universal recognition of the dominant language, [and] is the condition for the establishment of relations of linguistic domination (ibid:46).

This sounds like determinism, but by the time he wrote his public lecture *Sur la télévision* (1996. English translation 1998), the tone was different:

It goes without saying that to reveal the hidden constraints on journalists [...] is not to [...] point a finger at the guilty parties. Rather it is an attempt to offer to all sides a possibility of liberation, through a conscious effort, from the hold of these mechanisms, and to propose, perhaps, a programme for concerted action by artists, writers, scholars and journalists (Bourdieu 1998:1).

Here he is advocating an organised subversion by the normally subservient of the central instrument of established power. Bourdieu's target is here not so much the working journalists who are ensnared in the web of constraints which determine their output and livelihood, as the more senior players and their bosses who operate the market-based system and the processes of mind-control over the public. It is through their actions, he asserts, that 'television enjoys a de facto monopoly on what goes into the heads of a significant part of the population and what they think' (ibid:18). Bourdieu here sees as a role for critical writers the ceaseless unmasking of false constructions and discourses, an emancipatory task designed to teach the many, who have not yet seen through these processes, how to read and view critically:

There is a need to invent new forms of communication between researchers and activists, which means a new division of labour between them. One of the missions which sociologists can fulfil perhaps better than anyone is the fight against saturation by the media [...] It is no longer possible nowadays to conduct social struggles without having a specific programme for fighting with and against television (ibid:27).

Back in the UK, Norman Fairclough (see Chapter 14 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) would agree. Bourdieu's project synchronises closely with Fairclough's, Wodak's and others' Critical Discourse Analysis as applied to the mass media, and more broadly to his call for action on 'language in the new capitalism'. Language, he argues, is:

Important in imposing, extending and legitimising the new [neo-liberal] order; for instance the pervasive representations of 'globalisation' as a natural and universal process-disguising ways in which it is based on choices by business corporations and

governments which can be changed. The project of the new order is partly a language project-change in language is an important part of the socio-economic changes which are taking place. And challenging the new order is partly a matter of challenging the new language (Fairclough 2000).

Fairclough rightly sees this challenge as being broader than one concentrated on the mass media, but clearly the pervasive role of the mass media remains crucial.

Media effects or audience research was widely perceived in the 1990s to have produced evidence to see off the strong media effects observations of radical media criticism and thus to have undermined it altogether. If publics habitually resisted or appropriated media messages for their own purposes, then the mass media could be seen as powerless. Radical media critics would, of course welcome the existence of genuinely active audiences, and dream of emancipated, media-wise publics, but in reality, they seldom see them. Jürgen Habermas (see Chapter 6 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*), with his writings on the public sphere, promotes a model of 'radical democracy' in which open public debate leads through to civic action, but what he actually observes in contemporary society is an alarming continuity between populist mass mobilisation on the fascist models of the early part of the twentieth century, and a more concealed post-totalitarian mass manipulation of the 'electronically interconnected network audience' (Habermas 1998:144). He argues that:

The images of the totalitarian state appear to have vanished, but the destructive potential of a new kind of massification has remained. In the public sphere of the media as well, there are still structures that block a horizontal exchange of spontaneously taken positions-that is the use of communicative freedoms-and simultaneously make the isolated and privatised viewers susceptible to an incapacitating collectivisation of their conceptual worlds (ibid).

This kind of conclusion is largely borne out in results of empirical research carried out by the Glasgow Media Group (see Chapter 7 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) in the book *Message Received* (Philo 1999).

The debate takes a further turn, however, when we look at the work of Jesús Martín-Barbero and Nestor Canclini (see Chapter 12 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) in Columbia and Mexico respectively. Barbero suggests entry into communications issues via social movements rather than by analysis of media power, via the particular, concrete local situation rather than via confrontation with vast homogenising global corporations. Thus, building on Freire's work in pedagogy, he is emphasising 'horizontal' and 'dialogical' rather than 'vertical', top-down models of communication. In this context, the fields of art, religion, popular music and even the counter-hegemonic reclaiming and decoding of mass media products, appropriating them for subversive purposes, are all seen as sites for social change.

In comparable fashion, and also influenced by Freire, bell hooks (1952) (see Chapter 13 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) writes from the perspective of the culturally colonised but alienated sphere of black Americans, particularly women, in the USA. In the face of the fact that 'no one, no matter how intelligent and skilful at critical thinking, is protected against the subliminal suggestions that imprint themselves on our unconscious brain if we are watching hours and hours of television' (hooks 2003:11), her project is centrally one of consciousness-raising through education and the promotion of mass-based political movements to challenge the misinformation and indoctrination of white paternalistic power elites.

Important among those who focus on the links between mass communications technology and mass media power are Armand Mattelart (see Chapter 8 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) and Manuel Castells (1942-) in Spain then the USA. David Suzuki's (see Chapter 9 of *Radical Mass Media Criticism*) position here is also significant. Mattelart upturns the view that mass communications technology is benign, or at worst neutral, and rejects the common primary association of mass communications with entertainment and consumer satisfaction via mass media. He points out that 'communication serves first of all to make war [...] War and its logics are essential components of the history of mass communications and of its doctrines and theories, as well as its uses' (Mattelart 1994:xiii). He points to the close and constant relationship between the development and use of military and mass communications technology from the telegraph to satellite communications. Mass media content, often disguised as entertainment, in fact ceaselessly promotes the attitudes, dispositions and logics of war. New technology merely refines the process, it does not fundamentally change it.

Manuel Castells concentrates in his writings on critical responses to challenges posed by transformations in media and communications technology. However lively the public sphere, the pace and impact of technological change today may be just too overwhelming for most people to understand, let alone resist or control in their civic interests. To expect people to make counter-hegemonic decodings of media discourses may be illusory in a fast moving culture of instant images, twenty-four-hour news, or no news by choice, running on globalised, multi-channel, interactive digital information, entertainment and communications systems. The electronic information revolution has at one stroke both provided a massive shot in the arm and increase in economic power for the techno-capitalist elites (foremost among them information age tycoons), and created a system which provides the means of reaching and controlling the minds, in ever more differentiated and localised ways, of global consumer audiences of billions of people.

Castells (1997) however also leaves the door open to alternatives. He identifies space for autonomy or a public sphere, a porosity in the system of the 'informational society', where a critical paradigm can operate. He shows that oppositional and critical social movements can and are appropriating the potential of new global information networks to create their own information flows and worldwide publicity for their causes. He thus sees the ability and potential of democratic social movements to work effectively in the cracks of the dominant media communications system.

Conclusion

However inadequately this condensed paper has been able to do justice to the number and variety of thinkers and writers in this field, it is hoped that what is here may be seen as a serviceable initial charting of radical mass media criticism. Like early maps, it may not be geographically complete, and may come to look primitive once more accurate ones are produced, but it at least identifies recognisable features, and will have served its purpose if it acts as an accessible and stimulating guide to those discovering the terrain, and drawing their conclusions about the next steps to be taken.

The periodisation used in this paper would lead us to assume that a sixth period is now underway. As to whether this period will see the cracks that Castells refers to closing and crushing those within them, or being prised open from within to destabilise the structure and push it towards its collapse is a vital question whose answer will depend on our own thoughts and actions.

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