Media culture: the triumph of the spectacle assignment

Media Culture: the Triumph of the Spectacle " Media culture is a contested terrain across which key social groups and competing political ideologies struggle for dominance and . . . individuals live these struggles through the images, discourses, myths, and spectacle of media culture" -Douglas Kellner, Media Culture Table of Contents

Introduction At the end of the twentieth century, society became more and more aware of the changes in communication technology. People began to see changes in ommunication between individuals, changes in how individuals and society communicated, and changes in communication between societies and cultures. This led to an understanding of human development. The ability to communicate with the help of symbols is one of the fundamental features that differentiate us from the rest of the animal world. Without these practical communication skills and the intellectual capacity needed to use

these skills to transmit, preserve, and propagate thoughts, emotions, and values, it would not have been possible to create such unique religious, ideological, and philosophical systems. Furthermore, without communication, we would not have art.

Art has had a strong relationship with the media throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. New inventions and technology created a very favorable atmosphere for the development of new methods and means of communication. These new communication methods both benefited and furthered events within society. At the end of the 20th century, advanced methods and technologies in the field of communication fully changed the face of the world. Due to this change, some say it is very hard to find the line between reality and the reality that has been created and filtered by media. Some contemporary communication theoreticians have said that we find ourselves in the era of the simulation of the world. History of Media

Mass media, a term that arose in the United States in the early 20th century with the advent of far-reaching advertising campaigns and news networks, includes all those mediums through which information is distributed to the masses. This includes advertisements, newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet. According to some scientists, people started to speak of the media as far back as ancient Greece and Rome. These discussions of media focused mostly on the rhetoric surrounding the practice of persuasion. The Greek philosopher Aristotle said that rhetoric is " the faculty of discovering in any particular case all the methods of persuasion. " This kind of communication puts a heavy emphasis on meaning, and how the meaning is constructed and conveyed. Current mass media works in a

similar way. One of the most important goals f today's media is to construct a message that will convince the receiver to agree to do or believe something. The earliest surviving copy of a paper book, a Kumarajiva translation of the Hindu text The Diamond Sutra, is dated 868 CE (AD). Due to the slow spread of literacy among the common people, and the relatively high cost of paper and production of written media, written materials did not exist as widespread media until Johannes Gutenberg's 1450 CE invention of the printing press with movable type. Thanks to Gutenberg's invention, printed materials suddenly became much less expensive, and the spread of information in the form of written material became much easier.

However, much of the population still remained illiterate and the cost of publishing printed materials remained high enough to limit media from reaching a wide range of the population. Newspapers were first developed in 1605. The first English-language newspaper was published in Amsterdam in 1620. Soon after that, newspapers published in England, and, eventually, in America, began to reach mass audiences directly. Around this same time, America was being colonized, and printed and written materials played an important role. Revolutionary material such as Thomas Paine's Common Sense was published and distributed to the colonists, allowing the spread of ideas that eventually resulted in the creation of the United States.

The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Mayflower Compact1 were all examples of early colonial and American documents that figured prominently in the development of America as a nation. In the 1940s, new technologies and advancements in the field of media began to emerge. Radio began to play a major role in mass communication, as America went to

war. Radio could provide information much faster than newspapers. These new advents in technology allowed media to gain significance, new meaning, and wider function. Radio, film, advertising, and the press grew as industries and became the center of the culture of communication within the U. S. nd within other capitalist democracies. The culture of media became a dominant force within all aspects of life, including politics and social life. 2 It was the beginning of a new era. The media industry began to concentrate on the invention of new technologies. They both wanted to provide people with a wide range of different goods from which they could choose but also wanted to continue to develop ways in which to reach and influence people. The media could now easily affect the minds of the public, forcing the people to accept a particular set of beliefs, which occasionally diverted from actual reality. Societies started to be manipulated and people were indoctrinated.

The main goal of media was and still is to be persuasive enough to attract the attention of a potential receiver, and one of the most convenient ways to accomplish this goal is through the multimedia spectacle. Media Spectacle ‘ Media spectacle’ is a term created by Douglas Kellner to describe the creation by modern media of a display of contemporary dreams, nightmares, fantasies and values. The phenomenon of media spectacle has evolved over centuries, starting in ancient Greece and moving forward through hundreds of years of wars and other major public events. Today, media spectacle continually strives to achieve sensation and attract attention. In the contemporary world, media spectacle exists in nearly all spheres of our lives. The role of the media is not only to inform, educate, teach, and persuade but also to entertain.

The role of media today might suggest that the " fun factor" has become the leading motivation for our involvement in media and information. The main goal in media is now to attract the visual attention of potential consumers. Therefore, images have become more important than text. It is also very important for the creators and producers of media to keep up with ongoing changes in public interest and attitudes, so media companies face a continual need to be flexible and creative in order to reach consumers. This applies not only to advertisment but also to political and entertainment media in general. Media not only needs to be visual and relevant, but also attractive.

Advertisers, public relations departments, and political campaigners need to create messages that are structured in an attractive way, so that it reaches viewers and corresponds to their high expectations of mass media. If this is not done, the consumer will likely not respond to the media. It frequently occurs that a person is faced with a constant influx of media. The information that he or she is presented with may come from a variety of sources, and is likely both true and false information. Over time, it may become difficult for the consumer to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong; to distinguish between reality and fiction. Modern life is shaped by media. It is a power that affects both conscious and subconscious decisions and shapes ideas. We are surrounded by media.

Boorstin writes that " each society and its culture are impelled by fascination with the image and the stimulation and due to it lost its grounding in substance or reality". 3 Douglas Kellner's Contribution & Guy Debord's Influential Analysis of Spectacle Widely recognized social scientist Douglas

Kellner and sociologist Guy Debord focused heavily on the topic of the Media Spectacle and its impact on perceived reality. Kellner is the author of the article " Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle. " The scope of his activity and achievement includes membership in the American Sociological Association. He was also a member of the editorial service board of many journals including Theory, Culture, and Society.

It is this journal that for more than twenty years has published some of the most innovative works in social science. It has been in the forefront of the renewal of cultural sociology. It provides a forum for articles that theorize the relationship between culture and society. In his article Kellner refers to ideas put forward by Guy Deboard. He is known for his impact through the group known as Situationist International. This was a libertarian group that came to prominence during the May Events in France in 1968. This band of avant-garde artists and intellectuals was influenced by Dada, Surrealism and Letterism and concerned themselves with the infusion of poetry and music, and with the transformation of the urban landscape.

At first, the group was principally concerned with the suppression of art, that is to say they wished, like the Dadaist and the Surrealists before them, to supercede the boundary between art and culture as separate activities and to transform them into part of everyday life. In their analysis, the Situationists argue that capitalism limited life as a spectacle. The spectacle is the main concept of their theory (in many ways they reworked Marx's view of alienation). They say that the worker is alienated from his product and from his fellow worker and finds himself living in an alien world; moreover,

they argue that capitalism, in order to ensure its economic growth, has created " pseudo-needs" to increase the consumption.

According to this theory, modern society, or consumer society, is now a society of spectacular commodity consumption. People within this spectacle are treated like objects, rather than like active subjects. In this theory, people are like marionettes whose strings are pulled by invisible power. The Situationists' idea was, in spite of all kinds of separation, to make a world in which individuals could directly produce their own life; in other words, to engage people in an active, creative life. The solution, for them, was not to wait for a distant revolution but to take a different approach, a " step by step" process of the reinvention of everyday life, here and now.

To transform peoples' participation in the world was for them the same thing as changing the structure of society. In the place of the society of the spectacle the Situationists proposed a society without money, commodity production, private property, wage labour, class division, based generally on communist ideas. The most important tenet of the proposal was that the so-called pseudo-needs would be replaced by real desires. This utopial ideal seemed to some to be slightly out of touch with reality but aimed to move the focus of the world away from lies and distortion. The Situationists placed a large amount of focus on the concept that individuals should actively and consciously participate in the reconstruction of every moment of life.

They called themselves Situationists because they believed that all individuals should construct the situations of their lives, release their own potential, and obtain their own pleasure. The Spectacle-Form of Media

Culture As I wrote earlier, spectacle culture has expanded in every area of life " and is becoming one of the organizing principles of the economy, polity, society" 4. Guy Debord argues that " spectacle is… social relation among people, mediated by images. The spectacle … is a world vision, which has become objectified. . . in all its specific forms, as information or propaganda, as advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, the spectacle is the present model of socially dominant life…. " 5.

The spectacle phenomenon in this case refers to both high culture and to low cultural shows. The development of new media technologies made it easier for media to exercise influence over contemporary societies and cultures. In these societies media presented with images has the edge over plain texts. The visual spectacle, which combines all aspects of culture that communicate through visual means, made itself the ruler of the " outside world". Factories and offices where people work are visually soaked environments. Films, television, video games, and the internet are also part of the influx of visual media that affects our thinking and behaviors.

Moreover, we comunicate with the help of visualization. When we are trying to cross over cultural boundaries, our knowledge is often communicated visually, for example, we may use visual cues such as map boundaries and business graphs and data. The Spectacle in the World of Business The propagation of the spectacle is a major aspect of business, and plays a decisive role in whether any given corporation will succeed or not. Businesses, in order to survive, need to be present and visible for the potential customer. Entertainment and advertisement are the powers that

support the business world through various of methods, one of which is creating a ' pseudo event'.

The idea of a ' pseudo event' was put forward by Daniel Boorstin, an American historian, who claimed that America and other countries find themselves in an age of illusion. The ' pseudo event' occurs where " an event is planned and staged entirely for the media, which accrues significance through the scale of its media coverage rather than through any more disinterested assessment of its importance". 6 So to speak " pseudo event" exist for sole purpose of supporting media publicity and serves little to no other function in real life and is considered " real" only after viewing through news, advertisements, television, or other types of media. An extremely simple example is sitting for a family portrait. The event serves no other purpose than to be viewed through a photograph.

Other examples include media spectacles, and many types of news. The World of Celebrities Media contributes to the creation of celebrities. " The celebrity... is the human pseudo event, fabricated for the media and evaluated in terms of the scale and effectiveness of its media yisibility". 7 A famous person provides dominant role models and icons of fashion, style, personality, and, at the same time, leads to the enrichment of the media industry. Media entrepreneurs want celebrities involved with their projects because they believe this will help them attract audiences. Film producers use stars as mean of attracting investment to their projects.

Marketers use public celebrity statements as a means of profiling and branding their products. Sports promoters use celebrity athletes to attract

media attention and increase the number of people who would come to that sport event. Celebrities also make money for the individual concerned. Their success depends on various handlers and image managers that help them to develop their public persona. Celebrities invade all kinds of sites today, ranging from contests in shopping malls to the management of major political campaigns. The importance of publicity, promotion and the exploitation of the media event are omnipresent. The Madonna Phenomenon Madonna became a master in her use of image with the help of mass media.

Daniel Borstin is responsible for one of the most widely quoted aphorisms about celebrity: " the celebrity is a person who is well-known for his well-knownness. . . the celebrity develops its capacity for fame, not by achieving great things, but by differentiating its own personality from those of its competitors in the public arena. " 8?? Madonna has achieved just that. She has total control over her shows. She writes the songs, produces the music, and designs the stage sets. She controls all aspects of her show; not just her spectacle, but also all the things she does, including her films and public appearances. Madonna's entire life turns around the presentation of her image. Madonna is one of the greatest PR machines in history and she has hired top agents, publicists, and creative personnel to market her and produce her images. From the beginning her every move was surrounded by publicity and year after year Madonna references in media culture have proliferated. " 9?? The circulation of an image plays a very important role as well. Madonna constantly changes her public image. Whoever she is at the moment; a good girl gone bad or a virgin in white, a glamour queen or a

cosmic spirit or, finally, a doting mother, her ability to change images every couple of years has fascinated the world, and has been vital in her success.

There is also other side of the coin, the pessimistic one, that assumes that Madonna is a victim of her own image, or that she finds herself in an artificially constructed reality. That problem is not only a problem for her, but also for our culture as a whole. Image is dominating more and more of our lives. The World of Politics " The brutal reality of the modern age is that all famous people are treated like celebrities by mass media, whether they be a great political figure, a worthy campaigner, an artist touched by genius, a serial killer. The newspapers and television programs responsible for their publicity do not draw any meaningful distinction between how they are publicised. " 10 The most significant thing is to make a spectacle of oneself in order to be recognizable.

If you want to gain the state of being popular you have to make yourself highly desirable, and the most important thing is to be visible through the media. No special achievements are needed to be popular; only the attraction of public attention is required. In the world of politics, if one wants to be good politician, one has to be spectacular. The management of the media' reporting of politics has become increasingly important to contemporary political campaigns. Public relations consultants, media advisers, and press officers have become standard components of the contemporary world of politics. Media spectacle is also an inseparable part of politics. It can often be seen that most well-known people engage in politics. This can be interpreted as political manipulation.

It is possible that it is useful because spectators find it easier to identify with a celebrity that they know from TV than with a person that they are seeing for the first time. Conclusion In the contemporary world, mass media, and as a part of mass media, media spectacle, play very important roles. So many people live their lives or parts of their lives vicariously through the image world of the media- through TV, through soap operas, through any media outlet. Everything is just a matter of subjective perspective; everything is relative, depending on where you stand. Everything turns around the world we choose or create for ourselves. There is no reality, there are only images, different images. We can only see the world from where we stand, from that context, that language, that constructed reality.

In other words, the things that you say and do are all coming from the outside-from the world of media. The real you is lost. Life becomes virtual, and we are living in the image. Bibliography: 1. Reader " Literary and Cultural Representation of American Society: Visual Media", Prof. Dr. R. Isensee, " Super Media, A Cultural Studies Approach", Michael R. Real, pp. 26 2. " Media Culture, Cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern. ", Douglas Kellner, pp. 16. 3. " Understanding celebrity", Graeme Turner, Introduction, pp. 5. 4. Reader " Literary and Cultural Representation of American Society: Visual Media", Prof. Dr. R. Isensee, " Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle", Douglas Kellner, pp. 1. 5.

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