Introduction

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Capitalism uses the media to establish its hegemony and to mend the cracks caused by its many crises and contradictions. The chapters in this book examine the media with a critical eye from the left. All the contributors have a common point of departure: that the media must be understood as key organs within the global capitalist system. The capitalist system uses the media at every turn to promote this dominant ideology, with the result that individuals in society are unable to think, learn or question in the process of absorbing this readily available information. As Marx stated in ‘The German Ideology’:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.

Marx and Engels, 2004:64

Media provides the average person with information, and in so doing shapes our understanding of power relationship in society. In capitalist countries, corporate media control filters information to convey a desired virtuality rather than reality itself. Information presents lies as truth as it passes through many channels which provide access to the public's mind. The result is that real problems are hidden, and what is normal gets turned into problems, all in support of the capitalist mode of production. As Raymond Williams states, hegemony and ideology are the very phenomena that shapes and redirects our lives.

Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of ‘ideology,’ nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as “manipulation” or “indoctrination.” It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of our living: our senses, our assignments of energy, our
shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of
meaning and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are
experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus con-
stitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of the
absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for
most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives.

WILLIAMS, 1977:110

Williams regards ideology as a relatively formal and articulated system of val-
ues and beliefs, which can be abstracted as a world vision or perspective of a
social class. One of the uses of ideology is the process of generating ideas and
meanings. Williams tries to shed more light on the definition of the media,
which was a relatively new term at the time, characterizing it as an intermedi-
ary power:

In the twentieth century, the description of a newspaper as a ‘medium’
for advertising became common, and the extended description of the
press and broadcasting ‘the media’ was affected by this. ‘A medium’ or
‘the media’ is then, on the one hand, a term for a social organ or institu-
tion of general communication—a relatively neutral use— and, on the other
hand, a term for a secondary or derived use (as in advertising) of an organ
or institution with another apparently primary purpose. Yet in either
case the ‘medium’ is a form of social organization, something essentially
different from the idea of an intermediate communicative substance.

WILLIAMS, 1977:159

Media is a device that shapes the public’s consent for capitalist hegemony
and facilitates the spread of its ideology. Capitalism uses media to mend
cracks in the system as they emerge, and in the process reproduce the domi-
nant ideology. The bourgeoisie not only forms the consciousness of the soci-
ety via the media, more recently and with great effect using television, but
through the media it keeps control over society. Hundreds of television chan-
nels blast information into our homes through the news, programs, films,
music and many more venues all reflecting the ideology and hegemony of the
bourgeoisie. In this respect, increasingly and to an extent greater than any
time in the past, media takes on the important role of carrying and spreading
the discourse of this dominant ideology and ensuring hegemony in the global
economy.

Mosco juxtaposes Marx’s writings in the Grundrisse and as a journalist to
argue that he represents himself both as a political economist and a cultural