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"THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED": MEDIA DEPOLITICIZATION OF THE MONTREAL AND HEBRON MASSACRES[1]

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> Black youth (holding up a picture of Martin Luther King, Jr.): "Thirty years later, we're still not free. "White reporter: "That's not what this is all about."
> -from CNN coverage of the 1992 Los Angeles riots

> All voting is a sort of gaming, like checkers or backgammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked. I cast my vote, perchance, as I think right; but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail.... When the majority shall at length vote for the abolition of slavery, it will be because they are indifferent to slavery, or because there is but little slavery left to be abolished by their vote.
> -Henry David Thoreau, "Essay on Civil Disobedience"

Thoreau's observation was made in the United States over a hundred years ago, and yet his argument, that what we take to be the "political" realm consists, for most of us, of a means of diversion rather than a way of exercising control over collective life, seems, if anything, more true today. In 1966, then-governor of California Ronald Reagan stated that "Politics is just like show business" (qtd. in Postman 125) In 1980 he was elected President of the United States. In 1984, he was re-elected. In 1988, his chosen successor was elected, and there was even talk of repealing the Constitutional amendment that prevented him from seeking a third term in office. In spite of

his well-documented incompetence in overseeing the functioning of government, he remained one of the most popular presidents in modern American history. In other words, Reagan may not have been good at politics in the sense of managing government, but he was a master of show business. I would like to argue that while the distinction between "politics" and "show business" is one that is worthwhile to maintain, one of the functions of the mass media in our society (in practice, if not in theory) is to attempt to ensure that "politics" remains indistinguishable from show business; in Thoreau's words, a "game" where nothing is staked.

Since the decline of the party press in the nineteenth century, newspapers have tried to appeal to the broadest possible range of readers, hence they have generally attempted to remain "neutral" in their coverage of political issues (Fletcher & Taras 225-6). While editorials may take sides on a controversial issue, journalistic coverage attempts, whenever possible, to maintain an air of objectivity. In order to maintain this air of objectivity, the reporter must speak from the subject position of an impartial observer, and must report only the "facts" relating to an event, uncoloured by the reporter's subjective biases or "values". As a result, issues must be "framed" in such a way as to allow the integrity of this position to be maintained. Maintaining this integrity, however, is not always a simple feat: it requires that the issues being covered be, in a certain sense, "depoliticized", even when the issues are explicitly "political." In order to unravel this apparent paradox, it is necessary to explain exactly what is meant by "politics."

While we might want to begin with an understanding of politics as the functioning of governments (a view that would be supported a quick survey of what is generally seen to be "political" news), such a definition rather quickly runs into the problem of being too narrow, to the extent that the control of our collective lives often rests in institutions other than government or the state.[2] A broader definition of politics (and one that I will be de-

fending here, at least for liberal democratic societies), is one that claims that "politics" essentially involves the contestation of meanings: to be involved in politics is to be involved in a struggle to define issues or events in a certain way (Bell; Connolly; Edelman; Fraser; Gusfield). In William Connolly's succinct formulation, politics consists of "'essentially contestable concepts', [a phrase that,] properly interpreted, calls attention to the internal connection between conceptual debates and debates over the form of the good life..." (154).

The first point one might notice about this definition is the way it undermines the fact/value distinction which is crucial to maintaining the "air of objectivity" of the journalist, through the turning of questions of definition (questions of fact) into "political" issues. The politics of the abortion debate, for example, rests at least in part on the question of the definition of a human being. Similarly, one may think of the scientific evidence mobilized to establish "the facts" about any of a number of ecological "problems" (or "false scares"). In both of these cases, political disputes rest not so much (or not only) on differences of value: many who oppose the drastic curtailment of the production of greenhouse gases do so not because they are in favour of global warming, but because they dispute the causal relationship on which the argument for the reduction of greenhouse gases depends. Insofar as it disrupts the "objectivity" on which conventional journalism depends, then, this definition of politics helps to illuminate the extent to which media coverage turns "politics" into an event to be passively watched, rather than a means for exercising some control ("governing") our collective lives. Before proceeding to this, however, a couple of points about this definition of politics should be clarified further to avoid any misconceptions.

One aspect of this understanding of politics that should be emphasized is that the results of what Fraser calls "interpretive contests" (read: political struggles) are important to those engaged in the struggle. That is to say simply that politics is concerned with material issues. Furthermore, and following from this, differences of

opinion over definitions arise from material differences - differences in social conditions and from the particularity of subject positions:

> Meaning springs from interaction with others, not from inside an isolated individual's head.... It follows that the economic and social conditions in which people find themselves are decisive influences upon their interpretations of language, and especially of political language (Edelman 107).

In other words, while this conceptualization of politics may at first appear to be overly idealistic, in the sense that political struggle is understood to take place at the level of ideas, rather than at the level of physical struggle, it is one that can nevertheless be understood to be firmly grounded in material relations.

An important critique that may be raised against this conceptualization of politics as the struggle over meaning, is that it paints a picture of politics as a rather staid formal debate, which is of course false, to the extent that it occludes the aspect of force that is inherent in many, if not most or even all, political relations. The understanding of politics as a struggle over definitions should not, however, be confused with a model of the political that excludes everything but officially sanctioned debate. Nor should it be seen as relying on an understanding of discourse that excludes the physical (from body language to actual violence). An analysis of the media's coverage of violent events is not being undertaken here in order to validate a discursive understanding of politics as against a materialist conception: I do not want to argue that we can ignore political violence because politics is something that exists only "in our heads." Rather, this analysis presupposes, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, that all practices are discursive, and that all discursive structures are materially grounded (108-9).

What is thus important to recognize, and what I am here attempting to show, is that even violent acts, if they are to be construed as political acts of violence, are impli-

cated in questions of definition. Moreover, the "politicalness" of an act of violence is not a quality that is inherent in the act; it must be interpreted as such, and this interpretation is itself a product of struggle.

> All knowledge that is about human society... is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation. This is not to say that facts or data are nonexistent, but that facts get their importance from what is made of them in interpretation....[I]nterpretations depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is in interpreting, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place. In this sense, all interpretations are what might be called situational: they always occur in a situa-tion whose bearing on the interpretation is affiliative (Said, Covering Islam 154, emphases in original).

In other words, it is contextual information, or the location of an event within a particular historical setting, that can illuminate the contested (and hence political) character of the event's definition. Thus, an event is successfully "depoliticized" if the narrative describing it can be presented as, in a certain sense, ahistorical, where the specificity of context is deemed irrelevant. Philip Elliott's choice of the term "ritual" (170) to refer to cases where questions of definition are basically settled,[3] is thus particularly apt, given that "rituals" are events that are intended to stand outside of history. In these cases, the politicization of an event can occur only when the event's conformity to the standard narrative or ritual (and hence, the event's "definition") is questioned. In this paper, I would like to assess the definition of politics as the struggle over definitions with reference to coverage in the Globe & Mail (Canada's newspaper of record) of two acts of violence whose political character was contested: the "Montreal Massacre" of 14 women at L'Ecole Polytechnique in 1989, and the "Hebron Massacre" of approximately 30 Palestinians in 1994. These examples would seem to be "hard cases" for the Connolly (et. al.)

hypothesis, for these are certainly instances where "politics" extends well beyond the realm of mere language. Furthermore, in both of these instances, questions of definition arise only ex post facto: unlike the cases studied by Bell, Fraser or Gusfield, by the time questions of definition can be brought up, the "problem" is (according to some interpretations, at least) "solved" because the author of the violence is himself dead.

In the Globe's coverage of both cases, one of the dominant themes or narratives that emerged was that of a mentally unbalanced individual, acting alone, committing an act of violence against a group of innocent people, identifiable in one case by sex, in the other by religion/ ethnicity. This was a strong theme in the coverage, in part because it fits with the structural constraints of everyday journalism, especially in the television age: it is "unexpected and novel within the limits of what is familiar" (McQuail 207), and it is dramatic and can be simplified and personified (Ericson et al. 140-3). In other words, not only are the stories violent and dramatic, but their drama can be maintained without a great deal of contextualization. One does not need to know about feminist struggles to have more women admitted into male-dominated engineering programs, or about the Israeli government's policy of "building facts on the ground" in the Occupied Territories, for the stories to be interesting.

What is important to recognize about this narrative, however, is that while it is interesting, it is not inherently political, in the sense that the narrative (without any contextualization) is unlikely to have an impact on the day-to-day life of the listener or reader. In other words, the narrative alone, without contextualizing information (the narrative as "ritual") is unlikely to have an effect at the material level. At the same time (and these two points are not unconnected) there are no questions of definition raised by the narrative: to return to Connolly's definition of the political, the narrative does not "call attention to the internal connection between conceptual debates and debates over the form of the good life."

Even if its acceptance is not universal, however, the "lone madman" narrative is one that is inherently more "apolitical" than other competing narratives in another important sense. Insofar as it focuses attention on individuals, as opposed to social forces, it de-emphasizes the ways in which control over collective life can be exercised. The "lone madman" narrative is an example of what Marie-Andrée Bertrand, in her discussion of the Montreal Massacre, calls "individualist" or "positivist" criminology, which focuses only on the author of the crime, and "around the paradigm of the criminal personality and the danger to society" (195). This approach or narrative emphasizes the abnormal character of the criminal, and hence the minimal risk of the crime being repeated, as well as denying the connection between this particular event and less extreme examples of the same phenomenon through a radical exclusion of the action from the realm of "normal" society.

Thus, both through the specific treatment of the massacres as the product of aberrant individuals unconnected to any social forces, and at a more general level, through the treatment of the events as occurrences whose facticity is radically divorced from and exists prior to any interpretation of "the facts", the Globe's coverage resulted in a depoliticization of the massacres. The coverage was structured in such a way as to engender public conversation around interesting events, rather than informing public debate around issues of mutual concern. It would be a mistake, however, to draw the conclusion from this that all that is required is a better understanding of the functions of public space in a democratic society - that newspapers such as the Globe & Mail ought to provide a forum for public debate. While this may be true from a normative standpoint, it misses the point in that it conflates public space with privately-owned media of communication. While owners and editors of newspapers, for example, may certainly welcome the idea of opening their pages to debate, the topic of discussion is likely to be set by motivations other than the interests of the public, to the extent that the latter conflict with the mate-

rial interests of the owners and editors. Furthermore, this potential conflict of interest stretches beyond the simple claim that a newspaper magnate is unlikely to allow the publication of articles that might cause the government to nationalize the newspaper industry.[4] As well as this former, rather obvious point, "private capital tends to organize the media in such a way as to replace public opinion with mass opinion" (Young 266-7), the crucial difference being that the latter is "unmediated by group discourse or by common interests" (Young 263). To the extent, then, that the news media seek to capture a mass audience, they must present their coverage of events as objective reporting of the facts, upon which all can agree. An understanding of politics as the contestation of defini- tions, however, undermines the assumptions upon which the possibility of an "objective" understanding of political events rests. Through the rejection of the conception of politics as the contestation of definitions, the distinction between politics and show business becomes blurred, and politics becomes "depoliticized."

Montreal

In the case of the Montreal Massacre, the "mass murderer narrative" can be easily problematised as an insufficient description of the events that took place on December 6, 1989, at L'Ecole Polytechnique. This is so not only because all of the people killed by Marc Lepine were women, but also because Marc Lepine himself per- ceived his act to be a political one - an attack on feminists and feminism - and explicitly said as much. Nevertheless, the attempt was made to deny that the event was part of a larger political struggle (a denial that the actions of a "lone madman" had anything to do with the assertion of societal male dominance). The question of "definition" and the politicization of the event was thus established: was this incident the act of a "lone madman," completely removed from "normal" society, or was it merely an extreme example of the violence that women in our soci- ety have to deal with on a daily basis? The framework for

true "public debate" over the definition of the event would appear to have been set. However, in the pages of the Globe & Mail, this "debate" was extremely short-lived and one-sided. In an article on December 8, the Globe reported on a rally that had taken place at the university: "One woman told the crowd that the slaughter "shows the extreme hatred from men which women must live with in our society", but she was drowned out by boos and cat- calls from male and female students in the crowd." This "drowning out" of an understanding of the massacre that situates it within the context of a society where male violence against women is unexceptional, can also be seen as a metaphor for the Globe's coverage as a whole.

The Globe's lead editorial on December 8, 1989, was entitled "Why were women in the gunsight?" Not only does it discuss other instances of violence against women (such as the high incidence of wife-battering and the extent to and means by which the problem is mini- mized, as well as the backlash sparked by the "No means no" (date-rape awareness) campaign at Queens' Univer- sity), but the editorial even goes so far as to state that "Crazed as he may well have been, the killer... absorbed his attitudes from the society around him. Collectively, unconsciously and sometimes overtly, we have provided him with the context (albeit wildly distorted) he needed." Notwithstanding this startlingly frank admission of the current extent of patriarchal privilege, however, in the bulk of the Globe's coverage, the issue was depoliticized, in the sense that the view that Marc Lepine's actions were indicative of a systemic problem of male violence against women was accorded little coverage, or when it was men- tioned, was accorded little credibility. In articles describ- ing the incident (as opposed to editorials, of which there was only one in the Globe in the week after the massacre occurred), the "lone madman" narrative was used virtu- ally exclusively: Lepine was described as "crazed" or a "madman," his actions were "incomprehensible," "sense- less" or "purposeless." For those willing to acknowledge the ubiquitousness of violence against women, however, the actions were all too comprehensible. As Marc Raboy

notes, "the insistence on classifying the event as some-
thing 'incomprehensible' - as if it were a kind of social
unidentified flying object! - [was] simply [an] attempt to
repress and to camouflage the obvious, motivated by a
fear of confronting reality and taking the consequences"
(140-1). In editorial and opinion pieces, violence against
women as a social phenomenon disappeared within a
couple of days from media discussion, to be replaced by
issues such as gun control and restricting violent films, in
the few cases when any analysis was offered at all. Even
in cases where Marc Lepine was presented as a symptom
of a violent, sexist society, one could point to such
phrases as "albeit wildly distorted" (in the Globe's edito-
rial, cited above) as a means of denying as well as affirm-
ing the scope of the problem. In her analysis of the
coverage by 6 newspapers (including the Globe) Myriame
El Yamani found that only 10% of the articles "were
devoted to analysis of the event or providing at least a
tentative answer as to why such a sociopolitical event
occurred" (204). A cursory glance at the Globe & Mail's
coverage in the week following the massacre reveals far
more space devoted to coverage of the funerals[6] than to
analysis of the causes of the massacre, let alone discussion
of the massacre as a sociopolitical event.

Armande Saint-Jean has also pointed out the
prevalence of male experts asked to discuss the incident,
and noted that feminists who attempted to discuss sys-
temic violence were silenced by charges that "certain
pressure groups [were] tak[ing] advantage of this tragedy
to advance their cause" (63, emphasis in original). Sylvie
Gagnon, one of the survivors of the Montreal Massacre,
stated:

> As the days passed, I saw the media take the
> story and turn it into an isolated case. For me, it
> wasn't an isolated case, it was the violence I live
> with every day, that other women live with every
> day. An exaggerated violence, violence pushed to
> the extreme, but with the same, exactly the same
> intentions, the same form. But all of a sudden the

> media was saying it's isolated, the guy was crazy,
> he had a bad childhood. They started looking for
> reasons to justify a supposedly psychotic act

An important aspect of the contest over the defini-
tion of the Montreal Massacre was whether it was a socio-
political, as opposed to (or in addition to) a psychotic
event, in that the killings could be placed on a continuum
of male violence against women in our society. Reading
only the Globe & Mail might lead one to conclude that the
definition of the massacre as a sociopolitical event related
to patriarchal oppression was one that was not widely
supported. In society at large, however, this struggle to
define the massacre was not so quickly settled: in a col-
umn just after the sixth anniversary of the massacre,
Margaret Wente continued to argue that "the anniversary
of the Montreal massacre has turned into a yearly occa-
sion for cheap grandstanding, overblown rhetoric and all-
round male-bashing.... The real lesson of the Montreal
massacre is not that men are toxic." (emphasis added)
That a columnist continues to see a need to argue against
a feminist interpretation of the event six years later,
suggests that the editors of the Globe & Mail were not
wholly successful in imposing their definition of the event
on society at large.

Why is it, then, that the "real lesson," for the Globe
cannot be that "men are toxic," or even that the Montreal
massacre was an event that widely affected gender rela-
tions? A feminist interpretation of the Montreal massacre
was not seen as "objective" (and indeed, might not even
claim to be objective, although it would certainly also
deny the objectivity of conventional reports), and was
seen as attempting to exploit a tragedy for political gain.
This was the case, precisely because feminism represents
a challenge to established social relations. Because it is
attempting to challenge socially accepted definitions, it
must make more explicitly political arguments than a
more conservative position, which can appeal to a certain
(socially constructed, to be sure) "common sense." An
analysis of the event within the framework of "positivist"

criminology, unlike a feminist analysis, is one that is particularly suited to downplaying questions of social context and culpability, as well as being one that does not appear to take sides within a broader social conflict, by denying the relevance of that broader social conflict to an understanding of the event at hand. To see the advantages in this for capital, we can recall Young's distinction between the uses of public or social opinion on the one hand, and mass opinion on the other: while a feminist interpretation of the event would call for the formation of social opinion, and for readers to undertake action in their role as citizens, the "positivist" understanding encourages mass opinion, asking only that readers act as consumers of information.

Hebron

Compared to the Montreal Massacre, one of the striking things about the Globe's coverage of the Hebron massacre is the way in which the story seems to be immediately set within the context of a larger political conflict. Although the coverage of the actual event clearly follows the "lone madman" narrative, there is also a great deal of analysis focussed on what the impact will be on the ongoing Mideast peace talks. Unlike the Montreal Massacre, the event was immediately and continuously placed in the context of the larger conflict system of which it seemed to be a part. That is to say, the Hebron Massacre was treated as a "political" event in that it was presented as an event that would affect the actions of states.

On the other hand, the massacre was not "politicized" in the sense that the Globe's coverage did not raise questions of definition that materially affected the lives of the majority of its readers. Part of the reason for this may be because of the conflict's distance: most readers of the Globe & Mail are not immediately affected by developments in the conflict between Arabs and Israelis to the same extent that they are affected by struggles over the patriarchal nature of contemporary Canadian society. And while the physical distance separating the bulk of the

Globe's readers from the Middle East undoubtedly made the event's "politicization" (in Connolly's sense of the term) more difficult, this sense of distance was reinforced by the manner in which the event was covered. I have suggested earlier that contextualizing information is crucial to the (re)definition of an event. And indeed, through its linking of the massacre to ongoing peace negotiations, questions of definition are raised, most prominently: will "peace in the Middle East" be affected by this event? On the other hand, however, while questions such as this are raised by the Globe's coverage, one can at the same time recognize that the contextualizing information provided serves to maintain the view that, for most (although, of course, not all) of its readers, the definitions at stake are not ones that are intimately tied to their daily lives. While the massacre is treated as a "political" event in terms of its effect on policies, it is again only with a certain depoliticization that the coverage can be presented and seen as objective. With this in mind, the contextualizing information provided in the Globe's coverage can be seen as serving the function of a further distancing of the average reader from the conflict of which this event is presented as being a part.

Not only is the setting of this conflict distant from us physically, but the Palestinians and the Israeli settlers (who are immediately distinguished from the Israeli state, and implicitly, from more "normal" Israelis) are both presented as the Other. To cite one example, on the first day of coverage (February 26, 1994), there is an item simply titled "Mideast violence" which provides a catalogue of violent conflicts between Jews and Palestinians since 1929. For none of the events is there any indication as to a possible rational motive behind the violence - indeed, the only item for which any motive is provided is the 1956 killing of 43 "Arab civilians" by "Israeli troops", "for innocently breaking a curfew." The pathological "lone madman" narrative here seems to apply to anyone who is caught up in what is presented as an endless cycle of violence. For most readers of the Globe & Mail, this item seems to suggest that events in the Middle East

involving people and a social contexts that are so "different" (i.e. much more prone to irrational violence) from "our" experience, will not have much of an impact on their daily lives. As in the case of the Montreal Massacre, however, the way in which the story is framed is telling of whose ideal of "objectivity" is privileged.

As I suggested earlier, there are obviously some readers of the Globe & Mail who do identify strongly with one side or the other in the Israeli-Palsestinian conflict. Almost certainly, support among Globe readers who identify strongly with one side or the other is weighted far more heavily towards the Israelis.[7] Thus, in the Globe's coverage of the Hebron Massacre, the "lone madman" narrative remains unquestioned to perhaps an even greater extent than in the case of Marc Lepine: there is no attempt to place the event on a "continuum" of Israeli violence against Palestinians. Indeed, the only mention of a history of Israeli state violence on the first day of coverage (aside from the "Mideast Violence" item, cited above) is the rather oblique reference: "Six years ago, an unexpected killing of several Palestinians in Gaza led to riots and then to the famous uprising." The view that Baruch Goldstein's actions were unrelated to more widely held opinions, not to mention Israeli state policy, is especially ironic given some of the facts that have since come to light about the Hebron massacre. According to the Palestine Human Rights Information Center (PHRIC), by 1993, "attacks [by settlers on Palestinians] in Hebron's central market area were becoming almost routine" (3). Furthermore, Israeli military and police "use of live ammunition against Palestinians is often not even reported, much less investigated" (136), while in December of 1993, "orders prohibiting opening fire at settlers were issued" (124). As a result, Israeli troops allowed Baruch Goldstein to enter the mosque with a machine-gun, and did not try to stop him as he was shooting, but did shoot at Palestinians as they tried to flee, killing at least two (137).

Consistent with the "lone madman" narrative (and hence with coverage of the Montreal Massacre), coverage of the political effects of the Hebron Massacre was limited to treating the massacre as a discrete event, completely disconnected from Israeli state policy in the Occupied Territories. This was paralleled with the presentation of Israeli settlers as radically separate from the Israeli state, to the extent that the Globe's editorial ("Disarm the settlers" - March 1, 1994) states that "The [Israeli] government should take automatic weapons out of the hands of all settlers, who after all have the whole Israeli army to protect them." What this view fails to recognize is that, given Israel's policy of compulsory military service, the "whole Israeli army" is comprised in part of "settlers who kill or injure Arabs,"[8] and that, as the PHRIC's report suggests (see above), the view that Palestinian lives are worth less than those of Israeli Jews is by no means limited to radical settlers, but is enshrined in state policy.[9] While acknowledging in the editorial that the Begin government's policy of "building facts on the ground" included the settlement of "about 5,000 extremists" in the Occupied Territories, the Globe does not acknowledge the extremism of these settlers as facts that have been built into Israeli political life.

Finally, in the Globe's account, Goldstein's "mental crisis" is blamed on his having seen a fellow settler killed "in an attack by muslim militants", a claim which might be taken to suggest that the Palestinians are partly responsible for their collective fate. In distancing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole, the "othering" of both sides allows for the status of those killed in the massacre as victims to be subtly questioned, in a way that was not possible with the Montreal Massacre. While Lepine blamed feminists for driving him to such extreme measures, the claim that feminists were actually to blame was not given any credence in the Globe's accounts. The depoliticization of violence and the settling of definitions in the Globe's coverage seems in this case to have been accomplished even more quickly and completely.

Conclusions

If politics really is about the contest over defini-tions, then the positivist ideal of an "unbiased observer" providing descriptions in "neutral language" can be seen as highly problematic, at best. Even in cases where poli-tics seems to encompass much more than conflict over words, as I have tried to show, there remains the issue of whether or not instances of physical violence are included within the definition of "the political." Language and interpretation are inherent in politics. The "neutral" or "objective" terms chosen, must be seen as a form of lan-guage that privileges the status quo (and hence any existing inequalities), while attempting to deny the ap-pearance of counter-hegemonic definitions or explana-tions of events: those who attempt to neutralize questions of political definition "do not transcend the politics of discourse. They practice a... politics of depoliticization through reification of the terms of political discourse" (Connolly 149).

It should not, therefore, be a question of faulting the media for coming down on one side rather than the other in its coverage of events: the problem is not so much that the Globe's coverage of the Montreal Massacre, for example, was not sufficiently informed by feminist analysis. Rather, I have been trying to show that the very fact that knowledge about society cannot be made inde-pendent from interpretation, suggests that it is inevitable that coverage of an event will not be sufficiently informed by one or another point of view. Furthermore, it is this lacuna that is the space in which "political" struggle can be said to take place, and its existence is precisely what a view of journalistic coverage based on the objective pre-sentation of facts, attempts to erase.

A preferable view of the role of the media, there-fore, might be one that opens up this space, that sees the description of events as more open-ended, or one whose role lies more in the raising of questions rather than the presentation of answers. The simple presentation of such a case for a new view of the role of the media, however, is clearly not sufficient to effect such a change. Here again,

we should be wary of the sort of idealism that posits ideas and discursive struggles as being divorced from material forces.

As I have tried to argue, commercial media in the "mass age" depend on the preservation of a notion (how-ever illusory) of "objectivity" for their very survival: the more successful they are in depoliticizing their coverage of events, the greater an audience they can deliver to advertisers. However much the "politicization" of the media may be helpful for a democratization of society, it is equally clearly inimical to the interests of the media as capitalist enterprises. The contradiction between the media's role as capitalist enterprise and as informer of the masses for the purposes of public debate thus rests on the illusory foundation of objective reportage. The way in which this illusion is maintained is by framing issues in such a way that avoids questions of definition, or avoids questions where definitions are strongly contested, or, where these are not possible, avoids using definitions that are not acceptable to the "ruling class" - the buying public - defined as broadly as possible. Objectivity in the news, in other words, is obtained by reifying actual events and conflicts, turning them into a spectacle to be viewed with interest, but with no real concern as to the outcome. Events become more "newsworthy," the more they are emptied of their political content, and it is only through an unmasking of the illusory foundations of objectivity that true political debate - as distinct from the show business of contemporary mass politics - can begin to take place.

Notes

2. One may think, for example of the power of religious institutions, as well as such institutions as schools and professional associations, which are, in most liberal democratic societies, relatively autonomous from the state. In late capitalist societies, one can scarcely doubt that the greatest influence over people's lives is that of large corporations.

3. Elliott contends that "Successful mystification depends upon the agreement of the whole ruling class" (170). This statement is somewhat vague, however, as it leaves undefined the criteria of "success" as well as the constitution of the "whole ruling class", a point that seems especially important in light of Bell's observation that "sharp divergences between elite political culture and mass political culture can pose serious difficulties" in the rationalization (read: definition) of public policy (99). Perhaps a preferable phrasing would be: the degree to which issues are successfully mystified, and the extent to which an attempt is made to have them mystified, is dependent on the extent to which consensus exists on the definition of the issue, especially, although not exclusively, within the ruling class.

4. This applies of course to advertisers (the mass media true "customers," in that, even for newspapers, they are the source of the bulk of revenue) as well as owners, and the definition of "conflict of interest" is not always narrowly interpreted. Proctor & Gamble, the largest purchaser of television advertising in the United States, has an editorial policy for the shows it sponsors that reads in part: "There will be no material that may give offense either directly or by inference to any commercial organization of any sort...." (Parenti 186).

5. A view of the coverage that is supported not only by my own analysis (in the following paragraph), but also by the studies by Guillaumin; Juteau and Laurin Frenette; Raboy; and Saint Jean.

6. This was an important aspect of presenting the women killed as innocent victims, which, at the same time, reinforced the idea that the massacre was an "isolated incident" rather than a political action. As we shall see, this status of "innocent victim" was not so straightforwardly accorded to those killed in the Hebron Massacre.

7. This would account for such items as "The need for new walls on the West Bank" (*Globe and Mail*, March 1, 1994, reprinted from *The Wall Street Journal*), an article which simply presents the "detest" Palestinians feels for Jews as an ahistorical fact, while providing a number of concrete reasons why the feelings should be reciprocated. The article would seem to confirm Said's thesis ("Covering Islam") that the essentialization of the identity of "the Arab" is received in contemporary Western discourse more unproblematically than virtually any other racial, ethnic or cultural group.

8. I am indebted to Daniel Wolgelerenter for raising this point.

9. For a more extensive (although somewhat dated) discussion of the use of settlers as a political tool for "Palestinian depopulation", see Said.

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FROM THE KINGDOM OF ENDS TO THE KINGDOM WITHOUT ENDS: KANT AND NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF REASON

Katrin Froese

The writings of Kant marked a turning point in the history of Western philosophy. His predecessors had stumbled upon insuperable obstacles; the quest for certainty had remained largely unfulfilled and a seemingly unbridgeable schism divided mind from matter. Kant attempted to extricate metaphysics from this quagmire by postulating that certainty was to be found within the rational subject; any attempts to locate it in an "objective reality" would flounder. Knowledge was no longer an effort by the mind to reflect on matter; instead it constituted the imposition of form onto matter. Kant's task was to uncover the preconditions or structures of the mind that made all knowledge possible, thereby putting it onto a more secure footing.

It was in the domain of the ethical where the subject's rational capacities could truly be exercised, and where it could claim its independence from empirical reality, being guided by purely formal law. The absolute universalizability and permanence that had eluded theoretical reason were to be found in the realm of the "ought", not in the realm of the "is". The tension between the ought and the "is" provided the impetus for action, since it was the subject's duty to act in accordance with these truths and transform the empirical reality that it confronted. In addition, the grand metaphysical questions surrounding God, freedom and immortality which had escaped theoretical proofs were to be considered postulates or necessities of practical reason. Only a rational faith in them made ethical action possible.

Nietzsche accepted the tacit link that Kant had made between knowledge and interpretation but he insisted that reason was merely one form of interpretation among many. For Nietzsche, Kant's critique had only