Mediating Ideology in Text and Image

Ten critical studies

Edited by Inger Lassen, Jeanne Strunck
and Torben Vestergaard

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Preface

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Some observers of mass communication have identified the media as important modifiers in shaping popular perception, constructing meaning that reflects an increasingly complex world. Others have constructed an image of the media as channels of realistic and unbiased journalism. Clearly, as noted by Bauer and Gaskell (2002:96) information is being processed by being selected, translated, edited, shortened or expanded and perhaps, most importantly, transferred or recontextualized to other media, using different types of semiosis. This would suggest, as also observed by Bauer and Gaskell (ibid.), that the framing of news might be understood as the process through which complex issues are reduced to journalistically manageable dimensions, resulting in a particular focus on a certain issue' (ibid.).

An important endeavour of the present volume is that of combining analyses of text and image – an approach that has come to be widely known as multimodal analysis. In their approaches to discourse analysis, some of the contributors consider multimodality crucial to unravelling the ambiguities often resulting from monomodal semiosis, while others have found a middle ground between text and image using various forms of illustration and visualization of data, such as tables, graphs, charts and models, which all assist in the mediation of meaning. In this book images, texts and data visualizations interact on a higher level of abstraction, and it is in the implicit interaction of a number of what Scollon and Scollon (2001) have referred to as mediational means that a vacuum arises between language and image where ideology thrives, calling for better analytical tools to cope with the interpretative levels of analysis. (For an overview of multimodal discourse analysis, see Horsbøl this volume.)

This book represents the joint endeavour by ten writers who have explored some of the ideological processes operating in mass media discourse and how such processes may influence readers' beliefs about the world. Not oblivious of the reductionism alluded to in the introductory paragraph, the ten writers focus their analyses on the concept of ideology by exploring the views different journalists may have on the issues they write about. Subscribing to the idea introduced by Norman Fairclough (this volume) that transformations in social life are led by discourse, they approach their individual tasks from a critical discourse analytical point of view. Their common aim is one of assisting the audience to 'read between the lines', thus offering a variety of approaches that may contribute to a better understanding of how ideologies work and how they may be denaturalised from text and image. The aim is thus to suggest a variety of approaches to what Weiss and Wodak (2003: 14) have referred to as 'demystifying discourses by deciphering ideologies'.

Although the notion of ideology has been defined in different terms by different Critical Discourse analysts, there seems to be consensus about the potential force of ideology for establishing different world views. Primarily three approaches to defining ideology have gained ground in Critical Discourse Analysis. Among them, Van Dijk (200: 8) defines ideology as *the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group*, thus giving more emphasis to cognitive aspects and mental representations, but still recognizing that ideologies are not only mentally, but also socially shaped. Van Dijk's approach is thus socio-cognitive (ibid.: 48). A different way of conceptualizing ideology is found in Wodak (2001: 9), who defines it as *serving the purpose of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations*. She thereby dethrones cognitive aspects and places the emphasis on social structures in explaining the nature of ideology. To Fairclough (1992: 87) *ideology is a construction of reality, which contributes to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination.* [...] *The ideologies embedded in discursive practices are most effective when they become naturalized and achieve the status of common sense.* (For an elaboration of the Faircloughean approach to ideology, see Fairclough this volume.) Fairclough's definition comes close to Wodak's in that they are both based on a social-constructionist view. However, to Fairclough the notion of commonsense is crucial. If common-sensical statements are identified as a target for critical analysis, they attract more attention in the analytical process than they would in their normal, everyday use where they would go unnoticed. Therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis may be seen as a sort of contestation, along the same lines as contestations brought about by rivalling discourse communities.

The three approaches, which together constitute a wide-spectred definitional basis, are all valid, depending on variations in context. As Rancière (1994: 142) has suggested, the principal function of ideology is to secure bonds between human beings in their social interaction, which is in turn determined by social structure. Once class struggles – and this would entail also discoursal struggles – take over, unequal power relations maintained through common-sensical meaning-making resources will be challenged and the principal function of ideology, viz. that of maintaining bonds, will be overruled by other, more predominant functions. (For an elaborate discussion of the notions of 'critical' and 'ideology', see Weiss & Wodak 2003.)

In this book, ideology is the leitmotif that runs through the ten contributions. The notion is given a prominent position in some of the contributions, while in others it pursues its own life and does its own secretive work below the surface. In some of the contributions the common-sensical aspect is given more weight, while ideology as representing different value systems is predominant in others, thus illustrating how idelogy may – implicitly or explicitly – serve as a device creating bonds between members of a social group. It goes without saying that in reproducing value systems discursively, ideological resources help maintain power relations between social groups, but this aspect does not play a significant role in the present volume.

Why another volume on ideology?

While ideology has been treated widely in CDA-literature (Eagleton 1994; Wodak 1989; Weiss & Wodak 2003; Van Dijk 2000; Fairclough 1989; Chilton 2004), the role played by the interaction of text and image in furthering ideological stances has not so far received a lot of attention. Exceptions, though, are Kress and van Leeuwen (1996 and 2001); Lemke (2002, 2003), Norris (2004); Norris and Jones (2005); Scollon (2001); Scollon and Scollon (2003) and Ventola et al. (2004). These studies of multimodality, which are all of recent date, all pay attention to the importance of what Lemke has referred to as the *multiplication* of meaning afforded by the combination of text and visual, and it is our hope that this volume will contribute to filling the gap in multimodal analysis of ideology.

The book has two parts, which both have Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a fundamental theoretical approach. In the introduction, Ruth Wodak offers an enlightening overview of the theoretical field, discussing some central notions used in the book such as multimodality, recontextualization,

critical analysis, ideology and dialogic positioning. Asking whether CDA is critical, she goes back to the roots of CDA and addresses the issue – raised by some – of analytical bias. This, she suggests, may be overcome by using triangulation, thus working across disciplines and using different empirical data that 'transcend the linguistic dimension'. The articles in part I look at rhetorical strategies used in meaning construction processes unfolding in various kinds of mass media. In his article Semiosis, Ideology and Mediation: a dialectical view, Norman Fairclough sets the analytical scene by introducing a modified version of CDA. Using two Romanian cases as examples of re-contextualised practices, he offers examples of ways of accommodating theoretical and methodological semiotic resources for the research of media and mediation of ideological processes. Of particular interest to this field of inquiry is the sort of inter-subjective positioning that White discusses in the framework of Appraisal, a notion covering the commonly known concepts of evaluation and stance. After outlining the analytical framework used, White discusses some fundamental theoretical aspects relating in particular to attitudes that are implicitly rather than explicitly expressed. Against this background, he is able to demonstrate how readers are positioned to favour particular value positions mediated by variation in evaluative features of individual news items, which in turn produces variation in ideological effect. With purposes similar to those explained by White, Pentti Haddington discusses stance-taking, processes of categorization and identity ascription of humans and human groups in televised news interviews. His analyses suggest that categories, identities and ideologies, referred to by Haddington as 'stances', are constantly negotiated, renewed and constructed in discourse and that speakers are highly influenced by the dialogical use of language and syntax, which in turn influences ideologies, beliefs and images about humans and human groups. In an article entitled Denaturalizing Ideology: Presupposition and Engagement in Biotechnology texts, Inger Lassen is concerned with the same issues as White and Haddington, viz. those of intersubjective positioning realized through implicit strategies. On the basis of data from biotechnology press releases, she suggests methods for denaturalising apparently common-sensical values and concludes that the interplay of appraisal and presupposition may be seen as two mutually supplementary resources for naturalizing ideology. Francesco Caviglia studies value systems in public discourse in his article 'Understanding public discourse about violence and crime'. His main concern is that of promoting critical literacy among students. He suggests that sensitivity to attitudes and ideologies may be developed by analysing how world view value systems impose themselves on public dis-

course. In the article he analyses examples from the press coverage of a murder case in Italy.

Part II focuses on the resemiotization of meaning and looks at how analysing the combination of text and image may contribute to a better understanding of ideological processes brought about by multimodal resources. On the basis of examples of journalistic advertisements from the Danish Parliamentary elections in 2005, Anders Horsbøl argues the case of a multimodal approach to Critical Discourse Analysis. In a diachronic study of two political advertisements from the Danish Parliamentary elections in 2005 and 1987, he focuses on the interplay of image and verbal text, including typographical and paratextual matters. Judie Cross analyses the ideology of icons as a media construction of women in Australian magazines and the internet in her article 'Icons as ideology'. Using a visual grammar inspired by Kress and van Leeuwen, she demonstrates that there is similarity of 'icon-ness' between earlier religious representational icons of women and their post-modern counterparts. Considering resemiosis from text to image and vice versa, Henrik Rahm analyses the interplay of verbal text, graphic form and illustrations in five text categories. He discusses how story-telling and interdiscursivity in advertisements may influence text structures, styles and conventions and finally considers the genre status of advertisements. Dorothy Economou analyses and compares two weekend feature stories on illegal entry to the country by foreign nationals. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's image analysis framework combined with appraisal (see White this volume), she explores differences between a Greek and Australian text in their choices of prominent images and headlines. In his article 'News Bulletin captions as ideological indices', Konstantinos Kostoudis looks at Greek television news bulletins and demonstrates how intertextual features are incorporated into the construction of meaning and ideological complexes. He further suggests that a number of metaphorical structures tend to control interpretation, predisposing viewers to a preferred reading of news, and concludes with Norman Fairclough that 'ideology is articulated through language, while, at the same time, language shapes ideology and constructs meanings based on selective incorporation of preferred stereotypes in the making of news'.

Together the ten articles offer a critical perspective on ideological processes, using a host of analytical tools. Together the articles carry a multitude of voices that sometimes overlap, sometimes give priority to individuality. It has been our aim to bring these voices together in a cacophony of meaning construction and analytical interpretation, and it is now up to the reader to decide to what extent this aim has been reached.

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Introductory thoughts

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1.   Images and icons

Dan Brown's book "*The Da Vinci Code*" (2004) has sold more than 25 million copies throughout the world. It is a bestselling book and leads the bestseller lists in several countries, having been translated into 44 languages. What are the reasons for this success?

The media are debating this phenomenon and we find many, sometimes contradictory and speculative answers as well as both positive and negative evaluations and reviews: Readers seem to like conspiracy theories and critical views on religion, specifically Catholicism. Many readers also seem fascinated by the broad knowledge of the author, his expertise on ancient symbols and religious mysticism; others seem to like the emphasis on gender and the important role attributed to women in this crime story (and in Catholic institutions). Lastly, the audience seems impressed by very contrasting interpretations of famous pieces of art, such as the *Mona Lisa* and other pictures painted by Leonardo.

Suddenly, as the high quality Austrian newspaper *Der Standard* reports on 29 March 2005, p. 2, even more visitors are lined up in front of the *Mona Lisa* in the *Louvre*, Paris, debating the possible traces and clues signalling hidden meanings described in "*The Da Vinci Code*": Has Leonardo painted a man or a woman? What do certain characteristics and features in these paintings which have become icons for so many mean? The same is true for the second famous picture which plays a central role in this book, *The Last Supper*. Are there only men depicted or is a woman sitting next to Jesus Christ? Might it then be true,

as claimed by Dan Brown, that Jesus had been married and that his wife, Maria Magdalena, is sitting next to him? *Der Standard* and several TV documentaries discuss the debates surrounding the book as the Catholic Church, at the same time, vehemently opposes Brown's claims and some high Vatican officials even propose banning the book because constitutive principles of Catholicism (such as patriarchy) are questioned.

Apart from any necessarily speculative hypotheses as to why one book "makes it" while others do not, hence why this one book has obviously become so successful, it is legitimate to ask how readers suddenly became convinced that one could interpret well known pieces of art in significantly different ways if they are contextualized historically; a truism for any person dealing with semiotics and visual grammar but usually not reflected by visitors of exhibitions. Although viewers argue and discuss their opinions on art (masterfully enacted by Woody Allen in his film *Manhattan*) with great fervour, such readings usually concern vague and non-defined aesthetic criteria and the search for the "secret" and personal intentions and motives of publicly well known painters'/film-producers'/photographers'. Rarely do viewers reflect on the distinct social/cultural/historical meanings of art and their impact on socio-political debates, diverse audiences or social change (see also the heated debates surrounding *The Magic Flute* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the traces to Free Masonry detected in this famous opera; Wagner 2004; Zembylas 2004).

In recent decades, scholarly research has moved to different relevant issues, viewing news and images as dialogic, as oriented towards several audiences (Richardson & Meinhof 1999; Wodak & Busch 2004) and offering many readings. These aspects relate both to images from every day life, as well as to art. Meanings are thus mediated on several levels, through evaluative devices, implicit pragmatic elements, argumentation strategies, multimodal choices, and cognitive frames (see chapters by White, Caviglia, Horsbøl, and Lassen in this volume; van Dijk 2003, 2005; Scollon & Scollon 2003; Wodak 2005a). I will come back to audience research, *heteroglossia* and *dialogicality* below (Bakhtin 1981).

The role of media, religion and popular culture in the *Da Vinci Code* is central for the construction of its success. However, these are not the only recent cases where certain images have provoked huge public debates and penetrated deeply into our collective memories. Following the news in recent months, years and decades, we come across other political and ideological controversies, such as about the evaluation of war crimes committed by the German *Wehrmacht* (Heer et al. 2003; Benke & Wodak 2003; Wodak 2005b), by British

and American soldiers in Iraq or by Serbs, Bosnians and Croatians during the war in the Balkans (Sontag 1999); or about the assassination of John F. Kennedy (the film by Oliver Stone 1998 came up with a different narrative than the official one); or about 9/11, pictures seen globally in the media and ever since unforgettable for a world audience. The funeral of 'Princess Di' was viewed by masses around the globe, and the reconstruction of her death according to photos taken on the spot is still not completed.

Many of these photographs have acquired the status of *icons*, used for various purposes in different contexts (see chapter by Cross in this volume which also investigates historical changes in the definition of *icons*). Through the Internet, images as well as news can now be read and seen by a much wider audience, world-wide. Hence, when analyzing production, reproduction, distribution, dissemination and recontextualization of news items, globalisation should definitely be considered as a central and most relevant factor in our everyday lives (see Machin & van Leeuwen 2003).

Jay Lemke (2001, 2003) offers some innovative proposals for such research and labels communication and activities on the Internet as *"traversals"*, as virtual genres which transcend the traditional norms of time and space in specific, fragmented ways, constructing hybrid patterns of coherence (see also Urry 2003; Rusch 2004). Elaborating the notion of "multimodality" (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996), Lemke introduces the concept of *"hypermodality"*. Through hypermodality of web-pages, every user is able to create her or his new text, by linking different subtexts, images, symbols, icons and pictures to each other. In this way, people constantly create new semantic hierarchies and an ever newer mixture of "voices". This *"heteroglossia"* in the Bakhtinean sense illustrates different functions of a web-site as well as different perspectives and voices combined through hypertexts.

However, knowledge about the huge impact of photos and images is, of course, not new. During the First World War, war-reporting and photos from the scene were already used extensively (see Karl Kraus, *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*, 1957 and his ironically and sarcastically exaggerated protagonist, Mrs. Schalek, who represents a sensationalist Viennese war reporter in Serbia in 1914). The same is true for the Spanish Civil War in the 1930's or the Vietnam War in the 1960's (remember, for example, the famous pictures of Da Capa from the Spanish Civil War).

In all these cases, images have been and are being used today for political and media interests in various ways. Having acquired the status of icons, such pictures stand for different points of view, for meta-narratives, for ideologies. They serve as metaphors, as conceptual frames for the "evil" or the

"good" (Dirven et al. 2005; Koller 2005; Lakoff 2004; see Caviglia's discussion of Lakoff's approach in this volume). This also explains the heated debate about such images, because their meaning varies according to their contextualization by certain interest groups.

In the case of the war crimes committed by the German *Wehrmacht*, the denial of war crimes in spite of the over 1000 photos of murdered prisoners of war, Russian civilians, Jews, and Roma in the first exhibition staged 1995 in almost all big German and Austrian cities led to huge demonstrations of Neo-Nazis in Munich 1995 and even to death threats against the organizers of the exhibition in Germany and Austria (Heer et al. 2003; Martin & Wodak 2003; Wodak 2005a).

For all these reasons, it must be viewed as a great challenge to analyze such debates on a scholarly level and to grasp and explain the ideological functions of the visual in different contexts for different ends, especially in the news media which produce and reproduce "realities" for the general audience and thus provide (and construct) accessible information (Fowler 1991; Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 1988). The process of *recontextualization* (Wodak 2000; van Leeuwen & Wodak 1999; Pollak & Wodak 2003) is of the utmost relevance in this context: Images are decontextualized and recontextualized for different aims; and thus they acquire new meanings as hinted at intuitively by Dan Brown in his bestseller and analyzed carefully, explicitly, and in detail throughout this edited volume (see, for example, the chapter by Fairclough in this volume).

The construction of meanings by the media thus relates to several dimensions of *semiosis:* texts, images, the link between text and image, the production of texts by journalists and news agencies, intended and optional readings (i.e. the *dialogicality of news*), the ideological and economic interests of the newspapers, broadcasting and TV companies, and their owners, the presupposed knowledge of the readers, historical (national) traditions of news reporting, recent global influences, and so forth. Ideological, political and economic functions overlap and are integrated within the structural constraints of news genres in different political, national, regional and local cultures, new media technologies, and the patterns of *multimodality*. Research into this field – as illustrated excellently by this volume – therefore should necessarily be of an interdisciplinary nature (see the chapter by Rahm in this volume; van Dijk 2001; Weiss & Wodak 2003).

Such studies also need empirical and ethnographic research, investigating the various ways the news is understood by different groups of readers/listeners/viewers and inquiring into the salient listening/viewing/reading patterns of consumers (Busch 2004; Myers 2004; Scollon & Scollon 2004;

Kovács & Wodak 2003). By using the method of focus group discussions, for example, it is possible to grasp systematic ways of text comprehension that vary across different consumer groups. The readings of recipients are thus made accessible (Couldry 2003).

2. Analyzing (ideologies) critically?

All the contributions in this volume analyze links between text and image in different cultures from a critical perspective. In one way or another, they all adopt Jim Martin's *Appraisal Approach* (elaborated by White and Economou in their respective chapters), Gunter Kress' and Theo van Leeuwen' *Visual Grammar* and choose a specific text analytic (discourse analytic) perspective and methodology (Norman Fairclough's CDA; CA [Haddington's chapter] or a more Hallidayan grammatical analysis). From my point of view, two dimensions are specifically important in providing a general frame for this volume:

1. Elaborating the historical, social and cultural dependence of meanings and interpretations, both of visual or textual elements which situate and position both text production and text comprehension and inherently influence *mediation between discourse and society* (see Chilton 2004; van Dijk & Kintsch 1983).
2. Debating differing notions of the terms "ideology" and "critique" explicitly linked to a specific context or research tradition (see Fairclough, Graham, Lemke, & Wodak 2004; Reisigl & Wodak 2001).

These two dimensions also bridge the detailed case studies related to different nation-states, media traditions and cultures in this volume (i.e. Romania, Greece, Denmark, Australia, and so forth).

2.1 Text and context

Apart from the precise grammatical and linguistic analysis, the *context* needs to be explicitly integrated to allow understanding and explaining the impact of the various texts under investigation (Panagl & Wodak 2004; van Dijk 2003, 2005). This becomes particularly evident when reading Norman Fairclough's chapter in which he illustrates and also explains why two texts from Romania after 1989/1990 are realized the way they are: according to existing conflicting tendencies in the "new" Romanian society which is undergoing salient social changes ("transition"). The comparison of reports on migrants in Australian

and Greek newspapers also necessarily draws on cross-cultural dimensions (chapter by Economou).

A critical analysis of contextualized texts and images should, in my view, consider the many possible readings by different audiences; one of the main accusations towards different schools in CDA has been – quite wrongly in most cases – the assumption that CDA is elitist and prescriptive; i.e. claims to know the ONE reading of a specific text (see Titscher et al. 2000 where this criticism is summarized). A good deal of research in CDA actually proves the contrary: Audience research has become widely acknowledged (see Widdowson 2004 where this criticism is naively repeated without accounting for any recent research in CDA).

For example, already in our study on the comprehensibility and comprehension of news many years ago (Lutz & Wodak 1987), we provided empirical evidence for the fact that when updating information from news broadcasts, *mental representations* necessarily must guide our understandings and *mental models* most probably support linking new information with stored information. Due to different belief and knowledge systems, news is experienced and stored depending on available cognitive frames; and thus understood in different ways. This became apparent when we interviewed people after they had listened to certain news items and asked them to summarize the most important contents (Wodak 1987). The summaries were always related to their personal experiences and commented upon from their own perspective. This explained why different people inferred significantly different meanings when confronted with the same information. The summaries also depended largely on background knowledge as well as on opinions and preconceived stereotypes; thus, information was adapted to existing and stored event models.

In this study, we suggested a model of text planning and text comprehension which related several dimensions: the dimension of knowledge and experience (i.e. cognition; frames, schemata and scripts; see Schank & Abelson 1977) with different production and deconstruction of discourses, genres as well as specific texts linked to sociological variables of the speakers/listeners, such as age, gender, social class, and so forth. Moreover, we suggested viewing text production and text comprehension as recursive processes where constant feedback to mental models in episodic and long-time memories takes place as well as the updating of such models.

Such updating processes follow systematic, conscious and subconscious strategies (nowadays, we could use the term picking out the relevant information whereby "relevance" is cognitively defined; Sperber & Wilson 1986). These