

DRAFT

February 6, 1975.

IRCOMC, in collaboration with MASCOM, ANCHE and CERTA*, is organizing an International Conference on "Criticism in the Mass Media" emphasizing the ideology and structure of criticism in the mass media, in Barcelona, Spain from the sixth to the tenth of January, 1976.

It is widely stated that the mass media play a leading role in the generation of social habits, traditions, and values. It would seem, therefore, that cultural criticism presented through the mass media must be considered as one of the elements in establishing the values which prevail in a particular community. There is, therefore, a great interest in investigating the functions of criticism in order to elucidate our understanding of this area.

It is for these reasons the main task of the Congress will be the study of cultural critical criticism propogated by the Media. Specifically, the scope of the program will include professional critical activities in the various specific fields of plastic arts, cinema and theatre, music, books and magazines, newspapers, radio, television, music, dancing and popular festivals. This is not an inclusive list, however, special emphasis will be placed on newspapers, radio and television as channels used for delivery of these critical views.

Critical practice will be analyzed from two main points of view: the structural and the ideological. From the structural point of view, an effort will be made to clarify the institutional characteristics that related to criticism and critical conent in the various defined fields. The number and personal characteristics of the critics; their training and recruitment; their remuneration compared with that of other professionals in the same area; their complementary jobs; the kinds of activities criticized and how they vary in the different fields or in accordance with the medium of communications employed; how often the criticisms appear; their size; the audience, potential

*IRCOMC International Research Committee on Mass Communication
ANCHE Association of Human Communication
MASCOM Spanish Branch of IRCOMC
CERTA Centre Europeen de Recherches Transdisciplinaires Avancées.

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and actual, which they reach; their effects and results in each field; the amount of "feedback", etc. all bear close examination. The structural point of view is mainly concerned with considerations which are quantitative and macro-dimensional. Here the most important thing is to define the patterns and the intensity of the relationship between the critic and his activity and output, on the one hand, and the structural conditions of his work, on the other. Papers are now being prepared which will explore the structural aspects of criticism in the USA, Hungary, England, France, Holland, Italy, Peru, Yugoslavia and Spain.

The ideological point of view seeks to investigate how and to what extent the personal ideology of the critic and/or the group controlling the area in which his work is carried out influences his performance as a critic. Consequently, after defining the category "ideology" at a theoretical level and fixing the ideological elements of the critic and/or his professional platform, it will be important to determine how and to what extent both of these influence his performance as a critic. It should be made clear that "ideological elements" must not be understood as being only those of a socio-political nature but also include all of the psychological and cultural elements which combine to make up his world.

Given that the critic makes evaluative judgements on the subjects he criticizes, we need to clarify the extent to which his evaluations are dependent on the ideologies described above. This dependence can be expressed at a generic and at a specific level. As far as the first is concerned, the points at which the evaluations of the different critics within the same area coincide, and here we have in mind a newspaper or a television network, must be in accordance with certain characteristics which apply within that area. The establishment, in a comprehensive manner, of the possible connections between the ideological nucleus and the patterns of evaluation can help get to the heart of this problem.

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From the specific point of view, our object should be to throw light on the ideological postulates of the critic's performance the ways and extent to which they affect evaluation of the cultural object. This requires an analysis which has a sufficient time-range and enough cases to permit the establishment of the regularity of these tendencies. To demonstrate the recurring factors in the critic's evaluations, to reveal in detail how his performance is conditioned by his ideology, to uncover the ways in which this dependency functions, and to try to measure the relative importance of the different elements which make such judgement relate to the ideological world will be a long and difficult, but rewarding, task.

If the Conference has the advantage of a number of different contributions along these lines it could attempt to explore the way in which the values of the dominating class are reproduced, the presence of ideology in the world of culture, the social uses of such scientific activities, and the role of objectivity in the sphere of social communications.

The thematic approach of the Conference focusing the analysis of practical criticism on cultural items, does not exclude the criticism of established culture in our society nor pretend to exclude the possibility that this analysis could reveal inadequateness of the same words used in this text; these words are only used to get an approach to reality with a generally practised discourse. Expressions like cultural items, critical activity, patterns of evaluation, scientific task, ideology, are ambiguous if significances are not limited to the universe referred to when each is used.

The Conference will be organized as follows:

1. Professor F. Gerald Kline (Dept. of Journalism, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104) and Professor Thomas Szescso (Magyar Radio and Television, Brody Sandor Ul., Budapest 8 Hungary) are responsible with the structural point of view, while Professors Kurt and Gladys Lang (Dept. of Sociology, State of New York, Stony Brook, New York, N.Y. 11790) and Professor José Vidal-Beneyto (CEISA, Antonio Maura,

16, Madrid 14) will be responsible for the ideological analysis papers.

2. The scientific secretariat of the Conference is the responsibility of Cecile Rougier (16 rue de Prague, 92700 Colombes, France). She will act as permanent co-ordinator of the various research teams, be responsible for the two main conference areas, and any chairmen of committees who may be appointed.
3. Juan Antonio Bofill, Roman Gubern, Félix Santos and M. Vazquez Montalban (ANCHE, Via Layetana 39, Barcelona 3, Spain) are responsible for the organization of the conference and for the coordination of all research work done on the subject of the structural analysis of criticism in Spain.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

Criticism in the Communication Media

(The Ideology and Structure of criticism in the Mass Media)

I Ideological Analysis

Influence of personal and group ideology on critical practice.

1. Recurring factors in critical evaluation and leading ideology.
2. Political, psychological, and cultural elements as specific factors.
Group ideology and its influence on critical performance.
3. Relationships between the critic and what he criticizes: resulting evaluations.
4. Ideological homogeneity and heterogeneity in critical practice within the same medium of communication.
5. Criticism in institutionalized media and in marginal media.
6. Predictability of critical evaluation.

II Structural Analysis

Analysis of structures in journalistic practice.

1. Relationship between enterprise and professionals in the information field.
2. The newspaper as an ideological instrument of the State.
3. Remuneration of journalist; its effects and alternatives.
4. Censorship and self-censorship
5. Recurring factors in critical evaluation inherent to the specific medium in which the criticism operates.
6. Social stratification and its influence on critical performance.
7. The flow of information (from sources to receivers) and the function of criticism.
8. The professional training of the journalist related to critical practice.
9. Possibilities and obstacles to criticism disrupting the prevailing standards in a medium of communication.
10. Contribution of criticism to the mythogenesis through the media.
11. Applicability of evaluation models to different socio-political situation: criteria for use and falsification.

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This programme is not intended to be more than a guide, and is susceptible to the broadest amplification. The basic activities to be carried out would appear to be the collection and processing of secondary data, the implementation and analysis of a number of comprehensive field investigations and collection of a certain number of depth interviews to enable this programme to be accomplished.