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Tamil Cinema

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Tamil Cinema

Editor's Introduction

Emile McAnany
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Out of curiosity, and because I know little about Tamil cinema, I went to the master mind of knowledge, Google, and did a simple search for Tamil cinema. In the blink of an eye I was provided 476,000 hits. After a little surfing I could see that Tamil cinema was as popular as Periananygam Jesudoss says it is in this lead article for *COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS*. One of the reasons that the editors were attracted by the submission was that for most of us outside of India, Indian film is from the Mumbai production center and is called Bollywood. As the author of "Tamil Cinema" points out, Mumbai is but one of five major production centers in India with three in Southern India, known jointly as Kollywood. But we in the United States have probably not heard of these films even though they represent a major factor in national film making and a vibrant and increasingly lucrative center of Indian film making.

There are several things about the article that are surprising besides the name Kollywood. One is Jesudoss's assertion: "While yesterday's discussion of film often centered on Hollywood and Europe, today the largest producer of film is India, and the fastest growing cinematic audience is Asian and South Asian" (p.5). This assertion fits with the perception that Asia is increasingly acknowledged as the region of eminence for this century even as Europe was in the 19th and the Western hemisphere was in the 20th. Furthermore, it highlights that not only will India be among the economic and technology leaders in this century, but also that India will be a creative leader in the visual arts. Moreover, there is a distinction between Hollywood and Bollywood and Kollywood that needs additional attention. India, unlike the USA, has multiple centers of production just as its languages and cultures still maintain their identities in India instead of being amalgamated into a singular overarching popular culture as appears in the Los Angeles-dominated film industry of the United States. Even with production taking place outside of Hollywood, the dominance of Hollywood

still remains a force throughout the U.S. film and television industry.

The other surprise in the article is the author's assertion that television is still subordinate to film in its popularity with audiences, despite the fact that the Tamil Nadu government gave a color television set to all poor people in the state. Film, he reminds us, has a solid place in the lives and hospitality of the people of south India. Jesudoss also points out that all of the major political parties (many more than the two the United States is used to) own their own TV stations and use them to great effect. Adding to the importance of film in everyday life, the author also states that all of last five governors of the state have emerged from the film industry. That makes California's Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger more exceptions than norms in the United States by comparison.

A final note of why this story of a little known film industry might be of importance to others around the world is the author's argument about the cultural influence that film has wielded in South India: "Cinema technology has brought a revolution in creating different cultural forms: mass culture, public culture, popular culture, cinema culture, star culture, etc., which are different from crowd culture. What was considered high culture, great culture, classic culture, elite culture, official culture, traditional culture, and Brahmin culture . . . rediscovered and reconstructed the identity and cultural value in popular culture in a positive manner" (p.19). Film's role in Tamil Nadu's cultural mix provides an important look at how different regions create popular cultural forms. The export of these forms, as has begun to the Tamil expatriate community, will also export the cultural form.

It should be noted that this article is part of a dissertation on using film for education of street youth in Tamil Nadu. Here, too, we see how any communication campaign must take the local popular cultural context into account if it hopes for any degree of success. The longer studies shows those possibilities.

Tamil Cinema

Perianayagam Jesudoss

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1. Introduction

“The 20th century can plausibly be described as the ‘first age of mass media’” (McQuail, 2005, p. 50). Cinema as a popular medium of entertainment is now more than a century old. Comparatively only recently has society realized cinema’s great potential as an instrument of entertainment, instruction, motivation, and construction. Developing countries in their effort to accelerate the processes of economic and social change have taken this popular medium as their best means of supplementing or replacing the traditional communication forms. Even with the arrival of radio and television, satellite and Internet communication, the crucial role of cinema and its myriad possibilities in social change and development have still to be explored (Hopkinson, 1971, p. 5). The whole world identifies with the cinema and thus it becomes a universal medium. The truth is that the global community is aware of and accepts the influence and impact of cinema on the society (Subramanian, 1990, p. 6). What makes this art form so captivating is that it caters not only to the needs of people but also provides a visual space for them to live their dreams as it tells the story more effectively and creatively.

“The recent commemoration of the centenary of the cinema was a global event and a cause for celebration” (Krishnamswamy, 2001, p. 137). But it has taken more than 70 years for a global audience to come to terms with the cinematic medium, to liberate it from theater and literature. People had to wait until their consciousness caught up with their technology. The medium provides the only true language used as a recording instrument. The recorded subject, however,

Editor’s Note: This essay comes from material that Fr. Jesudoss first prepared as part of his 2009 dissertation, “The Learning Impact of Tamil Cinema in the Lives of Street Children: An Empirical Research and its Relevance,” presented to the Salesian Pontifical University, Rome (Thesis No. 712), with the readers, Professors Pasqualetti Fabio, Marie Gannon, and Devadoss Sagayaraj.

is not the external human condition (object) but the filmmaker’s consciousness, perceptions, and process (Youngblood, 1970, pp. 75-76).

Cinema technology shapes and records the objective and subjective realities of every person (p. 128). In the analysis of social change and development, the role of cinema has been recognized as critical. Mass communication in general accelerates and expands the spread of knowledge in the developing world and cinema has an important role as it increases the speed in social development and change. Cinema teaches new desires and satisfaction, new morality and ethics, devotion and worship, new paths and means of attaining power. It portrays role models particularly for children and youth to imitate (David, 1983, p. 2).

Understanding the function of art and technology in a given cultural environment is very important because people are conditioned by the cultural environment, and the cultural environment comes from the media network (Youngblood, 1970, p. 54). That people are conditioned by media, especially by the cinema rather than by nature, is witnessed particularly in an area like Tamil Nadu state in southern India. This review, then, will provide some background and history of Tamil cinema, examine its roles in Tamil society, discuss the industry’s structure, provide information about consumption, and finally look at how cinema plays a role in social change and identity production in Tamil Nadu.

A. Cinema as an aesthetic art

From the history of the world we find that Hitler and Mussolini realized the importance of cinema as a powerful ideological weapon and used it to further their own political interests. Russia used it for its propaganda. Progressive film makers like Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga-vertov, Jean-Luc Godard, Fernando Solanas, Rocha Marker, Humberto Solas, Miklos Jancso,

Charlie Chaplin, and Ritwik Ghatak have used cinema as a powerful means to constructive purposes and for challenging the hegemonic ideology of their time (Kamzi, 1999, pp. 16-17). If the fundamental character of the cinema is to bring out realities, it at first appears free from any subjective judgments. But cinema is a medium acting within people's perceptions—a part of their physical, psychological, cultural, and political context. This dual purpose (reality vs. interpretive scope) shows that cinema is a subject of socio-political negotiation; it has a dialectical nature (p. 18).

B. Indian cinema

Cinema production, distribution, and consumption, both through film and digital technologies, now constitute a global, rather than national, system. While yesterday's discussion of film often centered on Hollywood and Europe, today the largest producer of film is India and the fastest-growing cinematic audience is Asian and South Asian (Velayutham, 2008, p. 1).

"Media use has been a factor in displacement of not only existing media by a new medium but also of leisure time activities" (Rao, 2001, p. 104). In India the governmental Films Division was set up in 1948 in Bombay for the production and distribution of documentary films and news reels as a medium of education and information (Kumar, 2001, p. 130). When the cinema arrived in British India, it took root in three major metropolitan cities: Bombay (renamed Mumbai), Calcutta (renamed Kolkata), and Madras (renamed Chennai) (Velayutham, 2008, p. 1). Today, the well known largest Indian film industries are also found in Mumbai, Chennai, Calcutta, Bangalore and Hyderabad. Of these it is important to note that three are from South India—Chennai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad. The cinema, largely produced in these centers, dominates the mass culture in India and has a remarkable popularity with South Asians living outside India (Pendakur, 2003, p. 1). For millions of Indians whatever they do, almost everything comes from cinema. Cinema has provided for the majority of India's citizens an entertainment with mixed culture and creation. In all, Indian cinema has played a major role in providing and influencing the notion of "Indianness" and cultivating a cultural hegemony.

In India cinema as an art and industry has spear-headed development and social change from below. India has changed significantly in all its spheres in the past decades and that has to do with its national ideologies. In India the cinema becomes a powerful tool

to defend, to store up, to control, and to perpetuate its culture and national ideologies from foreign cultures at different times in its history (Rajadhyaksha, 2002, p. 10). As a cultural reference Indian cinema reflects the social diversity of the country and the density of everyday life; it connects expatriates to what happens back home and makes an emotional link among Indians and the variety of languages and cultures present in the subcontinent. The cinema deals with the problems to be addressed and the social issues that are of national concern, cultural goals to be proud of, and ideological possibilities to be defended and explored (Sardar, 1998, p. 22). The questions of film policy, financial assistance of government and its subsidies, state censorship board, taxation, and licensing regulations as well as the locally and the nationally instituted awards and film festivals become crucial in determining the wider role of the cinema in Indian society (Chakravarthy, 1996, p. 56).

C. Cinema in Tamil Nadu

Tamil cinema, centered in Chennai, is considered a regional cinema and often under-represented and overlooked. Although Mumbai-based Bollywood is usually considered the Indian Hollywood and the capital of the film industry, it is the Chennai-based Kollywood film industry that has the greatest impact on the masses. "It has become increasingly pervasive in almost all aspects of Tamil society and perhaps the most prominently in political life" (Hardgrave, 2008, p. 60).

Cinema has become part and parcel of the life of Tamils. It has taken a central place in the life and culture of the Tamil society. In fact, it did not vanish with the arrival of the TV; rather the small screen lives at the mercy of cinema, and it still remains a poor substitute for the cinema. The number of film goes in India is highest in Tamil Nadu. It is part of hospitality to treat guests by taking them to a film, and not doing so could even amount to breaking social etiquette. There are instances of family disputes and quarrels arising from this film-going culture. It is not a surprise therefore that people in the cities and towns hardly have a clear idea on information like the population in the city or the number of temples or schools and hospitals but exhibit fairly accurate statistics on the number of theaters and the film titles along with details of the number of shows, timings, etc. In fact, people in Tamil Nadu identify addresses and places using cinema theaters as their reference point (Chettiyar, 2001, pp. 7-8).

2. Origins of Tamil Cinema

A. Language

Tamil cinema emerges from Tamil language and culture, incorporating both cultural and entertainment strands. Tamil culture belongs to the *Dravidian* language family (Tamil, Malayalam, Kanada, and Telugu) which is spoken by 100 million people in the world (Alexander, 2006, p. 38). Tamil culture may be distinguished from the Tamil civilization, though both express the development of human history. The former speaks of the inner growth, personal life and humanity known in Tamil as '*panpaadu*,' ('*panbu*' meaning value / attribute / quality), and the latter deals with the external growth, public life, and organization, known in Tamil as '*naagarigam*,' ('*nagar*' meaning civic or city).

The term '*panpaadu*' refers to the sum total of the values and their system of priority and their individual and collective expression as guiding and conditioning both private and public life and is closely associated with preparing the land for cultivation. It is worthwhile noting that the ancient Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar (4th or 5th century AD, also spelled Thiruva uvar, author of the *Tirukkural* "Sacred Couplets") uses this same word *panpaadu* to teach society to live a cultured and civilized life (Thatchanamurthy, 1999, pp. 3-4).

Tamil Nadu or *Thamizhagam*, the homeland of the Tamil people, is one of the southern states of India, located in the extreme south of the subcontinent. The state has an area of 50,215 square miles (130,057 square kilometres) and is bounded by the Indian Ocean to the south and the Bay of Bengal to the east and by the states of Kerala to the west, Karnataka (formerly Mysore) to the northwest, and Andhra Pradesh to the north. The capital is Chennai (formerly known as Madras).

Tamil Nadu is endowed with rich cultural heritage, especially the Tamil language and literature, temple architecture, art, and sculpture, and the three great Tamil kingdoms of the *Cholas*, *Cheras*, and *Pandiyas* and later the *Pallavas* in the northern part of the Tamil country. These kings devoted their time and resources to nurture, sustain, and transmit Tamil cultural heritage in spite of the continuous battles they had waged among themselves (Arimpoor, 1982, p. 10).

"The Tamil language has a long and unbroken literary tradition of some 2,000 years" (Venkatachalapathy,

2005, p. 537). It belongs to the southern group of Dravidian languages and is spoken mainly in the southern part of India, in Tamil Nadu. The number of native Tamil speakers exceeds 26 million as the language is also spoken in other parts of the world. In the island nation of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) alone there are two million native Tamil speakers. In Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam there are one million people who speak the language. Besides there are also Tamil speaking people in some of the Indian Ocean islands. The oldest literary tradition of the Dravidian people is found in Tamil Nadu. The oldest existing manuscripts and monuments of Tamil literature date apparently from not later than the 2nd and 3rd century of the Christian era (Andronov, 1965, p. 9).

Colloquial Tamil or the dialect used in day-to-day conversation among the people is quite different from the classical or literary form, and it exists almost exclusively as an oral tradition as it defies the grammar of the written language. Oral communication has been completely monopolised by the colloquial language which is very much used in the cinema (Andronov, 1965, p. 9). "Tamil language is traditionally understood as consisting of three streams, namely *Iyal* which means literature, *Isai* which means music, and *Natakam* which means drama" (Chidambaranar, 1997, p. 3). The triple division of the Tamil language known as *Muthamizh* (literally triple Tamil) has been an integral part of classical Tamil literature right from the second century and it plays an important role in the context of modern cultural performances of the people (Subramanian, 2007, p. 25).

The Tamil language was very well known for its devotional nature that was prevalent during the time of the *Bhakti* (spiritual devotion) culture or movement (Zvelebil, 1975, pp. 5-6). But it was tabooed by Brahmanic Hinduism and Vedic Brahmanism. Militant Hinduism was very hostile to Tamil literature and this enmity may have been responsible for the disappearance of many great works of Tamil literature (Andronov, 1965, pp. 5-6). A passion for the Tamil language and culture led to protests against Brahmin identity. More than a protest against Brahmin domination, it was an expression of a deep passion and attachment; this passion for the Tamil language implied and

induced a passion for social reform, identity formation, and political empowerment, which continues in the media for example. Based on the popular belief that Tamil language is in fact the mother of all the Tamils, people exalted Tamil language as divine and sought to re-divinize or Dravidianize the culture (Subramanian, 2000, pp. 114-116).

B. Drama

Within this larger phenomenon, cinema takes part of its form from the theater. Though the Tamil language with the aforementioned triple linguistic character of *Iyal* (prose), *Isai* (music), and *Natakam* (drama or theater) flourished in ancient times, it had its setbacks in the past two millennia. When Buddhism and Jainism flourished in the country, music and drama were considered worldly pleasures to be refrained from. However, to please the common folk during festival seasons, a rustic form of art known as *Koothu* was performed, and the people who took it as a profession later assumed a caste identity known as *Koothar* (Chidambaranar, 1997, p. 3).

The tradition of *Koothu* is still prevalent in Tamil Nadu during village festivals. In the course of time, the theater, meant to spread morality among the people, started deteriorating with obscene dialogues and vulgar punning on words in order to attract audience attention and cheap popularity; this attracted severe religious strictures and sanctions. This reformation is comparable to the Puritan reformation in Europe that advocated strict religious principles and austere life to fight against the cult of pleasure (Chidambaranar, 1997, p. 4).

Theater in its present form is, however, a recent development. In the year 1877 a troupe by the name of *Thanjai Mananmohana Nataka Saba* was started by T. R. Govindasamy Rao along with some Brahmins, a few Marathis who knew Tamil, and a few Pillais. At that time they had no songs but made use of some musical instruments to go along with acting. Later on this troupe split and formed another group called *Kannu Pillai Troupe*. This troupe for the first time combined music with acting on stage. Seeing all these developments in society, a renowned artist by the name of Kumbakonam Mahapandithar Brahmasree Natesa Deekshidar started a company called *Kumbakonam sith Vilasa Sabai*. In this company he added the Buffoon or the clown character and men acted as women for the first time. People used to come by bullock carts from far and near to witness the performance (Bhagavathar, 1997b, p. 1).

This led to a golden time and a reformation in Tamil drama. *Kumbakonam sith Vilasa Sabai* was split,

and a certain Narayanasami started a new company wherein *Ramayanam* was enacted with songs, dialogues, costumes, and sets for the first time, which was quite different from the other companies. These drama companies, apart from performing in Tamil Nadu, especially in the southern districts around Tirunelveli, traveled throughout South India including the regions surrounding Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala, Hyderabad in Andhra, and Mysore in Karnataka. Later on there was a rise and fall of a plethora of drama troupes in Tamil Nadu, and today there still exist some drama groups that are spoken about highly (Bhagavathar, 1997a, pp. 1-2).

C. Music in Tamil drama

Tamil cinema could attain its progress only from the field of drama wherein there was little harmony between the action and drama, and *songs* were given more importance than story. People used to go to Tamil dramas more to hear than to see. The instrumentalists, especially the one at the harmonium, were more important than the hero, and the songs took the main place and drove the audience into a frenzy. The heroes and heroines were themselves more known and celebrated for their voice and musical talent than acting, and musical talent was considered an integral and indispensable component of acting. Obviously when cinema emerged it was music again that took the central place, playing the unique role of attracting the crowds, and many films have been produced and have attained wide popularity for the sake of music, and the trend persists till today (Vamanan, 2004, p. 5). That in one's past lies one's future is true in the case of Tamil cinema music.

This historical background of the Tamil cinema music needs to be noted as a significant factor that would throw light on the understanding and interpreting the impact of cinema, its music in particular, on the Tamil society especially the youth and children (Vamanan, 2004, p. 10). The Tamils usually hear the songs of a particular cinema and then go to the theaters to see the still pictures. In fact the Tamil usage *Thirai padam* for cinema—literally a still picture on screen—differs from the Western idea of “movies,” which indicates movement or action. It is something taken for granted in the Tamil or, for that matter, in any Indian cinema that the director conveys the story, plot, message, and sentiments through visuals along with music and songs (Narayanasamy, 1997a, p. 9). In order to improve and flourish, Tamil cinema took the direction of music rather than acting or the technical aspects of film making. This could be the reason why the best actors could not shine in cinema when they were not

able to sing (Jayaramiyer, 1997, p. 6). It is recorded that the producers looked for heroes and actresses who were popular singers as drama artists without bothering about their ability to act and represent characters on screen (Narayanansamy, 1997b, p.10).

D. Loud voice culture in Tamil cinema

The stage actors brought the “loud voice culture” into the Tamil cinema by shouting and yelling as they would do it in theater. People came to the cinema to see

3. History of Tamil cinema

A. Extent of Tamil cinema

In the State of Tamil Nadu in India, cinema is everywhere and it is everything. Going through the main streets of the bigger cities one can not but see the gigantic glittering billboards that advertize the latest films as well as the small posters that are pasted on the walls, with the fan club’s name. The digital banner culture of today has made it very easy to print the photos of the youth leaders who sponsor the clubs to identify themselves with their film stars (Dickey, 1993, p. 3).

Transportation companies, both public and private, compete with each other to attract passengers with the latest digital audio-visual system which gives the passengers a thrill of theater experience while traveling. It is a very common sight to see the posters of the famous film stars on the backs of autos and cycle rickshaws, with their famous slogans taken from the cinema. Tea shops, restaurants, shopping complexes, temples, bus stands, and railway stations will assist and entertain the public with cinema audio-visual programs (Dickey, 1993, p. 3). Hence it goes without saying that cinema is one of the most preferred means of entertainment in Tamil Nadu.

During festivals, both the public and the private television channels telecast programs by the cinema stars. Even government functions can not have a celebrative mood without cinema stars (Editors, 2004, pp. i-iii). In family gatherings like weddings, cinema songs blare from horn speakers and from cassette players. People, irrespective of age, follow the life style in dress, hair dressing fashions, and mannerisms promoted by popular films and film stars. This is very common in the lives of the youth and women. The release

beautiful women with jewels, men with impressive voices, and picturesque scenery, love songs and sentiments, and a comedian who could evoke laughter. These may be cited as some of the reasons for some aesthetic failure of Tamil cinema even today (Iyer, 1997, pp. 11-12). Nevertheless this initial aesthetic language suited the pre-independence period, bringing along with it the drama, stories, plot; therefore, it is called Tamil cinema of the loud voice culture.

of a new film of their favorite film star is a feast for the fans. They celebrate it with maximum joy and commitment which naturally involves lots of money. Going to the cinema is not always an easy thing. One has to be prepared for several risks like losing one’s purse, picking quarrels, being pulled and pushed in the queue, and even being beaten by the police, before one can buy a ticket and get into the theater. With all these risks the number of cinema goers is still on the rise (Chettiyar, 2001, p. 9). All these challenges show that the cinema still has an important place and remains a popular medium in Tamil Nadu.

In the history of cinema there is a distinctive place for the Tamil cinema with regard to its political and social nature, which covers the entire lives of the people (Govindan, 2001, p. iv). The Tamil cinema as an art form gives importance to the social life that explains the various aspects of daily life (p. vii). But it is unfortunate to note that this art form which is the biggest invention in the field of communication of the 20th century with its direct impact on the society and its democracy is still not understood by many people. In fact the study of Tamil cinema opens the window to the understanding of Tamil psychology, Tamil culture, and its consequences (Chokkalingam, 2000, p. 1). Cinema serves a valuable role since by their cultural tradition the people of Tamil Nadu tend to learn more by audible knowledge (p. 2). Children are no exception from this cinema culture. They play cards with the image of the movie star printed on them. They learn to dance, fight, and speak dialogue like the film stars and entertain themselves and others with the songs and dances from their favorite cinema. Babies are named after the famous film titles or with their famous star’s name (Subarav, 1992, p. 12).

An example illustrates the popularity and power of Tamil cinema and its impact on audiences. Since 1967 five chief ministers, all democratically elected, have governed Tamil Nadu and all of them are associated in one way or another with the film industry (Baskaran, 1996, p. i). These socio-cultural and political factors associated with Tamil cinema mirror the different strands of society and help us to understand its multi-role as propagator, entertainer, educator, and guardian of ideas, mores, traditions, and culture. Through Tamil cinema one can trace the diverse schools of thought which obviously are rooted in politics and religion (pp. ii-iii). Tamil popular cinema is politically and ideologically loaded. It not only reflects social reality but also constructs it. It is fused into the polity and sensibility of citizens (Kazmi, 1999, p. 16).

B. A brief history of Tamil cinema

Tamil cinema is a powerful medium of cultural expression and it functions as a social, cultural, political, and economic institution (Pendakur, 2003, p. 12). It has a tremendous impact on the lives of people by shaking and shaping the foundations of the society. Through cinema one can enter and study the cultural traits of the society: for example the caste system, its origin, its structure, and its function and influence can be understood just going through the Tamil cinema (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 1998, p. 8). A critical study of the Tamil cinema industry will support the connection and its impact on socio-cultural, religious, and political values (Sivathamby, 1983, p. 19). Dickey has rightly observed that the Tamil cinema has much to do with the life of the Tamil people in all its aspects (Dickey, 1993, p. 14).

The Tamil cinema industry had its arrival as celluloid technology in the year 1897 when M. Edwards held a cinematograph show in Victoria Public Hall near Central Station in Chennai. This was the first ever show in South India. It is important to note that this was just a year after the Lumiere brothers had demonstrated their inventions in Paris. There was, however, little indication that this would evolve as a big, popular entertainment industry and become a commercial possibility in society (Baskaran, 2002, p. 3).

During the silent film era (1916–1932) most of the films were based on the well known stories from the *Puranas* and almost every actor came from the stage dramas. But women did not want to appear in front of the camera for fear of their health, so women from America and Europe came to act in Tamil films.

In order to keep the audience busy and entertained during the silent movie, women of ill repute, mostly from the lower castes in society, stunt masters, and magicians kept the crowd entertained (Narayanan, 1981, pp. 29-30). There were social, political, cultural, and moral problems which drew the attention of the British government and the high caste people. In 1915 the electrical inspector for the public works department of Madras Presidency, E.J.B. Greenwood, made the comment that cinema could be both physically and morally harmful to the public (Vasudevan, 2000, p. 47; see also Liang, 2005, p. 369). The British came down heavily on the new technology with lot of restrictions. In 1927-1928 the Indian Cinematograph Committee described the Tamil cinema as an entertainment of the masses. The government gave more attention to censorship and not to trade and, in fact, the trade aspect was neglected (Baskaran, 2002, p. 4).

In 1913 a cinema theater known as Gaiety was built by an Indian in Chennai. R. Nataraja Muthaliar was the forerunner of this industry. He produced the first studio-made film, *Keesakavatham*, in 1916 (Narayanan, 1981, p. 12). There were more than 100 films produced during this silent film era, and they were touring even in the small towns. After the arrival of sound, R. Nataraj Muthaliar gained autonomy in the market and his own General Pictures Corporation in 1934 produced films in four major South Indian languages namely Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannda as well as in Hindi. In fact, at this time not even the Hindi films had made much progress in this field.

The high caste leaders saw the cinema as a cultural threat which could destroy society. The upper caste reaction to the regular shows was one of elitist apathy and anger. They despised the cinema and concluded that it is not even worthy of any serious attention. Mahatma Gandhi's statement in 1939 included "cinema among evils like gambling and racing." This same hostile approach towards cinema can be seen in the remarks of Nehru that "the cinema industry was not a priority of a new nation" (Prasad, 1998, p. 33). In the year 1935 when the film *Nandanar* came out as a hit, the writer and journalist Kalghi Krishnamurthy wrote in his journal that the trees, buffalos, and goats acted well (Narayanan, 1981, p. 76). The situation worsened when color entered the cinema and the songs and lyrics shifted the industry to outward values rather than the inner values that were found in other traditional media (Bakshi, 1998, p. 117). This

showed the attitude of the educated of that time towards the cinema. It is interesting to note that in independent India for many years film songs were a taboo on the All India Radio, which is the state broadcasting station (Baskaran, 2002, pp. 4-5).

Because of these often negative reactions, the Indian Cinematograph Act of 1918 empowered the authorities to examine and to grant or deny certification for films as suitable for public exhibition. Eventually the police also were authorized to examine films, but they only enjoyed the film and did not much bother about the examination. They attended to their duties with various vested interests rather than doing their duty and thus corruption entered the cinema industry (Vasudevan, 2000, pp. 52-54). For the Indian government, controlling the cinema was a problem since 1915 (p. 57). Thus the coming of cinema in India and Tamil Nadu saw a period of consolidation of the censorship machinery to regulate the new technological medium and the potentially dangerous space that it enabled. The cinema space was highly regulated and, considered as a highly suspicious environment, constantly under the threat of law and order (Liang, 2005, p. 369).

The producers borrowed capital from the rich people and as there was no security for money return, they sacrificed the value-based films and produced low budget films for quick money (Baskaran, 2002, p. 5). Illegal funds and underground criminals entered the industry in a big way to invest and to settle the disputes among the producers and artists (Pendakur, 2003, p. 30). The relationship between the money lenders and the producers is not a simple thing that existed once but a continuous story which led eventually to explain the nexus between the economic, ideological, and political forces that shape the conditions of the social, cultural, and political elements of production in the cinema world (Prasad, 1998, p. 30). This cinema industry was an occasion for the entry of black money, black marketers, and smugglers to invest their unaccounted money which would be tax free. This practice was even regarded as a patriotic act during British rule (p. 39).

Mostly the money lenders and the distributors controlled the industry, which was taken over later by famous stars. Most of the time the film's success depended on its star value. In the course of time, the stars rose to the top, and all the other artists and film makers found it difficult to survive in the industry. The sound engineers, cinematographers, editors, laboratory technicians, and junior artists were poorly paid. The

unskilled artists and workers in the industry, most of them poor low caste artisans, earned even less. It is worth to take note of M. B. Srinivasan who writes that the cinema industry is ruled like a *zamindari*—a feudal land-holding system (Baskaran, 2002, p. 5). Today much of the rise in the production of popular cinema can be attributed to outdoor shooting, which implies a lot of money and time (sometime they say it is easier and more economical to shoot in foreign countries because of corruption from the local authorities and disturbances from the stars' fans), particularly for the song and dance sequences, whose costs often are rather high (Pendakur, 2003, p. 30).

C. Technology and industry

Cinema's realism had the power to move the sentiments of the audience right from the beginning. For example, early audiences viewing on screen a train coming into the platform ran away from the theaters; seeing rain in a scene made them look for their umbrellas; seeing images of snakes, medical operations, shootings, or exaggerated violence tended to have similar effects on the audience. Other pseudo-realistic scenes still affect audiences. For instance, the scene of the contemporary Tamil actor Kamalahasan shaking hands with Shubash Chandra Bose in the Tamil film *Indian* is a typical example of the Tamil cinema in making the unreal appear real (Sivakumar, 2003, pp. 39-40). The heroes in the Tamil cinema are portrayed as supermen able to do many things at a time—things they are otherwise incapable of, like talking in many languages, singing, dancing, fighting, handling weapons, etc.

The common people sees these things as real whereas the educated elite take these as a part of cinematographic language. The sense of reality dominates our psyche because visual truth overcomes us. In fact when we see films continuously in a theater we are taken to another world altogether. Only when we come out of it do we realize this. This is how these experiences become a part and parcel of our life. The individual's ability to apprehend, capture, generate, transmit, duplicate, replicate, manipulate, store, and retrieve audio-visual contents on the desktop has reached the point where film technology results in the rebirth of a home-based or "cottage industry" throughout the world (Youngblood, 1970, pp. 130-131).

The cinema industry has achieved far more success than the other arts in a very short span. The pro-

duction of cinema is basically an industrial process, which means it calls for a huge investment of money and personnel, a well built framework, and an industrialized infrastructure in the society. It could be financed by the government or by private companies. India possesses a highly developed and sophisticated film industry which is the second largest commercial film production industry in the world (Hopkinson, 1971, p. 12). It is noteworthy to mention that Tamil cinema has its unique place in the nationwide film industry. The southern film industry (“Kollywood”) is the largest in terms of number of studios, capital investments, gross income and number of people engaged in production (Dickey, 1993, p. 3).

The cinema’s popularity is very much dependent on the camera which imitated that representation, which served as the artist’s tool for many centuries (Briggs & Burke, 2002, p. 164). Cinema is undoubtedly the largest media industry in the world. Sound and color radically transformed not only cinematography but also society as the stories already present in society in the form of novels and literature are translated into the new technology and thus reproduce the systems of reality and morality already present in the older systems of story telling in society (Denzin, 1995, p. 22).

By 1980 (the golden jubilee year of talking pictures) in the four states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamilnadu, there were 98 studios, with most of them in Chennai. There were about 2,742 production units and 5,885 cinema houses of both permanent and touring category (the all India figure was 10,813) and about 3,980 films were made (Baskaran, 2002, p. 2). Today, in Tamil Nadu as many as 1,771 cinema theaters function under the following categories: (i) 1,351 permanent cinema theaters; (ii) 120 semi-permanent cinema theaters; (iii) 291 touring cinema theaters; and (iv) nine open air cinema theaters (Anbalagan, 2007, p. 20).

Tamil cinema is more than the actors and the actresses. There are other persons of whom the director comes first as the one responsible for the film and the producer who finances the cinema and has the final say in the industry. In addition to technicians the persons included are the writer, music director, lyrics writer, choreographer, dance director, fight scene master, special effects director, dubbing artists, group dance team, stunt crew, playback singers, comedians, side actors and actresses. All of them represent the film industry (Dickey, 1993, p. 120). The unique and

magical qualities of the Tamil cinema can be understood only in the background of its industrial network and its cultural ideologies. These are two sides of the same coin. They support each other. In order to understand their relationship one should examine the salient features of the Tamil cinema industry and combine them with the cultural analysis of popular cinema (Pasumaikumar, 2003, p. 50).

D. Kollywood:

Center of the Tamil cinema industry

In the Tamil Nadu cinema, business was and is strongly influenced by market considerations as found in its production and distribution. Chennai—*Kodambakkam* or Kollywood—still continues to be the center of the cinema industry in South India, exploiting the reputation and image of past rulers to assert both supremacy and take on a stance of compassionate concern for the people (Ramasamy, 1994, p. 313).

As noted, Kollywood has its roots in Tamil drama. The well-known stage artist and script writer Shankaradas Swamigal, born in the year 1867, was the first one to regularize the stage drama in Tamil Nadu. All his dramas are based on the well known stories from the *puranas*. In his time men were substituted for women on stage as per the culture of the day (Narayanan, 1981, p. vii). But today this humble beginning has grown into a mega-million rupee industry, employing hundreds of thousands of workers. It is true that as an entertainment industry it had to struggle to strike its roots in the beginning, but immediately after independence and as electricity entered the villages the cinema also entered in the minds and culture of society with its glamour (p. vii). Surprisingly, only in 2001 did the government declare film making an industry; at that time the industry started receiving considerable attention from researchers (Baskaran, 2002, p. 1).

In earlier times the story and the director were considered to be the most important in cinema production. Today, however, the onset of new technology has led to new advances in cinema such as animation, special sound effects, and quality of production with the arrival of computer technology. Today it is more challenging to produce a good film in a world of excellence, competence, and competition. Today, Chennai uses the best available cinema technology (Mohan, 2005, p. 1).

4. Film distribution

With the issuing of the censor certificate the film is ready for distribution. In Tamil Nadu most of the time the major studios are owned by the same associates of producers, and they become responsible for the release of the film. There are of course films not permitted by the censor board to be released. When the film is certified, the distributor looks for the best theater, the most auspicious time, and the cooperation of the fans for the release of the film. Releasing a movie involves advertising through newspapers, wall posters, and bill boards. In addition the press must be called for an exclusive preview at which the director and the producer will pay attention to the reviewers in both English and in the vernacular dailies and periodicals. The reviewers have a say in the success of the cinema with regard to the commercial part of it. As mentioned earlier, in India there are almost 11,000 cinema theaters, of which about 2,000 are found in Tamil Nadu (Chokkalingam, 2000, p. 1). The price of the cinema tickets is fixed by the government according to the city type and the class of the theaters. This is how the cinema that is produced becomes a commercial product in the hands of the common man who ultimately decides the success of this cinema industry (Dickey, 1993, pp. 121-122).

Film distribution in the silent era was not a developed one. It was with the arrival of the sound and regional talkies that this sector became an independent one with great scope for the future. Distribution and exhibition are the two sectors of the entire distribution process widely known as the most profitable part of film business. Normally the financiers take up the business of distributing the films for the sake of regaining their investment, as is the practice with Hollywood companies. In this way they gain a lot of profit without losing the capital in the industry. The financier and distributors manipulate the industry because the business side has turned to be the producer and distributor (Prasad, 1998, pp. 40-41).

Film production and distribution is almost an underground business in India and Tamil Nadu. Even before the release of every film, the music and the sound track is sold and methodically distributed; it is said that by selling the songs alone the money for the investment is often recouped. In 1997 A. R. Rahman's music was

reportedly sold for 20 million rupees in each of the four territories of distribution in India (or about \$1.7 million). Pre-sale of pictures to raise production funds is also done by selling ancillary rights, particularly the sound track of the film apart from the sale of audio and video cassettes, CDs, DVDs, sale of rights to Star television and satellite television and cable television, still photos on T-Shirts, on saris and other cosmetic ornaments, on wrist-watches, and on notebook covers add up considerable revenue (Pendakur, 2003, p. 35).

It is proper to note here that the Indian television as a whole becomes a tool for both central and state governments. As part of the welfare package promised at the election campaign the Tamil Nadu state government has distributed a color television set to each family below the poverty line. Television at home has a tremendous growth potential in society today. *Doordarshan*, the state-owned national network, along with numerous private satellite television networks in different languages from different political parties telecast movies and other politically motivated programs for home consumption to millions of viewers across the state. In Tamil Nadu major political parties have their own television networks to propagate their ideologies. These offer tremendous opportunities for the film industry to reconnect to a cross-section of its lost audience in the theaters (Pendakur, 2003, p. 46).

In addition, fan clubs provide relatively cheap distribution venues for productions that create a new network of wholesale and retail dealers that reach out to every nook and corner of the country. The products also reflect the religious sentiments of the masses, and songs are being recomposed or remixed with the original tunes but adapted to the religious and social occasions. Hinduism with its diverse traditions and customs has the broadest scope to make use of distribution dealers. Christians and Muslims have a limited use as sales are mostly restricted to their shrines. Generally it is the political parties and the fan clubs that are involved in the distribution, which they do with much dedication and meticulous organization. Cassette companies buy the copyright of the songs while the television companies buy the copyright of the dance sequence and sometime of the film itself. Failures at the box office is compensated by this, and no one who invests money in this

cinema industry has gone bankrupt. That is the reason why even the tax from this industry is a steady income for the government (Pendakur, 2003, pp. 35-40).

In addition to local distribution, Tamil films appear around the world. The global marketing strategy may be explained with an example. Ashoke Amirtraj, who is a partner in Amirtraj-Solomon Communications with Michael Solomon, President of Warner Brothers, produced a Tamil film called *Jeans* (1996) with an eye towards the growing international markets. It is a multi-million rupee production with extensive location work outside the country and its budget reportedly exceeded that of any film in Tamil so far. Amirtraj declares that his company's strategy was to go after the world market in terms of casting, high standards in production, and directing. It is important to note that the film industry employs and exploits the world famous Miss World celebrities in order to attract global business along with local market. This example cites the growing global market for the South Asian cinema and also indicates the globally spread diaspora of South Asian emigrants especially the youth among them and their natural desire to feel closer to home via the Indian or Tamil movies (Pendakur, 2003, p. 43).

The cinema industry offers job opportunities to many people. Cinema entertains so many people and keeps them engaged positively but for which they

would in all probability get involved in anti-social activities. Cinema is an industry where many talented people are employed and it is a dream world for so many young artists. The cinema industry is a wonderful means to seek a job opportunity because the film industry diversifies its operations into television, information technology, and computer technology, which includes the related digital knowledge in the mass media as the film industry can no longer be viewed as an isolated entertainment. It would not be an exaggeration therefore to claim that the Tamil cinema industry is a precious gift for talented youth in society. It is up to the youth and society to use it for constructive purposes aimed at individual and collective good and not for destructive purposes. It is the responsibility of both the industry and the society to make use of this medium for the betterment of the society (Chettiyar, 2001, p. 9).

The producers today have come to compromise with the foreign film entries for they themselves are aware of their inability to stop it as the flow of the latest media technology in the video shops and Internet downloading has made access to all types of cinema a glaring reality. To the contrary the producers try to imitate some of the characters in their films. Even regional languages now apply cross linguistic puns to entertain the audience. By doing this the regional cinema extends its marketing nationally and globally (Gopalan, 2003, p. 5).

5. Cinema Production as Cultural Commodity in Tamil Nadu

In developing countries like India, cinema forms a part of the social, economic, and political context; it holds a strategic importance as a cultural phenomenon, which obviously takes into account the rapid development in production and consumption of cultural products (Thomas, 2001, p. 78). In India as a whole the culture and entertainment play a major role and it is ever on the rise. When we speak of cultural products and entertainment, we see different patterns of growth in production. For example the production of cinema and the consumption of its products are always on the increase. People in India generally do not have the means to buy the latest entertainment products of television, radio, satellite and cable connections, computers, tape recorders, etc. But the majority go to the cinema, which is relatively cheaper and easy to access. In

a country like India where illiteracy is high, cinema becomes a cultural commodity in the field of production and consumption which of late has come to be known as "commoditization of culture."

Cultural needs are not satisfied fully and hence producers link people to the modern entertainment technologies so as to block people's genuine needs and manipulate the same for their own ends. For example, the producers continually create new needs in the form of music tracks, dances, lyrics, and violence and sex in order to extend continually their own interest of making money and realizing their capitalist ambitions. In Tamil Nadu the process of cultural production and the formation of cultural need work within a framework of economic, political, religious, ideological, and caste-class relations. This process of cultural production and

creating cultural needs has a specific purpose, namely increasing profit. The cultural products of Tamil cinema do not respond to all the demands of people; instead they create new products to create new and targeted social needs. In other words, the industry selects certain social groups in society based on caste, class, gender, religion, language, and fan groups and prepares them to respond to the producers' offer. The fact is that these strategies in the process of formation of cultural needs are confined within the framework of economic, political, and ideological class relations and have a specific aspect of valorization of capital (Miege & Garnham, 1979, pp. 299-300).

The film industry takes extraordinary care in order to avoid failures in the production of cultural commodities. They need to maintain a collaborative relationship with the artists by creating young artists' new creations and carefully promoting their success in the industry. Meanwhile the industry takes into consid-

eration the non professional labour and artists by occasional payments while both of them wait in hope for public recognition.

Tamil cinema produces cultural commodities according to specific conditions and modes of production. Like other commercial commodities the cultural commodity too has its expansion of exchange values. It implies not only the expansion of values but also that of capital. Today the Tamil Nadu government organizes and promotes cultural shows, commercial sites, world trade shows, and shopping malls as sales environments. Thus in Tamil Nadu one witnesses a capitalist society where on the one hand the promotion of culture is taking place by commercial parks (Indian Institute of Technology Madras-Taramani), and on the other hand the promotion of commerce by culture as for example through the MGR Film City, a recently built state-sponsored complex featuring the sets and studios of Tamil Nadu film industry.

6. Consumption

Cinema going in Tamil Nadu depicts people from all walks of life and their problems concerning need and hunger. Need is that which can be met by a specific and unchanging object. As for example hunger may be satisfied by food only. Cinema too meets specific needs of the society. The producers and their productions are justified by the demand of social needs. While the other sectors of society like the economy and politics have often failed to meet the basic material needs of the masses, the cinema industry has succeeded in effectively meeting the demands that are placed on it. These basic needs of the masses are very important. People are hungry and the commercial cinema is the best food for them (Prasad, 1998, p. 108). Hunger is evoked by the failure of the cultural structures ("mother," "home," "man," family, economy) that presumably fulfill—or entirely circumvent—women's needs (Hastie, 2007, p. 299; Youngblood, 1970, p. 112). Many people especially those who are deprived, exploited, and poor in society seek to find solutions for many of their needs that spring from their uncomfortable situation in society, and cinema is an easily accessible source to which they turn for relief if not solutions.

From the perspective of cinema, the need or hunger is at the heart of all basic human problems. The result of cinema or the problems of cinema watching

can be explained from what one has seen or "eaten" from the cinema. As food contains many ingredients, the cinema too is a cooked form of food with lot of spices in it. In fact, cinema is food for the people for their emotional, psychological, religious, and political hunger. Film replaces reality by a symbolic system of meaning. Popular film cooks by narrating a story, but the problem occurs when it is "overcooked," it loses its nutritional elements, loses its meaning, hence it becomes incapable of fulfilling people's needs (Valicha, 1988, pp. 37-38).

Reel food is also known as *Masala Padam* in Tamil Nadu. Masala (a composite of a variety of spices used in cooking delicious food) is an appropriate metaphor to analyze India's and particularly Tamil Nadu's cinema. It is precisely because it draws attention to the variety of ingredients that make up the story of the popular cinema. Just as the Tamil cooking includes lots of Masalas or hot spices, the popular Tamil cinema also takes on a lot of hot spices like love, affection, sex, pleasure, violence, passion, music, song, dance, etc., and that is how the cinema substitutes for a variety of social needs and ideals. Tamil cinema is created as an industrial product that aims to please the large masses and their changing tastes (Pendakur, 2003, p. 12). This cinema product is available at cheap

rates or even for free 24 hours a day in Tamil Nadu (p. 95). As mentioned earlier, the food or the “masala” should not be overcooked and everything should be in place just in the right proportions for which the cultural intervention is needed.

A. Socio-demographic factors in consumption

Popular Tamil cinema consumption can be measured as the average cinema attendance per inhabitant per year. Drawing on their own practical experience and their sense of business success, exhibitors brought cinema and audiences together the best they could (Hughes, 2006, p. 61).

Other socio-demographic factors like gender, age, material status, family compositions, and region of residence may exert some influence on cinema consumption (Pendakur, 2003, p. 112). These socio-demographic factors are also intended to serve as primary controls on media consumption in Tamil Nadu (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005, p. 197). The rising income, especially of the youth, leading to greater demand for cinema in both quantity and quality, proves quite relevant to the consideration of the cinema. A materialist lifestyle diminished people’s ability to enjoy the pleasures of taste, smell, and sound, and of activities such as walking and reading. The problem was not consumption as such. It was that and more, the forms of consumption were crowding out smaller, but more intensely pleasurable forms of consumption (Trentmann, 2007, p. 153).

In Tamil Nadu, there is a relationship between poverty and increased consumption of cinema products (Chettiyar, 2001, p. 13). Furthermore, the competition in the movie industry, the quality of cinema product supplied and viewed with the superior audio-visual technology, the role characteristic of the famous super stars offering a variety of possible behaviors or decisions in a given situation, and the number of theaters per square kilometer (known as the situational factor) are the important determinants of consumption of cinema in Tamil Nadu (Shen & Dickson, 2001, pp. 76-77).

B. Visual culture as mass consumption

Tamil cinema is consumed as mass culture. This mass culture indicates the notion of cultural need which implies group divisions based on needs. The strength or relevance of Tamil cinema lies in its ability to feed and heal the wounds of cultural discrimination. The consumers are thus satisfied as they are enabled to appreciate and preserve their traditions. It is by giving the mass what they want that the producers are so sure of getting what they want (Prasad, 1998, pp. 105-107).

These needs, being so basic and residual, never die and so are not fully satisfied, implying thereby a process of never-ending or continuous desire. The cinema uses categories such as language, blood, soil, race and kinship, purity, and *bhakti* because they are the most tenacious categories; they form a residual narrative of community, which refuses to die even as it is in the process of being fractured by very contradictory processes of citizenship (Pinney, 2001, p. 29).

People in Tamil Nadu are addicted to almost every cinema product or cinema star’s activity independently of any biological or sociological discrimination. While examining the emergence of the visual culture in Tamil Nadu, Freitag (2001) explores a new gaze theory. She writes that religious practices in Tamil Nadu include both the centrality of *darshan* [the beholding of a deity] and the special reshaping effected under *bhakti* [an act of devotion], and live performance and traditions. Gaze culture was the beginning of visual culture that later became the popular culture in India and Tamil Nadu. *Vedikai parpathu* (looking on at what is going on) is one of the practices of mass culture which is in vogue even today. Historical evidence shows that there were opportunities for this gaze culture right from the beginning of the Vijayanagara kingdom (1336-1646 CE). The people who gathered in royal courts watched events in the form of music and dance, poetry recital, challenging one’s physical and intellectual powers, etc. as instances of the gaze culture. This private performance eventually became a public gaze event on the street corners, in market places, and in open fields. These included street theater, popular musical performance, textual exegesis, and wrestling. The religious practices gave a religious sanction to this secular practice of gaze culture that evolved into a culture of *darshan* and *bhakti*. It is a mutual gaze between God and man. Man becomes a gazer and God becomes as gazed upon. Man becomes a believer and sees God in the eyes of faith. It is a mutual gaze and a relationship. *Darshan* helps to create a basic visual gaze vocabulary and a social space for experiencing and sharing of the same (Freitag, 2001, pp. 39-43).

The audiences too were powerful because of their direct financial contribution and the votes cast regarding artist merit, power, and popularity. This powerful gaze helped shape the content and pronounced on the quality of the art produced. The subjects differed according to the region and the class and caste (Freitag, 2001, pp. 44-45).

The media events and mass culture of live performance that began from the royal court and merchant markets led to art photography and to cinema in order to fulfill popular aesthetic expectations. Through cinema, cultural specialization emerged immediately in various regions in order to satisfy needs and desires through this particular medium. For example there are in the theaters reserved boxes for ladies and couples only. Gaze culture or visual culture has become an inevitable one and the audience may choose any one of several alternatives posed visually. Consumption of an event or image also became a political act of great import. This political importance continues implying anti-imperial and anti-hegemonic connotations: for others, gaze becomes a form of resistance by those who see themselves cast in subaltern roles to indigenous freeholders who attempt to dominate on the basis of regional, caste, class, or gender identities. Thus the visual culture and the gaze culture have become the heart of the mass culture which assumes special meaning and relevance today owing to the subaltern dimensions of social relations (Freitag, 2001, pp. 61-65).

Consuming the cinema products ties individuals to a larger system of provision, linking private and public worlds. This has implications for the focus of what is at stake in considering the relationship between consumption and mass culture or popular culture for it is this practice that shapes public life, rather than the goods themselves or their symbolic value. Consumers through their everyday practices, consciously or unconsciously, leave an active mark on these larger social systems. The skills necessary for practice are performed, acquired, contested, and regulated, and they evolve over time. Examining Tamils watching cinema, viewing television, listening to film music, going through cinema magazines, buying other cinema products, and actively involved in fan clubs, and so on almost as habit provides a useful additional perspective for understanding the dynamics between consumption and Tamil mass or popular culture (Trentmann, 2007, p. 155).

C. Youth as consumers

In India people live in a mass-mediated society. Young people particularly become the focus of major concern with regard to the consumption of the mass mediated products. Without realizing or making little of the impact of cinema, the youth frequent the theaters for their entertainment. It is an opportunity for the youth to relax, to learn, to know, and to acquire information. At the same time it is a risk in as much as it threatens their cultural values and their identities in society. Media in

general are the hope and at the same time a serious concern for society (Devadoss, 2006, p. 185).

By way of an example: The fans of the super star Rajinikanth tattoo themselves with his name, write his name with blood, and have opened some 15,000 fan clubs all over the country. They worship him like a demi-god when he appears on screen, performing the temple rituals of showering him with flowers, garlanding his billboards, and even bathing or anointing his image in milk. The youth spend their time, energy, and resources this way totally unmindful of values like self respect and self esteem to say the least.

By representing the objects of desire—riches, sex, youth, pleasure—the popular Tamil cinema mystifies youth and makes these objects not only exalted but coherent and understandable. The youth as viewers are able to grasp them, refer them to their life, and build a mythical society. The hero, story, heroine, etc. become their own. The youth become part of the story and do not feel alienated. They overcome their frustrations and feel good, calm, and fulfilled. The youth experience a sense of belonging which is an important psychological need and at least to some extent they feel fulfilled. Through the unreal they are exposed to the real. This way the cinema creates their world, or they create their own world mediated by cinema. It is as good as saying the cinema creates people (society) and people (society) create cinema. This is the power of myth, it creates and satisfies, it confers and exploits. The desires give meaning to the youth and so it grips them, guides them, and makes them recognize themselves. It thus becomes an ideology. It is in this sense that film can be seen as an intellectual, moral, and artistic construct capable of bearing a unique though somewhat ambiguous relation to reality (Valicha, 1988, p. 33).

D. Gender identities in cinema consumption

Gender roles are socially constructed and they are learned from the behavior pattern of the elders, especially as mediated by the popular media. Tamil cinema still perpetuates traditional gender stereotypes because it reflects dominant social values. The cinema narration also reinforces them, presenting them as natural and this is consumed by the audience. For example, the stereotypes of masculine domination and feminine submission are portrayed, often justified, and occasionally challenged in cinema, but the predominant images of male domination and female submission are generally reinforced by cinema. Many cinema narratives are still implicitly designed to be interpreted from the point of view of male domination.

Media texts, at least potentially, have a direct effect on their audiences, and the audiences have direct relationship with those texts. As for the audience-text relationship it is assumed that romantic beliefs, aspirations, and attitudes are put to work in the interests of a consumer society (Wilding, 2003, pp. 374- 375).

Audiences, particularly the men, learn and identify with male characters and treat females as objects of pleasure. As mostly depicted in many implicit and explicit ways, the male is expected to be physically strong, aggressive, assertive, taking initiative, independent, competitive, and ambitious. They mostly learn from cinema that men are supposed to be political leaders, aggressive, assertive, independent, and risk-taking. The girls on the other hand learn from most cinemas that the world is male dominated and learn to accept the man's world. Good women are presented as submissive, sensitive, and domesticated; whereas bad women are projected as being rebellious, independent, and selfish. Girls learn from the cinema that they are supposed to be pure, obedient, soft spoken, confined to the household and agriculture. They are supposed to be affectionate, gentle, sympathetic, dependent, emotional, nurturing, supportive of men, etc. Social status, marriage, age, education, job opportunities, nutrition and, in some cultures, even their very birth are some of the factors that still continue to operate as differences within the gender (Govindan, 2001; Devadoss, 2006, pp. 188-189). It is important to note that the transformation of contemporary visual pleasure, narrative cinema, mass culture, and the impact on the construction of gender very much depend on the various uses of technology (Oleksy, 1995, pp. 501-502).

E. Street children and cinema consumption

Street children as consumers think of themselves in the light of their past and present preferences: a person they like, a kind of music they enjoy, and a kind of movie they prefer. Many street children today grow up alone feeling abandoned, whether it is because of the loss of one or both of their parents, parental neglect, trouble at school, or some other similar reason. For

street children friends are rare and relationships are often even rarer. So many children take the cinema stars as substitutes for their real family members and friends. However, in reality it is not only children who have this problem. For example, the unique style of super star Rajinikanth gives the children a momentum to perform unthinkable feats. Youth want to participate or share in his identity. Many adults too look to cinema as a substitute for companionship. They even find themselves turning to cinema for comfort to help fill the emptiness in their lives. Children may learn better from cinema because pictures serve as conceptual pegs from which information can be retrieved on recall trials (Perry, 2002, p. 123).

The consumer culture for the street children not only affected their material well being, it has also influenced all areas of their lives including their approach to, and practice of, religion. Indeed, consumer culture reduces all things—religious beliefs, values, and symbols—into mere objects of consumption rather than value systems that can give meaning and direction.

The potentiality of the cinema experience is dependent on the multiple sensory engagements with film: seeing, hearing. Cinema experience functions as mediating or transitional objects between the gazer and the gazed upon. Cinema experience might enable the audience to better understand the aesthetic experience of film. It might help the audience to negotiate with their relationship between inner physical and psychic reality and the external world. For children, cinema experience creates physical existence, but at the same time is pressed into the service of inner reality. The notion of a transitional object—a mediating force between materiality and inner consciousness which engages our emotions and psychic investments at a public level—is a useful tool through which to think not only about the cinematic experience as something between states or worlds but also about the relation between ourselves and the film we see and also in the context of a specific value system or culture (Hastie, 2007, pp. 294-295).

7. Cinema and Social Change in Tamil Nadu

A. Knowledge change

The monopoly of knowledge, as noted by Harold Innis (McQuail, 2005, p. 103), was exercised in India

by the Hindu Brahmin priests who were the most powerful and important people in the society. They claimed they alone had the knowledge and the power to inter-

pret the *Manu* traditions (the source book for the Indian penal code), as well as to interpret social customs and practices. Cinema made its entry in India in the first decades of the 20th century in a society built on caste stratification. Apart from its traditional occupation and status, every caste had its own entertainment too, and there was no interaction between them (Baskaran, 2002, pp. 2-3). The advent of the cinema technology challenged the exclusive claim of the Brahmins and broke their monopoly and brought equality in relationship and new desire for material and economic well being in society, especially among the so called lower castes (Sivathamby, 1983, p. 21). The significant role of the Tamil cinema in the social and political context is provided by Sivathamby as follows:

The Cinema Hall was the first performance centre in which all Tamils sat under the same roof. The basis of the seating is not on the hierarchic position of the patron but essentially on his purchasing power. If he cannot afford paying the higher rate, he has either to keep away from performance or be with "all and sundry." (Sivathamby, 1981, p. 18)

From this perspective, "technology was the answer to all social problems" (Eapen, 2001, p. 43), and cinema technology created a space for a certain kind of public, communal urban life. Inside the theater Tamils felt that they entered the public realm, but it was a self-contained realm. The public was made private by the darkness of the theater, and here in these dark places a version of the untold stories of the society were told. Cinema stories effectively erased the social untouchability, caste consciousness, religious supremacy, and economic dominance in Tamil society (Denzin, 1995, p. 14). Cinema is thus a powerful tool in shaping a society's opinion and changing traditions, customs, and practices (Ellis, 2007, p. 284).

Tamil cinema can break all the hurdles between the low and high among people. Cinema is no more to be taken lightly because it touches everybody irrespective of caste, clan, and religion. Now that this new technology has come to stay, it affects everybody's life, and no one can do away with it or take it lightly (Pandian, 1997, p. 24). It made the stars, ordinary mortals, into idols and brought changes in the idea of God, temple, and worship. Fan clubs were formed and a movie theater with its marquee was a permanent part of virtually a new community. Theater becomes sacred wherein the spectator could simultaneously experience the thrill, desire, dangers, and invasions of being both a voyeur

and the subject gazed upon. Thus the individual experiences both private and public values. The old forms of visual culture and community are replaced by a new visual community (Denzin, 1995, p. 13).

Cinema technology also brought about changes in gender differences. It broke the barriers of social restriction for women and opened the doors of entertainment for women and children. Cinema brought about new socialization among the people and brought families together. It created new social groups based on the cinema stars and themes and the music. Movie going is a group event and not an individual act (Srinivas, 2002, pp. 159-165).

Watching cinema in groups not only offers occasions for collective visual experience, but it also explicitly encourages new forms of associations based on the visual interest and ideas that are developed and nurtured along with the people in the theater. This eventually leads to the formation of group movements that leads to social action as well. This visual community or fan clubs' involvement with the visual culture, which is dominant among all other entertainment and media, has reduced to a certain extent the anti-social activities in society particularly among the youth who otherwise would be idling their time and would be prone to such behavior.

That cinema technology would extend beyond a great finale of entertainment and could be used politically, religiously, socially, and for educational and animating purposes has become a reality. The touring film theaters facilitate the spread of electricity, transport, markets, and small shops which eventually brings an impetus for the development of the economy. It also indirectly helps the artists, billboard makers, painters, and other small skilled personnel. Theaters are generally located in the middle class neighborhoods and in densely populated areas. This has brought about a new marketing environment and created a new visual culture environment. Theaters became the status symbol of the new middle class and on the screen the middle class and the poorer classes would see lives of wealth and prestige played out by famous stars (Denzin, 1995, pp. 16-17).

B. Cinema technology and cultural change in Tamil Nadu

The cinema industry in Tamil Nadu plays a crucial role in the emergence of a cinema culture (Srinivas, 2003, p. 49). The state of Tamil Nadu considers cinema as an entertainment, as a business, and as an art form that is part of Tamil culture. Cinema tech-

nology because of its economic influence has become part of the national and international culture. It is what is called “mass culture.” The Tamil cinema industry continues to please the people with its visual contents and thus creates a “popular visual culture”: for example, in the “*Rajini* style” or the actress Simron’s slim body shape. Cinema as a technology has changed the notions of culture and has brought new forms of political, aesthetic, and cultural beliefs and practices.

Cinema technology has brought about a revolution in creating different cultural forms: mass culture, public culture, popular culture, cinema culture, star culture, etc., which are different from crowd culture. What was considered to be high culture, great culture, classic culture, elite culture, official culture, traditional culture, and Brahmin culture are now changed with the arrival of the cinema technology that discovered or rediscovered and reconstructed the identity and cultural value in popular culture in a positive manner. In Tamil cinema the arrival of cinema music director Ilayaraja (composer for nearly 900 Tamil films, Vamanan, 2003, p. 288) saw the dawn of a new era and a cultural revolution in the field of cinema music, and the popular culture assumed status, respect, and acceptance by the dominant social groups (Maruthuvan, 2002, pp. 6-20).

Tamil cinema created a new space which threatened existing cultural hierarchies as it liberally and creatively borrowed from high and low cultural forms at the same time recombining them into a new cultural product. For example cinema with its technology can have a disco dance number in traditional *Bharatanatyam* costume, just as the much welcomed Tamil film *Jeans* (2001), combined western and eastern, classical and folk music and dance (Pinney, 2001, p. 7).

Tamil cinemas are highly melodramatic and have the potential to challenge the dominant social order (Dickey, 1993, pp. 64-65). Tamil cinema music plays an important role in the spreading of popular culture in Tamil Nadu. Cinema songs as a popular cultural form were created under technical and market constraints, but gained immense popularity with the masses of listeners and viewers (Pendakur, 2003, p. 122; Reddy, 1989, pp. 405-407).

In order to understand the interaction of media and culture in Tamil society let us take the technology of music and analyze the way in which it affects the cultural products and the culture of the Tamil society. Tamil music, based on emotion and oral tradition, has changed a great deal by introducing western harmony

in the melody. It has brought about uniformity to a medium which prides itself on the skill of each individual musician playing in concert. The arrival of the electronic synthesizers, electric guitars, bongo drums, and even the *Parai* (once considered untouchable among the musical instruments) has changed the entire tone of cinema music. On the other hand, the same technology has brought a great set back to the live artists, performers, and priests who became the cultural victims of the industry as the recorded version of ritual songs, marriage ceremonials, and prayers for all seasons and occasions were readily and easily made available. All these forms once considered a sacred monopoly of the priests have now become superfluous and are replaced by technology. It certainly has had an impact on social gatherings, the carrying out of rituals, chanting prayers, giving instructions, and mourning the dead. Hence the real artists and the priests have taken to other professions for their livelihood (Reddy, 1989, pp. 406-407).

C. Cinema technology and political changes in Tamil Nadu

The visual cinematic technology is basically hegemonic, touching all aspects of society. All personal, political, social, cultural, and economic dilemmas become converted into personal melodramas (Denzin, 1995, p. 30). As regards Tamil politics, practically all politicians have emerged from the cinema world. When talking about the cinema technology and its impact on constructing the political structures, one has to start from the talking-era of the Tamil cinema during the post independence period (David, 1983, p. 63). Almost every political party has its own TV channel for its own political propaganda (*Sun TV, Jaya TV, Raj TV, Makkal TV, Vijay TV, Kalaignar TV*). These television networks have challenged the monopoly of *Doordarshan*, the state owned television network. The strategy is successful because these channels are meaningful to the local linguistic culture and society (Sanjay, 2001, p. 72).

In the 1996 general election for the Tamil Nadu state government the television channels used video technology to create electoral propaganda. Following the lead of the cinema’s contents on corruption, and noting its popularity among the masses, the political parties have manipulated the channels to persuade the voters. In fact, television using the cinema language can convince people irrespective of the truthfulness of the message. Using techniques more common in devel-

oped countries like America, politicians have discovered a world of difference in talking in front of media and talking in front of a crowd (Sivakumar, 2003, p. 46). Producers manipulate space and time to touch the emotion of the people. Visuals are impressive and powerful, and people generally believe what they see. Cinema's capacity to convince the crowd as if all is real knows no bounds. Using film technology, the political parties show visuals of joyous crowds clapping hands, women in wonder, flashes of sound and light, close-up faces, and positive facial expressions of the leader to impress and attract voters. The images' significance comes from the context and interpretations of a powerful commentator, and the visible evidence offered of a situation authenticates the carrier of the meaning and the commentary (Collins, 1983, p. 215).

The star's and the superstar's cinema image is one of the many ways in which the Tamil Nadu cinema industry attempts to assert its industrial status (Srinivas, 2003, p. 51). Politics and cinema have been inseparable in Tamil Nadu ever since star-politicians Annadurai, Karunanidhi, and M. G. Ramachandran (popularly known as MGR) realized the power of this cinema language in the 1970s and decided to exploit it to the full for their political careers. The biggest crossover success was of course MGR. His carefully cultivated do-gooder image in cinema made him the darling of the masses and helped transform him into an unbeatable politician. In the history of Tamil Nadu's election to the State Assembly only MGR managed to

contest an election while undergoing treatment as a bed-ridden paralyzed patient at a hospital in the USA and won by a margin of 32,484 votes (Pendakur, 2003, pp. 99-100).

The Tamil political field has seen the entry of more and more movie stars stepping into Tamil politics. The present Chief Minister and DMK leader, M. Karunanidhi, is not a movie star, but a famous script writer for Tamil films. The biggest movie star to take Tamil Nadu politics by storm, the legendary M.G. Ramachandran (MGR), broke away from the DMK after accusing Karunanidhi of corruption and formed the AIADMK. MGR was one of the leading stars of Tamil cinema for almost 30 years, and ruled Tamil Nadu for 10 long years until his death in December, 1987. After MGR's demise, the leadership of the party was taken over by MGR's leading lady on screen and actor-turned-politician, J. Jayalalitha (Pendakur, 2003, pp. 100-101).

In 2006, another actor, Vijaykanth, set up his own party, the DMDK, and won an assembly seat for himself. Among the parties on the Left, the actor Karthik heads the All India Forward Block. The actor Sarath Kumar set up his party in August, 2007 and has had his first major state level conference with all glamour promising 33% reservation for women. The Viduthal Chiruthaigal Katchi leader, Thol. Thirumavalavan, is surely on the way to becoming a full time actor; he is only the latest example of the one-to-one relation between cinema and political career.

8. Cinema and identity

According to the economist Amartya Sen the theory of identity should be informed and enriched by two important traits. The first one is the idea that explains the basic questions with multiple answers, which give an idea about a person from the point of view of plural and multilayered identity encompassing nation, religion, gender, labor, interest, ideology, and so on. At the same time none of them can be taken to be the person's only identity. The second trait that Sen emphasizes is the need for choice by prioritizing the relevance of these various identities (Alexander & Sankar, 2007, p. 82). In this view, political structure holds primary importance to study the ideology and identity of individuals. Since Tamil Nadu is ruled by politicians whose background is cinema, it is important to study

the political structure so as to understand cinema and the society's dominant identities. With this idea Tamil cinema can be understood in a better and holistic way. It has a multilayered identity that encompasses the entire cultural, political, social, and religious set of institutions. It also has its hegemonic identity, which still rules the industry (Prasad, 1998, p. 13).

A. Cultural identities

The core of the Tamil society is the family. The family plays a significant role in the transmission of traditions. Families in turn join to form clans, castes, and communities. Cultural traits had been handed over across generations through the channel of family using dance, music, drama, other performing arts like street

play or *koothu*, and folk arts, which were mostly oral, as channels to communicate the cultural traits to the society. Communication served the ancient society in India in more than one way. It offered a job for every one according to one's caste identity in the process of production. The Indian communication philosophy is very simple as seen in the *Natyashastra*. It is to bring commonness between the sender and the receiver. The communicator sends a message with gestures, symbols, speech, and visuals as tools to simplify the message and to arouse response. It was a challenge for the artists at that time. The audience received the message actively with acceptance and pleasure. This process of producing new methods and tools in communication continues today (Reddy, 1989, pp. 398-399).

The cultural context in India-Tamil Nadu is marked by unequal relations that are rooted in centuries-old religious scriptures, customs, and social norms. This unequal treatment can be seen as various forms of discrimination based on caste and gender, including domestic violence against women. Women play a minimal role in the family which is the basic societal unit with prescribed traditional roles for every one (Panchanadeswaran & Koverola, 2005, p. 740).

Tamil films are made to focus on day-to-day life. They all illustrate the relationship between God and humans, between woman and man, and among family members—all of which is rooted in the identities. Tamil cinema frequently revolves around these stories as a solution for a problem, as an anxiety about a social situation. It may not be a realistic solution for the social problems, but it appears to be (Dickey, 1993, p. 89).

B. Religious identity

Of all the social institutions in society, religion is the most sensitive and fundamental. It has influenced every individual and found a very prominent and dominant place in society. Religion and arts are inseparable, and they influence each other. Religion controls the media and technology while media play the propaganda agent to religious values in every type of publication, including cinema, books, videotapes, general magazines and newspapers, and scholarly journals. The father of Indian cinema, Dada Saheb Phalke, rightly recognized the commercial viability of translating myths into cinema. The cinema as a new technology adopted religious themes to ensure mass appeal (Rao, 1989, p. 446).

In the beginning mythological themes dominated Tamil film. Mythology is not a fairy tale but a process

of humanizing the unknown, to make it known. It is a passage from the known (human) to the unknown (divine), and myth is used as a stable point of transition. Myth is used as a symbolic language in order to reach the divine. So this symbol is the meeting point of the human and the divine as well as a vehicle for the personification of abstract values in human form (Rao, 1989, pp. 446-447). In fact, the Tamil cinema industry survives largely by *Puranic* and social stories.

In Tamil cinema *Puranic* stories dealing with gods and goddesses, heaven and hell, and films dealing with historical persons like Veerapandia Kattabomman and Kappalotia Thamizan are the pictures that have gone beyond time and space (Ramasamy, 1994, p. 296). People have recognized the same idea in that the film *Veerapandia Kattabomman* has served as a "text-book of history" contributing immensely towards consolidating Kattabommans's image in Tamil Nadu as India's first martyr (David, 1983, p. 63).

Cinema as a fast growing technology has brought some of the emotional qualities so close to the audience through actors that people have learned them without questioning. The culture of learning through audio-visual images is an ancient one among Tamils. They learn more by watching and imitating. This "gazing culture" has given cinema a prominent place in society till today (Sivakumar, 2003, p. 32). Cinema as a new technology is enabled to substitute all the passion for visuals to become a mobile gaze with immense power to satisfy the gaze culture (Freitag, 2001, p. 62).

In colonial times, the British government's aim was to promote the commercial interests of British film companies. The sensual attraction of foreign films, their superior quality with stunts and special effects, supported by the government, caused a set back in the local film industry. And so the producers decided that one sure way to attract the local audience was to offer films depicting local episodes, especially the well known stories from *Puranas* (Baskaran, 1996, pp. 6-7). The pantheon of innumerable gods and goddesses with their supernatural powers and remarkable resemblance in form and behavior to earthly human beings and with the rich and appealing variety of their sacred exploits presented the Tamil cinema with a dramaturgy that could exploit the technology of cinema to its fullest (Rao, 1989, p. 447).

This phenomenon of the content and style of foreign cinema influenced other parts of the country too. Local cultural factors like language worked as a shield and protective barrier to enable the local cinema to

compete with the imported films (Pendakur, 2003, p. 25). Many social drama stories have been made into films in Tamil Nadu. Imitating the English stories and naming them with English titles were common in the film industry at that time (Narayanan, 1981, p. 81). So much so that it was an accepted code that if the actors appeared dressed in shirts and pants, those films were known as social. If they appeared in “divine” costumes, those were known as Puranic stories, and if they appeared in royal costumes, those were known as historical films. Actually the appeal of the visual image (costume) was so strong that the audience considered the nature of story as secondary (p. 70).

Since the stories were more familiar to the audience, the producers did not care much about indigenous cinematic vocabulary; that crippled the quality and the development of local cinema. The producers never bothered to learn the cinematic language but instead were content with the same old stories and methodologies of stage visuals (Baskaran, 1996, p. 9).

C. National identity

In pre-independence days, especially during the freedom movement, the purpose, priority, and the major content of the Indian cinema was the “national culture.” It was the time when both bureaucrats and politicians, whether connected with cinema or not, repeatedly referred to the “national culture” (Ramasamy, 1997, p. 109). At the initial stage of sound cinema, most films made a special reference to the “national freedom,” reflected in the titles, songs, and other dialogues (Narayanan, 1981, p. 47). Baskaran narrates that particularly in the 1930s and 1940s this spirit of Indian nationalism found expression in cinema with nationalistic songs and direct protest against the British rule, especially with the demonstration of the Non-cooperation movement. Gandhian social reform themes, including the prohibition of alcohol and the uplift of women and Dalits, were also the themes of the day in the cinema (Dickey, 1993, p. 53).

Tamil nationalism, formerly known as the Dravidian Movement, can be traced in its political identities, right from the beginning of the 20th century. It included all the four major Southern Indian languages. This identity of the Dravidian nationalism was made of many like-minded organizations and movements against Brahmins who formed a distinct racial and cultural identity of North India. According to this view of Tamil national identity, the Brahmin immigrants from the North had imposed the Sanskrit lan-

guage, religion, and heritage on the South. This “self-respect movement,” started by veteran social reformist E. V. R. Periyar, demanded the dismantling of Brahmin hegemony, the abolition of Sanskrit, the revitalization of a pure Tamil language, a social reformation through the abolition of the caste system, religious practices, and recasting women’s position in society. Gaining a political vigor, the movement focused on Tamil identity and the uplift of the poor. It even went to the extent of demanding autonomy and independence from India in order to maintain the integrity of Tamil consciousness, though the idea was given up later in favor of state autonomy within India (Moorti, 2004, pp. 552-553; Dhara, 2006, p. 390).

The local and historical condition of Tamil politics within India and a century-long quest for a separate Dravidian nation find easy expression in the Tamil cinema industry. These expressions of vernacular identity are quite explicit in Tamil cinema and in modern Tamil channels which assert Tamil ethnic identity even today (Moorti, 2004, p. 552).

Tamil political life and culture are significantly marked by the ideology and practice of the political party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). The DMK’s unchallenged grip over the audience is thanks to its rhetoric on “Tamilness,” which was constructed in part by notions of *maanam* (honor) and valor. The concept of female chastity symbolised by the virtuous and valorous Kannagi, the heroine of *Chialppathikaaram*, one of the famous Tamil epics, was articulated within the confines of these political ambitions and reinforced by popular cinema culture (Dhara, 2006, p. 393).

C. N. Annadurai’s appearance in the film industry changed the history of Tamil filmdom as it had earlier altered the course of Tamil theater and radical reform. It was the time when Dravidian movement was very strong in Tamil Nadu and every play was set with a reformist agenda of the Dravidian movement. His first film-play *Velaikkari* (maid servant) made a mark in society as a film with a strong social theme and message. He also became the founder of the DMK—the Dravidian political party. Tamil culture was fundamental for its politics and rationality was its philosophy. The party fought against the Brahmins and their religious superstitions. In order to free the Tamils from the clutches of the religious and caste hegemony of the Brahmins, the DMK was founded. It brought back the great Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar and his Tamil values to the people through popular cinema. It was a war

against the Aryan ideals. Thus, this political structure was founded firmly on Tamil cultural values (Sivathamby, 1983, p. 40).

The next mile stone in the history of the Tamil cinema is Kalaiginar M. Karunanidhi. His famous 1952 film *Parasakthi* was written by him keeping in mind the early DMK's demand for a sovereign *Dravidanadu* or Tamil homeland. However once the party tasted power and entered into electoral politics, it began to compromise on all these issues. The brave Tamil nationalistic slogans were replaced with "one caste and one god" (Rajadurai & Geetha, 1996, p. 560). It celebrated the greatness of Tamils and Tamil nation. This was an eye opener to bring the audience to the immediate realities of despair. This film touched the very core of the social problems and narrated the religious superstitions. It had its strong impact on the middle class people for its Tamil sentiments and ideals. Following these success stories the Tamil cinema industry produced a series of films on social themes, stories on Tamil ideologies like valor, love, chastity of women, and love for the Tamil language. It created a major revolution among the people and was considered as a threat to the high caste people (Baskaran, 1996, pp. 32-33).

The ethos of popular cinema has had a close relationship with Tamil political culture. The DMK used cinema as a tool for the propagation of its ideology. Many leaders of the DMK movement were also involved in Tamil cinema in their own capacity. M. G. Ramachandran (MGR) is still the most prominent even now, 20 years after his death (Dhara, 2006, p. 395). His popularity rested on his screen roles as subaltern hero combating everyday oppression.

9. Conclusion

This overview began with the observation that Tamil cinema as an industry needs to be studied in the light of Tamil culture. The Tamil cinema industry has several sectors or segments; here, this study of the industry focused on its production, distribution, consumption, and impact on identity. The Tamil cinema favored mostly the social themes that were rooted in the Tamil language and culture. In its approach to entertainment Tamil cinema offers a visual narration in the form of popular culture intertwined directly with the lives of the people so as to enable them to consume various information, belief systems, and cultural commodities and thus fulfill social and cultural needs.

In these oppressed roles MGR assumes all the privileges of his social superiors, the right to dispense justice, access to literacy especially for women, and the right to adopt the language and posture of authority. In his movies MGR would portray himself as a swash-buckling hero, a screen image that is located in the public domain or non-domestic space, historically and culturally constituted as men's exclusive preserve. Given this background we can understand the MGR phenomenon which would attract more male than female audiences, even though a major constituency from which MGR derived support was that of women (Pandian, 1996, p. 535).

D. Cultural narrative in Tamil cinema

Tamil cinema enabled a wider dissemination of Tamil culture and ideology. The cultural practices are still fused with cinema, for instance, the exuberant use of Tamil language. Tamil cinema helped to articulate the political and cultural ideology through various signs and symbols, such as *Thali* (the most valued and auspicious ornament worn by married women symbolising the marital bond). As cultural narratives Tamil films reflect the sentiments and aspirations of the Tamil people. The cinema industry takes special care to construct the social, cultural, and political values of society; as evidence we can refer to the blockbuster and super hit films produced in the period from 2000 to 2007. Table 1 (page 24) lists Tamil values in these films; it is organized according to social values. These are identified as being very popular and held in high esteem among Tamils today.

Tamil culture along with the technology of cinema became popular among Tamils and brought social changes; it also reinforced social and religious sentiments, challenged the traditions and customs and also became a powerful tool in the hands of politicians. The review also described and clarified how Tamil cinema became the cultural expression of Tamil audiences and how the same is being continued today with reference to some of the recent popular cinema through which capitalistic forces construct the cultural commodities. People's psyche and world view are shaped by both cinema content and technology.

Dominant Cultural Traits	Cultural Interpretation	Expressions	Film examples from 2000 - 2007 by name of film
Language	Title and name construct the entire life of Tamils and Tamil identity	Summarizes case, class, region, gender, character, values, politics, economy, language, and religion	<i>Vazhthugal</i> <i>Tirunelveli Sivagasi</i> , <i>Tiruppachi</i> , <i>Kartratu Tamil</i>
Hero and Valor identity	Should take care of the society, should be able to solve the problem even to death, and sacrifice	Physically strong, morally upright, mentally sound, legitimizing violence	<i>Virumandi</i> <i>Sandaikozhi</i> <i>Paruthiveeran</i> , <i>Pokiri</i>
Caste identity	Should feel a strong sense of attachment to the caste one belongs	Names, character, stories, violation is condemned even to death	<i>Oruthi</i> <i>Bharathi</i> <i>periyar</i>
Family	Sacred social institution	Loyalty to death, sacrificing love, generosity, harmony, and happiness in joint family, good reputation	<i>Thavamai</i> <i>Thavamirundu Veyyil</i>
Woman	<i>Thali</i> , chastity or <i>Karppu</i> , virginity, <i>Sarri</i> , <i>kunkumam</i> , ideal woman	Loyalty to her husband, purity with divine power, sacrificing even to the point of death	<i>VasoolRaja</i> , <i>Pallikoodam</i>
Romance or <i>kaadal</i>	Sacred, sacrificing, and risking even to the point of death	Popular style, sentiment of success, not encouraged outside the caste, clan, religion, and other social division, emotions are restrained in public	<i>Boys Azhaghiyetheeye</i> <i>KaadhalKirukkan</i> <i>Chelleme</i> <i>KaadhalKoattai</i>
Ancestor worship, Mother worship, Hero worship	Ancestor worship is to be revered and respected, honor and worship. (<i>Kulatheivam</i>).	Ancestors like mother, son, sacrificing their life for the sake of the family and society become their family deities.	<i>Karuppusamy kutha-gaitharar</i>
<i>Amman</i> worship	Purity, sacrifice, loyalty of women and their divine qualities are worshiped	Woman are considered to be the cultural carriers of the society and Tamil society is a maternal society giving saintly woman the place of honor and worship	<i>Karuppusamy kuth-gaithatar Veerappu</i>
Filial piety	Obedience, love, and respect to the parents	Children (sons) should obey their parents during their life time, take care of them and after their death the eldest son perform ritual sacrifices at their grave.	<i>Emmagan</i> , <i>Adaikalam</i>
Gender roles	Gender roles and sexual mores in Tamil society have been specifically constructed to represent cultural carriers	Father is to be demanding, mother is to be understanding, male is to be sacrificing and heir of the family, female cultural honor	<i>Verapu</i> <i>Veyyil</i>
Universality	Brotherhood and cultural negotiations	Able to treat others with respect and love	<i>Autograph</i>

Table 1. Tamil values in films

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Book Reviews

Bignell, Jonathan and Andreas Fickers. (Eds.). *A European Television History*. Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2008. Pp. x, 273. ISBN 978-1-4051-6340-8 (pb.) \$44.95.

The problem for European television history, as Bignell and Fickers admit on page 1, lies in Europe—not so much the place as the idea. One can readily imagine the history of television in Great Britain or Germany or Greece or any of the other countries of Europe, but can one really speak of a European television history as something that crosses international boundaries? The problem describes the problem of Europe, the Europe of the European community. How do scholars (politicians, economists, soldiers, and so on) find common ground in an area long defined geographically and more or less as separate countries? Their solution lies in a “cultural identity” of Europe and one in which television has long played a role (p. 2). The book, then, becomes a discursive exercise—a way to talking/writing about Europe and European television that more or less creates a commonality in the discourse. The approach works, as long as one can tolerate rough edges and approximations.

Bignell and Fickers use Chapter 1 to make the case for their approach and to set it in contexts of (a) historiographies of European television and (b) methodologies for comparative and interdisciplinary histories of television. The plan of the book presents thematic chapters, “each focusing on a specific set of historiographical problems and brief case studies that explore these problems in specific contexts” (p. 12). The conceptual problems range widely across mass communication and cultural studies:

- private versus public television spheres
- national versus transnational, regional versus global television spaces
- public service versus commercial television institutions
- active versus passive television audiences
- transmission versus reception television technologies
- television discourses
- high versus low television norms
- ordinary versus special event television rituals
- democratic versus totalitarian television politics
- old versus new television
- “us” versus “them” television ontologies (pp. 12-48)

As editors, they assembled teams of scholars from across Europe and asked each of them to develop their themes, with case studies from at least three countries. With that approach the reader more easily sees the similarities and contrasts of European television.

Chapter 2 provides the wider context by describing how various European (and North American) individuals and groups “imagined and realized” television. The idea of television begins well before 1880 with experiments in data transmission; in the 1880s, Paul Nipkow had proposed an electro mechanical-device for image dissection. (Knut Hickethier, the chapter’s author, points out that much of Nipkow’s later fame as “the father of television” emerges from Nazi propaganda; Nipkow himself never followed up on his ideas and never renewed his patent application.) As many well know, television continued to develop in the first half of the 20th century with collaborative and competitive work across many borders. Similar to the various technical inventions, Hickethier traces the inventions of program formats, services, and styles. Here one begins to see some cross-border influence, whether in the adaptation of ideas or the rejection of them on cultural, ideological, or nationalistic grounds.

Chapter 3 carries the history forward by exploring different models of institutionalizing television. Using case studies from France, Greece, and Romania, the authors (Adamou, Gaillard, & Mustata) offer a snapshot of what occurred. The chapter examines “the creation of television institutions and markets with an emphasis on the visions and conceptions of television as a medium, and [focuses] on countries where political control over the development, identity, or mission of television institutions was exercised for long periods of time” (p. 98). The chapter illustrates both the strengths and the weaknesses of the book: a good overview of a complex reality but one the authors cannot develop in detail in the space of a single chapter.

The next chapter explores programming—content, genre, and format—with particular emphasis on the drama in the UK, France, and Flanders; on crime shows in Germany, Switzerland, and a number of other countries; and on documentaries in France, Spain, and Italy. The topic itself places a challenge squarely before the researcher: few programs are accessible to the historian because few broadcast institutions had the means or the desire to preserve them. One must often depend on secondary sources (newspaper accounts, scripts, critics, etc.). Perhaps not surprisingly, one finds a good

deal of cross-border influence in program ideas, genres, and formats.

Chapter 5, examining television as a national or global medium, probes news (national, international, local) as well as national narratives (historical drama) in Finland, Flemish Belgium, and Holland. Language becomes an issue as well, as case studies of Andalusia and Wales show. This chapter shows the limits of an idea of “European” television—for all these things remain quite localized. At the same time, almost every European country faces a similar problem of local versus national versus international.

American television provides a kind of “elephant in the room” perspective for Chapter 6. It functions as competition, threat, ideal, agenda-setter, and creative engine. Case studies of global successes like *Roots* (1977), *Holocaust* (1978), and *Dallas* (1978) highlight one dimension while British exports to America highlight the opposite. The French with their “cultural exception” provide yet another model while corporate pressures (Disney, Children’s Television Workshop) illustrate two others. Add Eastern Europe before the 1990s (East Germany, Poland, Romania) and one finds still other sides to the relationship with American television.

But what about European attempts to bridge the gaps? Chapter 7 reminds us of the “made-for-tv” kinds of things like the Eurovision Song Contest, the World Soccer Cup, and blockbuster series (*Holocaust*). It then contrasts them with less artificial television events, usually drawn from the news (the wars occasioned by the break-up of Yugoslavia, the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, etc.). Offering a perspective of these pseudo- and spontaneous events from Finland, Austria, West Germany, Romania, and the UK, the chapter develops the idea of “television events in Europe.”

Television, of course, would not be television without its audiences, a huge area of study in themselves. Chapter 8 contrasts different approaches to the European audiences. One case study begins apart from television, with Swedish “Housewife’s Films,” films shown in theaters and targeted at housewives. “They were especially composed and carefully constructed programs of about 60–90 minutes long, and were made up of 7–10 information and advertising films, each 5–15 minutes long.” Each had a celebrity host; the programs “toured around Sweden between 1954 and 1972 and were shown at cinemas, for free, during the afternoon” (p. 219). Because Swedish television did not allow advertising in this period, the Housewife’s Films

created the audience for advertising in another way. Different aspects of audiences emerge with case studies in Milan (transforming the living room and family routines) and Spain (immigration and emigration and transborder audiences).

At the end of it all, Fickers and Bignell try to pull the pieces together, returning to each theme to draw lessons from both the content and the methodology. While they wish to stimulate discussion and to help create a European media history, they also recognize certain limitations. Many of the cases brought forward show the problem of Europe. They show

the fragility or even impossibility of Europe as an essentialist concept. From a political perspective, the history of European integration—which more or less coincides with the life span of television in Europe—can most accurately be described as an ongoing project. . . . Just like the gradual expansion of Europe as a political union of now 27 sovereign nation-states, television has expanded from local, regional, and finally national coverage to a transnational and global media space. (p. 250)

Hidden away in much of this lies another commonality: the financial and economic imperatives that drive television, both nationally and globally.

The book concludes with a brief, but valuable chapter in which O'Dwyer describes archives and sources for audiovisual material for the study of television in Europe.

For someone reading it from the perspective of U.S. communication studies, the book remained both consistently interesting and a bit puzzling in the weight given to some of the case studies. Did some of these things really matter all that much? Why would people make such a fuss about television? Here the book actually works quite well to expose the hegemony of U.S.-based thinking. The value of the book for a European scholar will lie in the materials and the methods; for a U.S. scholar, in the materials, the methods, and the reminder that there is more to television than the typical models teach. The approaches of this book—or at least the experience of it—should become part of the preparation of anyone teaching about television.

Each chapter has its own reference list; the book has a common index.

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Fazio, Antonio. *Globalizzazione: Politica economica e dottrina sociale*. [*Globalization: Political Economy and Social Doctrine*]. Preface by S. E. Mons. Giuseppe Molinari. In the Collana fedelmente, collection directed by Luigi Maria Epicoco. Assisi (PG), Italy: Tau Editrice, 2008. pp. 96. ISBN: 978-88-6244-033-2 (pb). €12.

Antonio Fazio, who studied in Italy and at MIT, was Governor of the Bank of Italy from 1993 to 2005 and has previously published work on the economy and on matters relating to money. In this book, he suggests that one of the phenomena most relevant to the economy, society, and politics is globalization. Innovative impetus for finance, communication, and capitalism are transforming society and the economies of both the developed and emerging economies.

For Fazio, man's nature in relationships with others, whether the family, society, State, or the rest of the world, could use reason in a search for the common good and for ethical principles that can regulate society itself at every level. Here, he uses his professional experience to consider the principles and history that are shared by theology and the economy. His first chapter considers John Paul II and social doctrine. He then goes further back and looks at the Roman Catholic Church's development of teaching in relation to medieval and late-medieval economic and social civil and social community, which he says (p. 5) had developed from the first centuries of Christianity. Later chapters consider his topic in relation to the discovery of America, through slavery and colonization and the industrial revolution. In the last, he notes that, with the industrial revolution, the workers lost control of the ownership of their own work and thus their satisfaction in it, perhaps returning to notions put forward by William Morris and his colleagues in the late 19th and early 20th century in the UK. It was also during the era of the industrial revolution that emigration began in earnest and many, including those he mentions who falsified their age to leave their home countries as minors (p. 29), attempted to make a better life in new places. While a great deal of attention has been paid to Marx' writing, in particular *Das Kapital* (first published in England in 1876), it is interesting to see an economist pay attention to the Church's social doctrine, although the recent Encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, may concentrate at least some of the academic community on new work in this area.

Further chapters consider Paul VI's teaching, the free market, and changing demographics in the world.

Fazio concludes that today, with the problem of a unified economy throughout the world, with exchanges of goods and services, migration, ever more intense cultural exchange, with the opportunities offered by improved communications and the ever present push for business to seek both profit and power (represented by globalization), there is a greater need for analysis leading to an understanding of the dynamics and the ways they might have at their center the good of humanity and the development of peaceful relationships between people and States. He notes that there has been a return to 19th century philosophies of *laissez-faire*, but suggests that we should learn from Maynard Keynes, who is quoted on p. 80, as saying, "It is not a correct deduction from the Principles of Economics that enlightened self-interest always operates in the public interest. Nor is it true that self-interest generally is enlightened." Later in the quotation Keynes adds, "The next step forward must come, not from political agitation or premature experiment, but from thought."

Fazio notes that the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* had as one of its central points a note that the dignity of man would only be reached in its fullness when man could fully understand himself (herself) in the light of the mystery of the Son of God made man (p. 81).

The author asks that we read the news of our time, draw on the positive benefits of progress for the human community, and isolate these benefits from the excesses and negativity that are connected with them in such a way that we can dominate them intellectually in order to put them at the service of the common good.

All of this is good news and it would be wonderful if Fazio's notions could be brought to fruition. Unfortunately, I have found that encyclicals are read by very few of the Church's faithful and even fewer of those outside the Church. Perhaps if they were written in more accessible language this might help. The book is footnoted, but there is no bibliography.

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Hassan, Robert, *The Information Society: Cyber Dreams and Digital Nightmares*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008. Pp. 266. ISBN 978-0-7456-4179-9 (hbk.) \$69.95; ISBN 978-0-7456-4180-5 (pb.) \$24.95.

Robert Hassan, almost like a detective, here tracks down the narratives of speed and acceleration in our digital age—how speed is built into the logic of computers, killing our leisure, preventing our ability to be thoughtful about our daily duties and our societal challenges. He would not get any argument on this from most people reading these lines, or from the person writing them. However, the author admits there is "good speed" and "bad speed."

Hassan has studied the concept of speed in the Information Society in previous publications and his list of references notes that he has a volume entitled *Empires of Speed* forthcoming from University of Illinois Press.

This book's framework of analysis places speed in a wider context. Through the lens of political economy, Hassan speaks of "three interdependent processes that have influenced and shaped our contemporary world in a most profound way." The first is neoliberal globalization, citing Klein and Anderson: ". . . an economic system [that] has no 'serious challengers' with a logic that has become the 'basic grammar' that informs our understanding of how the world operates." Second, flowing from neoliberal globalization, is the information technology revolution, supercharged by basic research into computers that could serve the globalized economic system. Hassan claims, "The third results from the effects of the first two. Principally this has been the 'speeding-up' of time and the 'shrinking' of space."

I will insert here some of the strengths of this book. Although the work contains a harsh evaluation of what Susan Strange has called "casino capitalism," Hassan has listened to many different voices along a wide spectrum of analysis of our current digital dilemma. They are all here in the book: Anthony Giddens, Al Gore, Esther Dyson, Nicholas Negroponte, Dan Schiller, Jacques Ellul, Vincent Mosco, and many more. And to his credit, the author cites respectfully and extensively the extraordinary scholarship of Manuel Castells, perhaps the most masterful and thorough analyst of the Information Society in his trilogy on the subject. I have found the Castells' work invaluable in my own current research on the impact of our digital culture on churches, politics, education, and the economy.

In several places in the book Hassan cites the need for more research—on the theory of the damage that speed and multi-tasking does to our problem-solving, for example. In addition, he carefully provides coverage of both digital cheerleaders and doomsayers. He urges the need for both theory and empirical data in

studying digital culture. And this book is a very valuable contribution to both these streams.

In addition, his language, his prose, is rich and a pleasure to read.

There are several other themes here, in addition to speed. His chapter on “Commodification and Culture” is a rich summary of how our “casino capitalism” has turned everything from sports fervor to university education into *products*. He mentions that by providing their courses online, Yale and MIT have enriched their *brand* globally. And he relates his own personal sadness when some of his favorite teams in the UK turned to putting the names of sponsors on their players’ shirts.

Another topic explored thoughtfully is the issue of power, especially in his final chapter, entitled “Who Rules?: Politics and Control in the Information Society.” Hassan notes “the private sector now makes up a growing element of the state’s capacity to project power.” He adds, “Power is still tied to knowledge, as Foucault suggested, but ‘power geometry’ is linked to the commodity and to the market.” He writes of “Google power” and the unprecedented power of corporate capitalism in the age of information. “This has meant that political as well as economic power has accreted to capital in ways that are unprecedented.”

The author’s discussion of politics has been somewhat bypassed by the election of U.S. President Obama, with his digital machine, and by the cell phone photos and the Twittering of Iran’s post-election anger. However, Hassan is a thoughtful analyst of the digital challenges we face as theorists and as individuals just trying to get things done every day.

The book has an excellent glossary (much of it attributed to Wikipedia), 16 pages of references for further reading, and a valuable index.

Hassan is a Senior Researcher at the University of Melbourne. I, for one, will continue to track his writings in order to understand the deeper meanings and challenges of our digital culture. As Castells notes, “Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture” (1996, p. 46).

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Humphries, Reynold. *Hollywood’s Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. Pp. 192. ISBN 978-0-7486-2455-3 (hbk.) £50.

A new generation was possibly introduced to this dark era of American history by the film, *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005), directed and written by George Clooney, who also appeared in the film. This slim volume looks at the political and cultural background to the work of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and at some of its results. The author has obtained source material from the archives of the American Film Institute, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Margaret Herrick Library, the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, the University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. In addition he has considered previous literature on this murky area.

The book is divided into three sections: a background introduction; the “Drawing Up of the Battle Lines” (which considers Hollywood and the union question, the war years, and strikes in Hollywood); and “From Hot War to Cold War.” This last section details the 1947 hearings of HUAC, those that followed in the 1951–1953, the anti-Communist crusade on the screen, and the personal results for many of those who were questioned, some of whom stayed in the USA, but had little or no official work; some of whom moved to other countries, notably the UK—with a consequent benefit to its film industry—and not a few who were so downcast that they committed suicide as a result of what they had suffered. My immediate reaction to the book was: “And they call this the Land of the Free?”

Were they to have cast a film at the time, the cast would have cost millions, since so many “Hollywood Royalty” were involved: some fighting against the HUAC—like Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart, who are shown on the dust jacket; and some who went with the Committee against their fellow actors, writers, and even technicians. Page 2 notes that anti-Communism had been an all-consuming occupation of J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI from 1924 to 1972, and that had World War II not diverted the nation from Communism, McCarthyism might have happened

10 years earlier. For me, it was particularly interesting to note that, in a supposedly classless society, Denning (1998, cited p. 3) suggests that there was an increasing sense of class consciousness in the USA following the Crash of 1929, and that this had united the working class with artists and intellectuals (although this is somewhat overstating the case, I am sure). This led, Denning suggests, to reorganized patterns of loyalty and allegiance, which forged an “alliance of social groups and class fractions; by offering a new culture . . . it creates the conditions for a political use or reading of cultural performances and artefacts, the conditions for symbolizing class conflict” (Denning, 1998, p. 63, cited on p. 3). The heat generated by the hearings is perhaps summed up by the comment of the Republican, Kid Clardy, who commented on hearing that a number of Communist unionists had been beaten up by the workers they represented, “This is the best kind of reaction there could have been to our hearings” (Caute, 1978, p. 364, cited p. 3). What kind of mentality can justify physical violence against somebody because of their political views?

There is also a viewpoint, demonstrated here, that putting forward the constitutional rights of Negroes was Communist propaganda, and what amazed me as I read the book was the amount of pro-Nazi feeling that was presented, some of it from within the movie industry itself—an industry that was, and still is, often seen as being an industry in which many Jews worked. The anti-Communists were also often anti-Semitic, and many of them were practicing Christians, like the evangelist Gerald K. Smith or Fr. Coughlin (who was silenced by the Catholic Church because of his views), or the Representative for Mississippi and HUAC member, John Rankin, who publicly gave out what would now be called hate speech against Walter Winchell. So there was a strong stream of anti-Semitic, anti black, and anti-Communist feeling that underlay the views of those who put the HUAC together. It is not therefore surprising that William Randolph Hearst could tell Louis B. Mayer that Hitler’s intentions were pure, or that Irving Thalberg, returning from Germany in 1934, could, while saying, “Hitler and Hitlerism will pass; the Jews will still be there,” also add that: “a lot of Jews will lose their lives” (p. 15). Strangely, after Hitler annexed Austria in 1938, Fox, Paramount, and MGM, which were all owned by Jews, kept their offices in Austria, but sacked all Jews to appease Hitler. Mussolini’s son reportedly said that Hollywood was a “Hebrew Communist Center” (p. 15-16).

To their credit, there were some who were anti-Communist, but also anti-Nazi, like Melvyn Douglas, who visited Europe in 1936, and was horrified that so few people seemed aware of the Nazi threat. (p. 17). Some of those later brought before HUAC had felt it their duty to go to fight in Spain against Franco and they had joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Were it not so horrifying, it might be laughable that immigration officials were able to have the following conversation when some aliens applied for US citizenship after the war:

Examiner: 18 of them formerly belonged to the Hitler Youth and similar organizations [N.B. this was obligatory to German youth, just as the Balilla was to Italian youth]

Judge: Yes, but they have been thoroughly investigated. None has ever been a Communist or a member of a Communist front organization, only Nazi and Fascist. (Belfrage, 1989, p. 153, cited p. 19)

In 1941, Senator Taft (quoted on p. 21) noted that a “victory for Communism in the world would be far more dangerous to the United States than the victory of Fascism.” Humphries notes that the policy of Britain and America during this time must have added to Stalin’s paranoia and thus affected Soviet policy, which was not demonstrated in contemporary writing and other media, but also notes that the USA kept Nazis in power in post-war Germany, “as they were useful in the Cold War and that both US and German business had always had a soft spot for Nazis” (p. 23).

Later, Humphries comments that there were many occasions where anti-Communist or pro-Fascist views were put into films and the MPA (Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals) was formed in early 1944. While the MPA presented itself as being against all totalitarian regimes, its publicity said that “we resent the growing impression that this industry is made up of, and dominated by Communists, radicals, and crack-pots” (p. 63). One Senator, Robert Rice Humphries, went so far as to tell the Senate that Mussolini and Hitler were doing their best for their people and so “why should we not play ball with them?”

In a post-war era when up to a quarter of war workers had lost their jobs (p. 65), when there were two million unemployed in the USA and income had fallen, and when ten million service men and women would be returning to the workforce, workers became (justifiably, one might think) concerned about their employment, and back-lot workers in the movie industry began to strike (the first strike happening in March,

1945, when the USA was still at war). To break the strikes, studios bought in hired “goons” and even hired local police—and admitted to this. The stance of these workers was backed by some big names, Frank Sinatra, Katharine Hepburn, Orson Welles and Artie Shaw—more bizarrely, perhaps, also by Albert Einstein, who joined HICCASP (Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of Arts, Sciences and Professions). Another member was Ronald Reagan, although Shaw clashed with him over Reagan’s anti-Communist stand. One result was that Shaw was brought up before the HUAC and withdrew from public life and music.

Reading the sections of transcripts which Humphries reprints here is not pleasant and one wonders that not more damage was done to those who suffered under the HUAC hearings. Many suffered ill health as a result, like J. Edward Bromberg, who moved to London and died of a heart attack, aged 47. Others, like Philip Loeb, John Garfield, and Mady Christians, died at an early age shortly after the hearings, Loeb having committed suicide. Some, as I mentioned, moved to the UK (Joseph Manckiewicz, for instance) where they built careers; some continued to write under assumed names, either in America or the UK. Robert Rossen, who had been an “unfriendly witness,” went to Mexico, and on returning to the USA, his passport was withdrawn so he could not travel. After several years with no work, he gave in and “named names.” Some who remained had to choose between exile and self-degradation (p. 149) and while a very few managed to reignite their careers at a later date, like Zero Mostel. These were very few in number.

In his concluding chapter, Humphries draws the reader’s attention to a Wilder film, *Avanti* (1972) in which both class and American political attitudes are highlighted. He notes that this was made just before the Watergate scandal broke and Nixon forced to resign in 1974.

Nixon’s subversive activities were not merely the excesses of an out-of-control politician. They had been nurtured in a system that, from the 1940s on, had justified the illegitimate use of state power against the supposed enemies of the state. Nixon simply identified himself with the state and carried on business as usual. Watergate was, thus, the logical result of the tendency to insulate affairs of state from the Constitution. During the McCarthy era, that tendency nullified the First Amendment; during Watergate it overrode much of the rest of the Constitution. (Schrecker, 1998, p. 414, cited on p. 160)

As Humphries points out, McCarthy, who died in 1957, had become a sort of smokescreen that hid the disaster that had hit America after the war from public view. Humphries sees parallels between those who believed that were you to be “tarred with the brush of Communism,” you were against the regime in the HUAC era, and the stance of the Bush government after 9/11. As he further says, “now that so few victims of the blacklist are still alive, we owe it to them and to those who have passed away never to forget the lessons learned” (p. 162).

While this book may upset the sensibilities of some people who read it, it is well worth the read. Both compellingly written and well researched, it is a book that I am glad to have on my bookshelf. Humphries is to be congratulated on his painstaking work, which shows faults on both sides of the political divide, but is so relevant to politics today—not only in the United States.

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Lee’s book was put together as a *Festschrift* for Michael Traber, a personal friend and colleague from 1985 until his death. He is sadly missed, not only by me but also by those others who knew him. Traber, in his role at the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) worked for many years with those of us who were involved with the Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture and often contributed to this journal.

In a long career, publishing his first article in 1953 and his last in 2005, he wrote on many subjects, including faith, mission, racism, literacy, the Church's political engagement, NWICO, and the press's role in the democratic process; he reflected theologically on communication, ethics, and rights (p. 15). His aim was for a world where harmony and the right to communicate were the norm. The articles collected in this book are written by academic colleagues from several countries and their foci reflect the width of vision in Traber's own work.

Philip Lee (pp. 1-7), the editor of the work, was a colleague of Traber's at WACC for many years and here he gives an overview of Mike's life and work, which is perhaps too brief. Perhaps particularly noteworthy when, as is often the case today, religions are shown to be in conflict, was Mike's work in ecumenism. Lee's second section to the introduction, discusses Mike's articles, some of which are reprinted at the end of the volume. Later in the book, Lee includes his own interesting chapter (pp. 157-173) on peace communication and war's pity and the absurdity of war. To this end he considers war literature and war films that centralize the topic, yet do not glorify it. A wide range of films is used. Erich Maria Remarque, author of the 1928 book on which *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, USA, 1930) was based, wrote a letter to Gen. Sir Ian Hamilton which I found particularly touching. Remarque's book was translated into 20 languages by May 1930, but was labeled an affront to Germans by the Nazi government, who had it banned and burnt in Berlin. As Remarque said, wars are, in the main, not occasions for filmic heroism, but those taking part often suffer boredom punctuated with terror, sometimes feeling that they are fighting for a hopeless cause. The British comedian Spike Milligan's war memoirs are telling memoirs of such war. Mike's own struggles (e.g., against apartheid) have thankfully sometimes been won.

Coming as I do from a family with parents of different nationalities, Lee's comment that different countries' perceptions of particular wars vary as they enter national histories and mythologies, chimed with me. As a child, visiting my family in Italy, I would read the history books of my mother's cousins and often had to question whether they were talking about the same wars! Lee suggests that film is a medium that can provide moral guidance and critical reasoning on life's issues, but he ends by asking whether societies can educate people to develop and nurture environments

where the ethical imperatives of coexistence and peace are recognized both implicitly and explicitly. He puts forward the viewpoint that this will only happen when international, national, and local political cultures are transformed and thus enable individuals to understand themselves to be active citizens. Lee proposes that film and other public media could start and effect this transformation, but where human needs for dignity and equality prevail over economic and military interests, such lessons have still to be learnt.

White demonstrates how small elites, who have control of the culture, politics, and power of formerly colonized countries, have developed. For other citizens in these countries there are limited opportunities. He comments on research from Tanzania that showed that of those in the National Assembly, 50% held that they had taken up politics for the large salary offered, 25% were in it for the contacts they could make, and few offered a notion of service to their country and its fellow citizens. White notes that while there are often press protests in African media against exploitation and oppression in the national arena, those who complain are frequently silenced, bought off, or "sent abroad." While there is a variety in the amount of accountability and service which such ruling elites are prepared to accept and offer, there is still often a super-rich class. Often the same parties and leaders have been in power since the countries gained independence and their claims to legitimacy are often supported by notions they put forward that they are preserving national unity. White also notes that forms of civil society that are the norm in many European countries (often those who were the former colonizers) are not always accepted in the African context.

From the colonizing countries' viewpoint, the independence of some African nations came earlier than expected, but they left legacies behind, for instance, multinational companies and educational systems. These educational systems work, White suggests, on a reward for merit system. Churches and NGOs aid grassroots organizations who assist communities by using new service forms. They often have a particular interest in educational resources and may be helped by small entrepreneurs whose profits, White offers, unlike those of the multinational companies present in individual countries, often are returned to the community, where they are used in upgrading basic infrastructure. In some of the formerly colonized countries there are now large groups of professional people who have begun to become despondent about government organ-

izations, such as schools and hospitals, where staff salaries are often low and frequently delayed. As a consequence, doctors have begun to open their own clinics and teachers to open schools. There are well-developed professional associations and some of these feel able to cast light upon the violations of human rights and other unjust practices that occur in their country. The African press is working to become accepted as a professional body and their claims are assisted by NGOs and other bodies who are putting pressure on ruling elites to develop more accountable civil societies. Such efforts often come from outside the country. Media are, for White, one of the cornerstones of the legitimization that is provided for the elite ruling classes and they also assist in the building of national identities. White suggests, however, that they should also feel able to sustain human rights, highlight bad governance, and pinpoint and publish information on bad management and corrupt practices. For some specific issues, women's organizations have been active in media relations. White writes that "civil society does not really exist in Africa in the sense that 'people' are conscious of confronting a powerful elite, but grassroots organizations, especially community radio, more successfully confront injustice" (p. 40).

He puts forward his own suggestions about means that the media might use to be more useful in their countries. As always in White's writing, he has a tendency to idealism.

Christians' article addresses communication ethics. He notes the problems surrounding global media forms, but also the uses these forms have. He suggests that in the 21st century indigenous languages and ethnicity have come to the fore and adds that culture is now more salient than countries. This is perhaps not surprising when one considers that many countries have boundaries that are totally arbitrary and which took no account of the cultural or ethnic or even language groupings that boundaries might cut across. Identity politics, he says, dominate world affairs, and ethnic self-consciousness, he believes, is essential to cultural vitality (p. 47). These changes must be reflected in changed theoretical and practical communication ethics. Christians' main question here is whether the world is one or many. He attempts to reach an answer by reflecting on the philosophical background to the question and finds three principles from one/many traditions which he believes are particularly pertinent:

- a. insistence on universals, whilst reconceptualizing their character;

- b. understanding the one/many in terms of philosophical anthropology, and
- c. building a model from the one/many traditions by reconstruction of theorization's character.

He puts forward the notion that theories are neither *ex nihilo* nor abstract, but can put forward oppositional claims about the world and he asks for ethics that are dialogical, ethics where the first means of truth communication is by story-telling. Such stories can enable us to begin to unpick abstractions and obscurities (p. 59). The stories woven around events and occasions, around mythologies and beliefs, can help us to comprehend the world that surrounds us, the lives that we live in that/those world(s), and can even help us to understand death. He adds that such a dialogic ethics "is fed by the sacredness of our universal humanity as tacit knowledge," and concludes that they allow us to meet both the global and multicultural. We can both critique one way imperialism from multinational media and "celebrate indigenous resistance in the people's voice" (p. 61).

Nordenstreng, on the other hand, writes on journalism ethics for peace and war. He states that those involved in the journalistic professions generally consider that what they report is unbiased truth. He highlights the content of different ethical codes and shows that it is only in the 1992 Latvian Journalists' Code that peace is mentioned overtly. In six other journalistic codes, all of which, incidentally, come from formerly Eastern bloc countries, it is more obliquely mentioned. He puts forward some comments on the legacy of UNESCO's 1978 Mass Media Declaration and says that there are still relevancies here, both good and bad. However, there is no clear trend towards a commitment by journalism to such an ethics. He finishes the article by suggesting some action lines that just might bring fruit in the form of acceptance of such ethical norms.

Nyamnjoh writes of his experience with journalism in Africa and Africa in Journalism (JAAJ). He notes that the precepts of African journalism are often different from the notions of personhood and agency that are dominant. They thus differ also to those in society, culture, and democracy (p. 101). There is a notion that there is a One-Best-Way of being and/or doing, one to which Africans should aspire in order to be considered modern and civilized. There is a tendency to place emphasis on journalistic relationships and solidarity rather than on the illusion of autonomy (p. 104). Nyamnjoh suggests that journalists who are active in African society have a tendency of being

attached to their immediate environment rather than to their society or country, perhaps for reasons that I have put forward above regarding countries' arbitrary boundaries. Africans, he says are also apt to be individuals who can span cultural and civic citizenships, but who are not prepared to sacrifice either. Cultural citizenship is as important to the democratic process as are political or economic citizenship. The One-Best-Way notion posed may help to ensure that journalism remains narrow, can suffocate "unorthodox" outlooks and/or practices that may enable the sharing of news, information, entertainment and education. There are few journalists, he suggests, who even feel able to write work that fits into their own language and culture and he proposes means to augment the realities of the journalist's profession and the creative uses of ICTs which have enabled African citizen journalism, just as it has elsewhere. Once again, here there is little sense that there may be downsides to such citizen journalism. To my mind, there is also a sense of a "One-Africa" mentality, while I believe that there is no more a unified notion among the citizens of Africa than there is among the citizens of Europe—a much smaller land mass. Those in the Maghreb have a culture and society vastly different to those who live in sub-Saharan West Africa or in South Africa. Since language is one of the strong formers of culture, the formerly colonizing countries have left legacies here that Nyamnjoh does not necessarily take into account.

Sovik writes from Brazil on advertising against racism through reflection on consumer culture and social activism. In Brazil, following the Durban UN Conference against Racism, what was previously black activism against racism in Brazil has moved onto an activism that is more racially inclusive. This has resulted, among other things, in changes in the ways that anti-racist campaigns are mounted. Previously, campaigns were generally reactive, now they are more questioning. This campaign mode has been used on leaflets, buttons, posters, buses, and billboards, as well as on tv and radio. Sovik questions the position of broadcast advertising in the anti-racist campaign, through use of the original sense of "broadcasting": "sowing words (rather than seeds) on fertile and rocky ground" (p. 117). He sees advertising as being an extension of publicity or of letting a receptive audience know about specific information. It is shown here in a variety of contexts which can easily be utilized around social concerns, even when this may mean that methods that were developed for capitalist, and sometimes

unethical, purposes are taken on for this new function. For Sovik, such means are not, in the main, used by NGOs and/or social movements, but they are taken up by corporations who are interested in social responsibility, with the Istituto Ethos being the foremost actor. What he does not mention are uses of such means for so-called "Green washing," which has become a relatively common practice in publicity for, for instance, energy companies, to show that they are thinking about the environment and doing something to help fight global warming, as an example. Companies who form the Istituto Ethos, utilize publicity methods as a means to try to improve their public image and/or to react to public pressure or public image. One of the spin-offs is that it may help to create staff loyalty by stopping vandalism or shoplifting, for example. Many such companies have an understanding also that their profitability may be enhanced by ethical campaigning.

Work for social justice often aims to have some effect on the dynamics of globalizing capitalism and thus many of Brazil's NGOs have been founded by members of the militant left. Business may have begun to have some sympathy for the social (p. 119), but NGOs have now also begun to see possible uses for the techniques of marketing in the creation of public interest and the development of increased demand for their "product." As such interest grew, some larger NGOs began to both mediate funds and offer consultancy services to smaller groups (p. 120), since such small groups also need to have higher visibility. Some NGOs, however, may believe that such activity is contrary to the values that organizations that are socially active may espouse. Such activity might be considered to use up funding, already valuable and scarce, and be a diversion from the group's original purposes. Some groups have a more pragmatic approach and accept that such means are necessary, as they believe that their message and their audience are central to their original ethos, thus enabling them to forget the connections with advertising.

Sovik's next section offers a review of recent ideas on marketing and advertising. These notions come from scholars such as Jean Baudrillard, Naomi Klein, the Brazilian musician, Sérgio Ricardo, and Gilles Deleuze. One of the most interesting questions he asks follows: "How can publicity be accepted (by socially active groups) without the promotion of the notion that those who 'buy into' whatever it is they promote are somehow on the side of right?" He highlights also Lury & Warde's (1997) suggestion that public reaction is

impossible to predict and accepts the means these authors advance on the ways in which advertisers combat this. He then discusses ideas both for and against advertising's usefulness to social activist groups, observing the experience of limitations by groups in their abilities to follow normal practices, such as focus group application. He gives the example of CESE, an organization that offers small, grassroots funding, and highlights possible campaign weaknesses that may result. Problematics of inequality remain, both in the attitudes of ad agencies to these client NGOs, who may be relatively weak in comparison to other clients, but also in the business practice such agencies may use, and he proposes questions that should be asked. Sovik concludes by noting that to criticize and question those who are socially aware actors in a society may seem crass as it would show a denial with a certain naivete towards capitalism. However, and perhaps more crucially, he adds that this may also seem crass because, within the critique of advertising and promotion, there is as yet no language through which to address such a critique.

The last author in this section is Pradip Thomas, who was a long-time colleague of Traber at WACC. Thomas points out that communication rights are experiencing something of a renewal and a resurrection, which perhaps partly results from the republication of *Many Voices, One World*, the McBride Roundtable and the efforts of WACC. A number of works on this topic were published in the '90s, but Thomas notes that there is no acceptable definition of "communication rights" that has achieved universal acceptance (p. 138). The National Conference for Media Reform's, WACC's, AMARC's, and IAMCR's presence in the development of such an understanding is noted here. While campaigns like CRIS have assisted somewhat, Thomas puts forward the notion that present approaches to communication rights are flawed, mainly because they are Eurocentric and do not seem able to recognize the diversity of deficits in communication in a variety of locales, something with which I would agree wholeheartedly, although American scholars and activists are also not without stain in this regard. He asks whether contemporary communication/information NGOs really do represent the local if funding is obtained for strategies of development which are donor driven. He believes this has particular resonance now that many international NGOs have been decentralized. Such decentralization, he suggests, may have meant only that these organizations are mere clones and the North-South divide and the hierarchy of funders reinforced.

These funders may possibly also advance a European or North American norm or context for funded work, and he asks whether such global reform is an obstacle to present communication deficits, rather than being of assistance (p. 141). Two epistemological deficits are highlighted here from the present discourse.

The right to know, the right to information, is usually considered the most significant communication right, but this consideration also brings questions that are different according to the variety of experiences and expectations of democracy, and also the understanding of the notion of identity, which he says is not "the most vexing question in South Asia." However, the freedom from want is. When fighting against want, he suggests, information is a most powerful tool, but Thomas adds that "micro-communication"—local communication—is just as crucial as macro-communication struggles around the reform and ownership of media institutions and intellectual property control. He illustrates his case through two case studies: the Right to Information Movement, and the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in India, and then draws a number of conclusions.

One of the valuable aspects of this book is that it does not contain only separate articles, valuable as they are, from colleagues of Traber, but also reprints some of Traber's own articles. The book is a tribute to his breadth and depth as a scholar but will also, it is to be hoped, bring a new audience to his work, an audience who were unborn when his long career started. Mike was a man it was a privilege to know, always a pleasure to be with—even in arguments. He is sorely missed.

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- Riley, Kerry Kathleen.** *Everyday Subversion. From Joking to Revolting in the German Democratic Republic*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2008. Pp. 375. ISBN 978-0-87013-801-0 (pb.), \$69.95.

The revolution did not begin in the streets; it began in East German homes (p. 23).

This very enjoyable book by U.S. scholar Kathleen Riley is based on a wealth of personal interviews and primary source materials acquired by the author in over a decade of research trips to the former German Democratic Republic (GDR).

In a publication that will appeal to those interested in studies on rhetoric and social change, European history, as well as communication, anthropology, and sociology, Riley vividly analyzes the ways in which ordinary people managed to find spaces for their rhetoric under a non-democratic state and how they practiced democracy in hostile conditions.

Showing how proverbs and jokes gradually gain momentum in the final days of the GDR, the author provides also the social and historical context of 40 years of the Republic's history, tracing also the failures of the system set up by the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, Socialist Unity Party of Germany) that governed East Germany for these four decades.

In the first of the 10 chapters that compose the book, Riley explains how her work aims to fill a gap in research on life beyond the Iron Curtain and the historical events of 1989, especially about the "peaceful and revolutionary strategies" used by East Germans to topple the Berlin Wall (p. 7). Indeed, this innovative work goes beyond the analysis of the memorable events of that year to discuss the origins of private political culture of the GDR, to see the progression from the private to the quasi-public to the fully public.

Rightly so, the author highlights the methodological challenges of studying social movements in Central and Eastern Europe and how the social dynamics differ under Leninist regimes, grounding her analysis, among others, in the work of Christian Joppke, Vaclav Havel, and Gyorgy Konrad. The oppositional spaces offered by the Lutheran Church and small thematic groups gatherings, as well as the "peace prayers" held in Leipzig's St. Nicholas Church are thoroughly analyzed. They include also the wide range of communication tools used in East Germany to practice "anti-politics" as jokes, samizdat, slogans, banners, and exhibits, providing an important rhetorical analysis of the revolution that complements the relatively great number sociological analyses already available about the changes in European history at the end of the 1980s.

The strength of this study, however, relies also in its interdisciplinary approach to the research that, apart

from social movement theory, sociology, political science, history, and communication, includes also literary studies, humor research, and theology to illustrate a story of "rhetorical resistance, reclamation, rebellion, and revolution" and "the power of rhetorical anecdotes" under the East German regime (p. 22).

In the second chapter, Riley then shows how the SED failed to inculcate a mass consciousness of socialism among the population and then, in Chapter 3, unfolds the concept and function of the *Buschfunk* (bush-cast), private political satire, jokes, through which East Germans coped with the regime in their everyday lives. A sample of them are analyzed in order to show the rhetorical and subversive power of political joking in the country.

The central part of the book, Chapters 4, 5, and 6, discusses then the "quasi-public sphere" environment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and its function as "the shelter of alternative thinking in the GDR," and a center of peace initiatives and social involvement. No wonder, then, that when the demonstrations started to gather momentum, the Church comes clearly out as their point of departure, this also causing conflict between the more activist stance chosen by some pastors and parts of the Church hierarchy less inclined to be involved so openly in challenging the status quo.

In the following part, in Chapter 7, 8, and 9, Riley casts light on the events that will lead to the peaceful revolution by discussing more in detail episodes that are usually marginalized in historical accounts of the 1989 events, but are no less important in forming, and informing, the "prehistory" of GDR protest. The personal interviews and the first hand material originating from the heart of the events, in the city of Leipzig, offer a vivid account of the social dynamics behind the demonstrations, the sampling of demonstrators' discourse, and the non-violent interaction between two sides on the streets, the state, and the people.

The final chapter, offers a concluding analysis of the continuing rhetorical perspectives on the GDR after its political end on the night of October 3, 1990, the day of Germany's reunification. It recounts the fall of the GDR ruling class, the costs and the tensions of the reunification process, Germany's coming back to the center of Europe and European Union, and the verification of the mismanagement and corruption allegations exposed already during the "bush-casts." The author affirms that

the East German case encourages us to reconsider the persuasive power of everyday speech. . . . [I]n the GDR orality helped to keep things open to interaction and helped to keep things peaceful . . . Perhaps most important, orality encouraged reciprocal orality. (pp. 312-13)

While describing the benefits of the “cheap delivery system” adopted by activists, Riley rightly points out that the personal risks taken by them may have been “simple in form,” but required “unusual personal courage” (p. 313).

The book gives an excellent contribution in English to the study of the use of rhetorical tools for social change and a thorough analysis of the everyday tools used by East Germans, especially in its final decade of existence, including a wealth of samples of both jokes and banners used during the demonstrations that took place in Leipzig and also Berlin throughout 1989.

Bibliographical references are listed at the end of the book, divided by chapter, and a selected bibliography offers a very useful complement to this section. A subject index is also included in this publication.

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SunWolf. *Peer Groups: Expanding Our Study of Small Group Communication.* Los Angeles: Sage Publications, Inc. 2008. Pp. 222. ISBN 978-1-4129-2686-7 (pb). \$37.95.

The universal practice of disrespecting a person by refusing to acknowledge their presence springs, no doubt, from some primal urge to demonstrate superiority. In Britain, the upper classes refined such blatant rudeness into a social art. Edwardian era writers debated whether it was proper for a “gentleman” to “cut” someone by failing to extend the minimal courtesy of a greeting, as in, “M. approached me yesterday and I cut him dead.”

Although the expression “cut” is no longer in vogue, this British term most aptly describes the effect of social rejection: a deep wound that never completely heals over. Exclusion presupposes boundaries, real and imagined. Social life—largely a quest for some manner of self-affirming inclusion—requires sagacity in recognizing and negotiating boundaries. “Peer groups” is a porous umbrella term for collectively-drawn boundaries that function to establish and sustain self-identity through rituals of inclusion and mutual

aggrandizement. Near the mark, Bob Dylan once sang, “I’ll let you be in my dream if I can be in your dream.”

In one sense, SunWolf’s *Peer Groups* is a type of field manual based on her belief that membership in multiple peer groups is a trying ordeal that consumes more of our lives than ever before: “Studying the various communication subcultures and outcomes of peer groups in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood is an important endeavor, in part because it illuminates the powerful influence on our satisfactions, anxieties, and behavior choices” (p. xv).

From this, the author crafts a plain-spoken warrant for the reader (something too many writers fail at or neglect entirely):

What’s in it for me? (And what’s not?) In short, this book offers the possibility of a bit more pleasure, a bit less pain in the (unavoidable) time you will spend with myriad future peer groups; more understanding, less confusion about what goes right and what goes wrong. If you are also someone who thinks about group processes, there’s this added value: a whole lot of intriguing (empty) spaces are revealed (dots no one has connected, yet), that would benefit from your mindful attention. (p. xvi)

The notion of a peer group is as amorphous and protean as the social and psychological phenomena the concept is employed to illuminate. For SunWolf, peer groups are composed of people with a common interest who also perceive each other as equals. But equals on a “sliding scale”: “Some ‘peers,’ it turns out, may seem to be more equal to others” (p. xii). Peer groups may be non task-oriented—apart from the goal of seeking enjoyment. Also, they tend to form “naturally,” in contrast to the “artificial” problem-solving teams mandated in organizations.

Peer Groups moves through early childhood, adolescence, gangs, “super-tasking” groups, and juries. Here is a neat summation of the book’s compass: “Peer groups construct boundaries, socialize members, create identity, engage in tasks, resolve conflicts, enact rituals, adopt symbols, exclude outsiders, and even disband through *communication*” (p. xvi). SunWolf makes emphatic that a great deal of anxiety—and joy—derives from incessant comparisons to our “perceived” peers. “People trigger continual satisfactory or negative emotions for themselves. A large portion of our satisfaction with our own lives, in fact, is fragile—depending, as it does, on continual comparisons to our peers” (p. 20).

The habitual measurement or judgment of others is too often a zero-sum contest replete with idiosyncratic twists. For example, a study of verbal combat among Little League baseball players shows that gaining status through put-downs is a social game inculcated in childhood. Apparently even a poorly skilled player has some use—but not on the diamond; rather as a victim who “unwittingly enabled his attackers to impress one another with their negative verbal skills” (p. 18).

The author uses tables to explicate and systemize seven theoretical models that ground her examples. In particular, two of these models are worth noting: the Symbolic-Interpretive Perspective (S-I), and Decisional Regret Theory. S-I is an overarching perspective (encompassing a handful of other group theories) that posits the primacy of story-telling and the attendant use of symbols. Thus, the predominant activity in group life is explanatory communication. (And, as SunWolf slyly remarks, the behavior of some folks requires a whole lot of explaining.) S-I foregrounds “language, clothing, colors, rituals, music, writings, initiations, ceremonies, stories, metaphors, humor,” and signage (p. 17). S-I makes use of the notion of “negotiated order,” whereby when a person’s predisposition to “act in a certain way” threatens group harmony, order is maintained through explicit or implicit negotiation. (Should the “discussions” fail, the penalty, of course, is the heavy “head-trip” of ostracism. Perhaps this is why group membership requires behavior that compromises heartfelt communication.)

SunWolf creatively employs S-I to analyze narrative snippets from *Workin’ from Can’t to Can’t: African-American Cowboys in Texas*, a documentary film by the Institute of Texan Cultures. These superannuated cowboys exemplify the category of “super-tasking” peer groups. The following explanation of the cook’s status within the group foregrounds language: “‘We got a cook. And don’t make him mad, ’cause you do, you come in, it won’t be no dinner cooked. . . . Everybody can’t cook on a camp’” (p. 109). The shared identity of this peer group is seen in its negotiated meaning of individual tasks and group responsibility—a glaring contrast to today’s pervasive “that’s-not-my-job” mentality:

One cowboy described an owner out looking for another hand named Bill. This cowboy (who was *not* Bill) said, “You looking’ for Bill, you found him.” Both he [owner] and the cowboy knew he meant simply, “Whatever work Bill was sup-

posed to do for you, I’m now Bill, I’ll do it.” Task was never one man’s job. (pp. 110-11)

Among the theories S-I encompasses is Decisional Regret Theory, whose basis recalls the existentialist axiom that life is a series of choices and making a choice produces anxiety. SunWolf—a former trial attorney—makes deft use of this idea in her examination of juror regret over verdicts *after* deliberations have concluded, which is called “juror flipping.” In 2005, after a trial of nearly five months and 130 witnesses, Michael Jackson, the recently-deceased pop star, was cleared of multiple criminal charges by a jury of eight men and four women. However, two months later two jurors publicly proclaimed their belief in Jackson’s guilt and professed regret over their votes, which they claimed were coerced. SunWolf describes the psychological effects of peer pressure on one of these regretful jurors, a 79-year-old woman, who attempted to assuage her distress through “reframing”:

The physical anxiety produced by group argument after a lengthy trial was real for this juror, as she then described her heart palpitating and the “gut-wrenching” position she felt she was in with other jurors. She began mentally to *reframe* her position for herself as perhaps ‘ambivalent,’ in order, she explained, “to stop the pain.” (p. 134)

Even more extreme than “reframing” is a type of counterfactual thinking labeled “restorying,” whereby jurors fantasize about reordering the past:

Jurors begin to imagine what *could have happened* so that there would not even *be* a trial! . . . Counterfactual thinking is common in dog mauling and medical malpractice cases, for example, since often jurors prefer to imagine the tragedies being avoided. *Such stories offer a fantasized reality in which decision makers imagine that they would never have to be faced with the current decision at all.* If the story of how someone should have behaved differently than they did is joined or restoried by others, the jury may be diverted from its painful decisional task. (pp. 134-35)

Such psychological mechanisms are not exclusive to pressured jurors. “Reframing” and “restorying” also describe the dynamics of individual coping devices—strains of self-talk used to flail anxiety. Ultimately, handling others, inside or outside of groups, involves understanding the power of the imagination to precipitate fear and suspicion. (Not withstanding *real* malice and hostility—typically felt as the

lash of surreptitious slander.) As the author states, “We are talking about other people, sure, but we are talking (a whole lot) about *us*” (p. xi). And SunWolf’s narrative examples trigger a great deal of introspective recollections about ourselves and others. Too much of our thinking seems habitually concerned with how we measure up to others—and our pasts. *Peer Groups* dissects the worm of comparison, which poisons confidence and spoils the present; thus the book’s direct existential relevance.

The book features a lengthy Appendix (pp. 147-174), as well as end notes, references, and an index.

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Tuman, Joseph S. *Political Communication in American Campaigns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008. Pp. xxiv; 279. ISBN 978-1-4129-0945-7 (pb.) \$39.95.

Joseph Tuman tells a great story of watching Robert Kennedy establish rapport with his audience during a whistle stop tour in 1968. Four days before his death, Kennedy stopped in Turlock, California to address a predominately Republican crowd. Among the crowd members was 10-year-old Joseph Tuman who attributes his later interest in political communication to his parents’ political work and Kennedy’s stop in Turlock. Tuman’s book is an overview of communication strategies and tactics in American elections, based on his insights as a scholar and political consultant. He sees campaigns and elections as essentially contests with multiple players and game plans that regulate and are regulated by communication. His objective is to describe the people, the messages and their delivery methods, and the imagery of these contests.

As a foundation for the book, the author introduces the reader to political communication by reviewing ways elections may be seen as contests of personal appearances, of stances on issues (stated or perceived), and of imagery. He defines political communication as “the discursive process by which political information is shared and promotes awareness, ignorance, manipulation, consent, dissent, action, or passivity” (p. 8). The ways in which political communication is engaged become the focus of individual chapters. Chapter 2 (Players) is an overview of political parties with attention to third parties and the origins and critical incidents of the two major parties. Other players are introduced: consultants, surrogates, and the media. The

overview builds on his first chapter to address readers who are interested in politics but who may not completely understand the language that describes role players in Tuman’s contests.

In next two chapters, the author lays out the significance of political oratory in the election process. The third chapter, “Campaign Oratory and the Communication Process,” is dedicated in part to identifying interesting genres of election rhetoric. The genres are not the typical rhetorical genres often discussed in the field but, rather, include less formal descriptions such as incumbent speeches, stump speeches, and personal crisis speeches. Tuman cites numerous examples: from John F. Kennedy’s speech in Houston in 1960 wherein the candidate addresses his Catholicism, from Al Sharpton at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, and from Reagan’s first inaugural. In the next chapter, “Methods for Deconstructing Political Oratory,” Tuman’s approach is more critical in nature as he identifies classical rhetorical means of thinking critically about speeches. He takes the opportunity to lay out classical rhetorical principles, fallacies, and rhetorical figures. The fallacies and figures sections include basic examples of each including antithesis, anaphora, praeteritio, and prolepsis to name a few. Tuman then devotes a chapter to short rhetorical criticisms of four campaign speakers: Richard Nixon, John McCain, Barbara Jordan, and Hilary Clinton. The entire speech text for each speech is included in the chapter followed by a description of each situation, and an application of relevant rhetorical figures and fallacies identified in the previous two chapters.

Two chapters deal with political debates. The first (Chapter 6) traces the history of debates to classical roots, but quickly moves to critical incidents in contemporary American political debates. For example, the author describes FCC section 315 (requiring equal broadcast time for all candidates), and its strategic suspension or invocation to influence the perceived necessity for debates. He also provides descriptions of the Lincoln-Douglas debates and presidential and vice-presidential debates since 1976. In short, Chapter 6 lays out “what we mean by debate, as well as [how debate fits] in the context of political discourse and decision making” (p. 151). Then, Tuman provides examples of “Negotiations, Tactics, and Strategies for Political Debates,” his title for Chapter 7, in which the author provides illustrations of negotiations, what he even calls the “picky details to haggle and argue about” (p. 154), identifying such issues as time limits, set

design, camera angles, and so on. He describes pre-debate analysis as “pitch” and post-debate analysis as “spin.” Tuman includes descriptions of dress rehearsals and specific examples of strategies in debates such as a balanced, generally good-natured approach (which Tuman describes as “even-keeled”), using a defensive posture (drawing from Al Gore’s over emphasis of his vast experience and background on many subjects), and emphasizing differences between candidates (such as a “gaffe,” illustrated by Gerald Ford’s misstatements in 1976 about Russian use of eastern Europe). With these and other strategies, Tuman always draws from specific examples from debates, including excerpts from transcripts.

The final two chapters explicate the relationship of mass media and political communication. Despite the continued blurring of the lines due to the journalistic convergence, Tuman lays out four fundamental media distinctions that define mass media: entertainment media and news media, print news media and broadcast/cable news media, old and new media, and free and paid media. He then provides specific examples of communication in each area such as how celebrities such as Tom Cruise can further a cause by capitalizing on free media, the roles of Rush Limbaugh and Howard Stern, and websites and blogs related to campaigns. Strategies and tactics of political communication are enumerated in the final chapter where the author draws from numerous campaign examples to exhibit the symbiotic relationship between communication staffs and the media. Since the campaigns and the media need each other (desperately, in fact), each side both relies on and manipulates the other. Tuman draws on well-known examples such as the infamous Willie Horton revolving door television advertisements against Michael Dukakis in 1988, the Swift Boat 527 group that undercut John Kerry, and some examples that are not as widely discussed such as George W. Bush’s September 2004 visit to hurricane sites in Florida (as a way to connect with Florida voters) yet his absence in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Tuman also includes some personal examples such as a confrontation with a lesser known California gubernatorial candidate who chastised the author, whom the candidate saw as a media representative, for seemingly disregarding a large number of candidates for the post vacated by the recalled Gray Davis. He spends considerable time on negative attack ads, arguably the dominant form of advertisements given that the ads are so effective (a

point underscored in his book by consultants from both the left and the right).

There are many books on political communication, and they vary in scope and complexity. What makes this book unique is its basic structure: descriptive or historical chapters, followed by discussions of strategies and tactics of political communication in numerous contexts. The audience for this book may be wide, but the book would be particularly useful as a required text or reader in a class in political communication, rhetoric, political science, or simply as a guidebook for anyone interested in politics or becoming a more informed citizen, particularly before major elections. Three complete speech texts, which were excerpted in the book, appear in the appendix: John F. Kennedy’s Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, Al Sharpton’s speech to the Democratic National Convention in 2004, and Ronald Regan’s first inaugural. There is also a bibliography and an index.

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Wilson, Tony. *Understanding Media Users: From Theory to Practice.* Malden, MA: Wiley- Blackwell, 2008. Pp. 232 ISBN 978-1-4051-5566-3 (hbk.) \$89.95; 978-1-4051-5567-0 (pb.) \$39.95; also available as e-book from <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1444304968.html>

Tony Wilson’s book, *Understanding Media Users: From Theory to Practice*, is about interpretation or audience response of mass media and Internet content. Wilson’s aim is toward a universal interpretation process and he uses phenomenology and hermeneutics to ground his ideas theoretically. Through abduction (abstract analysis) of the way people describe their own media and Internet interpretation processes, Wilson develops a five stage game-like (ludic) universal model. This model includes, “absorptions/anticipation, articulation, and appropriation of or alienation from screen content” (p. 173).

Throughout the book, Wilson refers to one main example to help illustrate our interaction with media and his emerging model: It is the story of how a Chinese Malaysian woman in an airport uses her cell phone. The phone rings, she looks at the number, and she decides whether she will answer based on the familiar or unfamiliar number. She values her phone because if her daughter calls, it will make her day. Wilson’s example is global or cross-cultural because

the woman is Chinese Malaysian. Her choice to talk on the phone or not represents all of our ability to technologically opt out of a present environment and join another present. In Wilson's words:

Being an audience, engaging in play, stands outside "ordinary" life (Huizinga, 1970, p. 32): often "intensely and utterly" (*ibid.*) involved, we forget the daily self. Viewers take aim at achieving sense in a mediated story: they anticipate and actualize textual meaning as goal. Like games, accessing the screen is a "stepping out" of "real" life into a "temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all its own" (*ibid.*, p. 26), an "intermezzo," an "interlude" associated with television or Internet surfing. Messaging on a cell-phone screen, our concentration looks beyond our material location. (p. 75)

The theory is in its infancy. For this reason, Wilson recommends his model be tested through "falsifying focus groups and interviews" because these methods rely on the interpretation processes of media users.

Wilson spends the first part of his book theoretically positioning his approach. His work aligns with uses and gratifications analysis and reader reception theory and is in opposition to UK structuralist work and U.S. media effects work. Wilson dismisses these latter approaches "as irredeemably determinist." For those who teach media studies to graduate students, *Understanding Media Users* could be used to discuss how one vies for space at the theoretical table. The book could serve as a springboard for discussions with graduate students about the ethics of theoretical and epistemological positioning. For example, what does it mean to say that media user theory operates from a constructionist epistemology? Is it necessary to shore up the strength of your own epistemological choices the way Wilson does? How are methodological divisions maintained and perpetuated in the field of communication?

For mass media scholars, *Understanding Media Users* might prove a valuable resource to or as an uncommon body of literature. Wilson is concerned with how a person incorporates what he or she encounters with what he or she already knows and because of the phenomenological and hermeneutical foundation he works within, draws from a set of references different from those typically found in mass media research. Fisher's work on narrative is absent. Van Dijk's work on ideology is mentioned once. Burke's seminal work on identification is absent.

Hall's encoding/decoding model is mentioned one or two times. Lacey's work on media, genre, and narrative is absent. Wilson does not contradict what these authors outline and this makes his book fascinating and perhaps useful.

Similarly, Wilson's discussion of philosophy in *Understanding Media Users* could be useful. He discusses the perspectives of Derrida, Morley, Gadamer, Barthes, Heidegger, Iser, Jauss, and Fish (among many others) at a high level of proficiency. A person who does not share this philosophical proficiency could augment his or her knowledge with the references used in *Understanding Media Users*. For graduate seminar discussions, one could use Wilson's work as vehicle to explore what one loses and gains with breadth of material over depth.

One problem with Wilson's theory is in scope. He does not clearly describe what his theory covers, unless naming television and the Internet suffices. His psychological phenomenological constructivist media user theory is about how people come to understand, and what the source of this understanding is. Wilson claims that "Meaning is ours." Missing from the discussion is a distinction between how people come to understand "screen content," and how people come to understand anything else. Communication is the way we make sense together. Essential, I would think, to a media user theory would be the line where media and Internet interpretation differs from other interpretation.

The third and final portion of the book offers a mélange of contextual examples such as marketing, brandscapes, and the focus group results from consumer citizens who engage in journalism and tourism websites. These examples, while confusing at first glance (why explore marketing, tourism, and branding?), might offer an invitation to media scholars who share Wilson's theoretical vision, to help refine his theory.

While Wilson's model, philosophy, and method are clear, his examples and supporting material are less clear and his repetitious style requires a measure of patience and respect for the difficult work of theory building. *Understanding Media Users: From Theory to Practice* could be valuable pedagogically, philosophically, and epistemologically.

The book includes a bibliography and an index.

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