KEY MEDIA THEORIES
Fig. 1—Schematic diagram of a general communication system.
Marxist Media Theory

* Theodor Adorno / Max Horkheimer - Frankfurt School

* *Dialectic of Enlightenment: The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* (1947)

* High Art vs. Culture Industry

* Capitalist-driven entertainment industry - commoditisation - products are ‘same’ & reflect values of established system

* Standardisation / homogeneity
Cultural pessimism

- Owned by capitalist classes / consumed by mass of employees
- Ulterior motives: repress imagination and render masses socially and politically inactive

*Something is provided for all so that none may escape* (Adorno 1973:123)

- Formulaic, manufactured content: e.g. blockbusters, bestsellers, music hits
- Illusion of individual air but conformism
PAR LE RÉALISATEUR DE "TITANIC"

ENTREZ DANS LE MONDE

AVATAR

LE 16 DÉCEMBRE

www.avatar-france.com

TITANIC

From The Director Of "Avatar," "EZ" and "True Lies"
Passive audience

* Audience is disempowered / drones
* False consciousness: does not notice damage done
* Hypodermic syringe
* Neil Postman: couch potatoes / zombies
* ==> Media Effects research (e.g. psychology)
Encoding/Decoding

* Stuart Hall (1973) / Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies

* Decoding determined by social context and assumptions
  * Dominant reading
  * Negotiated reading
  * Oppositional reading

* Role of ideology - Gramsci: hegemony / Althusser: interpellation
Cultural Studies

* John Fiske: *Understanding Popular Culture / Reading the Popular*

* Popular culture made by people. Industries merely produce a repertoire of texts

* Audience empowered to interpret, use, reject

* Drive for innovation and change comes from the audience activity in the cultural economy (Fiske 1989c:62)
John Fiske

* Most texts contain ‘preferred’ meaning - as intended by producer - but also offer possibilities for consumers to create own alternative or resistant reading

* Audience: producer of meanings and pleasures (cf Michel de Certeau ‘guerilla tactics’) - activates meanings in text

* Media is ‘enabler’ of ideas and meanings, promoting diversity and difference = may lead to social change

* Optimistic viewpoint
Uses & Gratifications

* What people do with media vs. what media does to people (Katz, 1959)
  * Cognitive needs - surveillance
  * Affective needs
  * Personal integrative needs - credibility, status
  * Social integrative needs
  * Tension release needs - diversion, escapism
* Limited effects approach
Reception studies

- Qualitative approach / Ethnography
- Exploratory
- Ien Ang: *Watching Dallas*
- David Morley: *Nationwide Audience / Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*
Textual analysis

- Structuralism and semiology (Saussure, Peirce)
- Barthes: sign systems / myths / ideologies
- Discourse analysis / content analysis
Psychoanalysis

- Freud = Oedipus complex
- Lacan = mirror stage
- Mulvey = cinematic apparatus / male gaze / voyeurism / narcissism