

ISMRC Seoul 2016 August 1 - 4

Questions to be addressed:

- (1) Religious conflict and media representation
- (2) Religion and entertainment media
- (3) Religious audiences

Abstract

Audiovisual Storytelling and Ideological Horizons:
Audiences, Cultural Contexts and Extra-textual Meaning Making

In a society characterized by mediatization people are to an increasing degree dependent on mediated narratives as a primary means by which we make sense of our experience through time and our place in society (Hoover 2006, Lynch 2007, Hjarvard 2008, Hjarvard & Lövheim 2012). American media scholar Stewart Hoover points to symbols and scripts available in the media environment, what he call the “symbolic inventory” out of which individuals make religious or spiritual meaning (Hoover 2006: 55). Vernacular meaning-making embedded in everyday life among viewers’ dealing with fiction narratives in films and tv-series highlight a need for a more nuanced understanding of complex audiovisual storytelling. Moving images provide individuals with stories by which reality is maintained and by which humans construct ordered micro-universes for themselves using film as a resource for moral assessment and ideological judgments about life (Plantinga 2009, Johnston 2010, Axelson 2015). Important in this theoretical context are perspectives on viewers’ moral frameworks (Zillman 2005, Andersson & Andersson 2005, Frampton 2006, Avila 2007).

This paper presentation will focus on ideological contested meaning making where audiences of different cultural background engage emotionally with filmic narratives, possibly eliciting ideological and spiritual meaning-making related to viewers’ personal world views. Through the example of the *Homeland* tv-series I want to discuss how spectators’ cultural, religious, political and ideological identities could be understood playing a role in the interpretative process of decoding content. Is it possible to trace patterns of different receptions of the multilayered and ambiguous story depicted in *Homeland* by religiously engaged Christians and Moslems as well as non-believers, in America, Europe and Middle East? How is the fiction narrative dealt with by spectators in the audience in different cultural contexts and how is it interpreted through the process of extra-text evaluation and real world

understanding in a global era preoccupied with war on terror? The presentation will also discuss methodological considerations about how to reach out to audiences anchored in different cultural context.

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