



PROJECT MUSE®

Internationalizing "International Communication"

Lee, Chin-Chuan

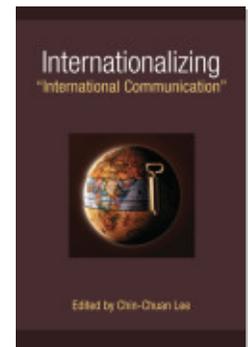
Published by University of Michigan Press

Lee, Chin-Chuan.

Internationalizing "International Communication".

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/39747>

Access provided at 24 Sep 2019 11:05 GMT with no institutional affiliation



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Postcolonial Visual Culture

Arguments from India

Arvind Rajagopal

Analysts of visual culture have only recently begun to reckon with the complexity of postcolonial visual culture in those regions where a history of semi-colonial or colonial rule remains important in understanding the period of national development thereafter. “Postcolonial” is a historical marker, therefore, and a reminder that where efforts at modernization were accompanied or preceded by struggles against foreign rule, a distinct set of conditions apply that need to be specified in any adequate attempt at historical analysis. For example, some or more aspects of modernization are usually perceived as a foreign import in postcolonial countries. Given that nation-centered development is the modal political form of modernization, the nation-state has to negotiate the differences between the forms of knowledge that existed previously and more modern forms of knowledge. The authority of these new and more “modern” forms of knowledge seldom acquire the same status they have in the West, where two or more centuries span a similar process. Images, as a privileged mode of communicating knowledge in modernity, become a key site for negotiating and contesting authority. How this happens, and what we can learn from analyzing the visual culture arising in the process, is worth considering. Certainly it is clear that “international communications” as a field of study did not anticipate the new forms of visual communication that would arise across the world, or the effects such communication would have.

Recent work by scholars acknowledges that postcolonial media culture presents discontinuous temporalities and complex aesthetic forms that challenge routine ways of relating the history of media form to conventional historical processes (Curtin, 2007; Fox & Waisbord, 2002; Jain, 2007; Lee, 2003; Pinney, 2004; Ramaswamy, 2010; Servaes, 2008). For example, visual realism appears as only one among a range of options utilized by cultural producers in South, Southeast, or East Asia, to mention a few regional examples, despite extensive and sophisticated communications industries in those regions. Technological sophistication does not always lead to the annihilation of older aesthetic forms, but may instead provoke their renewal, whether martial arts film and their link to Beijing opera traditions or mythological epic traditions and their transformation in India and elsewhere.

For scholarship on earlier periods, by comparison, arguably a greater scholarly consensus prevails about the protocols of research and argument, and there exist more accessible archives. Or else scholars have focused on specific crafts and technologies of visual culture such as painting, print, or film, deferring broader questions about the institutionalization of visual practices across media that socialize audiences into new habits of perception. Image making in postcolonial society is now so extensive and multifarious however, and the questions they pose are so unpredictable, that the guidelines for inquiry available from nationalist historiography, art, and cultural criticism or from postcolonial social sciences are manifestly inadequate.

With the proliferation of media technology and of mediatic forms across print, cinema, television, mobile telephones, and the Internet, South Asia seems to have arrived at a communicative modernity in the space of barely two decades, or from the first Gulf War onwards, when satellite television was launched in the region. Globally, South Asia's communicative modernity signaled a post-Cold War period defined by intensification of securocratic regimes of visual surveillance, and geopolitical alignments organized around Islamic "terror" instead of the specter of communism.¹ In India alone, the past two decades have witnessed a compressed series of developments. The long-delayed market prominence of indigenous language media in relation to English was closely followed by the ascendancy of an aggressive strain of Hindu nationalism that has taken on a new intensity with the growth of privately owned media. On the other hand, the dense spread of television news coverage provides greater visibility to a host of actors and events, with diverse political agenda, from terrorists in Mumbai who use the media as surveillance aids to a growing Maoist campaign in defense of tribal land rights that is gaining public sympathy.² Hence to

simply associate increasing media density with growing support for any specific postcolonial ideology would be misleading. However, the larger context of India’s new economy within which both of the above problems have emerged suggests the need to historically situate questions of media visibility and density, and explore ways to produce multi-causal, or contingent, models of explanation.

In South Asia, greater communication has neither seen the reduction of violence nor an increase in political transparency in any simple sense. Since the 1937 provincial elections in India, the authorities have tended to overlook mass violence, while the culprits and their sponsors have tended to derive electoral capital from targeted acts of violence. Investigative journalism, including the release of “sting” videos, confirms the existence of institutionalized corruption and secrecy without altering them. Hindu militant groups can paralyze the entire country, such as around the anticipation of violence over a court ruling on the demolition of a historic mosque. When the culprits are rewarded rather than punished, sober media commentators celebrate the verdict for having thwarted further violence.

Clearly, visibility does not always work in the ways Enlightenment thinkers assumed.³ Greater visibility in public does not ensure more rationality, nor does a greater density of information flow assure less violence or more democratization. On the one hand there are those who assert the demystifying gaze of the modern imagination, according to which “seeing is believing.” On the other hand we can observe the enchantment or glamour in what millions behold, for which the opposite may be true, that is, “believing is seeing.” Analysts of postcolonial visual culture would need to acknowledge both of these possibilities, while specifying what happens to each term in this reversible proposition, in this age of digital reproduction. South Asia provides a useful site for such discussion given its manifestly heterogeneous visual practices alongside a growing homogenization of screen culture that introduces new regimes of surveillance and regulation.⁴ The specific question this chapter will pose is whether postcolonial visual culture itself displays regularities over time that can illuminate the modes of political performance, while avoiding historicism, that is, the presumption that historical context determines both media and meaning, as well as technological determinism.

Media as/and a History of the Senses

I take it for granted that the senses are interconnected, and that their separation occurs through technological means. Technologically mediated

forms of sense perception recombine and acquire a prosthetic character with the growth of the apparatuses of communication. For instance, when sound and light from audio-visual media impinge on the observer, they convey or imply the sense of touch at the same time. Here I draw on Marshall McLuhan (1994), who theorized the media as the interface between the body and technology, correlating communication technologies with changing ratios of sense perception. McLuhan argued that audio-visual media require to be read not so much on the register of visual and auditory perceptions as on that of tactility. Hence the immediate apperception from mass media, McLuhan argued, was one of intimacy rather than remoteness. The result was that rules of social distance reflecting understandings of hierarchy or potency, that is, vis-à-vis class and gender differences, appeared to shift or erode due to media impact.

McLuhan provided an ingenious argument about the power of media, linking concerns about social order and the fear of the crowd to latent apprehensions about the power of Communist ideology, with the possibility of utopian transcendence. If the medium was the message, it implied that propaganda, the feared weapon of the East Bloc, would be neutralized by the character of modern media, which might in fact serve as silent allies of the West in the Cold War. The “global village” fashioned from the expansion of communications could be a friendly and intimate space, he suggested, in a distinctly North American conception of community.

McLuhan also provided a genealogy of the West that defined backwardness in terms of media literacy, but without overt condescension. Electric media, McLuhan argued, “re-tribalized” Western man, and allowed him to overcome inherited, print-dominated forms of rationality. Modern media, he claimed, enabled forms of communication that were both more individualized and more communal, both “hot” and “cool.” The argument was difficult to follow, and perhaps ultimately incoherent, but it served an important purpose. It insisted that technology was not other to human beings, but altered their capacities in ways that quickly “became” them, although human beings might fail to recognize it. And technology could be used to order world history in a cumulative sequence of developments while acknowledging then-prevalent trends of cultural auto-critique. If mass media were the problem, more media, intelligently applied, could be the cure. The dominance of the West was thus simultaneously acknowledged, criticized, and offered again as a possible overcoming of its previous limitations, provided the appropriate steps were taken.

McLuhan’s broad schema provided little room for sensory histories that were discrepant with his teleological argument, except to relegate them

as “old media.” New media, in this view, provide the form of all media; they defined the sense ratio of older media, until supplanted by newer media. He did not consider how uneven technological impact might result in highly contingent forms of individual and collective action that were not predicted by his schema. Despite the global ambition of his theories, McLuhan’s imagination was itself more parochial, and showed the limits of its Western origins.

Media as Totality?

The assumption that the media could create a level playing field where society can effectively be unified gained enormous prestige, and was promoted by U.S.-based think tanks and philanthropic foundations during the Cold War. A version of this assumption can be seen in Daniel Lerner’s *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958), where mass media, from print to radio, are believed to stimulate empathy for modernization, in an account that anticipates some elements of McLuhan. Such assumptions align media with a normative conception of state power, hence their importance for projects of planned development across the world.

Yet in contexts where the link between development and modernization was understood variously, the spread of technological communication was known to have unpredictable outcomes. Modern apparatuses of communication are argued to have transformed social interaction and its conception, from the hierarchical cosmologies of the medieval age to the anonymous, horizontal sodalities of print capitalism, in a rationalizing effect that is tacitly presumed to be ongoing. The underlying modernist conceit is that social interactions can be redrawn through the intervention of communications technology, and that there is, for all practical purposes, no “outside”: the media and society, it is held, map congruently onto one another. The deeper underlying supposition is that of knowability, or predictability. The growth of mass media can in this understanding be likened to the spread of light across a terrain, leading to the ability to cognitively apprehend and potentially control what occurs within it.

And yet the growth of mass media in postcolonial societies has manifestly not had such an effect. The joint presence of older and more recent forms of fetishistic thinking, such as the alliance between devotional and ritualistic forms of worship with commodity culture, for example, or the ideals of modernization as initially embodied in the racial difference of colonial rulers and subsequently in postcolonial technocrats, points to

the creation of new and more complex communicational environments. If the practice of vision in South Asia enfolded a tension between sight as a privileged access to divine truth and everyday life as profane, unimportant, or unreal, such understandings were consecrated in a visual culture that sharply distinguished between what was good to see and what ought not to be revealed.⁵

As a result, visibility does not always equate with acceptance or popularity, while invisibility may signal secrecy rather than irrelevance in such contexts.⁶ Hence, I suggest, the decades-long silence in India attending the large-scale killings accompanying the partition of the subcontinent after 1947 (into India and Pakistan), and the unexpected rupture of this silence with the emergence in politics of the so-called angry Hindu in the late 1980s, or for that matter the 1984 massacre and rape of many hundreds of Sikhs (to name only one such episode) that still awaits its moment of public reckoning and redress. In these contexts of violence the notion that the truth will set you free, or that power can be transparent, do not have much traction. Such silences point to a complex and agonistic polity, the majority of whose members are excluded from the privileges of a civil society where their concerns can be aired and addressed.⁷

Some of the mediatic underpinnings of this complexity are indicated by the continued growth of the press even as television expands, and the relegation of the English language media to a minority share of the market even while it commands the highest advertising revenues. Vernacular media, meanwhile, increase their audiences at historically high rates. There exists here a multilingual market both at regional and national levels. English language media never question their status as the more global segment, however, thereby confirming their insularity vis-à-vis vernacular media, though the latter is the site where affective orders and social relations are being changed most rapidly and powerfully.⁸

New mass media are invariably accompanied by the utopian expectation that they can help re-imagine the world as unfettered and inclusive (Rajagopal, 2005). Radio, television, and digital media have each been accompanied by similar, heady expectations that are unlikely to be realized. After all, each medium enters a space already dense with pre-existing media forms and sedimented communicational practices that seek to define or domesticate new media rather than succumb to them. As a result, new media reactivate earlier media forms in unexpected ways, rather than erase or supplant them. The greater visibility of epic and mythological imagery successively with print, cinema, and television provides a convenient

example of the way in which older image repertoires and symbol systems have been the vehicle for new communication technologies. For example, Indian cinema and television gave the appearance, temporarily, of bringing audiences together across a public that the state split into more and less modern parts, for the purpose of development. However, the same division could appear with its polarity reversed due to the experience of nationalist mobilization, in terms of less versus more culturally authentic parts. This reversible formation, which indicates both the dynamism and instability of cultural formation in postcolonial contexts such as South Asia, can be explained by the concept of a *split public*, wherein the provisions for the unification of the different components of the public are variously understood across its divisions. That is to say, *the expansion of the media did not result in greater social unity so much as in greater visibility for existing social divisions.*⁹

A postcolonial analytic of these emergent communication circuits and the synthetic forms they take can also make visible how such differences work across different domains in society. Such an argument challenges the Habermasian model of the public sphere where ideals of equality are realized in a model of communication based on the contract, while power differences are bracketed by the exercise of tact.¹⁰ Such a model of communication is inadequate for addressing the deep divisions in postcolonial societies. Any adequate account of the postcolonial public sphere must accommodate not only rational-critical discourse but also contentious counter-discourse and political silences, acknowledging that *the protocols of agreement are not in fact shared*. In other words, publicity has to be understood as a site for asserting power, and for power to be visualized.

Postcolonial Visuality

Now, in the conventional account of modern society, power is invisible, contained in capabilities and in modes of discipline, in rules and institutions such as the bureaucracy and the market, rather than in persons, classes, or things. Such an account was made possible by making invisible those acts that in their very operation demonstrated power, for example, the punishment of criminals. One of the ways in which the present age understands itself as modern, we now know, is by relegating such activities out of sight to the public, and by making them secret.¹¹

At the same time, however, modern modes of seeing presuppose a disembodied gaze, a view “from nowhere” that produces data whose validity does not depend on the person who sees. This is because the mechanisms

of sight can be technologically reproduced in the absence of a physical observer. Seeing in modernity therefore has a distinct socio-technical character. It implies knowing what to see and what not to see, and absorbing the rules by which the prevailing threshold of visibility operates, that is, how they are socially prescribed and technically reproduced.

Where such rules of vision cannot be assumed to operate, the prevailing forms of power tend to be signaled more explicitly by concrete symbols, objects, persons, and rituals. They exist to be seen, and in the case of Hindu religious objects and persons, they are also, conventionally, bestowed with the capacity to see. Forms of vision in this context confirm who is seeing and who is seen, in what has been called an “embodied gaze” (Pinney, 2004). Rather than providing a view from nowhere, the embodied gaze validates existing rules of social space rather than disrupts them, because the sense of space is not empty, homogeneous, or infinite; rather, it corresponds to the presumption of a bounded, known universe.¹²

The contrast between these two ways of seeing could be read as the difference between, say, science and popular culture, or between secular and religious life. And the meeting of these different modes of perception could be described as an encounter of knowledgeable and naïve ways of seeing, but since this also reflects a social hierarchy, a more complete description should include the so-called naïve view of the powerful. I do not have the space to explore this problem in detail here, but clearly anticolonial nationalism sought to incorporate this difference through charismatic and culturalist forms of mobilization, while also offering a program for modern economic development.

Communication associated with the former became relegated in nationalist history to the popular level, or was accorded the status of a vanishing mediator, while the latter were understood to belong to official nationalism.¹³ And in postcolonial society, while communicational circuits are initially largely top-down, for developmental policy implementation, for example, the growth of media, especially Indian language print and electronic media, introduces the possibility of bottom-up forms of communication on a hitherto unprecedented scale.

What postcolonial society brings to collective awareness is the existence of plural ways of seeing and a form of sovereignty that is not singular but divided. With the emergence of a visual regime that cuts across different media platforms, the battle for hegemony between different modes of perception is itself a public one, and any attempt to erect one form of seeing as dominant cannot be tacit, rendered invisible, or relegated to the

corridors of power. The persistence of such contestations over both the content and the form of common knowledge, I suggest, ensure that the outcomes of postcolonial politics are unpredictable.

The Postcolonial Split Public

The category of the postcolonial remains relevant to mark the agonistic relationship with Western media forms, whose developmental narrative operates as the standard of measure against which the specificity of postcolonial media must be situated. The former are typically ordered on the model of technological developments of Euro-American provenance, such as print, radio, cinema, and television. The result is to relegate theory-generative phenomena outside the West to so many varieties of socio-technical imaginings, or iterations of media modularity, or as phenomena of interest to area specialists and intelligence experts at best. However, postcolonial modernity is inaugurated not only by submitting to the West but also, and crucially, by selectively resisting modernization (Rajagopal, 2009).

A well-known argument has it that, to forge unity across their internal divisions against colonial power, anticolonial nationalists established their claim to sovereignty in the cultural domain, and demarcated it as a distinct arena from that of the external world, where the superiority of colonial power was undeniable at least for the moment. This result of a nationalist compromise arrived at toward the end of the nineteenth century, we are told, endures into the postcolonial period.¹⁴

The great insight in this argument is the development of a bipartite rather than a unitary model of sovereignty in anticolonial nationalism. Such a model has effectively relegated religion and spirituality to the private realm and matters of political economy to the public realm. But each of these spaces is characterized by communicative acts that both reify and challenge a structural dichotomy between private and public life. As such, we could think of each of these realms as, in fact, a “public.” And a communicative public is by definition something that is in a process of *becoming*, rather than a static element in a model.

The rules in these different publics (“religious” and “political”) diverge, but presume each other. For example, colonial power claimed to be a modernizing influence but relied on force. Meanwhile indigenous society, with the growth of nationalism, claimed cultural authenticity as the real seat of legitimacy. This split public, held together by coercion as well as by consent, was one in which neither segment of the public was transparent

to the other. Each believed that its claims trumped those of the other's, but the contest was not one that could be adjudicated in rational terms. Postcolonial development extended this dynamic, by virtue of the demands of modernization, with the difference that voters could now elect who would govern them. The idea of a split public grasps this process of productive misrecognition as a key dialectic shaping and reshaping these agonistic spaces (Rajagopal, 2001).

Spectacle, Commodity, and the Labor of Seeing

We have seen that the teleological thrust of most varieties of media studies order themselves by technology (e.g., print, radio, cinema, television). Below, I speculate on what media, both as perceptual ensemble, and as furthering market logics, that is, as both technology and commodity, might reveal about emergent postcolonial political forms.

A noteworthy critical argument that theorized the shift in the character of visibility in late capitalism is Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, a text that continues to resonate more than a half century after it was written. Debord argued that everyday life had dissolved into a series of spectacles that claimed to unify the world through their representation of it. The spectacle was an extension of the commodity, he wrote, and as such was an expression of the alienation of expressive from productive life and of capital's domination over living labor. However, the distinguishing feature of the society of the spectacle, as Debord defined it, was that the commodity had succeeded in completely colonizing social life, so that commodification was coterminous with the known world (Debord, 1995).

Debord's argument linked knowledge and power as they manifested in the domain of perception. The spectacle claimed a fullness of representation, offering a transparent window onto the world. What the spectacle made visible was real, and what was invisible in the spectacle was neither real nor salient. The power of the spectacle was in fact that of regulating perception, of distinguishing between what was worth seeing and what could be ignored. Where the logic of commodification had extended to every sphere of life, what was excluded from the spectacle becomes insignificant, in this argument.

Debord's argument embedded visual perception (which in the Renaissance conception of seeing, presumed agency as a component) with a fairly durable epistemic regime where the scope for anyone to intervene was limited at best.¹⁵ This was because, according to Debord, extensive

socio-technical apparatuses of communication already encoded the place of individual observers within them, and anticipated their response. Truth or accuracy of depiction were less relevant criteria of perception than the extent to which existing circuits of communication “recognized” what was sought to be circulated, and assisted in the propagation of those elements that enhanced capital accumulation and reinforced “the spectacle.”

The Society of the Spectacle is a polemical rather than a dispassionate text. It presents an analysis whose totalizing force is more provocative than it is precise. It responded to a context, namely post–World War II Europe, which Debord saw as pacified by Americanization following the Allied victory and the ensuing Marshall Plan. In this sense it was an early critical response to media globalization from within the West.¹⁶

A significant portion of the world’s population, however, lives outside a fully commoditized market economy, and relies for its sustenance on other sources such as land, or on non-market relations of charity, servitude, welfare, and so forth. This is not to say that they are therefore altogether insulated from the modern world, and from what Debord calls the spectacle. The extensive reach of government agencies through a range of service and surveillance functions (including welfare), and the profusion of both state and non-state communicational programs, for example in a country like India, from religious festivals and election propaganda to marketing campaigns, leave few if any untouched. In such contexts, images reproduced by various technological means have become familiar now, although more so in urban areas, from cell phones to the cinema, television and video, to say nothing of billboards, periodicals, and posters (Rajagopal, 2010, pp. 209–28).

The spectacle in such contexts is not so much an extension of commodity logic as it is a site where heterogeneous factors are brought together to enhance the marketability of the commodity. Here, the spectacle itself cannot adjudicate the contest between its constituent elements. The power of these elements vis-à-vis each other is decided externally, for example by frames of perception inculcated over time that separate what requires notice from what can be ignored, and through contingencies attending the image’s passage across society. Just as the circulation of commodities emphasizes exchange value over use value, and abstract labor over real labor, the circulation of the commodity image appears to absorb the real labor of seeing into the abstraction of consumers whose viewing time generates value.¹⁷ As we know, however, the reproduction of capital can be assumed, but that does not insulate it from the contingencies of history and politics, which in fact provide no guaranteed outcome.

It is helpful here to disarticulate issues of perception and its effects from the political economic context, which for Debord is the relatively undifferentiated milieu of late capitalism. These topics are conflated in Debord's expansive use of his concept of the spectacle.

Wolfgang Haug's concept of the commodity image suits the purpose, signaling the interconnections between perception and political economy, but allowing them to be considered separately. In his argument, the commodity image is designed to enhance the commodity in an expressive space that is contiguous with the economic but not reducible to it. While Haug posits a relation between commodity and image that is functional to capitalism, his concept of "commodity aesthetics" points to a cultural domain in which the rules of the economy apply, but not exclusively. Debord's argument about the spectacle aims to provide an account of late capitalism's dynamics as secured through its governing mode of perception. As such, the term serves not only to index this theory but also works as a concept that applies to different levels of abstraction, such as, specific images or scenes and ideological frames sutured together by visibility.¹⁸ However, where images form an aspect of a still-emergent public sphere, where the meaning of "publicness" is uncertain, they may provide a domain where the rules about what it is to see, and what there is to see, are worked out.¹⁹ In Marxian terms, the labor of seeing and the value placed on visibility in an emergent market economy are not apparent at the start, but are negotiated over time, in ways that it would be necessary to trace.

In that sense it is worth asking precisely what is foreclosed by Marx's understanding of commodity fetishism as the resignification of religious aura or affect. Marx argued, it will be recalled, that with the commodity taking on a life of its own, akin to a celestial being, human beings failed to realize that the economy was subject to human control, but instead granted it power over themselves.²⁰ Let us look, however, to a different context, where religious imagery and the commodity form together secure value for the product, as the commodity-image is itself interpellated into places of commerce and worship both. This is important because, in the subcontinent, religious imagery, commodity form, and public performance have long been allied.

The first images to be circulated on a large scale in South Asia were god pictures, in advertisements for goods and services such as in calendar art.²¹ When there were protests against the use of religious imagery, these were dismissed on the grounds that trade would suffer without the use of such representations.²² Such portraits did not document the external world, nor in themselves depict goods and services being sold. Rather, they ap-

peared as religious fetishes with an auratic power that helped sell products. Such aura added value to the commodity but also served to mystify it and, by so doing, *visualized the commodity fetish*. The spread of the commodity economy might have been eroding communal forms of production, but the commodity image was at the same time able to call up its prehistory, and in the process media technologies themselves acquired a magical aspect.

What this meant was that these technologies might have been seen as modernizing, but they were also imagined as providing access to the past, and to valorize a history that, if not already gone, was being erased as its idea was summoned and broadcast anew. The rapid growth of television in India following the telecast of Hindu epics on Doordarshan is perhaps the most dramatic recent example of this tendency, followed as we know by widespread attacks on Muslims and the ascendancy of overt Hindu majoritarianism, albeit with internal contradictions (Rajagopal, 2001). Something very different from the Foucauldian account of the modern optical regime occurs here. Communicative modernity is announced in the South Asian context not by the withdrawal of violence but by its greater visibility.

In contrast to the kind of arguments Jonathan Crary has made about the emergence of both expert and popular practices that helped socialize the destabilization of visual perception, and the way professional and managerial discussions sought to contain the effects of this crisis, elsewhere such destabilization tends to reverberate upward and downward, yoking the existential together with the national-political (Crary, 2001). The most crucial distinction to be marked here is that the context Crary focuses on, the consolidation of Western nation-states and the governmentalization of their populations, is accomplished by the early twentieth century, at least in relation to the rest of the world, which remained under colonial rule during the period he focuses on (mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries). Elsewhere, changes in perception and in politics tend more directly to be read through each other. As a result, the crisis of the perceiving subject, in the different ways it is experienced outside the West, telescopes into more generalized crises of self-making and nation-building, that reverberate with and compound each other. It is in the partial depiction and propulsion of this turbulence that any regularities of postcolonial visual culture must be found.

REFERENCES

- Appadurai, A. (2006). *Fear of small numbers: An essay on the geography of anger*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Benson, R. (2009). Shaping the public sphere: Habermas and beyond. *American Sociologist* 40 (3): 175–97.
- Brosius, C., Ramaswamy, S., & Saeed, Y., eds. (forthcoming). *Houseful? Image essays on South Asian popular culture from Tasveer Ghar*. New Delhi: Yoda Press.
- Calhoun, C. J. (2007). *Nations matter: Culture, history, and the cosmopolitan dream*. London: Routledge.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2007). The two histories of capital. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference* (pp. 47–71). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Chatterjee, P. (1986). *Nationalist thought and the colonial world: A derivative discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Chatterjee, P. (2004). *The politics of the governed: Reflections on popular politics in most of the world*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Crary, J. (2001). *Suspensions of perception: Attention, spectacle, and modern culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Curtin, M. (2007). *Playing to the world's biggest audience: The globalization of Chinese film and TV*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dandekar, A., & Choudhury, C. (2010). *PESA, left-wing extremism and governance: Concerns and challenges in India's tribal districts*. Anand: Institute of Rural Management.
- Debord, G. (1995). *The society of the spectacle*. New York: Zone Books.
- Elias, N. (1978). *The civilizing process: Sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Foster, H. (1988). *Vision and visibility*. Seattle, WA: Bay Press.
- Fox, E., & Waisbord, S. R. (2002). *Latin politics, global media*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Freitag, S. B. (2007). South Asian ways of seeing, Muslim ways of knowing. *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 44 (3): 297–331.
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The Structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (trans., T. Burger). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Haug, W. F. (1986). *Critique of commodity aesthetics: Appearance, sexuality, and advertising in capitalist society*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Jain, K. (2007). *Gods in the bazaar: The economies of Indian calendar art*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Latour, B. (1986). Visualization and cognition: Drawing things together. *Knowledge and Society: Studies in the Sociology of Culture, Past and Present* 6:1–40.
- Lee, C.-C., ed. (2003). *Chinese media, global contexts*. London: Routledge.
- Lerner, Daniel. (1958). *The passing of traditional society: Modernizing the Middle East*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Masselos, J. (2006). A goddess for everyone: The mass production of divine images. In J. Menzies, ed., *Goddess divine energy* (pp. 147–87). Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales.
- McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Nelson, R. S. (2000). Descartes's cow and other domestications of the visual. In R. S. Nelson, ed., *Visibility before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as others saw* (pp. 1–21). New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Pinney, C. (2004). *Photos of the gods: The printed image and political struggle in India*. London: Reaktion.
- Rajagopal, A. (2001). *Politics after television: Hindu nationalism and the reshaping of the public in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rajagopal, A. (2005). Imperceptible perceptions in our technological modernity. In C. Wendy & K. Thomas, eds., *Old media, new media* (pp. 275–85). New York: Routledge.
- Rajagopal, A. (2008). Violence, publicity, and sovereignty. Retrieved from <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/12/15/violence-publicity-and-sovereignty>.
- Rajagopal, A. (2009). Beyond media therapy. *Television & New Media* 10 (1): 130–32.
- Rajagopal, A. (2010). The strange light of postcolonial enlightenment: Mediatized form and publicity in India. In C. Siskin & W. Warner, eds., *This is enlightenment: An invitation in the form of an argument* (pp. 209–28). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ramaswamy, S. (2010). *The goddess and the nation: Mapping Mother India*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ramnarayan, G. (2004). No easy answers, *The Hindu*, 5 September.
- Report of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce for the year 1915*. (1916). Bombay: Bombay Chamber of Commerce.
- Servaes, J., ed. (2008). *Communication for development and social change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Siegel, J. T. (1998). *A new criminal type in Jakarta: Counter-revolution today*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- van der Veer, P. (2010). The visible and the invisible in South Asia. In Meerten B. ter Borg & Jan Willem van Henten, eds., *Powers: Religion as a social and spiritual force* (pp. 103–15). New York: Fordham University Press.
- Vasudevan, R. S. (2010). *The melodramatic public: Film form and spectatorship in Indian cinema*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vasudevan, R. S., Thomas, R., Majumdar, N., & Biswas, M. (2010). A vision for screen studies in South Asia. *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 1 (1): 5–9.
- Vieira, S., Martin, W. G., & Wallerstein, I. M. (1992). *How fast the wind? Southern Africa, 1975–2000*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

NOTES

1. The term “securocratic regime” is from Vieira, Martin, & Wallerstein (1992), p. 205. For a discussion of some of the cultural dynamics attendant on such a context, see Appadurai (2006).
2. On the Mumbai terror attacks, see Rajagopal (2008). For the most authoritative recent survey of the Maoist issue, see Dandekar & Choudhury (2010).
3. Hal Foster distinguishes vision from visuality: the former refers to the mechanism of sight and the datum of vision, the latter refers to its historical techniques and discursive determinations. See Foster (1988), p. ix.
4. On the most significant visual surveillance initiative in recent times, see “UIDAI Strategy Overview,” Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), Planning Commission, Government of India, April 2010.

5. The internal variety within and among South Asian ways of seeing is not as yet something about which a great deal has been written. For one of the few recent essays addressing the subject, exploring the question in relation to Muslims, see Freitag (2007).

6. For an argument about the pervasiveness of secrecy at the heart of publicity in relation to state-sponsored violence in Indonesia, see Siegel (1998).

7. See Chatterjee (2004). Chatterjee does not explore the relationship between civil and political society, and thus ignores the existence of the many forms of connection, including media circuits, that cut across the divide he argues for.

8. See in this connection the interview with the poet Arun Kolatkar in Ramnarayan (2004).

9. I have made this argument vis-à-vis television in Rajagopal (2001). For a relevant critical discussion, see Benson (2009).

10. Whereas the contractual agent engages in exchange out of interest, and is not personally modified by the act of exchange, the communicative act transforms the person engaging in discourse over time. Habermas responds to this problem by arguing that personally transforming communication is intimate and remains in the private sphere, unlike rational-critical communication (Habermas, 1991).

11. In this context, see van der Veer (2010). For a shift in the domain of etiquette corresponding to the new secrecy of punishment, see Norbert Elias on the growth of shame attending the display of hitherto “public” practices that began to be considered private in the early modern era (Elias, 1978).

12. Note that the difference between the claims of modernist vision and its uneven instantiation in the colonies is the outcome of the culturalization of colonial politics as well as of the resulting politicization of the culture concept. What I am describing here are practices that willy-nilly created the effect of a temporal and developmental divide between a society organized around a particular politics of vision and one that was fractured by diverse visual practices.

13. See Calhoun (2007) for an incisive analysis of the failures of nationalist universalism.

14. I refer to Partha Chatterjee’s seminal argument, outlined in its initial version in Chatterjee (1986).

15. For an argument about the relevance of the Renaissance in making the conditions of modern visibility possible, see Nelson (2000), pp. 1–21.

16. For an important discussion of critical perspectives on media globalization and the question of development, see Servaes (2008).

17. See in this context Dipesh Chakrabarty’s distinction between real and abstract labor in Chakrabarty (2007), pp. 47–71.

18. On the commodity image and commodity aesthetics, see Haug (1986), for example, p. 8.

19. Bruno Latour defines a new visual culture in terms of understanding “what it is to see, and what there is to see” (Latour, 1986).

20. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, chap. 1, section 4, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof.” <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#S4>. Accessed 6 October 2010.

21. See my essay, “The Commodity Image in the (Post) Colony,” published in

2010 in tasveerghar.net, in Brosius, Ramaswamy, and Saeed (forthcoming). The appearance of religious imagery appears to be prior to that of non-religious imagery in advertising and packaging. See Masselos (2006), pp. 146–51.

22. See, e.g., “Use of Hindu Mythological Pictures as Designs for Trademarks,” *Report of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce for the year 1915*, pp. 67–68. Also Masselos (2006), pp. 148–49.