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Myths of Media and Audiences

Vossiuspers AUP

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Myths of Media and Audiences

Inaugural lecture

delivered June 23rd 2000
on the accession of appointment to the chair in
General Communication Science
of the University of Amsterdam

by

Klaus Schönbach

VOSSIUSPERS AUP

*Zeer geachte dames,
mijnheer de Rector Magnificus,
spectabilis – mijnheer de Decaan,
zeer geachte heren,*

‘t Is een chagrijnige tijd – dat komt door de televisie.’¹ It is Simon Carmiggelt who provides the motto for my lecture this afternoon. In his ‘kroegverhalen’, his ‘pub stories’, of the 1950s and 60s, Carmiggelt describes an important sector of the Dutch culture, the community unified by beer and talk in the ‘bruine cafés’ of this city. In a story written before 1962, he makes a ‘neerslachtige man’, a depressed man, sigh into his beer: ‘These are sad times – that comes from television’ – a complaint that, in its sweepingness, sounds familiar even forty years later, doesn’t it?

I.

I myself confess guilty of contributing to one of the key myths about media and audiences, and this is because of the strange custom in Germany, known as the ‘Habilitation’. Scholars who want to be eligible for a full professor position are expected to undergo this rite of passage. It happened to me about eighteen years ago. One of the three tests I had to withstand was the ‘Habilitationsvortrag’, a 45-minute lecture that the candidate is supposed to prepare almost from scratch within three weeks. The professors in my faculty gave me the topic I had to discuss in that public lecture. Let me quote the title, ‘Consequences of the new media technology video cassette recorder: Disintegration of society or democratization of high culture?’ The VCR had just entered private homes at that time. Only about eight percent of the German households had one.² In my ‘Habilitation’ lecture of 1982, I

played safe. How? I simply predicted that VCR's would change everything and completely:³

- Firstly, media use would become even more fragmented;
- secondly, the VCR would cause the decay of public opinion and political reasoning;
- and thirdly, because of the video recorder, people would lose contact with the real world.

In sum, at that time I totally agreed with Marshal McLuhan. About ten years earlier, in 1971, McLuhan had predicted that 'cassette TV' (as it was named at the time) would, I quote, 'influence every part of our lives ... and finally overthrow the whole political, educational, and commercial establishment.'⁴ To play safe in my 1982 rite of passage, I followed McLuhan's example and simply recounted one of the most popular myths of media and their audiences: the myth of 'the dangerous new medium'.

II.

Why do I call my predictions about the VCR now, in the year 2000, a myth, and not simply false? Because that's what they were: Video recorders all over the Western world are an almost negligible media technique nowadays – in terms of time spent with them and importance attributed to them.⁵

Myths want to explain the world. They address the great and timeless questions of mankind: Where do we come from, where do we go, who are we? *Creation* myths come to mind and the purpose of numinosity in our lives. But we also encounter more down-to-earth myths – about why we use fire, how come that we bake bread, why do mountains, trees and animals look the way they do?⁶ Those statements about the world that we call myths, and not simply explanations or predictions, share some peculiarities. Let us look at two of them, for a start:

Firstly, myths follow simple and recurring patterns. Don't be misled by the fact that they are sometimes clad into long and sophisticated stories – such as the Greek *Ilias* or the Indian *Mahabharata*, for instance. But their mythical core, i.e., the ex-

planations of the world that they provide, are straightforward cause-and-effect chains, often clearly personalized:

- We do not live in paradise anymore because Adam and Eve ate the apple.
- The Greeks won the Trojan war because of the trick with the horse.
- The Amsterdam of the Middle Ages became more successful than the city of Utrecht because the bishop of Utrecht charged higher taxes.⁷

Claude Levi-Strauss tells us that typical for the clear-cut structure of myths is their ‘binarism’⁸ – the juxtaposition of two principles, such as clever and dumb, big and small, high and low, arrogant and modest, and, of course, good and bad, the basic Manichaeism that many myths share.

A *second* characteristic of myths is that they are without any systematic proof of their truth. Myths about historical developments, of course, often *cannot* be verified anymore. Typically, however, we feel that the core message of myths does not *have* to be proven – because myths do not *intend* to describe an objective reality. Instead, their truth is ‘para-historical’⁹ – they are not supposed to explain rationally one or the other event or phenomenon, but to represent our ‘collective unconscious’, as C.G. Jung suggested. This, however, is why myths are not *fairy tales* either: They are often common-sensical, plausible, and convincing.

III.

My predictions about the VCR in 1982 fulfilled those two criteria for myths: They were simple stimulus-response assumptions about the consequences of video use and without any real evidence, but with a natural self-assuredness that I derived from a recurring tale: the ‘dangerous-new-medium’ story. It goes like this: ‘What can we expect from a new media technique? As all new media techniques, the VCR is inevitably dangerous.’ That was the core of my message.

The myth of the ‘dangerous new medium’ is centered around a topos that is at least as old as the art of writing as a communication technique:¹⁰

- According to Plato's *Phaidros*, it was Socrates who complained about the decline of memory because of the new medium 'written texts' and about the treacherous nature of black marks on white.
- In the late seventeenth century, concerned observers such as Ahasver Fritsch¹¹ and Caspar von Stieler¹² expressed their sorrows about the destruction of the natural order because servants were reading those *newspapers* instead of serving their masters.
- Deep concerns have accompanied the rise of the movies, of radio and television and now come up again with the Internet. In a recent article in *de Volkskrant*, two communication consultants made us aware of the dangers of the Internet. It is bad for the environment because shopping on the Net increases the number of delivery trucks. In addition, the Internet chokes creativity, kills organizations and leads to financial catastrophes.¹³

I do not want to say that those fears about new media and new communication techniques have all been unsubstantiated. What is striking about them, however, and my VCR-phobia of 1982 was no exception, is their ritualistic structure. When a new medium appears on the horizon, we often do not cautiously infer one or the other experience with one or the other older medium; instead we *know* already. Our American colleagues, Ellen Wartella and Byron Reeves, describe a somehow blind, recurring *sequence* of fears related to the advent of new communication developments:¹⁴

- At first, new media are seen as harming the *senses* involved: our *eyes*, because watching television, but formerly also reading, is not good for them, and our *ears*, because using the telephone, listening to the radio and now to the Walkman makes us deaf. Some of us may still remember the efforts to protect our eyes against television in the 1950s. We were asked to watch only from a certain distance and with a lamp placed behind the TV set. A thin gold foil coating the TV screen was supposed to block dangerous radiation.
- Then, in a second step, *psychological* fears come to the fore: New media and communication techniques make us nervous, aggressive or apathetic.
- Thirdly, and finally, there is the 'angst' of secular *societal* changes, such as Caspar von Stieler's seventeenth-century fear that servants may be too busy reading newspapers to fulfill their duties,¹⁵ and Joshua Meyrowitz' metaphor of the homelessness, the disintegration of the 'television society'.¹⁶ Neil Postman

warns us of even more apocalyptic dangers: Whole generations never become adults anymore. They remain childish because of TV.¹⁷ Robert McChesney is afraid of the information highway because it ‘encourages isolation, atomization, and marginalization of people in society.’¹⁸ Peter Sloterdijk thinks that the culture of reading and writing that had tamed and civilized us has now lost its final battle. Consequently the blood and the gore of the Roman amphitheater are returning via the audio-visual media, Sloterdijk says.¹⁹

By the way, some people think that these three steps are the typical sequence of fears of all major technical innovations – not only of media but also of railways, the electric light and nuclear power plants.

IV.

We sense where the myth of ‘the dangerous new medium’ comes from. Its basis, its ‘super code’, as Levi-Strauss calls it,²⁰ is a deeply rooted pessimism about the audience – a pessimism, so strong and self-evident, that until the 1940s, scholars hardly bothered to do systematic research on the effects of new media. The audience is seen as basically passive and defenseless, and hence easy to manipulate. Often, the audience does not even deserve our *compassion*, because the super code behind the myths of media and their manipulated viewers, readers and listeners comprises a *lazy* public. If it had its will, it would neither work nor study nor play with the children nor mow the lawn, but always watch television. Because, unfortunately, the media can take advantage of the weakness of the flesh that so often overwhelms the willing spirit.

For instance, the audience falls for *pictures*. This is a recurring topos of decline, as old as civilization: ‘You shall make for yourself no idol’, the iconoclasm of eighth-century Byzantium, the animosity against depictions during the Reformation. This is why television, for many of us and without any doubt, cannot be anything else than the most powerful medium for those lazy people out there – in fact another widespread *myth* of media and audiences.²¹

Consequently, in the 1970s, there were serious predictions that the time spent on watching television would be a linear function of the expanding offer of programs available. Thus our exposure would double, even triple with the intro-

duction of cable TV, VCRs and commercial channels²² – a powerful myth, the sweeping and unquestioned proposition that supply always creates demand; that the stupid audience always uses whatever is offered to it. And if there is more of it, the audience uses more – regardless of whether it is useful or harmful.

A defenseless and lazy audience as a ‘super code’ also explains why anything new offered by the media is often regarded as ever less demanding and increasingly trivial. Moreover, new content even drags the old content down. Catchwords are ‘dumbing down’ and ‘tabloidization’.²³ As a consequence, it is believed that the media offer as a whole converges to the lowest common denominator. But empirical proof for a general *decline* of that kind is not overly convincing. Instead, we observe an increasing *differentiation* of the mass media where news and information channels find their place. Newspapers seem to be successful just because they decide *not* to become tabloids, as our studies in the United States and in Germany show.²⁴ And the current research of our Amsterdam colleague Jan van Cuilenburg makes us aware that there is no *linear* relationship: It is not the increasing number of media offers that determine the quality of what is produced, but the structure of their competition.

V.

But fortunately myths are not only pessimistic or gloomy. We also find the opposite, an optimistic, notion of a fruitful, enlightening relationship between public and media, often with an audience that intelligently decides what is best for it:

- Despite his fears in the late seventeenth century, Caspar von Stieler knew that people *learn* something from the new medium newspaper.²⁵
- And, as early as in his book of 1795, *Über Zeitungen*, Joachim von Schwarzkopf makes us aware of another important function of newspapers: They help us focus our attention on the important issues of a society.²⁶
- In the nineteenth century, two famous social scientists from France hated to admit that the audience is not powerless at all but forces the newspapers of their time to address the topics the public finds important: Gabriel Tarde, in his study *L'opinion et la foule*²⁷ and Gustave Le Bon in his work on the psychology of the masses.²⁸

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- One of my predecessors here at the University of Amsterdam, Kurt Baschwitz, emphasized in the 1920s the impact of an independent and intelligent audience on the media and stated in his book *Der Massenwahn, seine Wirkung und seine Beherrschung* that the power of the press over its readers is a ‘superstition’.²⁹
- Beginning in the 1940s, mass communication scholars acknowledge that the audience seems to use the whole range of media offers intelligently. According to that tradition, the one of the ‘uses-and-gratifications’ approach to media reception, media serve as windows to the world, as a source of learning and advice, as escape and as instruments to get into a better mood – all because an independent, active public deliberately and consciously wants it that way.
- In 1964, Raymond A. Bauer praised the obstinate audience – people who know exactly what they seek and who pursue their goals. They mercilessly block off what they do not want to see, hear or read.³⁰ It is an audience that may even construct its own reality, using mass media content as an inspiration only.

At first sight, the intelligent, sovereign audience seems to serve as the ‘super code’ for the opposite of the ‘dangerous-new-medium’ myth. Side by side with that pessimistic myth we find its counterpart, the ‘wonderful new medium’ – new media will set us free, open the way for a more egalitarian and just social order:

- In 1922, Walter Lippmann expected us to become wiser once we had access to all the new information possibilities of his time.³¹
- Bertolt Brecht’s *Radiotheorie* of 1932 was a plea for using of what he called the new medium’s tremendous possibilities for political participation.³²
- Think of the hopes for educating and activating the audience through movies and later through television. The easiness and vividness of TV would help children to learn what written texts had made inaccessible for them, Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince assumed in 1958.³³
- Cable television is even good for family life, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, my promoter, claimed.³⁴
- As opposed to my gloomy view of 1982, some devotees even heralded *video recorders* as the ultimate instrument to emancipate the audience from the hegemony of the TV stations, enabling video users to be their own movie directors.³⁵

Not only fears, but also great hopes are accompanying the new media of the year 2000, the Internet, ‘enhanced’ television (with a lot of extra information available to viewers) and finally interactive TV.³⁶ The idea is that the audience of the mass media has been eager to be active for centuries, if not millennia. It has been impatiently waiting to be freed. Now it can finally decide about camera angles in football games, about happy ends in movies; it may click on hyperlinks in a newscast in order to access a wealth of archival materials. Traditional newspapers will finally be replaced by my personal ‘Daily Me’, as Nicholas Negroponte has put it. He waits for an individualized newspaper that caters only to what *I* am interested in.³⁷

A closer look at the myth of the ‘wonderful new medium’ reveals that it is often not as optimistic about the audience as it claims to be. It actually mirrors the ‘*dangerous-new-medium*’ myth – side-inverted. It is again based on the conviction that if technology provides us with new opportunities, we will inevitably use them, now to our best, of course. If there is information, we will be informed; if there is interactivity, we will be interactive. This is probably why those positive myths on media and their audiences are often expressed in a negative way, as disappointed hopes:

- Either, the media are blamed for not having enlightened us, for not having created the multicultural society, for not having stopped the discrimination of minorities – although they could have *manipulated* us to our own best.
- Or, we, the audience, are blamed because: Why are we not using those wonderful, enlightening media offers out there? I think because we are often ‘intelligently lazy’, as Paul Virilio calls it.³⁸ Or to put it in more sophisticated terms: We are cognitive misers, expending the minimum amount of effort to be informed and entertained.³⁹ Cees de Bruin, director of ICT at NOS, puts it this way: ‘Waarom zou je zelf willen bepalen hoe een soap afloopt? Mensen denken al snel: hou toch op met dat gezeur.’⁴⁰

VI.

We seem to encounter two families of myths on media and their audiences – myths that claim to believe in the audience, and myths that distrust the audience. These two categories of myths are obviously based on fundamental notions of human nature:

- One is the conviction that human beings are basically egotistic and violent. This is a ‘Menschenbild’ that, among others, Thomas Hobbes has elaborated on. He suggested that human nature has to be tightly controlled, tamed, even broken, to make social life possible.
- The other notion maintains that mankind is essentially good, at least means well – a standpoint that Jean-Jacques Rousseau has so eloquently defended.

Sadly, Rousseau was a little afraid of his own courage. Yes, we are good, but do we know what goodness means in practice? Thus, not only Hobbes but also Rousseau asks for educating human beings – not to break their *savage* character, of course, but to help them return to their *innocent* natural state. A century later, Rousseau’s doubts re-emerged in historic materialism: Essentially, we are good – but only if culture, or in Marxist terms, the conditions of societal production, encourage us to do what we should genuinely want. Consequently, the Frankfurt School asked, ‘*Can the audience want?*’ Theodor W. Adorno was concerned about an audience that is kept in a ‘*fremdverschuldete Unmündigkeit*’, estranged from itself by the capitalist system; a public that needs to be told, even to be freed, by those who know better.⁴¹

VII.

Myths are necessary. Although we may be fully aware of the metaphorical and ritualistic nature of our myths about media and audiences, we do not want to let go of the explanations they offer. Roland Barthes rightly alerts us: *Our relationship to myths is not determined by their truth but by their use.*⁴² The so-called ‘videomalaise’ is an example for a myth that we do not want to leave, although it is probably the only myth on media and audiences that was definitely withdrawn by its creator. In the mid-1970s, Michael Robinson had claimed that television creates cynicism, even alienation, among its seemingly defenseless viewers.⁴³ After heavy criticism of his methodology and a series of falsifications,⁴⁴ Robinson, who was working at the Catholic Georgetown University, felt obliged to officially revoke his ‘videomalaise’ argument, but that did not help. The idea was too tempting, too deeply entrenched in our pessimistic view of the audience, to really be abandoned. In any case, major parts of the videomalaise concept resurrected, seemingly unharmed, about twenty years later – under the title ‘Out of order’⁴⁵ – and have been popular ever since.

Myths are often tools for intervention in the public sphere, and are often tied to efforts at social and political action. Myths about the blessings of information technology have certainly been important in mobilizing those who have sought to build the Internet, and pessimistic myths have been used by those who want to get the public and policy-makers to pay attention to negative social consequences.⁴⁶

The German philosopher Hans Blumenberg even suggested that myths are indispensable for the *survival* of a species that is not adapted to one specific, self-explanatory environment, a species that has to *define* its 'Lebenswelt' instead, fill it with purpose, has to 'humanize reality'.⁴⁷ Claude Levi-Strauss said that the purpose of the continuous recounting of myths is to make sure that the unforeseeable future follows past and present as closely as possible.⁴⁸ He celebrates myths as the triumph of what we can see, smell and feel over scientific evidence that is often so complicated and seemingly counter-intuitive that it alienates us from the outside world.⁴⁹

Myths even serve an additional purpose, beyond providing us with reassuring explanations of the world. They make for good stories. This is what Jan Bremmer, the expert on Greek mythology and professor of religious history in Groningen, tells us.⁵⁰ Formerly those stories were enjoyed at the campfire, now at Carmiggelt's Amsterdam pubs. And those who share them know that they belong to a specific, if not special, group of people. This may be the reason why also the mythical stories about media and audiences are often clad in catchy, even poetic metaphors: 'The disappearance of childhood',⁵¹ 'The plug-in drug',⁵² 'Spiral of cynicism',⁵³ 'The early window',⁵⁴ 'No sense of place',⁵⁵ 'Rich media, poor democracy',⁵⁶ 'Amusing ourselves to death',⁵⁷ 'The unseeing eye',⁵⁸ 'The sound bite society'.⁵⁹

VIII.

These are good reasons for not questioning our myths too much. Even if we could, we often do not *want* to falsify them with reality. On the contrary, there are even strategies to *immunize* them:

- A very primitive one is described by Mircea Eliade. He found that myths often use the mere existence of the phenomenon to be explained as proof for the explanation: Doesn't the world exist? So, it had to be created by God.⁶⁰ Aren't

there violent kids, and don't they watch television? So, television makes them aggressive.⁶¹

- Another, more refined, strategy is to historicize myths after they have been narrated for centuries; we invent historical events that give proof of the myth. Levi-Strauss makes us aware of how the Romans began to decorate mythical stories long after they were first told.⁶² They did that by adding historical dates and names to them – so the *coup d'état* of the Roman bourgeoisie became the victory over a certain Tarquinius Superbus, and some Cincinnatus provided a name to virtuous citizens who readily give up farming when duty calls. Media research, too, has historicized its myths – for instance by erecting 'milestones',⁶³ historical turning points in our research: the Payne Fund studies on the influence of movies; the radio drama *War of the Worlds* in 1938; Hovland's study on persuasion, *The American Soldier*; Lazarsfeld's revelation of a two-step flow of communication during the presidential election campaign of 1940.
- A third immunization strategy is to use one myth to defend the other. The myth of the 'dangerous new medium' seems to be so deeply engrained in our minds that I am not sure whether you really believe me today when I refer to scientific evidence that video recorders are by far not as dangerous as I thought eighteen years ago. Many of us tend to react with a 'but': But *aren't* there people who *do* spend all their leisure time with VCRs? The unemployed, the neglected children, those who have never learned to appreciate reading a book? This defense actually draws from another myth of media and audiences: It is not you and I who are influenced by media, but only *other* people. This is the 'third-person' myth: You and I may watch pornography and violence, we can listen to silly pop songs and read comics without being harmed – but others beware!
- To protect our myths, we even use a fourth strategy: Some of the myths are virtually unfalsifiable – particularly those secular, catastrophic ideas about the consequences of new media for society. Their prophets have even given up the 'third-person' myth as a safe haven for the truth of their warnings. On the contrary: They do not concede anymore that their fears are only true for those hapless people out there. Instead, also you and I are affected by the childishness that Postman attributes to the television society⁶⁴ and the uncivilized brutality that Sloterdijk envisages.⁶⁵ This is exactly why those ideas are highly immune to falsification. Because the dangers are so omnipresent by definition, we are so

much part of them ourselves, that we apparently cannot take any *outside* stance to critically question them.

IX.

Myths on media and audiences have – ambivalent – consequences. Here are some examples of them:

- They confirm images. The ‘third-person’ myth, for instance, supports the stereotype of the dumb audience that has to be protected by us who know better.
- Pessimistic myths about new media developments are useful in countering another myth, that is that all technological change is inexorable, and that it is senseless to resist or question it.
- We may keep our children from watching TV altogether because of those myths.
- Parliaments pass laws to protect those out there from the bad influence of the mass media.
- Licenses for new TV and radio stations are based on myths, camouflaged as common knowledge about how dangerous certain content material is.
- The new criterion for controlling concentration in the German TV market is the viewing time for a specific station, an idea obviously based on a crude stimulus-response myth: The longer people watch a channel, the more dangerous that channel becomes.

These myths – good and bad – are often much stronger than scientific evidence. Many of us have been forced to answer questions such as: Is television bad for children? Do the media decide elections? Weren’t people formerly better informed? If we honestly reply ‘it depends’, and then want to talk about parameters and conditions, we are often not taken seriously. The myths of media and audiences in their simplicity are more convincing than the scientifically established but complicated answers. But of course, scholars, too, may have vested interests in maintaining myths of media and audiences. Only recently, Professor Jack McLeod, friend and colleague from the University of Wisconsin, found harsh words for the myths that our founding fathers Bernard Berelson and Joseph Klapper disseminated. They, McLeod says, wanted to propagate a stubborn audience and harmless

media: They ‘did their best to close the field and distort the meaning of effects in the service of protecting media industries. It took decades to overcome the damage they did to the field.’⁶⁶

If I as the professor of General Communication Science may offer not only my teaching and my research to you at our department in Amsterdam, but also a more principal contribution to the development of our field, then I want to work on some demythologization of the public discourse on media and their audiences. Social scientists should play the role of subjecting myths to scrutiny and criticizing their oversimplifications. It is certainly tempting to explain the world by simple horror stories or by happily ending fairy tales. It is also tempting to use myths as powerful tools in the public discourse. Unfortunately, the relations between media and audiences are complicated, and unfortunately, it is our duty as scientists to modestly tell complicated stories about them. That said, it should not keep us from wording our stories understandably and maybe even poetically...

X.

I mentioned how media research has historicized its own creation myths, the origins of our theories, by defining them as ‘milestones’ in hindsight. I cannot resist the temptation to end my lecture today with clarifying a myth involving my famous predecessor, Professor Denis McQuail. It is a myth that tells us how it all began with ‘agenda-setting’ research. We are told that, once upon a time, there was a ‘seminal’ study by McCombs and Shaw, published in 1972.⁶⁷ They were, the myth says, the first to empirically demonstrate that media make us aware of important issues in society. Some people even believe that it took till 1987 when a certain Shanto Iyengar became the father of agenda-setting research.⁶⁸ But both ‘milestones’ can easily be dismissed. Because agenda-setting research began with Denis McQuail’s work as early as in 1959, nine years before the study of McCombs and Shaw.

Many of us are familiar with the well known definition that Bernard Cohen came up with in 1963: ‘The press ... may not be successful much of the time in telling people *what* to think, but is stunningly successful in telling its readers *what* to think *about*.’⁶⁹ Two years earlier Denis McQuail and Joseph Trenaman, in their classic study of the 1959 general elections in Britain, *Television and the Political Image*, did not only present the first *empirical evidence* of the agenda-setting effects of the media.

To summarize their own findings in the 1959 study, McQuail and Trenaman even used the following words: ‘The evidence available suggests very strongly that people think *about* what they are told ... but at no level do they merely think *what* they are told.’⁷⁰ Amazing, isn’t it?

XI.

The ritual of an inaugural lecture not only reconfirms myths about the joys of academic life, but it is also an opportunity to thank those people who helped ensure that it marks the beginning of a new phase of teaching and research:

First of all, I want to thank Holli Semetko. She is a friend with whom I have worked for almost 15 years now at different places in this world. At the Amsterdam School of Communications Research, ASCoR, we are now doing a major cross-national study, funded by the NWO, the Dutch National Science Foundation, with an excellent team, including Professor Cees van der Eijk. Holli Semetko’s great negotiation skills and her persistence encouraged me greatly to work with *her* and many other and wonderful colleagues in Amsterdam now. Jan van Cuilenburg’s support was very important for my decision to come here. I thank him very much.

There are those people who now make sure that I can teach and do research – Otto Scholten and Sabine Ruitenbeek at the Onderwijsinstituut and Peter Neijens and Sandra Zwier at ASCoR. In the ASCoR domain ‘Media Audience Analysis’, which I have the honor to chair, we are building up a body of evidence to call into question the myths of media and their audiences. Let me also praise the staff in the library and our secretariats for facilitating my work. I want to thank all of you and my other colleagues who, from the start, made the Afdeling Communicatie-wetenschap not only an exciting but also an inspiring and rewarding place for me.

Edmund Lauf was already a creative and loyal colleague in Hannover. He has taken a big step to come and work here in Amsterdam, and I wish to thank him for that.

Professor Winfried Schulz from Nuremberg is here. He is my academic mentor and has had great influence on both my work and my attitude toward science – a chance to thank him today.

I also wish to thank all the friends and colleagues, all of you, who are honoring me today with your presence. Allen Freunden und Kollegen, die heute aus Deutsch-

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land und der Schweiz gekommen sind, möchte ich für die Ehre danken, die sie mir damit erweisen. Carin Mulie I wish to thank for helping me and my family tremendously to settle in. Maar ik wil ook de buren in de Watergraafsmeer, de Luths en de Jansen-Kwekkebooms, van harte bedanken voor hun warmte en vriendschap.

I am very happy about the presence of my brother, Karl Schönbach, a professor of physics, who flew in from the United States to be here today. Aber vor allem meiner Familie, Marianne und Christina, danke ich, dass sie das Wagnis eines anderen Landes und einer anderen Kultur so überzeugt, voller Aufbruchsgeist und Optimismus mit mir eingegangen sind.

Ik heb gezegd.

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Notes

- 1 Carmiggelt, 1984, p. 148.
- 2 Hackforth and Schönbach, 1985, p. 5.
- 3 Schönbach, 1982.
- 4 Quoted in *Newsweek*, 31 May 1971, p. 78.
- 5 See, e.g., Turecek, Grajczyk and Roters, 2000.
- 6 Levi-Strauss, 1980, p. 136.
- 7 Mak, 1994.
- 8 Levi-Strauss, 1980, p. 87.
- 9 Grant and Hazel, 1973, p. 5.
- 10 Becker and Schönbach, 1989a.
- 11 Fritsch, 1676.
- 12 Von Stieler, 1695.
- 13 Dijkshoorn and Loth, 2000.
- 14 Wartella and Reeves, 1983.
- 15 Von Stieler, 1695.
- 16 Meyrowitz, 1985.
- 17 Postman, 1982.
- 18 McChesney, 1999, p. 145; see also Wagner's criticism of those fears (1997).
- 19 Sloterdijk, 1999.
- 20 Levi-Strauss, 1980, p. 185.
- 21 See Schönbach, 1983.
- 22 See Becker and Schönbach, 1989b; Voltmer and Klingemann, 1993, p. 145.
- 23 See, e.g., Sparks and Tulloch, 2000.
- 24 Schönbach, 1997, 2000; McLeod, Scheufele, Holbert and Schönbach, 1998.
- 25 Von Stieler, 1695.
- 26 Von Schwarzkopf, 1795.
- 27 Tarde, republished in 1989.
- 28 Le Bon, republished in 1991.
- 29 Cited in Groth, 1928, p. 113.
- 30 Bauer, 1964.
- 31 Lippmann, republished in 1997.
- 32 Brecht, republished in 1968.
- 33 Himmelweit, Oppenheim and Vince, 1958; see also Schönbach, 1991.
- 34 Noelle-Neumann and Schulz, 1989; see also Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, and Voltmer and Klingemann, 1993, p. 147.
- 35 See Schmidt, 1999, p. 136; Fromm, 2000, p. 259.

- 36 See McChesney, 1999, p. 119 f.
- 37 See Schönbach, 1997b.
- 38 Virilio, 1998.
- 39 Schönbach, 1997b.
- 40 Giesen, 2000.
- 41 Adorno, 1963, republished in 1986.
- 42 Barthes, 1964; see also Brosius and Esser, 1998, pp. 356f.
- 43 Robinson, 1973.
- 44 See Schönbach, 1983, p. 39 ff.
- 45 Patterson, 1993.
- 46 I wish to thank Professor Daniel Hallin, University of California, San Diego, for his inspiring comments on the uses of myths as tools in the public discourse.
- 47 Blumenberg, 1996.
- 48 Levi-Strauss, 1980, p. 56.
- 49 Levi-Strauss, 1980, p. 18, 30.
- 50 Bremmer, 1996.
- 51 Postman, 1982.
- 52 Winn, 1977.
- 53 Cappella and Hall-Jamieson, 1997.
- 54 Liebert, Sprafkin and Davidson, 1982.
- 55 Meyrowitz, 1985.
- 56 McChesney, 1999.
- 57 Postman, 1985.
- 58 Patterson and McClure, 1976.
- 59 Scheuer, 1999.
- 60 Eliade, 1979.
- 61 See Schönbach, 1991.
- 62 Levi-Strauss, 1980, p. 200.
- 63 Lowery and DeFleur, 1983.
- 64 Postman, 1982.
- 65 Sloterdijk, 1999.
- 66 McLeod, 2000, p. 1.
- 67 McCombs and Shaw, 1972.
- 68 Iyengar, 1987.
- 69 Cohen, 1963, p. 13.
- 70 Trenaman and McQuail, 1961, p. 178.