

106 學年度中央大學英文系碩士班甄試入學考試

【筆試試題】

共 2 頁(採雙面印刷)

Below is an excerpt of "ISIS and the Spectacle of Terrorism: Resisting Mainstream Workstations of Fear" by Henry A Giroux. Please discuss first the author's argument and then extend his analysis to any aspect of cultural life involving the politics of fear.

The use of new digital technologies and social media by ISIS has drawn a great deal of attention by the dominant media not only because the extremists have used them as a form of visual terrorism to graphically portray the beheadings of captured American and British civilians, but also because of its alleged sophistication as a marketing tool. Examining ISIS's propaganda machine within a neoliberal frame of reference that responds to the latter in the language of the market does more than depoliticize the use of the media as a spectacle of terrorism; it also suggests that the new media's most important role lies in creating a brand...and producing a buzz among those individuals sympathetic to its violent, ideological vision. Power disappears in this analysis as the social media is stripped of its diverse sites and complex usages, defined largely in terms of its presence as a marketing campaign. What is missing is the recognition that as the link between the media and power becomes more integrated, the visual theater of terrorism mimics the politics of the "official" war on terrorism. Violence not only becomes performative, functioning as a kind of representational politics linked to the death drive, but it is also packaged so as to mimic the unbridled monopolization of pleasure now associated with extreme and sensational images of brutality and cruelty. Moreover, representational shocks and outrages are now presented as either legitimate sources of entertainment or as part of a survival-of-the-fittest ethic endemic to neoliberal spectacles of misery, all of which are used by the major cultural apparatuses to flood the culture in spectacularized images of violence and graphic displays of terrorism. It should come as no surprise that when mainstream media report on the bombing of ISIS targets in Syria and Iraq they accompany their comments with images of the actual bombings as if the viewer were looking at a video game.

Echoing the discourse of the "official" war on terrorism, the violence of extremist groups such as ISIS is produced almost exclusively within the vocabulary of moral absolutes pitting good against evil. Ironically, this is a binary discourse that mirrors a similar vocabulary used in the interest of the national security-surveillance state and the corporate sponsored war machines of battle-ready domestic and global forces of repression. What is clear is that the spectacle of terrorism trades in moral absolutes whether it makes such claims in the name of religion or human rights. This friend/enemy distinction wipes out any sense of uncertainty, need for thoughtful debate, and reason itself...This is a dangerous binary because it closes down questions of history, politics, power, justice and the ethical imagination while legitimating revenge and militarism through the language of an unchecked moralism...[I]f the sheer brutality and barbarism of ISIS did not exist, it would have to be invented by the United States.