

■ Communication

- 29-6103** HD5325 90-23351 CIP
Goldman, Robert. **Mapping hegemony: television news coverage of industrial conflict**, by Robert Goldman and Arvind Rajagopal. Ablex, 1991. 258p indexes ISBN 0-89391-697-8, \$47.50; ISBN 0-89391-819-9 pbk, \$24.95

On the premise that "television news reports are structured by a concept of the audience they address," the authors set forth to establish a profile of that audience. Using semiotic theory to read the "subtexts" of selected television newscasts, an exhaustive study is done of the job performed by the networks in covering labor disputes, principally strikes. The number and duration of "soundbites" are charted to prove that the audience for labor stories on television is relatively small, uninterested, and underinformed. The tone here is harshly critical, not just of the television news industry which, it is pointed out, never "allocates a specialist reporter to the beat of industrial relations," but of the television audience itself. Perhaps both are justly criticized, but the methodology here could profit from input by many of the reporters whose stories on, for example, the 1977-1978 coal strike are cited. Nowhere are any of broadcast journalism's dominant figures consulted on the reasons behind their editorial decisions. Also not fully explored is the role of mega-businesses like NBC's current owner, General Electric, with a decided labor relations point of view. Still, beginning with the idea that "no research has previously addressed the question of how U.S. network television covers industrial-labor relations," this work is an interesting start.—A. J. Silvia Jr., *University of Rhode Island*

- 29-6104** PN4930 91-13964 CIP
Salwen, Michael B. **Latin American journalism**, by Michael B. Salwen and Bruce Garrison. L. Erlbaum, 1991. 227p bibl index ISBN 0-8058-0767-5, \$45.00; ISBN 0-8058-0768-3 pbk, \$22.50

Determining the best way to study a continent's press can induce migraines, for the country approach often is repetitious and loosely structured, the topical treatment blurred and homogenized, and the comparative analysis strained and ethnocentric. Salwen and Garrison have performed a craftsmanlike job of using all three approaches in this book. They blend many countries into a potpourri of the usual, as well as some refreshingly new, topics; generally avoid comparing the press of Latin America with that of the US; and organize chapters for convenience, providing abstracts, case studies, and "spotlights." The book's other strengths are a series of informative tables; an impressive bibliography of more than 450 items, which are precisely integrated into the text, and a rather balanced treatment that digests left and right viewpoints. Some sections need elaboration or additional perspectives, especially on the New World Information and Communication Order and development journalism. These shortcomings resulted because the authors concentrated too frequently on the writings of US theorists. For example, numerous scholars condemned the old development paradigm long before Rogers's 1976 renouncement; and development journalism, originally on honorable concept, was coined in Asia years before it was bastardized by governments. The book also suffers because the minimal original research was conducted in Miami, not in Latin America. Nevertheless, this is a very valuable addition to area studies; in fact, the very best book on Latin American journalism.—J. A. Lent, *Temple University*

■ Language & Literature

- 29-6105** PN81 91-18260 CIP
Battersby, James L. **Paradigms regained: pluralism and the practice of criticism**. Pennsylvania, 1991. 306p bibl index afp ISBN 0-8122-3127-9, \$32.95

Inside this fat and wordy book, there is a thinner, more specific and targeted argument that Battersby (Ohio State University) fails to distill. Observing the misguided decorum often practiced by American pluralism, Battersby decides not to "key discussions to particular [authors and] arguments" in contemporary theory. Instead, he seeks to outline a viable plu-

ralism, yet he cannot do so without attacking an unspecific "theory" to which he imputes beliefs and claims that he misconstrues. This damages a book that makes valuable contributions, for example in its argument on behalf of "intentionality," its insistence on the indispensability of some notion of reference, above all in its grasp of the centrality of "interest" to meaning-making. The section on "map"-making exemplifies the book's strengths and weaknesses; among the latter, the most important is its confusion of the intelligible with the persuasive. Here, E. Rooney's *Seductive Reasoning: Pluralism as the Problematic of Contemporary Literary Theory* (CH, Dec'89) would have proved a very useful corrective. Recommended to the larger undergraduate libraries, essential for research institutions.—K. Tölölyan, *Wesleyan University*

- 29-6106** PN56 91-8595 CIP
Black, Joel. **The aesthetics of murder: a study in romantic literature and contemporary culture**. Johns Hopkins, 1991. 276p index afp ISBN 0-8018-4180-1, \$42.50; ISBN 0-8018-4181-X pbk, \$14.95

In spite of its intriguing title, this book touches on detective fiction in only the most tangential way. Instead, Black discusses those examples of mimetic literature (such as DeQuincy's "On Murder Considered as a Fine Art" and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*) that present the concept of murder as an aesthetic act and not a moral dilemma. The threads of his theme involve mass-media reporting of murder and violence, graphic portrayals of death, Alfred Hitchcock's suspense films, Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, and the assassinations and near-assassinations of celebrities. The second half of the book is taken up by an account of the murder of John Lennon by Mark David Chapman, and the attempted murder of President Ronald Reagan by John Hinckley, Jr. Black argues for these events as having been conditioned by our culture at the same time as they were presented to us through the media. Thus, there becomes a very intimate interplay between life and art in which art stimulates the murderer to recreate the fiction in the reality. It is difficult not to find more than a germ of truth in the juxtaposition of examples from both realms to support the dense reasoning. Extensive notes, but no separate bibliography. Recommended for large academic libraries.—J. R. Cox, *St. Olaf College*

- 29-6107** PR756 91-17637 CIP
Contesting the subject: essays in the postmodern theory and practice of biography and biographical criticism, ed. by William H. Epstein. Purdue, 1992. 251p (The theory and practice of biography and biographical criticism, 1) index afp ISBN 1-55753-018-1, \$30.50

In his book *Recognizing Biography* (CH, Jan'88), Epstein (University of Arizona) pioneered the scrutiny of life-writing using postmodern techniques. As the insightful editor of this volume of 11 original essays by qualified contemporary scholars of biography as an art form, he continues vigorously to challenge the traditional humanistic approach to biography. He intends this substantive first work in a new series in the theory and practice of biography to be read not as a resistance to, but as an affirmation of a continuing faith in the biographical. With uneven degrees of success the essayists tackle a number of thorny aspects of life-writing, including the vexing problem of subjectivity to feminists critics, the apparent conservative stance of biography as a defender of the cultural status quo, and the need for remapping of postmodern expressions of the biographical in academic discourse. Sharon O'Brien (Dickinson College) on feminist theories and literary biography, Rob Wilson (University of Hawaii) on the form of American biography, and Steven Weiland (Michigan State University) on Erik Erikson as a biographer are the better reasoned presentations. As with all revolutionaries, the authors succumb to employing artificial verbiage, forcing the reader, even the subject-informed, to parse sentences to grasp the meaning of the words of these contesters of "new-critical and structuralist repressions of biographical discourse." Although this book provides some greatly needed elucidation of what is meant by "contesting the subject," it may be fully digested only by the dedicated student of biography.—R. F. Cayton, *emeritus, Marietta College*