

**BRITISH MEDIA AND THE SHAPING OF POLITICAL IDENTITY IN PHILIP
PURSER'S *THE TWENTYMEN***

SILUE Ténéna Mamadou
English Department
British Literature and Civilisation
Université Alassane Ouattara, Bouaké (Côte d'Ivoire)
Email: silue_tenena@yahoo.com

Abstract:

In the post-war British political history, the media have always played an important role in shaping the daily profiles of the different British Prime Ministers. Journalists mold aspects of their political life, pinpointing how they define themselves, how people perceive them, and how they shape their political ideology. The media hold an instrumental and powerful role in determining the British Prime Ministers' political identity. Building upon Antonio Gramsci's concept of "Civil Society" and Louis Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus, this paper seeks to demonstrate how the BBC and the British daily newspapers shape the elites' political identity, their electoral victory in Philip Purser's *The Twentymen*. Specifically, we will argue that the BBC and other media draw upon the discourse of interpellation to build some leader's personality as heroes. The media promote the selected candidate in order to facilitate his electoral victory. We will also analyse the way in which the novel offers an anti-hegemonic discourse to the government's use of media in the shaping of its political, institutional and legislative power.

Keywords: BBC, British media, civil society, hegemony, Political Identity, Ideological State Apparatus (ISAs), Interpellation

Résumé : Dans l'histoire politique britannique de l'après-guerre, les médias ont toujours joué un rôle important dans la formation des profils quotidiens des différents premiers ministres britanniques. Les journalistes façonnent certains aspects de leur vie politique, de la façon dont ils se définissent à la façon dont les gens les perçoivent et prévoient leur idéologie politique. Les médias ont un pouvoir déterminant sur l'identité politique des Premiers ministres britanniques. Ainsi, à l'aide du concept de la "société civile" de Gramsci et du cadre conceptuel de l'appareil idéologique d'Althusser, cet article cherche à démontrer comment la BBC et les quotidiens britanniques construisent l'identité politique des élites jusqu'à leur victoire électorale à Westminster dans *The Twentymen* de Philip Purser. Plus précisément, nous soutenons que la

BBC et d'autres médias s'appuient sur le discours de l'interpellation pour construire la personnalité d'un dirigeant en tant que héros et candidat pro-coalition afin de faciliter sa victoire électorale. Nous analysons également la manière dont le roman offre un discours anti-hégémonique à l'utilisation des médias par le gouvernement dans la formation de son pouvoir politique, institutionnel et législatif.

Mots-clés: Appareil- Idéologique de l'Etat, BBC, Médias britanniques, Hégémonie, Identité politique, interpellation, Société civile

INTRODUCTION

British media in general and the BBC in particular have always shaped public opinion about their preferred candidate during British General elections. Arguing about the BBC's influence over the British people's socio-political identities, Robin Aitkin, the former BBC reporter and journalist says: "It is telling us about ourselves and the wider world" (2007: 7). Aitkin underlines the power of the BBC to influence and shape the national identity. In other words, the BBC calls upon British people in particular ways and instills thinking in specific ways about their identities, relationships with the outside world and their connection to their own socio-political institution.

Some books echo the burgeoning issue of the British media effect on leaders' political identity and citizens' voting behaviour. In *Politics and the Media*, Jean Seaton shows how media influence voters' attitude in the process of winning elections. John Street's *Mass Media, Politics and Democracy* views leaders' introduction to voters as a way of influencing the latter. Not only does Duncan watt's *Political Communication* provides an analysis of media's impact on voters but it also highlights media effects on elites' identity. These books have a common feature: they are reductionist. They fail to be more critical about the ideological power of media and its subsequent drawbacks.

In *The Twentymen*, Philip Purser highlights how the mass media effect is discussed in these aforementioned works. The novel also provides a critical analysis by focusing on the interpellation of broadcasting corporations. At issue in this novel is the fact that mass media epitomize a powerful ideological apparatus that is expert at political manipulation to boost candidates' political profile. This work seeks to provide a counter discourse to media influencing power.

Within the framework of Louis Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus (ISAs) paradigms, the paper suggests an analysis of Philip Purser's *The Twentymen*. As a paragon of Ideological States Apparatus, "mass media" is akin to an institution "which call [s] individuals in particular ways, prescribe[s] and enforce [s] thinking in specific ways about their identities"(Althusser, 2003: 199). In the Althusserian thinking, the British media could be seen as a force that sets unfair subjectivities on the masses. In the light of this theoretical framework, I will, first, argue that the BBC and other media use biased discourse of interpellation. Second, emphasis will be put on the civil society's anti-hegemonic discourse.

1- British Media's Biased Discourse of Interpellation

In the British broadcasting culture, media often organize some radio installments wherein the political elite seeks the vote of the masses. It is often an opportunity to question about their political programmes or the policies different politicians intend to implement. The aim of this discourse of interpellation is to boost the image of candidates on the basis of their good performance during the show. An important feature of this practice is the free speech of the masses and their free choice of the candidates that respond to their political ideals. Conversely in Purser's *The Twentymen*, the model of discourse of interpellation is totally biased. In effect, during the course of the debates, the relation between the broadcasters (studiomen under the aegis of the elites) and the masses is disrupted. The reason for this unrest is that the studiomen display a preference for a specific candidate and works for the victory of the latter to the disappointment of the masses. The following episode illustrates their state of mind:

Attacks on the broadcasting organizations were voiced in nearly every debate; and a charge of Contempt against a Panorama speaker had only just failed; the Postmaster-General had intimated, amid cheers from all sides of the house, that he was keeping close watch on the standard of reporting displayed by certain television commentators. (Purser, 1970: 15).

In the novel, Collin Panton the chief BBC studio producer and his co-workers are depicted throughout the story as "interpellated individuals"¹. In fact, their primary role is to prescribe a specific identity to the political elite Hurst in order to allow his victory at Westminster. Here, the BBC which serves as an aid and abettor in the ambition to seek to impose the views of a given candidate on potential voters suggests this radio corporation. On this account, it is akin

¹"interpellated individuals"¹ means subject of a specific political persona in Althusserian terms

to Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatus (ISAs). The BBC's comparison to ISAs indicates that this radio corporation is an apparatus, an institution that prescribes and enforces the thinking of one person on a whole community. What is most annoying here is that the ISAs want to make people adhere to the views of a candidate who does not seem to meet their assents. The general point labored here is that the interpellation discourse is a failed project because instead of letting voters make a free choice after the radio show, it adversely aims to boost the political profile of Hurst in the eyes of the masses.

According to Purser, the discourse of interpellation and ISAs go hand in hand. They both seem to represent the two sides of the same coin. Again, interpellation is assumed to be the patent manifestation of a latent dogma, that of ISAs. As a matter of fact in the novel, the fact that Postmaster-General shuts adverse opinions down on the pretext of "keeping close watch on the standard of reporting displayed by certain television commentators" (Purser, 1970: 15) displays the implementation of Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus. For Althusser, the discourse of interpellation is not only common with mass media practice in many modern capitalist societies but that it also permeates it to the point of its unfairness. For the French theoretician, when an individual is interpellated within Western contemporary societies, the latter is irremediably submitted to the dogma of ISAs because his ideas, his views and decisions are influenced by this apparatus. Ironically, he puts that a person interpellated is "free" so that he/she "freely accepts...subjection" (Althusser, 1978: 182). In the same vein in *The Twentymen*, when Postmaster-General diverts the adverse comments, he imposes on them his hegemonic view: a model of ISAs. Through this character, interpellation is only a free way of subjecting the masses to the policy of constriction of ISAs. Here, Purser contends that interpellation is a deliberate epistemological self-conscious process in that sense: the masses become aware of realities. They understand the political dynamics in such a way that does not allow freedom of choice. Also, the author of *The Twentymen* does not imagine a position or opinion of the masses from outside the realm of media. The attitude of the masses during interpellation is always dictated by hegemonic forces, sorts of backseat-drivers that have controlling influence. Althusser, who labored on this point, seems to accept and insist that all thinking subjects, himself included, are "always, already" interpellated (1978: 176). This shows that one's own subjectivity, one's own particular thinking is under the control of the driving apparatus of his society's ISAs, namely mass media.

Second, another role of interpellated mass media in the process of voters' acquiescence in their supremacist views is authority. This power to control or judge, or have the final say

in something, establishes the influencing force of media and the elites to impose their hegemonic views on the masses in the framework of interpellation. Through their authority, the interpellated candidates for elections and their supporting mass media acts as supervisory body. In *The Twentymen*, the interpellated discourse of the Postmaster-general, Sam Tyler, is blatantly exposed. He stands as a major regulator of BBC and other broadcasting agencies. The Postmaster-General looks as an interpellated individual whose task is to garner support for Hurst's political personality from the BBC's studio as C. Exec. Tel puts it : "New *Man at Number 10*, query. If there were other contenders still in the field – even outsiders---it would still look as if we were promoting Hurst at their expense"(Purser, 1970: 45).

As it stands out, Purser suggests that Sam Tyler or the Postmaster-General is the true embodiment of Althusser's Repressive State Apparatus. This assumption takes its impetus from the fact that he suppresses, although non-violently, the contesting ideas of the challenging candidates. By the same token, he imposes the views of the one he has elected. It appears that the character uses the media, as a state apparatus, to repress or repudiate all adverse opinions. For a fact, when the narrator says that it were as if the interpellated studio-men were promoting the candidate Hurst (Purser, 1970: 45), this hints that they had camouflaged, kept under control the views of the other candidates and had promoted their favorite. On account of what precedes, the BBC encompasses both interpellation and authority. Interpellation, here, is the manifestation of the influencing control of a group of people (leaders) in the society. By regulating broadcasting corporations, these elites try to inscribe their views on the society. When they promote a candidate, he becomes the choice of the voters. In the Bourdieusian sense, "the mediatized political discourse is a particular new political discourse created by media through representation or reproduction" (Norman Faiclough, 1995: 182).

This representation of the interpellated mass media's opinions hints at two semantic values. On the one hand, Sam Tyler's suppression of opposed opinions and his wish to see Hurst represents both all voters and opposing candidates concurs with the imposition of his ideology of the politicized media onto the masses. This view is in line with John B. Thompson's contention that ideology is at work whenever signifying practices "establish and sustain relations of power which are systematically asymmetrical" (1990: 7). What is at issue here is that ideology is in the service of power. In *The Twentymen*, the Postmaster-General's repudiation of adverse views and the opposition candidates is a model of state repressive force

in the service of Hurst to maintain his power. So to speak, ideology is tied to social relations of domination (2003: 173), to paraphrase Mike Wayne's idea.

Through its imposition of a certain logos, ideology can turn disastrous in the sense that it proves to be a failed discourse. If this representative sign actually turns out to be a misleading project, it is the entire society that goes astray. Though a policy is not good, some elites still advocate it. Although a candidate may not seem to be prepared to live up to national expectations, broadcasting corporations still back him up. For a fact after his election and his occupation of 10 Downing Street, if Hurst, in *The Twentymen*, eventually proves to be an inefficient and unskillful leader, it is the whole community that loses. And the more his governing archetypes are reproduced nationwide the worse the social and economic of the country is. Yet, in spite of his shortcoming, if such a candidate is imposed, it is that his party or the media have a lurking incentive. In corroboration Terry Lovell makes the following observation: "Ideology [...] may be defined as the production and the dissemination of erroneous beliefs whose inadequacies are socially motivated" (Lovell, 1983: 51). In Purser's novel, it stands out that interpellation is in the service of dominant ideology which favors not the masses; but only the dominating groups. Wayne (2003: 174) illustratively pens that "*dominant*" ideologies correspond to the interests and values of the dominant class.

On the other hand, the Postmaster-General's repudiation of all other candidates for the validation of Hurst's candidacy and his subsequent victory occurs in the search of a social order manifest through hegemony. In repressing adverse views (by diverting them), in *The Twentymen*, the BBC and other media intend to reach a compromise with opposed groups. The aim of this is for the interpellated elites and media to set a state of social peace and harmony characterized by the masses' adherence to their interpellated views. From Wayne's insights, hegemony seems to be in full compliance with interpellation as depicted in Purser's novel. He puts forward that this form of dominion including electoral politics and the media (Wayne, 2003: 178) "involves the winning of consent to the social order and particular directions which that social order may take" (Wayne, 2003: 178) according to Wayne. Compared to the ideology which focuses on power, hegemony is engrossed with the search for a social contract whereby the masses (forcibly) agree to the myth, logocentrism and monologism perpetrated by the elites and the controlling media. Hence, in *The Twentymen*, hegemony is in line with Althusser's "interpellation" (2003: 15) because it works a spectacular recognition process between the individual (the masses and other candidates) and an absolute subject (Hurst) as the center in which social order reproduces itself. This is suggested by the

quote: “Hurst the man of action, Hurst the pioneer” (Purser, 1970: 92). Hegemony in *The Twentymen* highlights Hurst’ promotion as the best candidate for the elections. By the same token, it indirectly repudiates other candidates and seeks to create a general feeling of agreement concerning Hurst, which can bring cohesion and social order.

As it stands out, ideology and hegemony reinforce the manifestation of the interrelation discourse of the British political elites and the BBC in Purser’s work. Given that the prejudice and one-sidedness of authorities’ ideological and hegemonic legitimization are intrinsically connected to relations of social control through the BBC studio broadcasters in *The Twentymen*, the fight against authority is also a counter-hegemonic struggle against such relations.

2- The Anti-Hegemonic Discourse of the Civil Society

Gramsci first understood the term civil society as “a direct expression of hegemony”; which he defines as “a pattern of established power relations among social groups in a given historical situation” (1961:1). According to him, the Civil society is the cradle wherein hegemony can therefore be theorized and researched upon. Given that hegemony refers to the pattern of established power relations among social groups, our use of the notion “anti hegemonic discourse” is to set out the discourses that sidestepped the role of the dominant discourse in media. In a Gramscian sense the term, the “civil society” provides the terrain on which the progressive struggle between the marginalized and the dominant class is played out. As such, in the novel understudy, the notions of “civil society and anti- hegemonic discourse” (Gramsci,1971:717) imply the discontent with the newsmen. Their discourses demean the celebration of the preferred candidate’s discourse in media.

The actions of the civil society can be classified into two groups: For example, Individual initiative and collective action. The Italian theoretician advances an interpretation of the notion of “individual initiative” as private entrepreneurialism which attempts to distinguish itself from a mere manifestation of private interest. (Gramsci, 1961: 12). In fact, such a notion is so important for independent and disgruntled journalists who seek to shape a counter hegemonic discourse in order to create a balance of power in the political game. Purser’s *The Twentymen* presents a civil society group that bears characteristic of Gramscian individual initiative.

In Purser's novel, the civil society is represented by some broadcasters who became critical of Hurst's government. They first carry out individual initiative action in the BBC's studio by selecting one of their co-workers as the opposition candidate to contend with Hurst. The aim of these broadcasters is to set a liberal philosophy in contradiction to the pre-eminence of the ruling class' ideology. The following sentences pen this individual strategy as follows:

A public that seemed to welcome interference, a press that gleefully reported it. It was almost as if the country were afraid to have the responsibility of making up its own mind, as if it wanted television only to be orderly and reassuring... history'. He looked at his watch. 'We are bringing all the influence we can to bear on Mr. Jerrold(...)' The Crystal Palace engineer said, 'we can put someone on the air, all right (...)' I thought. 'Jerrold'. (Purser,1970: 180)

What the Crystal Palace engineer (broadcasters) is doing is asking the public for what Gramsci termed as "individual initiative" (1961: 12). In the Gramscian sense, this should be understood as private entrepreneurialism which attempts to distinguish itself from a mere manifestation of free will voluntarism at the service of private interest. In fact, such a notion of "individual initiative" constitutes the systemic requirement of the Crystal Palace engineer for the audience. By selecting Jerrold, the studiomen not only acknowledge that what the public have been going through is dangerous for the country, but also want to construct a new liberal ideology that gives the free choice opportunity for people and stands out of government's control. The BBC studiomen's choice for Jerrold instead of Hurst encapsulates their desire for a free press through the separation of political power. Jerrold's option epitomizes this quest for power separation in the sense that his candidacy with its liberal agenda is designed to resist the hegemony's ideology. In corroboration, Gramsci makes this insight observation: "the liberal ideology is integrally premised upon the principle of the division of powers" (175: 712). In the same token, when the broadcasters put their faith on Jerrold, they intend the British Broadcasting Corporation to boost for a liberal ideology that will establish the division of power. The narrator pens this when he says: "as if it wanted television only to be orderly and reassuring...history"(Purser, 1970:180). What the disgruntled studiomen move on to is the business of individual initiative to establish their liberal thinking that differs from that of the hegemony. No sooner have they confessed to resisting Hurst's individualist ideologies than they are busy trying to pin the blame on the general public, who supposedly follow him. The first blow is on the masses, who were personally responsible for accepting the heroic representation of Hurst. By the time The Twentymen or Crystal Palace engineer (the narrators)

are urging the masses to stand against what Gramsci coined as “regulated society” (1961:11). According to Gramsci, the hegemony conditions the civil society through “regulated society”. In the narrative, the studiomen do not recognise this regulated society at the very beginning because they and the other broadcasters were trapped for ever inside a political illusion. Here is where the notion of “individual initiative” proves to be a crucial structure of power articulation where the requirements of freedom and hegemony part: civil society is made of broadcasters who are capable of self-government, thus providing a liberal power that can resist the government.

Another individual initiative is the cancelling of the hegemony broadcasting programme at the BBC’s studio. When a group of broadcaster decides to censor the state’s regular programme, they might be willing to enforce a democratic thinking in the social order. The cancelling of the programme does not suggest brute force and bloody civil actions. What is at issue is the formation of the civil society’s own ideology in order to introduce what Luckas substantiates as “a new and more universally democratic, classless society” (1983: 3). The same quest for this universally democratic society is viewed in the studiomen’s attempt to rescind Hurst’s programme as we read: “Panorama on BBC television had been cancelled and a special programme on the national emergency would follow the broadcast” (Purser, 1970: 173). With the cancelling of the panorama programme, a new class-conscious defense will come out in the BBC’s studio. This is likely to shape a dialectical opposition between the proletariat and the bourgeois. This is how Purser’s fiction works in league with Marx’s dialectical opposition. In fact his fiction parallels with Marx’s prediction about the bourgeois and proletariat class relation. Although we do not first observe a proletariat revolt in the BBC studio, we, at least, see a dialectical resistance between the civil society and the hegemony through broadcasters’ individual initiatives. On account of what precedes, the choice for Jerrold and the cancelling of the radio show encompass the civil society’s individual initiative to resist the hegemony.

Collective initiative uses the strike to oppose hegemony. Despite the modern capitalist development strikes waves are still persistent in today’s societies. Many Marxists theories associate the idea of strike with class struggle. From Althusser’s insight, class struggle has primacy over the dominant ideology, over the apparatus. (1971: 61). This Althusserian assumption not only suggests strike as class struggle but it also implies an ideological assumption to it. The ideological dimension of strike can be hidden when we only consider the economic and political aspect of it. At time strikers may have the upper hand over the hegemony with the help of the press, and in others they may be losing the struggle because of

the media connivance with the dominant forces. Purser's fiction provides us with an example of this ambivalence ideological contestation between the civil society group (the broadcasters or the twentymen, studiomen) and the hegemony (elites or Hurst, government). First, the independent Journalists ("The Marxists and The Crystal Palace Engineers" (Purser: 1970: 179) take advantage of the general strike to support the agenda of their candidate in order to defeat the hegemony. The following words underscore the strike as a form of ideological contestation of the hegemony at the BBC's studio:

The Crystal Palace engineer spoke. 'We are, Mr. Panton. The Twentymen. We call ourselves that partly because we go back to the 'twenties. Back to 1926, in fact, which was the last time a government thought of taking over the BBC, during the General Strike (Purser, 1970:179)

This extract presents the disgruntled BBC's broadcasters known as the 'The Twentymen'. They are identified with the civil society group that the professor of sociology, Beverly Silver termed as "Wave of labour unrest"(2014: 5). In Silver's understanding strikes are events or acts that trigger or spark working class movement to overthrow the hegemony. When offensive strikes occur, they can generate an extraordinary amount of pressure on the hegemony, which often lead in structural changes such as the reconfiguring of the political system. To speak so, these kinds of strikes are referred to as "turning points", to paraphrase Webster (2017: 2). Similarly, the "General Strike" (Purser, 1970: 179), Purser's disgruntled broadcasters sponsored is akin to Webster's "turning points". Given that the aim of this wave of labour unrest is to introduce a fundamental shift of power, Jerrold is automatically appointed in the studio as the civil society's candidate. The broadcasters' approach to the "General strike" (Purser, 1970: 179) is consistent with former Marxists who have rather tended to focus on the outcomes of strikes (the relative autonomy), pointing politically to shifts in the leading role of sections of the working class and class consciousness as the course of class struggle unfolds.

Besides, strikes movements are very often carried out by trade union group. In Marxists' consideration trade unions have been the constant target of indescribable pressure and repression. There exist, consequently a tendency, on the part of some independent or disgruntled journalists, to consider themselves as trade unionists. In their coverage of strikes movement, these broadcasters often confront the pressure and repression of the authority as the trade union. In Purser's novel, the disgruntled broadcasters face pressure on the part of Hurst's government to report the general strike in their likings. These lines provide additional empirical evidence for our thesis about the press and trade union's capitulation to the pressure of the hegemony at time of strike:

There were three of them: a good, solid union demagogue; a sharp little Marxist; and a big, affable man with lots of tangled grey hair and a check wollen shirt, a grammar-school master, I was told, and clearly popular. They hammered away at one theme: the encroachment on hard-won rights which Hurst's Government had already made and threatened to make again. One strike had been stopped by interfering with tax repayments, another by whipping up public anger (like all Marxists, the sharp young chap assumed this was to have been a willing conspiracy by press and television; (Purser, 102)

The language here is produced by the chief reporter Colin Panton on behalf of the Marxists and Hurst's government. It is accompanied by a high tension between the Marxists and the professional politician, Hurst. The media are said to be at the center of the manipulation. In the Marxist chap's view, the British media is plotting against the civil society. The Marxist's political pathos, and Hurst government's defiance of realism, should not prevent us from making our way through the book and noticing that the BBC and British media are parts and parcels of class domination. The media are associated with bourgeois law and democracy. If Hurst succeeded in curbing the strike and implementing new laws, it is largely due to the media which the Marxists qualify as "a willing conspiracy" (Purser: 1970: 102). Thus Purser's novel is a political satire that bears witness to the Althusserian categories for the analysis of political elite's identity; and a (novel) theory of the 'Ideological State Apparatuses' and ideological 'interpelation'. The spirit of a strong political hero runs through the entire text as the chief reporter continues: "The political situation is, of course, a novel one for all of us" (Purser. 1970: 56).

In Purser's understanding, this sentence can first be regarded as a small masterpiece of irony, though the irony does not exactly leap from the page. It lies in the difference between what is said – that everyone agrees that political issues are evidently covered by the BBC – and what is plainly meant, which is that politicians manipulate the media in complicity with journalists BBC's. In an ironic reversal, the strength which the sentence ascribes to Hurst is actually studiomen felt by the need to shape his political identity. A Journalist's need to work with a political individual is presented as a universal truth, which makes it sound as unarguable as a geometrical theorem. Presented almost as a fact of Nature, the BBC's studiomen are not to be blamed for projecting Hurst's personality as a hero in studio. It is simply the way of the world. They are merely responding to what Gramsci coined as "functionary," that is, each individual operates spontaneously with the hegemonic forces while developing his or her own individual initiative. By simply focusing on him, they provide an organic complement to him on how to exercise his political power. The studiomen prove to be crucial pillars of Hurst's political power

articulation. This is how Purser's scrupulously diplomatic words thus ironically level criticism at journalists and trade unionists' capitulation to political pressure and repression at time of strike.

Second, Purser also contends that the statement en question occurs in a context when Britain was not still recovering from post war socio-political turmoil, is likely to sound unpleasantly condescending to a good many readers today. They might therefore be surprised to learn that Colin Panton was at time Hurst's press reporter. His ambivalent roles iron out the two alternative readings in the relationship between politics and the media. In certain cases, the media control the politicians. In others, they manipulate the media in complicity with journalists. Arguing about this intrinsic character of the media and politics, Andrew Crisel writes that: " Whatever the political, cultural and institutional forces that shape broadcast content, the latter is in first place constrained by the special characters of radio and television themselves" (2007: 1). Indeed, the biased feature of the civil society's collective action is also noted in Purser's work. Colin Panton's capitulation to the hegemony's pressure during the strike is read as the failure of the trade union to resist the power's suppression.

However, history has often proved the victory of the civil society group over totalitarian regimes though revolt. In corroboration of this Karl Marx believed that a socialist future would arrive when the proletariat would revolt and defeat the bourgeoisie (1909:14). In the same vein as Marx's prediction, Purser's novel closes with the defeat of the hegemony (bourgeoisie) in favour of the civil society (the proletariat). The following passage illustratively pens that idea:

Hurst lost his vote of confidence by a shattering majority and the next day announced the dissolution of Parliament and a general election(...) His subsequent withdrawal from British politics has been the subject of such learned and such extensive analysis (...) He displayed remarkable absence of rancour towards those who had engineered his downfall(Purser, 191)

The defeat of the hegemony, Hurst is noted in the lines above. From the victory of the civil society we note the power of the media to award paradoxical political identities to elites. The bourgeoisie (Hurst) was praised by the same broadcasters who finally caused his downfall. In other terms, the media can construct a variety of identities and relations. The same individual was constructed at time as hero, prophet and another moment viewed as an illegitimate devil and incompetent Prime Minister. In the BBC' studio, prophets turn out to be mischievous sprite who cannot shape the future. This is already clear from these closing lines, when Hurst is disdained in the fiction as the evil spirit responsible for the country's socio-political problems. The BBC studiomen's prophetic utterances of Hurst are ridden

with paradox and ambiguity, but so also is the question of whether the media construct reliable political identities. Ambiguity can be enriching in media shaping of political identity, but it can also be lethal, as the hero Hurst discovers.

Actually, the ideological role of mass media is important in political individual identity shaping. When newsmen positively construct a candidate, the general public is likely to abide by his political manifesto and doctrine. In the corpus understudy we observe that how the politician's personality is seen from the world of the BBC's studio is on a par with how he is viewed from the ordinary people's perspective. Yet there is something to be said for both of these ways of looking, even when they are not at loggerheads with each other at the beginning. Some disgruntled studiomen finally raised up against the candidate and construct him as a brutal dictator and an abused outcast. The ordinary people were eventually accused of passivity vis à vis politics and in search of individual self-fulfillment within a Gramscian "regulated society". The novel itself does not invite us to choose. Instead, it allows us to view this complex relationship between the newsmen and ordinary people in terms of the interdependent ties between the media-and political identity relations building.

The civil society and the hegemony forces confront each other in a form Karl Marx's dialectical opposition. The individual initiative and collective action such as strike finally help the civil society group to overthrow the hegemony and its biased ideological apparatus.

CONCLUSION

The mainstream British media system constructs the political stage for their favorite candidates. As hinted above, the aim of this paper is to decipher how the BBC studiomen construct the different candidates' political identity as the chosen ones in Philip Purser's *The Twentymen*. Focusing upon Althusser's (ISAs) and Gramscian term of civil society, it follows that Purser's characters appear as interpellated individuals whose prime concern is to shape the politician as a national hero. The partial and biased nature of the characters' discourse about the chosen candidate is built into the structure of the fiction throughout journalistic scoop, humour and masquerade.

Most literature on the British media view the media as a channel of political communication that simply facilitates the mechanisms of freedom of speech and acts as watchdog of the state's action. This simplistic and outdated reading of British media ignores the radical ideological

changes and threats that the recent British media may pose while concentrating the news around a political individual. In the recent technological development, the concentration on a single political individual might affect political activities, democratic processes and pose a problem of communicative ethos.

Actually, the communicative ethos of British broadcasting is politically ambivalent. At time, broadcasting can be part of a substantive democratization of cultural life and relations with tendency towards popular cultural values and ordinary people's practices. In others, it can be read as forming identity aspects of a particular political individual to legitimize his/her domination on the British political landscape. The same consideration can also be noted with other European countries' media. It was generally recognized that "Forza Italia" was a media discourse created by Berlusconi to win the election in March. Berlusconi's victory was the result of his ideological control of the Italian media. An underlying concern with contemporary media in general is the possible dangers and threat they may pose in their ideological shaping of political identity.

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