



Power of Scandal: Semiotic and Pragmatic in Mass Media (Toronto Studies in Semiotics and Communication)

P. Johannes Ehrat SJ

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Are there events that are inherently scandalous? *Power of Scandal* finds that the very idea of 'scandal' is derived not from an event, but from public opinion - which, in turn, is construed by media narratives. Scandal is powerful because of its ability to challenge institutions by destabilizing their legitimacy. The media plays an integral role in the creation of scandal because it interprets real events as purposeful actions for the public. Examining the ubiquity of scandals in today's mass media, Johannes Ehrat's conclusions are fresh and surprising.

Ehrat applies classic semiotic and pragmatic thought to contemporary media issues, mainly moralist discourse from sex abuse cases to the phenomenon of televangelism. Arguing that sociological and communications studies of scandal have ignored the media's constructed nature, Ehrat focuses on how meaningful public narrative is produced. By examining the parallel worlds of media and public opinion, *Power of Scandal* uses an alternative heuristic for understanding mass communication that is both rigorous and sophisticated.

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