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A FUTURE FOR MEDIA STUDIES

Cultural Labour, Cultural Relations, Cultural Politics

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Media studies has been dominated by three topics: infrastructure, content, and audiences. Approaches to infrastructure vary between neoliberal endorsements of limited regulation of ownership by the state to facilitate market entry by new competitors, Marxist critiques of the bourgeois media for controlling the socio-political agenda, and nationalist interventions to protect local commerce and culture. Approaches to content vary between hermeneutics, which unearths the meaning of individual texts and links them to broader social formations and problems, and content analysis, which establishes patterns across significant numbers of similar texts, rather than close readings of individual ones. And approaches to audiences vary between social-psychological and culturalist attempts to correlate audiovisual consumption with social

conduct and policy critiques of imported audiovisual material threatening national and regional autonomy. These three components, fractured by politics, nation, discipline, theory, and method, are embodied in what I call Media Studies 1.0 and Media Studies 2.0. Both are ultimately to do with audiences. Media Studies 1.0 *panics* about citizens and consumers as audiences, whereas Media Studies 2.0 *celebrates* them. I investigate their histories here and make a case for generating a panic-free, critical, internationalist Media Studies 3.0, taking electronic gaming and the international precariat movement as examples of how we might do so. Throughout, I draw on the four core concepts that inform this volume.[1]

Media Studies 1.0

Media Studies 1.0 derived from the spread of new media technologies over the past two centuries into the lives of urbanizing populations and the policing questions they posed to both state and capital: What would be the effects on cultural publics of these developments, and how would they vary between those with a stake in the social order versus those seeking to transform it? By the early twentieth century, academic experts had decreed media audiences to be passive consumers, thanks to the missions of literary criticism (distinguishing the aesthetically cultivated from others) and psychology (distinguishing the socially competent from others).[2] The origins of social psychology can be traced to anxieties about "the crowd" in a suddenly urbanized and educated Western Europe that raised the prospect of a long-feared "ochlocracy" of "the worthless mob"[3] able to share popular texts. In the wake of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke was animated by the need to limit collective exuberance via restraint on popular passions.[4] Elite theorists emerged from both right and left to argue that newly literate publics were vulnerable to manipulation by demagogues. The founder of the "American Dream," the Latino James Truslow Adams, saw "[t]he mob mentality of the city crowd" as "one of the menaces to modern civilization." He was particularly disparaging about "the prostitution of the moving-picture industry."[5] These critics were frightened of socialism; they were frightened of democracy; and they were frightened of popular reason.[6] With civil society growing restive, the emergence of radical politics was explained away in socio-psychological terms rather than political-economic ones. The psy-function warmed itself by campus fires, far from the

crowding mass. In the U.S., Harvard took charge of theorizing, Chicago observing, and Columbia enumerating the great unwashed.[7]

The famous U.S. Payne-Fund studies of the 1930s investigated the impact of films on what a gaggle of sociologists labelled "'superior' adults" (this expression referred to "young college professors, graduate students and their wives") versus children from juvenile centres. Researchers wanted to know: "what effect do motion pictures have upon children of different ages?" especially on what were known as the "retarded." These pioneering scholars boldly set out to discover whether "the onset of puberty is or is not affected by motion pictures" by what they called "The Big Three" narrative themes: love, crime, and sex (sound familiar?) pondering "demonstrations of satisfying love techniques" to see whether "sexual passions are aroused and amateur prostitution … aggravated" by the screen. They gauged reactions through "autobiographical case studies," questionnaires asking whether "All Most Many Some Few No Chinese are cunning and underhand," and "skin response" measured by psychogalvanometers attached to young people in cinemas and hypnographs and polygraphs wired to them in their beds.[8]

The Payne-Fund studies birthed seven decades of obsessive social-scientific attempts to correlate youthful consumption of popular culture with anti-social conduct, scrutinizing audiences in terms of where they came from, how many there were, and what they did as a consequence of participating. In 1951, Dallas Smythe wrote of this effects research, "Everybody seems to be doing it, especially those who are best qualified by virtue of the fact that 'they wouldn't have a television set in the house.'"[9] Recalling the 1960s in Greenwich Village, Bob Dylan remembers, "Sociologists were saying that TV had deadly intentions and was destroying the minds and imaginations of the young—that their attention span was being dragged down." The other dominant site of knowledge Dylan encountered was the "psychology professor, a good performer, but originality not his long suit."[10]

Purveyors of normal science continue to cast a shadow across that village, and many others. The pattern is that when cultural technologies and genres emerge, young people are identified as both pioneers and victims, simultaneously endowed by marketers and critics with power and vulnerability. They are held to be the first to know and the last to understand the media—the grand paradox of youth, latterly on display in the digital sublime of technological determinism, as always with the super-added valence of a future citizenship in peril. Concerns about

supposedly unprecedented and unholy risks from new media recur. Damnation was sure to follow cheap novels during the 1900s, silent then sound film of the teens and 1920s, radio in the 1930s, comic books from the 1940s and 50s, pop music and television as per the 1950s and 60s, satanic rock and video cassette recorders of the 1970s and 80s, and rap music, video games, the Internet, and sexting since the 1990s. The satirical paper *The Onion* cleverly mocked these interdependent phenomena of moral panic and commodification via a *faux* study of the impact on U.S. youth of seeing Janet Jackson's breast in a 2004 Super Bowl broadcast.[11]

Effects studies suffer all the disadvantages of ideal-typical psychological reasoning. They rely on methodological individualism, failing to account for cultural norms, let alone the arcs of history that establish patterns of text and response inside politics, war, ideology, and discourse. Each laboratory test, based on, as the refrain goes, "a large university in the mid-West [of the United States]," is countered by a similar experiment, with conflicting results. As politicians, grant-givers, and jeremiad-wielding pundits call for more and more research to prove that the media make you stupid, violent, and apathetic—or the opposite—academics line up at the trough to indulge their contempt for popular culture, and their rent-seeking urge for public money. Media Studies 1.0 rarely interrogates its own conditions of existence—namely, that governments, religious groups, and the media themselves use it to account for social problems by diverting blame onto popular culture. And it takes each new medium and genre as an opportunity to affirm its omniscient agenda. Consider Dorothy G. Singer and Jerome L. Singer's febrile twenty-first-century call for centring media effects within the study of child development: "can we ignore the impact on children of their exposure through television and films or, more recently, to computer games and arcade video games that involve vast amounts of violent actions?"[12]

Whereas effects research focuses on the cognition and emotion of individual human subjects via observation and experimentation, another way of considering audiences looks to the customs and patriotic feelings exhibited by collective human subjects, the grout of national culture. In place of psychology, it is concerned with politics. The media do not make you a well- or ill-educated person, a wild or self-controlled one. Rather, they make you a knowledgeable and loyal national subject, or a *naïf* who is ignorant of local tradition and history. Cultural belonging, not psychic wholeness, is the touchstone of this model. Instead of

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measuring responses electronically or behaviourally, it interrogates the geopolitical origin of popular texts and the themes and styles they embody, with particular attention to the putatively nation-building genres of drama, news, sport, and current affairs. Adherents hold that local citizens should control television, for instance, because they can be counted on in the event of war.

Canadians have a unique purchase on anxieties about U.S. screen domination. Even before the inception of television in 1952, affection for Yankee culture was officially derided as unpatriotic, because 150,000 TV sets in Canada were tuned to U.S. signals. There has been over half a century of battling what is perceived as "an ideological misrecognition whereby Canadians mistake American television for what they really like while simultaneously neglecting the Canadian television that they ought to like."[13] This is not always about protecting one form of cultural nationalism (Canadian) against another (U.S.). It can also offer services that supply and demand cannot. For example, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network enables the maintenance of Native culture by targeting viewers across a massive country, often in small clusters and different language groups. The only way the Network could exist is via a mandate from regulators—market economics would probably see the spectrum space go to a U.S.-programmed network.[14]

In addition to audience research and cultural policy, Media Studies 1.0 includes political economy, which focuses on infrastructure rather than audiences but also works from the *nostrum* that the media are all-powerful, and critical theory, which is concerned that the audiovisual sector turns people away from artistic and social traces of authentic intersubjectivity and towards control of individual consciousness. Political economy is more policy-oriented and political in its focus on institutional power, whereas critical theory is more philosophical and aesthetic in its desire to develop modernism and the avant-garde. But they began as one with lamentations for the triumph of industrialized cultural production and the loss of a self-critical philosophical address. The two approaches are linked via distaste for what they deride as mass culture. Because demand is dispersed and supply centralized, the media supposedly operate via an administrative logic. Far from reflecting already-established and -revealed preferences of consumers in reaction to tastes and desires, they manipulate audiences from the apex of production. Coercion is mistaken for free will, and culture is one more industrial process subordinated to dominant economic forces within society that seek standardization. The only element that might stand against their levelling sameness is said to be

individual consciousness. But that consciousness has itself been customized to efficient media production.[15] We are all familiar with this account, thanks to latter-day Frankfurters who continue to offer it to us, and their scornful critics from Media Studies 2.0, who continue to denounce its pessimism and snobbery in the name of populism.

Media Studies 2.0

For Media Studies 2.0, popular culture represents the apex of modernity. Far from being supremely alienating, it embodies the expansion of civil society, the first moment in history when political and commercial organs and agendas became receptive to, and part of, the popular classes; when the general population counted as part of the social, rather than being excluded from political-economic calculations. At the same time, there was a lessening of authority, the promulgation of individual rights and respect, and the development of intense but large-scale human interaction. This perspective has offered a way in to media audiences that differs from Media Studies 1.0 and its faith in the all-powerful agency of the media. For in Media Studies 2.0, the all-powerful agent is the audience. 2.0 claims that the public is so clever and able that it makes its own meanings, outwitting institutions of the state, academia, and capitalism that seek to measure and control it. In the case of children and the media, a new culturalist perspective has challenged anxieties from 1.0 about turning Edenic innocents into rabid monsters, capitalist dupes, or mental Americans. This formation has, for example, animated research into how children distinguish between fact and fiction; the generic features and intertexts of children's news, drama, action-adventure, education, cartooning, and play; and how talking about the media makes for social interaction.[16]

Faith in the active audience can reach cosmic proportions. It has been a *donnée* of 2.0 that the media are not responsible for anything. This position is a virtual *nostrum* in some research into fans, who are thought to construct connections with celebrities and actants in ways that mimic friendship, make sense of human interaction, and ignite cultural politics. The critique commonly attacks opponents of commercial culture for misrecognizing its capacity to subvert patriarchy, capitalism, and other forms of oppression. The popular is held to have progressive effects, because it is decoded by people in keeping with their social situations. The

active audience is said to be weak at the level of cultural production, but strong as an interpretative community. All this is supposedly evident to scholars from their perusal of audience conventions, web pages, discussion groups, quizzes, and rankings, or by staring at screens with their children. Consumption is the key to Media Studies 2.0—with production discounted, labour forgotten, consumers sovereign, and governments there to protect them.

Cybertarian technophiles, struck by the "digital sublime," attribute magical properties to contemporary communications and cultural technologies that obliterate geography, sovereignty, and hierarchy in an alchemy of truth and beauty. A deregulated, individuated media world supposedly makes consumers into producers, frees the disabled from confinement, encourages new subjectivities, rewards intellect and competitiveness, links people across cultures, and allows billions of flowers to bloom in a post-political cornucopia. It's a kind of Marxist/Godardian wet dream, where people fish, hunt, film, and write cheques from morning to midnight. In his survey of this work, Vincent Mosco rightly argues that such "myths are important both for what they reveal (including a genuine desire for community and democracy) and for what they conceal (including the growing concentration of communication power in a handful of transnational media businesses)."[17] At such moments, we can say that what Terry Eagleton sardonically named The Reader's Liberation Movement is in the house.[18]

The Movement informs quasi-libertarian critiques of Canadian cultural policy for condescending attitudes to the earthy choices made by "ordinary" consumers, maintaining that viewers should be trusted rather than countered by elites, whose desire to strengthen the nation through culture is said to be self-serving and impossible.[19] In the case of white settler colonies such as Canada, Will Kymlicka argues that culture aids individual autonomy through engagement with collective as well as individual histories.[20] It can allocate preferences effectively on a market basis, provided that collective inequality does not distort history and life chances. He suggests that majority settlers and their offspring should trust in market dynamics. They don't merit cultural rights. Recent voluntary migrants deserve some cultural rights. First Peoples, the dispossessed, and the enslaved deserve many. Yet the much-vaunted organic capacity of, for example, hockey to bind Canadians together on a market basis rather than a policy one has been dwarfed by the desire of television networks to target specific territories through localizing technologies, which has seen them tailor coverage to particular audiences. That

desire has neither reflected nor encouraged multiculturalism, as is evident from the routine racism and sexism of commentators.[21]

The fundamental dilemma for the political claims of Media Studies 2.0 is this: Can fans be said to engage in labour exploitation, patriarchy, racism, and neo-imperialism, or in some specifiable way make a difference to politics beyond their own selves, when they interpret TV unusually, SMS (short message service) each other about romantic frustrations, or play pirated versions of *Scrabble* on Facebook? Have we gone too far in supplanting the panicky Woody Allen nebbish-ness of 1.0 ("I'm kind of bothered that…") with the Panglossian Pollyanna nerdi-ness of 2.0 ("Cool stuff")? Virginia Postrel, then editor of the libertarian *Reason* magazine and later a *New York Times* economics journalist, wrote a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed welcoming 2.0 as "deeply threatening to traditional leftist views of commerce … lending support to the corporate enemy and even training graduate students who wind up doing market research."[22] That should give us pause.

Consider the juncture of 1.0 and 2.0 in games studies. A powerful binary situates at one antinomy (1.0) omnipotent corporate technocrats plot to control the emotions and thoughts of young people around the world and turn them into malleable consumers, workers, and killers through electronic games; at the other antinomy (2.0) all-powerful desiring machines, called players, are satisfied by malleable producers. But the fantasy that innovation comes from supply-and-demand mechanics is misleading. The state—specifically the military—is at the core. 2.0 fails to explain the long-standing imbrication of electronic games and the U.S. military.[23]

2.0 *savants* are fond of invoking pre-capitalist philosophers, dodging questions of labour exploitation by heading for texts. High aesthetics and high technology are brokered through high neo-liberalism. 2.0 refers to ludology (but ignores the work of the Association for the Study of Play and the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport) and narratology, returning to the non-materialist, non-medium-specific work of literary studies (but ignoring work undertaken by the International Association for Media and Communication Research, the Canadian Communications Association, and the Union for Democratic Communications). Drawing on the possessive individualism of neoclassical economics, game analysts study virtual environments as ways of understanding "whole societies under controlled conditions," neglecting or caricaturing history and ethnography in the process.[24] 1.0 and 2.0 met unhappily in a U.S. law case over a commercial

ordinance that required games manufacturers to advise parents that their products were risky for young people, with 2.0 *savants* supporting corporate interests.[25]

Media Studies 3.0

We need more *frottage* between Media Studies 1.0 and 2.0, breaking down the binary between them. 1.0 should register struggle, and 2.0 should register structure. Currently, 1.0 draws our attention to audience inoculation and corporate control, but leaves out productive labour—the key place where value is made. 2.0 draws our attention to uptake and response, but again marginalizes work. 1.0 misses moments of crisis and hope, presenting a subject-free picture with structure but no agency, other than psychological response, shareholder maximization, and managerial rationality. Its nationalistic cultural policies often deny the banality of protected cinema, the futility of quota-driven television, and the partiality of who is chosen to create national images and appear in them. 2.0 misses forms of domination and exploitation, presenting an institution-free picture with agency but no structure, other than fan creativity and reader imagination. Both 1.0 and 2.0 are doggedly tied to nativist epistemologies that must be transcended. The nativism is especially powerful in the U.S., Britain, and their academic satellites such as Israel and Australia, where effortless extrapolations from very limited experiences support totalizing theories and norms, due to the hegemony of English-language publishing and scholarly links to the warfare, welfare, and cultural bureaucracies. To transcend these pitfalls, we need Media Studies 3.0.

3.0 must blend ethnographic, political-economic, and aesthetic analyses in a global and local way, establishing links between the key areas of cultural production around the world (Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East) and diasporic/dispossessed communities engaged in their own cultural production (Native peoples, African and Asian diasporas, Latinos, and Middle-Eastern peoples). 3.0 needs to be a media-centred version of area studies, with diasporas as important as regions. It must be animated by collective identity and power, by how human subjects are formed and how they experience cultural and social space. Taking its agenda from social movements as well as intellectual ones, and its methods from economics, politics, communications, sociology, literature, law, science, medicine, anthropology, history, and art, it should focus on gender, race, class, sexuality, sustainability, and pleasure, across national lines.

We can gain some tips on how to do this from the history of theorizing culture. Culture has usually been studied in two registers, via the social sciences and the humanities—truth versus beauty. It has been a marker of differences and similarities in taste and status, as explored interpretatively or methodically. In the humanities, cultural texts have long been judged by criteria of quality, as practiced critically and historically. For their part, the social sciences have focused on religions, customs, times, and spaces, as explored ethnographically or statistically. So whereas the humanities articulate differences through symbolic norms (for example, which class has the cultural capital to appreciate high culture, and which does not) the social sciences articulate differences through social norms (for example, which people cultivate agriculture in keeping with spirituality, and which do not).[26] This distinction feeds into the Cartesian dualism separating thought from work, which presumes that humans have two distinct natures: the intelligent and the corporeal. One is focused on action, the other on reason. That binary has dominated media studies through oppositions it poses between society versus economy and audience versus meaning. It haunts 1.0 and 2.0.

I suggest that this bifurcation and subsequent silencing of labour and culture, for all its sticky origins in Cartesianism, cannot and should not hold. Historically, the best critical political economy and the best cultural studies have worked through the imbrication of power and signification. Blending them can heal the fissure between fact and interpretation, between the social sciences and the humanities, between truth and beauty, under the sign of a principled approach to cultural democracy. Lawrence Grossberg recommends "politicizing theory and theorizing politics" by combining abstraction and grounded analysis.[27] That requires a focus on the contradictions of organizational structures, their articulations with everyday living and textuality, and their intrication with the polity and economy, addressing production, consumption, and social stratification. Half a century ago, Smythe studied TV texts as "a group of symbols" that "serve as a medium of exchange between the mass media and the audience." He recognized that analyses of infrastructure and content must be supplemented by an account of the conditions under which culture is made, circulated, received, interpreted, and criticized: "The produced program is … more than the sum of the program ingredients" because it is encrusted with "contextual and explicit layers of meaning" that emerge during its creation and consumption.[28]

Such work is already underway. Arvind Rajagopal notes that because television,

the telephone, the Internet, and the neo-liberal are all new to India, "markets and media generate new kinds of rights and new kinds of imagination … novel ways of exercising citizenship rights and conceiving politics."[29] For Rosalía Winocur, women's talkback radio in Latin America since the fall of U.S.-backed dictatorships has offered a simultaneously individual and social forum for new expressions of citizenship in the context of decentred politics, emergent identities, minority rights, and gender issues—a public space that transcends the subordination of difference and the privileging of elite experience.[30] And Mosco starts from the power of mythology then "builds a bridge to political economy" in his investigation of neo-liberal *doxa* about empowerment, insisting on "the mutually constitutive relationship between political economy and cultural studies" as each mounts "a critique of the other."[31] We can see similar intent animating such innovations as Sarai, the Free Software Foundation, and the Alternative Law Forum, exemplary instances of Media Studies 3.0 in formation. They blend internationalism, political economy, ethnography, and textual analysis, and resist the binarism of 1.0 and 2.0.

To understand media infrastructure, we must address technological innovation, regulation, labour, ownership, and control, utilizing ethnographic, political-economic, and public-policy research to establish how the media came to be as they are. To understand content, we must address production and undertake both content and textual analysis, combining statistical and hermeneutic methods to establish patterns of meaning. To understand audiences, we must address ratings, uses-and-gratifications, effects, active-audience, ethnographic, and psychoanalytic traditions, combining quantitative and qualitative measures to establish the audience's composition and conduct in the wake of media consumption. This incarnates a simultaneously top-down and bottom-up approach, undertaken always with an eye to labour issues.

Gamework and the Precariat

Let me exemplify a labour focus. Electronic Arts (EA) is based in California with "worldwide studios" in British Columbia and offshoots in Montreal, Hong Kong, Tokyo, China, and Britain, *inter alia*. EA makes *The Sims*, National Hockey League games, *FIFA World Cup*, and the John Madden "football" franchise. The company was founded in 1982 by Trip Hawkins. He bought into Media Studies

1.0 and 2.0 simultaneously, dismissing broadcast television as "brain-deadening" and embracing "interactive media" as a development "that would connect people and help them grow." EA's name derived from a desire to emphasize art and technology under the sign of publishing, with developers initially promoted as authors. Its first games, such as *M.U.L.E.* and *Murder on the Zinderneuf*, were marketed through their designers' names—rather like rock albums of the day. These shining young white design geeks were celebrated in a famous 1983 advertisement called "We See Farther." But geek authorship was soon supplanted. By the mid-1980s, the "authors" of key games were no longer dweebs in black polo necks, but Doctor J. and Larry Bird, basketball celebrities brought in as endorsers and *faux* designers. Creators lost their moment of fame as authors. A stream of sports stories drew on promotions underwritten by others' creativity and money, displacing what were regarded as the esoteric pursuits of the first innovators.[32]

The labour process became fetishized as EA bought development studios and set up design teams on an industrial model. At the same time, the corporation sought to undermine the existing political economy of the industry by cutting the discount given to distributors of software, thereby building up revenues. Its next move was to deal directly with retailers, writing games for personal computers and consoles and becoming a distributor. In addition to continuing with console options, in the late 1990s it entered virtual worlds and awakened to female consumers, buying advertising space and time across fashion periodicals and girly TV. EA is massively successful—2007 revenues were US$3.091 billion, the company boasts almost 8000 employees, and it is buying other studios.[33]

In 2004, however, the firm became a byword for the poor labour practices that characterize the sector when the blogger ea_spouse pseudonymously posted a vibrant account of the exploitation experienced by her fiancé and others working at the firm.[34] Eloquently ripping back the veneer of joyous cybertarianism from games development, she disclosed that EA's claim to blend aesthetics and technology, as per its name and corporate trademark—"Challenge Everything"—belied both the company's treatment of employees and its products. Regarding labour, she wrote, "To any EA executive that happens to read this, I have a good challenge for you: how about safe and sane labour practices for the people on whose backs you walk for your millions?" Regarding texts: "Churning out one licensed football game after another doesn't sound like challenging much of anything to me; it sounds like a money farm." The nature of this exploitation is that a putatively

limited "pre-crunch" is announced in the period prior to release of a new game. Forty-eight hour weeks are required, with the alibi that months of this will obviate the need for a real "crunch" at the conclusion of development. The pre-crunch goes on beyond its deadline, and 72-hour weeks are mandated. That crunch passes its promised end, illness and irritability strike, and a new crunch is announced. Everyone must work 85 to 91-hour weeks, 9 am to 10 pm Monday to Sunday inclusive, with the (occasional) Saturday evening off, after 6:30 pm. There is no overtime or leave in return for this massive expenditure of talent and time.

At the very moment that ea_spouse blew the whistle on the corporation, *Fortune* magazine ranked EA among the "100 Best Companies to Work For." Today, the firm ranks sixty-second in the magazine's "List of Industry Stars" and ninety-first amongst firms that "try hard to do right by their staff" as measured by the Great Place to Work[35] Institute in San Francisco. EA calls itself "a one-class society," and its Vice-President of Human Resources, Rusty Rueff, operates with the following (astonishing) dictum: "Most creativity comes at one of two times: When your back is up against the wall or in a time of calm." In case readers find this firing squad analogy alarming, *Fortune* reassures them that workers can "refresh their energy with free espresso or by playing volleyball and basketball." But the exploitation begat a class-action lawsuit.[36] EA's website boasts about its labour record, but not in terms of the class action—rather, that it fares well on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index.[37]

The bold intervention (as we say in cultural studies) or outburst (as they say elsewhere) by ea_spouse generated febrile and substantial responses, such as calls for unionization, appeals to federal and state labour machinery, confirmation that EA was horrendous but by no means aberrant, frustration that the bourgeois press was disinclined to investigate or even report the situation, denunciations of asinine managerialism and private-sector bureaucracy (for example, "The average game company manager is quite possibly the worst qualified leader of people in the world") and a recognition that intellectual property rights make labour disposable ("I'm beginning to think that EA is really nothing more than a licensing warehouse. They'll always be able to recruit naïve talent to slave away … alienating talent is not a big problem for them"). Ea_spouse now runs a website that is bombarded with horror stories by angry former idealists from all over the globe who thought they were doing "cool stuff" until they experienced web-shop horror.[38]

We inhabit a world where flexibility is the mega-sign of affluence, and precariousness its flipside; where one person's calculated risk is another's burden of labour; where inequality is represented as the outcome of a moral test; and the young are supposed to calculate that insecurity is an opportunity rather than a constraint. Cue Electronic Arts. But not everyone succumbs to Media Studies 1.0's sense of helplessness or Media Studies 2.0's rhetoric of empowerment. Cue ea_spouse and a developing discourse about flexible labour amongst cultural workers who are segmented through deregulation and new technology.

In Western Europe and Japan, this group is naming itself. The precariat/précaires/precari@s/precari go under the signs of "San Precario" and "Our Lady of the Precariat," who guard the spirit of the "flashing lights of life." The movement embodies a new style, a new identity struggling for security against neo-liberalism that has been formed from young, female, mobile, international workers within the culture industries, services, and the knowledge sector. Antonio Negri refers to this group as the cognitariat: people with high levels of educational attainment and great facility with cultural and communications technologies and genres.[38] A new breed of productive workers, they play key roles in the production and circulation of goods and services, through both creation and coordination. This new proletariat is not defined in terms of factories and manufactures opposed to ruling-class force and ideology. Instead, it is formed from those whose immediate forebears, with similar or lesser cultural capital, were the salariat, and confident of guaranteed health care and retirement income. The new group lacks both the organization of the traditional working class and the political *entrée* of the old middle class. Today's "culturalisation of production" both *en*ables these intellectuals, by placing them at the centre of world economies; and *dis*ables them, by doing so under conditions of flexible production and ideologies of "freedom."

Since 2001, the Euromayday Network has organized Precariat parades in twenty European cities, featuring "contortionists of flexibility … high-wire artists of mobility … jugglers of credit," along with apparitions by San Precario to protect his children against evil bosses.[39] In 2005, San Precario appeared in the form of a worker uniformed and supplicant on his knees, with a neon sign on his head. Participants note the instability of working life today, and hail a new class of sex workers, domestic servants, and media creators at <maydaysur.org>. Their manifesto reads:

Somos precarios y precarias, atípicos, temporales, móviles, flexibles
Somos la gente que está en la cuerda floja, en equilibrio inestable
Somos la gente deslocalizada y reconvertida

We are the precariat, atypical, temporary, mobile, flexible
We are the people on the high wire, in unstable equilibrium
We are the displaced and made-over people

The Precariat recognizes the complex connection between "eslóganes de los movimientos sociales, reapropiados por el neoliberalismo" [social-movement slogans reappropriated for neo-liberalism]. It realizes that concepts like diversity, culture, and sustainability create spectacles, manage workers, and enable gentrification. Similarly, Espai en blanc "afirma que vivimos en la sociedad del conocimiento y en cambio no existen ideas" [affirms that we live in a society of knowledge and change where ideas barely exist] (espaienblanc.net). Adbusters and cultural jamming work in cognate ways (adbusters.org). When the Precariat and culture jammers analyze globalization and declare a new "phenomenology of labor," a "world horizon of production," they are reoccupying and resignifying the space of corporate-driven divisions of labour in ways that 1.0 and 2.0 have simply ignored. *Pace* apologists for the creative industries, who argue that the precariat is a fabulation of nostalgic leftist academics in need of theoretical makeovers, this is an organic movement of recognition and resistance.[40]

There are wider implications than labour itself. For example, a scandal engulfed British reality-TV promotions in 2007 because the BBC, and more overtly capitalistic enterprises, deceived viewers to cut costs and increase excitement. This critique soon turned into an appreciation of what happens to the public interest when programs are made on a project basis by businesses without a commitment to anything but profit, whose employees lack security and integrity. The British media executive Dawn Airey (once the author of a television business plan orchestrated around "films, football, and fucking") now warns against "the casualisation of the industry."[41] Similar debates have emerged over the exploitation of child workers in U.S. reality TV at the hands of sub-contractors—who again eschew organized labour.

Conclusion

To summarize, Media Studies 1.0 is misleadingly functionalist on its effects and political-economy side, and 2.0 is misleadingly conflictual on its active-audience side. Work done on audience effects and political economy has neglected struggle, dissonance, and conflict in favour of a totalizing narrative in which the media dominate everyday life. Work done on active audiences has over-emphasized struggle, dissonance, and conflict, neglecting infrastructural analysis in favour of a totalizing narrative in which consumers dominate everyday life.

Immanuel Kant envisaged our "emergence from … self-incurred immaturity" and independence from religious, governmental, and commercial direction.[42] To help make that possible, critical scholars and activists need to account for the post-industrial standing of cultural workers and reject a neo-liberal embrace of casual-ized labour.[43] Media Studies 3.0 should synthesize and improve 1.0 and 2.0 through a labour emphasis. This returns us to the origins of social theory: Adam Smith's ethnography of work, John Stuart Mill's account of the liberal individual, Karl Marx's observations on the fetishization of commodities, and W. E. B. Du Bois, Rabindranath Tagore, and José Martí's encounters with subjectivities split between production, consumption, and citizenship. There would be no culture, no media, without labour.[44] Labour is central to humanity, but largely absent from media studies. Let's change that.

Notes

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