FAST CAPITALISM

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Fast Capitalism is an academic journal with a political intent. We publish reviewed scholarship and essays about the impact of rapid information and communication technologies on self, society and culture in the 21st century. We do not pretend an absolute objectivity; the work we publish is written from the vantages of viewpoint. Our authors examine how heretofore distinct social institutions, such as work and family, education and entertainment, have blurred to the point of near identity in an accelerated, post-Fordist stage of capitalism. This makes it difficult for people to shield themselves from subordination and surveillance. The working day has expanded; there is little down time anymore. People can 'office' anywhere, using laptops and cells to stay in touch. But these invasive technologies that tether us to capital and control can also help us resist these tendencies. People use the Internet as a public sphere in which they express and enlighten themselves and organize others; women, especially, manage their families and nurture children from the job site and on the road, perhaps even 'familizing' traditionally patriarchal and bureaucratic work relations; information technologies afford connection, mitigate isolation, and even make way for social movements. We are convinced that the best way to study an accelerated media culture and its various political economies and existential meanings is dialectically, with nuance, avoiding sheer condemnation and ebullient celebration. We seek to shape these new technologies and social structures in democratic ways.

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Looking Over the Cliff: Globalizing Inequalities and the Challenge for a Global Social Theory

Jason Powell

Introduction

Every nation-state across all corners of the globe has been experiencing the most formidable structural, economic climate since the 1930s. One of the central causes of global financial instability has been transnational financial institutions and lack of regulation for consumer populations in different nation-states. It is not just financial institutions but also nation-states. For example, in May 2010, the Greek government has turned to Europe to help stimulate its economy (with 100 billion euros loan); otherwise, Greece would be at risk for bankruptcy which would then have ripple effects for other EU economies linked through economic harmonization, such as EU country memberships of the Euro – which would dramatically lose its value in the global economic market if the Greek economy was not propelled by support from other EU countries. President Obama has recognized the potential instability that Greece could potentially have on the US economy; and hence, this raises questions about the wider global economy. Whilst these problems require a global response by the international community and political leaders, they also require a response and engagement by social scientists. Historically, there have been a number of social scientists who explored how the Enlightenment and its legacy have impinged upon the emergence and creation of and social science disciplines that have attempted to explain social, economic, political, and cultural transformations in modernity (Layder 2006).

The processes of globalization in the 21st century are not associated with encompassing ideologies in the way that was the case with processes focused at level of the nation-state. The world is changing at a rapid pace, and the scope and impact of change have multiple dimensions and implications that transcend geographic and cultural boundaries (Bauman 1998). Hence, globalization has transformed the way people see themselves in the world. Everyone must now reflexively respond to the common predicament of living in one world. This provokes the formulation of contending world views. In a compressed world, the comparison and confrontation of world views are bound to produce new cultural conflict. In such conflict, old traditions and new ideas play a key symbolic role, since they can be mobilized to provide an ultimate justification for one's view of the world – a case in point being the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalist groups that combine traditionalism with a global agenda but also the response of US/UK governments that wished to promote 'democracy' and 'freedom' through a 'War on Terror' against such groups (Sands 2006). A globalized world is thus integrated but not harmonious, a single place but diverse, a construct of consciousness but prone to multiplicity and fragmentation. In that context, it is highly pertinent that critical social science steps up to the challenge and rethinks how we 'unmask' the implications of globalization and impact on modern society.

The Power of Globalization

Globalization has become one of the central but contested concepts of contemporary social science (Ritzer

2004). The term has further entered everyday commentary and analysis and features in many political, cultural, and economic debates. The contemporary globalized world order originates in the international organizations and regulatory systems set up after World War II – including the United Nations, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (now the World Trade Organization), the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank (Bauman 1998). However, the end of the Cold War was the prelude to the maturity of the concept of globalization. From 1989 to the present, it is possible at least to imagine a 'borderless' world (Ohmae 1990) in which people, goods, ideas, and images would flow with relative ease, and the major global division between East and West had gone. A world divided by competing ideologies of capitalism and state socialism has given way to a more uncertain world in which capitalism has become the dominant economic and social system, even for the communist-led People's Republic of China. Coinciding with these changes, a major impetus to globalization was the development and availability of digital communication technologies from the late-1980s with dramatic consequences for the way economic and personal behavior were conducted – this has transcended to mass communication from the Internet in the 1990s to Mobile Phones from 2000 onwards (McGrew 2007). The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the USSR, and its modernizing in China, plus growth of digital technologies further coincided with a global restructuring of the state, finance, production, and consumption associated with neo-liberalism. Coupled with this, in a post 9/11 world, there has been the recent 'War on Terror' and its implications for the reordering of the geo-political global agenda.

Since the advent of industrial capitalism as a feature of development of modernity, intellectual discourse has been replete with allusions to phenomena strikingly akin to those that have garnered the attention of recent theorists of globalization (Bauman 2001). Nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy and social commentary include numerous references to an inchoate yet widely shared awareness that experiences of distance and space are inevitably transformed by the emergence of high-speed forms of technological transportation (for example, rail and air travel) and communication (the telephone) that dramatically heighten possibilities for human interaction across existing geographical and political divides (Smart 2007). Bauman has proposed nothing less than a rewriting of human history based on what he called 'the retrospective discovery' of the centrality of spatial distance and speed of communication in the constitution of all societies (Bauman 1998:15).

However, because they were rooted in its core relations, private property and wage labor, they would keep 'reasserting themselves', and on an ever greater scale, so long as those relations were reproduced over time. The consequence is that globalization as a spatial process that has facilitated the emergence of a new kind of global city based on highly specialized service economies that serve specific, particularized functions in the global economic system at the expense of former logics of organization tied to manufacturing-based economies. To enable global markets to function effectively, they need to be underpinned by local managerial work that is concentrated in cities. Further, privatization and deregulation during the 1980s and 1990s shifted various governance functions to the corporate world, again centralizing these activities in urban spaces. In post-industrial cities there is a concentration of command functions that serve as production sites for finance and the other leading industries and provide marketplaces where firms and governments can buy financial instruments and services. Global cities become strategic sites for the acceleration of capital and information flows, and at the same time spaces of increasing socioeconomic polarization.

One effect of this process has been that such cities have gained in importance and power relative to nation-states. There have emerged new 'corridors' and zones around nodal cities with increasingly relative independence from surrounding areas. Globalization simultaneously brings home and exports the processes of privatization, competition, rationalization, and deregulation as well as the transformation of all sectors of society through technology and the flexibilization and deregulation of employment. As a process, debate centers on the uses of globalization as the rationale and means by which corporate capital may transnationally pursue new low wage strategies and weaken the power of labour, women, and ethnic minority populations.

But whether globalization is imagined or real requires rigorous analysis. The next section attempts to pull together main authors, ideas and trajectories of globalization and illustrate it by using key examples to consolidate understanding.

Contested Complexities of Globalization and Neo-Liberalism

The theorization of globalization is extremely complex. Roland Robertson refers to the concept of 'global

consciousness', which refers to 'the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' (1992:8). Through thought and action, global consciousness makes the world a single place. What it means to live in this place, and how it must be ordered, become universal questions. However, European expansion and state formation have boosted globalization since the seventeenth century and the contemporary shape of the world in the nineteenth century, when international communications, transportation, and conflict dramatically intensified relationships across societal boundaries (Mann 2006). In that period, the main reference points of fully globalized order took shape: nation-state, individual self, world-system, societies, and one humanity. These elements of the global situation became 'relativized' since national societies and individuals, in particular, must interpret their very existence as parts of a larger whole. To some extent, a common framework has guided that interpretive work; for example, states can appeal to a universal doctrine of nationalism to legitimate their particularizing claims to sovereignty and cultural distinction (Delanty and Isin 2003). But such limited common principles do not provide a basis for world order.

For Anthony Giddens (1991) the concept of time-space distantiation is central. This is a process in which locales are shaped by events far away and vice versa, while social relations are disembedded, or 'lifted out' from locales. For example, peasant households in traditional societies largely produced their own means of subsistence, a tithe was often paid in kind (goods, animals, or labor), money was of limited value, and economic exchange was local and particularistic. 'Reflexive modernization' replaced local exchange with universal exchange of money, which simplifies otherwise impossibly complex transitions and enables the circulation of highly complex forms of information and value in increasingly abstract and symbolic forms. The exchange of money establishes social relations across time and space, which under globalization is speeded up. Similarly, expert cultures arise as a result of the scientific revolutions, which bring an increase in technical knowledge and specialization. Specialists claim 'universal' and scientific forms of knowledge, which enable the establishment of social relations across vast expanses of time and space. Social distance is created between professionals and their clients as in the modern medical model, which is based upon the universal claims of science. As expert knowledge dominates across the globe, local perspectives become devalued and modern societies are reliant on "risk" and "expert systems" (Beck 1992). Trust is increasingly the key to the relationship between the individual and expert systems and is the glue that holds modern societies together. But where trust is undermined, individuals experience 'ontological insecurity' and a sense of insecurity with regard to their social reality (Giddens 1991).

The Internet itself has changed not only the way business works but also the way people interact on a personal level – from buying and selling online to planning for retirement, managing investment and online bank accounts. Although, in recent times, the dark side of the Internet has revealed illegitimate ways that groups and individuals use 'hyper borderless worlds' with data espionage, data theft, credit card fraud, child pornography, extremism and terrorism - are ever more common on the Internet with up to £40 billion a year made by international organized crime syndicates on the web (Powell 2006). The Internet is a global system and decisions made on virtual 'platforms' (that are created by corporations rather than governments) determine how money moves around the globe. The emergence of 'around-the-world' 24/7 financial markets, where major cross-border financial transactions are made in cyberspace represents a familiar example of the economic face of globalization (Schneider 2007). The definition and social construction of 'the problem' of state power is transferring from the state and its citizenry to private sector global finance. For example, Powell (2006) points to how the economic stakes and social consequences of 'ageing populations' cannot be underestimated for the upholding of power by multi-national corporations. Looking ahead, the race is on for 'Global Custody' through the socially constructed 'Ticking of the Pensions Time Bomb', as described by the Financial Times with Europe as a 'battleground' for the US Banks (The Bank of New York, State Street Bank, JP Morgan and Citibank) competing against the European Deutsche, BNP Paribas and HSBC for custody of the growing pensions market and the highly lucrative financial services supporting it. As further incentive to eager financial enterprises, the 'global picture' in private wealth drawn from the lucrative business of pension providing is estimated by 2007 to exceed $13,000 billion in the USA, $10,000 billion in Europe, and $7,200 billion in Asia. In less developed countries, women especially have been among those most affected by the privatization of pensions and health care, and the burden of debt repayments to agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF (Walker and Naegelhe 1999).

Indeed, Thrift (1994) suggests that international systems reliant upon rapid electronic communication and diffusion of data do not always result in a lessening of the importance of individual actors or localized face-to-face micro-social relations. He acknowledges that the international financial system has become, to an extent, 'disembedded from place', but emphasizes that transnational financial networks generate vast amounts of data and

a range of 'meanings' pertaining to the interpretation of those data. The result is that inter-personal exchanges involving individual agency to negotiate, discuss, interpret, and act upon the data are still of considerable importance. Since the vast majority of human activities is still tied to a concrete geographical location, the more decisive facet of globalization concerns the manner in which distant events and forces impact on the local or 'glocal' situation (Tomlinson 1999:9).

John Urry (2005) argues that the changes associated with globalization are so far-reaching that we should now talk of a 'theory beyond societies'. This position is informed by the alleged decline of the nation-state in a globalized world, which has led to wider questioning of the idea of 'society' as a territorially bounded entity. This in turn prepares the ground for claims to the effect that since 'society' was a core theoretical concept, the very foundations of social science discipline have likewise been undermined. The central concepts of the new socialities are space (social topologies), regions (interregional competition), networks (new social morphology), and fluids (global enterprises). Mobility is central to this thesis since globalization is the complex movement of people, images, goods, finances, and so on that constitutes a process across regions in faster and unpredictable shapes, all with no clear point of arrival or departure.

Despite the contrasting theoretical understandings of globalization, there is some measure of agreement that it creates new opportunities or threats. For example, globalization offers new forms of cosmopolitanism (Delanty 2006) and economic growth (Smart 2007) but also new threats and global risks such as ecological crises of global warming, climate change and environmental pollution; global health pandemics such as 'swine flu'; and international crime and terrorism. Globalization may be seen as encroachment and colonization as global corporations and technologies erode local customs and ways of life, which in turn engenders new forms of protest. Giddens has argued that the effects of globalization must also be seen as positive and that integration into the global economy increases economic activity and raises living standards. For example, Legrain (2006) claims that in 2000 the per capita income of citizens was four times greater than that in 1950. Between 1870 and 1979, production per worker became 26 times greater in Japan and 22 times greater in Sweden. In the whole world in 2000 it was double what it was in 1962. Even more significantly, Legrain (2006) argues that those nation-states isolated from the global capitalist economy have done less well than those that have engaged with it. Poor countries that are open to international trade grew over six times faster in the 1970s and 1980s than those that shut themselves off from it: 4.5 percent a year, rather than 0.7 percent.

By contrast to Legrain's (2006) idealism, it can be argued that global patterns of inequality have become increasingly polarized (Estes, Biggs, and Phillipson 2003). According to the United Nations, the richest 20 percent in the world 'own' 80 percent of the wealth; the second 20 percent own 10 percent; the third 20 percent own 6 percent; the fourth 20 percent own 3 percent; and the poorest 20 percent own only 1 percent. Throughout the world, 2.7 billion people live on less than $2 per day. These global inequalities predate globalization, of course, but there are global processes that are maintaining a highly unequal social system (Phillipson 2005). Contradictions in global society are illustrated in other ways, too. The globalization of capital may not have driven costs down in developed countries where few workers are prepared to tolerate the conditions this new model creates. Flexible global ordering systems need not just produce flexible labor, but flexible labor in excess, because to manage the supply of labor it is necessary to have a surplus. Migrants have met this need (Miles 2004). But in the wake of hostility manifest in many developed countries, especially following threats of terrorist attack in the United States and Europe migrants face tightening border controls and deportation of those who are not in areas where there is a shortage of skills.

President Obama currently sort to transform the provision of health care in the US, but the vested interests of the privatized health care system are seeking to limit and oppose the main thrust of his proposals, presenting these as being 'socialist' extensions of state power. Paradoxically, however, the neo-liberal ideology of globalization further bolsters the more restrictive limitations on the role of the state with respect to its citizens. David Held and his colleagues make the point that a distinctive feature of the present period is the extent to which:

> financial globalization has imposed an external financial discipline on governments that has contributed to both the emergence of a more market-friendly state and a shift in the balance of power between the state and financial markets.
>
> (Held 2000:232)

In this respect, the political agenda of advanced capitalist states reflects in part the constraints of global finance, even though the specific impact of financial globalization will vary greatly among states. A tangible consequence is the insertion of the operatives and 'requisites' of global finance into state policy-making in ways that frame, if not dictate, the parameters of state power.

These developments can be viewed as part of a new global process of shaping the lives of present and future generations of populations in western and non-western states. The change has been variously analyzed as a move from 'organized' to 'disorganised capitalism', to a shift from 'simple' to 'reflexive modernity', and to the transformation from 'Fordist' to 'post-Fordist economies'. The final part of this paper looks ahead and provides some reflective thoughts for questioning the extent to which a 'global social theory' is warranted.

The Future of a Global Social Theory?

At this point in the twenty-first century, an array of opportunities and challenges present themselves for the study of social theory. There is a need to develop a clearer perspective on the pressures facing social groups that impinge on 'race', class, age, gender, disability, and sexuality as a result of global change. A significant issue is how globalization and its impingement on local governance is transforming the everyday texture of day-to-day living. In this context, the need for a framework to respond to the challenge associated with globalization is warranted. The key dimensions here are the changing and contested form of the nation-state, citizenship and nationalism; the enhanced role of supra-national bodies; the increased power of multi-national corporations; and emergence and retrenching of social inequalities across the globe.

I argue that social theory should not merely provide 'critical questions' about dynamics of social relations, but rather, it is what one does with critical questions that is the cornerstone for critical theorizing.

A key aim of social theory is, first, the examination of the social construction of reality and critical debunking of such contingent realities. A central task for social theory concerns the need to examine the structural inequalities and power dynamics that perpetuate current understandings of the social world. An analysis that accepts Enlightenment assumptions about, for example, 'equality', fails to ask the key questions about why this state of affairs holds true for some rather than for others. A critical social theory must move beyond appearances and seek explanations that overturn conformist realities. Crucially, power relations, social processes and structures must be examined as they appear in everyday relations. Links must be made between the traditional and contemporary social theories between macro, micro and meso levels of analysis, so that the pull of social inequalities can be identified and the emotional experience and daily interpretation of them explored.

A key issue in theoretical interpretation concerns the place and nature of 'society'. The ideas of society as a bounded self-sufficient entity most associated with the recent neo-functionalism of Alexander (2004) had become taken for granted within mainstream theorizing. Such a formulation assumes there is a coherent and bounded society into which social integration is attainable. This view has become prominent by a small group of western societies, especially those associated with recent 'War on Terror' who aggressively promote nation statehood and democratic freedom (Walklate and Mythen 2007). Nevertheless, the notion of society as a sovereign entity is changing profoundly with the intensifying social forces of globalization:

> there are exceptional levels of global interdependence, unpredictable shock waves spill out 'chaotically' from one part to the system as a whole; there are not just societies but massively powerful empires roaming around the globe; and there is a mass mobility of people, objects and dangerous human wastes.
>
> (Urry 2000:13)

This critical questioning of the modernist basis to society is a challenging one to social theory. In a sense the traditional formulation of 'society' is being challenged from global forces that impinges on new technology that transforms the experience of social relations. Indeed, in a networked world, everyday life is becoming detached from the protective nation-state seen to be at the core of occidental modernity. Steering a path between Giddens's (1991) 'global optimists' and 'global pessimists', it may be suggested that a new formulation is required that recognizes diverse and unequal networks in and through the way people interact throughout their lives across national, transnational, and sub-cultural contexts. A major dimension of inequities impinges on debates on issues such as climate change, power of multinational corporations, and third-world countries of debt repayment. The phenomenon of globalization has transformed debates within social theory to the extent that it has reordered concepts typically used by social theorists across micro-macro continuum (Bauman 1998). Ideas associated with the idea of modernity, the state, gender, class relations, ageing, and ethnicity have retained their importance but their collective and individualized meaning is different and fragmented in the context of the influence of global actors and institutions (Powell, 2006).

A contentious point is that accepting the importance of globalization also strengthens the case for rethinking social theory through reassertion of macro analysis. Given the explanatory role of social theory, globalization is setting major new challenges in terms of interaction between individuals, communities, and nation states and the global structure within which these are constructed, contested and nested. Analyzing the interpretation of daily life may be more appropriately assessed in the contexts of networks and flows characteristic of global society, these producing a loosening in those attachments which have traditionally embedded people to locative settings: for Marxists in social class and for Feminists in gendered configurations. With globalization, these attachments are maintained but recontextualized and reembedded with the influence of transnational communities, corporations and international governmental organizations producing new agendas and challenges for how we understand 'modern society' (Turner 2006). Further, the nature of 'citizenship' and 'rights' so heavily influenced by Enlightenment philosophy are both heavily contested under the lead of the complex and commanding influences of powerful non-democratic intergovernmental structures such as the World Bank and International Monatory Fund (IMF), private multinational corporations such as banks and western states that are under new pressures associated with accelerating demography and migration. This contrasts sharply with the Enlightenment period which saw rights arguably independently defined and negotiated through various manifestations of British, European and American nation-building and sovereign state-based power.

It may also be suggested that democratic rights have become more fragmented as well as individualized. What has changed is the duty and necessity to cope with these risks that are being increasingly transferred to families (Bauman 2000). The new social construction of everyday life may be defined as a global problem and issue but the social reconstruction of how experience globalization is being cast as a personal rather than a collective responsibility. This development also implies an important role for social theory in interconnecting macro and micro perspectives with new approaches in order to understand how global processes contribute to the reshaping of the institutions in which the experiences of social groups are embedded.

A further task must be to construct new social theories about the nature of individualization in light of more fluid borders surrounding nation-states. Important questions concern whether and how people, socially differentiated, are facilitated or constrained by the spread of mobile communities along with more varied forms of belonging and citizenship. Social theory will be profoundly influenced by the 'development of a common consciousness of human society on a world scale and an increased awareness of the totality of human social relations as the largest constitutive framework of all relations' (Shaw 2002:12).

A further issue concerns the extent to which social theory may challenge the dominant institutions that reproduce and perpetuate social divisions in society. Applications of the policy sciences take for granted existing systems of capitalism as scholars work largely within 'definitions of the situation' that are framed by classical economic theories, assumptions and models of cost-effectiveness and individual level outcomes. The end result is that only a limited array of potentially viable policy options assuring the serious consideration of only incremental changes that will do little to alter the underlying structural economic problems facing social groups such as, for example, older people (Powell 2006).

In challenging this, there is a need for theorizing that examines the structural forces and social processes that profoundly shape individual and group experience in the global community of the first, second and third worlds. Theoretical development from a critical perspective seeks to illuminate alternative understandings and a vision to 'what is possible'. It is a requisite to lifting the ideological veil of scientific objectivity that obscures and mystifies inequality and social injustice in a society and economy that prioritizes the production of goods and services primarily for its economic and exchange value rather than for its social value and capacity to meet human needs across the world.

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Activism in the Fast Lane: Social Movements and the Neglect of Time

Kamilla Pietrzyk

> If we continue to follow the acceleration of human technological time so that we end in the black hole of oblivion, the earth and its bacteria will only smile at us as a passing evolutionary folly.

> — Stephen Jay Gould

Over the past decade, research on the so-called anti-globalization movement – better termed the global justice movement (GJM)1 – and on other aspects of transnational organizing, has grown substantially. Much of the recent thinking on the GJM emphasizes the role played by transnational information and communication technologies (ICTs), in particular the Internet, in providing what is seen as an unprecedented opportunity to build a virtual network of global citizens. According to these commentators, thanks to the new ICTs, social movements appear to be acquiring the organizational and strategic capabilities that may turn them into genuinely powerful political actors (e.g. Dartnell 2006; Meikle 2002; Rheingold 2002). As Nick Dyer-Witheford (1999) argues convincingly in Cyber-Marx, the Internet has permitted previously dispersed and isolated points of resistance to 'rhizomatically' connect and combine with each other.

While it is important to acknowledge the instrumental value of ICTs for progressive social actors, the intention of this paper is to problematize the prevailing celebratory approach by drawing attention to the central role played by communication media in facilitating what Marx called "the annihilation of space by time," and the associated cultural neglect of time. More specifically, my key concern is that the pervasive spatio-temporal imbalance fosters a mode of social consciousness that is short-term, unreflexive and ahistorical, in turn shaping the strategic propensities of political activists in advanced, "fast capitalist" societies in significant and potentially deleterious ways.

The article is organized in three parts. First, I outline the article's theoretical framework, which combines an approach to communication studies known as medium theory with the basic dynamics of capitalism as laid out in Marxian thought. The aim of this interdisciplinary framework is to facilitate a complex, historical understanding of how, in the broader context of capitalism, instantaneous media of communication shape the ways in which people conceptualize and organize social relations in space and time. The second part examines how capitalism's systemic imperative to accelerate the turnover time of capital penetrates (largely hidden) temporal norms, and how it is ironically and revealingly reflected in the predominant forms of activist mobilization, which tend to increasingly privilege speed and spatial reach to the detriment of duration. Finally, the brief conclusion offers some tentative suggestions for moving beyond this short-term, myopic impasse.

Medium Theory

According to Ron Deibert (1997), medium theory is an approach crafted to show how historical change emerges as a result of shifting relations involving media of communication. Medium theorists examine the structural features of various media when trying to understand how each medium differs from others in terms of its political-economic,

psychological and sociological implications. A key facet of medium theory is the belief that "media are not simply neutral channels for conveying information between two or more environments, but are rather environments in and of themselves" (Deibert 1999: 273). Raymond Williams (1973), albeit not a medium theorist, described the influence of the material conditions of any system with the expression "the setting of limits and exertion of pressures" (1973:4). This expression captures admirably well the dialectical relationship between a medium of communication and the character, cognition and cultural capacity of the society in which it operates.

Furthermore, as Babe (2000) and Comor (2001) have argued, medium theory does not limit the definition of communication media to speech, writing, telegraph, telephones, radio, and so forth. From a medium theory perspective, institutions, technologies and organizations all constitute media broadly defined insofar as they serve as "key nodal points through which social knowledge is produced and reproduced" and which accordingly affect people's thoughts and behavior (Comor 2001:276). Modes of transportation, both natural ones such as rivers or lakes and human-made ones such as canals, roads, and railways, constitute communication media as do schools, churches, and markets, and money (Babe 2000:59). In maintaining a broad definition of a "medium," medium theory asserts that, "[t]hough related to technology, a medium is not simply a technology, but the social relations within which a technology develops and which are rearranged around it. A medium is thus a mode of social organization, defined not by its output or production but by the relations obtaining within it" (Angus 1998:17).

Unlike most content-based approaches to communication, medium theory is also necessarily historical, contrasting different media environments across time, and tracing changes in communication media for their effects on the evolution of social and political order (Deibert 1999:21). According to Robert D'Amico, historicism can be defined as a thesis of "how human understanding is always a 'captive' of its historical situation" (cited in Cox 1996:281). In contrast an "essentialist" mode of thought, medium theory views history "not in terms of unchanging substances but rather as a continuing creation of new forms" (ibid). From this dynamic perspective, rationalities, systems, and states – though potentially stable in their basic characteristics over long periods of time – are nonetheless the products of historical contingencies and are thus subject to change as societies evolve (Deibert 1997:278).

Harold Innis and "The Bias of Communication"

One scholar whose own approach to medium theory is particularly relevant for our purposes is Harold Innis, a Canadian economic historian turned communication scholar. After he abandoned his initial training as an economist to pursue communication research, Innis set out to investigate the role played by media of communication in shaping the dynamics of large-scale social and political change. He was particularly interested in the influence of communication media in relation to how different civilizations apprehend and organize themselves in terms of time and space – the two fundamental indices of the human experience. Innis turned to communication studies precisely because he wanted to trace the evolution of temporal and spatial conceptualizations across civilizations, and because he believed that "communication technology, far more obviously than other forms of technology, directly intervenes in the structuring of time-space relations" (Watson 2006:327-28).

Innis believed that most civilizations tend to have a cultural orientation towards either space or time – an orientation closely connected to the communication media available to that society. In order to trace this connection across civilizations, Innis developed the concept of media "bias," arguably the most significant heuristic device found in his later writings. Innis first used this concept to enable social scientists to become more explicitly reflexive in their work. He maintained that while objectivity is impossible, social scientists can develop tools to become aware of their own subjectivities, to understand how they are constructed and how and why they are unconsciously expressed. The question posed by one of Innis's undergraduate philosophy professors, Ten Broeke, "why do we attend to the things to which we attend?", informed Innis's formulation of bias; indeed, it should be understood as the defining question in Innis' communication studies (Comor 2001:275).

In analyzing Innis's communication research, Robert Babe (2004) explains how, given their structural capacities, media tend to privilege, or be biased towards, either time or space. Media that are relatively easy to use and transport and that have an abundant capacity to store information but are not durable (e.g., paper) were considered by Innis to be space-biased. They give rise to, and support, space-biased cultures, which Innis characterized as "secular, present-minded, and intent on territorial expansion and administration of vast territories" (Babe 2004:384). These technologies "allow the acquisition, transmission, and control of information over an ever-expanding geographical

space" (ibid). Paper, for instance, lent itself to the creation and administration of the Roman empire – its lightness enabled an army of officials to coordinate their activities over vast expanses of space, simultaneously reducing the amount of time for decision-making. Because technologies such as paper "are light, easily reproduced and disseminated, and quickly replaced, they facilitate the control of space, but do not further...the preservation of knowledge for perpetuity" (Berland 1999:285). By contrast, media that are relatively intractable (e.g. stone carvings), difficult to transport, durable, and that are limited in their capacity to store information were deemed by Innis to be time-biased because they support and induce time-biased cultures, characterized as "ceremonial, communitarian, hierarchical, in tune with custom and tradition, religious and geographically confined" (Babe 2004:384).

At this point it is important to note that while the concept of media "bias" shaping societies may bring to mind technological determinism (and some have accused Innis of just that), Innis conceptualized "bias" in "decidedly non-deterministic ways" (Cox 1995: 8; original emphasis). This is because the structural characteristics of a medium that make it prone to privilege either space or time are never comprehensible outside the social-economic context of their use (Comor 1994:112). The development and use of a new means of communication into a specific society will shape, and be shaped in turn, by the political economic conditions existing in that society at the time. As such, from a medium theory perspective, one cannot evaluate the impact of new technologies, including new media, without also examining the material foundations of society involving its means of production, distribution and consumption, and the structured relationships related to them. No medium operates in a vacuum; media work in a relationship of dialectical influence with a society's particular political-economic configuration. These conditions continue to modify how a medium functions even as they themselves undergo transformation due how people use the medium in question (Comor 2001). Furthermore, Deibert argues that the charge of technological determinism leveled against Innis signals a common misreading of his work because "bias," properly understood, constitutes a heuristic device:

> [S]pace/time biases are better conceived of as shorthand designates for the supports and constraints presented by different communication media for prevailing mentalities and institutions throughout history... [T]o say that Sumerians were time-biased is not to reduce it to the medium of communication; it is to reveal the way the material context and available technologies of the time constrained or supported existing institutions, social groups and mentalities. (Deibert 1999:286)

Deibert's words highlight the fact that Innis's main goal in The Bias of Communication (1951) was not to cast media as direct determinants of the course of history. Instead, Innis endeavoured to use media as focal points through which macro-historical developments can be better understood in relation to the micro-level of conceptual systems, or modes of consciousness (Cox 1995:8).

Media and Consciousness

In pursuing communication studies, Innis placed such a heavy emphasis on the categories of time and space because he believed that these constitute "the fundamental conceptions in the make up of human consciousness" (Watson 2006:327). Similarly, Cox (1995) argues that the distinction between the space and time bias in Innis goes beyond "institutional configurations" – it relates even more to orientations of the human mind. Innovation in communication technologies "affect not only the physical relations among people and the centralization or decentralization of authority but also, and perhaps most importantly, the structure of consciousness" (Carey 1975:35). The relevance of Innisian medium theory to this study's assessment of the global justice movement directly involves its focus on "how the historically specific techniques of communication set channels in which perception runs and how, therefore, the thought of the times is related to the structures of the channels of perception" (Watson 2006:296).

For Innis, "reality" is neither God-given nor simply a product of what we observe. How human beings conceptualize themselves, their world and their interests is shaped by various media which influence, and are in turn influenced by, prevailing political-economic relations. Innisian medium theory emphasizes the role played by media in shaping conceptual systems – what human beings use in the task of processing information and experience into what is known. In short, medium theory is characterized by an analytical sensitivity to "the perspective imposed by the technique of communication" (Watson 2006:364).

Conceptual systems can be defined as interrelated, interworking sets of values, ideas, and beliefs that shape every individual's worldview; they serve to filter or sift through the vast amounts of information people receive from

their external environment and through direct experience. Media of communication constitute a significant element in the process of socialization through which these conceptual systems are formed. Referring to Innis's writings, James Carey points out that "knowledge is not simply information…There is no such thing as information about the world devoid of conceptual systems that create and define the world in the act of discovering it" (1975:45). For Innis, the ability to define what reality is constitutes the fundamental form of social power because human actions are controlled and constrained according to ways in which their realities are defined (ibid:44).

In the final years of his life, Innis became preoccupied with the pervasive lack of interest in problems of duration – what he called the "obsession with present-mindedness" of Western civilization (Innis 1951:76). "Each civilization has its own methods of suicide," Innis warned (1982:141). To his mind, culture ought to be primarily concerned with "the capacity of the individual to appraise problems in terms of space and time and with enabling him to take the proper steps at the right time" (Innis 1951:85-86). Contemporary western civilization, Innis thought, was teetering on the brink of self-annihilation because it was losing its general ability to redress its cultural imbalances.

In concentrating his studies on the ways in which different civilizations have organized and conceptualized time and space, Innis perceived that modern Western history started with a time-biased tendency and moved toward being dangerously space-biased. Referring to Innis's ideas, Ian Angus writes: "[O]ur society has been extremely efficient in media oriented towards space. We have more and more organization over a larger and larger area…What we do not do well is organize things in the dimension of time" (1998:24). In his essay "A Plea for Time," Innis called for a correction to this imbalance. As an antidote to the contemporary and pervasive space bias, he promoted the oral tradition, which he held to be a key component in creative and critical thought, as exemplified by the ancient Greek culture, whose popular use of "mnemo-technique" served as a means of building up and transmitting their cultural heritage over centuries (Watson 2006:372). Yet rather than pushing for a dominance of time-biased relations and conceptual systems, Innis saw the tension or balance between time-biased and space-biased media as the ideal. As Innis (1951) put it:

> A stable society is dependent on an appreciation of a proper balance between the concepts of space and time. We are concerned over control not only over vast areas of space but also over vast stretches of time. We must appraise civilization in relation to its territory and in relation to its duration. The character of the medium of communication tends to create a bias in civilization favourable to an over-emphasis on the time concept or on the space concept and only at rare intervals are these biases offset by the influence of another medium and stability achieved. (P. 64)

For Innis, "The oral tradition was both fecund and sterile in a fashion exactly contrary to the written tradition… [I]t had the ability to disseminate ideas but was obliged to depend on oral sources for creativity in thought" (Watson 2006:353). Its disintegration in modern society was, for Innis, accelerated by mechanical mass communication – the reading of books, newspapers and magazines, listening to radio, watching films (Innis 1995:47). The process of systematizing and amplifying the reproduction of contemporary (mostly commercial) sources of information – what Innis called "the mechanization of knowledge" – involves significant implications for intellectual and cultural capacities insofar as it fosters a "dispossession of time and the resources of memory" and renders marginal "nonrational" forms of knowledge, including history, myth, and the oral tradition (Berland 1999:305). "The quantitative pressure of modern knowledge," Innis wrote, "has been responsible for the decay of oral dialectic and conversation" (1995:351). As information started to be transmitted at speeds too great for people to process with care, for Innis, it was "growing too vast for successful use in social judgment" (ibid). At the same time, orally transmitted knowledge – important for cultural balance and potential efflorescence – was increasingly pushed to the periphery of the human experience through the predominance of space-biased communications. The "mechanization of knowledge" thus was serving to diminish cultural conditions needed to facilitate creative thought by tilting the balance between space and time in favor of space.

Combined with the structural conditions of capitalism as delineated in the Marxist tradition, the Innisian approach allows for an understanding of the deep-seated changes in our consciousness effected by any given predominant configuration of space and time relations --changes that shape social movement activists' "imagination" and strategy. Like Marxism, medium theory examines historical changes at the macro-level but it also examines the role of media in shaping ways of thinking and acting. For Innis, the historical struggles of groups or classes to gain power have usually entailed the effort to control the temporal and spatial conditions of life. In this respect, Innis's analysis of media as forces shaping ideological production and the classes which sustained and were sustained by them "constitutes the core of a materialist interpretation of the relations between the economic base of a society and its superstructure which complements Marx's analysis" (Parker 1977:560). Parker continues:

A full incorporation of Innis' analysis into contemporary Marxist thought would require a recognition that the "forces of production" of any historical political-economic system comprehend not only the population, the means of material production, and the resource base, but also the communications media or networks which sustain and are sustained by that system: the forces of ideological reproduction, and the transport media which are conditioned by and determine the structure of spatial-temporal relations between individuals and classes within the system. (ibid)

While Innis was not directly influenced by Marx's work, Parker demonstrates that their writings are complementary in several important aspects. Before examining the ways in which predominant media shape the strategic propensities of today's political activists, medium theory directs us to first assess with more depth the capitalist dynamics, forces and processes dialectically structuring these media of communication.

The Capitalist Speed Imperative

To reiterate, the temporal and spatial characteristics of society can only be properly understood by situating them in the larger context of the political economy in question. In the context of the modern world order, capitalism expands because it is has to; it is a system organized around competition and competitive market relations, which, for Marxists, are organized around the dynamic to extract more surplus value from labor and to subsequently realize this value (as profits) through sales. This basic dynamic, known as the labor theory of value, informs the competitive relations among capitalists.

According to Barbara Adam (1995), the contemporary industrial way of work is fundamentally dependent on clock time. In her discussion of the time economy of work relations, Adam explains that "surplus value and profit cannot be established without reference to time" (89) since "to be profitable means to spend as little money as possible on labor time" and "[t]o be competitive is to be faster than your rival" (100). This is why the values of efficiency, profitability and competitiveness have all been highly valorized in advanced capitalist societies, giving rise to the contemporary "speed fetishism" (101). The precise calculation of time in connection with these values, says Adam, forms the core of the process that Marx theorized as the commodification of time. While she emphasizes that life in industrialized Western societies is not dominated exclusively by the time of the clock – which continues to coexist with the complex, variable and open-ended times of the body and natural cycles – Adam rightly stresses the hegemonic status of commodified, decontextualized, quantifiable and empty time, which has served capitalism for centuries in its role as a standardized unit of exchange.

Echoing the argument that competition and the profit motive constitute the underlying rationales for the contemporary imperative toward speed, David Harvey has identified two incessant drives in the capitalist system: the drive "towards the reduction if not elimination of spatial barriers, coupled with equally incessant impulses towards acceleration in the turnover of capital" (2000:98). In the words of Marx, commenting on the capitalist impulse to revolutionize the means of transportation (themselves media of communication, broadly defined), capital must "strive to tear down every spatial barrier to...exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market" and "annihilate this space with time, to turn over capital in the 'twinkling of an eye'" (Marx 1973:538-9). Marx could already see that the spread of railways, telegraph and steam navigation would tend to accelerate the means of communication and transport, leading to periodic bouts of "annihilation of space by time" (Rosenberg 2005:21-22). Capitalism loves speed because, as Benjamin Franklin observed over two hundred years ago, time is money.

Harvey (1990) argues moreover that, historically, the emergence of recent, digitally-based ICTs constituted one of the ways in which capitalism responded to the collapse of Fordism in the mid-1970s. Capitalism required greater flexibility with respect to labor processes and markets, products, and patterns of consumption. The shift to the post-Fordist "regime of flexible accumulation" was partially achieved through the rapid deployment of new organizational forms and new technologies of production that brought to the fore entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and above all, "greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation" (Harvey 1990:147). These and other organizational shifts constitutive of post-Fordist restructuring benefited enormously from the development and implementation of new ICTs, which enabled capitalists to improve efficiencies and extend their control of various markets across geographical space. Harvey (1990) explains the significance of instant communication in what he calls the process of "time-space compression":

Accurate and up-to-date information is now a very highly valued commodity. Access to, and control over, information,

coupled with a strong capacity for instant data analysis, have become essential to the centralized co-ordination of far-flung corporate interests. The capacity for instantaneous response to changes in exchange rates, fashions and tastes, and moves by competitors is more essential to corporate survival than it ever was. (P. 159)

Instantaneous ICTs have also played a crucial role of the post-Fordist regime of flexible accumulation by facilitating the transnationalization of finance, with informational facilities now in place for the continuous and real-time flow of monetary information, the round-the-clock trading in stocks, bonds, and currencies, which bounce from exchange to exchange in response to slight shifts in the market, frequently without human input as computers handle the transactions automatically for traders (Webster 1995:143; Deibert 1997: 153). It also allows corporations to maximize competitive advantage by arranging, for instance, to locate headquarters in New York City, design facilities in Virginia, and manufacture in the Fast East, with sales campaigns co-ordinated from a London office. Referred to by some scholars as the new international division of labour, this orchestration of globalized production and marketing strategies by transnational corporations would have been impossible without instantaneous media like the Internet. Furthermore, by using ICTs to obtain "time leads" over competitors, corporations can obtain potential "extra-profits" before the competition catches up. For instance, the ability to "beat the competition" in accessing the latest trend, product, or scientific discovery implies the possibility of an important competitive advantage and thus constitutes a vital aspect of successful profit-making (Harvey 1990:159).[2]

The Neglect of Time

Capitalist dynamics, particularly the imperative to increase control over space and reduce capital turnover time, have been structured into dominant media of communication, broadly defined. I contend that through these media, the conceptual systems and practices of more people in more parts of the world are becoming increasingly preoccupied with immediate or relatively short-term concerns. In the context of capitalism, the accumulated result of these spatially biased structures is deepening a spatio-temporal cultural imbalance, which Innis saw as detrimental to people's creative resources and intellectual capacities.

Historically, as it became easier to communicate more quickly over large geographic spaces (thanks to the printing press, followed by the telegraph and the telephone), the temporal norms of society underwent profound modifications. The speed of life, defined as "the number of an individual's episodes of action and/or experience per units of time" generally accelerated (Rosa 2006:448). With "time efficiency" structured into and, in turn, promoted by spatially biased technologies, organizations, and institutions, people's responses had to become more immediate in response to emerging norms of timeliness. Notions such as "saving time," having no time, running out of time, or being "up with the times" gained greater currency in an increasingly time-conscious culture (Lubrano 1997:120). Simultaneously, the relatively "slow" oral tradition that Innis championed as a counterweight to the spatially biased Western society, was increasingly marginalized. As Berland (1999) argues, because of their structural predisposition toward the rapid dissemination of large amounts of information across vast territories, predominant media serve to marginalize or altogether obliterate those media "appropriate to memory, tradition, spirituality, and dialogue – all aspects of oral culture that have been appropriated and transformed through the production of technological space" (292). Like media before it, the Internet, dubbed by Todd Gitlin (2001:76) as "the latest speed demon" works to obliterate time as it is being structured to serve the interests of "fast capitalism" (Agger 1989; 2004). In this light, the Internet can be understood as what Innis would refer to as a spatially biased medium.

Of course, the Internet is not the sole, all-powerful mediator of contemporary conceptual systems, culture, and economic order. Today's preeminent media, broadly defined, also include the American state and its ongoing efforts to control or expand the boundaries of US interests specifically, and capitalism more generally. Capitalist consumption similarly exerts a powerful influence by promoting the desire for instant gratification and individualistic self-fulfillment through commodities.

Recognizing the presence of other powerful media, however, need not divert us from assessing the Internet's biases. In the context of the "developed" world in the early twenty-first century – the so-called "age of information" – the Internet plays a key role in deepening the prevailing preoccupation with spatial expansion, organization and control through shrinking time frames. While communication media, once established and widely accessible, can be used in ways unintended by those who initially created and structured them, the most prominent providers of Internet services and content continue to be dominated by profit-seeking interests. These interests also have the

greatest input in determining the national and international policies that shape the medium's development. In this broader context, the Internet continues to perpetuate the existing tendency to prioritize spatial reach and speed over duration.

One important manifestation of this tendency is the astounding ephemerality of information disseminated on the Web. The Internet can reach virtually anywhere in the world, provided sufficient infrastructure and the availability of telephony; therefore, all its information potentially has a global reach.3 But the ability to transmit and receive information from almost any part of the world instantaneously has been accompanied by a growing neglect of duration: as Innis recognized, to the extent that a medium excels at controlling space, it is generally less efficient at controlling time. Thus, while the Internet's infrastructure itself is robust, the messages transmitted online are highly perishable and are easily obliterated with the push of a button (Frost 2003). According to web archivist Brewster Kahle, the World Wide Web has a "memory" of about two months (cited in Brand 1999:48). Materials published on the Web that derive from professional sources, such as libraries or databases, have their analogs elsewhere; this ensures that they will still be available even after they vanish from digital view. Other kinds of digital documents, however, tend to disappear within days (Deegan and Tanner 2002).

As with other structural properties of the Internet, the ephemerality of web content should be understood in the context of the systemic imperative toward an acceleration of production, distribution and consumption. The technologies used to archive digital data face high rates of obsolescence because most companies have little economic incentive to develop lasting data storage solutions. Faced with the pressures of fast capitalism, information technology companies have to perpetually innovate their products – and the upgrades themselves, of course, are supposed to make computers and the capitalist system that relies on them run faster and more efficiently, contributing to the general speedup.

For Simons (2006), the fact that as technology for writing becomes more advanced, the products of writing generally become less durable represents "one of the great ironies of our age." Echoing Innis, he points out that clay and stone used thousands of years ago to record important information lasted thousands of years, and that the parchment used hundreds of years ago lasted hundreds of years. Even acid-free paper has proven to last for centuries. Today, digital technologies, including both hardware and software, are changing so rapidly that a typical storage medium or file format is obsolete within five to ten years. Indeed, given the accelerating rates of obsolescence and ephemerality of the Internet and related technologies, "there has never been a time of such drastic and irretrievable information loss as right now" (Simons 2006).

The absence of archives in a context of growing amounts of obsolete data suggests that we are now living in a period that may prove "a maddening blank" to future historians – a digital Dark Age – because almost all of our art, science, news and other records no longer have lasting, physical analogs, being directly created and stored on media "that we know can't outlast even our own lifetimes" (Brand 2003:48). The obsolescence of digital data, especially on the Web, both reflects and perpetuates a cultural tendency toward the neglect of duration. Because it provides a way to constantly update information, the Internet is perpetually rendering obsolete the information we already have, exacerbating the problem of impermanence and "obsessive present-mindedness" that Innis associated with modern media. As Brand warns, the "price of staying perfectly current is the loss of cultural memory" (2003:38).

History and Memory

The loss of this type of memory can already be observed among activists, many of whom appear to largely lack awareness of the history of social justice struggles. Having (online) access to texts documenting these struggles is of course requisite for gaining this awareness, which is why the ephemerality of online texts is so disturbing; however, mere access is not enough in a cultural milieu wherein historical thought itself has been marginalized. While further empirical research is necessary, preliminary anecdotal and case study evidence (Pietrzyk 2007) allows me to feel justified in positing that given what is perhaps an unprecedented emphasis on the present and immediacy, there seems to be no observable incentive or interest to learn the lessons of the past to inform contemporary strategy and vision-building. In such a scenario, the potential for creativity and innovation in social activism becomes reduced, for it is arguably more difficult to build a new social order when one has little idea about what has already been tried and its results.

The question of memory is an important one when assessing the capabilities and potentials of contemporary

activists. According to social movement scholars, cultural and institutional memory are significant aspects of successful activist organizing (Della Porta and Diani 1999:184-85). However, to the extent that the predominant media in contemporary Western society are conducive to speed and spatial control, they make it relatively difficult to hold onto a sense of historical continuity. The extraordinary ephemerality of Internet-mediated information offers one example of the neglect of long-term thinking prevalent in our culture.

In her commentary on the difficulties afflicting volunteerism, Ellis (2003) is weary of the lack of institutional memory in volunteer-driven organizations, including contemporary social movements. The need for institutional memory in such groups is particularly pronounced, she argues, because of the high rates of turnover in leadership positions: "New ways of doing things seem to spring up without any consciousness of what happened in the past (…) newcomers often initiate change simply because of their own preferences or the wish to establish a 'new administration.' Many fail to ask an important question first: **Why and how did we end up where we are now?"** (original emphasis). While she acknowledges the importance of avoiding getting bogged in past failures, she insists that "we are all too busy to reinvent the square wheel or duplicate the hard efforts of predecessors. The key is to do some research before we set off in a new direction" (Ellis 2003).

Likewise, global justice activists Cobarrubias and Casas (2007) identify an "unhealthy lack of trying to reflect on what has been done (actions, campaigns, movements, and so forth), learn lessons, share those lessons and tools with others, and in a more long-term way recuperate genealogies of movements' struggles." Echoing Ellis's concern with the neglect of institutional memory, they observe:

> Activists do not know how to learn from their history – how to keep it alive – or even how to produce and share or own history with others....Often, even simple things like keeping track of a collective's activities, being able to share its history with others, are left by the wayside in the grind of daily activist work or organizing response actions. Groups that are fighting against the same exact targets don't know what people three or four years ago did, what worked and what didn't.... [I]t's a question of a lack of historical memory – not only of what movements did 100 or 70 years ago but of what they did 10 and 20 years ago. (Cobarrubias and Casas 2007)

The lack of cultural and institutional memory identified above is magnified through the Internet and other spatially biased media. The Internet represents a communicative environment wherein users are encouraged to "click onto the next thing" and where website designers work under the basic premise that they have mere seconds to grab the viewers' attention before they surf away to find something more interesting (Frost 2003). In this respect, the Internet shapes the very mode of thought in modern society by affecting attention spans and memory. In reference to Innis in Watson (2006) argues that space-biased media such as the Internet convey great amounts of information quickly and promote a perception of time that is much more "cut-up" and "short-term" when compared to previous generations (419).

Some would argue that the generations growing up in the contemporary "developed" world have "evolved" to handle the informational onslaught by developing superior skills at "multitasking." However, there exists some evidence to suggest that the overload of information facilitated by the Internet and other ICTs entails deleterious consequences not only for cultural and institutional memory, but also for human organic (biological) memory. For instance, a study done in Tokyo in 2001 has linked severe memory loss experienced by increasing numbers of young people to a growing dependence on computer technology. A preliminary examination of one hundred people between the age of twenty and thirty-five revealed that serious problems with their memory afflict more than one in ten, with those afflicted reporting an inability to recall names, written words or appointments. The severity of their memory problem has even forced some to leave their jobs. The researchers argue that devices like electronic organizers "lead to diminished use of the brain to work out problems and inflict 'information overload' that makes it difficult to distinguish between important and unimportant facts." "It's a type of brain dysfunction," said Toshiyuki Sawaguchi, the university's professor of neurobiology. "Young people today are becoming stupid" (Norton 2001:A1).4

If we take note that for Innis, culture is primarily concerned with "the capacity of the individual to appraise problems in terms of space and time and with enabling him (or her) to take the proper steps at the right time" (Innis 1951:85-86), we begin to get a better idea of memory's importance in resolving collective, long-term problems. As Heather Menzies argues in her book No Time, memory is crucial to critical thinking "in both its aspects: the broad range of personal experience, chance observations and overheard chat, plus the deeper wells of accumulated and composted knowledge, wise nuggets and one-liners against which we test new information, sensing contradictions and resisting accepting the latest idea or news flash simply because it is new" (2005:186).

Given their structural propensities toward spatial reach and speed, the Internet and other ICTs are not conducive

to facilitating this kind of accumulated, "composted knowledge." For David Solway, the problem is that young people today suffer from "aphasia," or "an inability to articulate themselves as social and historical subjects." He has coined his own term, "chronosectomy," which he describes as "a kind of lobotomy in that part of the brain that senses time as personal and shared continuity" (Menzies 2005:188). He worries that contemporary youth do not perceive themselves as "being part of, even immersed or embedded in, a continuum of time, and as a result they seem to be simultaneously moving at the speed of light and going nowhere" (ibid:189). Solway's concern is shared by Rosa, who maintains that social acceleration "counteracts our capacity to relate episodes of experience to a sense of identity, history and the communities we are part of. Episodes of experience thus remain just that: episodes that pass without a trace, without being transformed into lived experience" (2005:458).

Information Overload

In exploring the influence of the Internet and other space-biased, instantaneous media on the creative resources and intellectual capacities of political actors, we also need to examine the problem of information overload. Innis (1951) believed that improvements in communication tend to make understanding more difficult. The mechanical amplification of the amount of available information was initiated on a large-scale with the advent of printing and perpetuated with each wave of technological innovation. With the advent of instantaneous, global systems of communication it has reached new heights. More information is available to an individual with access to these technologies than ever before; however, such a vast increase of available information is not necessarily "good news." As Innis realized, innovations in systems of communication do not necessarily lead to greater knowledge. On the contrary, the general trend in innovation, leading to ever "lighter" and ephemeral communications (highly efficient over distances but of short duration), help foster a culture that is rich in information, but poor in analysis, particularly when the commercial dynamic (and its emphasis on sensual titillation) is involved.

According to Surman and Reilly (2003), information overload is one of the biggest problems of networked activism. Mads Hassar (2001) observed that "We are less patient, less willing to take the time, perhaps because we have less of it since there is so much we feel we need to digest in order to keep up" (cited in Hassan 2003:139). This problem represents a substantial challenge to "networked" social movement organizations: as they continue to produce more and more information, it becomes difficult for activists to know where to start – "or possibly more importantly, where to stop" (49). There is simply too much information to absorb. One cause of this problem is the emphasis of data collection over analysis – our culture excels at producing and disseminating large volumes of information but runs aground when it comes to synthesizing it. As Naomi Klein writes: "We are producing more and more data – statistics, case studies, best practices. However, we often see this information thrown out to the world in a fairly raw form with no analysis or even explanation of the framework in which the information can be understood" (Klein 2000:51). In the context of capitalist ICTs, fast information usually wins. What gets lost along the way? For Eriksen (2001:70), "the short answer to this question is context and understanding" while Hassan (2003:137) observes that the increasing immersion in the real-time, chronoscopic temporality of the network means that we are left with no time to develop knowledge, expertise and critical thought, without which we cannot live through consciousness in the past nor project possible futures.

Dominance of the Visual

The loss of memory and the strong possibility that our capacity to filter "important" information, from a torrent of trivia is diminishing, are not the only potentially disturbing element in relation to the creative and intellectual capacities of contemporary social movements. These capabilities are being further undermined by the visual orientation of predominant media, including the Internet. Our space-biased civilization privileges sight, or visual knowledge, as a dominant mode of communication – something that deeply disturbed Innis.

In his admiration for the cultural heritage of orally-based societies, Innis developed a critique of "the dominance and isolation of the visual in the dominant era" (Watson 2006:347). He maintained that as a result of the dominance of the visual, "'perception' becomes replaced with sensation' as the central function in human consciousness" and that "sensory imbalance and political instability" represented "two sides of the same phenomenon" (ibid). In a

similar vein, Frost (2003) argues that "visual media promote specific, limited modes of perception and understanding and of economic and spatial organization, which shape the society and culture in which they circulate." Visual media are conducive to inducing feeling, not critical, reflexive thinking. Such knowledge is usually practical or entertaining , yet it tends to reduce our ability to critically reflect upon what we are seeing.

For Innis, "biases tend to be cumulative and self-reinforcing" (Comor 2001:283). The conceptual systems of people living in the 21st century are being shaped by the aggregate effects of long-standing spatially biased, fast-paced media; from the telegraph to radio, from television to the Internet. In particular, the visual and space and time-annihilating tendencies of television are being intensified with the growing use of Internet medium.5 To make the argument that the Internet is a predominantly visual medium is not to ignore the continuing presence of text online, including websites and discussion boards. Rather, it is to call attention to the fact that biases, whether those of space or time, or the privileging of sight, influence each other. The introduction of a new medium, especially by relatively marginal social forces seeking to challenge existing power centers, may well serve to undermine the bias of other, preexisting media and help to bring about a new social order. However, if the development and the application of these new media is structured by biased vested interests and conceptual systems, these media generally will take on already dominant biases. Given capitalism's systemic tendency to maintain and extend the torrent of images that stimulates our senses and the "modern" desire to consume, the Internet generally reflects and deepens the visual orientation of preexisting, predominant media.

Even a quick Internet journey using one's Internet browser will reveal the dominant positioning of images on the Web. Text found on the Internet also has been affected by the privileging of the visual. Students of Internet "usability" learn that the average Internet user spends mere seconds in evaluating the attractiveness of a website; to entice the user to stay, any text must be short, broken up into short paragraphs, and surrounded by lots of "white space." Above all, to attract the "reader" (or more to the point, the website "viewer"), textual information typically is surrounded by colorful, appealing images, diagrams, and illustrations. It would thus appear that if people are choosing to spend their time on the Internet rather than watching television (see Putnam 1999:179), it is likely because the Internet can "outperform" television by offering content that is more engaging, sensually titillating, and "controllable" with just a click of a mouse.6

Since we are all more or less used to the hyper tempo of spatially and visually biased, predominant media, it can be difficult to find evidence of their influence on conceptual systems. In this respect, it is useful to examine cultural relics. For example, one of the most striking aspects of films made in the fifties, at least from our contemporary perspective, is how sluggish they are, with slowly unfolding dialogues and lingering scenes (Eriksen 2001:85). Todd Gitlin likewise observes that while looking back over the past fifty years of Western cultural production, "it is hard to resist the impression that the movies were slower, newspaper and magazine articles longer, sequences longer and more complex, advertising text drawn out." In comparing the images and dialogue in films from the 1920s through the 1950s, he remarks how "strikingly slow" they seem. In these early films, the camera typically remained still and the scene stayed put; today, the restlessness of the camera is matched by the relentless montage of clips (Gitlin 2001:88-9).

Examining cultural relics like old movies can be illuminating in their ability to reveal the extent to which our conceptual systems have been shaped by cultural speed up. Yet such an examination is fairly narrow in its focus. From an Innisian perspective, it is no substitute for developing a mode of thinking that strives to continually reflect upon its own unconscious biases.

The Need for Reflexivity

It is difficult to deny that in the rushing capitalist world, most people not only have to think fast, they also have to act fast. I have been arguing that this speed imperative can be observed not only in relation to the systemic pressures of fast capitalism and the decisions made by political leaders, but also in dominant forms of activist engagement. With individualistic and immediate gratification common sense characterizing modes of consciousness, many forms of activist organizing appear to be prioritizing speed and spatial reach over sustainability. Forms of engagement become more and more oriented toward short-term, instrumental mobilizations that may inspire, but often fall short of the sustained, "committed" action needed to effect substantive change. Long-term strategy-building is typically eschewed, as the dominant pattern among the current generation of activists (at least in advanced

capitalist countries) seems to enthusiastically embrace the cause du jour (determined in most cases by a volatile commercial news agenda) and spend some time vigorously organizing a "day of action": a demonstration, a festival, or a film screening. Once the action is done, participants tend to feel a little better about themselves and, more often than not, subsequently turn to a new and different social justice issue, choosing from the plethora of more or less titillating causes available in what one commentator calls "the theme park of radical action" (Blühdorn 2001). Not without bitterness, "one time deal" is how a friend once characterized this self-gratifying, strategically myopic style of engagement. Many "networked" activists ' temporary, ad hoc organizations entail less commitment than the more laborious task of nurturing sustained alliances and erecting stable political organizations. The capitalist imperative toward speed is thus ironically and revealingly reflected in the prevailing emphasis on taking action in the here and now, often with no time or energy to debrief afterwards or more generally, consider the usefulness of action taken for the sake of action (Featherstone et al 2004).

In observing the new generations of Western activists, Canadian cultural critic Hal Niedzviecki has became convinced that when they try to raise awareness of their particular cause, "the line between chronicling dissent and using one's status as a protester to enter the pop world and further an "I'm-Special agenda is a thin one" (2004:218). This general sentiment was well captured by one young activist, who proclaimed enthusiastically that "Going to Québec City was, without a doubt, the craziest, most dangerous, most fun experience I've ever had" (ibid).7 To be sure, this is not to say that activism cannot or should not be fun. Yet based on the present analysis using medium theory and also my own experiences with activism in Canada, Niedzviecki's point rings distressingly true when he asks: "How many of the mostly middle-class Westerners who protested at the antiglobalization rallies of the early millennial period were in attendance at least as much to be there as to 'work for change?'" (ibid:218; original emphasis). Much heartfelt idealism and real effort undoubtedly factors into the work of activist youth; however, anecdotal and first-hand experience suggests that, frequently, this tends to be the case for a considerable number of activists, for whom superficial political engagement serves as a vehicle to "reinvent themselves and affirm their specialness" (Niedzviecki 2004:221). Against the background of a "me-first," short-term outlook common to many activists, "[p]seudo-rebellion blurs into passivity. We start to think that seeing a film or videotaping a protest is the same thing as actually striking a blow against the evil corporation, tantamount to rejecting the latest ultra-convenient polluting apparatus in favor of some benevolent alternative" (ibid:223).

This self-absorbed, instant gratification mode of activism manifesting itself in "summit-hopping," with its promise of colorful marches, cultural performances, extreme thrills should the authorities decide to intervene, and above all, its ability to make one feel special and "radical," might best be understood in the context of a space-biased culture, mediated by technologies such as the Internet. Such media facilitate an acceleration in the pace of life while reducing the general capacities needed to critically assess the ways in which we go about "doing" radical politics. By enabling an accelerated mode of interaction, ICTs promote what Robert Hassan (2003:142-143) calls "abbreviated thinking" and the associated foreshortening of political imagination. In applying this line of critique to social movements, Featherstone et al (2004) have deployed the term "activistism" to describe what they perceive as the prevalent pragmatist emphasis on action "for its own sake" that fails to reflect upon its own impotence.

From an Innisian perspective, one corrective to this myopic style of engagement is through the development of a mode of thinking that strives to continually reflect upon its own unconscious biases. Reflexive thinking refers to the ability of groups and individuals to appreciate the biases that impact their thinking and which are enacted unconsciously time and over again. For Innis, the importance of reflexivity stemmed from his belief that "the search for knowledge is not the search for final truths, for the Known, but for an understanding of the limitations of knowledge. This is the only real knowledge" (Watson 2006:296).

The task of developing a reflexive mode of thought is not easy, for it is virtually impossible to obtain an objective perspective in relation to one's own self, yet it is not too unfeasible to discover one's own limitations. Innis maintained that the "sediment of experience" provides the basis for this investigation. While it is difficult if not impossible to predict one's own course of action, it can be done with respect to the course of action of other people. To uncover one's own biases, therefore, one can observe the predictable habits or biases of others (Innis 1995:433). In relation to social movements, activists may learn to become more self-reflexive by observing the biases played out in the process of planning and executing a protest or other activities.

If they succeed at gaining a degree of self-reflexivity, activists can then bring it to bear not only upon how they choose to pursue their objectives, but also to reflect upon the objectives themselves. Innis observed that the social scientist who succeeded at becoming more self-reflexive in terms of their biases can take comfort that "thought in the social sciences grows by the development and correction of bias. On the other hand, he [sic] will receive small

thanks and possibly much contempt and persecution for attempting to tear the mask from innumerable biases which surround him" (Innis 1995:432). In recommending reflexivity for social movement actors, the question thus arises whether it is salutary for activists to adopt this intellectual strategy: to refuse to accept "final truths" and relentlessly question their motives and activities. Insofar as strong and unshakable faith in one's ideals is advantageous in the formidable effort to change the world, such an approach conceivably could undermine the strength of one's convictions. There is thus a tension at work here: on the one hand, self-reflexivity can undermine whatever confidence activists bring to their work. On the other, reflexive capacities are needed to recognize and possibly counteract the biases that are potentially influencing goals and strategies in deleterious ways.

While recognizing this tension, I venture that self-reflexivity takes precedence over self-assurance. Reflexive thought needs to be at the forefront of contemporary activism if activists are to develop the kind of intellectual and creative capacities necessary to correctly identify and analyze the deeply rooted systemic problems of capitalism as well as their own biases.

Final Remarks

By way of concluding, I wish to emphasize that I recognize the instrumental value of instant, digital communication media, including the Internet, for social movement activists. Through email, message boards, file transfers, and so forth, movement activists across the globe can now coordinate a transnational campaign or orchestrate a protest within weeks, sometimes even days, without ever physically gathering in one place. As exemplified by "Global Days of Action" and other large-scale protests, Internet-mediated networks have proven very effective at uniting large groups of people in very short periods of time. In my own work as a member of various Canadian movements, I too have relied extensively on the Internet and other media as tools of organization and mobilization. And yet, as I have argued in this article, given that the speed with which worldwide movement mobilization can now take place is, in fact, historically unprecedented on account of new media of communication like the Internet, activists appear to be increasingly putting speed and spatial reach above organizational sustainability, reflecting the short-term, ahistorical, and immediate gratification common sense perpetuated by contemporary capitalist media.

Finally, I do not mean to suggest that in order to recognize and rectify the pervasive myopic outlook of space-biased cultures, activists should permanently turn off their computers and television sets, and devote their free time to solitary meditation. I am calling, however, for more reflexive thought within activist practice. As this paper has suggested, the Internet might perhaps be better understood not as a revolutionary tool or solution, but as part of the problem confronting today's social actors. As Agger suggests, "[s]lowing down is easier said that done" (2004:131). Nonetheless, future successes of contemporary social movements may well depend on the ability of activists to recognize the way in which fast media such as the Internet are influencing their political self-expression, and to re-think and re-evaluate their uses of such media. To offer one example, rather than investing their energies into yet another spectacular though short-lived and largely ineffective "global Day of Action," movement activists could use the Internet to begin the process of becoming acquainted with the rich theoretical and historical legacy of past anti-status quo struggles. Additional strategies likely can be devised for the paradoxical deployment of space-biased media to counter our speed-obsessed culture and modes of thinking and acting. Ultimately, whether they use the Internet or not, the greatest challenge confronting the new generations of activists will involve efforts to build some places and spaces where ordinary people can become empowered to think critically and collectively about the better world we wish to create.

Endnotes

1. The term "anti-globalization" is regarded by the movement's participants as unduly negative and is typically eschewed in activist discourse in favour of more positive monikers, such as "alter-globalization", "globalization from below" or the "global justice movement" (GJM).

2. It is important to note that such dynamics, of course, are not new; they have long generated the annihilation of space and time and can be explicated in terms of

ongoing, if accelerating, trends. What has changed is that instantaneous communication systems are now instrumental in facilitating this competitive advantage on a global scale.

3. Of course, as Frost (2003) and others have pointed out, the digital divide remains a serious obstacle to Internet connectivity around the world, and that in many places even basic telephony is not available.

4. Other scholars and medical professionals also are starting to recognize the problem. Professor Pam Briggs, who chaired a British Psychological Society symposium on the effects of technology, said: "I think increased use of the Internet and computer technology is starting to have an effect. Everyday memory might be at threat if you are using the computer as a kind of external memory." Likewise, David Cantor, director of the Psychological Services Institute in Atlanta, Georgia, argues that, "information overload is making it difficult for some people to absorb new information as they have reached a limit of what they can store in their brains. These people forget things because they were too distracted to absorb them in the first place" (cited in Norton, 2007: A1).

5. With the advent of television, Western civilization's short-term, unreflexive and ahistorical outlook reached new heights, since moving images constitute a relatively more "potent" form of communication insofar as they appeal to human beings at a relatively visceral and sensual level than do print or radio, emphasizing the emotional over the rational (Gitlin 2001). Television's propensity to promote immediacy, individualism and sensation to the neglect of thought and duration is related to its role as a purveyor of a consumerist outlook. Through consumption, immediate gratification and individualist satisfactions have been promoted to the extent that short-term, "me-first" orientations now play a significant role in the common sense of most Western cultures (Comor 2003: 9). Sut Jhally (1991) points to the shrinking time span of television commercials as advertisers' response to the growing "clutter" of the commercial environment and the coming of age of a generation raised on fast-paced video games and television programming. Jhally is worried that the speed of television advertising "has

replaced narrative and rational response with images and emotional response. Speed and fragmentation are not particularly conducive to thinking. They induce feeling" (84). The neglect of time perpetuated by television can also be observed with respect to televised news programmes. A typical news broadcast consists of decontextualized "sound-bites," sewn together to the visual accompaniment of rapidly flashing images. Neil Postman (1985) concluded that "we are by now so thoroughly adjusted to the 'Now..this' world of news – a world of fragments, where events stand alone, stripped of any connection to the past, or to the future, or to other events – that all assumptions of coherence have vanished" (110).

6. Gitlin (2001) believes that there is pleasure in the ability to speed through a torrent of images on screen while remaining physically still. It is a different sort of pleasure of the kind Mark Crispin Miller (1990) calls "subvisual" – "visceral pleasure at the disorientation that results from a sequence of bursts, pleasure at immersion in a wild procession of fragments, the sort of pleasure that, extrapolated from moving pictures to the other arts, has come to be called 'postmodern.' The montage is the message, and the message is that the torrent feels good" (94). In a sense, the Internet functions like "TV on steroids," reflecting and deepening television's predominant biases. Concentration and contemplation, two qualities of "slow" thought being undermined by fast media, become an even greater anachronism in the online environment, "where everything is fast and facile" (Menzies 2005: 7).

7. The documentary produced by the Toronto Video Activist Collective about the protests during the Québec City Summit of the Americas is revealingly titled Tear Gas Holiday ("Tear Gas").

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Death-Drive America: On Scott Wilson's Vision of the Cultural Politics of American Nihilism in the Age of Supercapitalism

Mark Featherstone

I.   Against the Bipolar Culture of Americanism

Despite the explosion of academic study of American political theology in recent times, I hold the view that the best single work on the fundamentalist turn in American politics under Bush II is Arthur Kroker's (2006) short book Born Again Ideology. However, this view has recently been challenged by the appearance of two books on contemporary America by the British cultural theorist Scott Wilson. What makes Wilson's books on American supercapitalism, which should really be labeled volumes one and two of a single study of contemporary American political culture, extremely important is that they provide a coherent philosophical and cultural exposition of contemporary America that historicizes the fundamentalist turn under Bush II and presents the Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld neoconservative regime as less the driving force behind the turn to fundamentalism and more the political-cultural representation of a tendency in American history that has always been present. Kroker's book is essential for the same reason. There are, of course, other studies which cover the same ground, including James Morone's (2003) excellent Hellfire Nation, but none of these offer the same level of philosophical sophistication as the Kroker or Wilson books.

Where Wilson differs from Kroker is in his sustained use of psychoanalysis and cultural theory to explicate the structures of contemporary American society that enables the reader to situate the Bush II regime in a philosophical context comparable to those that exist for the great modern utopias-dystopias of Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union (Arendt 1973). In other words, where Kroker's book delivers the story of American quantum culture and vampyric techno-theology through a close reading of American culture itself, Wilson provides the interpretation of the deep structure of this strange cultural form through a close reading of the poststructuralist tradition in French thought. Although some realist readers may complain that both Kroker and Wilson are hyperbolic in their interpretations of America, I would suggest that it is precisely the surrealistic tone of both writers that makes their books essential, because it is this super-realistic vision that enables them to reveal the madness of contemporary American culture and overcome the tendency to normalization that is present in every society, never mind those where the exception has become the rule. It is for this reason, which often means that those books that are most necessary are paradoxically completely underexposed to commentary and discussion, that what I offer in this paper is a critical analysis of Wilson's essential theory of American political culture under Bush II.

The first point to note is that Wilson's books are particularly timely in that they offer us an image of the America of Bush II in its last days. As I read Wilson's texts America was already consumed with Obama's utopian talk of change, and it was easy to think that the cruel landscape of what we might call death drive America was about to be swept away forever by at best Obama's utopian politics, which would apparently see the world united behind a new tolerant brand of Americanism, or at worst McCain's Bush-lite, which would never be able to hit the highs or lows of the Bush II regime because of the failure or, as Wilson's books explain, the success of the latter in its black

policy drives. But simply because Obama came out of top, and America entered a new utopian phase of thinking about itself as liberator of others through rule of law rather than iron fist, does not mean that Wilson's books on the cultural politics of the America of Bush II represent irrelevant historical documents. Although it is clear that America has now entered a liberal phase, which as Kroker (2006) explains is the less violent other side of American quantum culture, it is not clear that the social, culture, and psychological complex of Americanism that endlessly propels the land of the free through the bipolar cycle of religious ultra-conservatism and secular liberalism has been completely or even partially recognized.

As Kroker's (2006) shows, the central reason why it is difficult for America to reflect upon its cultural psychopathology is that the connection between religion and reason runs right through to the core of American identity itself to the extent that even the two-party political system is a reflection of its psychopathological bipolarity. This is why it will not be enough for Obama to simply turn away from what Wilson shows to be the Bataillean politics of Bush II. If Obama's own utopianism, which is colored by nods towards social justice rather than Bush II's focus on advancing the law of nature, is no more than the latest in a long line of more or less centrist versions of American liberalism, then the bipolarity of American culture will remain unchallenged. This is what Kroker and the subject of this paper Wilson show. The real change America needs will require a radical re-evaluation of its national, cultural, psyche on top of a turn away from the surrealistic political economy of Bush II. That this will only be possible by interrogating the deep structures of Americanism is what makes Wilson's books important beyond the Bush II period, into the Obama presidency, and most probably long into the future.

What Wilson's books offer is precisely this psychological analysis of the deep structures of Americanism that is necessary to not only critically engage with the totalitarian or, to use Paul Virilio's (Virilio in Armitage 2001) term, globalitarian aspects of the American psyche, but also excavate the progressive or utopian element of the thought of the inhabitants of the land of the free. As I have shown in my own work, Tocqueville's Virus (2007), this utopian impulse which runs through Americanism, and can be traced back to the original settlers, read out of the works of Hobbes and Locke, and detected in the politics of Wilson, FDR, and Obama, is the other side of the death dealing, sacrificial, psychological temper Wilson associates with the Freudian (2003) notion of thanatos.

Although thanatos may be essential, because as Deleuze (1991) shows in his work on the psychology of sadism, the dystopic rhythms of the death drive are always prior to the secondary impulse of eros, the life drive that prevents humans simply destroying themselves in the name of a return to Mom. I think there is a sense in which America needs to confront its own death drive in order that it may better engage its progressive, utopian, impulse. In the age of globalization and global capitalism, I think this is now more urgent than ever before because the reach of the death drive America is more or less total, as evidenced by dystopic notions such as full spectrum dominance, and the original utopians, the European heirs to Plato and More, who for so many centuries sought the realization of an imaginary social and political ideal, have long since seen their idealism collapse into cynical realpolitik under the unbearable weight of the memories of Auschwitz and the Gulag Archipelago. This is why we need to take Wilson's books deadly seriously. They offer a dark dystopic image of America that may be enough to cause us to think about the ways in which America can return to its progressive, utopian, tradition under conditions of globalization that make confronting profound philosophical, psychoanalytic, questions of utopia, dystopia, life, and death more pressing than ever before.

II.   The Mystical Order of Joy and the Supercapitalist Death Drive

On the face of it is difficult to see how what I take to be the first volume of Wilson's study of Americanism, The Order of Joy (2008a), delivers the form of cultural re-evaluation that will be necessary for America to recognize, and consequently master, its own unique brand of quantum culture. The book seems to be a standard philosophical document working through connections between various French structuralisms and poststructuralisms, and it is hard to see what it could say about America, beyond a passing similarity between some aspects of French thought and American culture. However, the relation between French thinking and American culture the book establishes is much deeper and much more convincing than first impressions suggest. The deep meaning of the book, and the psychological complex which roots the exploration of American culture to come in both texts, resides in the equation of pleasure, death, and joy made early in the book. This connection, which it would be easy to miss because it appears on the first page of the book, relates back to Wilson's earlier work on Georges Bataille, with the important

development that Bataille's link between pleasure and death is augmented through reference to Deleuze's concept of joy that describes the sensation of perfect mechanization (Wilson 2008a).

Given the addition of the notion of joy, Wilson's thesis is not simply that a kind of sensuous violence pervades contemporary American culture, and that this is paradoxically the product of a repressive Puritan society, but rather that the fusion of religion and technology in America creates a limit situation defined by perfect mechanization that recalls the mythic state of joyess rapture where the chosen people leave their fleshy earthbound bodies behind and ascend towards the heavens to become one with God. It is through reference to this thesis, which recalls Achille Mbembe's (2003) work on necropolitics, that Wilson shows how America has evolved a mystical culture of negation, where technological death and destruction is necessary for the elevation of particular humans to a joyess new state. What is more is that this runs parallel to the Islamic fundamentalists' apocalyptic cult of death of the suicide bomber, which transforms the ghoulish spectacle of the exploding body into a cause for celebration. That is to say that in much the same way that the Islamic fundamentalist body explodes when it reaches the joyess state of maximum intensity represented by the condition of martyrdom before God, the American techno body pushes towards the limit condition of organic death through a culture of techno-theology that aspires to reach the mystical state of oneness with the divine through a state of perfect mechanization that would render the fleshy body obsolete and signal the emergence of posthuman cybernetic man.

Given that this psychocultural apocalyptic structure has, as Kroker (2006) shows, been central to American thought from the very beginning illustrates why it will not be enough for Obama to simply turn back to multilateral politics and away from the empire talk of Bush II. In Kroker's theory of American postmodern ideology, what happened under Bush II is that the ancient Old Testament Puritanism of the original settlers came back to enchant the postmodern techno-politics of post-Berlin Wall America that was already gripped by the messianic language of the end of history. Thus, the thinkers who inform Kroker's vision of the America of Bush II are Einstein and Weber who illustrate the possibility of a quantum culture where religion and techno-reason fuse to form an apocalyptic complex that is endlessly thrown back to the future in search of salvation. It is this image of techno-Puritan America that Wilson (2008a; 2008b) extends in his books through French theory, with the added value that the psychoanalytic basis of his work may provide some way out of the psychological complex of quantum culture through the recognition of the way the compulsion of repeat sustains the bipolarity of Americanism. In other words, through recognition it may be possible to work through and eventually overcome the condition of bipolarity that currently means that the conservative-paranoid line through Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan, and Bush II will never end. This is, essentially, the therapeutic model that sustains the Freudian-Lacanian theory that Wilson employs in his books to explain the structure of the order of joy that he believes organizes American culture.

In order to extend this psychoanalytic model to an analysis of American cultural politics Wilson makes use of Lacan's three registers of the imaginary, which usually refers to the subject's imagined self, the symbolic order, which relates to the systems of language and culture that structure human reality, and the real, which Lacan employs to explain the hard core of organic existence that can never be represented by either the imaginary or the symbolic order and persists on the outer edge of human perception. Wilson employs this triadic structure of the imaginary, the symbolic order, and the real to refer to the body of global capitalism, the state, and the general economy of war and expenditure. In his Lacanian complex, then, the imaginary is represented by the totality of global capitalism, the symbolic order is reflected in the state that provides significance and codes the image of the global economy, and the real is embodied by the practices of war, violence, and expenditure understood in the widest sense. Regarding the fusions between the three registers, Wilson explains that economy and war meet in the explosion of joyful immanence linked to destruction and consumption, war and state collide in the production of the mode of anorganic joy related to perfected mechanization, and the state and economy meet in the event of the symbolization of empire.

The nightmarish picture of neo-liberal America that emerges over the course of the first chapter of The Order of Joy (2008a) is, therefore, one of a state set on the total domination of global space-time through the endless expansion of a martial economic model that is based on that mechanistic consumption of organic matter and is for this reason totally impervious to human reason. While Kroker (2006) paints a similarly bleak picture of American empire in his outstanding companion piece to Born Again Ideology , The Will to Technology (2003), through the use of Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, Wilson fast forwards through Kroker's essential texts Capital (1990), Thus Spoke Zarathustra (2003a), and The Question Concerning Technology (1977), until he reaches Deleuze and Guattari's (1972; 1984) books on capitalism and schizophrenia, which become the core texts for his work on contemporary Americanism. In respect of the use of Deleuze and Guattari to conceptualize the rise of empire there is nothing particularly new in Wilson's work, because Hardt and Negri (2000) and to a lesser extent Retort (2005) make use of

the core thesis of Anti-Oedipus (1972) and A Thousand Plateaus (1984) to understand processes of globalization. But I think that what sets Wilson's treatment apart from these texts is the depth of the textual relation he establishes between the works of the French schizoanalysts and the condition of Americanism.

Similar to the thesis explained by Kroker in The Will to Technology (2003) and Born Again Ideology (2006), The Order of the Joy (2008a) shows how the American war machine expands in order to colonize global space-time on the basis of a ballistic version of Puritanism that we can trace back to the original settlers, but also the core political theorists of America, such as Thomas Hobbes (1982) and John Locke (2003). We know Hobbes employed the new physics of Galileo to conceive of the early modern economy in abstract terms of competing forces, trajectories, and lines of flight that needed minimal regulation in order to ensure that collisions between the human embodiments of those forces continued to be objectified in economic terms and did not break through the thin crust of civilization to restart the natural war of all against all (Spragens 1973). The next step took place when Locke located Hobbes's abstract model of economy in America, the tabula rasa of the new world which was perfectly suited to carrying a metaphysical theory of economy, and began the long history of the mechanization, or technologization, of man through his theory of property that extended to the idea of the estranged possessive individual who owns his own body as an objective source of labor power to be gainfully employed in the world (Macpherson 1962). Given the theoretical model that the English political philosophers left America, which enabled the understanding of men as abstract economic quantums best understood through reference to the new physics of movement that conceived of reality as a smooth space characterized by competing quantums of matter in motion, and money that stands in for some other object and only finds value in relation to other values, it is clear how the possessive individual could be conceived of in terms of a piece of hard metal that was endlessly on the move and was meaningless beyond its relation to the environment that would simply either allow or disallow future movement. Although my view is that the political philosophies of Hobbes and Locke may be seen to inform the development of Americanism on a deep philosophical level, Wilson skips the English masters and leaps straight to Deleuze and Guattari and in particular their idea of the war machine to illuminate the condition of postmodern America. In his view the purpose of the war machine, which represents the fusion of economy, state, and war in American empire, is to brand reality, where the practice of branding simultaneously refers to the ancient process of marking property and the postmodern practice of image manipulation in order to stimulate consumer desire, and code the flows of capital as they pass through space-time in order to continually construct and reconstruct the endlessly deconstructing economic imaginary.

This is where war enters Wilson's system. The practice of war paves the way for flows of fast capital by deconstructing traditional territorial structures in order that new capitalist structures may be constructed in the image of the globalized capitalist body without organs and the state may oversee the construction of the correct essential infrastructure to establish connections between the new virgin territory and the wider imperial network. Hardt and Negri (2000) make the same point in their Empire, suggesting that the key role of the American military machine is to develop smooth space for capitalism to flow through, and Retort (2005) employ the concept of military neo-liberalism to show how the American military machine is led by the principle of economic need in order to first open up and second protect new markets essential for the maintenance of the heated up global consumer credit society. That this heated up consumer model crashed while I was reading Wilson's books illustrates his point that the reason global space-time has become a battleground of competing economic interests is that the traditional master signifier of international relations, the balance of power, which had held since the end of World War II in the form of nuclear deterrence, collapsed with the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union leaving the globalizing technologies of finance, telecommunications, and the American military machine free to colonize global space-time without human reason or reflexivity.

It is now clear that the essential result of the total unreflexive expansion of these globalizing technologies under the tutelage of the American state over the course of the last twenty years has been the more or less apocalyptic crash of the global economy which was never governed by value rationality, but rather operated on the basis of mindless principles of economic struggle, such as competitive advantage. However, to imagine this crash somehow signals the end of Americanism and that Obama will be presented with a clean slate on which to build a more socialistic America is, I think, a mistake since the standard view of the Chicago School economic thinkers would be to regard the current economic chaos in posthuman terms by suggesting that what has happened over the course of the last year or so is best represented by the image of the personal computer re-booting itself after receiving the essential software update that the credit bubble was over-inflated and needed to burst in order for the economy to start to expand in future. The idea that we should tamper with the economy on the basis of the essential re-boot, and think in humanistic terms about the effects of the re-start on the world's human population, would be lost on a thinker such

as Milton Friedman (2002), who would assert the need to let the economy work itself out of the downturn, simply because he was possessed by the apocalyptic spirit of technology that has become normal in the Americanized world. Unfortunately for the human population of the planet, the modern / postmodern age has been, and continues to be, defined by the dominance of the spirit of technology in ways that stretch far beyond the economic theories of Friedman and the Chicago School thinkers and are perhaps better illustrated by Heidegger's (1977) theory of completed nihilism that describes a world totally possessed by instrumental reason.

Despite the dire warnings of the prophets of technological dystopia such as Heidegger we remain unable to really conceive of the value of organic life vis-à-vis the vitality of technology because we are infused by the spirit of the machine that has no purpose beyond the endless reproduction of its most basic function to work. As Kroker (2003) illustrates in his The Will to Technology, the prophets of the technological future, such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, understood that the machine, which is transformed into Deleuze and Guattari's war machine in Wilson's work, has no thought, philosophy, or reason. It simply works for the sake of working and ensuring that it continues to works in the future. In Kroker's view this image of what Deleuze and Guattari call the mecanosphere was predicted by Marx, who advanced the notion of circulation, Nietzsche, who made the idea of the will central to this thought, and Heidegger, who linked Marx to Nietzsche in his theory of completed technological nihilism that simply wills the will that wills itself and so on. However, we know that this is not the end of the story. Akin to Kroker (2006), who shows that the closed circle of completed nihilism produces a mythical resurrection effect that pushes a primitive God who hires and fires and sort winners from losers centre stage, Wilson explains that the total expansion of the supercapitalist war machine through the various scalings of global space-time produces a utopian moment of convulsive pleasure comparable to the mystical union with an omniscient tech-no God for a post-Nietzschean nihilistic universe.

This is a truly apocalyptic event in Wilson's view because the sensation of anorganic mechanistic joy is the product of the realization of a ghoulish utopia-dystopia of total control or over-determination which sees the supercapitalist machine start to threaten the elimination of organic life itself in favor of a new brand of post-organic cybernetic life that does not suffer from any of the imperfections or malfunctions of its organic predecessor. In this situation the war function and the state function of supercapitalism are merged in the form of a violent control mechanism set on over-determining organic life by transforming it into code that can easily flow through the imaginary body of the globalized communications network in quantums that are equivalent to both basic financial and telecommunications data. Under these conditions, where organic life itself is under threat from the spirit of technology, we have entered the realm of Agamben's (1998) state of exception where there is no rule of law, but that made by those in executive power who manage the endless unfolding of the supercapitalist machine.

For Wilson (2008a), we are currently living in the Americanized supercapitalist state of technological second nature where we are totally exposed to the coding mechanisms of state power. In Agamben's work this means that the liberal individual is completely open to construction through discourse and that they can, therefore, easily be reduced to a state of bare life by stripping away their legal identity. However, Wilson's postmodern, surrealistic, take on the significance of the new coding technologies of the supercapitalist state takes this Foucauldian theory a step further. In his view, the contemporary supercapitalist empire, which is in the process of reducing everything and everybody to the status of code, deconstructs and reconstructs the individual as either normal or pathological on the basis of their sociological and biological identity that flows through the globalized communication network as streamed data. At this point the individual, who has already been reduced to the status of a quantum of economic power by the Hobbesian / Lockean logic of the supercapitalist system, is totally surveilled by the normalizing power structures implicit in the Americanized global communication network.

In many respects this vision of a total system that covers every conceivable scaling on the planet, reaching from the global level of networked communications to the micro-biological level of individual genetic code, represents Foucauldian (2008) biopower in its ultimate form. What the contemporary American supercapitalist war machine achieves through the reduction of the individual to digital data is the complete immersion of humanity into a technological coding system that simply works by endlessly circulating information. The difference between this Americanized biopolitical machine and what Roberto Esposito (2008) calls the archetypal biocracy of modernity, Nazism, is that the Nazi machine was never able to globalize its model of normality and pathology because its central mechanism for reducing humanity to the status of bare life, the camp, remained at an experimental level that required the relatively primitive industrial production of corpses, rather than the system we live with today which creates postindustrial postmodern Muslims or muselmänner through the reduction of humanity to the status of code. In this respect Nazism was nowhere near as effective in achieving the normalization of humanity as the contemporary

American supercapitalist machine because its mechanism for creating robotic men relied on brutal violence and the systematic humiliation of the embodied human.

We know that the American system sometimes slips back into the same logic, because we have all seen the images from Abu Ghraib, but these kind of events represent a primitive or, in Wilson's Lacanian language, real form of punishment that the supercapitalist war machine would prefer to avoid where possible, simply because it understands that surveillance and normalization through data is a far more effective means of ensuring that humanity is perfectly streamed through the channels of technological mecanosphere than ritual humiliation ever could. However, the supercapitalist machine is not a static system that simply turns over endlessly because the effect of the closure of mechanical circuit is the production of a new mythological subject that functions to make the process of total robotization bearable. What this means is that somewhere in the realization of the total technological system, where the global scale is the micro scale of data that streams across the smooth spaces of the world communication network, we encounter the real end of history in the emergence of a kind of metaphysical temporal loop, which connects the contemporary supercapitalist machine to ancient cosmological notions of the micro-macrocosm that showed how man was intimately related to the universe, and, as a consequence, the violent closure of the circuit of history running from ancient Greece to postmodern America, with the result that humanity is thrown back into prehistory and mythology.

This is what Kroker (2006) means by quantum culture because what it illustrates is the way in which the surrealistic looping of history creates a new space of techno-mysticism based on notions of the kind of apocalyptic rapture popular in contemporary America (Pfohl 2006). But in the new American techno-apocalypse it is not simply that the chosen few vanish into the mystical body of Christ, because this pulp version of the story is far too close to traditional Old Testament thought, but rather that the totally immersed, totally coded, body of the normalized individual is overcome by the fantasy of the bioengineered new man who never wears out and never passes away. In this sci-fi fantasy, which is, in my view, the hard core or real of contemporary supercapitalist ideology, the new man, a kind of bioengineered Nietzschean übermensch, resides in a strange techno-utopia, a new Heaven on Earth characterized by immortality and a culture of endless life, where everybody and everything simply works.

Consider the sci-fi fantasy where everything works. This imaginary, which trades off the construction of cinematic imaginary and star-status in Hollywood, current obsessions with cosmetic surgery and body transfiguration, and the proliferation of hard-core pornography on the primary site of globalization, the Internet, where super-human, hyper-sexed, bodies provide surrealistic images of hard fucking machines working at maximum intensity in idolization of the supercapitalist machine, not to mention the very real evolving science of bioengineering, sustains the masses' belief in technology. That this fantastic vision seems more real in some places in the world, such as California, than others, which are known for other reasons related to death and destruction, legitimates its ideological function in the minds of the masses who worship those super-human pumped up bodies working and playing at maximum intensity. But the problem with this work hard-play hard ideology of endless life is that it creates a culture of mystical enjoyment based on perfect mechanical motion to screen out what Wilson (2008a) suggests is the truth of the contemporary supercapitalist system, which is death, destruction, and the transformation of humanity into pure malleable data to be bought, sold, and disciplined over the media-scapes of the global communications network.

In this condition, which Wilson expresses through the idea of the death drive of capitalism, humanity is reduced to the status of pure commodity and the veneer of civilization is stripped back to leave the world in what may appear to be a state of nature, but is in reality a condition of manufactured technological brutality. Supported by the ideological fantasy of the post-human body, there is no end to death drive supercapitalism. In the state of manufactured natural brutality one would imagine that the brand of mysticism that Heidegger (1993) employed to suggest a different mode of technology, which would be poetic rather than calculative in its approach to evolution, should be unsustainable. The same should be the case for the fantasy of the utopia of the bioengineered man, simply because in the face of a thanatological system that transforms everybody and everything into an object for exchange, and in a globalized society where the amoralism of evolutionary biology dominates economic thought in the shape of bioeconomics, one would imagine that there would be no room for such a technological fantasy. However, it seems to be that far from undermining the legitimacy of the techno-utopia of the bioengineered superman, the evolution of the contemporary supercapitalist thanatological dystopia that we might call the new Hobbesian ecosystem has in fact led humanity to cling to the fantasy of the technological superhuman more desperately than ever before, perhaps because we collectively realize that there is no way we can stop technology in its tracks and that our only hope of salvation from the impending techno-apocalypse resides in some future utopian technological innovation.

Unfortunately, in Wilson's (2008a) view, the flat line American supercapitalism is likely to produce is not some

timeless anorganic utopian future where everybody lives out perfect lives, but rather an endless posthistorical present characterized by death, destruction, and the consumption of organic life. This relates to his key criticism of contemporary bioeconomic thought which is that it remains wedded to 19th century notions of sustainable economics and balanced production and consumption and fails to recognize that the supercapitalist machine is not about creating a sustainable economy, but rather consuming and laying waste to everything that crosses its radar in thanatological pursuit of flat line burn out. In this respect Wilson reads contemporary supercapitalism through the lens of Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle (2003) that explains how humanity is set on a suicidal path straight back to the state of security first experienced by the unborn in the peaceful nothingness of life in utero and that the only reason we continue to live and do not simply cut our own throats is that we are conflicted creatures who also possess a deep will to live. Fatally caught between the extremes of Dad who tells us to live a little and Mom who wants to keep us close, we live lives characterized by risk and consumption taken in the widest sense of the term in order to establish some kind of compromise formation between living forever and dying as soon as we are born.

Wilson makes the case that Mother Nature has the same problem herself. She realizes she has to let her children live a little or she would have to cancel their existence outright before they had even had chance to let out their primal birth cry. All the same she cannot stand to see them stray too far for fear that they will leave her behind. For Wilson, this is why eating, sex, and death exist in nature. These practices simultaneously prolong life, but also ensure that death will eventually catch up with complex organisms that eat and copulate. In other words, eating and sex have no reason of their own, but exist to ensure that death persists. Thus, Wilson explains that there is no need for creatures to eat each other or starve searching for food because making their own food through photosynthesis would be more effective in terms of sustaining life. Similarly, he tells us that there is no need for creatures to work through the problems of sexual reproduction because simple asexual reproduction or splitting is a more efficient way of ensuring the continuation of life without the combative struggle to reproduce or the essential problem of complex organic life, death. But if this is the case, we are left with the fundamental problematic of waste. Why waste? Following Bataille (1991), Wilson's basic answer to this most basic but profound question is that the universal truth of existence is expenditure. There is no more. We live to waste.

In Wilson's (2008a) view it is this basic truth that animates American supercapitalism. This is why it should be understood as a manufactured technological mode of brutality modeled on the state of nature that is totally ignorant of the value of culture and civilization. His theory of contemporary American supercapitalism shows how the growth of human economy through the stages of industrialism and postindustrialism until the current globalized economic system has resulted in the emergence of an informational ecosystem that treats everybody and everything as economic data to be circulated through the channels of the network in order to enable the production of more value in the form of profit. Although we have seen that this system can generate surplus value ex nihilo in the form of complex economic machines called futures, the hitch is, of course, that somewhere in the process the supercapitalist system needs to consume fresh raw materials. Herein we encounter the martial element of contemporary American supercapitalism, which we may explain through Marx's (1993) theory of primitive accumulation or Retort's (2005) update notion of military neo-liberalism, that Wilson suggests is essential to feed the machine by opening up new territory for exploitation. Given that it is this machine that causes so much poverty, misery, death, and destruction across the world to the extent that today we wonder whether the biosphere will soon become inhospitable for human life, it is difficult not to wonder why we do not simply pull back from the brink now.

Beyond the mystical belief in technology, perhaps the answer to this question is, as Wilson suggests, that we are fated to self-destruct and turn the planet into a black hole that cannot sustain organic life. Despite this thesis, which seems more persuasive every day, I think that we must hope that the power of human reason will save us from ourselves. But even this hope is complicated by the effects of supercapitalism on culture understood in its most basic sense as human meaning symbolized. As Wilson (2008b) shows the problem of culture under conditions of American supercapitalism is that it loses its deep capacity to carry human meaning and instead becomes more data trash in the commodity ecosystem. This is problematic because if we are to even begin to critique the techno-nihilism of supercapitalism we will have to turn to culture to first create some sense of the significance of organic life in the world and second help us to think through the problems of the thanatological personality of America. But what is even worse is that beyond the Frankfurt School problematic of culture as commodity lay the issue of the ways the commodity form infects cultural content (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997). This results in, for example, the inscription of the suicidal culture of performance in the Nike slogan, Just Do It! What, then, are our prospects of saving ourselves from death-drive America through cultural criticism? This is the subject of the second of Wilson's (2008b) two books on contemporary American supercapitalism, Great Satan's Rage.

III.   Rage Against The Satanic Supercapitalist Machine

Great Satan's Rage (2008b) turns off the theoretical model developed in The Order of Joy (2008a) to explore the popular cultural effects of the emergence of the nihilistic supercapitalist machine. In this text Wilson's central thesis is that beyond the production of the mystical techno fantasy of the bioengineered man, which is translated for everyday use by movie-porn-sports stars who enjoy life to the max through perfect bodies, the meaningless supercapitalist system has seen the development of a popular culture of negativity that is peculiarly American in nature. The basic emotion streamed through the culture of negativity is what Heidegger (1993) called the malice of rage, but the sense of nihilism of American supercapitalism similarly expresses itself in cultures of despair, hopelessness, apathy, boredom, sadness, misery, anxiety, and paranoia. Although it is possible to read the production of these cultures of negativity in terms of a process of psychological reaction-formation, which is designed to simultaneously work through and critique the nihilistic technological form of contemporary America, Wilson shows that the relation of the popular culture of negativity to the supercapitalist machine is more complex than first appearances may suggest.

The title of the book itself, Great Satan's Rage, begins to suggest the complexity of the relation between the popular culture of negativity and the wider supercapitalist system for the reader of The Order of Joy, because it works off the idea that it is not simply American popular culture that is possessed by a deep sense of rage, but also the Great Satan, the American state itself, that rages against the world around it. Centrally, it is this bind between the negativity of American supercapitalism and its popular cultural expressions that are simultaneously utterly conservative, because they express the violent negativity and murderous rage that is America, and entirely radical, because this cultural negativity and rage is often directed towards America itself, which holds Great Satan's Rage together and drives the text forward through to its undecided conclusion, in much the same way that violent negativity and murderous rage propel the America supercapitalist system endlessly into the future.

Given the centrality of the idea of conflict to the book, the position of Milton's figure of Satan in the text is particularly important. Milton's Satan is, of course, the rebellious antihero par excellence of Paradise Lost (1993) who struggles with a tyrannical God, only to be cast out of Heaven and forced to live in Hell. Satan's rage emerges from his hatred of his creator and his deluded belief that Dad wants to stop him leading his own life. Although Milton ultimately presents Satan as at best a sulky teen, who simply cannot stand the fact that he is God's creature, and at worst a paranoid conspiracy theorist, who is possessed by psychopathological feelings of hatred for Dad, the equation between the fallen angel and rebellion and revolution has stuck. It is this vision of Satan, the raging rebel without a real cause, that Wilson uses to symbolize America under conditions of supercapitalism. Akin to contemporary America, which was born of rebellion and revolution first when the Puritans fled England and second when the settlers threw their colonial masters out of the new world, Milton's Satan is a born rebel who lives for revolt and revolution but is not, in the end, entirely sure what it is he wants to put in place of the old regime.

Despite his claim that 'it is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven' (1993:9), it seems that what Satan does know is that he wants to get out of Hell in order to get back in Dad's face. God's two-state solution is clearly no good for Satan because he heads off to the new world as soon as he can in order to cause problems for God's other more recent creation, man. I think it is clear that the reason Satan wants to mess with man, and lead him out of the Garden of Eden where the rules of utopia apply and throw him into the dystopic world of time driven by desire, sin, and the law, is that he wants to provoke Dad who really should have known better than to abandon him to Hell. We know that life in Hell is no life for Satan because his rage against God is marked by deep ambivalence. He hates God because He is creator, everything Satan wants to be, but loves him for the same reason. The problem is that God cannot help his status as creator. He cannot make his creature independent. Satan has to revolt on his own terms. This is exactly what happens in Paradise Lost, but the problem is that rebellion is never enough because Dad is still Dad and Satan's place is not Heaven. This is why the revolution never ends.

In the end Satan's revolution is purely negative, purely nihilistic, since it is based in the rage of the creature who wants to be his own creator. For Wilson the same is true of America. He tells us that Satan's motto 'non serviam' (I will not serve) perfectly describes the American attitude to life, even in the era of supercapitalism when the land of the free is the only super-power on the planet. In Wilson's view, then, the truth of America is that the Puritan revolution never really ended. The sulky states cannot help but see oppression everywhere, because it is still consumed by resentment towards the old world. Similar to Milton's Satan, who really wants to get back to Dad to live out a flat line life in Heaven, but can only express this through hurt fuelled rage, America is driven by a primal desire to reach the oceanic state of the old world that simply exists, which it can only articulate through violent rage

against examples of oppression that appear to repeat its own colonial past. That all of this is repressed deep into America's cultural unconscious explains why the discourses of freedom, democracy, and individual self-realization, which condition the ideology of progress scratched onto the nihilistic supercapitalist machine and continue to inform the Californian mysticism of the bioengineered man and his organic friend, the movie-porn-sports star, are expressed with complete naivety and total lack of reflexivity, despite the glaring presence of evidence to the contrary, which suggests that America is more often than not engaged in cynical realpolitik. It is this delusional situation, which has evolved through massive military spending set on ensuring that the revolution never ends and the emergence of a politics which is always conditioned by ideas of freedom and more centrally liberation, that has led America to become a world leader that still thinks of itself as an oppressed power.

That America has no sense of itself is, I think, perfectly captured by the reversal of Milton's revolutionary Satan, who Wilson correctly interprets as the romantic antihero of the west, into the Great Satan of the Iranian Revolution that still persists today in the Islamic world. In this view the American Satan is simultaneously John Wayne with horns civilizing the West and an evil imperialist set on the violent exploitation of every available human and environmental resource. Although America seems to be completely unaware of the bipolarity of the figure of Satan, it may be that the schizophrenia of the Devil is perfectly illustrative of the condition of American supercapitalism and its front men, such as George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld, who wanted to present themselves as revolutionaries on the side of freedom, democracy, and human rights, but came off looking like evil colonialists looking to slash and burn what they could not loot.

Wilson knows that the Devil has all the best tunes. As such, he explains that it is possible to find a similar bipolarity in the nihilistic popular culture of supercapitalist America. The bands who soundtrack postmodern America, such as NWA, Ice-T, Nirvana, Korn, and Slipknot, express sincere rage, apathy, and disgust at the world around them, but similarly fail to offer any kind of constructive solution to the dystopic conditions they hate so much. Instead what they offer is images of sensuous violence and complete apathy. In this respect they are totally in tune with the nihilism of American supercapitalism because what they have to offer, rage against the machine, is in no way revolutionary in an extra-systemic sense. Consider one of Wilson's (2008b) key examples, gangsta rap. Gangsta rap evolved in Los Angeles in the early 1980s in response to the rise of Reaganomics and the ruination of the black inner city. Abandoned by policy makers to the ultra-violent state of nature Loic Wacquant (2007) calls the hyper-ghetto, and living in a completely segregated world characterised by the narcotics economy, NWA and Ice-T rapped about the violence of gangsta life. As Wilson explains, their records where characterized by what Chuck D, front man of Public Enemy, called niggativity. For Wilson, Chuck D's point was that the problem with NWA, Ice-T, and later NWA member Ice-Cube, was not only that they produced records that where wholly negative in their representation of the state of hyper-ghetto, because they could surely be forgiven for not producing utopian solutions to the withdrawal of the state from the inner city, but that they also created urban imaginaries that glamorized the ultra-violent world of the dark economy of drugs, gangs, and prostitution.

The term niggativity refers to the way black popular culture plugged into the nihilism of American neo-liberalism and began to glamorize the violence of its central principle, economic competition, through rapped tales of the drug wars that played out supercapitalism in the black community. All of this in order to make a fast buck. But what a fast buck! Now the vicious circle of the nihilist economy was complete: supercapitalism destroys the black community that responds by selling the hyped-up version of that destroyed community to make money in the supercapitalist economy where violence is necessary to produce profit. As the supercapitalist machine heated up over the course of the 1990s, the niggativity of gangsta rap became more extreme. Snoop Doggy Dogg, who had always employed the pimp aesthetic, branched out into hard core pornography, and 50 Cent, produced perhaps the archetypal gangsta hymn to ultra-violent supercapitalism, Get Rich or Die Tryin. In Snoop Dogg and 50 Cent the niggativity of NWA and Ice-T was completed. In completed niggativity there is no longer any trace of criticism of American apartheid, such as that advanced by Chuck D and Public Enemy, because adjustment to the violence of the inner city is complete and the narco-economics of the hyper-ghetto have become an accepted part of American life.

At this point the misery of the hyper-ghetto expressed by sociologists such as Wacquant (2007) is totally overcoded by expressions of the sexualized enjoyment of violence that recalls the key works of Wilson's master thinker Georges Bataille, and the gangsta imaginary is transformed into a fantastical universe of violence, sex, and money, where the normal rules of society no longer apply. It is this cartoon world of fantasy transgression, most clearly illustrated by the New York group Wu-Tang Clan whose 1999 record Enter the Wu-Tang mixed samples from cult martial arts movies, Bushido philosophy, and ultra-violent tales of the hyper-ghetto to create a surrealistic landscape caught somewhere between medieval Japan and postmodern America, which sells to middle-class white

kids on the basis of the parental advisory sticker, the sign that one is about to enter the fantasy world of the gangsta. Regarding this warning sign, I do not think that the importance of the parental advisory sticker can be underestimated because what this symbol, which was developed by the ultra-conservative Parental Music Resource Centre (PMRC) in the 1980s, really signifies is the kind of Satanic rebellion Milton wrote about in Paradise Lost expressed through violent language that tunes kids into the core values of the nihilistic culture of supercapitalist America, cut throat competition, sadistic enjoyment of violence, complete lack of sympathy for others, hedonistic consumption based on immediate gratification, and total lack of reflexivity, which can never find voice in official discourse because they remain the obscene, unconscious, dystopic truth of Americanism.

Unfortunately, the other popular cultural form Wilson examines, white punk / nu-metal, has not really exposed the problem of Americanism in an overtly political sense either. Instead, the new wave of punk has simply repeated the constructs of gangsta rap for a different sub-cultural audience. Accounting for the emergence of the new form of punk / metal, Wilson suggests that as the niggativity of gangsta became more popular with white kids in the late 1980s, a new fusion of punk-metal emerged on the independent music scene. The new creation, grunge, soon became the music of choice for the hyper-nihilistic, disenfranchised, white kids of generation X. A seemingly endless series of grunge bands exploded from the Seattle Sub-Pop label in the late 1980s / early 1990s, but the key exponents of the form, Nirvana, remained central to the movement even though they 'sold out' to a major record label, Geffen, and produced a number one album, Nevermind, simply because they captured the nihilistic culture of American supercapitalism for white kids so perfectly. Apart from the ironic naming of the band, 'Nirvana', which was simultaneously a sincere recognition of the need for some utopic state of peace and a sarcastic swipe at the impossibility of such a condition, that might be seen to be comparable to Thomas More's (2003) gesture of naming his perfect world Utopia to indicate the impossibility of the place he was describing, the title of the group's most popular record, Nevermind, exemplified the apathy of generation X, who had resigned themselves to lives characterized by misery and boredom before they had even reached adulthood.

In explaining the synthesis of boredom, apathy, and teen angst under the master sign of grunge, rage, Wilson (2008b) provides a contemporary pop cultural example of the condition of the malice of rage that Heidegger (1993) linked to the rise of technology and the emergence of the condition of completed nihilism. Akin to Milton's sulky teen hero, Satan, who was expelled from perfect state of Heaven, the kids of generation X were the cast offs, where the idea of the cast-off refers to the creation of an accursed share or excremental remainder, of a perfectly functioning technological system that has no time for the philosophizing of the young. Since the supercapitalist machine has no time for the eternal question of the young, why? -- and is completely closed to the real experience of wonder before the new -- simply because it is completely cynical in its industrial production of saleable novelty, the original kids of American neo-liberalism were born nihilists or, in the words of Kurt Cobain, negative creeps. That the nihilism of Generation X was in many respects the product of supercapitalism and its reduction of cultural significance to the level of financial calculation is reinforced by the cover art of Nevermind.

As Wilson explains, Nirvana's baby is caught up in the supercapitalist machine and the pursuit of money from the moment it is born. Although the cover star of Nevermind is no new born, his immersion in water recalls the condition of the foetus in the womb, with the implication that the nihilistic logic of the new economy conditions life, not only before the toddler has learnt to speak and entered the symbolic order, but before he has even emerged into the world. Herein resides the reflection of supercapitalist nihilism in Nirvana's outlook on life. If supercapitalism is mother long before it is father, then the thanatological pursuit of peace, nirvana, through a suicidal return to the womb will offer no escape from the torment of a life conditioned by the need to find some kind of meaning in a human world reduced to the meaninglessness of the natural world that simply exists. That Nirvana could never escape this bind is clear. Consider their third and final album that mixed critique of the culture industry, the track Radio Friendly Unit Shifter, with suicidal tendencies, the original title of the record was I Hate Myself and Want to Die, and the metaphor of the womb, the final album title was In Utero. Here, the thanatological strategy of the pursuit of the return to the peace of the womb through self-destruction was played out on vinyl. But even though Cobain took the thanatological route, shooting himself in the head in 1994, he could not save himself from supercapitalism. Suicide is big business, especially in pop music, because it helps to sell records to kids who feel similarly suicidal about their hopeless situation in the supercapitalist machine.

It is likely that death has always been a key theme of popular music, and popular culture more generally, because this form of culture has always been connected to the capitalist culture industry that is endlessly set on reducing human meaning to the calculation of the bottom line. But Wilson (2008b) shows how this condition radicalizes under conditions of supercapitalism, so that it is no longer simply suicide that captures the nihilistic imagination of

the teen critique of consumer capitalism, but rather the active cultivation of death and destruction through war and combat. In Great Satan's Rage (2008b) this turn from rage conditioned by apathy and suicide to rage characterized by aggression and violence is captured in the shift from the grunge scene of Nirvana to the nu-metal sub-culture of Korn that reflects the shift from Bush I to Bush II and the transformation of war from a cynical political strategy to an existential condition. In this transformation from Bush I through Clinton to Bush II, which represents the movement towards the complete realization of the supercapitalist machine, the rage of bands such as Slipknot and Drowning Pool can be seen as a critical reflection of the violent nihilism of contemporary America that is characterized by anger, aggression, and conformity to the belief in the existential significance of war. That nu-metal is the soundtrack to Bataillean man fighting his way through the war zone of the contemporary supercapitalist eco-system screaming 'I myself am war' (1985:239) is evidenced by Wilson who notes that American troops in Iraq made Drowning Pool's Bodies their number one theme to the war on terror. In Wilson's view the screamed mantra of Bodies, 'let the bodies hit the floor', perfectly captures the ghoulish supercapitalist utopia-dystopia that has taken root in the neo-colonial spaces of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The lyrics of Bodies juxtapose the line 'nothing wrong with me' to the mantra 'let the bodies hit the floor' in order to suggest that the American war machine is in some way pathological. But contrary to Drowning Pool's equation of the violence of the war on terror with insanity, war and violence are far from pathological in western thought. Consider the key works of Hobbes (1982), Nietzsche (2003b), Marx (1993), Heidegger (1991a; 1991b), Jünger (2004), Marinetti (2008), Bataille (1991), and Deleuze and Guattari (1972; 1984). Milton's Satan, the Puritan Devil of resistance, rebellion, and revolution, is in each of these thinkers. He possesses them, manifesting himself in the commitment to negativity and overcoming, which has been more or less completely realized in supercapitalist America. This is why Wilson's use of the Nietzschean tradition of French thought is perfectly appropriate to the study of contemporary America and there is nothing arbitrary about his use of Bataille and Deleuze and Guattari to understand the system he calls supercapitalism. As Kroker (2006) explains in his study of technology, it is not only that the Nietzschean tradition sheds light on contemporary globalization, but rather that contemporary globalization is in many respect the realization of the current of nihilism and negativity running through western thought. To call the violent hot spots of the contemporary world, such as New Orleans, Mexico City, Juarez, Caracas, Gaza City, Baghdad, and Mogadishu, Bataillean spaces is, therefore, in no way simply descriptive, because these urban war zones are realizations of the prophetic insights of the French thinker and his fellow Nietzscheans who saw supercapitalism coming long before Bush II was pushed center stage.

Given that the Nietzscheans' central lesson of supercapitalism is that struggle is an existential condition, the difference between war and peace in the supercapitalist world is relatively unimportant. Whether we choose to focus on Detroit, Mexico City, or Kabul the war is always on. War is everywhere in the supercapitalist world. In sports, which represent the most popular escape route from the hyper-ghetto, conflict, suffering, and pain are considered necessary to success. Even in education, the space of culture, civilization, and learning, there is no escape from warfare. As Wilson (2008b) explains, Columbine and the Virginia Tech shootings illustrate that the core principles of supercapitalism (compete, consume, produce) form the hidden curriculum of contemporary education. War is, in Wilson's language, the hidden excess-essence or x-essence of the contemporary Americanized world. From the drug wars that rage across the hyper-ghettos of Los Angeles, Mexico City, Juarez, and Sao Paulo, to the violent response to criminality of the supercapitalist warfare state, there is no end to spiral of violence because in Wilson's view struggle is what the Americanized world is all about. This is the negative utopia of America, the negative utopia of first freedom, where we are free to fight for our right to survive, second democracy, because we know everybody is part of the fight to survive, and third individualism, because we understand that we are on our own, that everybody else is either predator or prey, and that the role of the state is to ensure that the basic Hobbesian rules of engagement hold and no more.

Possessed by the malice of rage that comes from living in a technological world that is completely devoid of human tolerance, the spirit of Milton's Satan possesses every Americanized one of us. Possessed individuals, the rebel nation orders us to resist. You will not serve, unless you are working the counter of McDonalds or Wal-Mart, in which case you must fall in line with the hyper-rational machine of supercapitalism that embodies the principle of resistance. Refusal to obey the negative program to not serve will paradoxically be interpreted in offensive terms and result in massive resistance on the part of the Satanic machine. War, the normal modus operandi of the supercapitalist machine, will be the end result. This is why war in no way opposes the supercapitalist machine and the radical Islamists are misguided if they think that their actions will have any impact upon American neo-colonial policy. As Wilson (2008a) suggests, the exploding body of the suicide bomber is a secret joy to the supercapitalist

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Community Accessibility: Tweeters Take Responsibility for an Accessible Web 2.0

Kate Ellis, Mike Kent

Introduction

In his book on new forms of personal expression and communication on the Internet, *The Future of Reputation*, Daniel Solove reminds us that "people scattered across the globe can now all congregate together in cyberspace" (2007:33). He observes that social networking sites where people create profiles and alert the world of their thoughts and activities have emerged in an era where the idea of a local community in which everyone knows everyone is evolving into an atmosphere of individualism and of being alone in the global world. Twitter (www.twitter.com) in particular has been credited with making local events global. Martin Cahill (2009) described 2009 as "the year of Twitter". Established in 2006, the micro-blogging site is currently the third most popular social networking platform (Johnson 2009). Twitter was growing at a rate of 2,565 percent in early 2009 (Ostrow 2009a) and currently has more than 50 million user accounts (Pepitone 2010). These users generate approximately 1.5 billion tweets a month (Schonfeld 2010). In the United States at the end of 2009 19% of all Internet users were using Twitter or a similar status update service (Fox, Smith and Zickuhr 2009). The 140 character limit on "tweets" or text-based posts was conceived to be compatible with SMS messaging and slang. For Steven Johnson (2009), Twitter's "remarkably simple" interface has spawned an exciting era of innovation where "the most fascinating thing about Twitter is not what it's doing to us. It's what we're doing to it".

Our aim here is to use Twitter to engage with this new global-local village to explore the intersecting areas of critical disability studies, political mobilization and online social networking. The user created Twitter platform "Accessible Twitter" will be used as a case study to explore the importance of innovation and accessibility in Web 2.0. Accessible Twitter is accessible to users with a disability and vision impairment, in particular. Accessible Twitter is an important example of the kind of exciting innovations inspired by user-generated social networking and signals towards the future possibilities for an accessible Web. The first part of the paper focuses on the Web as a platform to connect people, locating the centrality of people with disability for Tim Berners-Lee when he conceived of the Web as a way to connect to each other. The paper then moves to briefly consider the political significance of Twitter as a platform for democracy and political activism using the 2009 uprisings in Iran in order to make a connection with people using Twitter to advocate for an accessible Web. We then introduce the idea of community accessibility where members of a network contribute to it to ensure it is accessible for other members. The final section of the paper situates Accessible Twitter within the continuum of Community Accessibility and political activism available via Web 2.0.

The Power of the Web Is In its Universality

In articulating his vision for a platform to share information, Tim Berners-Lee believed that access for everyone regardless of disability was a crucial factor:

> As we move towards a highly connected world, it is critical that the Web be useable by anyone, regardless of individual capabilities and disabilities...The W3C is committed to removing accessibility barriers for all people with disabilities—including the deaf, blind, physically challenged, and cognitively or visually impaired. We plan to work aggressively with government, industry and community leaders to establish and attain Web accessibility goals. (Goggin and Newell 2003:109)

However, the increasing use of graphics, user generated content and a rejection of Web standards, is blocking out people with disability (Craven 2008). As Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell (2003) argued in their seminal book on this topic Digital Disability the Internet will not be fully accessible until disability is considered a cultural identity in the same way that class, gender and sexuality are. For Goggin and Newell (2003) digital technologies, including the Internet, broadband and advanced telecommunications have the potential to revolutionize our lives and have been held up as a way to eradicate disability yet disappointingly continue to "build in" disability at the point of production. Since the time of their writing in 2003, there have been massive shifts in the way the Web is used and developed. Accessibility, which is more widely understood, is ignored due to a continuation of the social prejudice that Goggin and Newell sought to expose. Following the publication of their text, the Web has evolved to Web 2.0 and has generally become less accessible. This paper builds on their ideas and applies them to Twitter and social networking (a more recent Web 2.0 phenomenon). Chieko Asakawa, a vision impaired researcher, has published widely on the non-visual Web and sees an enormous accessibility chasm between the early Internet and the more recent Web browsing experience:

> Lynx, a text-based Web browser, which was developed in 1992, was very accessible for screen reader users, since it could be controlled with just a keyboard. By pressing the curser right or left keys, for example, users could move to the next or previous link texts. I was able to access the Web for the first time using linux in 1994, with a DOS screen reader through telnet by accessing a UNIX server. (Asakawa 2005)

She argues that the plugins and multimedia which characterize Web 2.0 prevent blind Web users from authentically experience the Web. Of course the ability of most people to access the World Wide Web in 1994, regardless of any level of disability, was quite limited, with not everyone possessing Asakawa's considerable skills and literacies in this, at the time, very new technological medium. This ironically also meant that this lack of access was less of a disabling factor at the time. The first widely distributed Web browser Mosaic had only been launched in 1993 and in 1994 there were less than 50 million Internet users, mostly concentrated in North America. By contrast in late 2009 there were more than 1.7 billion Internet users. The Internet has gone from a relatively marginal medium in the early to mid 1990s to one that is much more mainstream in 2010; ironically, this growth in the use of the medium has also tracked with it becoming less accessible for people with disabilities.

Connecting People

Twitter combines the concept of social networking with SMS communication to rework the values of local community within a global environment:

> In countries all around the world, people follow the sources most relevant to them and access information via Twitter as it happens—from breaking world news to updates from friends. (Twitter n.d.)

This quote from the "About us" section of Twitter highlights the global nature of social networking and its importance in keeping the average world citizen up to date with what's happening in their relevant networks whether they be local or global. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, encourage an increased level of documentation so although ties may be weak, the possibility of obscurity is low. Further, this is happening in a worldwide sense. Critics of this social environment suggest mobile phone directories and instant messaging are a poor replacement for "true networks of kinship" (Bauman 2004:130). The Internet and mobile access are reinventing aspects of the local village in a global environment. Twitter, in particular, has been embraced by people using mobile devices to access the Internet as a way of maintaining contact with their extended social network (Fox et al. 2009). Twitter is developing differently to previous social networks; rather than being embraced by young early adaptors, Twitter has been described as 'aging in reverse' (Ostrow 2009b) as it was initially embraced by older users and is only more recently being embraced by a younger demographic. The median age of Twitter users is still 31

although presumably falling compared to Facebook's 26 and MySpace's 27. This older demographic and the public embrace of the platform by people in the news media, celebrities and politicians has lead to the impression that Twitter punches above its weight in terms of influence in the social media marketplace, particularly when compared to more established names such as Facebook and MySpace. When Tim Berners-Lee articulated his vision for the World Wide Web he focused on connecting people, including people with disability and those from other countries and cultures. When he launched the International Program Office for Web Accessibility Initiative he emphasized the importance of "operation across different hardware and software platforms, media, cultures and countries" (Berners-Lee 1997). The Web has undoubtedly benefitted people with disability in their work, home and leisure pursuits. However, amongst this celebration of increased opportunity we must take care not to gloss over issues of accessibility. Becky Gibson (2007) cites user generated content as one particularly troublesome area:

> The next generation of the Web is relying on new technologies to build rich interfaces and applications which enable community, collaboration, social networking and enhanced interactions. This has implications for people with disabilities who have come to rely on the Web to provide more independence, work opportunities, and social interactions. (P. 2)

User generated content is providing challenges for universal design and disability. Accessibility features in protocols such as Flash animations, for example, are unknown to most users and hence provide limited potential for those who require different forms of access. Digital media and online technology hold the promise that people with disability will be included; however, features that enhance accessibility for groups with a certain type of impairment can diminish accessibility for another. Just as people don't wish to be locked into a particular method of generating content, people should not be locked into a single method of viewing content. This focus on "disability" potentially crowds the focus on the ways in which technologies can be redesigned to eliminate the ablest oppression that keeps people with disabilities from being able to participate fully in all aspects of the material and social world. The importance of establishing new technologies to address accessibility must be put into practice. Accessibility must be built into the initial toolkit and flow on to end users because the creation of a blog, wiki or Web page does not involve complex technical knowledge or skills (Gibson 2007).

Political Significance

Twitter claims a mix of public and private technologies that allow an easier global connection. It is predominately a social networking system and is heavily dependent on the mobile Web. In this way, personal moments can be transformed into wider social and political issues as Giroux (2009) suggests of the broadcast of the democratic protests in Iran in June 2009. For Giroux, new communication technologies and especially social networking sites are far more than depoliticized "personal tools" or "entertainment devices" (2009). A combination of social networking and mobile technology awakened a "reservoir of political activity" allowing people within and outside Iran access to information that would have otherwise been stifled (Giroux 2009). 140 character "tweets" and photo links were an effective method to disseminate information following the limitations placed on mainstream media during the conflicts. Political activists in China have likewise embraced the microblogging site and access was blocked by the Chinese government to prevent discussion of the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre. Twitter has also been used recently in both Egypt and Moldova (Giroux 2009). Although our position regarding Twitter's role in political mobilization is celebratory, others are more cautious suggesting that the only reason Twitter was not blocked in Iran was because the government used it for surveillance (Lake 2009). While Twitter may not be inherently political, its format has invited political mobilization in many areas, including disability and accessibility. Twitter has attracted a number of people interested in promoting the importance of Web accessibility, including the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) – who have a Twitter account. The strong accessibility community on Twitter is giving a public exposure to issues related to disability that have historically been considered personal problems that an individual must overcome. As we write this, some accessibility tweets on Twitter include:

> really when will ppl get accessible site = mobile site! :) dropdown is basically unusable with mobile browser

> hearing some very early, but very encouraging rumors about possible future platforms for W3C Widgets ... exciting!

> I had a look on YouTube last night at a video for the accessibility features, and I was very impressed! Mum liked them too :D

Not #accessibility, but #UniversalDesign. What is good for PWD is good for business. Reduce web dependencies & open markets. #ally

Community Accessibility

Marlee Matlin, perhaps the most famous Deaf Hollywood actress, recently used her Twitter account to launch an attack on the lack of captioning of online videos:

> 20 years ago I fought the fight for captions. And the law was passed 17 yrs ago. Now I'm forced to begin again. I'm screaming NOW not later.

The online realm which is being revolutionized by network television is exempt from the requirement to provide captions for shows aired on television. While Matlin is focusing on the corporate leaders such as iTunes that make money out of this and have revolutionized television viewing, Berners-Lee has been questioned by video bloggers as to whether they need to provide captions. He acknowledges the difficulties with this and suggests "community captioning" in the spirit of Web 2.0 where "The video blogger posts his blog – and the Web community provides the captions that help others" (OUT-LAW News 2006). This solution embraces the collaboration that underscores Web 2.0 and highlights the importance of Apple and other online network video services to lead the way in this area. While there are a number of people who use Twitter to tweet about accessibility issues, Twitter itself in inaccessible. Dennis Lembree outlines several inaccessible features of Twitter:

- No keyboard access to favorite/reply/delete
- Lack of headings
- Favoriting requires Javascript
- Custom colors may not be readable
- Code doesn't validate
- Code could use better semantics
- Password field is missing a label; select lang missing label
- Fieldsets used without legends
- Layout width is static not flexible; doesn't "stretch" with browser width
- JavaScript required for details on latest tweet (time, in reply to)

(DeNardis 2009)

Given that Twitter is primarily a text-based medium, many of their accessibility problems could be easily solved. Cahill (2009) believes that Twitter, which currently has no accessibility policy, needs to start addressing accessibility in order to reach the number one social networking spot because if a site is "accessible, easy to navigate and read, it is typically successful". Solving these accessibility issues would also likely make it the most accessible social networking site: a significant competitive edge given that Facebook recently overhauled its accessibility features. Lembree argues that people with vision impairment are being excluded from Twitter and the Web, in general, because of a focus on more complicated programming and a desire to save money. Although he believes people with disability are "not intentionally neglected online", inaccessibility is a determining point of the way we interact with social networking technology and reflects the disabling values of the people who design and maintain these limiting applications (Foley and Voithofer 2008). The assumption that every Web user has the same ability to access the Web is an intentional example of "doing production." (Goggin and Newell 2003). The production of disability as a category is a dynamic process that is shaped by technology, culture and the underpinning moral order; disability only exists in society (Goggin and Newell 2003:21). Disability is a negative social interpretation of impairment that empowers dominant groups and institutions. A critical understanding of disability in line with other marginalized groups will enable a realization of Tim Berners-Lee's vision for an entirely accessible connected Web because accessibility will be prioritized. Alan Roulstone suggests that new technology is experienced according to the conditions of the existing social and theoretical order. Technology remains influenced by existing social values (Roulstone 2010:7).

Accessible Twitter

Twitter's simple design invites collaboration amongst the Twitter interface, users and third party platforms. The community is encouraged to improve the service and the more people that use it the better it gets; in this way, "users add value". In the spirit of Web 2.0 users are treated as "co-developers" (O'Reilly 2005) with amateur codes allowing users to organize their feeds, upload videos and locate other users within a certain distance. Similarly, Accessible Twitter, allows more people to join the network and was developed by a small startup. Dennis Lembree won the 2009 Access IT @web2.0 Award for his Twitter tool "Accessible Twitter". Lembree, whose speciality in Web development is standards and accessibility overhauled the Twitter site to make it accessible to users who are blind or vision impaired. Although motivated by disability and accessibility, Lembree argues that the benefits of Web accessibility reach far beyond this group as well. Lembree has addressed many of the inaccessible features of Twitter to ensure it adheres to Web standards. Lembree was unable to maintain the traditional Twitter "look" because it does not lend well to accessibility; so, Accessible Twitter has a different "look" to Twitter. Accessible Twitter adopts a simple and consistent layout, and navigation can work with or without JavaScript. JavaScript is a functional programing language that is used to make Web pages more dynamic and interactive. As an add-on to html it has traditionally posed a problem for users with disability. In the first set of Web Standards WCAG1.0, it was a top priority that Web pages work without javascript; however, more recently screen readers have developed the capability to handle it and it is not highlighted as an issue in WCAG 2.0 at all. Designed with Web 2.0 technology in mind, WCAG 2.0 encourages flexibility and requires that all Web sites be perceivable, operable, understandable and robust. Nevertheless as a proportion of people continue to browse without JavaScript and many people with vision impairment use older versions of screen reading software; it is still an important business and accessibility issue to ensure the page works with or without JavaScript. Lembree has also ensured "forms are marked up for optimal accessibility". This is a relatively easy to achieve feature which includes clear identification and labeling as well as allowing exclusive use by both a keyboard and mouse. This is an important feature for users with a mobility or vision impairment who can't use a mouse and people without disability who prefer to use keyboard shortcuts as a time saver. Accessible Twitter has a large default text size that adopts a high color contrast making it perceivable and understandable. The site allows users to access it in either high or low resolution in line with Berners-Lee's original vision for the Web. Finally, Lembree has made a commitment to expanding the accessibility features of Accessible Twitter "every day". As we write this Accessible Twitter announced an app update:

> App Update: due to API inconsistency, tweets on user profile page reduced from 20 to 1; added a link to view last 20 #api

Lembree was not surprised at the inaccessibility of the original Twitter even given its reputation for being simple and easy to use because of the misconception that a site can't be cool and accessible at the same time. For Lembree, ensuring functionality and fun together is a simple matter of "planning it from the beginning and implementing progressive enhancement". Lembree's Accessible Twitter has been enthusiastically received by those with and without vision impairment in the Twitterverse. The project has raised the visibility of the importance of accessibility in the rapidly evolving online world:

> Wow! You have really made my day, and I am smiling once again. I am so excited that I found your Accessible Twitter. Now I feel that I can be in the cutting edge of everything that is happening in the Twitter Universe.

> *from Jacqueline (via Dennis' blog)*

> Many thanks to @accessibleTwitr for his very nice Twitter Web application!

> *from PerBusc*

Lembree claims that the inaccessibility of Twitter is a general reflection of the poor quality of accessibility on the Web:

> Twitter.com is extremely off-course as far as web accessibility goes. Basic things such as proper use of headings and keyboard access are not implemented. I received an email from a blind user who really enjoys Accessible Twitter. He even asked, I think jokingly, if I could make an accessible Facebook, which is also terribly inaccessible. (Accessify 2009)

Although Twitter did not even rate a mention, in 2008 AbilityNet found a number of social networking sites

were inaccessible to users with a number of different disabilities. Since that time the importance of accessibility has been demonstrated with Facebook and YouTube, two sites criticized by AbilityNet, revamping their accessibility features with far reaching success in audience satisfaction while MySpace, which was also criticized has done nothing and lost 54% of its market share (Cahill 2009). Cahill believes Twitter should take notice and the existence of Accessible Twitter does not let them off the hook:

> Accessible Twitter is designed to be easier to use and is optimized for disabled users, but it is yet to be seen whether such a move will prompt Twitter into action or have the reverse effect, letting them feel that they can more easily shed all responsibility. In such a competitive market and with other social media players innovating and leading on accessible design, accessible design is becoming central to the development and continued growth of online businesses. This fact should be food for thought for a savvy startup like Twitter. Leaving it too long might just signal the beginning of the end.

(Cahill 2009)

Conclusion

Clearly, Web 2.0 accessibility is of most benefit to people with disabilities and especially those with vision impairments, older people and people in the developing world, the recent trend toward mobile applications and Internet usage suggests the majority of Internet users would benefit from accessibility options (Zajicek 2007:1). The move from "Reading the Web" to "Writing the Web" is an important point in the evolution of the Internet in cementing its place in our lives. Although a plethora of avenues exist in terms of generating content, opportunities for how this information is accessed and viewed is limited to the restrictions established by the creators of sites. In theory, digital information can be accessed by users with different needs in different ways as Asakawa's early experiences demonstrate. The user can determine the way the information is displayed visually, the size of the text and its background, or alternately have images relayed as sounds through a screen reader, or as refreshable Braille using a Braille output device. However, in practice this is not always the case, particularly as the Web becomes more complex and a more ubiquitous part of life,Despite its reputation for being simple and easy to use and its perceived importance as a tool for democracy and political mobilization, Twitter builds in disability at the point of production by failing to consider accessibility. However, at the same time by encouraging a community of members to create Twitter applications, Berners-Lee's belief that accessibility can be achieved via a network of community is realized. Lembree's Accessible Twitter shows that accessibility in social networking is possible. While Lembree's adoption of community accessibility gives cause for great optimism, it is equally important for the corporations to lead the way by building accessibility features into their toolkits.

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Mayhem, Magic, Movement, and Methods: Teaching and Learning about Hearing and Listening

Tara Brabazon

This is an article about a course, but shadows a much wider history of online education, media literacies and sonic media.[1] Teaching research methods is difficult.[2] Students hate it. Staff tolerate it. Occasionally, there is a comrade or sister who demonstrates as much commitment to Marxist and feminist research methods as Paris Hilton does to shopping, but most of the time it is hard to summon enthusiasm. Students approach these often mandatory courses with the excitement of a dental appointment. Similarly, academic staff justify such courses as being good for students, like regular flossing.

I had a problem. I had to develop a Masters-level methods module in Media Studies that could be taught throughout the world to students fluent in many languages and derived from myriad disciplines and professional experiences. It had to be applicable and rigorous, flexible and committed, motivating and stimulating. I had few staff, fewer resources and no technical support. It was just me, a microphone, an overloaded hard drive and a slow, standardized and generic university portal. This paper explores what happened from this mayhem with methods.[3]

It is a truth of education that we teach the surprises. Through this process, I learnt how to transform hearing into listening[4] and surprise into an opportunity. From this teaching-led research project, I explore how teachers can use the dynamic and emerging literature on sonic media, auditory cultures and media literacy to not only rescue a method from mayhem, but create magic through the movement in ideas and application. When the Fast Capitalism of contemporary higher education slams into the slow processes of teaching research methods, the resultant contradictions are productive and revelatory.

1.   The Mayhem

Scholarly discussions about social networking sites and the convenience of mobile media exhibit the enthusiasm of a labrador confronted by an open refrigerator door. What is required is a careful study of how university teaching and learning models operate in specific historical moments of digitization. Such an investigation is wider and deeper than what David Gauntlett described as a "vague recognition of the Internet and new digital media, as an 'add on' to the traditional media."[5] Forming a considered, mappable and trackable relationship between form and content – user generated contexts and user generated content – is a foundational task of curriculum design. It is much easier – and financially rewarding with research councils and teaching and learning committees – to isolate a change in educational technology and overlay a learning 'crisis' or 'revolution' from it. My concern is that teachers, theorists and educational managers place too much attention on technology in education, rather than education in technology. While William Merrin confirmed with a flourish that "the revolution has already taken place,"[6] it is increasingly difficult to pinpoint if – let alone when – the moment of change (revolution?) in educational media 'happened.'

These debates about 1.0 and 2.0, interactivity and participatory media, quality and standards, haunt most teachers

as we construct curriculum. It is particularly the case in my field of media and cultural studies. Indeed, Robyn Quin reported that "the history of media education has been characterized by defensiveness."[7] There is often a reason for this hyper-reflexivity and conservativism. Not only is Media Studies labelled a Mickey Mouse subject in the United Kingdom, but I had a more localized and immediate problem. There had never been a successful Media Masters-level course at the University of Brighton. There were many reasons for the failure to connect aspiration, intent and delivery. A former Polytechnic, it celebrated creativity[8] rather than creative industries and high art rather than popular culture. I (just) managed to guide a new course, a Master of Arts in Creative Media, through validation, assembling a range of courses at the edge of the media studies paradigm, ensuring that the distance education and on-campus modes of learning were rigorous and integrated.

Twenty students joined us for the course from Gambia, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Slovak Republic, Greece, Cyprus, the United States, Belgium, Australia, Brazil and throughout the United Kingdom. The students were challenging, committed, inspirational and aspirational. The group spoke six different languages and came from a range of professions, including print and radio journalism, computer science, pharmacy, publishing, photography, education and public relations.

It is a fascinating course to teach but it faced many challenges after the validation battles were fought. The goal was to ensure that it could be offered on campus and off campus, both part-time and full-time and that it would weave into the diverse lives and aspirations of a multicultural, international, creative media community. As it was new and not amending or updating older models and modes of learning, all the transformations in hardware and software in the last few years were embedded into the methods and modes of teaching from the first day it was offered. We had the great gift of starting anew and building something different and productive. Participatory media platforms were not an 'add on,' but a central element in both curriculum design and assessment.

Educational technologies possess three functions: to provide a framework for the presentation of learning materials, to construct a matrix for the interaction between the learner and the information environment, and to configure a communicative space between learners and teachers. While it is easy in an era of digital convergence to align and conflate these roles – to combine presentation, engagement and communication into an asynchronous bundle – there are advantages in the development of literacy and the building of an information scaffold to slow and differentiate these functions.[9]

Practicing Media Research, the mandatory methods module, was a particular focus in considering how to configure and align media production, media dissemination and the activation of media literacy theories.[10] Teaching research methods, particularly in media and cultural studies, is complex. Invariably there is a conflict between humanities and social scientific models. The qualitative sociologists titter at the semioticians. Those wedded to focus groups cannot fathom the unrepresentative nature of oral history. Fieldwork researchers cannot grasp the intricacies of the archive and unobtrusive research methods. In a radically interdisciplinary environment, it is difficult to overcome intellectual inertia to move outside a very narrow palette of research methods from a home discipline.

This problem had surfaced in the undergraduate research methods module. The first year of my arrival at Brighton, I was present at the once-a-semester student feedback session – called a course board. The student representatives savaged the mandatory methods module. The critiques varied from the usual boredom and questionable relevance to a mismatch between learning methods and applying them in a dissertation. The complaints continued at length. It became much more than uncomfortable and could not be dismissed as students having an extended whine at their teachers. The key at moments like this is to listen. As a sample, three undergraduate students told me about their experiences. Alice was a second-year student and has just completed the methods module when she spoke to me. Melanie was a former student and student representative who had been active in the workforce for a year. Abi was a colleague of Melanie's who went straight into the MA program upon the completion of her degree. These comments about the undergraduate method module are startling in their honesty.

> Alice: Perhaps it is not as explanatory and in depth as it should be. While the recommended readings are helpful, it would good to have things clarified a tad better in the lectures and have a wider range of lectures rather than very similar lectures. Just, you know, the lecturers being there to be available and answering questions rather than expecting everyone to know what they're talking about.

> Mel: From what I remember it was kind of rushed. Um. Very rushed – not as in depth as I wanted it to be ... It was almost as if the lecturer thought that we were meant to know it already, which we didn't. Obviously like the lecturer had more experience than we did ... I know we had trouble with seminars and stuff where people didn't turn up.

> Abi: I found it very poorly constructed. I don't think there was enough ... People got to thinking that they could assume

what it was about so they didn't bother turning up because it was very dry and very sort of – it was hard to learn. You felt you could read it in a textbook but really you could be taught it and understand it better and use it. I think to put your own examples through it to apply it to your research. It was just like boring and you felt like you were back at school and it was just just just awful, if I'm honest.

Teachers manage and negotiate phrases like the student experience for validation procedures and quality assurance. Many of these voices and views are poured into already existing mechanisms that suit university branding and advertising as much as improving the learning experience. As the list of problems in the methods module progressed, I was aghast. My mouth was open with shock. Fortunately, my mind was open as well. As I approached the MA Creative Media, I was determined to find a method to teach methods that would note their critiques and help them learn.

I buried myself in three distinct research literatures: teaching research methods, media literacy theory and sonic media.[11] I had worked in these areas for a decade, but wanted to create new links between these paradigms, settling on a fully online mode of teaching and learning for methods. This would enable the program to move through space and time. Asynchronous media was an obvious choice, so students could return to the sessions as and when they needed them, beyond the conclusion of the module and through the writing of their dissertation. Distance education and on-campus students could liaise and communicate early in the semester, reducing the isolation of both groups.[12] It became important that this one module would be more than a module, but the start of a teaching-led research project to experiment with new strategies and methods for postgraduate education. Colleen Murrell realized that not only was there an important role for podcasting in "interactive journalism training," but that "there has still been very little serious research into its uses – both in industry and in academia."[13] Part of my role was to contribute to that research literature by testing new links between sonic media and education.

My plan started to form. I would use a sound-only platform. I would test the hypothesis that more media are not necessarily better media. These premises were an attempt to correct the tendency logged by Anthony Chan and Catherine McLoughlin: "Audio has traditionally been neglected and underused as a teaching and learning medium."[14] Individual staff members would introduce their research method and show students how it works in application rather than in abstraction.[15] The idea was that staff would present readings on a method, including an example of their own research using that method. This was a way to address the critique of the undergraduate methods module in terms of its relevance and applicability. It was a way to close the gap between understanding a research method and being able to move and apply it to a new project. Attendance would not be required. I would not extol or vilify podcasting, but think about new options and alternatives that emerge from a much longer history of sound in education. I would not revel in adding 2.0 to any random noun or adjective, but focus on the development of media literacy, which requires neither a designation nor an imperative for platform migration. Jack Maness stated that "Web 2.0, essentially, is not a web of textual publication, but a web of multi-sensory communication."[16] Obviously Life 1.0 and Education 1.0 are also based on multi-sensory communication. However, my goal was to shape a pathway through difficult and abstract material. This was enacted by limiting the available sensory material, finding a match between learning outcomes, mode of delivery, and student interactivity. The goal was not interactivity for its own sake or to activate a banal comment culture. The imperative was the development of media literacy in a way that was contiguous, gradual, contemporary, passionate, and planned.

All seemed to be going well. All the other modules and courses had their study guides and readings ready to distribute. Staff were organized for the year, and I just started to relax and enjoy the idea of teaching this extraordinary group of people. However, my confidence was short-lived. While the course had proven its worth and success to even the most neo-liberal of managers, a problem exploded three days before the start of the Orientation Week. Unfortunately, the first year that the course ran was during a period of the restructuring of Media Studies at the University. 'Restructuring' is managerial shorthand for randomized change or an inverted Trotskyite vision of permanent revolution. This institutional instability was to unsettle the foundation of the MA.

Prior to the Orientation Week, at the very moment that students were arriving at Heathrow and Gatwick Airports from around the world, the person who was meant to be running this mandatory methods module in the MA was assigned another teaching responsibility. The following email was received at 5:38 P.M. on Thursday afternoon, before all the materials were due to be distributed the following Monday morning.

Sent: Thu 25/09/2008 17:38
To: Brabazon Tara
Subject: Can I ask your advice please?

hi Tara,

I have (as ever) some staffing issues to resolve - ***** is still off sick and one of her modules is now without a module leader. It's a module ***** has some involvement with and has been module leader for in the past. He's willing to take it on again, but he'll need to 'lose' one of his other modules and the only one anyone else can realistically take on is the Research methods on the Media Masters. I was thinking that ***** would be ideal for this as he already liaises closely with colleagues for the undergraduate research methods - and that maybe he could do so with your support and guidance as I know you've already been involved in getting contributions from people and helping with the sonic sessions (and no, I haven't forgotten that I owe you a session myself!) - what's your opinion as Course Leader?

thanks

This was a complete and utter nightmare. The person suggested by the manager not only had a full teaching load but was the academic who taught the undergraduate methods module that had caused the problems that I was trying to correct. This academic had also never taught via distance or online education in his career. The only solution was that I would have to take over coordinatorship of the module. We all know that the best courses take months and often years of preparation. In this situation, I had Thursday night, Friday, Saturday and Sunday to write the study guide, find reading materials, record the sonic sessions, create the portal, upload the materials, photocopy the study guide and collection of readings for distribution on Monday morning to the students and post them via courier to the distance-education scholars. With few staff and less time, I called in some favors from former PhD students who hastily produced three sessions. In a matter of days, I recorded four of my colleagues in Media Studies, recorded my sessions, mixed them all and photocopied from 5:45 A.M. through to 8:55 A.M. on the Monday morning to – just – finish the materials in time for the students to collect. I had to work thirty six hours without a break over the weekend, with two printers churning out materials. The module was ready. While this managerial hiccup just before semester resulted in rushed and last-minute preparation,[17] I was buoyed by the year-long research I had conducted to ensure that the framing, platform selection and theoretical basis for the module were well-considered. The key was to determine how the execution of this plan was to be assessed.

2.   The Method

Although the final execution and delivery of materials was not ideal, I had been thinking about, theorizing and planning the form of this module for some time, taking on board the critique of the way methods had been taught in the past and how to improve this delivery for not only the current cohort but a new community of international learners.[18] Practising Media Research, as it was called, would be flexible in delivery, personal, intimate and applicable. It would implement the lessons from the historic use of sound in education. Podcasts of lectures would not be the chosen option. As early as 1984, Durbridge stated that "As compared with a written text, the spoken word can influence both cognition (adding clarity and meaning) and motivation (by conveying directly a sense of the person creating those words)."[19] The complexity of tone and voice is captured in new ways. Daniel Power realized that, "The ability to adjust or modulate frequencies allows us to communicate in a correct and artistic way with words and sounds [through] … the ability to adjust intonation, inflexion, phrasing, pacing, volume, loudness and timbre."[20] Similarly, Mark Lee and Anthony Chan in 2007 argued that "while audio is certainly not new as a teaching and learning medium, it has been neglected and underused in recent times."[21] Most portals and platforms still emphasize text rather than sound. Twitter is only the most recent example. But if there is a moment of and for audio-only media in education, then it is now. Sonic media is a low cost mode of delivery that enables staff and students to know each other in a new way. With new low cost devices and intuitive interfaces, it is often the infrastructural glueware that lags behind and reduces the effectiveness of sound. For example, the University of Brighton, like many institutions around the world, deploys a standard Blackboard interface. Therefore, it is a slow process to both upload and download sonic files, even for those with Broadband. This issue is a problem. I have students in Gambia as well as Greater London. The (temporary) solution for those with unstable and dial up connections is to send the sonic files on disc with their other print-based materials.

Sound has great capacity for education. It has personalized content, capturing all the advantages of radio, along with learner control of the place and time for engagement. Sonic media and auditory cultures unsettle subjective geographies. New relationships are formed between participants and locations through the shared intimacy of sonic

media. However, the best use of podcasts or sonic sessions (my description of audio files without an RSS feed)[22] emerges if they are short, diverse, entertaining, and contemplative. A diversity of media can summon a diversity of learning styles. For distance education students, there is an opportunity for a different mode of academic delivery, with asynchronous learning being suitable for students separated by geography and time zones. They can share a sound and discussion portal which enables mixed media presentations and collaborative discussions.

Sonic media has been my platform of choice for over a decade. The Open University has always been a beacon and inspiration. They resisted recording and distributing lectures. Remembering their experience, I wanted to ensure that as our media has become more portable and permeable in our daily lives that I neither compress nor forget this educational history. Sound-only media are intimate and immediate, literally whispering into the ear of the listener. They can slot into – and accompany - daily life on a car stereo while taking children to school, exercising at the gym, or completing a daily commute. They are flexible, permeable and can integrate into the available time of our students, whether they are part-time or full-time. However, it creates a series of further problems in a cultural environment that – to cite Douglas Kahn – "pervasively privileges the eye over the ear."[23] Would the students bother listening? The undergraduates had not attended the methods lecture and seminar. Would the postgraduate bother downloading the file and taking notes from the session? Would they post messages and upload images and sounds?

To improve the chances of success, I tracked earlier experiments in sound, sonic media and auditory cultures. It is, as Klaus Bruhn Jensen confirmed, "sound remains significantly under researched as a form of communication, as a modality of experience, and as a resource for cultural expression and social action."[24] I started using 'sonic sessions' in 1995, with analog cassettes as a platform for sound and education. My goal was to create mobile learning experiences that could assist in the understanding of abstract or complex ideas. With the eyes at rest, sonic literacies could enable new relationships between form and content, signifier and signified. Like most of us, I have experimented with analog and digital recorders, a range of microphones, and put my faith for a few years in the iPod as both a recorder as much as a player of sound. However that was a transitory commitment. In the early 2000s, Brittain, Glowacki, Van Ittersum and Johnson attempted to use the iPod to record their sessions at Michigan's School of Dentistry.

> From the beginning, we attempted to contain costs. Because the iPod would be a low-cost solution, we explored it first as an audio capture device. Students reported using iPods to record lectures, and a few students placed iPods with supplementary microphones on their desks in the front row of the lecture halls. This method produced unsatisfactory audio quality and was highly dependent on lecturer position.[25]

Students found the audio quality poor. At Michigan, they started to use an Apple PowerBooks G4. The quality improved, but technician's time was expensive. As with Michigan's case study, this early iPod experience – for most of us – was hampered not by portability and convenience, but by the quality of the recording. Since they wrote this important piece, the quality of portable recorders has increased enormously, and the skill to use them has reduced. I understand the attempt to use the iPod as player and recorder. Mobile popular music players have been integral to the public acceptance and consumption of particular platforms. The attraction of the iPod and MP3 players are clear: they integrate screen and sound. The ease of scrolling through a personal music collection means that hours can be spent satiated in an individual's greatest-hits collection. However, their use in education is more arbitrary and ambivalent.

There are many assumptions about students and their use of technology. Most of the conjecture is incorrect or unproven. For example, Carie Windham reported her attraction to the iPod and podcasting, while noting a lack of experience in more complex uses of the platform.

> When you ask most students what they think of their iPods, they immediately mention the benefits of mobility and small size. But when you ask them how they might incorporate podcasting into a course, they draw a blank. The most common answer is the most obvious: offering course lectures or instructors' notes as an audio or video download. The problem for most students is that downloading a course lecture is often their first foray into the technology ... Just because a student totes an iPod on campus doesn't mean that the student is podcast-savvy.[26]

Use of a platform does not guarantee that it is deployed well. There are always issues to balance when teachers favor particular platforms, hardware and software. These decisions must be responsive to the learning outcomes of a curriculum. My interest is what happens to education when we make it location-independent, a digi-space of i-lectures, iPods and PowerPoint slides. To cut away sensory complexity and focus on sound and aural literacies through podcasts requires pedagogical expertise and experience in sonic media. Norquay confirmed that "writing for

talk is different from the writing you do for print."[27] There must be attention to voice, intonation, pauses, pitch and pace. The goal is to enact vocal variety and dynamism through rate, pace, volume, pitch, inflection and pause. This skill set in creating sonic media is different from lecturing, particularly the 'technique' tethered to reading headings off PowerPoint slides. Good audio-only presentations are highly scripted. A recorded voice is distinct from the vocal sounds heard in daily life. Effective lecturers have different skills to good broadcasters and effective podcasters. Good materials for the ear rarely emerge from a lecture theatre. Part of the ease with which lectures have been plucked from analog delivery and moved to audio streaming and RSS feeds is a misunderstanding of the value of a lecture as an analog educational location and the specific characteristics, benefits and weaknesses of sonic media.

The Open University is an innovator in the history of media education and the reasons for this success were realized by Gary Berg who stressed three nodes of innovation: high quality content, student support and a strong research base.[28] As a result of this nexus, media choices were made in relation to learning goals. The OU were international leaders in the development of a proto-digital sonic literacy. A.W. Bates, in reviewing the successes of the Open University,[29] showed the importance of media choice and selection in distance education, including the history of audio cassettes for OU courses. He stated that, "Audio cassettes are low costs; all students already have facilities at home; they are easy for academics to produce, and cheap and simple to distribute; students find them convenient to use; and, when designed properly, they encourage student activity."[30] This review of the analog environment has relevance when ascertaining the applicability of digital platform choices. The Open University selected audio cassettes because they were low cost, accessible, and able to be produced by academics without intervention from technicians, and convenient to use. In terms of educational design, lectures were noted as inappropriate in developing effective sound-based OU educational strategies. The key realization – then and now – is that the media selected for curriculum delivery must be determined by the student's home environment. Audio cassettes were cheap. Broadband, iPods and computers are not. But all three are reaching a point where assumptions of greater student-ownership can be made.

Careful thought is required when writing a curriculum, considering how to align diverse student cohorts with digitally convergent media to attain learning outcomes. Bates constructed a checklist to assist this process.

Assessment of Educational Technology

- Cost
- Learning effectiveness
- Availability to students
- User friendliness
- Place in the organizational environment
- Recognition of international technological inequalities

Bates, A.W.1993. "Technology for Distance Education: A 10-Year Perspective." P. 243 in Key Issues in Open Learning – a Reader: An Anthology from the Journal 'Open learning' 1986-1992¸ edited by A. Tait. Harlow: Longman.

The goal in thinking about web-based education is to ensure that a mechanism for quality control and evaluation is present. The division between 'new' and 'old' media is deceptive. The deployment of Web 1.0 and 2.0 is part of this problem in universalizing the availability and applicability of the online environment in all its multiplicity, diversity and scale for all social groups. The educational imperative must not be the celebration of the new but the selection of effective media that is relevant to its environment. The key choice for teachers configuring curriculum is not analog versus digital, but synchronous versus asynchronous media. For distance education learners, timeshifting enhances the effectiveness of educational platforms.

Sharing audio and video texts has been part of the post-war history of educational technology.[31] Often this sharing was in real time and space. Sharing digital audio and video files online has been possible for a decade. But it is the symbolic power of the iPod specifically, rather than MP3 players more generally, that has brought not only sonic media but podcasting more centrally into the educational portfolio.[32] Important educational opportunities are available through the iPod. Podcasts are simple to produce and receive, and suitable for distance education. They also offer an intellectual opportunity for reflection on sonic media. The most effectively branded platform for educational podcasts is iTunes U. The arrival of the iPod Video, iTouch, iPhone and iPad also created the potential for video podcasts or vodcasts. However – and even with the prevalence of web cameras – they are more difficult to

create than an audio podcast. Their added value for education is debatable. Future research in this area, assembling the best use of podcasts and vodcasts for distinct learning goals, would be valuable.

Initial leadership in iTunes U was provided by elite universities, including Duke, Stanford and the University of Michigan, but smaller campuses have increased their international corporate visibility through this relationship. As an example, Stanford's podcasts are professionally produced and while some of the sonic quality is variable in the presentations themselves, the tracks are introduced, advertised and mixed in a standardized and effective way. Stanford had a model to follow and extend, building on the high profile deployment of iPods by Duke University. Famously, in August 2004, Duke distributed 20 GB iPods to 1600 first-year students. With enough space to store five thousand songs, it was preloaded with orientation content in both spoken and written form, alongside information about Duke's academic environment and student activities. It was a US$500,000 investment from the University. The key element of the Duke story that is underplayed in the retelling is that the University also provided a Belkin bar microphone to attach to the iPod. From this early program, students used the microphone to record lectures and interviews for oral history and community media. Academics used this platform to disseminate class content, record class-based discussion and for file storage and transfer. The iPod was enfolded into curriculum as a fieldwork recording tool.

At the end of the first year, Duke released its evaluative report of the iPod experiment.

> Initial planning for academic iPod use focused on audio playback; however, digital recording capabilities ultimately generated the highest level of student and faculty interest. Recording was the most widely used feature for academic purposes, with 60 percent of first-year students reporting using the iPod's recording ability for academic purposes.[33]

The significance of 'the Duke moment' in the history of sonic media in education was to recognize that much of the value of the unit was derived from the Belkin voice recorder. It meant that listening could – with technical ease – transform into recording. The 'what if' scenario is an intriguing one. If Duke had distributed the iPods without the microphone, then student behavior may have drifted into listening to music. Instead, there was a more malleable and integrated relationship between listening and recording, the iPod and curriculum. If Duke's 2004 and 2005 'experiment' is assessed in terms of the wider iPod-owning constituency, then it is clear that most users mobilize the platform for listening rather than the production of material. Duke's story is different because from the start of the unit's distribution with a microphone there was an assumption of interactive production.

After two years of experimentation, the University moved away from providing iPods to students.[34] The iPod was treated, not as a branding or marketing device, not as a Web 2.0 platform and the basis of social networking and collaboration, but as "as a course supply, much like a textbook."[35] In the space of two years, iPods went from the forefront of educational innovation to the basic kit of an undergraduate student. In reviewing this short history, three strategies emerged for the iPod's deployment in education:

- distribution of lectures for review
- delivery of new educational materials (which may be termed 'supplemental materials')
- use for student assignments[36]

A diversity of materials is distributed through podcasts, even though the lecture dominates. Lecture recording is the simplest and least time consuming way to create sonic material. It may not be the most useful in terms of attaining learning outcomes.

> In general, it is safe to say that most students do not listen to each and every lecture podcast. Only 20% of students in the UW study listened to more than 75% of recorded lectures. In addition to picking and choosing which lectures to review, many students also scan the lectures, fast-forwarding to specific points or sections, and listening to particular portions multiple times.[37]

Simply because lectures are syndicated to a student does not mean they are heard. Such a practice may also encourage a disconnection from curriculum. This problem was of concern within the preparation of my MA methods module -- and may have repeated some of the issues emerging in the undergraduate degree. Most students did not come to sessions and then complained that they did not have the knowledge they needed for their dissertation. Still, in international education, a series of surprises have emerged in how students work with podcasts. Most significantly, up to 80% listen to podcasts at their computer rather than deploying the mobility of the MP3 player and iPod.[38] The potential of mobile education – delivering content anywhere and anytime – is not revealed in the lived learning

experience of students.

The advantages in persisting with these experiments through the challenges and surprises are enormous, as sonic media can offer a reflexive space for the teaching of abstract ideas.[39] But not every subject is best taught or learnt through digitized, mobile sound. When written and targeted for particular courses, approaches and student communities, the effects of sound in and on learning are powerful. For Practising Media Research, I wanted to both understand and differentiate between the longer sonic sessions I was producing and simply recording a lecture. The distinctions were clear.

Characteristics of a Recorded Lecture	Characteristics of a Sonic Session
Written for multi-sensory delivery	Written for a sound-only delivery
Written for multi-textual literacy engagement	Written to use auditory literacies in isolation
Length of session determined by the timetable	Length of session determined by content
Sound quality variable	Control over sound quality and standardized production
Lecturer concentrating on the many variables in a classroom	Academic presenter concentrating on the singular aspect of delivering high quality sonic content
Students must attend the session in the mode prescribed by the timetable	Students can insert the session into their timetable

In my earlier research on the iPod and/in education, I stressed the ease with which staff could use the iPod's microphone attachment and record material of reasonable quality.[40] "Reasonable" was probably an accurate description in 2006, but sonic media platforms and editing software have improved and evaluative mechanisms (particularly from the corporate branding of podcasts) have also sharpened, demanding a higher quality of sound. Students can still deploy the iPod as a listening platform and use it to complete assessments, but better recording and editing is possible and necessary from staff. If Media Studies is to offer an intervention and interrogation of Web 2.0, then it is through the recognition that a domestication of media production rarely produces professional results.[41] In the early to mid-2000s, the iPod was able to create recordings that were quick and easy to disseminate, but now it is possible - at reasonable cost - for academics to develop and record higher quality materials.

We are now in a post-iPod moment for sonic media.[42] As early as 2006, Meng tracked the problems in the educational use of this convenient – if domestic – recorder.

> Higher quality audio or video generally require a higher level of technical expertise. Currently many podcasts are known for their 'scratchy' or homemade personalities. As the popularity of podcasting grows we will see ever more sophisticated broadcasts with increasing production values and higher level of required technical skills. The School of Journalism at The University of Missouri has already committed to producing all future podcast and vodcasts using 'best practices' – a professional quality level for their podcasts and vodcasts which they are currently defining.[43]

While Meng was clear in 2006 that sonic quality was re-entering the discussion, some theorists argue that the sound quality of podcasts was not important. For example, Anthony Chan and Catherine McLoughlin in the same year as Meng stated that,

> The ability to produce high fidelity sound does not appear to be critical to the success of educational podcasts. Students tend to be quite tolerant in this regard, so long as the speech is sufficiently audible and clear. With this in mind, there is no need for sophisticated, studio-grade sound recording/editing hardware and software. To date, the project has relied solely on inexpensive, handheld computer microphones and free/open source software.[44]

It would be informative to ask if Chan and McLoughlin's students are still 'tolerant.' Other students have been less satisfied. Significantly, one equated a lack of quality in the technical output with a lack of commitment to teaching.

> A novice podcast listener can tell the difference between poor sound and sound that reflects even a small amount of attention to detail and quality. For students to value a podcast, they need to believe that the professor values it as well. Part of that comes from demonstrating a commitment to quality in recording.[45]

Podcasts do not have to sound like the opening to Rick Wakeman's Journey to the Centre of the Earth. However

technical and pedagogical expertise must be aligned.

Through the celebrations of social networking and user-generated content, quality, professionalism and technical expertise are re-entering the evaluative criteria. It is here that Media Studies scholars can offer international leadership, not through celebrating the iPod but recognizing the significant moment of disruption the platform caused, providing an opportunity to reconsider the role of sound in education. While academics from other disciplines and paradigms may find the lower quality recordings sufficient for their purposes, Media Studies scholars have an opportunity, through teaching-led research, to find new platforms, methods and options. As Colleen Murrell realized,

> Academics may also baulk at the technological demands on their time. Preparing interesting and relevant podcasts does eat up the hours and so may not appeal to all lecturers as they juggle heavy workloads and the competing demands of teaching, research and administration. However, media lecturers may see the equation differently as they tend to be more interested than most in keeping up with technological change.[46]

While this last five years in educational technology may be termed an 'iPod moment,' actually students did not use it as a listening platform, and academics are moving away from the iPod as a recording device. The iPod is the symbol and activator of change, not the platform for change.

One of the services that can be enacted to educators by Media Studies scholars is to scaffold, structure and assist this movement away from the iPod. Its use as a mobile platform is clear. But its role as a recorder is limited. Its quality is reasonable for student work and software can clean up the sound, but reasonably cheap and powerful stereo recorders are now available. A flexible and useful recorder for a diversity of environments is the Zoom H2 Handy Recorder and its subsequent model the Zoom H4n. The Zoom H2 weighs 120 grams, has a power adapter and can use two AA standard batteries. It deploys a USB interface, permitting high quality recording with control over sound capture with four separate microphone capsules. Both models are inexpensive, intuitive and mobile. Yet even with the permeation of such hardware, the quality of material being released publically is still mixed. There is confusion between the availability of better hardware and software and the literacy and technical competency to deploy them well.

Concurrently, editing software has also improved for podcasts and the construction of sonic files. While Audacity is free, open source software – for which I have enormous respect – it requires the installation of a LAME MP3 encoder to overcome software patents. It is not as intuitive as other recording and editing programs. While the Adobe Audition III – which now enfolds the Cool Edit Pro editing suite – is arguably the best software on the market, its complexity and scale is beyond what is required for many educational productions. A more appropriate and available software at one tenth the price is Acoustica's Mixcraft 4, which is an intuitive multi-track audio recorder and remixer. Magix Music Maker 15, along with their Soundpool collection, is another low cost option. While useful for musicians and remixers, it is also ideal for constructing podcasts and sonic material, composed of perhaps two or three sound tracks. It allows a simple mix down into MP3 files. There are also new opportunities for convergence of both sound and vision, beyond the static vodcast. For example, Magix PhotoStory can allow the importing of MP3s such as oral history testimonies or voiceovers to accompany a series of captioned images. This simple program permits not only a considered discussion of the relationship between sound and vision but a significant archive of photography with either existing or created sound. Digital storytelling and the creation of rich digital data is also possible through deploying Flip cameras and Magix's Movie Maker. These are only two examples of hardware and software that are contributing to an expanding and dynamic space for sound-only platforms in education.

Sound is a mode of communication that slows the interpretation of words and ideas, heightens awareness of an environment and encourages quiet interiority. It punctuates buildings, workplaces, leisure complexes and family life. The visual bias in theories of truth and authenticity means that sounds are often decentered or silenced in empowered knowledge systems. Education rarely manages this sonic sophistication. Formal educational structures are geared to developing literacies in manageable print. Too often, teachers cheapen soundscapes with a monotonic verbal delivery of lectures, interspersed with stammering and confusion, and do not open our ears to the other rhythms, melodies, intonations and textures in the sonic palette. The i-lecture, which was subsequently rebranded Lectopia, was an example of how an urgent – yet undertheorized – need to gather 'online materials' from academic staff resulted in low quality sonic resources. The system was developed so that it could be automated and not reliant on academics 'ruining' the recording and distribution. This desire for standardization rather than standards has marginalized the complex relationship between media and education.

In 1995, the first mode of sonic sessions I recorded was on analog cassette was a short introduction to a week's teaching. It was a way to orient students into the material. The goal, particularly for first years, was to use a sound-

only platform to interrupt their everyday experiences and prepare them for more formal, disciplinary literacies involving the encoding and decoding of text. In MA teaching, I use sound in more diverse ways. Firstly, it has a role to orient students into postgraduate education, making them aware of expectations and levels and standards of reading and writing. Secondly, sonic media provide alternative platforms to express information, defamiliarizing the relationship between signifier and signifier, to provide assistance for students facing print-based challenges or who are working in diverse languages.

An imperative of my use of sound for fifteen years has been to avoid replicating either analog lectures or seminars. I believe in the physicality of education, the importance of a group of people gathering in real time and space. I believe in the importance of gestures, expressions and nonverbal communication that are not applicable with sonic media. Obviously, sonic media have disadvantages, and the key is to use it selectively to boost its strengths and also to minimize the consequences of its blindness. Throughout my work with online education, I have never recorded – or believed in recording – lectures. Writing text for the ear and text for a multi-sensory synchronous lecture and seminar are two different modes of expression. Therefore, the challenge for me was to find a way to configure and extend the sonic session I had used for over a decade. I required a larger sonic space – between 18-30 minutes in length – for a long session that was not a lecture. Much of the success has been due to the research, preparation and writing of the session, along with the mode of delivery and voice of the academics.

None of the staff involved in Practising Media Research had conducted online learning or distance education before this session. Therefore, professional development for staff – through one to one discussion and modeling – was a priority.[47]

> Julie Doyle: I currently teach an MA module Mediating the Environment which is presented, it's not online. And now I feel not only more confident but I see the benefits of being able to deliver teaching through an online medium because it means more people can take part in this learning and teaching process. So, I would, it's definitely had an impact on my teaching in terms of thinking about turning one of my existing modules which is on-site into distance learning. And also just thinking about, in my own research as well, talking about criticizing the visual, actually using a sonic medium, an online medium, made me think about ways in which I can actually use that medium in my own research and also my own teaching a lot more.[48]

Dr Doyle is research active and completing her first book. But this method of professional development was – and continues to be – important for research inactive staff to gain assistance in reconnecting teaching and research, and reconnecting with the international scholarly community. While bringing research inactive and early career researchers to increased productivity were incidental benefits of creating this new module, Practising Media Research did become a portal for teaching-led research and professional development for staff. It brought them to the early stages of writing and moved them into research activity. Significantly, staff only had to offer one week on their specialism. Therefore, they did not have the burden of delivering a new, full, online Masters module, but could attempt a combination of a known area of research interest on an unknown platform and in a new teaching mode. Certainly new modes of thinking emerged from this model of learning, encouraging the theorization of alternatives.

The other key principle besides not replicating a lecture structure that I carried forward in the construction of this module was to slow the learning experience. Obviously, accelerated, expedited, contracted, applied and work-led learning has come to dominate our universities. As early as 1990, Alvin Toffler realized that "the metabolism of knowledge is moving faster."[49] John Tomlinson confirmed that "acceleration rather than deceleration has been the constant leitmotiv of cultural modernity."[50] Indeed, it now appears that Virillio's "city of the instant"[51] houses our universities. My intention through this model of teaching methods was to intervene in the speed of data extraction and just-in-time learning to ensure that students slowed their engagement with ideas. If they did not listen to the session, then they could not gather enough information to understand the readings or participate in the online forum,[52] which became the spine of social and intellectual engagements for the first semester of the course. Over 800 posts on the forum were made through the semester in which the module first operated. By releasing the content more slowly, at a pace directed by the student, the module's presentation of methods started to weave through their other modules and interests.

Speed is integral to how we understand industrialization, globalization, modernity and knowledge. Much of education is based on taking ideas and moving them around space and through time. The dominant media of an era is often the channel and metaphor for this moving knowledge, with participatory media platforms like Twitter and YouTube being recent examples. Scrolls, books, newspapers, and television were earlier modes. Perhaps the most significant sensibility of modernity is movement, of goods services, money, information and people. An arc beyond

the local creates formal and informal pathways between spaces. Transportation systems and technology increase not only the speed at which change takes place, but also the consciousness of change.

In thinking about time and learning, I made the decision to not make these method sessions into podcasts. I continue to use my phrase 'sonic sessions' to describe the genre. There was no RSS feed for a reason.[53] Podcasting is like a sonic direct debit: we set it and it arrives without too much thought.[54] I did not want the learning object to be pushed to students unconsciously, laying dormant and unheard on their hard drive. I wanted them to choose the time and place they would listen to the session. It also ensured an independently timed progression through the course. However, I mobilized many of the attractions of podcasting, including use a plurality of voices, views, accents and program lengths.

I also wanted the content to be mobile. Research is showing that students who are accessing podcasts are not listening on the move, but at home and on their computers.[55] However, my students did enjoy the time shifting capacities of learning. Mobility has been studied in methodical and innovative ways by John Urry[56] and his research colleagues at CeMoRe, the Centre for Mobility Research at the University of Lancaster. Their paradigmatic investigations have tempered mobile connectivity with mobile failure, and aligned transportation and communication systems. When placing attention on how people, money and ideas move, mobility becomes a new marker of class and power. Those who hold power have a choice to move. Those who lack power are immobile. Therefore, an easy acceptance of mobile learning needs to be questioned. For the part time, distance education students, it was a valuable service to create mobile content and they did use it.

Ironically, this propensity and capacity to slow learning is based on the speed of technological change – in both hardware and software – during the last two years. There has never been a better time to experiment with sound, education and research methods. Yet through all this planning and research into sound and education, the question is how students engage with this way of teaching and learning.

3.   The Movement

There were some difficult transitions for the students to negotiate. As Henry Jenkins has stated, "Every risk you take comes with a price."[57] Moving into this new way of teaching methods, some of the scholars who had passed directly from the undergraduate to postgraduate program were inexperienced in online education and had to be scaffolded into participation utilizing asynchronous teaching and learning methods. I took Amanda Berry's advice.

> As teacher educators begin to move away from traditional models of teaching about teaching to explore new ways of working with their students, many begin to experience feelings of self-doubt and uncertainty about how to proceed in this task.[58]

When challenges emerge, it is important to remember the caliber of the preparation undertaken and the reasons for choosing this alternative mode of teaching and learning. While confidence is important, it is also necessary to watch, listen and hear what students are telling us.[59] I addressed problems early in the program directly with the students. To assist staff in modeling the new method of teaching, I conducted the first two sessions, providing the introduction and the session on Unobtrusive Research Methods. The response was superb. However. there were lurkers and I wanted to prompt them into a more active engagement with the materials.

> **T.M.Brabazon@brighton.ac.uk [mailto:T.M.Brabazon@brighton.ac.uk]**
> **Sent: Sat 18/10/2008 07:16**
> **To: "MJM01"**
> **Subject: Welcome to Week Three!!: MJM01**
>
> Good Morning Practising Media Researchers!
>
> Now guys - we're about to enter WEEK THREE of practicing media research. Make sure that you've heard the first two sonic sessions - done that reading - left a few comments and posts (big shout out to the guys who have been keeping me company!) and are READY TO GO into Visual Research Methods with our Julie Doyle! She is amazing - and it is a really beautiful sonic session. I listen to it all the time...
>
> I'll be still lurking - so if you are catching up and leaving messages - we'll keep those parts of the course alive. That's the advantage of Asynchronous methods.

I'll also be guiding you through the assignments in the next couple of weeks. :) NO STRESS. I've been getting worried emails. NO STRESS - PROMISE. Really easy - and I'll guide you through them...

But remember guys - the great advantage of teaching methods in this way is that we don't have these dry and boring (!!!) discussions about methods (zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz). You will have access to these sonic sessions throughout the year(s), including during the writing of your dissertation. So you can keep returning to the ideas. All cool. You can work out what you think in stages - and apply what is useful...

Therefore, (and some of you have worked it out) the great advantage of this busy discussion forum is that we're creating a collective journal as we engage with each method. So you're helping each other to work out the strengths, weakness and problems of each method. I re-read the messages yesterday, and your insights are AMAZING. So remember to look back on what we've said about these methods when you come to write up assignments and do your dissertation. Andy and Venessa - you are doing some amazing work with URM and how you create a research question. Amazing.

But all of you are brilliant and really innovative people. And you're sharing great insights with each other. So if you haven't quite left your mark on the discussion forum - don't think it's too late and don't be frightened. Just have a go. It's a very supportive environment. So we'll all work together to create a great collective journal (and journey) through methods! Your ideas matter - a lot.

Have a lovely weekend. Drop me an email and say hi.

T XXX

I also worked with individual students, particularly those who moved from the undergraduate to the postgraduate degree and needed a more detailed explanation for the transformation in how methods would be taught.

Brabazon Tara
Sent: Fri 17/10/2008 03:45
To:
Subject: Checking in!!

Hey XXXX -

Just doing my two weekly check in :) Hope you are well. It's given me so much happiness to see you every week - I cannot tell you. You are a real light in the darkness :)

The quick conversation I was going to have with you was over methods! I know for you - and XXXX - the new way of teaching is a bit 'hoollleeee hellllll' what's going on here... I realized yesterday - while doing our reading for Media Literacies by the way!!! - that I never explained to you WHY it is being taught this way. So this may help to explain and show what's going on - and why it won' t bite ya!

The teaching of methods in this way - my idea originally came from MEL. We were in one of those course boards a couple of years ago. Mel reported a series of problems with how methods were taught for the undergraduates. The things I remember were

1. students didn't come to the class

2. when students needed the methods for their dissertation - they couldn't remember them (!!) / or weren't there in the first place

3. the discussions were dry - they couldn't see how the methods were actually used

4. students didn't have much choice in methods - either discourse analysis or focus groups ;)

5. students were seriously bored by methods. Not a pleasant class.

So - when I came to think about how to construct the program, I wanted to solve these problems in a fresh and new way. My priority - as you can see by the title - is to show students how to practice media research. I didn't want to create a disconnection between methods and applications. But for the masters - I wanted to create a series of seamless relationships. Students would see how the methods operate - and apply them to their own work RIGHT AT THE START.

Also, I wanted to widen the range of approaches. Particularly from a humanities side, you guys didn't see some of the most common methods in terms of action research, interdisciplinary popular cultural approaches, oral history, Unobtrusive

Research Methods - so I wanted to make sure that they were there as well.

And the key - I wanted the students to be able to return to the sessions on methods throughout the masters. Whenever they needed them - I wanted them there. Also - I wanted a record of students' engagement with them - like a collective journal through the method... When students needed an approach - they could re-hear a session and look at the response from other students...

That's why I struck upon using the sonic sessions. Sound is an intimate medium. It can create a connection between ideas, and an intimacy between speaker and listener. Podcasts are called the medium of the whisper, which I like. But students could pause, rewind, fast forward and have a think. Then the guided questions through the forum would help them through the key issues of applying these ideas...

Hope that helps a bit. It just struck me yesterday that I never explained to you WHY I was using this method. And poor XXXX was thinking - this is weird. Why is this all online???? So I thought I'd give you the rationale - so you can see what we're doing and why :)

Now let me know if I can do anything at all. I'm hearing that you're doing fabulously well :) And obviously the other students love ya like we all do. Let me know if I can do anything - and don't be worried about the new teaching environment. It is like a collective journal. Everyone goes through the methods and helps each other. That's all. No marks on it - nothing decided - just people from all over the world working together :)

Bit better???

T XXX

The reply suggested that the explanation did work. In future presentations of this module, I will explain the reasons for this way of teaching in greater depth, rather than allowing my rationale to be assumed rather than expressed.

> **XXXX**
> **Sent: Sat 18/10/2008 10:13**
> **To: Brabazon Tara**
> **Subject: Re: Checking in!!**
>
> Helloooooo,
>
> Aw thanks for emailing me about this - I really appreciate it! The reasoning behind it makes much more sense now I've read through it and had a think about it, and I think that doing the module online is actually a good idea, even though I'm finding it a bit freaky! You're totally right about the fact that students didn't go to the lessons last year, and the discussion board/sonic sessions (which I really like) will be a brill resource come assignment time.
>
> Sorry that I've not been more active on the discussion board. I won't bore you with my excuses, but hopefully from next week onwards I'll have a bigger input! Although I am still a bit intimidated by some peoples' wonderfully intelligent answers - everyone is very eloquent in their responses (I wish I was!).
>
> Anyway, all is good. Really enjoying things so far, and loving our Monday sessions! :-)
>
> See you soon,

Through these early teething problems, advantages emerged very quickly. The on and off campus students had an opportunity to converse and debate with others. English as second language scholars could orient themselves into the university community by repeatedly hearing sessions rather than being locked into a single lecture and seminar in real time. However, for domestic students who had experienced the other version of the undergraduate methods module, the difference in our mode was not only productive, but revelatory.

> Abi: At first I thought wooow it's online. Technology. But I found it made you learn more, made you interact more, and be more active, I think, learning. I learnt more for it being on the internet because I had to actively – I could do it any time of the day cause doing it at 9am in the morning, when we used to do it before, it was quite hard to motivate yourself at that time of the morning to learn that stuff. Just being able to sit at home and do it at your own pace and sort of ... it just made it clearer, I think. You have to be more active. Active learning, eh?

The other advantage of asynchronous delivery that I was not expecting is that a few students fell behind the

teaching schedule in the first couple of weeks. While we did run an orientation session, we probably needed to ensure that the students were more organized in their work patterns. They were enjoying their new program, new friends and new city too much. However, the advantage of the asynchronous delivery is that when I became aware that they needed to engage in greater depth from the first two weeks, they were able to catch up to the more disciplined scholars and continue their work. Also, hearing actually existing case studies of how research methods operate in scholarly life was as appropriate as I hoped it would be, introducing students to a range of staff and giving them a stream of contacts. For journalism and public relations students in particular, the applications of research methods connected their past experiences in the media with their current projects with the media.

Students started to enjoy and understand the diverse ways in which sound was being used in the Masters. I still deployed short sonic sessions in the other modules, but with diverse goals. The use of sound in discussing assignments seemed to help as students heard the same information from a study guide in a different way. Many students put the sonic sessions on a loop while they were writing or drafting their papers and projects, to keep themselves on track. Their movement in thinking was also a movement in staff thinking. We all started to consider with much more reflection and consideration which medium suited a research project and learning moment. The staff did well, considering the newness of the mode of teaching. For research inactive staff, it formed a pivotal moment to reconnect them with thinking, reading and writing. Particularly, considering the short notice at which many of the staff were asked to contribute, I was grateful for their generosity. However, it was amongst the students that the magic started.

4.   The Magic

After the first week of teaching, it became clear that something extraordinary was happening amongst the students. Firstly, they started to independently record all their seminars and logged them into a private portal.

<div align="center">

Our site is ready!
To members of MA Creative Media
</div>

Hey everyone! Just a quick note to let you know that the site is ready and up. You can start using it immediately but you will have to register first. I am slowly uploading the recordings from the seminar as I type this so everything I have should be up by tomorrow. I need some volunteers to record the seminars I do not attend. Anyone? Please? So far I have recruited the lovely Lucy for Mediating the Environment (if I remember well) but I need more so we can cover everything.

I have a recorder we can all use and maybe Tara can lend us hers too if there is a clash or the exchange of the recorder failed somewhere along the way (shit happens, ya know!).

Anyway, head over to www.macreativemedia.co.uk and register yourself (there is a link to register under the login box) so you can access the site. I will make sure to upgrade your account to "Editor" so you can post anything you want also. Feel free to grab the RSS feed if you are into the whole RSS scene but you may have problems with it since the site is password protected. I am looking into a notification feature so we can all be emailed when there's fresh content added on the site.

That's all I can think of right now.

I hope you're enjoying your hump day (this always sounds dirty to me).

Take care!
Yanni xx

The other students all followed Yanni and started to record everything. We added library sessions and comments to the portal. Everyone gained from Yanni's commitment but the distance education students became the biggest beneficiaries of his work.

Sent: Thu 23/10/2008 00:07
To: Brabazon Tara
Subject: RE: bloggity blog

Bugger.... ok. Sorry, I got sucked into a little vortex of analysis with mX there (I do it in life also :)
Next post going up today. Thanks for your help and guidance. I really don't want to be the special needs student!

Am poking around Yanni's site - HURRRRRAH for hearing you all!!! He's a legend!!!

Remarkably, they continued to record sessions all year, right until the final week of seminars.

Yanni
Sent: Fri 15/05/2009 22:00
To:
Cc:
Subject: Approaching the end of term!

Hello to everyone!

Right, there are a couple of rough weeks ahead filled with deadlines and general (sometimes weather induced) insanity so I thought I'd try to see if I can keep/put things in place for you to help out. I keep asking myself when will the weather realize that it's mid-May and act appropriately. Of course, when the sun finally comes out I start sneezing and generally become an overflowing snot machine and curse all the Gods of Olympus as I try to wheeze some oxygen into my system and up to my brain. Hurrah for hay fever...

Anyway, back to the point. This is a notification email to let you all know that I finally had some time today to convert and upload this week's seminar recordings. With the exception of Julia's module for which we have one last seminar next week, these are the last recorded sessions for this semester. I am sending this update to all of you so you know everything is up to date on the website (http://macreativemedia.co.uk) and you can have a listen before completing your assignments. Keep in mind that all the recordings from the first semester are still online as well. I will keep those up until at least the end of September so we all have access to them. They might be useful when working on your dissertations.

That's all from me for now. Best of luck to all of you on your assignments! Keep it together and see you soon!

Yanni xx

The distance education students appreciated everyone's work and again thanked Yanni for all his efforts.

Sent: Sat 16/05/2009 05:32
To:
Subject: RE: Approaching the end of term!

I'd just like to second that sentiment. Yanni's efforts have really made the difference for this distance student. I listen to you all on my daily commute, and really feel a part of the action.

w00t!
x

This idea was completely derived from the students, aligning the computer science expertise from Yanni with the design experience of another and the educational interests of others. They also started to independently experiment with sound and recording devices. Basically, they started to record everything. They asked me to teach them how to use a range of mixing software.

There were other surprises and moments of magic. Oral history, which I thought would be a minor research method, became the method that most of them chose to specialize on and with for their research. Significantly, and startlingly, the conventional problems of creative-led or practice-led research, captured best through the disconnection of artefact and exegesis, never appeared in any of the student's research. They seemed to – naturally it appeared – understand how to align creative work, method and the configuration of an exegesis. There are probably many causes for this ease of movement between platforms but one reason must be that they were taught methods in a way that was applicable, challenging, malleable and living, rather than dry, abstract and unused. There was no gap between theory and production, analysis and practice.

On the basis of our experimentation with methods, the entire group aligned sonic media and education. The year became punctuated by sound, aurality and orality. What Francisco Lopez described as "a 'blind' listening" [60] started to emerge. The assignments from the methods module were remarkable. As an example, one of my students offered an experiment in oral history methods, recording the same testimony in three ways - sound only, sound and vision, vision only with close-captioning - to investigate the different type of evidence and interpretation that could be gained from the diverse sources. Another aligned form and content by interviewing the manager of the

North-West sound archive. He researched oral histories by interviewing a curator of a local sound archive. Form and content blended through oral history and sonic media.

Our academic culture became more audible and created space for interpretation, silence, abstraction and analysis. While Paul Carter stated that "listening becomes a cultural work where the ground rules are not established,"[61] he also realized that active listening is situated in cultural, historical and social environments. It provides an opportunity to create "new symbols and word senses."[62] The student innovations triggered a feedback loop to staff who also became inspired by the diversity, range and quality of assignments. As I reviewed the first year of the MA Creative Media, I noted that students and staff had developed a sonic media and auditory cultures portfolio. While I had always used popular music, oral history and recorded speeches as punctuation in both my teaching and research, we were able to extend far beyond these conventional usages. Our project commenced with a desire to solve problems in the way in which we taught research methods. The teaching-led research literature and media literacy theory helped us, as did transferable learning object theories.

Through the year, and inspired by the students' enthusiasm for diverse sounds and voices in our Masters, I continued to work with them, asking how I could help them through developing time and space-shifting genres for sonic education. I started to conduct specialist micro-interviews on particular topics that can be used for a specific goal in a lecture theater or the more intimate environment of a seminar room and then transferred through the Web to wider and different international usage.[63] Students listened to these micro-teaching moments and then commenced their seminar discussion. They could then return to this micro-interview outside the seminar. This new genre was based on a simple idea, asking one question and receiving one answer. Of less than two minutes, they introduced new voices into teaching spaces and sonic learning objects to augment print-based texts and directed students to alternative learning experiences. While I started to use this mode in all my undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, it had great success in the Masters. Students were reading Professor Steve Redhead's "The Art of the Accident"[64] to understand the relationship between terrorism and cities. It was incredibly useful for students to hear how ideas can be transposed into publications and research deployed in new contexts.[65] Through the mobility of sonic media, expertise could be brought into the teaching and learning space, while also enlarging the genres of online learning objects and online learning resources

Again, this innovation in the use of sonic media provided another opportunity for staff development. Staff who may have been apprehensive or fearful of constructing a full Practising Media Research session can be scaffolded into this longer recording. The informality of one question and one answer, taking less than two minutes, is a way to lift the confidence of staff in deploying new media platforms, while also increasing the resources available to students. It is another way to enable research inactive staff to express an idea or disseminate works in progress.

I also developed a liminal length of presentation between the short sonic sessions and the longer offering for Practising Media Research. Being of less than ten minutes, they formed a series of public education sonic sessions, held on the Internet Archive with the wraparound from my website. The topics included education, libraries, popular culture, and social justice.[66] The Sonic Lab from my website[67] created an opportunity to share these experiments with both colleagues and students, and in the future will present an important opportunity to disseminate the MA students' research in sonic form. My goal is to ensure that each student produces a sonic session from their MA dissertation to not only disseminate their research but form a show reel to enable their future employment.

A recently released book by Jeff Jarvis asked a provocative question in its title: "What Would Google Do?" Probably, my method of teaching research methods would suit the supercorporation. It solved a problem. It opened students to a range of voices, views and resources. It also inspired them to think that they could take their voice, views and resources and create independent research. It was mayhem. The time scale of development, the lack of equipment and the clunky portal did not bode well. Yet we survived. The students thrived and succeeded and we have built on this first experiment in new and fascinating ways. This mayhem with methods embodied Frauke Behrendt's reading of our time.

It is not only the old technology of the computer and the Internet moving to new social and geographic context by becoming mobile. Something new is emerging from this, for which a lot of new terminology has been tried out, but only little appropriate metaphors have been found so far.[68]

Perhaps attention to the dynamism of sonic platforms, rather than similes and metaphors of the Internet, may be more productive in tracking the changing relationships between media and education. Staff and students transformed universities into sonic laboratories for hearing, listening and thinking. While our experiments continue, we have realized that fewer media may create more meaning.

Endnotes

1. Sonic media, as a phrase, has been used intentionally through this paper as it moves fluidly between the categories of high and popular culture. It maintains relationships with acoustic studies, digital and internet studies and audio and auditory cultures.

2. Cheryl Bluestone realized that "despite its importance, even at the graduate level, students tend to perceive research methods and statistics coursework as uninteresting and difficult," from "Infusing active learning into the research methods unit," College Teaching , Vol. 55, No. 3, 2007: 91.

3. I also acknowledge the inspiration of Susan Gibson and Bonnie Skaalid in the construction of this article. Gibson and Skaalid stated that "unless teachers are exposed to new ways of thinking about their practice and the role that computers can play in their changed practice, they will continue to use computers as an add-on to the ways they have traditionally taught," from "Teacher professional development to promote constructivist uses of the internet: a study of one graduate-level course," Journal of Technology and Teacher Education , Vol. 12, No. 4, 2004:579.

4. Paul Carter stated that "active listening is not simply psychological jargon. In the context of 'hearing cultures' it conjures up historical, cultural, or social situations in which listening surfaces as a device for dreaming new symbols and word senses. As these arise dialogically, in the back-and-forth of mutual (mis-)understanding they have the capacity to ground communication differently ... the cultural work done on such occasions is far from trivial. Usually precipitated in circumstances of an imminent loss of personal and collective identity, its echoic poetics is both tactical and profoundly political," from P. Carter, "Ambiguous traces, mishearing, and auditory space," in V. Erlmann (ed.), Hearing Cultures, (Oxford, Berg, 2005)

5. D. Gauntlett, "Media Studies 2.0," Theory.org.uk , http://www.theory.org.uk/mediastudies2.htm , 24 March 2007

6. W. Merrin, "The Revolution has already taken place," Media Studies 2.0 Forum , http://twopointzeroforum. blogspot.com/2007/03/revolution-has-already-taken-place.html , 3 March 2007.

7. R. Quin, A genealogy of Media Studies. The Australian Educational Researcher , 30, Vol. 1, 2003, pp. 101-122.

8. The Creativity CELT (Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching) was present at the University of Brighton, http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/projects/CETLs.htm#cre

9. Asynchronous media platforms were chosen to ensure that students could fit the modules into their work and family commitments. Also, distance education students were considered at the start of course development. They were not an inconvenient addition to the on campus mode. The full course was available in both on and off campus modes from the launch of its program. Therefore, there was a different motivation to distance education when compared to Matthew Roberts, who stated that "it all started with a scheduling conflict ... one student let me know that she would need to miss our research methods class the coming week. As hands popped up around the room I realized I would be missing almost a third of my class. Unfortunately, they were going to miss crucial lectures on measures of significant and measures of association, without which they could be considerably lost when it came to the semester research paper," from "Adventures in podcasting," PS: Political Science & Politics , Vol. 41, No.3, July 2008.

10. I particularly want to note the literacies series that, although resident at Routledge, was commenced by the Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis edited collection, Multiliteracies , (Melbourne: Macmillan, 2000). Influential texts in Routledge's series include Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe, Global Literacies and the World-Wide Web (London: Routledge, 2000), Gunther Kress's Literacy in the New Media Age , (London: Routledge, 2003), Ilana Snyder (ed.) Silicon Literacies , (London: Routledge, 2002) and David Barton, Mary Hamilton and Roz Ivanic edited collection, Situated Literacies , (London: Routledge, 2000)

11. Many of these influential materials are included throughout the piece, but I would particularly like to note Annette Lamb and Larry Johnson's "Podcasting in the school library, part 2: creating powerful podcasts with your students," Teacher Librarian , Vol. 34, No. 4, April 2007. In this article, they stressed the ease of construction as a way "to promote technology to reluctant teachers," p. 61. They also stressed the importance of a standard format, particularly using music. Their advice was followed. They also argued for the diversity of possible genres, including book reviews, collaborative projects, promotion of events, interviews and original sonic productions. Through the year, I have experimented with this diversity of material for future use in teaching and learning. Please refer to www.brabazon.net/soniclab .

12. My experience through the MA Creative Media in terms of distance learning was also confirmed in Muhammad Imran Yousuf's "Effectiveness of mobile learning in distance education," Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education , Vol. 8, No. 4, October 2007, http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr/tojde28/pdf/article_9.pdf

13. C. Murrell, "Interactive student podcasting: the emerging technology of choice," in A.Oosterman, A. Cocker (eds.), Journalism Downunder: the future of the media in the digital age. Proceedings of the 2nd joint JEANZ/JEA Conference , School of Communication

Studies, AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand, 2006, http://artsweb.aut.ac.nz/journalism_conference/docs/paper-Murrell.doc , p. 1

14. Anthony Chan and Catherine McLoughlin, "Everyone's learning with podcasting: a Charles Sturt University experience," Proceedings of the 23rd annual Ascilite conference, p. 111

15. While application was a focus of my work, it was not an example of problem-based instruction or problem-based learning as was introduced by Margaret Greenwald in teaching graduate research methods. I certainly note her corrective that "a problem-based approach to teaching research methods allows the instructor to build directly on the students' current level of knowledge in clinical diagnosis and treatment and to help students to extend clinical questions into research questions," from "Teaching research methods in communication disorders," Communication Disorders Quarterly , Vol. 27, No. 32, 2003:179.

16. J. Maness, "Library 2.0 theory" Webology, Vol. 3, No. 2, June 2006, http://webology.ir/2006/v3n2/a25.html

17. I am not undermining the seriousness of this rushed preparation. Frank Troha is absolutely correct: "A successful-learning or blended learning initiative requires careful project planning, solid instructional design, the development of all instructional components based on an approved design document, ongoing attention to project management issues ... varies formative evaluations prior to launch, deployment of the learning and ongoing evaluation and maintenance of the learning system," from "Ensuring e-learning success: six simple tips for initiative leaders," USDLA Journal , December 2002:15.

18. S. Junaidu and J. Al-Ghamdi realized that "before beginning course development, online course developers should have a clear understanding of their target audience, the learners," from "Tips for developing media-rich online courses," USDLA Journal , December 2002:18. Junaidu and Al-Ghamdi particularly stressed motivation, knowledge, language level and computer literacy.

19. N. Durbridge, The role of technology in distance education , (Kent: Croom Helm, 1984)

20. D.J. Power, "The use of audio in distance education, in S. Timmers (ed.) Training needs in the use of media for distance education, (Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, 1990)

21. M. Lee and A. Chan, "Reducing the effects of isolation and promoting inclusivity for distance learners through podcasting," Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education , Vol. 8, No. 1, January 2007, http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/27/fa/95.pdf .

22. I use the phrase 'sonic sessions' to signify a distinction from both podcasts and online lectures. By deploying a distinctive nomenclature, I am attempting to show that a sonic session is written, recorded and structured differently from a lecture that has been recorded.

23. D. Kahn, Wireless Imagination , (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), p. 4

24. K. Jensen, "Sounding the media," Nordicom Review , Vol. 27, 2006, p. 7

25. S. Brittain, P. Glowacki, J. Van Ittersum, L. Johnson, "Podcasting lectures," Educause Quarterly , Number 3, 2006, p. 28

26. C. Windham, Confessions of a podcast junkie: a student perspective. Educase , May/June 2007, http://connect.educause.edu/Library/EDUCAUSE+Review/ConfessionsofaPodcastJunk/39405

27. M. Norquay, "Writing for the ear," in L. Burge, M. Norquay and J. Roberts (eds.), Listening to learn , (Ontario: Ontario Institute for Studies in education, 1987), p. 11.

28. G. Berg, The British Invasion. WebNet Journal , January-March, 2001, 5-6

29. A.W. Bates, Technology for distance education: A 10-year perspective, from A. Tait (ed.) Key issues in open learning – a reader: An anthology from the journal 'Open learning' 1986-1992¸ (Harlow: Longman, 1993), pp. 241-265

30. ibid. , p. 242

31. Allison Cavanagh realized how rarely this point is actualized. She stated that "the idea of a radical schism between new media, in particular the internet, and prior forms of media is a common trope of the field," from "Contesting Media History," Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture , Vol. 4, No. 4, 2007, p. 6

32. "Podcasting: a teaching with technology white paper," Office of Technology for Education & Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence, Carnegie Mellon University, June 4, 2007

33. Y. Belanger, Duke iPod first year final evaluation Report , (Durham: Duke University, 2005), http://cit.duke.edu/pdf/ipod_initiative_04_05.pdf

34. B. Read, "Lectures on the go," Chronicle of higher education , 52 (10), 2005, http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i10/10a03901.htm

35. S. Earp , Y. Belanger, L. O'Brien, Duke digital initiative end of year report. Durham: Duke University, 2006, http://www.duke.edu/ddi/pdf/ddi_exec_report_overview_o5_06.pdf

36. Office of Technology for Education & Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence, Podcasting: a teaching with technology white paper. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University, June 4, 2007, http://connect.educause.edu/files/CMU_Podcasting_Jun07.pdf

37. ibid.

38. ibid. , p. 3

39. T. Brabazon, "Socrates in earpods: the ipodification of education. Fast Capitalism , 2 (1), 2006, http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/2_1/brabazon.htm

40. ibid.

41. I note David Millard and Martin Ross's corrective that "Web 2.0 is not a system, nor even a class of systems," from "Web 2.0: hypertext by any other name," HT'06, Odense Denmark, August 22-26 2006, p. 28

42. Jean Burgess tracked the amateurization of photography and the domestication of personal computing as a form of "Vernacular creativity and new media," from her PhD thesis at the Queensland University of Technology, 2007.

43. P. Meng, Podcasting gains an important foothold among US adult online population, according to Nielsen//Netratings, 2006, http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/news.jsp

44. A. Chan and C. McLoughlin, Everyone's learning with podcasting: a Charles Sturt University experience. In: Proceedings of the 23rd annual Ascilite conference Sydney, Australia , 2006, http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/sydney06/proceeding/pdf_papers/p219.pdf

45. C. Windham, Confessions of a podcast junkie: a student perspective. Educase , May/June 2007, http://connect.educause.edu/Library/EDUCAUSE+Review/ConfessionsofaPodcastJunk/39405

46. C. Murrell, "Interactive student podcasting: the emerging technology of choice," in Allison Oosterman, Dr Alan Cocker eds., Journalism Downunder: the future of the media in the digital age. Proceedings of the 2nd joint JEANZ/JEA Conference , School of Communication Studies, AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand, 2006, http://artsweb.aut.ac.nz/journalism_conference/docs/paper-Murrell.doc

47. Y. Zhao and G. Cziko found three conditions to be met for staff to enact professional development to use new platforms. Firstly, staff must believe it can meet higher level goals than other methods. Secondly, they must believe that it will not effect other higher learning goals. Finally, they must feel confident that they hold the ability and resources to use it. Please refer to Y. Zhao and G. Cziko, "Teacher adoption of technology: a perceptual control theory perspective," Journal of Technology and Teacher Education , Vol. 9, No. 1, 2001.

48. "Tara Brabazon talks with Julie Doyle about using sonic media to teach visuality," Internet Archive, http://www.archive.org/details/TaraBrabazonTalksToJulieAboutUsingSonicMediaToTeachVisuality

49. A. Toffler, Powershift , (New York: Bantam, 1991), p. 459: http://www.scribd.com/doc/7000495/Alvin-Toffler-Power-Shift

50. J. Tomlinson, The culture of speed: the coming of immediacy , (London: Sage, 2007), p. 1

51. P. Virilio, Pure war , (New York: Semiotext(e),1983), p.28

52. The forum was an integral part of this module. It is the component that I will work on in future years. The participation was strong – but uneven. There were – as always – lurkers and uneven participation from week to week. But through the semester, over 800 posts were recorded from the students in response to the structured questions I asked them. It also provided a great opportunity for students to engage each other regardless of their enrolled mode. However I do note Fei Gao and David Wong's fascinating work in "Student engagement in distance learning environments; a comparison of threaded discussion forums and text-focused Wikis" First Monday , Vol. 13, No. 1, January 2008, http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2018/1921. Their discussion of threaded discussion fora, text-based wikis generally and seedwikis in particular (www.seedwiki.com) is important. The direct engagement with particular portions of text is useful and I will investigate this potential in future offerings.

53. I was inspired by George Lorenzo, Diana Oblinger and Charles Dziuban's argument that "With all these choices, do we really know what we are doing, whether the information is valid, or how best to use it?" in "How choice, co-creation, and culture are changing what it means to be net savvy," Educause Quarterly, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2007, http://www.educause.edu/apps/eq/eqm07/eqm0711.asp?bhcp=1 . Therefore, my goal was to ensure that some choice, pauses and stops were introduced into the process of both finding learning materials and engaging with them.

54. A paper from the Office of Technology for Education & Eberly Centre for Teaching Excellence at Carnegie Mellon University confirmed that "In general, it is safe to say that most students do not listen to each and every lecture podcast. Only 20% of students in the UW study listened to more than 75% of recorded lectures," from "Podcasting: a teaching with technology white paper," Office of Technology for Education & Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence, Carnegie Mellon University, June 4, 2007

55. ibid. , p. 6

56. An example of this research includes John Urry's "The complexities of the global," published by the

Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster UK, http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/papers/urry-complexities-global.pdf , July 2, 2004

57. H. Jenkins, "The war between effects and meaning," MIT, http://web.mit.edu/cms/faculty/WarEffectMeaning.htm

58. A. Berry, "Confidence and uncertainty in teaching about teaching," Australian Journal of Education , Vol. 48, No. 2, 2004, p. 152

59. Elizabeth Van Es and Miriam Gamoran Sherin argued that "teaching is a complex activity. In any given lesson, teachers need to attend to what students are doing and saying, how they are thinking about the subject matter, what analogies or representations to use to best convey important ideas, and what experiences to provide students to engage them in learning," from "Learning to notice: scaffolding new teachers' interpretations of classroom interactions," Journal of Technology and Teacher Education , Vol. 10, No. 4, 2002, p. 572

60. F. Lopez, "Profound listening and environment sound matter," in C. Cox and D. Warner (eds.), Audio Culture , (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 82

61. P. Carter, "Ambiguous traces, mishearing, and auditory space," in V. Erlmann (ed.), Hearing Cultures , (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 44

62. ibid. , p. 45

63. While many of these sessions were recorded, two examples from Steve Redhead are "Art of the Accident," Internet Archive, http://www.archive.org/details/ArtOfTheAccident and "Cities and Popular Music," http://www.archive.org/details/CitiesAndPopularMusic

64. S. Redhead, "The art of the accident," Fast Capitalism , Vol. 2, No. 1, 2006, http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/2_1/redhead.html

65. T. Brabazon talks to S. Redhead, "Art of the Accident," Internet Archive , http://www.archive.org/details/ArtOfTheAccident

66. Examples include T. Brabazon, "Analogue ways of thinking," Internet Archive, http://www.archive.org/details/AnalogueWaysOfThinking and "Dust bowl democracy," Internet Archive, http://www.archive.org/details/AnalogueWaysOfThinking

67. Sonic Lab, Brabazon.net, http://www.brabazon.net/soniclab

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Blast Wind: Phantomenology, Modernity, and the Remains of Art

Gray Kochhar-Lindgren

Ghosts are appearing in our public squares at noon and at midnight they become visible as shimmering forms that buzz along the edges of the neon glare. They haunt our screens and emerge from the radiant cores of our most sophisticated technologies, the outgrowth of the violence of our domination of the earth-body. Ghosts accompany the installation of the apparatus of rationality installed by techno-capitalism that has finally split the shadow from its object, leaving the shadow burned into the stone as the object, vanishing, is vaporized in heat and light. Ghosts, as Avery Gordon has reminded us, are a "generalizable social phenomenon" that mark the presence of a traumatic history, and with the logic of a strange and torsional doubling, they wander as free-floating symptoms along the (in)visible seams of the wounds of contemporaneity. But they also mark out the spaces-between from which the unexpected can emerge that can grant us the to-come of a futurity.

The ghost in the early 21st century marks the return of the phantasmata—image, shadow, affect, body—that the central philosophical tradition of the idealism that runs from Plato through Husserl and beyond has worked so assiduously to cast aside and to exclude from the discourse of truth. This is the return of the repressed and the structure of such a return entails the fracturing of the metaphysical compact between the quantifiable and the true, the true and the logical, and the true as a form beyond appearance. This is not to dismiss the quantifiable, the logical, and necessity of ideal forms; it is, however, to reconfigure these and other terms in the different light of the chiaroscuro of phantomenology. Thus, we have the necessary appearance and development of visual cultures, affect studies, and gender and body studies. The shadow of the ghost cast aside by philosophy must receive its due.

In W.G. Sebald's Vertigo, the narrator comments that:

> I was unable even to determine whether I was in the land of the living or already in another place. Nor did this lapse in memory improve in the slightest after I climbed to the topmost gallery of the cathedral and from there, best by recurring fits of vertigo, gazed out upon the dusky, hazy panorama of a city now altogether alien to me.... (115-116)

This is the site of the phantoms, the site of everyday life after the catastrophes of the 20th century and within the catastrophe, as well as within the promise, of history itself. Since for a long time now we have not had any compass bearings to orient ourselves, we are not quite sure where we are, although we know that both the living and the dead cross our field of vision. Perplexed by our dizziness at what we see, we change our angle of view, trying to climb higher in the ruined cathedral in order to see things more as an ordered whole, but even then our city is alien to us, beset by dust and dusk. A shadow spreads that obscures the city of human habitation, and then a stiff wind arises as if from nowhere into which all of us are leaning as we struggle to maintain our balance. This is the blast wind of modernity. It is relentless.

This blast wind roars at us from every side, along many ridges and through many valleys and subterranean tunnels, and one of the central sites at which this wind becomes visible is Hiroshima, a city devastated by a blast, a city where shadows remain burned into steps and onto walls even while their original objects are obliterated, vanished except for a smudged trace. The technologies that precede the splitting and chaining of the atom, photography and the cinema for example, mark the installation of the power to split the natural order of things—to sever the shadow from its object—and to ghost the past in the ghosted present.

Now, however, faced with the nuclear technologies of both the atom and the gene, we find ourselves in an intensified vertigo that radicalizes that of the lost compass orientation. The Federation of American Scientists explains the blast in this way:

> When the expanding blast wave from a nuclear air burst strikes the surface of the earth it is reflected, and the reflected wave reinforces and intensifies the primary wave. Targets in the vicinity of ground zero may actually be subjected to two blast waves: the initial or incident wave, followed slightly later by a secondary reflected wave. This limited region close to ground zero in which the incident and reflected waves are separate is known as the region of regular reflection. Beyond the area of regular reflection as it travels through air which is already heated and compressed by the incident blast wave, the reflected wave will move much more rapidly and will very quickly catch up with the incident wave. The two then fuse to form a combined wave front known as the Mach stem. The height of the Mach stem increases as the blast wave moves outward and becomes a nearly vertical blast front. (http://www.fas.org/nuke/intro/nuke/blast.htm)

We stand directly in the path of that vertical blast front, a destructive wall of fire created by the interpenetration of a primary incident wave and the secondary reflected wave. The original and the secondary become inseparable and a new hybrid entity that increases in height as it moves toward and through us is created. This is the moment of the emergence of a spectrality different than has always accompanied the questions of appearance, meaning, the human, and of death, although these, too, are still active. As Akira Lippit insists, the "atomic radiation that ended the war in Japan unleashed an excess visuality that threatened the material and conceptual dimension of human interiority and exteriority. It assailed the bodies it touched, seared and penetrated them, annihilating the limits that established human existence in the world" (4).

This is the moment of phantomenology and the remains of art. The philosophical history of reason, the empirical world of culture, and the enigmatic presence of art find themselves isomorphically reflecting one another as modernity morphs into another phase. As T.W. Adorno has commented, "[O]nly polemically does reason present itself to the knower as total reality, while only in traces and ruins is it prepared to hope that it will ever come across correct and just reality" (AP 121). These traces, this disorderly pile of ruins strewn across the earthscape, are constitutive of the work of reason, the work of culture, and the work of art. The logic of the phantom is one phrase for the site, which is nowhere and anywhere but which precipitates at places like Hiroshima where the material forms of thought crisscross one another, looping back on one another in a spooky and snarled entanglement.

In an interview published in its original version in Le Monde de l'éducation, Jacques Derrida once again recapitulates his notion of the trace and of the remainder, which, as with all words, is neither here nor there and both here and there. "A trace," he says to his interviewer, "is never present, fully present, by definition; it inscribes in itself the reference to the specter of something else" (PM 151). There is sameness and difference; there is an enigmatic "itself"; and there is a writing that, as itself, refers to the specter of something else: and only the specter of that something else, never something-in-itself, is available. This is an expression that articulates the most banal of all possible experiences; it defines, or regulates or bounds, any ordinary experience at all. The simplest moment is infinitely strange.

Derrida continues, reminding us through the talking-listening that has become reading-writing and that arrives from the other side of life, that "[T]he remaining of the remainder is not reducible to an actual residue, or to what is left after a subtraction either. The remainder is not, it is not a being, not a modification of that which is. Like

the trace, the remaining offers itself for thought before or beyond being…" (PM 151). There is an offering before or beyond the "is" that serves as a copulating function of identity. Being is not first and there can never be a first philosophy. The remainder is not second, a modification or the result of a subtraction from that-which-is, for that-which-is depends on the structure of a trace in order to appear as a present. This is first philosophy as the appearance of the uncanny. This is deconstruction and it is profoundly confusing, since it both undergirds and undermines the structure of logical and empirical clarity, of intellectual or sensible intuitions of essences.

We can, and should, become clearer about ideas and beings—we should do the best science and logical analysis possible—but this clarity emerges from an obscurity, an inscrutability that can never itself be brought to the point of distinctiveness, but which nonetheless offers a remainder, a trace of itself. As we have seen, we do not live in absolute light or absolute darkness; instead, the world is chiaroscuro: shadowed, ghostly, and, therefore, able to be full-bodied in its frothing forth of singularities.

Derrida, like others, associates the remainder with ashes, "remains without a substantial remainder, essentially, but which have to be taken account of and without which there would neither be accounting nor calculation, nor a principle of reason able to give an account or a rationale, nor a being as such" (PM 152). What an absurd claim: the rational in its many forms of power, including the possibility of accountability itself, is founded upon the slowly drifting lightness of ashes, always pluralized and always only one.

And it is absurd not only because the rational cannot account for it—the concept of truth cannot be fulfilled—but also because one insignificant particular, ashes, comes to stand for the entirety of Being and the possibility of both understanding and memory. This is the holocaust, the catastrophe, and the hope. There is no Being as-such—and this is perhaps the most succinct statement of Derrida's critique of Husserl—but there is being as-if. Directionless, it drifts in play with the slightest whisper of a breeze. And so, while there is no remainder as such, there are "remainder effects, in the sense of a result or a present, idealizable, ideally iterable residue…sentences fixed on paper, more or less readable and reproducible…" (PM 152). This is the phantomenological essence of philosophy.

There is also a phantomenological essence of cultural production that is schematized by Slavoj Žižek in "The Specter of Ideology." In this brief text, Žižek examines ideology as the "generative matrix that regulates the relationship between visible and nonvisible, between imaginable and nonimaginable, as well as the changes in this relationship" (1) that, in turn, is based on the Lacanian analysis of the relationship between the real, the symbolic, and the structure of fiction. "[I]deology has nothing to do with 'illusion,'" Žižek explains, "with a mistaken, distorted representation of its social context….a political standpoint can be quite accurate ('true') as to its objective content, yet thoroughly ideological…"(7). Just as we have seen with the philosophical critique of idealism, so, too, in this understanding of the ideological we are always in a symbolized world rather than in a realist world "as such." There is no "original" world to which an adaptation occurs called "the fictional" or the "ideological," but the world as such is always the world as-if. There is the play of faculties, the conflict of interpretations, and the possibility of possibility.

There is always an historical specificity to the ideological—Žižek is particularly interested in this text in the "empty pleasures" of late capitalism—but this is fundamentally related to the structure of sociality as symbolically constructed. Žižek emphasizes that this is not the same as to be entrapped in the representationalist dilemma of the "only" discursive universe that some forms of postmodernism have promoted.

> It all hinges on our persisting in this impossible position: although no clear line of demarcation separates ideology from reality, although ideology is already at work in everything we experience as 'reality,' we must nonetheless maintain the tension that keeps the critique of ideology alive. …it is possible to assume a place that enables us to maintain a distance from it, but this place from which one can denounce ideology must remain empty, it cannot be occupied by any positively determined reality…. (17)

This "empty space" carries the names of possibility, ghost, specter, writing, and art, and though it cannot be definitively inhabited by a positive determination, it must always be inhabiting itself with new determinations that then freely give way to others.

This emptiness is structured like a fountain, a structure always rejuvenated and overflowing its boundaries. (Rilke is the one who knew this most completely.) It is the mysterious space of emergence into the symbolic dimension of human activity. Žižek, following Lacan, attempts to distinguish the symbolic from the real, which is a difficult articulation to draw. The real, which is not symbolizable, can only be marked with an X. The non-symbolizable real returns as "spectral apparitions" and, therefore:

> 'specter' is not to be confused with 'symbolic fiction,' with the fact that reality itself has the structure of a fiction in that

it is symbolically constructed; the notions of specter and (symbolic) fiction are co-dependent in their very incompatibility (they are 'complementary' in the quantum-mechanical sense). To put it simply, reality is never directly 'itself,' it presents itself only via its incomplete-failed symbolization, and spectral apparitions emerge in this very gap that forever separates reality from the real, and on account of which reality has the character of a (symbolic) fiction: the specter gives body to that which escapes (the symbolically structured) reality. (21)

But in "giving body to," the specter must show itself as an apparition, an appearance, a phantom trace that participates in the logic of the is-not, part of which divides itself toward the symbolized. When the symbolic is considered closed we find ourselves in the state of ideology; when it is considered as open, a necessary condition for its operation, then we find ourselves in the impossible position of witnessing the appearance of the spectral. Critique, which is creative, simply means having the tools to pry open the ideological and to position the magic goggles to see the difference between the two formations.

"The preideological 'kernel' of ideology," Žižek continues, "consists of the spectral apparition that fills up the hole of the real…What the specter conceals is not reality but its 'primordially repressed', the irrepresentable X on whose 'repression' reality itself is founded" (21).2 The "pre-," which should no longer surprise us, indicates a before or beyond of the isness of the world as it appears as empirically stable and fully present to the thinking senses. The real is a tear that, nothing in itself but a jagged edge, shows us a hole, a shadow on the face of things. Art, philosophy, and psychoanalysis feel their way slowly, with painstaking care, along the edges of this edge that drops away into nothingness. All of these reveal not a stabilized commodity fetishism that is an illusory modification of the real, but, instead an "uncanny chimera at work in the very heart of the actual process of social production" (30, Note 8). The social, in all of its forms, is spectral. As Marx put it so memorably:

we have the complete mystification of the capitalist mode of production, the reification of social relations and immediate coalescence of the material production relations with their historical and social determination. It is an enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world, in which Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre do their ghost-walking as social characters and at the same time directly as things. (Capital III, ch. 48)

Everything is always doubled, including the doubled. And as the network of relations shifts and slides, looking for a while like a thing and then like a thing that vanishes—something like a toxic mortgage—meanings, too, slide about. This is the process of cultural signification, the face of the spectral that appears in our direction, and this includes the production of the arts.

In The Emigrants, for example, Sebald's authorial description of Sebald's narration of the text within the text, notes that the process is as arduous as Max Ferber's violent and unforgiving technique of painting—the arts always cross over one another—and that there is a fundamental, inescapable anxiety about the "entire questionable business of writing. I had covered hundreds of pages with my scribble, in pencil and ballpoint. By far the great part had been crossed out, discarded, and obliterated by additions. Even what I ultimately salvaged as a 'final' version seemed to me a thing of shreds and patches, utterly botched" (230). All additions obliterate the past, but the past continues to appear as trace, as smudge, and all of cultural production is merely a series of "shreds and patches," a torn fabric of remains through which we sometimes see, or think we see, the blue sky of the hole of the real. The arts stage this scenario.

When in Paper Machine Antoine Spire (the questioner) turns to film, he reminds Derrida that the "cinema could be said to be an elsewhere edged with mirrors, but where it's no longer a question of constructing yourself, a body, but rather of haunting the screen." This beautifully provocative definition of the cinema echoes how mirrors and shadows play off of one another in the history of philosophy, painting, in new media, and in films such as Schatten. The screen functions narcissistically to construct the body of identifications, but since those supposedly mirroring identifications are projected from an elsewhere, the mirror is always shadowed by the otherness of that elsewhere, which therefore deconstructs the body of identifications. Responding to Spire, Derrida comments that "spectrality is at work everywhere, and more than ever, in an original way, in the reproducible virtuality of photography or cinema" (158).

This comparative logic of the "more than ever" is the difficult doubling of the logic of the phantom that we are attempting to track, for, although spectrality has always been operative, it now takes an original form, late in the day, as the technologies of reproduction come on line in ever more penetrating and powerful ways.

The bombings that ended Japan's imperialist activities had introduced…a form of warfare that circulated through a dense matrix of visuality, displacing any access to a stable referent. At Hiroshima, and then Nagasaki, a blinding flash vaporized

entire bodies, leaving behind only shadow traces. The initial destruction was followed by waves of invisible radiation, which infiltrated the survivors' bodies imperceptibly. (Lippit 86)

We are all suffering from this blow, from this radioactive effect of the blast wind that, though detectable, is not directly visible; that governs, but in unpredictable ways, the registers of the visible and the invisible, the possible and the impossible. It is a dense concatenation of thresholds where ghosts cross between worlds.

The wind leaves traces behind: shadows, ruins, and a little bit of waste from which to make things. Writing of the Japanese Neo-Dada artists in the 1960s, Tōno Yoshiaki notes that their exhibits

reflected the immense junkyard of the teeming city of Tokyo. The junk which they first saw, which influenced their way of feeling objects, was the junk of the burned ruins of the city during the war. The blasted city had been their playground; their first toys had been bottles melted into distortion from fire bombs, pieces of roof beams found in the ashes. Now their shows were full of these junk flowers, with their queer blossoms. (cited in Munroe:157)

And all this junk has been shaped into new forms by the hands of artists, has been created to serve as the meeting point of the past and the future. Art, distorted and transformed debris from the nuclear strike, embodies the sedimented history of the past, witnesses the mangling of the world.

This strange blossoming of a glass flower—the artifactuality of art— opens up possibilities for the future. The artistic, with the semblance of its seeming, creates a discourse of critical aesthetics, of philosophy, that responds to the question of the truth of the object. The art-object also, however, creates a space in the mode of silence as a transmitting placeholder for the creation of the next object. The present object opens in all directions—the past, the present, the future, the surface, and the depths—as it generates itself and others out of its own supplemental traces that it strews about, like fragrant petals, in the noise of the world.

Art, then, can only be a site of ruins, a place that testifies to the blast wind of obliteration, but, in that very testimony art gives a place for the ghosts to gather and disperse, to come and speak with each other and with us before turning. Art, which installs itself in the very heart of the ancient dream of philosophy, insures that each phenomenon is always a phantasm and thus we can be assured that the apparitions will speak in the grotto of miracles. We cannot understand this speech, not very well, but it keeps us listening. The remains of art, in other words, remain; they grant us a reminder.

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Europe: Dream of Unity, Reality of Divisions

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In the 1990s, the European Union aimed to achieve two ambitious goals: to end the wars for Yugoslav succession and to lead the nations of former communist countries in Eastern Europe toward economic and social prosperity. Both of these goals remain elusive. The Dayton Accord, brokered by the United States in 1995, merely "froze" the state of war on the territory of former Yugoslavia without remedying its causes. Moreover, it was not a European, but an American military force that effectively intervened in Bosnia and then later in Kosovo. Indeed, only with a very slight exaggeration do I say that Sarajevo would still be under siege today if the Yugoslav wars had remained the exclusive responsibility of the EU.

As for the second goal, the economic and social prosperity for post-communists countries, it is undeniable that the "velvet revolutions" of 1989 ushered in a period of renewed hope. Yet, the EU failed to respond with its version of the Marshall Plan, offering substantial and comprehensive assistance to these nations. The subsequent integration of many of these countries into the EU presents a grave political, cultural and economical challenge. To put it bluntly: the mission of the EU to bring prosperity and stability into Eastern Europe and the Balkans is an expensive and contradictory enterprise. It is sure to keep the EU nations at odds for at least several generations to come. We are thus left with the dawning realization that Europeans may have tragically failed in the very objectives that they strove to realize on their own, that is, without outside (read: American) help.

From this angle, it seems all the more clear that the various channels connecting Europe and America reflect a real, mutual, and inescapable dependence. Suffice to point out the trade networks between the EU and the US, the density of which is only surpassed by the commercial traffic within EU (that is, among the EU members themselves). Despite the messianic self-righteousness of the American government under president George W. Bush and the ill-justified occupation of Iraq in the spring of 2003, the community of European nations cannot simply retreat into their historical bunker of cultural specificities and try to define itself against America. The attempt to build a European political identity on anti-American foundations is, I fear, just as likely to fail as the past attempt of German Romantics to define their nation on an exclusively anti-French basis.

In addition, America has been much more systematic in providing support to Eastern European anti-communist dissidents and the fresh buds of civil society that sprouted there. From a historical vantage point, this is hardly a surprise. In the wake of World War II, Western Europe was a de facto American military protectorate. It is ironic that without the threat of war and the American assistance to avert it, Europeans would certainly not have been able to afford the massive investment, over half a century, into their search for "universal peace". It was only under the protective umbrella of NATO with America at its helm, that Western Europe could begin the post-war project of reconciliation and integration.

During these years, Europe took ample advantage of the American aid intended to rebuild the destroyed continent. America provided European nations with the initial incentive to summon adequate political will to overcome the violent conflicts that had divided them for centuries. This endeavor required the strategic construction of common life-world structures that were meant to render war between European nations not only materially impractical, but also morally unacceptable and politically unfathomable. Despite progress in this direction, however, it has not been possible for Europe to entirely eliminate obstacles on the complex map of historical hostilities, across

which any idea of a community of European nations must navigate.

To conceive of Europe's imaginary totality was to draw identifiable boundaries. But the absence of a strict natural border on the eastern flank of the continent has, instead, conditioned the need for a symbolic geography. Distinct areas were and continue to be defined by mutual opposition. In other words, Europe has traditionally defined itself negatively, its self-perception arising from what it is not, rather than from what it is. Accordingly, Europe's outer boundaries shifted with political circumstances and contingent features of different social-historical periods. At various times, this boundary has been determined by the Oder and Neisse rivers, by the ridges of the Carpathian Mountains, the Ural Mountains, the summits of the Alps and the Pyrenees, the Atlas mountains, the coasts of the Black and Caspian Seas, the Iron curtain, and, most recently, by the Schengen limes. Throughout the ongoing changes in the meaning that Europe has attributed to the imagined or real enemy, temporary alliances of interest and pragmatic coalitions of power were formed.

The smallest common denominator in a communal integration was fear. In the collective mind of the nations claiming membership in Europe, the West and the East have acquired polarized values. In modern times, it was Eastern Europe and the Balkans with the attendant communist ideology that assumed this negative role. In the Middle Ages, European rhetoric has persistently perceived Islamic culture as the "Other" in its ongoing process of defining borders between the domestic and foreign, between us and them. After New York and Washington's 9/11, Madrid's 3/11 and London's 7/7 , it seems, the image of Islam as "the Other", as the threat, was revived in a European public discourse.

The noble ambition that wants to see Europe united and free has since World War II inspired a significant part of the national elites. These elites realized that they must limit the potential sources of fear, while at the same time striving to integrate diverse ethnic, cultural and social traditions into common structures. This ambition continues to drive many European leaders.

But where does Europe end? And who, really, is European? Will we, the citizens of post-communist countries, new members of the EU after May 2004, receive not only the political rights of European citizenship, but also the societal respect worthy of an association of equals? How long will it take to cast off the legacy of the traditionally divided continent? How long will Western Europeans need to overcome the deep-rooted feelings of suspicion (or at best apathy) that they feel toward the "barbaric" states and peoples of the East, Europe's terra incognita? How long will East Europeans behave like poor little relatives trying to impress? I wish I knew.

Sure, for some commentators the very idea of a united Europe provokes a condescending smile, but if history can possibly be of any use, than we could do worse than assimilate a lesson that it is equally laughable to contemplate a divided and, at the same time, successful Europe. A united Europe, of course, would be utterly unique. To the extent that the European Union does have many features of the state, it is a state of nations and not a nation of states like United States of America. The EU is thus inventing a self-suitable political form as it goes along. The dream of a united Europe, however, is ancient. It was pursued by the Roman Empire, Charlemagne and Napoleon, but also by Hitler (and this is only a partial list). After World War II, the European idea was adopted by the institutions that were conceived to prevent future armed conflict on the continent. Regardless of the vantage point, one is left with the same conclusion: the European idea is indelibly scarred by wars, aggression and violent conflict.

In order for European citizens to gain a reflexive awareness of our shared history, the shaping of the politics of European identity is of paramount importance. Yet sober reflection calls for humility. The face of "Europeanness" is invisible. Distinctly European elements of one's identity are today not easy to pinpoint. Moreover, in order to have a vision for a progressive realization of European identity, the common goals of European integration would have to be defined if they are to serve as guidelines. In view of the bickering inside the EU and the bitter disputes over the European constitution, alas, it is impossible to deduce with any certainty what are in fact the common goals of European integration. Does the goal lie in a particular vision of "Fortress Europe" which should close its doors to new members after the Balkan "rhythm & blues", Bulgaria and Romania, entered the club? Or is the goal projected in Europe as the embodiment of universal ideas: the rule of law, the liberal democratic system, constitutional respect for human rights? A union that can and must expand, perhaps to Turkey and the southern coasts of the Mediterranean, if not to the countries lying east of Polish borders?

In an unstable environment of post-Cold War, the European Union appears to be perceived, at least among the elites and middle classes in the continent's eastern part, as the ultimate purpose of national life. This large segment of the public that pins their hopes for quick improvement of living conditions on decidedly West European standards, may choose to conveniently look the other way -- but one fact won't disappear: despite the collapse of communism Western Europe remains by and large a "family onto itself".

Observed from this perspective, four aspects in the genesis of contemporary Europe come to the fore. First, there is the economistic ideology that emerged from etatist political culture, based as it is on the belief that it is possible in a relatively short time to change individual behavior and values by changing market conditions. The second aspect lies in the fact that Europe defines itself negatively, as indicated above. The third aspect is the shared mental framework that might eventually nurture the commonality of European nations. At present, this frame is still weak, abstract and optional. The "European joke" is a case in point: there are virtually no jokes about Europeans, in contrast to the cornucopia of jokes about individual nations. As stereotype-affirming as jokes tend to be, they do reveal the preoccupations of ordinary people in their everyday lives. A European is featured as neither the protagonist nor the butt of jokes for the simple reason that "Europeanism", the nascent identity in which to ground such a subject, is hardly present in public spheres of individual nation-states.

This brings us to the fourth key aspect of the current European order: its democratic deficit. United Europe remains the project of social elites rather than that of broader national constituencies. Due to the inescapable fact that the European Union is being established from the top down, it has yet to take full root among ordinary people. The European anthem, the flag, and the Euro banknotes are isolated bricks in the mental structure of the European identity; they still need ligatures to hold them together.

The enlarged EU, which lives on formal procedures, negotiation, and consensual compromise in the search of the common good, faces its most profound challenge: it must invent a new political design. Regardless of whether the future holds prospects for a confederate Europe or for a federation, a European democratic political culture must first be put in place and developed within member-states themselves. This is especially true in the post-communist countries where democracy barely entered its early adolescence. Democratic life in individual member-states is thus the main precondition for fostering the democratic habits on a transnational European level.

Unfortunately, a culture with trust, consent, and solidarity as the main ingredients in a common European life remains a long way off. From the vantage point of Eastern European experience, it is difficult to not see a Medusa of "traditional West" rearing its compromised head in a political ambition of some of the most prominent contemporary intellectuals, including Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida. The idea of a pragmatically justified KernEuropa that would lead the European Union with relative independence from the anguished and, no doubt, cumbersome process of decision-making by consensus in an enlarged EU, this idea gives a dangerous credence to perhaps inevitable, but emphatically non-democratic concept: Europe of two speeds, Europe of the first- and second-class citizens. I am afraid that this trend only reinforces the historical discrimination of the traditional West against the countries, languages, cultural traditions, and people in the "Wild East", les petit pays de merde, as some French diplomats are wont on saying.

The fact that, while Europe fidgeted, America finally intervened with military force in Bosnia and Kosovo (however late) complicates my personal dilemma all the more. My dilemma grows, in part, from the realization that many rejections of the American strategic dominion in Europe are permeated with an anti-American sentiment. It is this popular sentiment that has, after the end of the Cold War, replaced the structural source of fear that the Soviet Empire once represented. I would be blind, though, if I didn't recognize something else, too. The escalation of America's global military presence that began with the legitimate and internationally legal attack on Afghanistan and went on to occupy Iraq without broad international consensus, has meant a huge backward step for transatlantic and international relations. Conceived on spurious grounds if not outright straight-face lies, it drove a wedge in the Western alliance. In fact, the "coalition of the willing" might properly be called a "coalition of the deceived", as the supporting states were twisted into believing in the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The legacy of American ties to Europe, however, cannot be regarded in the contemporary context alone. A united and free Western Europe was, for Americans, the best form of security and peace. Over the course of the last hundred years, Europe produced two World Wars, was the key geographical and political stage of the third, the Cold War, and then failed to decisively intervene in the wars in its backyard, former Yugoslavia. Each of these conflicts prompted in turn an American engagement on the European continent.

After the Cold War, America gradually ceased being seen as the exclusive guardian of the old continent. Instead, it became a mirror that Europe uses to correct and improve its self-image. At the same time, American strategic interest in European affairs has declined and America has begun to shift its focus to the former Soviet Central Asia and the Arab peninsula. Later, America would be naively appalled when faced with the fact that most of the European countries refused to join the United States in its dangerous Iraqi adventure. The American Secretary of Defense's notorious division of countries according to the attitude toward the invasion of Iraq into "the Old Europe" and the "new Europe" had a twofold character. On the one hand, it reveals a policy of "divide and conquer" that benefits

America. On the other, it has functioned as a sobering statement that may one day work to Europe's benefit. The division clearly illustrated at least the following: first, the governments of post-communist countries who have been practically given an ultimatum as to the adoption of acquis communautaire, without the chance to actively participate in a debate in all but the very last stages of enlargement process, now demand the right to have a voice in the common European house. Second, these governments and their publics have not forgotten the Cold War. It was during this period that a culture of mutual trust and solidarity between the Western and Eastern Europe lived a miserable existence, to put it euphemistically.

In order for Europe to achieve solid legitimacy as a pluralistic "open society", it must therefore significantly enhance the culture of trust. The culture of trust presupposes a democratic frame defined by solidarity. As with many other underlying social concepts, however, Western and Eastern Europe differ in their concept of the basic social bond. In the modern Western world, the understanding of solidarity is pragmatic while in the East, the understanding of solidarity has been a moral one. Typical of the former is a concerted effort to join forces of all involved in order to attain a common goal which in turn reflects the common values and interests of participants. In the East, the prevailing belief is that solidarity is rooted in the imperative of unselfish assistance: the stronger offers to the weaker, even if the only reward is a feeling of moral satisfaction.

There is no doubt that institutionalized solidarity played a key role in contributing to the modernization of Greece, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal following their entry into the common European structures. Solidarity, alas, was since forced to yield to the demands of greater individual freedom and economic profits that have grown apace with global capitalism. The rebellion of the middle class against the continuation of guarantees for the social safety nets has been in Western Europe politically channeled into restrictions on the national budgets. The result? Solidarity, once the central pillar of social order, is now seen as a luxury which individual nations can, but are not obliged to, afford. It is no longer a crucial value. Instead, it has been pushed off to the sidelines.

Those, however, who reject the necessity of solidarity's handshake and prefer to swear by the hidden hand of the market, must remain blind to what shape would this hand assume should it be visible: a fist with a pointed middle finger. Until it becomes a mind-set of common belonging for people across European lands, without two-class discrimination among them, united Europe will remain what it is today: a noble dream.

The Nostalgia of Jon Stewart: The Looming Extinction of Journalism

James C. Smoot

In the last several years considerable attention has been paid to "fake news" comedy television programming both by journalists and academics. The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (TDS) has drawn the most attention with The New York Times seriously asking the question in 2008: "Is Jon Stewart the most trusted man in America?"[1] The comedian Stewart is taken seriously enough by broadcast journalists to have been awarded two Peabody Awards for broadcast journalistic excellence for presidential campaign coverage in 2000 and 2004. While Stewart insists that he is a comedian only remarking at the award's ceremony that one of the "legitimate" nominees such as 60 Minutes ought to investigate how a fake news program beat them out for the award (Warner 2007:23).

It is not exactly a secret that the boundary between news programming and entertainment programming became blurred decades ago with the advent of "infotainment" in local television news programming in the 1980s where soft, "human interest," stories or fluff began displacing hard news so that a story of a fatal apartment building fire could be juxtaposed with a story about a local baseball player's charity work. "Dumbing down" is a term used by elites for this process as if there were some earlier day where there was a distinct line between news and entertainment. This is a mirage. Television news was tainted by theatrics even in its "golden age."

Before The New York Times asked its question, the title of The Most Trusted Man in Television had been the legendary Walter Cronkite of CBS. Journalist John Nichols (2009) describes Cronkite as "the most serious of serious journalists". Cronkite was instrumental in shaping the new medium of television into its current form, image driven, reducing events without footage to sound bites as the logic of the new medium developed. In an obituary for Cronkite published in The Guardian, Harold Jackson (2009) wrote, "Television, as Marshall McLuhan shrewdly observed, itself became the message and Cronkite was one of those who failed to resist the trend." An obituary in The New York Times said that it wasn't Cronkite's admirable journalistic credentials that made him outstanding but rather his appearance and his journalistic props:

> Mr. Cronkite, who sat at a desk next to a typewriter in what at least seemed like a bustling newsroom, would fiddle with his earpiece, move his chair and glance down at his notes; he looked like a kindly newspaper editor interrupted in the middle of a big news day, busy, of course, but never too busy to explain the latest developments to out-of-town visitors. (Stanley 2009)

The operative word here is "seemed." While Cronkite did function as CBS News managing editor, his on-screen presentation was pure theater. Cronkite did not just report the news – he was the news. When Cronkite announced in a 1968 editorial segment that the Vietnam War was lost in the wake of the Tet Offensive, President Lyndon Johnson is reported to have said: "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America."[2] Over the years the format of news theater Cronkite and other's invented developed its logic to the point where the personalities, punditry, props, and theatrical form came to totally eclipse content in the bizarre world of 24-hour pseudo-events with dazzling computer graphics the feeds off of itself more than it feeds off the world on which it is supposed to be reporting. This "news" increasingly resembles Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, where the generation of representations or models of reality no longer have an origin, or referent in the world and this hyperreal simulation comes to substitute for reality itself.

Much of the discussion of Jon Stewart and "fake" parody news programming misses the point that the

television news was always fake, always staged. The claim made by Geoffrey Baym that fake news is a new form of journalism deserves some attention. The Daily Show can be better understood not as "fake news" but as an alternative journalism, one that uses satire to interrogate power, parody to critique contemporary news, and dialogue to enact a model of deliberative democracy (Baym 2005:261).

In this article I will critically analyze Baym's thesis. As much as I would like to trumpet the revolution led by Jon Stewart and fake news, Baym's thesis fails on key points. While TDS may indeed be an example of a new form of journalism, it suffers from the same ills that afflict the commodity form it mimics and legitimizes, perverting the news rather than subverting it. Habermas "Public Sphere" arises in this discussion continuously, and for obvious reasons. Debeljak describes the bourgeois public sphere as a "space for a continuous rational-critical debate" where public opinion is formed through discussion and access is guaranteed to all citizens (1998:81). The public sphere is a space between market and state where individuals can publically deliberate and form opinions that will become the basis for democratic action. Already built in to this is the problem of who constitutes a citizen, whose opinion is given the podium. This is the "gatekeeping" function about which more will be said later.

There are specific difficulties that fake news has in engaging in dialogue with power, much less interrogating it, most salient of which is Stewart only engages the simulacrum of power, not power itself. It is not so much an expansion of journalism, but rather a nostalgia for a journalism that never really was on the brink of its extinction. Finally, the laughter engendered by fake news satire and parody is far from the "ambivalent" carnival laughter Bakhtin describes -- a laughter that is regenerative as well as destructive (Bakhtin 1968). As satire, the parody masks a polemical subtext which makes TDS less fake news as it is anti news (i.e. it functions as the negation of the news).

Vukojebina

I wrote the article on Jon Stewart and fake news not having watched the program on Comedy Central's cable channel for more than eight years. Particularly when the Iraq war was in its nastiest days, I would watch it streaming from the Comedy Central website for some insane relief from insanity. The scholarly articles and some of the books were also obtained through digital transmission from outside Slovenia where I live. In early 2008 I participated in a symposium on art and politics at the faculty of social sciences in Ljubljana presenting this desperate political comedy to an audience who had absolutely no experience of it.

Not so long ago this just would not have been possible. Slovenia has one of the most rural populations in Europe, and its capital, Ljubljana isn't exactly a cultural Mecca, its inhabitants generally abandoning it at weekends. In eastern village where I live, urban culture is entirely absent. Yet I have become a devoted fan of shows like The Wire that I have never seen on television. In this ancient village house with inadequate heating and a shocking sewage disposal system (I flush directly into the creek) I have a 10 mbts broadband connection, a bizarre intrusion into Vukojebina.

That's what I call my house. Vukojebina loosely translates to "the middle of nowhere," but literally from Serbian it means "the place where the wolves fuck." Bucolic isolation in a mountain village of a few hundred, a place where the broadcast television appears to get two channels; the ski jumping channel and the bad Balkan music video channel. I badly needed rescue from the idiocy of rural life.

Up the digital pipe come the supermoveable cultural commodities of American urban culture. I have four computers in this tiny house all networked running Linux and several terabytes of media on hard disks. Inside this house it is all urban cosmopolitan, a digital bubble of American culture, while right outside these walls is rural Slovenia, an entirely alien place. Somewhere very near to where I sit right now is the boundary between the simulation and incomprehensible reality. Marshall McLuhan wrote made the observation that electronic media accelerated time and collapsed space. People aren't where they are any more, but always elsewhere. It definitely was not my to move here and live in a digital bubble of there, a situation has developed where I know more about what is going on in Los Angeles than in Ljubljana. Slovenia just doesn't produce enough accessible media for a foreigner to situate him or herself here, no English news services, few available literary translations, and very limited film and television production.

The crazy thing is that as a high school teacher I find it very easy to talk about this nether culture with my students, this disembodied American which exists in the online world. Young Slovenes are avid internet pirates, and they really have no choice as there are no legitimate ways of getting most films and television programs here. American cultural commodities are what is available. I use South Park and Family Guy cartoons in class to teach elements of satire, parody and narrative, programs that are only available through downloads.

Long ago I lived in Taiwan and from time to time I would go to the cinema to see American films. Leaving the cinema and walking back out into the noises, sights, and smells of a Chinese city always came as a shock. When I leave these little electronic bubbles here in Slovenia, I get the same shock except that the bubble is now the house.

So the perpetual question: where the hell am I? The postmodern dissolution of cultural, even geographic boundaries facilitated by internet communications definitely has advantages in bringing things that are distant intimately close. But at the same time it can make what is intimately close incredibly distant. Hence vukojebina, the inhabited no place.

Fake News

"The spectacle," writes Guy Debord (2002), "is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (p. 7). The primary target of TDS' satire is the hype and image pollution in the "news" from which TDS draws its raw material. Warner 2007 writes that The Daily Show uses culture jamming techniques derived from Debord and the Situationists, particularly détournement, a "turning" that displaces the expected with a subversive reversal. Perhaps the funniest and most effective segment of The Daily Show is the opening monologue/ bulletin segment where Stewart deconstructs the top stories from the 24-hour news cycle format. Parodying a news anchor Stewart sits at a desk while clips are shown on a screen over his right shoulder. But the selection of clips and Stewart's commentary on (or interaction with) these clips is incongruous. Frequently clips are ripped out of their original context and set against each other: the juxtaposition revealing the manipulative agenda of political branding strategies (Warner 2007). Another strategy is choosing from the video feeds clips that do not fit the cogent, eight-second sound bite format but rather reveal bad grammar, hesitation, contradiction and apparent confusion on the part of the speaker. Stewart often interrupts these clips to ask questions, which are then followed by another out-of-context clip that provides an answer. Simple juxtaposition of clips out of time, as in the Bush vs. Bush debate between 2000 Governor Bush and 2003 President Bush where Stewart plays the straight faced moderator while "the Bushes" contradict each other is a brilliant act of détournement, turning the image against itself to reveal hypocrisy.

Lauren Feldman argues that TDS was one of the few critical voices on television after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks while the news media marched in lockstep with the Bush administration into war in Iraq. Citing many journalistic sources, she states that it is possible that The Daily Show broke the Cheney-Halliburton story, where the Vice President's former company was given lucrative postwar contracts in a "no bid" tender (Feldman 2005). Actually breaking a story is a highly sought trophy in American journalism, but this claim needs to be scrutinized carefully. The fake news The Daily Show employs no reporters and is entirely parasitic on the "real" news for its information. Much of the March 25, 2003 episode was devoted to the Halliburton contract. In a faux suspense announcement of the winner of the contract, complete with drum roll, Stewart opens the envelope and finds Halliburton inside. Stewart simply adds up that Cheney was the CEO of the company until he became Vice President, he says "on the bright side I won my office pool, but hearing that makes me feel that the government has just taken a shit [bleeped out] on my chest."[3] While actual corruption is never explicitly stated, it is assumed in the comic horror to the announcement.

As fake news, argues Warner, Stewart can operate stealthily through his role as Socratic straight man: he is not bound by any code of journalistic ethics. According to Lukacs, journalistic professionalism is the "apogee" of capitalist reification as it is precisely the journalist's subjectivity itself that must be suppressed in order to present "the facts" (Lukacs [1921] 1971:100). The Halliburton story did not require any investigation as the facts were public knowledge. It took the will to do the math and state the conclusion, which The Daily Show achieved in a tragic-comic fashion. In March 2003 the major news media was still bedazzled by the war machine and the theater of war (pun intended). Only later would major news organizations such as the New York Times realize how thoroughly they had been duped by the Bush administration through "leaks" of false information regarding weapons of mass destruction and other rather fanciful fabrications of the "intelligence community."[4]

In this case the fake news, assuming a satirical voice, took the primary function of "real news" when the "real news" failed to state the obvious. Baym states, "Any notion of "fake" news depends upon an equal conception of "real." Fake news necessitates assumptions about some kind of authentic or legitimate set of news practices, ideals that one rarely hears articulated or necessarily sees as evident today" (Baym 2005:261). The Daily Show in its close parody of "real news" in form (it never deviates from established journalism in form) draws attention through its satire to the corruption of news practices, not to the broadcast news format itself. This is not détournement in the sense that DeBord had in mind. The purpose of détournement is the negation of culture, a violent subversion of the existing order (Debord 2002:114), which is clearly not what The Daily Show is doing.

Nothing on The Daily Show deals a structural critique to the broadcast news. Aaron McKain (2005) argues that TDS appropriations of news media forms may "…actually instill faith in the host, reifying conventional News as an "ideal or norm" (p. 416). While it may puncture and deflate aspects of the news as spectacle, such as the odious "stand up" shots where a news reporter reads a prepared script on the scene (e.g. in front of the White House), it does not deflate the news itself. The message appears to be one of reform rather than revolution that the news has become corrupted and needs to get back to its function of speaking the truth.

Perhaps the most serious criticism of news reporting both broadcast and print is editorial "gatekeeping," most clearly articulated by Noam Chomsky in his book Manufacturing Consent. The gatekeeping function filters the newsworthy from the not newsworthy, and how events will be reported and represented. As a parasite, The Daily Show is dependent on the news gatekeeping even when satirizing it (McKain 2005:418). It cannot add to the content or expand it in any way. Despite its scathing criticism of the news, the Daily Show's parody functions to legitimize the news and gatekeeping.

Dialogue and Monologue

Baym claims that The Daily Show is "dialogic in the Bakhtinian sense, playing of multiple voices against each other in a discursive exchange that forces the original statement into revealing contexts" (Baym 2005:266). In contrast to the mainstream news, where the sound bite and anchor's voice constitute a monologue, Stewart's perversion of the news anchor into the voice of the enraged citizen calls into question the legitimacy of the original, often through his catchphrase, "are you insane?" What is at issue is whether this dialogue is between two languages or is within a single, hermetic language(i.e., internally dialogized). In that case, according to Bakhtin (1981), the discourse can never be fundamental: "It is merely a game, a tempest in a teapot" (p. 325). Polemic is the sort of discourse produced by this game.

The second sort of dialogue is basically trivial, but Bakhtin's conception of dialogue is directly relevent to the gatekeeping function discussed in the previous section. For Bakhtin (1981) languages are stratified socio-ideologically both in what we would call dialects as well as jargons, so at any given moment a language is heteroglossic (p. 271). A single person can speak many "languages" in this sense, but they don't necessarily engage in dialogue with each other even though they may embody conflicting ideological systems. Bahktin gives examples including the "worlds" of prayer, song, labor, everyday life, and the world of the authorities (ibid 296). Potential conversations between languages can only occur in a zone of dialogic contact (ibid 45).

The close parody of The Daily Show is dual voiced and dialogic as is all parody since the words used have a second, critical set of meanings that usually operate beneath the surface, for instance in the gross exaggeration of the star reporter played by Steven Colbert. The perversion of journalistic discourse to unacceptable levels does unmask the untruth in the original, turns it into a image in Bakhtin's terms, but it does not subvert journalistic discourse itself. The second voice in the parody dialogue speaks the same language of the first. So The Daily Show parody masks a potent polemic uttered sotto voce. The dialogue between the pompous language of the news either through fake reporters or through video clips is the standard straight man – comic routine of Abbot and Costello applied to news. Stewart, the host and man behind the desk, plays the straight man acting with the voice of the outraged citizen.

It is in this sense that Stewart interrogates power, as straight man to comic. A standard routine is Stewart interacting with carefully edited video clips of powerful figures such as President George Bush. Stewart reacts and asks questions then another clip is played in answer. The out of context video clips and Stewart's "dialogue" with them reveals their vacuous rhetorical strategies of deception and misdirection -- and is very effective. It is hard to see how having the simulacrum of George Bush playing the bumbling laugh getter to Stewart's devious Abbot is any real engagement of power. It is the image of power, not power itself that is being interrogated. What's more is that as the parasite, it is image of the image of power converted into yet another image through parody. One can further extend the procession of these images to the television screen on which the viewer watches The Daily Show.

While powerful political figures such as John McCain have appeared as guests for the interview segment on the show, they are seldom "interrogated." The fact that Stewart does not grill his interviewees raised vocal criticism from Tucker Carlson, the co-host of CNN's debate program Crossfire. While the interview segment takes the form of the late night talk show, such as Letterman, the interviews are seldom mere fluff. "In pace of reductionist polemics, Stewart's politically oriented interviews pursue thoughtful discussion of national problems. The goal of the

discussion is not the tearing down of the "other" side (although Stewart never hides his own political preferences) or some banal prediction of the shape of things to come, but rather an effort to gain greater understanding of national problems and their potential solutions" (Baym 2005: 271). Often these interviews segments become news themselves as when Senator John Edwards announced his candidacy for president on the show. These interviews on a fake news program have in turn created many news stories for the "real" news, but comedians can also create pseudo-events (McKain gives the example of the Dean scream) that are re-remediated into news. In this sense the news is parasitic on fake news (or other comedy programs) for stories.

Laughter

The Daily Show is funny, often achingly so. As political satire, it has no equal in contemporary America. The show runs four nights a week, and as a parasite on the news, writing the evening's script is a feverish process beginning early in the morning with a review of media from the previous day. According to Jon Stewart, the writers are looking for "those types of stories that can, almost like the guy in The Green Mile — the Stephen King story and film in which a character has the apparent ability to heal others by drawing out their ailments and pain — "suck in all the toxins and allow you to do something with it that is palatable" (Kakutani 2008). Like in real news rooms deadlines can be ferocious with the shows complex graphics often being finished shortly before taping (Hanas 2008). Making the tragic comic requires sensitivity and dexterity, using plays on words, "Mess 'O Potamia" for the Iraq war, and "Indecision 2000, 2004, 2008 and so forth" for the political campaign coverage.

Stewart's quote in the above paragraph suggests he sees the show as having a palliative or healing role. Justine Suchard (2008), using Adorno, argues Stewart employs "critical laughter" seeing The Daily Show as being critically effective in the post 9/11 Iraq war moment. Employing Adorno, the gloomiest of theorists, to make an argument for critical laughter may seem a stretch, particularly embodied in a culture industry commodity such as The Daily Show. In Dialectic of the Enlightenment, Adorno and Horkheimer, accuse the culture industry of making "laughter the instrument of the fraud practiced on happiness" (Adorno and Horkheimer [1944]1997:140). Yet she argues that there is a "serious laughter" that comes in the form of irony. Unlike parody, which Adorno found as a form of domination, irony is "a form of self critique that expresses the inexpressible without diminishing it" (quoted in Schuchard 2008:6). In Minima Moralia Adorno writes: "Irony convicts its object by presenting it as what it purports to be; and without passing judgement, as if leaving a blank for the observing subject, measures it against its being-in-itself. It shows up the negative by confronting the positive with its own claim to positivity. It cancels itself out the moment it adds a word of interpretation. In this it presupposes the idea of self-evident, originally of social resonance" (Adorno 2005:210). Irony only works when it is not interpreted but recognized, something Stewart does through careful placement of out of context clips. Yet there is another caveat Adorno makes, "He who has laughter on his side needs no proof" (ibid). In the post 9/11 climate The Daily Show manages to critique the uncritical media consensus by showing it, perhaps as Stewart says by providing catharsis, a release of tension, that kind of laughter that "occurs when some fear passes" (Adorno and Horkeimer [1944] 1997 ibid). "Conciliatory laughter is heard as the echo of an escape from power; the wrong kind overcomes fear by capitulating to the forces which are to be feared" (ibid). It's arguable that the TDS comedy engenders the first kind of laughter, but this is a desperate laughter of escape, not fighting, fearless laughter.

Another defense of laughter as the critical force of The Daily Show comes from Warner. Citing Bakhtin, he states, "If we can laugh at it, we can examine it, evaluate it, even critique it. Laughter has the power to disrupt any analytical paralysis engendered by fear" (Warner 2007:33). If anyone is the great proponent of the liberating power of laughter it is Mikhail Bakhtin. His book Rabelais and His World is not just about carnival laughter as fun (actually the word "fun" doesn't even appear in the book) but that it has revolutionary power to remake the world. In the earlier section I discussed Bakhtin's ideas on heteroglossia and how the dialogue in The Daily- Show doesn't quite register in the zone of dialogic contact because the dialogue has the form of a polemic, the dual voice of the parody is within the language of journalism rather than between languages. Similarly, Bakhtin's liberating laughter is not the sort of laughter engendered by The Daily Show.

Both parody and irony, the comic forms discussed in this paper, depend on context for their comic effect. It is well know that British comedy television programs do not cross the Atlantic with the cultural baggage that would make them comic to Americans. The comedy The Office was rewritten for American audiences as showing

the original was a flop. Comedies heading east across the Atlantic find their baggage already there as a result of the hegemonic power of the American culture industry. Bakhtin in his work on Rabelais suggests that the key to understanding works whose authors intended to be comic has been lost. Old Testament scholar Thomas Thompson argues that The Book of Job can be best understood as an ancient satire on piety, an idea that would prompt enraged protest from many modern Christians and Jews (Thompson 1999). Moreover, the nature of laughter has changed from collective ambivalence of positive and negative forces to just the negative. Central to Bakhtin's understanding of medieval laughter is the concept of the "carnivalesque." While the hedonistic festival of Carnival has persisted to current times, Bakhtin (1968) writes that these are just "the best preserved fragments of an immense, infinitely rich world" (p. 218). Carnival laughter was not in any sense theatrical. "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it" (ibid 7). It is the fusion of subject and object. Carnival is not something you watch; it is something you are inside of subject to its own laws of freedom and "outside of all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity." It is immediate, sensual, and above all physical (ibid 255).

Parody and travesty in medieval Europe that mocked the liturgy, the mass, and other sacred rituals, yet were at least tolerated, in some cases actually written by ecclesiastical authorities. These parodies did degrade the sacred, but they also had a regenerative function, destruction followed by rebirth. The grotesque realism employed by Rabelais emphasizes the lower stratum of the body, defecation, copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth (ibid 21). This positive aspect, or the key to it, is lost during the Enlightenment according to Bakhtin. Laughter becomes private, individual, trivial and only destructive losing it universal liberating power. "The satirist whose laughter is negative places himself above the object of his mockery, he is opposed to it" (ibid 12). The corrupt, dominating laughter described by Adorno in The Dialectic of the Enlightenment is not laughter at all to Bakhtin, but rhetoric, a laughter that does not laugh. True laughter for Bakhtin is laughing with, not laughing at.

It is very difficult to successfully deploy Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque to The Daily Show. Besides the destructive, polemical intent of its parodies, it is a nonparticipatory spectacle, a commodity one consumes rather than becoming one of its creators. It is the rhetorical negation of the news despite offering itself up as the hysterical voice of reason. While Stewart routinely transgresses news practices in order to point out its failure to function as a source of information, he seldom transgresses the boundaries of "good taste" beyond the occasional expletive and innuendo. The grotesque is absent, as is the regenerative power of laughter, which would be truly subversive.

The Nostalgia of Jon Stewart

Carnivalesque revolutionary anarchy is not the aim of The Daily Show. I believe it when he insists he is not a journalist, nor is he attempting to create a new hybrid form of journalism. His on-screen persona of the everyman trying to make sense of the gibberish that constitutes political news is an attempt to enact what the citizen should be in deliberative democracy, skeptical, critical, attentive, and interested in rational discussion. His affected disbelief and bewilderment isn't just for laughs; it is also a demonstration of how a citizen should react to the news media spectacle. In other words, Jon Stewart is not the star of the spectacle, but, like the rest of us, one of its victims.

His assumption of vox populi is most clear on his 2004 appearance on CNN's debate program Crossfire already mentioned above. Crossfire is the epitome of the split-screen shouting matches that are called debate programs, and a frequent target of Stewart's on-screen ire. Stewart's appearance on Crossfire, and his masterful performance reveals a lot of what The Daily Show does, and what Stewart's real agenda is. Crossfire was canceled a few months after Stewart's appearance, and the president of CNN cited Stewart's criticism as one of the reasons for its cancellation, once again the fake news influencing the real news.

After a bit of obligatory banter, Stewart maneuvers the rhetorical situation to being about Crossfire and its hosts rather than about himself. He says he made a special effort to come and tell them that the show is not so much bad, but is hurting America.[5] He ask them to stop, then pleads, "stop, stop, stop hurting America." Beluga and Carlson struggle to regain the initiative, but then Stewart pleads with them to "come work for us, because we, as the people..." At which point Carlson interrupts with an attempt at humor? "How much do you pay?" Carlson has blundered into a trap as the joke puts him outside the people legitimating Stewart's assumption of vox populi. He continues in this voice, "we need your help. Right now you are helping the politicians and the corporations. And we're left out there

to mow our lawns."

Carlson and Beluga are masters of controlling the conversation, guiding it into the format "debate" path, but Stewart refuses to rise to the bait, responding to an accusation that he soft balled Democratic Presidential nominee John Kerry on his show, Stewart answers "I also gave him a backrub." Stewart will not play the game and even refuses to be funny when Carlson chides him for being so serious saying "I'm not going to be your monkey." Responding to Belgala's assertion that Crossfire is a debate show, Stewart responds that it is "like pro-wrestling is a show about athletic competition." It's not debate, but theater. "If your idea of confronting me is that I don't ask hard-hitting enough questions, we're in bad shape fellows." And later, "You're on CNN. The show that leads into me is puppets making prank phone calls. What's wrong with you?" Constantly keeping Begala and Carlson on the back foot, Stewart throws his sharpest barb, "you have a responsibility to the public discourse, and you fail miserably."

Stewart's claims to be just a comedian are disingenuous for all the reasons noted above, but even though the boundaries between comedy and news are long gone, technically they are still there. This technicality enables Stewart to be the outsider, the excluded public in the rhetorical situation he successfully hijacks. The role assumed is that of the gadfly, the pest, insisting that real journalists do their jobs and reinstall the boundaries between news and entertainment.

It is clear from this interview that Jon Stewart is in no sense a revolutionary. His agenda is reform; moreover, it is a return to the "golden age" of journalism. This is very clear in his book, America (The Book): A Citizen's Guide to Democracy Inaction. The chapter on the media begins thus:

> A free and independent press is essential to the health of a functioning democracy. It serves to inform the voting public of matters essential to its well-being. Why they've stopped doing that is a mystery. I mean, 300 camera crews outside the courthouse to see what Kobe Bryant is wearing when the judge sets his hearing date, while false information used to send our country to war goes unchecked? What the fuck happened? (Stewart 2004:133)

Despite the expletives and levity, this is a statement of longing, of nostalgia for the golden age of the republic, when journalism was journalism and not theater.

In the introduction to this paper I discussed Walter Cronkite and the golden age of television news. It was theater then. Anyone who believes that newspapers were immune to the disease of the spectacle should watch Howard Hawks 1940 screwball comedy, His Girl Friday. Competition to sell papers was fierce and reporters and editors resorted to all sorts of skullduggery. Robert Love, writing in The Columbia Journalism Review, points out that fake news has been with us at least since the eighth century. With the advent of mass media in the late nineteenth century, fakery was so commonplace that a taxonomy of fakers' techniques was compiled in 1903 (Love 2007:34). Love reminds us that even then, media was big money dominated by huge corporations like Hearst and Pulitzer the influence of which was enough (in Hearst's case) to push the United States into war with Spain with the slogan, "Remember the Maine!"[6] Even the great doyen of early 20th Century American journalism, H.L. Mencken wrote hoax stories passed off as true. Love (2007) writes that hoaxers are historically not comedians, but journalists who write "entertaining stuff that sounds vaguely true, even though it's not, for editors who are usually in on the joke" (p. 36). According to Love, hoaxing infected newsrooms of the day with possibly thousands of hoax stories passed off as the real thing in the period. A hoax differs from a prank when the fakery is not revealed; that is to say, hoaxes are only funny to people in on the joke who laugh derisively when the rubes (readers) fall for it. The contempt that journalists have for their readers is readily apparent to anyone who has ever worked in a newsroom. Recent forgery scandals at The New York Times and The New Republic where journalists entirely fabricated prize winning stories, indicate the persistence of fakery even in the most august of news organizations. The ease that fakes can be passed off as real is indicated by the satirical newspaper, The Onion, still finds its fake copy picked up as the real thing by newspapers around the world.[7]

Nostalgia is widely and rightly criticized for being reactionary and escapist, a turn away from action. Clearly this is not the intention of Stewart's employment of the mythical Republic. To a certain extent nostalgia has been rehabilitated, particularly in post-colonial research as a "necessary resource for those who find their political and social aspirations obliterated by monolithic versions of modernity" (Bonnet 2006:24). This politics of loss plays a key role in Situationist thought. The first thesis from The Society of the Spectacle states: In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has receded into representation" (Debord 2002). The Situationists set out to reclaim real life from its spectacular obliteration; hence, in order to go forward to the revolution, what has been lost is evoked. The utopian past of deliberative democracy Stewart employs is the vision of the yet to come utopian future.

The End of Journalism

One blatantly obvious reason why Baym's thesis that The Daily Show is a new form of journalism fails is Stewart's repeated denials of being a journalist, and his insistence that journalists go back to journalism instead of producing spectacles. While it is the case that the fake news The Daily Show is substantively equivalent to network news broadcasts (Fox, Koloen and Sahin 2007), (i.e., the fake news is equally informative to real news) its parasitic nature prevents it from being more informative. Without real reporters, people who are paid to go out into the grubby real world and ask questions, it can never be more than it is, an attempt at détournement in which it also fails.

From Marshall McLuhan to Douglas Rushkoff, visionaries have seen the potential in electronic media to enhance and achieve deliberative democracy. The current rage over the Internet, social networking sites, "smartphones" that can record audio and video then upload it to the internet has bubbled over into the "old" media where Twitter gossip can form the basis for an entire cycle of 24-hour news spectacle. It is already been noted that The Daily Show re-remediates the gatekeeping of the real news, but participatory model of the "new media" promises to eliminate gatekeeping altogether and enact a true public sphere. A small study of Internet based political groups by Victor Prickard finds their effectiveness and genuine novelty to be at best limited to grass roots organizing for particular issues, rather than discussion which it fragments. He also warns that internet service providers frequently block content and protocols (e.g., Bittorrent) which increasingly limit both the content and the structure of internet models of deliberative democracy. He also finds that "corporate interests increasingly dominate multiple layers of the internet" (Pickard 2008:628).

This vision fails for several reasons, most salient being that it intensifies the spectacle rather than weakening it by taking the spectacle as its source. First, the new media is parasitic on the old media as is The Daily Show. The problem is that the host, the old media, already ill from other causes appears to be in terminal decline from this parasitic infection. In an article entitled, "Does the News Matter To Anyone Anymore?" veteran newspaperman and creator of the television series, The Wire, writes that newsroom staff cuts on The Baltimore Sun mean that the city isn't covered any more. "So in a city where half the adult black males are unemployed, where the unions have been busted, and crime and poverty have overwhelmed one neighborhood after the next, the daily newspaper no longer maintains a poverty beat or a labor beat" (Simon 2008). Other beats, the prison system, even the courthouse remain uncovered, that is to say unmonitored. Already ill because of their careless management, the loss of advertising revenue to the Internet has caused American newspapers to strip their newsrooms even more of the most experienced reporters (the best paid are the first cut) or, shutting down entirely as in the cases of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer and Denver's Rocky Mountain News in 2009. Even The New York Times had to mortgage its Manhattan headquarters building to meet operating costs. If the old media functions poorly and undemocratically through its gatekeeping function, they do pay people to go out into the world and at least try to figure reality out. The new media depends on the old for its facts, and once it is gone, the new media will be bereft of any independent sources of information about the world; it will no longer have any referent. The interactive spectacle will float as pure simulation, the triumph of the object in Baudrillard's (2008) terms.

Another reason why The Daily Show and the new media fail to inflate the public sphere is the phenomenon known as "preaching to the choir." The multiplicity of choices and niche marketing has created a "forum" for every political taste and ideology no matter how crackpot. These are ghettoes of sameness Zigmunt Bauman (2000) describes in the "purified" residential developments in Europe and the United States. While there may be disagreement in these "forums," generally everyone shares the same viewpoint. In newsgroup jargon, someone who enters a thread with the purpose of interjecting an alien point of view is known as a "troll." Boundaries are maintained. The Roman Forum was a physical, crowded marketplace, of immediate physical contact of the type Bakhtin describes as essential for realized freedom. Roman magistrates were given lictors, men armed with clubs, to defend the magistrate and clear the way. In Bakhtin's terms the Forum was a zone of contact, a place of polyglossia where many languages crossed and had to come to terms with each other. The Public Sphere only can function if everyone must listen. There can't be Public Spheres. Deliberative democracy a la Habermas requires a society wide discussion.

Conclusion

Advertising critic Thomas Frank in his book The Conquest of Cool shows how easily protest and rebellion can

be commodified and turned against their original intentions. The success of The Daily Show not so much due to being fake news, which it isn't, but rather as being anti-news, and ever so cool. With a rating of two million viewers in 2008, nearly equal to its real news competition, Comedy Central makes a considerable amount of revenue for this popular show. Already real news organizations are borrowing tactics from The Daily Show (Smolkin 2007), so it's conceivable the "real" news can adopt "fake" news tactics and become fake-fake. Parody, as Adorno notes, is hierarchical and can be deployed by anyone, for liberation or domination. Debord avoided parody as a tool of détournement as it maintains rather than unsettling the audience's hold on truth (Harold:192,204). The Daily Show is a commodity in the market, and successful commodities breed imitations. In this sense, freeing parody into news can actually make things worse.

Finally, returning to the Crossfire interview, John Stewart's attack, "Right now you are helping the politicians and the corporations," has the whiff of hypocrisy about it. The Daily Show makes a lot of money for Comedy Central which makes a lot of money for its parent company Viacom whose total revenue for 2009 was reported at $3.32 billion.[8] John Stewart too is helping the corporations. Viacom is one of the six giant media corporations that dominate the old media and increasingly the new as well. Viacom also has news operations, and formerly owned CBS. Crossfire runs on CNN owned by the behemoth, Time Warner. So the interview was between two commodities of rival corporations, corporations that were rumored to be in merger negotiations at the end of 2009. As far as fake news and theater go, this was sublime. Rather than escaping the simulation, this is an even higher form of it. Belgala, Colson, and Stewart were present because it suited the interest of actual power, Time Warner and Viacom. Power was not interrogated or present in any visible form other than logos.

It would seem that Stewart, with his assumption of the mantle, "we the people," is playing to the question I began this essay with, "Is Jon Stewart the most Trusted Man in America?" Like Walter Cronkite, he affects to be one of us, our representative, a proxy for the public who speaks for us. He's not. Even in parody there is a truth claim, one that is immediately falsified by the spectacle itself. Cronkite used to close his CBS news broadcast with the statement, "And that's the way it is." The most trusted man in America could get away with such pretention, so should Stewart close The Daily Show with "and that's the way it isn't?"

Endnotes

1. Michiko Kakutani, "Is Jon Stewart the Most Trusted Man in America?" The New York Times, 15 August 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/arts/television/17kaku.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

2. Review of Walter Cronkite's memoir, A Reporter's Life,. "Broadcast News," http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/01/26/reviews/970126.26wickert.html?_r=1. Retrieved 29 Jan. 2010

3. March 25, 2003. "Halliburton Wins." http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/tue-march-25-2003/halliburton-wins

4. For a reasonably complete account, see Rajiv Chandrasekaran's Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Baghdad's Green Zone, 2006, Bloomsbury Publishing, London.

5. Transcript from CNN. http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0410/15/cf.01.html

6. The Maine was a US battleship that mysteriously exploded in Havana harbor 15 February 1898 sinking the ship and killing hundreds of sailors. The forward magazines exploded, but the cause of this explosion has never been determined. Hearst's papers developed a lurid story that a Spanish mine sank the ship to keep the US out of Cuba. Herst offered a $50,000 reward "For the Detection of the Perpetrator of the Maine Outrage!"

7. In 2009 two newspapers in Bangladesh picked up an Onion that revealed the Apollo Moon landings were faked.

8. Claire Atkinson -- Broadcasting & Cable, 11/3/2009. Retrieved 31 Jan 2010. http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/367362-Viacom_Q3_Ad_Revenue_Falls_4_Decline_Slowing.php

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Howard Zinn: A Public Intellectual Who Mattered

Henry A. Giroux

In 1977 I took my first job in higher education at Boston University. One reason I went there was because Howard Zinn was teaching at Boston University at the time. As a high school teacher, Howard's book, Vietnam: the Logic of Withdrawal, published in 1968, had a profound effect on me. Not only was it infused with a passion and sense of commitment that I admired as a high school teacher and tried to internalize as part of my own pedagogy, but it captured something about the passion, sense of commitment, and respect for solidarity that came out of Howard's working-class background. It offered me a language, history, and politics that allowed me to engage critically and articulate my opposition to the war that was raging at the time. I grew up in Providence, RI and rarely met or read any working class intellectuals. After reading James Baldwin, hearing William Kunstler and Stanley Aronowitz give talks, I caught a glimpse of what it meant to occupy such a fragile, contradictory, and often scorned location. But reading Howard gave me the theoretical tools to understand more clearly how the mix of biography, cultural capital, and class location could be finely honed into a viable and laudable politics.

Later as I got to know Howard personally, I was able to fill in the details about his working-class background and his intellectual development. We had grown up in similar neighborhoods, shared a similar cultural capital, and we both probably learned more from the streets than we had ever learned in formal schooling. There was something about Howard's fearlessness, his courage, his willingness to risk not just his academic position, but also his life that marked him as special–untainted by the often corrupting privileges of class entitlement.

Before I arrived in Boston to begin teaching at Boston University, Howard was a mythic figure for me and I was anxious to meet him in real life. How I first encountered him was perfectly suited to the myth. While walking to my first class, as I was nearing the university, filled with the trepidation of teaching a classroom of students, I caught my fist glimpse of Howard. He was standing on a box with a bullhorn in front of the Martin Luther King memorial giving a talk calling for opposition and resistance to the Vietnam War. The image so perfectly matched my own understanding of Howard that I remember thinking to myself "that this has to be the perfect introduction to such a heroic figure." Soon afterwards, I wrote him a note and rather sheepishly asked if we could meet. He got back to me in a day: we went out to lunch soon afterwards, and a friendship developed that lasted over thirty years. While teaching at Boston University, I often accompanied Howard when he went to high schools to talk about his published work or his plays. I sat in on many of his lectures and even taught one of his graduate courses. He loved talking to students and they were equally attracted to him. His pedagogy was dynamic, directive, focused, laced with humor, and always open to dialogue and interpretation. He was a magnificent teacher, who shredded all notions of the classroom as a place that was as uninteresting as it was often irrelevant to larger social concerns. He urged his students not just to learn from history but to use it as a resource to sharpen their intellectual prowess and horn their civic responsibilities. Howard refused to separate what he taught in the university classroom or any forum for that matter from the most important problems and issues facing the larger society. But he never demanded that students follow his own actions; he simply provided a model of what a combination of what knowledge, teaching, social commitment meant. Central to Howard's pedagogy was the belief that teaching students how to be critical or understand a text or any other form of knowledge was not enough. They also had to engage such knowledge as part of a broader engagement with matters of civic agency and social responsibility. How they did that was up to them, but most importantly they had to

link what they learned to a self-reflective understanding of their own responsibility as engaged individuals and social actors. He offered students a range of options: he wasn't interested in molding students in the manner of Pygmalion, but in giving them the widest possible set of choices and knowledge necessary for them to view what they learned as an act of freedom and empowerment. There is a certain poetry in his pedagogical style and scholarship, and it is captured in his belief that one can take a position without standing still. He captures this sentiment well in a comment he made in his autobiography, You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train. He writes: "From the start, my teaching was infused with my own history. I would try to be fair to other points of view, but I wanted more than 'objectivity'; I wanted students to leave my classes not just better informed, but more prepared to relinquish the safety of silence, more prepared to speak up, to act against injustice wherever they saw it. This, of course, was a recipe for trouble." In fact, Howard was under constant attack by Silber at Boston University because of his scholarship and teaching. One expression of that attack took the form of freezing Howard's salary for years.

Howard loved watching independent and Hollywood films, and he and I and Roz saw many films together while I was in Boston. I remember how we quarreled over Last Tango in Paris. I loved the film but he disagreed. But Howard disagreed in a way that was persuasive and instructive. He listened, stood his ground, and if he was wrong often said something like, "okay, you got a point," always accompanied by that broad and wonderful smile. What was so moving and unmistakable about Howard was his humility; his willingness to listen; his refusal of all orthodoxies; and his sense of respect for others. I remember once when he was leading a faculty strike at BU in the late 1970s, and I mentioned to him that too few people had shown up. He looked at me and made it very clear that what should be acknowledged is that some people did show up and that was a beginning. He rightly put me in my place that day–a lesson I never forgot. Howard was no soppy optimist, but someone who believed that human beings, in the face of injustice and with the necessary knowledge, were willing to resist, organize, and collectively struggle. Howard lead the committee organized to fight my firing by John Silber, the then President of Boston University. We lost that battle but Howard was a source of deep comfort and friendship for me during a time when I had given up hope. I later learned that John Silber, the notorious right-wing enemy of Howard and anyone else on the Left, had included me on a top-ten list of blacklisted academics at BU. Hearing that I shared that list with Howard was a proud moment for me. But Howard occupied a special place in Silber's list of enemies, and he once falsely accused Zinn of arson, a charge he was later forced to retract once the charge was leaked to the press.

Howard was one of the few intellectuals I have met who took education seriously. He embraced it as both necessary for creating an informed citizenry, and because he rightly felt it was crucial to the very nature of politics and human dignity. He was a deeply committed scholar and intellectual for whom the line between politics and life, teaching and civic commitment collapsed into each other. Howard never allowed himself to be seduced either by threats, the seductions of fame, or the need to tone down his position for the standard bearers of the new illiteracy that now populate the mainstream media. As an intellectual for the public, he was a model of dignity, engagement, and civic commitment. He believed that addressing human suffering and social issues mattered, and he never flinched from that belief. His commitment to justice and the voices of those expunged from the official narratives of power are evident in such works as his monumental and best-know book, A People's History of the United States, but it was also evident in many of his other works, talks, interviews, and the wide scope of public interventions that marked his long and productive life. Howard provided a model of what it meant to be an engaged scholar who was deeply committed to sustaining public values and a civic life in ways that linked theory, history, and politics to the everyday needs and language that informed everyday life. He never hid behind a fire wall of jargon, refused to substitute irony for civic courage, and disdained the assumption that working class and oppressed people were incapable of governing themselves. Unlike so many public relations intellectuals today, I never heard him interview himself while talking to others. Everything he talked about often pointed to larger social issues, and all the while, he completely rejected any vestige of political and moral purity. His lack of rigidity coupled with his warmness and humor often threw people off, especially those on the left and right who seem to pride themselves on their often zombie-like stoicism. But then again, Howard was not a child of privilege. He had a working-class sensibility, though hardly romanticized, and sympathy for the less privileged in society along with those whose voices had been kept out of the official narratives (as well as a deeply felt commitment to solidarity, justice, dialogue, and hope). And it was precisely this great sense of dignity and generosity in his politics and life that often moved people who shared his company privately or publicly. A few days before his death, he sent me an email commenting on something I had written for Truthout about zombie politics. (It astonishes me that this will have been the last correspondence. Even at my age, the encouragement and support of this man, this towering figure in my life, meant such a great deal.) His response captures something so enduring and moving about his spirit. He wrote: "Henry, we are in a situation where mild

rebuke, even critiques we consider 'radical' are not sufficient. (Frederick Douglass' speech on the Fourth of July in 1852, thunderously angry, comes close to what is needed). Raising the temperature of our language, our indignation, is what you are doing and what is needed. I recall that Sartre, close to death, was asked: 'What do you regret?' He answered: 'I wasn't radical enough.'" I suspect that Howard would have said the same thing about himself. And maybe no one can ever be radical enough, but Howard came close to that ideal in his work, life, and politics. Howard's death is especially poignant for me because I think the formative culture that produced intellectuals like him is gone. He leaves an enormous gap in the lives of many thousands of people who knew him and were touched by the reality of the embodied and deeply felt politics he offered to all of us. I will miss him, his emails, his work, his smile, and his endearing presence. Of course, he would frown on such a sentiment and with a smile would more than likely say, "do more than mourn, organize." Of course, he would be right, but maybe we can do both.

Making Cents: Life Below the Bottom Rung

Caoimhghin Ó Croidheáin

A new series of oil paintings examining the daily existence of people making a living in the worst working conditions in the global economy.

"Nations are not communities and never have been. The history of any country, presented as the history of a family, conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex. And in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people, as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners."

— Howard Zinn A People's History of the United States

While reading the International Herald Tribune I came across an article entitled 'Deal Near for Global Pact on Ship Recycling' (May 15, 2009). The article notes that '[t]he dismantling of ships, so that their steel and other materials can be sold as scrap, is often done on or near beaches in poor countries, notably India and Bangladesh. Both nations have pledged to improve working conditions and environmental practices. But labor advocates contend that the process still kills and maims many workers each year and results in the contamination of shorelines with asbestos, oily waste, toxic paint, and other dangerous materials.' It struck me that it is rare to see images of people in such working conditions depicted in paintings.

Following Sartre's dictum that 'to reveal is to change' I decided to make a painting that would in a sense 'reveal' this type of work to those like myself who had never come across it before. Like many bad situations they continue without change for a long time because of a lack of awareness of their existence by many who often benefit directly or indirectly from them. I looked at other situations where people worked in very bad and sometimes even horrific working conditions (such as recycling in dumps where children have been buried in the process). I talked about this to friends who told me of other situations (such as sulphur workers in Indonesia who carry 70 - 100Kg's on their backs for 2-3hrs to make $1 causing at the same time burnt skin and lungs).

The globalization of the world economy has allowed for extremes of exploitation of workers in poor countries. This exploitation is 'hidden' behind advertising and aesthetically designed products. Looking at the people behind the products reminds us that our lifestyle has its negative side too.

An excellent book on this subject is Planet of Slums by Mike Davis published by Verso (2006).