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New Television and Media?

Vicki Mayer
Editor

As incoming editor, I have the fortunate opportunity to begin 2011 with a chance to define the journal, outline the contours of its scholarly influences, highlight the future trends, rally the troops, and so on. It's been said before.

That is, a decade ago, my predecessor and founder of the journal, Toby Miller, foreshadowed the death of television (or at least its transformation), the birth of television studies (or at least its recognition as a legitimate field of inquiry), and the need to critically study anything that might be considered "new." I remember that moment. I had just finished my doctorate. I had been lurking around several different professional associations, mostly based in the United States, including the International Communication Association, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, the American Anthropological Association, the American Sociological Association, and the then–Society for Cinema Studies, looking for people who studied popular forms of media.[1] Sometimes I found a media studies panel, one in a sea of panels examining more traditional, disciplinary concerns. At that time, I was also hard-pressed to find a venue publishing articles on youth fan cultures, on copyright law and policy, or on the emergence of this crazy little format we now generalize as "reality TV." Luckily, there were some spaces for me to enter into broader conversations. Console-ing Passions—the international conference on feminism, television, video, and all media not-film—was reliably friendly to my work. Their book series, edited by Lynn Spigel and published by Duke University Press, promised an in-road for publishing. Our Media/Nuestros Medios, coordinated by many but invented by Clemencia Rodriguez, John Downing, and Nick Couldry, was another space for dialogue among alternative media scholars and media activists across the Americas and Europe. Started in the same year as this journal, the network imagined innovative strategies for connecting media research with television and new media practices. Through them, I also got to know the International Association of Mass Communication Researchers and the Brazilian communication association Intercom. With *Television & New Media*, however, there seemed to finally be a place where a wide variety of media scholarship could be found and would flourish.

Cut to the present. Despite continuous threats to academe, the widespread marketization of education, and the conglomeration of academic presses, including journals, television and new media studies is now established. Indeed, some of these negative trends may have inadvertently benefited these fields of study. As universities compete to be marketable, relevant, both "hot" and "cool" in student jargons, media studies has

been relatively insulated compared to some of the disciplines it draws on, especially when the field gets yoked to creative industry needs.[2] The number of conferences has multiplied, as have the publications, journals, and blogs founded by their attendees. The revised aims and scope of the journal point to the plural directions for studying media critically, historically, ethnographically, geographically, and textually, with attention to political economies, subjectivities, and technologies.

Meanwhile, television—the named medium in the title—is still and always in crisis. Some of what we put under the heading "new media" is at least thirty years old. It's with no doubt irony that commentators on television and new media frequently invoke residual terms in the names of their forums, such as flow, antenna, and signals, not to mention screen, frame, box, and console. The durability of these terms, despite their adaptations and transformations, suggests the endurance of the scholarly concerns that motivated television studies. It is still true, to wit,

> Television studies' abiding preoccupation is to question power and subjectivity in terms of access to the means of communication and representation. This questioning recurs across sites, albeit with due regard to the specificity of different media and their social uptake—the occasionality of culture. (Miller 2000, 3)

To this succinct description of television studies' contribution to media studies writ large, I would add that television as a term continues to be fairly synonymous with what researchers have called "media power." Although media power suggests a paradigm of the medium's monopolistic effects, I am referring more to the cachet that television continues to evoke as a symbol of modernity as well as the ways its symbolic capital circulates through societies and culture in terms of production and labor markets, contents and representations, reception and users (see Buonanno 2008; Morley 2007; Newcomb 2004; Couldry 2000). Emerging media and communication technologies are not neutral in these networks, whether developed through a military-industrial complex or the international division of cultural labor, or used to reproduce social hierarchies or inequalities in everyday life. I hope the journal will be the place to explore these roles and their politics as the new television and media deploy and develop relations of power.

Through this, I expect there will be many debating points. Article submissions, for example, could center on any medium but should take up questions that point to both the specificities of the object of study and the general implications that one might make with regard to history, geography, cultural formations, political regimes, or economic forces. Inquiries can be very focused on a particular text, industry, or set of informants, but they ideally would also intervene into contemporary debates, for example, about the politics of everyday life or its memorialization, the multiple manifestations of imperialism or liberalism, or the nature of discipline, consent, or resistance in this moment of many *post*s (postidentity, postindustrial, postnational). This means not taking media as objects on which to stage the newest theories without empirical groundings or to develop neologisms for the sake of using modifiers such as

digital, network, or convergence to connote newness. I think some of the most exciting books of late have taken terms associated with the present media moment and read them back into unexpected fields, practices, territories, and populations (see Maxwell and Miller 2011; Spigel 2008; Curtin 2007; Hilmes 2003; Larkin 2008; Kraidy 2005). Conversely, scholarship on recent wars, disaster, and traumas demonstrates the continuing need to revisit and renew such terms as *ideology* and *myth* at moments of crisis (see Riegert et al. 2010; Blondheim and Liebes 2009; Lewis 2007; Sturken 2007; van Dijck 2007; Parks 2005). At the same time, much of the energy in media studies has resulted from the productive poaching across professional languages, literatures, and methods to discuss the emerging future. Works on intellectual property and labor (see Coombe 1998; Terranova 2004; Qiu 2009), creative publics/policy and information policy/publics (Gripsrud and Weibull 2010; Cunningham 2008; Schiller 2007; Braman 2006; Chakravartty and Sarikakis 2006; Hartley 2005), production cultures and interpretative communities (see Livingstone 2009; Caldwell 2008; Hill 2007; Taylor 2006; Seiter 2005; Hills 2002), technologies of governance, surveillance, and citizenship (see Ouellette and Hay 2008; Andrejevic 2007; Elmer 2004), and those that intersect with critical studies of identity, subjectivity, and modernity (see Grossberg 2010; Turner 2010; Negra 2009; Chun 2006; Gray 2005; Paiva, Barbalho, and Sodré 2004; Ang 2001) demonstrate such innovations. As editor, I am more interested in the "newness" of the argument, not the subjects or objects of study.

To further stimulate ideas, I hope to use two new sections to juxtapose perspectives on media studies from different critical traditions. I want to continue the journal's practice of inviting commentary, particularly to respond to recent topics of interest from an alternative vantage point. It is worthwhile to me, for example, to question whether what some currently call *the* capitalist crisis for media production is based on national experiences in the United States and Western Europe.[3] In a similar vein, I would like to print short book reviews, especially when they would present cross-cultural and transnational viewpoints. Review editors Suzy dos Santos (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) and Dong-hoo Lee (University of Incheon) can be contacted directly to suggest or send recent books for consideration. I also encourage manuscript authors to suggest reviewers whom they know would contribute to these cross-disciplinary and transnational dialogues.

In short—and to echo an earlier conjecture at a past conjuncture—the only things that died in the past decade were the industrial myths that television and new media were totally separate entities. But that's a good thing, right?

Notes

1. Of course, with time and a bigger travel budget, I would get to know the many more international associations and organizations located outside of the United States.
2. I say "relatively" knowing that the neoliberals are at the doorsteps at many an institution simply because media studies are located in the humanities or social sciences. See, for example, a recent debate in the online journal *Culture Machine* (2010), http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/issue/view/12/showToc.

3. For this reason, it is good to keep abreast of how supposedly global forces manifest and are experienced differently in different parts of the world (see Fuchs et al. 2010; Rajagopal 2010; Yoshimi 2010; Wasko and Erickson 2008; Mato and Fermin 2007; Mastrini and Califano 2006; Goldsmith and O'Regan 2005; Rivero 2005) or among different multicultural publics (Gillespie 2006).

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