Book Review

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William Merrin:
Media Studies 2.0.
London & New York: Routledge, 2014

John L. Sullivan:
Media Audiences. Effects, Users, Institutions, and Power.
Los Angeles: Sage, 2013

As the media landscape changes and develops, new media occur and old media change. With this development, new logics and practices emerge as regards the production, dissemination and consumption of media content. In particular, the advent of digital media affords changes in media production and media uses, which urges scholars to revisit and/or rethink central concepts or maybe to consider up-to-date media studies a regular academic field. The two books reviewed here are each taking one of the two approaches: The first is taking media audience studies into the age of today's 'complex and potentially bewildering' media environment, while the second points to the need for revising and updating media studies as such, taking the same context into consideration.

In *Media Audiences. Effects, Users, Institutions, and Power*, John S. Sullivan revisits and rethinks the concept of media audience with a profound sense of historical development and recent changes and challenges. The book is based on the author's own teaching experiences. This becomes quite evident in its approach to a concept which is important to study and discuss theoretically, analytically and methodologically and with a firm grip of the changing meanings embedded in the concept 'audience' which – as the author has it – can be 'conceptually murky'. In the age of digital and cross-connected media, we are well-adviced to consider the change in audience behavior from being readers, listeners and viewers to becoming increasingly 'active' as prod*users* (Bruns), . The book explores media audiences from multiple theoretical perspectives: as victims, institutional constructions,

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users, and producers. This approach is well-suited for introducing students to the history of the audience concept and to many of the important scholarly traditions within media audience studies. In order to have a concept that is broad and flexible, Sullivan (p. 6-8) applies James G. Webster's three overlapping models: 1) audience-as-outcome, describing "people as being acted upon by the media"; 2) audience-as-mass, describing audiences as large collections of people "scattered across time and space who act autonomously and have little or no immediate knowledge of one another"; and 3) audience-as-agent, conceiving people as "free agents choosing which media they will consume, bringing their own interpretive skills to the texts they encounter, making their own meanings, and generally using media to suit themselves". These three models form the basis for the book's four sections and 10 chapters.

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter guiding us through the history and concepts of the audience, from the Antiquity, the Medieval Ages, the Renaissance, the early Modernity with its focus on the advent of new media technology such as the printing press, and further on through the mass media of the 20th century into 21st-century media multitude and proliferation. This is followed by the first section, which focuses on audiences as objects, with a keen eye on the ways in which media and media messages effect their audiences. The second section discusses audiences as institutional constructions, treating topics such as public opinion and audience citizenship on the one hand and media ratings and target marketing on the other. The last two sections of the book move away from audiences as mere objects and social constructions and explore more recent approaches to media audiences, dealing– in section 3 – with audiences as active users of media, including important theoretical frameworks such as uses and gratifications, the interpretation and decoding of mass media texts, reception contexts and media rituals, and – in section 4 – 'audiences as producers and subcultures' (p.187ff.) In doing so, they take Webster's audience-as-agent model into the age of digital, networked and increasingly collaborative and social media. In this section, the concept of audiences as receivers and consumers gives way for a conceptualization of audiences as (individual) users, often described by terms like participatory culture (Jenkins) and produsage (Bruns) in order to understand the characteristics of online, interactive audiences in a digital media world.

Even though this last part of the book considers changes in the producer-consumer relationship and the co-productive and participatory modes of media uses found in for instance online game communities and remix cultures, a more explicit and less subculture-focused approach could be added here, addressing the boundary between insisting on talking about audiences and changing to concepts such as that of the user, the "people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen). Media users increasingly use a wide variety of media types and genres in their everyday lives. They do so for diverse purposes of communication: pleasure, politics, planning and organizing, interpersonal relations etc. As media develop into rich and interlinked platforms (the computer, the cell phone, the Internet), media users come to use this variety of media not just separately but in shifting combina-

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tions. In a next step, these patterns of communication transgress traditional consumer roles and may develop into more participatory modes of communication, as listed above. For instance, news may be consumed by reading newspapers (off-line/online), watching television news (bulletins or text-TV), subscribing to online news services etc. But news may also be appropriated in a more participatory mode: by commenting on news stories, participating in forums debating news issues, and by sharing news stories on our social network sites (e.g. Facebook). Finally, users may engage in co-creative activities such as citizen journalism, documentation of important events users happen to attend and make available to other media or other groups as 'audiences' (see Sandvik, Thorhauge & Valtysson 2016; Jensen, Mortensen & Ørmen 2016). In other words, users apply different modes of communication across media when engaging as distributors, remixers, and producers in their own right (Sandvik et.al. 2012). Maybe William Merrin has a point when, towards the end of *Media Studies 2.0* reviewed in the next section, he states that the use of the concept of the audience is limited because it is "intimately tied to broadcast modes of consumption" (p.148). Still, *Media Audiences* is highly recommendable with its thorough reading of audience studies throughout the ages, in the area of mass media and in the present-day media landscape with audiences taking on new roles as collaborators, participators, and co-creators. As a textbook for media studies courses, it will also prove very useful with its many case studies as well as its suggestions for discussion at the end of each chapter. And as a textbook with its clarifying overviews and summaries and its well-structured line of argument and its stories of 'audiences' from the early days of Western society to the present day, it is absolutely exemplary.

The second book in this review, *Media Studies 2.0* by William Merrin, sets out to perform a polemic attack on what is called 'traditional media studies' (Media Studies 1.0) for its failure to grasp the new complexity in the present-day media world and the changed roles of its agents. The book introduces the term 'Media Studies 2.0'. This concept has been developed over the years by the author, much in accordance with David Gauntlet, who in the same period (2006 and onwards) has developed a similar concept with the same name (see: http://www.theory.org.uk/mediastudies2.htm). His aim is not – so the book claims – to replace 'traditional' media studies, but to supply it with updated theoretical and analytical tools and concepts to meet the changing conditions of a digitized media landscape. However, throughout the book's descriptions of the shortcoming of 'Media Studies 1.0' and its focus on media texts and linear communication flows between senders and receivers or media producers and media audiences, it becomes clear that what is suggested here is more than a mere update or upgrading: it is an attempt to revolutionize media studies in order to meet the demands of the changes brought about by the digital revolution conditioning today's media reality.

The book consists of ten chapters, the first five explaining the elements of the digital revolution by 1) tracing the development of mass media and the rise of computing;

2) exploring transformations of analogue media forms into digital ones; 3) explaining the transformation of the dominant media ecology brought about by the rise of digital media; 4) tracing the changes in media production, distribution and consumption logics as a result of the passage from broadcast to post-broadcast models, and finally 5) discussing the central role of the individual users of digital media, including their personalized possibilities for sharing, shaping, and creating media content: the rise of social media as 'me-dia' or 'we-media'. The second half of the book considers the implication of the changes and developments described throughout the first five chapters with their focus on the role of the 'digital revolution' as the main driving forces, necessitating the media studies 2.0-update pose on media studies as an academic discipline. Chapter 6 explores the history and development of media studies with a somewhat narrow focus on media studies, which it claims to be solely focusing on media content and relations between 'expert' producers and 'passive' audiences. This maneuver is necessary in order for chapter 7 to explain the problems and 'illogic' positions of media studies 1.0, and for chapter 8 to paint the grand picture of the way in which media studies may be upgraded. It also facilitates the survey provided in chapter 9 of the key issues for '21st-century media studies' and chapter 10's conclusion, which considers the consequences of these changes.

Central to this line of argument is the suggestion that media studies should not be limited to sociological and humanistic approaches but should adopt a media ecology-framework inspired by the thoughts of the Toronto School's medium theory (Innes, McLuhan etc.). It is argued (p.48) that this media ecology approach has 'certain benefits over traditional media analysis. First, it explores the relationship between biological and technological life, considering how specific technical extensions create specific environments which produce particular ontological extensions and epistemological effects. Second, it takes a holistic approach, considering the entire technical environment, rather than just that portion labelled 'media'. Third, it rejects linearity and specialisation, emphasising instead a web of forces and agents and the study of relationships within this ecosystem. It focuses simultaneously upon the material layers of the form, the system formed with its user and the radiating spheres that situate it within other systemic contexts. In place of a linear model of communication it presents a three-dimensional model of a world'. Inherent in this is a critique that 'traditional media studies' fail to focus on the technological aspects of media: the affordances of different technologies (especially the digital technology with its 'architectures of participation and creativity') and the agency that the said affordances offer to the users. Furthermore, media studies 1.0 is implicitly criticized for focusing on 'audiences' (with an 'outdated' connection to the logics of mass media) rather than 'users' (as active, co-creative agents), and even Henry Jenkins with his concept of 'participatory culture' is accused of being deeply rooted in the idea of the media audience. However thought-provoking and inspiring this line of argument may be – and it actually is, as we do need to reconsider our basic academic virtues and traditions when changes appear – one cannot help but searching for what has been left out in order to create the polemic dichotomy

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between an outdated 'traditional media' and the 21st-century upgrade. The book does not delve into discussing and scrutinizing media affordances, nor the spaces of agency they create (neither concepts are used in the book). These important fields within media studies, represented by the domestication theory (Silverstone, Haddon, Couldry etc.), the field of media studies concerning media and everyday life (Bakardjieva), media as spaces for social networks and communities (boyd, Ellis, Baym) are missing from the book. This also applies to research exploring communication flows (one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many…) and media of different types and degrees (Jensen, Helles).

Finally, as its goal is to present a three-dimensional model of the world as an object for media studies, it seems quite surprising that the book completely disregards the vast amount of cross-media studies (e.g. Ibrus & Scolari) focusing on the combinability and networkability of digital media. Here we find that the 2.0-ness of media study has been developing and growing over the past 10 years – at least with a multitude of methods and approaches and a focus on the ever-changing interactions between media technologies, media systems, media producers, and media users (and hybrid versions of the latter two). Cross-media studies typically focus on three different, yet interrelated perspectives: 1) crossmedia communication in a producer perspective, connoting meaning-producing coordinated uses of several media for communicating content through the use of multi-platform production, second screen production etc. and with implications for media institutions as regards production flows and hierarchies, new business models and new actors (e.g. streaming TV in relation to broadcast TV); 2) cross-media communication in a consumer perspective, connoting the meaning-producing use of content from several media platforms and services and where the cross-media interweaving of content and communication flows is no longer (solely) controlled by producers, but co-created and/or a result of produsage; and 3) cross-media communication in an everyday use perspective, connoting meaning-producing uses across media in everyday life practices from coordinating low key mundane routines to handling life crisis situations. In cross-media studies, this is done with a specific focus on the affordances of the media technologies at work and the spaces of agency they enable: As regards the production perspective, the crossmediascape implies agency for producers to create and disseminate content and engage with users through various flows (one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many, one-way (push/pull), two-ways etc.) across media platforms and media genres; as reagards the consumer perspective, it implies agency to use and engage with content across media in various way and with various intensities and modes of engagement; and finally, as regards the everyday user perspective, it implies agency for going about our everyday life activities: the uses of media for organizing our day-to-day lives when micro-coordinating, self-monitoring, dealing with life crisis or acting as citizens engaging in the political and cultural spheres of society. Leaving out this well-established and growing field within present-day media studies (and their various study programs at universities around the world) colors this otherwise well-written

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and useful book, for media students and media teachers in particular, with an unnecessary shade of outdatedness or anachronism.

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