Practices of Looking

An Introduction to Visual Culture

Second Edition

Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright

New York Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
2009

chapter six

Media in Everyday Life

The media are pervasive in most of our lives, yet we tend to take them for granted. How do you start your day? Take this hypothetical account of a morning in 2008: having been awakened by the alarm on your cell phone or the strobe flasher on your Wake and Shake alarm clock, the first thing you look at is the digital time display. You might check your text messages, perhaps using screen reader or screen magnifier software. Over coffee, you check your e-mail and the news on your iPhone or laptop, maybe listening to the news on TV or radio, or listening as the screen reader's voice lists one page element after the next as you scroll through your e-mail. Maybe you glance at the traffic site that gives you live webcam footage of your commute. Driving to school or work, you might program your destination into the navigational system in the dashboard of your car and then follow a map that keeps you at the center with each move your car makes. Descartes would be pleased. Or maybe you have few of these technologies used by your peers in your college or in another country. Perhaps you can't afford them, or perhaps you choose not to participate in the mainstream consumer culture of technological devices into which we are interpellated by advertisements every day.

We are increasingly invited to experience the mundane routines of our everyday lives through screens or through information translated from those screens by voice output. Although we perform some of these activities alone, most involve participation with, or simply the presence of, other people (audience members in a movie theater, for instance, or other commuters, or computer users seated nearby in front of screens in a café, a classroom, or a library). For some of us, participation in these technologies requires being in a public space such as an

Internet café, a library, or a computer center. Many of these experiences incorporate multiple forms of visual or audiovisual media at once, and we may keep open many screens at once, clicking between them as we multitask. Importantly, many of them are so integrated into our lives that we don't think of these screens as separate from our everyday worlds. We may find ourselves anxious when these systems of communication and consumption fail us (when we misplace our cell phones or are unable to connect to the Web, for example), or when we read about the risks of radiation absorption in exposure to radiofrequency (RF) fields through the use of some of our devices, such as cell phones, for which manufacturers are required to post specific absorption rate (SAR) ratings in their product details. In most of these uses of technology, we are the recipients, as well as the authors, to varying degrees, of messages that are conveyed through a variety and mix of media forms. Increasingly, the media modalities that are integrated into our lives work in conjunction with one another, for example with digital cameras, iPods, and cell phones that connect to computers. Together these linked and converged technologies offer a kind of personalized media network that each of us negotiates to varying degrees on a daily basis. For instance, you go to a concert and take a picture of the band on your cell phone, then e-mail that image to a friend or send it to your blog, where it is instantly available for anyone to see. This one simple example makes clear that small transactions with visual media today can involve complex interconnecting systems, networks, and audiences.

In this chapter, we trace the concepts of the mass media, the public sphere, and media cultures through the twentieth century to the present, looking at how particular media forms have shaped our understanding of information, news events, national and global media events, and our sense of a public. As these examples show, very little of contemporary media falls under the rubric of *mass* media anymore. Rather, what we see is a shift away from the concept of audience as a mass to the idea of audiences or users as niche or narrowcast markets. In order to understand these contemporary media interactions, we begin by examining the early concept of mass media.

The Masses and Mass Media

The idea of "the masses" was introduced in the nineteenth century to describe changes in the structure of societies undergoing industrialization and the emergence of a massive working class. The masses were regarded as having influence on opinion and on social practice. According to the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, in industrial society, collective sentiments and a collective conscience of the masses came to *determine* what constituted a crime, rather than the collective simply standing in judgment of actions predetermined to be criminal. In other words, we do not condemn an action because it is objectively a crime; the action is deemed a crime because society collectively evaluates and judges the action, determining

FIG. 6.1
Granada Cinema audience, Welling, England, c. 1938

it to be a crime and condemning it.[1] It is the mass response in itself that shapes classification, laws, and judgment about actions, and it is this function of the collectivity—its determining social role—that characterizes the masses as such. The concept of the masses was used by political economists, including Karl Marx, to describe the working class during the rise of industrial capitalism. In media theory, the concept of the masses has generally been used with negative connotations. It has been used to characterize audiences as undifferentiated groups of people, individuals who are passively accepting and uncritical of media practices and messages authored by corporations with profit motives, whose messages support dominant ideologies and ruling class and/or government interests. The term *mass media* came into common use in the post-World War II era, a period marked by the dissemination of broadcast television throughout much of the world.

Mass society describes social formations in Europe and the United States that began during the early period of industrialization and culminated after World War II. The rise of mass culture is usually characterized much like modernity: with the increased industrialization and mechanization of modern society, populations consolidated around urban centers. The large national (and later multinational) corporation, owned by a faceless board of investors, replaced the small-scale local company, whose owner might have been a neighbor. Mid-twentieth-century critics of mass society argued that urban populations lost their sense of community and political belonging and that interpersonal life and civic involvement slacked off under the pressures of crowding in the home, the workplace, and the streets. Corporate workplaces became sites of worker alienation not only because ownership was anonymous but also because assembly-line production had made the worker nothing more than a cog in the machine, replacing the satisfying work of completing assembly by hand from start to finish with the repetition of tasks that are boring or physically grueling to perform. Urban workers were disaffected from the harsh sounds and crowding in with strangers that came with life in the city. At the same time, workers who migrated from rural places were despondent about the distance separating them from loved ones left behind. Family and community life eroded as the large urban metropolis and then dispersed suburban enclaves replaced tight-knit rural communities.[2] Such characterizations emphasize the negative aspects of changes in modernity. They are linked to the concept that film, television, consumerism, and cheap amusements rose to provide some semblance of social connectedness among this exhausted and alienated populace.

To speak of people as members of a mass society is to suggest that they receive their messages through centralized broadcast forms of national and international media. The term implies that populations acquire the majority of their opinions and information through the one-way broadcast model and not through narrowcast media or through local channels of back-and-forth or networked exchange (members of the immediate community or family passing or sharing messages through conversation, for example).

The idea of a monolithic mass culture is linked to a particular historical period—the period of modernity and industrialization in which national newspapers and television broadcast media rose and dominated the industry through periods of monopoly and corporate growth. *Mass media* is a term that has been used since the 1920s to describe those media forms designed to reach large audiences perceived to have shared interests. It is used to refer to describe the conventions in which audiences receive regularly programmed entertainment shows or news about the events of the world, usually from a relatively centralized mass distribution source such as a newspaper corporation, a national television network, a major film studio, or a news and entertainment media conglomerate. The primary traditional mass media forms of the twentieth century were radio, network and cable television, the cinema, and the press (including newspapers and magazines); hence visual images were primary, though not the sole elements of that century's mass media.

Electronic and digital media, such as the Internet, the Web, cell phones, and wireless communication devices, as well as the rise of narrowcast television programming in conjunction with cable and satellite television systems, transformed the landscape of mass media in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Their increased prevalence and the varieties of uses to which these technologies were put by consumers demanded a rethinking of the term *mass* by the end of the twentieth century. Whereas previously mass media were produced and distributed under the auspices of corporations and the delivery of these messages to the masses was regarded as a major source of corporate and/or state power in any society with a strong mass media system, since the 1980s consumers have increasingly been recognized by media producers as occupying smaller, niche audiences that must be addressed according to their specific tastes, interests, and language groups. Today, consumers are also more likely to regard themselves as potential producers, as well as consumers who exercise choice, with regards to the media through which they interact in their everyday lives.

It is important to note the social impact of the expansion of the mass media from forms such as print and voice (such as black-and-white text-dominated newspapers and radio) into media that combine image, color, movement, text, and sound. Before radio, literacy was essential to the flow of information in society because books and handbills or newspapers were the primary forms of information and knowledge-sharing beyond the spoken word. Because only the educated minority could read and write, this portion of the society was largely in control of

the exchange of information beyond word of mouth. Some critics of the media have argued that radio and television furthered this control by restricting authorship of information to those with access to the means of media production (media corporations), creating a society of producers (who represent the interests of the government or the ruling class) separate from consumers (who are duped by these mass media messages to accept the views of the government and the ruling class). The mass media of the late twentieth century have been both criticized and celebrated for inundating us with images. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard used the term *cyberblitz* to describe the escalation of random and unpredictable media forms, images, and information that have bombarded us in postmodern society.[3]

FIG. 6.2
Robert Rauschenberg, *Retroactive I*, 1964, © Robert Rauschenberg/ Licensed by VAGA, N.Y.

Artists have engaged with the experience of media overload by working with "found" images from news and entertainment media. In this 1963 silkscreen, Robert Rauschenberg creates a tension between news images and painting techniques. The work gives a sense of the ways that news images penetrated the lives of U.S. citizens in the 1960s. This collage, titled *Retroactive I*, is a part of a series of eight silkscreen prints in which Rauschenberg featured a photographic image of U.S. President John F. Kennedy. Kennedy is caught in a pose made familiar by news images, emphatically jabbing his finger to make his point. Rauschenberg completed the silkscreen series when Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. In *Retroactive I*, Kennedy's image is framed by screened reproductions of images from news stories about the space program. Kennedy's launching of the program was widely reproduced in the news media: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth." Rauschenberg reproduces and combines news images in montage, overlapping and painting over them, to comment on the juxtaposition of images and texts that make news and history in modern life and the complexity of media culture's layered meanings. He plays on the iconic status of Kennedy as a purveyor of visionary progress and democratic social change.

If Rauschenberg had simply drawn these pictures, they would not have had the same association with cultural memory that these recomposed found images carried then and that they carry now. We live in an era in which we have seen Kennedy's

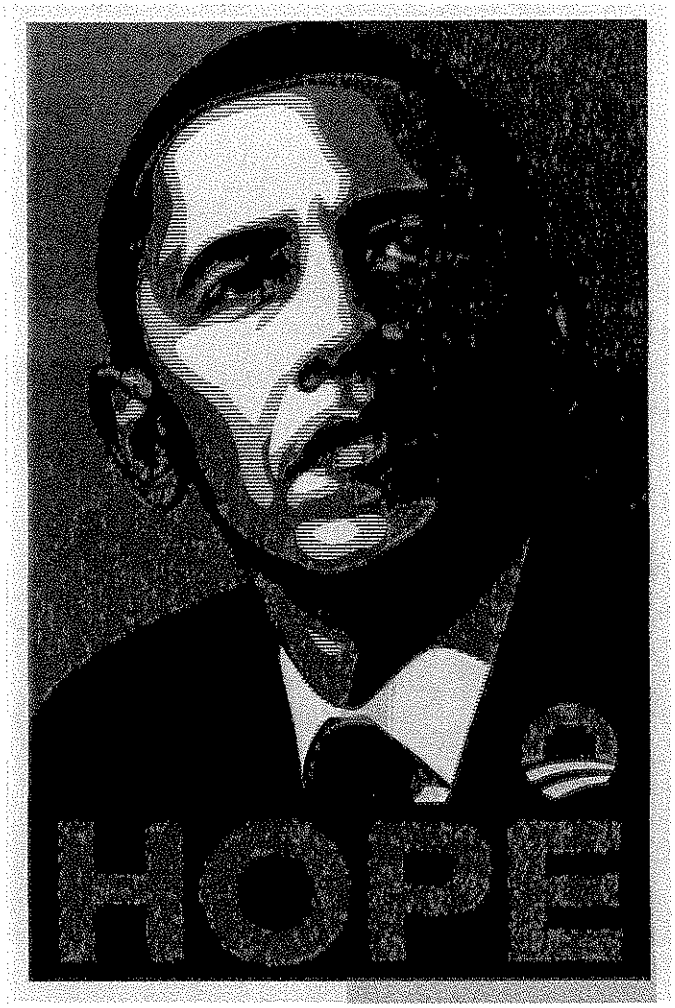


FIG. 6.3
Shepard Fairey, Barack Obama "Hope" poster, 2008, obeygiant.com

image consistently deployed to represent an era of U.S. history for which there remains significant nostalgia. Most recently, Kennedy's appearance has been referenced in the poses, dress, and compositional framing of Barack Obama in the news media and popular iconography. Street artist Shepard Fairey created this limited silkscreen print during the presidential campaign of 2008 to fund a broad poster campaign for Obama. The image draws on the iconographic pose, attire, and framing we associate with portrayals of JFK in the popular media, as well as the style of graphic poster design used by the Bolshevist agitprop artists of the 1920s. These references associate the popular Democrat with the spirit of progress and hope experienced in two prior contexts. The graphic newsprint-like reproduction gives the work a sense of political urgency, playing with the idea of mass images and the random, eclectic manner in which they appear in our encounters with the billboards and digital displays of everyday life.

Kennedy was, in many ways, the first media president in the United States—that is, the first to be subject to the media coverage of television to a full extent. It is therefore ironic that his death was also emblematic of the role images play in shaping political events as history. The famous film footage of Kennedy being shot in Dallas in November 1963 while driving in a motorcade, was taken by a bystander, clothing manufacterer Abraham Zapruder, with his 8mm Bell and Howell home movie camera. Today video cameras are pervasive, but in 1963, relatively few people owned the portable home movie cameras available as luxury items for middle-class consumers. The original print of this short 26.6 seconds of film, known as The Zapruder Film, was sold by Zapruder to *Life* magazine with the stipulation that the frame showing the fatal shot would not be shown. The footage is considered to be an essential historical document, and has been relentlessly analyzed for what it reveals (and does not reveal) about the details of Kennedy's death. But it was shown publicly only as still images for many years until an illegal copy was aired on television in 1975. The U.S. government paid the Zapruder family $16 million in 1999 for ownership of the original film.[4] It is thus one of the earliest examples of an amateur film image having an important political impact and public circulation. Like many iconic images, the Zapruder film has been the focus of public fascination. It was reenacted in 1975 by the video

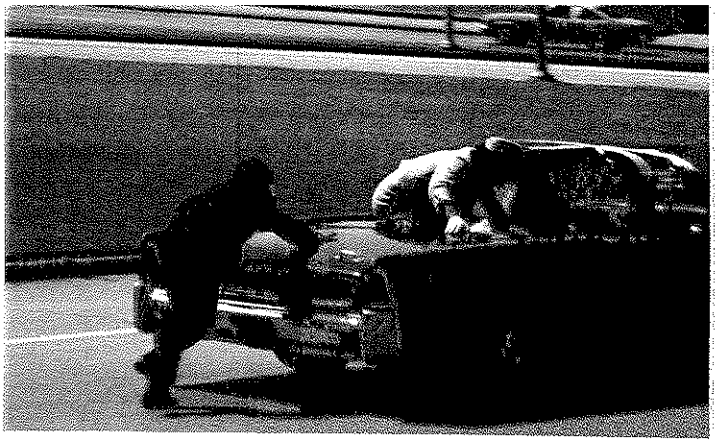


FIG. 6.4
Ant Farm/T.R.Uthco, *The Eternal Frame*, 1975

activist groups Ant Farm and T. R. Uthco, who restaged the event in Dallas in order to comment on the power of the image itself. Their video makes clear that the Zapruder film image of the assassination cannot be separated from the event itself, indeed that the image is, in essence, the event. Interestingly, the video captures the fact that most of the Dallas tourists who saw the Ant Farm reenactment mistook it for an official event and wept over the staged assassination. The Zapruder film has continued to fascinate. It was incorporated in a digitally enhanced form in the popular 1991 film *JFK* by Oliver Stone and was reenacted again in the late 1990s in a parodic music video by singer Marilyn Manson. This inter-referencing of media texts reminds us that mass media are not immune to interactions with other media cultures and popular culture.

Media Forms

The familiar definition of *medium* is a means of mediation or communication—a neutral or intermediary form through which messages pass. In this sense, *media*, the plural form of medium, refers to the group of communications industries and technologies that together produce and spread public news, entertainment, and information. When we refer to "the media" we usually mean a plurality of media forms (news, entertainment, radio, television, film, the Web, and so forth) and not one entirely unitary industry, though we may mean to imply that the members of the plurality produce a surprisingly homogenous set of messages. The term medium also refers to the specific technologies through which messages are transmitted. Radio is a medium, television is a medium, a megaphone is a medium, the Internet is a medium, your voice is a medium. Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan proposed in the 1960s that a medium is any extension of ourselves through a technological form. Media are not just those technologies that convey information. They include cars, trains, lightbulbs, and even vocal and gestured or signed speech. Media are forms through which we amplify, accelerate, and prosthetically extend our bodies in processes of communication.

It is widely agreed among those who study the media that a medium is not a neutral technology through which meanings, messages, and information are channeled unmodified. Even the medium of your voice, through conventions such as accent, loudness, pitch, tone, inflection, and modulation, encodes messages with meanings that are not inherent to the content of the message. The medium itself, whether that medium is a voice or a technology such as television, has a major impact on the meaning it conveys. There is no such thing as a message without a medium or a message that is not affected in its potential meanings by the form of its medium. This

point has been driven home in media theory since 1964, when Marshall McLuhan published *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*.[5] It is impossible to separate messages, information, or meanings from the media technologies that convey them. First of all, there are phenomenological differences among media—that is, there are differences in the way we experience media that are particular to their material qualities. When we listen to television news, for example, our experience of information or content is shaped by the form and conventions of the medium (how images are framed, how stories are edited, what the newscasters wear, how they speak, who they are, and so on). When we watch a movie in a theater, our experience is affected by the cinematic apparatus—the dark room, the projection of film on the screen, the sound system, the excitement that the movie is a new release, the feeling we have, muted or otherwise, of fellow audience members watching along with us. Watching the same movie on a DVD at home changes the experience.

Television viewing has been described, since its origins in the mid-twentieth century, as a medium of distraction. Television is an ongoing electronic presence that is set to a timetable (an aspect that is changing with the emergence of On Demand, Pay Per View, and the issuing of television series on DVD) and continuously transmitted. Watching television is a social activity, even when done alone, in that we are likely to be aware of ourselves as part of a broader public tuned in to the same broadcast, in particular for popular shows. Watching is sometimes performed in a collective social space such as the living room, where people talk during programs, move in and out of the space, or simultaneously perform other activities such as eating or doing homework. We tune in and out of television. Cultural theorist Raymond Williams once wrote about television flow, the concept that viewers' experience of television involves an ongoing rhythm that incorporates interruptions (such as changes between programs and TV commercials).[6] Television, insofar as it is time based and establishes narrative flow over days, months, and even years (as in the case of ongoing soap operas), has a particular kind of continuity that weaves into patterns of daily experience in our lives. It provides a different phenomenological experience from that of other technology we use, such as the computer. When we engage in online social networks or online gaming, we sit alone before a computer screen, using a mouse and typing on a keyboard, but we nonetheless participate in a social space—the virtual space that can span a vast geographical area across which those who share in our online communication live.

There are also important political and cultural differences in how we understand and judge the media messages in our daily lives. We may, for instance, consciously or unconsciously rank modes of news media in terms of importance or credibility. We might, for instance, consider newspapers to be more reliable than television news, find twenty-four-hour cable news to be more reliable than network news, or see news on websites or news blogs as more or less truthful than other sources. We might consider news parodies to be more reliable sources because their biases are explicit, and there is no pretense of neutrality. The way we rank media is based on

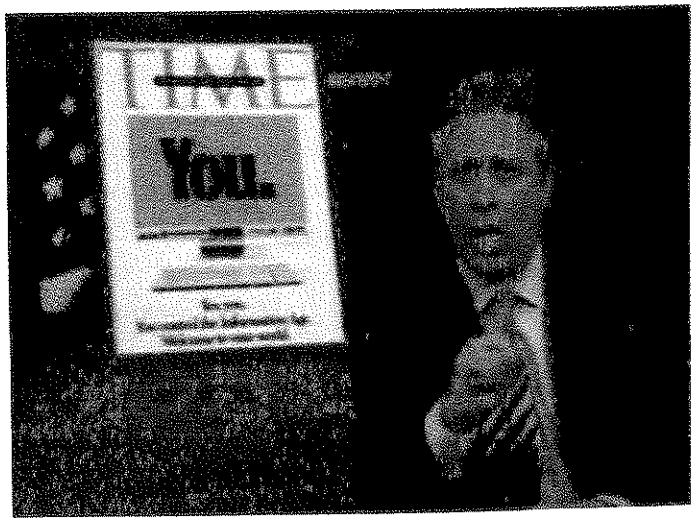
the position in which that medium stands in relation to older and newer media and on cultural assumptions about reliability and whether a network or show is primarily oriented toward entertainment, news, or information. We may think of Web news as being more "up to the minute" than televised news broadcasts, because the Web has come to be associated with speed of transmission, a global scope, and instantaneous border crossing.

The presentation of news in different media affects our perception of it. In the case of television news, for instance, aspects of the traditional television format can affect our sense of the veracity of the news. Our perception of television news is shaped by such elements as the cultural status of the newscaster (his or her gender, cultural identity, clothing and appearance, and accent and tone of voice), as well as by how he or she is situated on a set (with the image of a newsroom in the background or a screen into which images are inserted) and framed and edited and by the degree to which entertainment styles of television are used in broadcasts, with elaborate graphics, music, and stage sets meant to simulate everyday spaces such as living rooms. All of these aspects—casting, costume, makeup and hair style, composition, sets, and editing of image and sound—work within certain conventions of television news to confer meaning to what we tend to think of as the "content" of the story covered. In the United States, late-night comedy shows that parody the news (such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*) are adept at making fun of the conventions of television news in order to show how the news media spin stories and miss stories. These shows act as forums through which the formulas, conventions, codes, and assumptions of television news are constantly being analyzed and parodied, interpellating an audience that reads those codes and uses them to re-interpret the news as it is presented in more conventional venues.

Most newspapers and television news channels translate their stories to websites through a set of conventions that include different text fonts to capture attention, the use of images to signal story lines, complex link structures, and a mix of advertising, video clips, still images, and different type sizes. Reading and viewing the news online requires a different set of skills from viewers than reading a newspaper, watching television news, or listening to the radio. Media, then, never operate wholly apart from other media forms. They implicitly refer to and comment on other media forms.

In the media landscape of the early twenty-first century, the boundaries between news and fiction and between entertainment and

FIG. 6.5
Jon Stewart on *The Daily Show*, January 25, 2007



information are increasingly blurred. Entertainment television such as the *Idol* shows explicitly crafts the lives of featured contestants in narrative form. Evening television news programs feature stories linked to the story lines of drama shows that precede them in the television schedule, and reality television shows regularly funnel ousted contestants onto morning news shows the next day. Through these conventions of cross-referencing, entertainment is made to seem as important and relevant to our lives as are politics and real-life events.

The global media landscape of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is highly complex. It is diverse both at the level of the media themselves and at the level of national and cultural boundaries. Traditional media forms such as newspapers are increasingly Web based; films are shown in theaters and internationally on television, are rented on videotapes and DVDs, are downloaded from the Web, and are distributed in highly developed underground economies throughout the world; television migrates to the Web through both official and user-generated productions. Since the 1980s, the film industry has been transitioning to digital production, with movie theaters slated to shift to digital projection by the next decade. Thus movies are becoming an electronic and digital form. *Convergence*, a term used in the 1990s to describe the coming together of media forms, has resulted in the merger of such previously discrete instruments and technologies as the still camera, the video camera, the telephone, the musical listening device, the Internet, and the video screen. With the convergences taking place among these forms, we see redistributions and mergers among previously discrete media sectors such as telecommunications, computer technology, television, and the motion picture industry. The "bundling" of a previously discrete range of services (cable, Internet, and telephone) into one provider is the result of convergence.

Not only does the contemporary media environment mean that the distinctions among media industries and sectors are less clear, but it also means that there are opportunities for media programming and consumption to be less monolithic and centralized. One striking example of the way that even the most centralized media context can be resisted is the Chinese student rebellion in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the famous image of which we discussed in chapter 1. This square is a well-known site of public political expression in China, with more than half a dozen significant protests taking place at this location since 1919. In 1989, when labor activists, students, and intellectuals joined together to protest government corruption and to call for democracy, the Chinese government blocked media coverage, banning foreign press from the country and tightly controlling coverage by the media of the People's Republic of China. Because the Internet was not yet widely in use in China, supporters of the protests used fax machines to circulate news information about the student protests and the brutal killing of students at Tiananmen Square internationally. This is one of many examples of the ways in which new media and telecommunications forms were deployed in acts of political resistance, even under circumstances of strict media repression.

Media access and information flow within and out of China continues to be controversial. Activists in China have used text messaging, instant messaging, and chat rooms to organize protests against issues such as pollution and corruption and to protest the police task force set up to monitor the Internet, but increased monitoring has resulted in the erasure of information sometimes minutes after a posting appears. The Golden Shield project, a network firewall set up by the PRC Ministry of Public Security in 1998, is widely regarded as far from impenetrable, and with software such as Freenet it becomes increasingly easy for Internet users in China to send and retrieve information without being detected. These details demonstrate that even under tight state regulation the Internet remains a space of negotiation and multidirectional flow.

Broadcast, Narrowcast, and Webcast Media

When we consider different kinds of media forms, the reach with which they create audiences is a key factor. An important distinction between media forms is that between broadcast (with one central source broadcasting a signal to many venues) and narrowcast (targeted, via cable and other means, to niche audiences) media. As television became more widespread in the post-World War II era, it was largely a national broadcast medium, with some amounts of local programming in some countries. Initially, long-distance national transmission was facilitated through cables or antenna (CATV stood for "community antenna television," which was used as early as 1938 in England and 1948 in the United States, where it was used to transmit in mountainous regions), and by the 1960s, satellite transmission was introduced to facilitate long-distance broadcasting. Throughout regions such as Africa, satellite has made more sense because of the drawbacks of laying cable in areas of low population, and satellite remains South Africa's dominant transmission form. The broadcasting model replaced early narrowcast or community-based television, with satellite transmission making global communications a real possibility. With this expansion of regions and increase in potential markets, networks produced programs that appealed to more universal or "mass" cultural interests, replacing the earlier community television model.

The emergence of cable in North America, East Asia, Australia, Europe, and parts of the Middle East and South America during the 1970s and 1980s introduced the narrowcast model, allowing the development of community-based programming after twenty years of its near absence in the earliest television markets. It also allowed the development of specialty cable channels, twenty-four-hour news channels, and increasingly multilanguage programming that has served diasporic audiences throughout the world. Chinese, Korean, Indian, and Spanish-language channels serve diasporic communities throughout the world, and such channels as CNN, the BBC, and TV5 from France, among others, are distributed globally via cable systems. In the United States, this has also meant the rise of "minority"

networks such as Black Entertainment Television (BET). Important in global narrowcasting are the Spanish networks that serve audiences in Latin and North America, such as Telemundo and Univision. The proliferation of stations and programming options that has escalated into the 2000s may give the appearance of expanded choice. However, it should be noted that providing more networks and programs to choose from to consumers is not the same thing as providing more venues for different voices and opinions. Freedom to choose among a broader range of consumer products cannot be equated with freedom of expression. In fact, some critics of the cable phenomenon have emphasized the intensification of existing problems in the television industry with the advancement of cable networks, such as lack of diversity in management and hiring and the proliferation of conventional programming that deploys racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes.

The development of the Internet in the 1960s and 1970s, with the subsequent expansion of the home computer market and the making public of the Web in the early 1990s, dramatically changed the media landscape of broadcast and narrowcast media. The primary shift that the Internet and the Web introduced was toward multidirectional communication networks that converge media forms, so that people engaging with their media are considered to be active "users" rather than passive viewers. This began, in the early days of the Internet, with simple forms of text-based exchange, such as e-mail and e-mail list discussion groups. The public introduction in 1991 of the Web, in combination with the development of consumer-oriented imaging capabilities and graphic interfaces, resulted in even more dramatic changes in computer-based spectatorship and authorship. On the Web, with today's technologies, viewer-users can make and modify their own images and videos with relative ease. Users may upload content and images to personal websites and to centralized Web forums, and, in some cases, have their images, videos, or blogs viewed by thousands of other viewers.

Stories of success on the Web get a lot of attention. For example, after the YouTube film clips of Joe Bereta and Luke Barats, Gonzaga University students who won a film competition in Spokane, Washington, generated more than a million hits, NBC gave them a six-figure contract to produce situation comedies and sketches. Stories such as this proliferate as major media conglomerates used consumer venues such as YouTube both to scout talent and to pursue and quash apparent cases of copyright infringement. By 2007, NBC and Viacom were both embroiled in copyright infringement cases against Google involving footage posted on YouTube (which was acquired by Google in 2006). One of the important questions that these cases address is to what extent the corporations that own websites are protected from liability for the actions of their users. The courts will be interpreting the potential scope of the Safe Harbor Provision of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1997, which was set out to protect website owners from liability but that requires them to remove infringing material once notified by those who own the rights to it. When the 1997 Act was created, access to the high-speed Internet connection was rare,

but by 2007, a much larger percentage of people have access to high-speed connections from among a vastly larger number of users globally (estimates range over a billion), making video sharing far more prevalent, as is indicated by YouTube's global popularity.

We might say that the ability of the small-scale, unknown producer to reach a mass audience with appropriated images is serendipitous—it is dependent on his or her ability to work within and around laws that protect freedom of speech and fair use and those that uphold the intellectual property rights of the legal owners of media texts and images. These patterns are, of course, driven by the corporate strategy of making public the numbers of hits to any given site and allowing end users to search by this metric of site popularity. Majority taste thus emerges in contexts such as YouTube as an indicator of potential industry success, even if that success is relatively short-lived (because much of the talent contracted through these venues gets a short window of opportunity in which to succeed—the life of the network contract). Yet such sites also radically transform the concepts of broadcast and narrowcast media.

During the 1990s and early 2000s media critics warned of the emergence of a global digital divide. The early developers of the Internet lauded the medium's capability of expanding connectivity and bypassing formal structures of communication oversight and management. "Information wants to be free" was one of the catch phrases of the medium's early years, and this ethos of accessibility has been maintained to a surprising degree despite the corporate takeover of vast sectors of the Web through domain ownership and the use of the medium to enhance promotion and advertising—through pop-ups and banner ads on your "free" account on Yahoo, for example. As computer ownership and access became an accepted aspect of everyday middle-class life in the democratic West, people in developing nations were the first to achieve the kind of "freedom" of access envisioned by the medium's developers, increasing the divide between themselves and the majority of people in developing nations for whom computer access was a technological and economic impossibility. Having access to the Internet requires enhancement of networks such as telephone or cable lines, making a prerequisite of access either government or corporate initiative to extend access routes beyond areas with a solid potentially paying consumer base.

Responding to these concerns, some of the innovators and promoters of global digital culture have been developing alternative programs such as One Laptop Per Child, a global initiative launched by MIT computer pioneer and *Wired Magazine*'s founding investor Nicholas Negroponte to make computers available to all schoolchildren in selected poor remote and urban locations in which Internet penetration and Web access is low for geographic and/or economic reasons.[7] This program is designed not only to benefit children, who can use these solar-powered computers for learning in the classroom, but also to promote computer and basic literacy among adults by making these computers available for students to take home to their

parents each night. The idea behind this initiative is that if participation in a global network becomes recognized by the "haves" as a requisite for democratic participation in everyday life, it becomes the responsibility of those with access to transfer or disseminate the technology to those who do not have the means to buy into it for themselves.

The explosion of consumer-user productions, home entertainment, and Web media suggests that the model of broadcast communications has lost much of its dominance. Yet media industries have become increasingly consolidated, as networks, cable channels, newspapers, film studios, and other entertainment media are now part of huge media conglomerates (particularly in the United States). Thus, whereas traditional media industries are losing audiences, media conglomerates such as Viacom, Disney, Fox, General Electric, and News Corporation are actively staking out ownership over new media forms.[8] This consolidation of ownership has been enabled by the loosening of government regulation. Media scholar and activist Robert McChesney has chronicled the changes in Federal Communications Commission (FCC) policies throughout the 1990s and 2000s that have further limited government regulation of media ownership, facilitating private-sector mergers and new kinds of monopoly conglomerates that span telecommunications, television, print journalism, the film industry, the Web, entertainment and amusement venues, and a surprisingly diverse range of other sorts of industries (food, oil, clothing, toys).[9] McChesney argues that the new global media comprise a small world of big conglomerates.

The History of Mass Media Critiques

The capacity of the mass media to reach so many viewers both nationally and globally has historically given the media industry a significant amount of power. The coincidence of the rise of the mass media with industrialization and movements of populations away from rural communities to urban centers prompted some theorists to see the mass media as contributing to the erosion of interpersonal and group life and as fostering increasingly centralized models of communication and identity. The historical argument, put forward most famously by communication scholar Herbert Schiller in his numerous publications, from *Mind Managers* (1972) to *Information Inequality* (1996), warned of the takeover of public space by private media interests and the control of mass communications by the military-industrial complex. His criticism of U.S. media imperialism spanned the period from the introduction of video to the rise of the Internet. Schiller states that mass media function, in effect, as a tool of cultural imperialism and provide a centralized means of mobilizing the new global mass society around a unified political ethos handed down from dominant nations to less powerful nations and populaces. Schiller proposed that as nations modernize through the introduction of communication and media systems, along with industrial development, the external purveyors who introduce modernization

(transnational media corporations, for example) entice, pressure, or bribe national government and corporate leaders to embrace and promote the values and structures of the (usually Western and capitalist) political system in which the media company is based. The idea is that mass broadcasting, with its ability to reach large numbers of people across national boundaries with the same messages, fosters conformity to dominant ideas about politics and culture.[10]

Schiller's basic critique of the media has been continued by some contemporary media critics. In 2006, television studies scholar Timothy Havens noted the surprising statistic that only a few thousand professionals are responsible for the acquisition and distribution decisions of television markets around the world and that these professionals base their decisions not on audience tastes but on institutional incentives. His argument is that the market drives decisions about the program choices available to viewers globally.[11] This fact makes it clear that diversification of programming does not necessarily indicate diversification of ownership and decision making about that programming. In contrast, other critics, such as television scholar John Fiske, who wrote about popular culture and mass media in the 1980s and 1990s, introduced the argument that mass media forms changed the dynamics of the flow of information by making more information directly available to nonliterate people, thus rendering possible a more democratic flow of information.[12] Media theorist Ien Ang expanded on this idea when she proposed that the very notion of audience is imagined or constructed within the commercial and public service sectors as a convenient way to conceptually group together potential consumers, which, though convenient for marketing purposes, cannot capture viewers' specific and diverse tastes, interpretive strategies, and practices.[13] Contemporary critics of the mass media such as Robert McChesney have also argued that new technologies continue to serve as powerful tools for propaganda or mass persuasion. This conventional view emphasizes the top-down unifying potential of various communications technologies together as "the media," singular. Theorists such as Fiske and Ang offer a more plural view, stressing that members of audiences engage with television in ways that are both specific to their cultural context and at times resistant to normative and/or dominant ways of looking and interpreting. However, unlike many of the theories of viewer strategies that we discussed in chapter 2, many approaches to media regard viewers as passive if not gullible recipients of media systems and messages.

One view of the mass media is to denounce them as a form of propaganda. One key example of this effect is the use of film to support the rise of Nazism in Germany prior to World War II. The German film director Leni Riefenstahl (1902–2003) is well known for her work with the Nazi Party to produce propaganda to enlist the German masses in the Nazi Party ethos. Her 1935 film, *Triumph of the Will*, documents a Nazi rally in Nuremberg in 1934. It is considered by many to be one of the most powerful examples of the use of visual images to instill and affirm political beliefs in its audience. The 1934 rally was planned and constructed as a mass visual spectacle with the film process well in mind. Adolf Hitler, who served

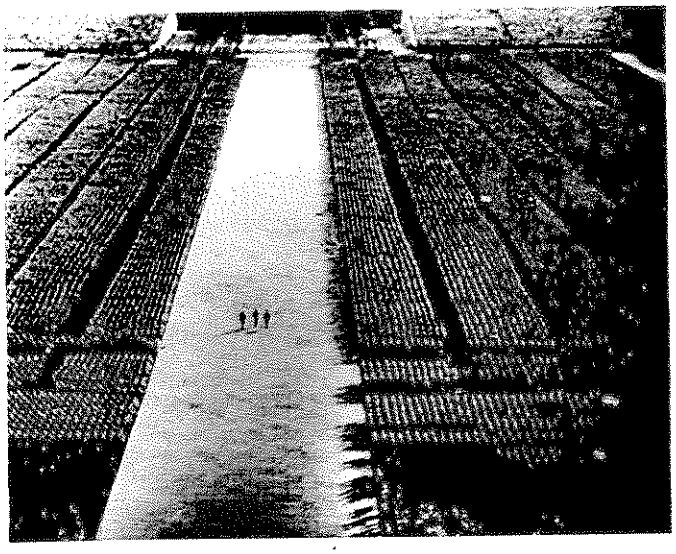


FIG. 6.6
Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will*, 1935

as the film's executive producer, had the rally choreographed and filmed with an array of special techniques, including aerial photography, telephoto lenses, multiple cameras, and an elaborate tracking-shot system to give the impression that the whole nation was united behind him at a moment when his party and leadership had just weathered a major challenge from the National Socialist Party. Special equipment was constructed to provide optimal access to the events for more than thirty cameras and a vast crew, led by Riefenstahl. The film is composed of strikingly dramatic compositions in which Hitler is featured as both the master eye that takes in all of the populace assembled and the full scope of the city and the single object that rivets the gaze of the vast crowds assembled before him. The film opens with grand aerial tracking footage of Hitler's plane swooping in over the city, intercut with shots of the city from the plane's-eye view as Hitler presumably scopes out his domain. We later see many shots of Hitler in the crowds, taken from a low camera angle to emphasize his stature and placing him at the focal point of cheering crowds who search out the chance to see him and gaze raptly on him when he is finally in their view. *Triumph of the Will* is an example of the way that practices of looking can work in the service of overt nationalism and idolatry.

Of course, we cannot equate all propaganda with Nazism and its ways of generating ideological positions. Images can be used for many political purposes, and media serve different social purposes in different cultures. For instance, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin called for the use of the presses by revolutionary student and worker groups rather than by governments and corporate interests. Whereas in the United States and many other countries, televisions were introduced as home appliances that took center stage in the relative domestic privacy of the family home, in countries such as Germany and Japan television was at first more frequently viewed collectively in public spaces. Television emerged during the era of Nazism as a nationalized industry that was used to forge a strong collective ideology. As such, it was a tool of mass persuasion not unlike mass rallies, at which people physically gathered to express their support for the party. In this sense, the practice of looking collectively in a public space at the same spectacle was an important experience in the forging of a mass ideology. This is true whether we are talking about crowds of people looking at Hitler himself in a rally or rooms full of people gazing at a television program that supported Nazism. The concept of the media as propaganda is one approach to understanding the mass media's promotion of mass ideology, one that sees audiences as undifferentiated masses easily persuaded by media messages.

Other critics of the mass media, many of them working with empirical methodologies influenced by behavioral communications research, have used several different models to understand media effects. The "hypodermic needle" or "magic bullet" effect was a popular model for understanding media effects in the mid-twentieth century, and its influence can still be felt today in the writings of critics who blame the media for modeling violent behavior through computer games and action and crime genre movies. The hypodermic-needle model proposes that the media have a direct and immediate effect on audiences, fostering passive follower behavior among viewers "drugged" by media texts that "inject" ideas into their viewers. This model was influenced not only by observations of media effects under Nazism but also by observations of rising consumption in response to the growing advertising and persuasion industries. Yet this model did not account for the complex back-and-forth negotiation of meanings and practices among media texts, technologies, producers, and audiences.[14]

Studying the effects of the mass media on social behavior has been a common model for thinking about media since the Payne Fund supported studies in the 1930s on the effects of motion pictures on children that concluded that children were deeply influenced by the content of the movies and that children who watched movies regularly did poorly at school. These studies, now largely discredited, were the first of many that fanned public fears about the influence of media (television, the Internet, etc.) on children. Television has, because of its dominance as a social medium, been the subject of many studies concerned with the effects of the media on social cohesion and political engagement. In the 1950s, for instance, the U.S. Congress held hearings on the effects of television on juvenile delinquency, and today, concerns about children, video games, and the Internet are a common topic of effects research. With every publicized example of violence or threatened violence by a child at a school or in the home, questions about the role of the media resurface anew, with politicians sometimes resorting to outdated research to support their views that images of violence serve as direct models for behavior. The extent to which political leaders have failed to understand how media work and how ill served we are by simplistic effects models is made clear by media scholar Henry Jenkins, who was called before the U.S. Congress to testify on the topic of "selling violence to our children" through the media. In his account of this experience, Jenkins recalls the reductive assumptions and misunderstandings about how media representations work and how media panics are started and his own largely unheeded attempts to offer the means for thinking about the complex ways that viewers make meanings. Popular culture, Jenkins noted, is not the root of the problem.[15]

Models for thinking about the influence of media and popular culture on social behavior have also come from the context of philosophy and art. One well-known analysis of collective practices of looking and the media that was influential in the 1960s is Guy Debord's 1967 *Society of the Spectacle*. Debord was a founding member of Situationist International, a group of French social theorists with links to the

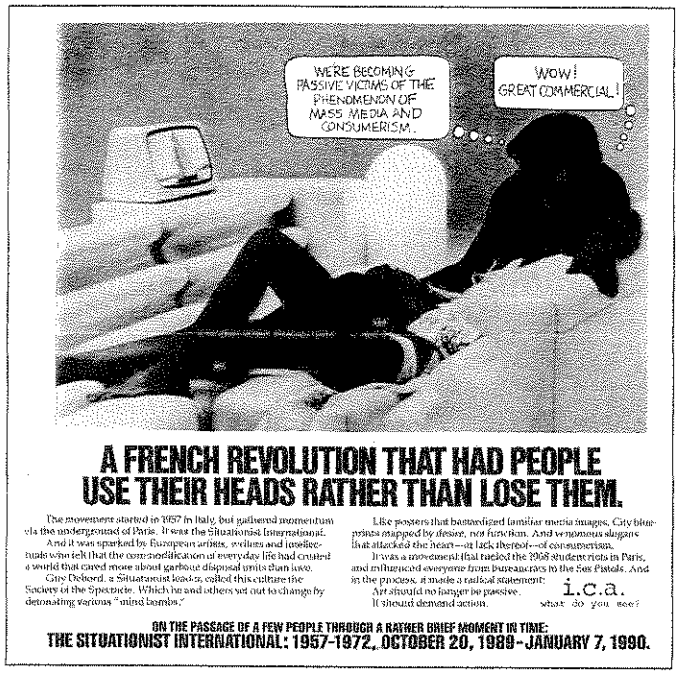


FIG. 6.7
Poster for exhibition "The Situationist International: 1957–1972," ICA Boston, October 1989-January 1990

modern art movements of futurism, Dadaism, and surrealism. They sought to blur the distinction between art and life and called for a constant transformation of lived experience. Debord describes how the social order of the global economy exerts its influence through representations. The spectacle is both an "instrument of unification" and a world vision that forges a social relationship among people in which images and practices of gazing are central. All that was once directly lived, he argued, has become mere representation.[16] The Situationists have since become a kind of symbol of strategies of resistance to media influence in the 1960s. Artists and writers refer to them in retrospect, as this exhibition poster shows, to show how radical was their critique of mass influence. They were interested in using guerrilla tactics and innovative publication styles to intervene into the homogenized experience of everyday life.

The term *spectacle* refers to an event or image that is particularly striking in its visual display to the point of inspiring awe in viewers. We commonly think of spectacle as involving enormous scale of some kind—fireworks displays, awe-inspiringly large images, IMAX movie screens. Yet Debord and the Situationists were primarily interested in spectacle as a metaphor for society, in how we live in an ongoing and constant spectacle. Although Debord and the Situationists were rooted in the social movements of the 1960s, it could be argued that the relevance of their ideas and the world of spectacle have reached new heights in the decades since, in particular in relation to media spectacle and the "empty" spectacle of political events. The virtual worlds of computer games, virtual environments, and simulated life are all examples of spectacles behind which there is no "there" there.

One of the most influential critiques of the media and the industrialization of culture came from the Frankfurt School theorists, who applied Marxist theory to the study of culture in the postwar years and whose work was equally influential in the 1960s, along with Debord's. This group, which included Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, among others, published a series of essays criticizing the capitalist and consumerist orientation of postwar entertainment and popular media forms, including popular movies, television, and advertising. Most of the members of the Frankfurt School had fled from Europe in the 1930s to the United States to escape the threat of impending fascism, but to a large degree they also found American society to be dangerous in what they saw as its degradation

of culture into cliché, mass-produced sentimentality, empty schlock, formulas, and so on. According to the Frankfurt School theorists, the "culture industry" is an entity that both creates and caters to a mass public that, tragically, can no longer see the difference between the real world and the illusory world that these popular media forms collectively generate. In their classic essay on the culture industry, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno set up a contrast between mass entertainment and fine art.[17] In this distinction of high and low culture, they criticize the culture industry for generating images that are nothing more than style and propaganda for industrial capitalism, reproducing the status quo and obeying the dominant social order. In their view, the culture industry generates false consciousness among its consumers, encouraging the masses to buy mindlessly into the belief systems or ideologies that allow industrial capitalism to thrive. As we have noted, Horkheimer and Adorno began their theories of media as Jewish intellectuals in Germany during the rise of Nazism in the 1930s. Their view of media was thus initially formulated in a time and culture in which the media were being used effectively to create a particularly destructive and murderous national Fascist ideology, and they wrote "The Culture Industry" in the United States in 1944, while World War II was still in full force.

The homogenization of culture was a central aspect of the Frankfurt School's critique, in particular the way in which the industries that produce culture shun innovation in favor of standardized products. If culture is a commodity, they argued, then its value has been reduced to the price of a ticket. Commodified culture produces a kind of pseudoindividuality, they argued, in which certain kinds of talentless celebrities evoke uniqueness even though they themselves are without individuality. Frankfurt School theorists, among other critics, emphasized that the mass media made palatable, and even seemingly inevitable, the domination and oppression inherent in a capitalist economy.

The question of what the "masses" or viewers in general might actively do with the mass media was not a central concern of the Frankfurt School or its followers. Though they were concerned with the effects of media on the masses, they did not generally consider just how people interpret and use the media forms they encounter. The ideas of resistant viewing, cultural appropriation, and subjective or psychical factors were introduced by other theorists to modify their model later, in response to the criticism that their view was too universalizing. The Frankfurt School theorists also set up a divide between art and mass culture, and in so doing established a high and low culture dichotomy (even as they claimed that much high art had sold out to the culture industry, too). Although the Frankfurt School model of media is flawed in its condescension toward the viewer (seen as a dupe of the system) and its inability to examine the complex negotiations that take place between viewer and cultural products, their criticism of the effects of the industry of culture—summarized in the phrase, "the whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry"—still resonates today.[18] In part due to the Frankfurt School's contributions, it has become

something of a commonplace idea that we experience life in and through our practices of looking at and experiencing media and art.

Since the late 1980s, critics have questioned the high art/mass culture divide, suggesting that our experiences with the media during the late twentieth century are too complex and varied to be adequately characterized in sweeping categories such as mass consciousness or mass culture. We have many cultures, many media industries, and many ways of representing meaning; hence the concepts of a unified mass culture and a singular media industry are not useful for talking about present conditions. There is no longer one mass audience. Rather, the populace is fragmented among a range of cultures and communities, some of which may respond to art and media in ways that challenge or even transform the dominant meanings generated by the mainstream culture industry. Moreover, the culture industry no longer makes a unified set of products. It increasingly produces a diverse range of art and media designed to appeal to niche audiences. Hence the media can include counterhegemonic forces that challenge dominant ideologies and the social orders they uphold. Yet one glance at television programming throughout the world can tell us that on the topic of the standardization of culture, the Frankfurt School had a point—the repetition of formats, genres, narratives, formulas, and conventions of most mainstream film and television today demonstrates a remarkable global standardization of culture. Although we may think that the medium of the Web media breaks with this standardization, much of what we encounter on the Web is also remarkably homogenous.

The paradoxes of contemporary media include this range: from standardized entertainment programming to ironic and resistant programming or interpretations of programming to the broad range of Web media produced by users themselves, some of which is innovative but much of which can look like the most conventional standardized programming. Yet many would argue that the fragmentation of media has also opened up new terrain in new media for many users (whereas, ironically, those media forms become less experimental and more conventional in other ways). It is clear that the term *media cultures*, in the plural, best describes the visual culture of the twenty-first century.

Media and Democratic Potential

Although the anxious and fearful view of how the mass media can change a society proliferated throughout the twentieth century, there was also a counterview that regarded the mass media as a promising set of venues for democratic ideals. This view sees communications technologies as empowering tools for use by citizens to promote an open flow of information and exchange of ideas, thereby strengthening democracy. It emphasizes the potential for various individual media forms to be used by individuals and groups to advance positions of resistance or countercultural perspectives.

An example of the media's potential to foster diversity of expression is community-based or public-access cable television. As the U.S. FCC set the ground for the introduction of cable in 1972, the regulatory agency mandated cable companies to set aside three channels for educational, local governmental, and public use in the top television markets. Any group or individual wanting to use this airtime would be guaranteed at least five minutes of program time per week. Cable companies were required to provide community access to production technology and facilities. Community-based television, in the form of local access programming in the United States and of subsidized programming in other national television systems, is produced at low cost by members of the community and is geared toward local audiences. It is a model of television as a means for citizens to feel connected to their communities and to gain more information about local issues. Public-access programming made possible programming by Paper Tiger Television, a New York news media nonprofit organization that since the 1980s has produced media critiques, beginning with a cable show featuring cultural critics and figures in the art world as hosts of an alternative investigative view of current news, such as *Noam Chomsky Reads the* New York Times*: Seeking Peace in the Middle East* in June 1985. (Paper Tiger expanded into Deep Dish Television, which distributes independent media via satellite.) Though public access is minimal in its audience scope and short-lived (it has been gradually scaled back with escalating deregulation of cable from the 1980s forward), this kind of programming nonetheless serves as a model for a democratic idea of a mass media that serve diverse or "minority" needs and interests. In one early episode of Paper Tiger television, many episodes of which were shot on a cheap set that was meant to look like a New York City subway car, media critic Herb Schiller reads the *New York Times*,

FIG. 6.8
Paper Tiger Television, *Herb Schiller Reads the New York Times: The Steering Mechanism of the Ruling Class*, 1981

pointing out the ideologies embedded in the language and editorial choices of one of the most respected of American newspapers.

The view of media as potentially democratic challenges the very idea of a mass media or a mass society. It stresses instead the potential of individual media forms for the development of community and identity on a much smaller scale. For example, the range and variety of television programming on cable, despite the fact that this medium contains many channels that emulate the mass appeal of network television, presents too varied a terrain to offer a unified idea of what public culture can and should be. Some cable network channels are geared toward specific language audiences, such as Spanish-, Chinese-, or Korean-speaking diasporas. Others are oriented toward audiences constituted according to taste, interests, age, or gender. However, when we look to ownership we see less diversification; for instance, Disney owns the ABC network. It also owns the Disney Channel for child audiences; Disney Asia (and Disney Malaysia, Disney UK, etc.); Lifetime Television network, which is geared toward women viewers; A&E (Arts and Entertainment); and many other channels.

Among those who have seen media as having great democratic and liberatory potential, Marshall McLuhan, who wrote most influentially in the 1950s through the 1970s, had the most widespread impact on media theory. McLuhan was known for coining catchy phrases, of which "the medium is the message" and "global village" have had the most longevity. McLuhan argued that television and radio were like natural resources, waiting to be used for the benefit of increasing mankind's collective and individual experiences of the world. He also stated that the media were simply extensions of our natural senses, helping us better to hear, see, and know the world and, moreover, helping us to connect ourselves to geographically distant communities and bodies. His analysis in the 1960s and 1970s of how the speed of information's flow through the media has affected local, national, and global cultures was tremendously influential.

McLuhan felt that media technologies give greater potential for power to our individual bodies by extending our senses and thereby extending our individual power in the world. Part of the "message" of the medium is the new, bigger scale that is introduced to individual experience through the very act of using a technology that increases the scope of connectivity. One of his examples is a hypothetical man in Africa who does not understand English but listens to BBC radio news every night. According to McLuhan, just hearing the sounds of the broadcaster's voice makes this man feel empowered. The content is not essential. The "message" consists in this man's relationship to the world, enriched and expanded through the experience of global media access. Interestingly, McLuhan chose an example in which we can imagine a recent colonial relationship between the man's country (presumably a former colony of England, as it receives the BBC) and the medium's national source (England). In contrast to McLuhan, we might want to ask, Can it be that the man might have a more contradictory relationship than one of "empowerment" through this association with the media broadcast of a past colonial power?

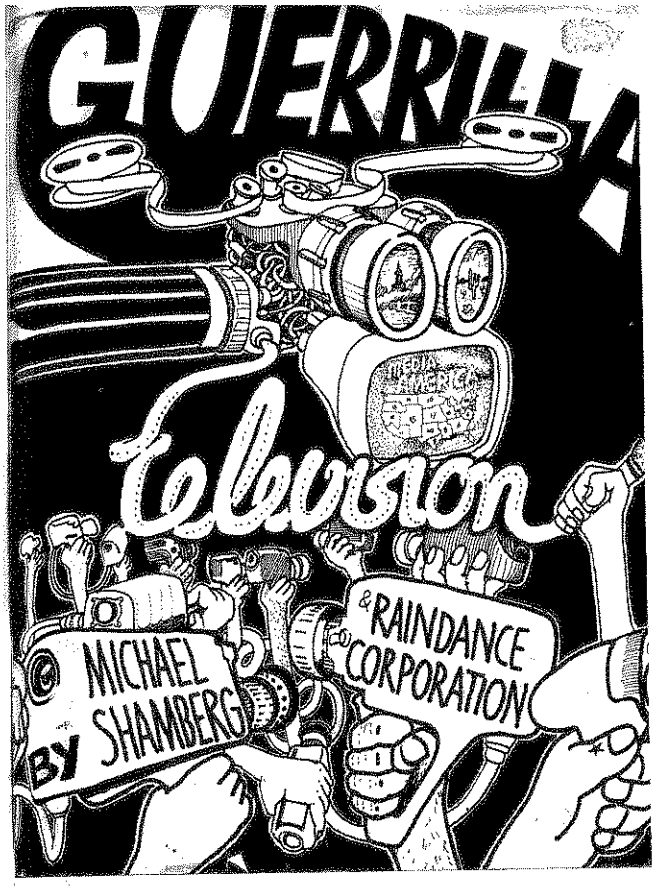


FIG. 6.9
Cover of *Guerrilla Television*, designed by Art Farm, 1971

Might the recipient of news broadcasts from the colonial center respond as a listener who is critical of and resistant to the broadcast and speak out on that basis?

Portable, consumer-grade video technology became available in the late 1960s, making it possible for artists, activists, and local community and political groups to make their own videotapes for the first time. Some saw this as a means of countering dominant television and news messages with militant, activist guerrilla television. Proponents of guerrilla television argued that to put the means of production in the hands of ordinary citizens would empower these citizens to express themselves more freely and defy the power of the mass media. This was regarded as a positive outcome of the new communications revolution that could foster a global media village. For instance, in 1972 a group of video activists calling themselves TVTV (for "Top Value Television") took their Portapak video equipment to the Republican National Convention that reelected President Richard Nixon to make their tape *Four More Years* (1972) ("four more years" was the slogan of Nixon's reelection campaign; the collective had already made a tape of the 1972 Democratic Convention, called *The World's Largest TV Studio*).[19] TVTV used their access to the convention to actually interview the press and get a view of the convention from many perspectives, such as that of anti-Nixon protestors, that were not included in network television coverage. Their resulting production gave a visceral sense not only of the maneuverings of the press on the floor of the convention but also of the protests that were taking place in the streets outside the convention hall. The gritty, kinetic style of TVTV, like other activist videos produced in the 1970s, demonstrated a resistance to mainstream television styles, and the group's tactics of looking "behind the scenes" at the media itself was radical at a time when the conventions of television news were highly staged. Their strategies resonate powerfully with the approach of students on college campuses in 2008 campaigning for Barack Obama under the sign of "change" by using personal networks and the Internet as a means for grassroots networking.

FIG. 6.10
Skip Blumberg interviewing news reporters in TVTV, *Four More Years*, 1972

Many of McLuhan's ideas are now being recycled as ways of looking at new media. In fact, he is considered to be the "patron

saint" of *Wired Magazine*, which was established in 1993 as a key publication about Internet technologies and Web culture. *Wired*'s ethos is one of techno-utopianism, and McLuhan's catchy aphorisms, such as his concept of the media creating a "global village," have resonated powerfully with the idea that digital technologies and the Internet create new forms of community. In 1965, McLuhan stated, "There are no remote places. Under instant circuitry, nothing is remote in time or in space. It's now."[20] His words now seem prescient. Yet, although McLuhan's notion of the global village resonates in profound ways in contemporary cyberculture, it cannot help us to understand the ways in which globalization has created new kinds of inequalities between those who are plugged in and those who are not.

Yet Web culture continues to spawn democratically inspired initiatives. Founders of the Web and advocates of the free global flow of information have emphasized technology access as a means of promoting development. A leader in Web initiatives such as this is the W3C, a World Wide Web Consortium founded by Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the Web, the aims of which include the promotion of nonproprietary standards in Web languages and protocols. In 2008, the W3C hosted a workshop in Brazil on the potential role of mobile and Web devices in providing services for underprivileged populations. Initiatives such as this one and the One Laptop Per Child project described earlier in this chapter extend a humanitarian and utopian view of the media prevalent in the McLuhan tradition since the 1960s. Whereas for some who embrace this model democratic ideals drive the spread of technology, for others libertarian entrepreneurship is also a strong motivating factor. The view that the Internet and the Web should remain free of government regulation and commercial ownership is strong among the founders of these forms of media and communication.

The concept of media fostering democratic potential is seen by many people as having been realized most recently with a wide range of activities on the Web in a broad range of "second-generation" websites known as Web 2.0. These sites, such as blogs, wikis, social networking sites, sites of person-to-person economic exchange (such as eBay and Craigslist), and Web media sites such as YouTube move well beyond the model of the Web as users retrieving information from sites. The simple fact that new software developments facilitated easy access to uploading content to the Web enabled an explosion of activity in the early 2000s in which Web "users" become Web "producers." One of the primary aspects of this shift is a change in the notion of the "amateur" and the concept of the "expert"—thousands of political news blogs challenge the system, videos of recent events are instantly posted online, Wikipedia encyclopedia entries are coauthored by multiple users. Is this democratization in action?

These changes in how the Web is accessed and used have been greeted by a discourse about how these Web media sites are facilitating democratic potential. It is important, therefore, to consider that even though many aspects of Web 2.0 indicate important new forms of democratic engagement, opening up spaces for

political and cultural debate, participants in such social networking and Web media sites, however large a number, still constitute a very small percentage of Web users. Inevitably, hierarchies evolve within open systems such as this, and the sheer amount of information posted on blogs on any given day creates a kind of saturation. As mainstream media become more consolidated and news entities are cut back, the explosion of the blogosphere offers an important countersphere of debate and discourse. There is simply no doubt that images produced by nonprofessionals can acquire audiences on the Web through such websites in a way that has never happened before. Whether this is a video of a teenager enacting light saber moves from *Star Wars*, a scripted serial show created by nonprofessionals that gets them a Hollywood contract, the image of a politician making a potentially unpopular comment, or photographs taken by Iraq War veterans, these images have the potential to be seen by a global audience.

Media and the Public Sphere

The many different forms of media that exist simultaneously today are also a means through which concepts of a *public* are created. Thus the idea of the media having democratic potential contributes to a broader sense of a viewing public, national publics, and a global public, interconnected at least in part through media forms. The concept of a public has been the subject of debate from the early twentieth century and has given rise to vigorous debate about the differences between public and private. Michael Warner has written that a "public" can be defined as a space of discourse, which involves a relation among strangers, in which public speech is both personal and impersonal, a social space constituted through the "reflexive circulation of discourse," that is, the circulation and exchange of ideas.[21] Warner notes that one effect of the Internet on this circulation of ideas is that it has been speeded up. That is, the circulation of ideas in more traditional media such as newspapers and television took place at daily and weekly intervals, whereas now it takes place within the instant temporality of the Web.[22]

The notion of a public has been deeply allied with the concept of a public sphere as a site in which the public debates and discusses the issues relevant to its time. This model is based on the idea that there are distinctly separate public and private spheres and that the state is separate from private market interests. Yet the political terrain of all modern societies involves, to varying degrees, elements of private interest. Furthermore, the notion of a separation of public and private spheres is based on traditional definitions of gender, race, and class that must be rethought. The division between public and private depends on the belief that women should be relegated to the domestic sphere of the home and men to the public arena of business, commerce, and politics.

The concept of a public sphere in which public discussion and debate can take place has itself been the subject of debate since the beginning of the twentieth

century. A public sphere is ideally a space—a physical place, social setting, or media arena—in which citizens come together to debate and discuss the pressing issues of their society. Social commentator Walter Lippmann postulated, in the 1920s, that the public sphere was nothing more than a "phantom"—that it was not possible for average citizens to keep abreast of political issues and events and give them due consideration given the chaotic pace of industrial society. Definitions of the public sphere have since then been enormously influenced by the ideas of German theorist Jürgen Habermas. Habermas postulated that modern bourgeois society has had within it the potential for an ideal public sphere. Habermas saw the public sphere as a group of "private" persons who could assemble to discuss matters of common "public" interest in ways that mediated the power of the state. With the rise of newspapers, salons, coffeehouses, book clubs, and private social contexts in which debate over public issues could take place, the liberal European and American middle class of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries might seem to have had the potential for a public sphere of genuine debate within civil society. Habermas postulates that this public sphere has always been compromised by other forces within modern society, including the rise of consumer culture, the rise of the mass media, and the intervention of the state in the private sphere of the family and home.[23] In ideal terms, he saw that public sphere as emblematic of participatory democracy, a public context in which citizens could debate public issues regardless of their social status and in which rational discussion could produce positive social change. In addition, Habermas believed that the public sphere was a public space in which private interests

FIG. 6.11
Café Capoulade, Paris, 1925. Café culture was emblematic of the concept of the nineteenth-century public sphere

(such as business interests) were inadmissible, hence a place in which true public opinion could be formulated.

Habermas's theory of the public sphere has been endlessly debated. The nineteenth-century public sphere described by Habermas was restricted to the participation of bourgeois white men, and criticisms of his work have seen the exclusion of others, such as women, blacks, citizens of other ethnicities, noncitizens, and working-class people, as not simply the problem of the restrictions of a previous society but as constitutive aspects of this way of conceiving the public. In other words, this criticism states that the idea of a unified public sphere is not only a fallacy but is also based on exclusion (hence not truly public). Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge wrote a well-known critique of Habermas in 1972 (translated into English in 1993) in which they argue that the public sphere imagined by Habermas needs to be reconceived as a working-class ("proletarian") public sphere and that the model of the nineteenth-century European bourgeois public sphere had been too easily transformed into fascism, as it was in Germany in the 1930s. Negt and Kluge also updated the concept of the public sphere to include media, both media industries and alternative media, as a form of counterpublic.[24] In other words, they looked for some positive contribution by media to discussions within the public sphere rather than dismissing media, as Habermas had tended to do, as the enemy of rational public discourse.

Contemporary attempts to understand how the public converges and functions have proposed the idea of multiple public spheres and counterspheres rather than one single voice or constituency. For instance, political theorist Nancy Fraser has pointed out that historically women were relegated to the private domestic sphere of the home and elided from the public spaces and discourses of middle- and upper-class European and white men. She puts forth the useful alternative theory of a women's or a feminist countersphere, among other counterspheres of public discourse and agency.[25] A counterpublic understands itself to be subordinate in some way to the dominant public sphere but is still a site from which people attempt to speak up in society. Theorists such as Fraser suggest that we can envision many publics that can overlap and work in tension with each other: working-class publics, religious publics, feminist publics, and so forth. Along these line, feminist media critics such as Lynn Spigel have critiqued the assumptions about the distinction of public and private as a means of negating not only the space of the domestic sphere as a site of women's labor and activity but also the integration of media and domestic space.[26] Michael Warner notes that the sexual cultures of gay men and lesbians can be seen as a counterpublic in that it is a sphere of discussion, debate, and the circulation of ideas that is conscious of a distinction from a more dominant public and that is structured by alternative dispositions and protocols, "making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying."[27]

There are many ways in which traditional broadcast media attempt to create a sense of public dialogue through formats such as "town meetings" on television, call-in talk shows, and formats that address controversial issues by having

representatives of concerned populations and groups debate together. One example of the ways that the Internet and television are being used together to promote public access is TV Worldwide's AT508.com Internet TV channel, which was launched in 2002 at the World Congress on Disabilities. The channel offers free live webcasts of events such as forums on disability access issues and a review of the effectiveness of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of the U.S. Congress (a law that preceded the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990), which mandates federal agencies to provide information and information technology access to employees with disabilities on a par with the level of access experienced by nondisabled employees. Not only are these webcast forums *about* access, but they also enhance or make possible participation by individuals who otherwise might be unable to attend or to participate fully in such meetings in person due to mobility or sensory disabilities. For instance, in 2007, when wildfires were spreading throughout Southern California, communities potentially threatened by fire and smoke could closely chart the progress of fire and shifts in the wind through Web venues ranging from weather sites documenting the direction and quality of wind to maps indicating the fires' geographic spread to local news broadcasts showing footage and reporting on the direction of spread. They could also use their cell phones and the Internet to keep in touch with neighbors, friends in other neighborhoods, and local fire and police officials. People did not simply watch the news from afar. They participated in networks of communication as active producers and disseminators of crucial information in a rapidly changing situation in which they were directly involved.

Although Habermas's image of the nineteenth-century public café is appealing, the fact of the matter is that most publics communicate in mediated ways, through discussion groups, newsletters, journals, bookstores, conventions, conferences, festivals, zines, websites, chat groups, e-mail, text messaging, blog discussions, online worlds, and other forms of media. The ideal public sphere imagined in the context of modern societies is also more global in its constitution and more embedded in the production of culture. Arjun Appadurai deploys the term *public culture* to suggest the dimensions of a broader transnational public culture in which global cultural flows of not only media but also people are key factors in the formation of notions of a public in the twenty-first century. We discuss the circulation of images in a global public culture in chapter 10.

National and Global Media Events

One of the primary functions of media has been to promote feelings of connectedness in audience members. Media can affirm national sentiment and offer a sense of national connection. By airing an issue or event internationally, broadcasters signal global importance and offer a means of connecting affected communities across vast distances. In his highly influential 1983 analysis of nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson wrote that the modern nation-state is an imagined

political community—imagined as both limited (with borders) and sovereign (self-governing). Anderson famously noted that the nation is "*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[28] Anderson argued that many factors cohered in the modern nation-state to aid in the creation of these feelings of community, among them the rise of national newspapers. Although Anderson did not discuss television, one can certainly argue that television has been a central medium in the creation of national identity, in particular in times of crisis. Thus some critics have noted that Anderson's concept of "print capitalism" should be extended to include "electronic capitalism."[29] Because of its capacity for instant transmission, its public presence, and its situation within the domestic sphere of the home, television has played a primary role (as radio did before it) in fostering a sense of national identity and a collective public sphere, in particular in the latter half of the twentieth century. In its creation of the sense of participation in a national audience, television has also aided in the creation of a shared national identity through television series and miniseries. For instance, as Arvind Rajagopal has written, Hindu nationalism in India was fostered by the enormously popular television series *Ramayan*, a Hindu epic, shown on state-run television from 1987 to 1990. The Hindu epic, a nostalgic view of a Hindu past, was effectively deployed via television to signal a religious national mobilization.[30]

As we already noted, in many postwar cultures television was viewed in public places before it had fully saturated the home television markets. For instance, in Japan most television viewing took place in large outdoor plazas before the late 1950s, when more Japanese households acquired television sets. Shunya Yoshimi writes that professional wrestling was a popular genre of these outdoor broadcasts, which sometimes drew thousands of viewers.[31] Later, businesses such as restaurants began to capitalize on the popularity of public viewing by installing television sets for their customers' use. In Great Britain, as seen here, prior to the television era national sentiment was rallied through the use of mobile movie trailers that brought newsreels out of the theaters and into the public square, where citizens could bond over war news in a more public and interactive manner than the darkened private theater could allow. Collective public viewing can thus interpellate viewers as part of a national audience. When Anderson wrote of the imagined community of the nation, he stressed

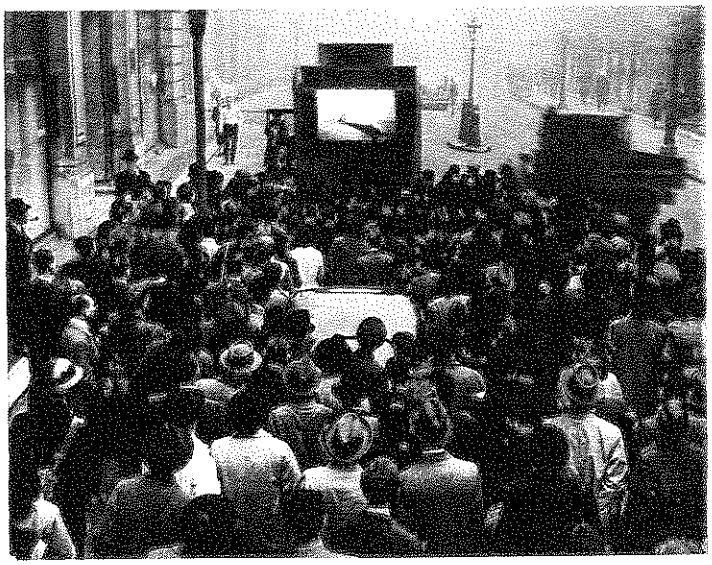


FIG. 6.12
A British crowd watches a film of the Royal Air Force projected from a mobile movie truck, October 1940

the importance of the sense of experiencing events at the same time. The fact that television can be transmitted instantaneously across great distances helps to create this sense of national or global community connectedness through the simultaneous experience of watching broadcasts of live events together with viewers dispersed across different locations. The public space created by these media is virtual rather than physical.

Over the past few decades, media events have affirmed the key role of television in creating a sense of simultaneous audiences while also expanding into a broad range of simultaneous media at work. Thus media events can be simultaneously local, national, and global, and they can involve an extraordinary range of producers, sources, and media. Let us take, for example, one of the most global of media events in the past decade, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in which four planes were simultaneously hijacked, one crashing into rural Pennsylvania and one into the U.S. Pentagon in Virginia and two planes crashing into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, which collapsed within two hours of the crash. Although little is publicly known about what the hijackers anticipated about news coverage of 9/11, it is commonly speculated that they strategized the timing of the hijackings to produce the largest potential global audience for their acts. When the first plane hit the North Tower, only a few cameras caught an image of the crash, and these images were taken purely by chance. Jules Naudet, a French filmmaker shooting a documentary about New York City firefighters, happened to glance up with his camera as the plane flew over him and struck the tower. That image would be central to *9/11*, the documentary that he and his brother would then produce about their experiences that day.[32] When the South Tower was hit by a second plane more than fifteen minutes later, there was an extraordinary number of people watching, not only from the street and rooftops of Lower Manhattan but also on screens and monitors receiving broadcasts of the live footage being recorded by the numerous television cameras that had been brought in to cover the scene of the first crash. Film and television documentaries that incorporate street-level footage of the second plane approaching the tower typically include not only the image but also the sound recorded at the scene. Accompanying the footage of the plane striking the second tower, we hear the horrified exclamations of the hundreds of people watching, along with the cameras, from below. Though the camera lenses were trained on the plane above heading into the tower, the live sound allowed us to picture the hundreds of spectators watching from the ground below, staring up in shock and disbelief that the unthinkable "event" of fifteen minutes earlier was about to happen for a second time. Television viewers watching the live broadcasts at a safe distance could watch with these witnesses, feeling their shock and fear through the medium of voice.

9/11 was a global media event of unprecedented proportions in which millions of viewers throughout the world saw images of the twin towers hit and falling, if not live, then within the span of a very short period of time. It was also an event

FIG. 6.13
Iconic image of World Trade Center towers being hit by second airplane, September 11, 2001

of immense spectacle—the image of the second tower exploding has been commonly referred to as the equivalent of a "movie," due to the unreality of the spectacle. This was an event that most thought simply could never really happen, except in the movies. It is now common to characterize the terrorist attacks of 9/11 as acts intended to produce above all an unforgettable image. As Slavoj Žižek has written, "we can perceive the collapse of the WTC towers as the climactic conclusion of twentieth-century art's 'passion for the Real'—the 'terrorists' themselves did not do it primarily to provoke real material damage but *for the spectacular effect of it*."[33] It is important to note that it is one of the primary aspects of spectacle that it overshadows and erases the actual violence behind it—in this case, the spectacle of the explosion erases the people who were incinerated within it. The point is not that spectacle is more important than real violence, but that spectacle is understood to have the potential to generate vast, global shock waves of violence that go beyond the actual destruction of life and property in the single event. These shock waves include invasions, sanctions, ethnic and religious conflict, and wars fanned by media spin.

The images of the twin towers exploding and then falling were instantly transmitted via satellite around the world. These images were recorded by photographic, digital, and video cameras, and disseminated via television transmission, websites,

newspapers, magazines, and e-mail. Although the meaning of 9/11 has since been effectively nationalized, in particular in the political rhetoric that followed it, it was a media event that made clear the global reach of the media. In an event such as this, we can see an array of intersecting media vectors through which information and images are simultaneously transmitted. The passengers on the hijacked planes and the people trapped in the World Trade Center used cell phones and sent e-mail to contact the police, family, and friends. Those connections created other networks of information flow via additional phone calls, e-mails, and text messages among relatives, friends, rescue workers and the press. In the case of United flight 93, it was through these communication vectors—specifically through cell phones—that passengers on the plane learned that several other planes had been hijacked and had crashed. This news apparently motivated passengers to attempt to take over the plane, leading it to crash in a field in rural Pennsylvania rather than its potential intended target somewhere in Washington, D.C. Over the hours that followed the hijackings, radio call-in shows were a forum for other vectors of exchange, and air travelers notified loved ones that they were safe by using e-mail. The television images transmitted instantly around the world were rapidly disseminated into many different formats and viewing contexts. Ironically, as the towers fell, they took with them an enormous television antenna and various cell phone transmitters, temporarily eliminating television reception and cell phone connection to many New Yorkers. Media industries clearly have an infrastructure that remains quite material and physical, even when our communication occurs in the realm of the virtual. In the week that followed, television in the United States remained focused on the crisis, with regular programming and advertising suspended. Such a dramatic change in the media activity of everyday life signaled not only the depth of the national crisis but also the shock it had produced.[34]

FIG. 6.14
Missing persons posters, New York, September 19, 2001

In the weeks and months that followed, still photography emerged as a uniquely important medium. In New York City, distraught family members searching for their missing loved ones created flyers, using snapshots and family

photographs to show relatives missing in the wake of the disaster, hoping they might be spotted, or might turn up in hospitals or among caregivers in the wake of the event. People in New York and surrounding areas created public shrines to mourn the dead, placing images of missing people and of the twin towers amid flowers and notes of grief and loss. Amateur photographs of the events of that day and its aftermath, taken by observers and by rescue workers, circulated though informal networks and were shown at several open exhibitions mounted in public venues throughout the city in the months afterward. Professional and amateur images have circulated in the media and in coffee-table books. In addition, websites have been central to discussions of 9/11, to the memorialization of those killed, and to the circulation of theories, including conspiracy theories, about what actually took place that day.

We can thus see how the meaning of a highly mediated event such as 9/11 is inextricably tied to the images that were produced and that continue to circulate about it through many venues and the media vectors that defined it. Its meaning as an event is inseparable from the iconic image of the towers falling and its spectacular qualities. The various ways in which this image has been used politically, whether as a tool of recruitment for Islamic fundamentalism or as the means by which the U.S. government justified subsequent wars, is enabled by its spectacular qualities. Yet, as the posters of missing people and the circulation of images in everyday networks show us, within the fabric of global media events such as 9/11, images can also be used in intimate and deeply moving ways; these show that media events are constructed by these broader systems of media vectors, but these are often accompanied by, interwoven with, and interlinked with images at the ground level.

Contemporary Media and Image Flows

It is important to note that there are many contexts of political change, violent conflict, and social injustice that are not covered by the media—through censorship, lack of access, and political indifference. The stories told through the media are always incomplete and always caught up in editorial decisions that cannot be separated from broader power structures. Newspapers, magazines, television channels, and Web media are owned by media conglomerates with political interests at stake. Sometimes this ownership results in direct and clear censorship as in the case where particular stories are stifled because they might reflect negatively on the parent company or one of its subsidiaries. More often, media institutions censor themselves, knowing that business survival depends on observing the boundaries of audience taste and opinion, as well as the interests of the dominant political system. Dependency on markets and government support makes it difficult if not impossible for media corporations to play the role of watchdog when it comes to reporting issues that involve potential infringements upon rights and freedoms by those who determine the financial stability of the corporation.

We can see how this affects media content in examining the image context of the war in Iraq, which began in 2003, and which has received restricted media coverage in particular in the United States, since its beginning. The U.S. military has systematically limited the activities of reporters and photojournalists in war zones since the Persian Gulf War of 1991. In the case of the Persian Gulf War, this was done by keeping reporters largely out of the areas in which combat fighting and bombing were taking place, so that the U.S. coverage of the war consisted mostly of images of weapons (and the images generated by cameras attached to those weapons)—a tactic that succeeded largely in erasing the Iraqi war dead from the television screens and news magazines of the American public. In the Iraq war, the U.S. military chose the tactic of embedding reporters within particular platoons and patrols, so that reporters saw the action of a particular group of soldiers and became identified with those soldiers. As the situation of the war worsened and security concerns heightened, news coverage of the war was heavily restricted by security concerns. Reporters Without Borders reports that between 2003 and March of 2006, 216 reporters and media assistants were killed in the Iraq war.

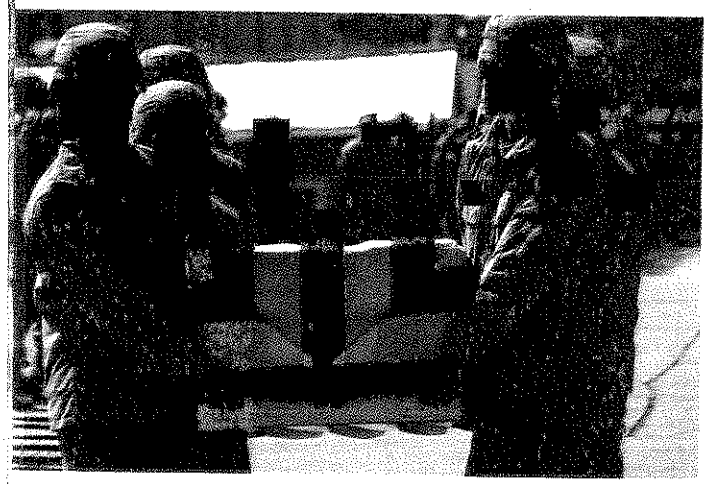


FIG. 6.15
Government images of U.S. Iraq war dead arriving at Dover Air Force Base, censored by the government, c. 2003

U.S. news organizations have historically refrained from showing images of American dead, though they have had no such restrictions on showing the enemy dead. Yet there are long traditions of showing the arrival of the American war dead at various military bases around the country. Since the Vietnam War, the U.S. military has treated the images of the flag-draped coffins as potentially political, if not incendiary. Since the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the Pentagon has banned the taking and publication of photographs of the flag-draped coffins of American soldiers returned to the United States. This has taken on extreme measures in the Iraq war. Even as the Pentagon has created its own archive of images taken by its own photographers, it has refused to release these images. This policy has been met with objections. A funeral protest at the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York included hundreds of empty coffins, conveying the message that we are allowing our war dead to go faceless, unrecognized. In April 2005, after two Freedom of Information Act suits, the U.S. government released a group of the images.[35] In releasing the second group of images, which were immediately placed on the website of the nonprofit organization the National Security Archive and published in many

major newspapers, the military chose to black out (or "redact") the faces of the soldiers who were carrying the coffins.

The political consequences of this kind of image restriction are many. Here we focus on the meanings generated by the released images. The military stated that it redacted the faces and insignia of the soldiers who were carrying the coffins and participating in the honor ceremonies for reasons of privacy. This claim seemed disingenuous to concerned citizens who responded that by rendering the soldiers faceless, the military effectively made the photos unusable, without the emotional and subjective meanings they would bear if we were able to see the mens' faces. The use of black rectangles (or digital pixelization to create a blur) in order to block content of an image has a long history and carries with it a set of associations about secret information, obscene imagery, or potential guilt. The black rectangles in these images block out the faces of the soldiers, screening out, in effect, their identities as individuals and any expression they may have had. This visual act also has the potential to make the soldiers and the ceremony they are participating in appear shameful or secretive.

Yet at the same time that the mainstream U.S. military and the U.S. media operated to restrict the kinds of images that were disseminated from the war, much more than European media, for instance, the changes that had taken place in the global media environment made evident the fact that the image story of the war would take place through new forms of image flow and circulation. Two examples make this clear: first, the rise of the Arab cable network Al Jazeera and the use of this network by radical fundamentalist groups such as al-Qaeda as a channel through which to broadcast video proclamations; and second, the release to the press in 2006 of a large number of images of sadistic torture and abuse of prisoners by U.S. soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq; these images circulated casually among soldiers and friends prior to the media exposé that revealed not only the extensiveness of prisoner abuse, but also the pervasive acceptance among soldiers of the practice of public sexual humiliation of prisoners for the apparent pleasure of display through photo documentation. These image networks made clear that traditional news organizations, such as the BBC and CNN, which had perceived themselves to be the source of news for global audiences throughout the world, are increasingly challenged by the media that have emerged in particular regions (Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya in the Middle East, Univision and Telemundo in Latin America) with very different, and sometimes more local, ways of depicting news events. In addition, a network such as Al Jazeera, which was begun in 1996 and is based in Qatar, emerged in defiance of state-run television in the Middle East, which had been heavily censored in countries such as Saudi Arabia.

The emergence of networks such as Al Jazeera was also coincident with the use of video as a tool of violence by many fundamentalist groups. Al Jazeera has been the primary news outlet through which al-Qaeda has released videos of Osama bin Laden's speeches. In addition, some militant groups have produced videotapes of the

on-camera beheadings of prisoners (most notably the killing of American journalist Daniel Pearl in Pakistan in 2004). These images were then posted on websites. In these contexts, the image itself has been a means to broadcast a political warning and message, and the new networks of image distribution, through which images moved quickly from websites into other distribution networks, have facilitated the ways in which these images have made the news, as they have then been reported on (though mostly not shown) in mainstream media networks.

That the dynamics of the global flow of images had changed with events surrounding the Iraq war was most obvious in spring of 2004 when photographs taken by U.S. soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq were published in several news publications and shown on television in the United States. In this media event, we can see all of these elements of the role of the image in violent conflict converge: the Abu Ghraib images document torture and abuse, but their circulation also further humiliates the prisoners in the photographs by exposing their humiliated bodies to a vast global public.[36] The act of photographing was clearly a means of heightening the men's physical and sexual abuse. The photographs are essentially snapshots, many with U.S. soldiers posing in them like tourists. For instance, this well-known image shows Private Lynndie England, who in 2005 was sentenced to three years in prison on charges relating to the documented abuses, holding a prisoner on a leash like a dog. In other images, soldiers posed like tourists pointing out something humorous while gesturing at hooded, naked male prisoners or at the corpses of prisoners who had been killed. The sexual humiliation that the camera heightens is also a form of cultural and religious humiliation. These are Muslim men forced to expose their bodies to a white female captor, who might be said to be the bearer of a male imperial gaze. The images began as private titillation, and were passed around in a personal network that included England's former fiance, Specialist Charles Graner, who was sentenced to ten years for his involvement in the Abu Ghraib abuses. The photographs were released to reporters and circulated through international media networks, beginning with a *60 Minutes II* news report and an article by Seymour M. Hersh in the *New Yorker* magazine in spring 2004. As the images circulated, some news stations branded their broadcasts of the images with their network logo, as if to claim ownership of them, and blurred or blocked out sections, but the debasement they document was nonetheless obvious. These

FIG. 6.16
Private Lynndie England holding a prisoner on a leash at the Abu Ghraib prison, Baghdad, Iraq, 2003

images raise important questions about the role of the visual in the psychology of sadism that permeates both warfare and racism.

Perhaps the most famous of the Abu Ghraib images is that of a hooded man standing with his arms outstretched with wires attached to his body. It fits within an iconography of suffering that extends back to the Christ figure on the cross and before.[37] The image of the hooded man was broadcast on news websites and then was appropriated in cartoons and remakes, including the iRaq culture jam that we discuss on page 85. The Abu Ghraib photographs demonstrate the ways in which images still play an important role as evidence. These images document what has been, providing evidence of facts that would otherwise be beyond the belief of the general public. Moreover, these images tell us something about the social relationship between seeing and sadism. Although we have discussed many of the ways in which images are censored, not reproduced, and suppressed in some form, it is important to recognize that the enhanced circulation of images, even ones as troubling as these, plays a key role in exposing injustice around the world, even when the making and circulating of the images can be bound up in that injustice.

FIG. 6.17
Iconic image of hooded prisoner at Abu Ghraib prison, Baghdad, Iraq, 2003

It is thus important to see the constant negotiation of power that exists in the media. Power is not simply held by one group or individual entity over another. It is always enacted across people and groups in complex, shifting, and uneven dynamics. The media are indeed in the control of powerful business and government entities, and they do influence our thinking, but audiences in a wide range of cultural and national settings resist, appropriate, and transform media texts not only at the level of consumption but also as producers of new meanings and new texts. Moreover, media consumers transform the technologies they use, adapting them to new settings and new uses. The rise of independent media has challenged the hegemonic control of media, yet it is not simply a site of resistant culture, but rather the source of a broad range of ideological positions and productions. For instance, when media coverage of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 failed to fully address the racial and class dynamics of the government's response to the disaster, independent filmmaker Spike Lee went to New Orleans to make a densely detailed, revealing, and scathing video commentary that aired on the HBO cable channel one short year later. Lee's *When the Levees Broke: A*

FIG. 6.18
Josie Harris and Tania Butler of the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans in Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*, 2006

Requiem in Four Acts is not simply about the natural disaster but about the political and social dynamics that escalated its most damaging impact on the black and poor citizens of New Orleans. It shows the institutional failure of the local and national government to ensure safety in advance of the storm for the residents of poor areas, such as the low-lying Lower Ninth Ward, and the subsequent failure of the government to address the needs of the citizens during the flood, when more valuable properties were afforded greater attention, and after the flood, when citizens remained without homes seemingly indefinitely. Controversies continue about the government's ineptitude and indifference and the continuing environmental risks to remaining residents housed in trailers offgassing levels of formaldehyde that exceed government limits and living in areas without basic services such as adequate water and sewage lines. Enhanced image reproducibility, flow, and technologies made it possible for Lee to generate a critical text dense with audiovisual evidence that twenty years ago it would have been impossible to obtain, particularly in under one year. Moreover, Lee's position as an "independent" director is no longer a barrier that places filmmakers in this category on the margins of visibility and the fringes of social commentary. The Web and digital editing were crucial factors in these changes. The contradiction between media as the product of global powers and media as technologies for local meaning and use exists not because the theories we rely on to assess the media are faulty but because the status of media in contemporary cultures is contradictory and mixed in exactly this way. We discuss the global flow of images, cultural forms, and ideas and global surveillance and monitoring at more length in chapter 10.

Notes

1. See Anthony Giddens, *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, 123–24 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press,1972); excerpt from Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 1933.
2. See, for example, David Reisman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950); and Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), which can be found online in full at http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/64onedim/odmcontents.html.
3. Jean Baudrillard, "Design and Environment, or How Political Economy Escalates into Cyberblitz," in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin, 185–203 (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981).
4. See Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering*, chapter 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
5. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Mentor, 1964). Republished in 1994 by MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

6. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).
7. http://www.laptopgiving.org.
8. See Eric Klinenberg, *Fighting for Air: The Battle to Control America's Media* (New York: Metropolitan, 2007).
9. Robert McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (New York: New Press, 2000).
10. Herbert I. Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination* (White Plains, N.Y.: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976).
11. Timothy Havens, *Global Television Marketplace* (London: British Film Institute, 2008).
12. John Fiske, *Reading the Popular* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
13. Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, 35–36 (New York: Routledge, 1989). See also Ien Ang, *Watching* Dallas*: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, trans. Della Couling (New York: Routledge, 1990).
14. Paul Lazarsfeld, Hazel Gaudet, Bernard F. Berelson, *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948).
15. See the account of this report to Congress by Jenkins at http://www.sirlin.net/Features/JenkinsGoesToWashington.htm (accessed March 2008).
16. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red Books, [1967] 1970), passages 3–5 in section 1, "Separation Perfected."
17. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment, Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, 94–136 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford: Stanford University Press, [1947] 2002).
18. Horkheimer and Adorno, "The Culture Industry," 99.
19. For a discussion of TVTV and guerrilla television, see Deirdre Boyle, *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
20. Paul Benedict and Nancy DeHart, eds., *On McLuhan: Forward through the Rearview Mirror*, 39 (Toronto: Prentice Hall Canada, 1996).
21. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, ch. 2 (New York: Zone, 2002).
22. Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 97–98.
23. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).
24. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. Peter Labanyi, Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1972] 1993).
25. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *The Phantom Public Sphere*, ed. Bruce Robbins, 1–32 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
26. Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).
27. Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 56.
28. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 15 (London: Verso, 1983).
29. Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics after Television: Religious Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Indian Public*, 24 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
30. Rajagopal, *Politics after Television*, 25.
31. Shunya Yoshimi, "Television and Nationalism: Historical Change in the National Domestic TV Formation of Postwar Japan." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 6.4 (2003), 459–87.
32. *9/11*, directed by Jules Naudet, Gédéon Naudet, and James Hanlon (2002, Paramount Pictures).
33. Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, 11 (London: Verso, 2002).
34. See Lynn Spigel, "Entertainment Wars: Television Culture after 9/11," *American Quarterly* 56.2 (June 2004), 235–70.
35. Two Freedom of Information suits were filed, in April 2004 by Russ Kick, the webmaster of www.memoryhole.com and in April 2005 by Professor Ralph Begleiter of the University of Delaware. See the National Security Archive (at George Washington University) website: http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/ (accessed March 2008).
36. On the Abu Ghraib images, see Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Invisible Empire: Visual Culture, Embodied Spectacle, and Abu Ghraib," *Radical History Review* 95 (Spring 2006), 21–44; Allen Feldman, "On the Actuarial Gaze: From 9/11 to Abu Ghraib," *Cultural Studies* 19.2 (March 2005), 203–36; and W. J.

T. Mitchell, "The Unspeakable and the Unimaginable: Word and Image in the Time of Terror," *ELH* (Summer 2005), 291–310.

37. See Hassan M. Fattah, "Symbol of Abu Ghraib Seeks to Spare Others His Nightmare," *New York Times*, March 11, 2006, A1; Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure* (New York: Penguin, 2008); and Errol Morris's film *Standard Operating Procedure*, 2008.

Further Reading

Ang, Ien. *Desperately Seeking the Audience.* New York: Routledge, 1989.

———. *Watching* Dallas*: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination.* Translated by Della Couling. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Allen, Robert, ed. *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities.* London: Verso, 1983.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation.* Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1981] 1995.

———. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign.* Translated by Charles Levin. St. Louis, Mo.: Telos Press, 1981.

Baughman, James L. *The Republic of Mass Culture: Journalism, Filmmaking, and Broadcasting in America since 1941.* 2nd ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Benedict, Paul, and Nancy DeHart, eds. *On McLuhan: Forward through the Rearview Mirror.* Toronto: Prentice Hall Canada, 1996.

Boddy, William. "The Beginnings of American Television." In *Television: An International History.* 2nd ed. Edited by Anthony Smith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 23–37.

——— *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

——— *New Media and Popular Imagination: Launching Radio, Television, and Digital Media in the United States.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Boy, A. H. S. "Biding Spectacular Time." *Postmodern Culture*, 6(2) (January 1996), http://www.monash.edu.au/journals/pmc/issue.196/review-2.196.html.

Boyle, Deirdre. *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Buckingham, David, ed. *Reading Audiences: Young People and the Media.* Manchester, U.K.: University of Manchester Press, 1993.

Chapman, Jane. *Comparative Media History: An Introduction: 1789 to the Present.* Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2005.

Couldry, Nick. *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach.* New York: Routledge, 2003.

Crary, Jonathan. "Spectacle, Attention, Counter-Memory." *October* 50 (Autumn 1989): 96–107.

Dayan, David, and Elihu Katz. *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle.* Detroit: Black and Red Books, [1967] 1970. Reissue translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books, 1994.

——— *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle.* Translated by Malcolm Imrie. London: Verso, 1990.

Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.

Ewen, Stuart, and Elizabeth Ewen. *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness.* New York: McGraw Hill, 1982.

Fiske, John. *Understanding Popular Culture.* London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

———. *Reading the Popular.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." In *The Phantom Public Sphere*. Edited by Bruce Robbins. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, 1–32.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Translated by Thomas Burger. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989.

Hansen, Miriam. *Babel & Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Havens, Timothy. *Global Television Marketplace*. London: British Film Institute, 2008.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*. Edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Standford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, [1947] 2002.

Huyssen, Andreas. "Mass Culture as a Woman: Modernism's Other." In *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, 44–62.

Klinenberg, Eric. *Fighting for Air: The Battle to Control America's Media*. New York: Metropolitan, 2007.

Klinger, Barbara. *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Kintz, Linda, and Julia Lesage, eds. *Media, Culture, and the Religious Right*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Lazersfeld, Paul F., and Robert K. Merton. "Mass Communication, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action." In *Media Studies: A Reader*. Edited by Paul Marris and Sue Thornham. Edinburgh, U.K.: Edinburgh University Press [1948] 1996, 14–23.

Ledbetter, James. *Made Possible By: The Death of Public Broadcasting in the United States*. London: Verso, 1997.

Paul Marris and Sue Thornham, eds. *Media Studies: A Reader*. Edinburgh, U.K.: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.

McCarthy, Anna. *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001.

McChesney, Robert. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. New York: New Press, 2000.

——— *The Political Economy of Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Revised Edition. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, [1964] 1994.

Meehan, Eileen R. "Why We Don't Count: The Commodity Audience." In *The Logics of Television*. Edited by Patricia Mellencamp. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1990, 117–37.

Negt, Oskar, and Alexander Kluge. *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*. Translated by Peter Labanyi, Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff. Foreword by Miriam Hansen. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1972] 1993.

Nightingale, Virginia. *Studying Audiences: The Shock of the Real*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Rajagopal, Arvind. *Politics after Television: Religious Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Indian Public*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Robbins, Bruce, ed. *The Phantom Public Sphere*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Ross, Andrew, and Constance Penley, eds. *Technoculture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

Schiller, Herbert I. *The Mind Managers*. Boston: Beacon, 1973.

———. *Culture, Inc: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

———. *Communication and Cultural Domination*. White Plains, N.Y.: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976.

———. *Information Inequality: The Deepening Social Crisis in America*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Silverstone, Roger. *Television and Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Smith, Anthony, ed. *Television: An International History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Smulyan, Susan. *Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Radio, 1920–1934*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.

Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

———. *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001.

Staiger, Janet. *Media Reception Theories*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

Thompson, John B. *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Tracey, Michael. "Non-Fiction Television." In *Television: An International History*. 2nd ed.. Edited by Anthony Smith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 69–84.

Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone, 2002.

Williams, Raymond. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. New York: Schocken Books, 1974.

Yoshimi, Shunya. "Television and Nationalism: Historical Change in the National Domestic TV Formation of Postwar Japan." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 6.4 (2003), 459–87.

Žižek, Slavoj. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* London: Verso, 2002.