

CURATION PEDAGOGY FOR MEDIA STUDIES: (FURTHER) TOWARDS THE INEXPERT

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ABSTRACT *An educational 'model' for participatory learning and media literacy in the contemporary context of digitally mediated lifeworlds is emerging (Jenkins, 2010; Gauntlett, 2011; Fraser and Wardle, 2011). The critical problem, we argue, for its 'adequacy' is the privilege granted to curriculum content and skills over pedagogy. Elsewhere, we offered a 'pedagogy of the inexpert' as such a model for text-conscious disciplines such as, but not restricted to, Media Studies. This strategy removes 'the media' from our gaze and looks awry to develop new ways of working with students – to 'show and tell' textual agency and more reflexive deconstruction of what it is to read and make media, and to 'be' in mediation. In this article, we develop this approach further towards a model of 'curation'. Understood in this way, students 'show' media literacy in new spaces – not by recourse to skills, competences or analytical unmasking of the properties of a (contained) text, but by exhibiting, by curating a moment in time of textual meaning-making and meaning-taking, but with a mindfulness – a critical acceptance of such an attempt to hold and curate the flow of meaning as an artifice.*

KEY WORDS

CURATION, MEDIA LITERACY, PEDAGOGY, RANCIERE

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A PEDAGOGY OF CURATION

New digital media have not *in themselves* caused a temporal shift. Rather, they have allowed educators to more clearly understand a problem (of restricting textual agency in the classroom to producer / audience and teacher / student) and work towards a solution – a more reflexive engagement with mediation in ‘flow’. We arrive, then, at a ‘knowing compromise’ for dealing with media as fluid and flowing in the age of ‘realised’ participation. This constitutes our ‘adequate model’. John Potter has offered a theory of curation as an active literacy practice, providing “alignment between theories of media production, learner agency, voice and identity in a new formation around the concepts of curatorship, representation and exhibition” (2012: 11). Here we propose a pedagogy of curation for Media Studies.

This article offers an application of this curation pedagogy to three events – *L.A Noire*, *A Separation* and the *Occupy movement*. In conceptualizing the ‘teaching’ of these events and their fluid ‘reception’ in a field of media learning defined by engagement and participation, we will explore, for Media Studies today, the productive intersection between the curatorial and the educational with attention to its potential for a more embodied media literacy.

MEDIA STUDIES (1.5)

The degree to which ‘Web 2.0’ has enabled ‘Media 2.0’ and quite how liberating this might be have been the subject of much debate in our field as these three statements, all in response to Will Merrin’s initial (online) intervention and the subsequent exchange of views, serve to illustrate:

I would agree that it is necessary to keep pace with our students’ media experiences and their changing orientations towards media. Nevertheless, we also need to beware of assuming that those experiences are all the same (the ‘digital generation’ argument) and keeping up with our students does not mean we should automatically import the latest technological gimmicks into the classroom, let alone start pinging up our Facebook profiles in some hopeless desire to be ‘down with the kids’. (Buckingham, 2010: 26)

Technological determinism’ is a charge which is often levelled at people who are merely seeking to discuss ways in which technology *could* be used. It’s laughable, sometimes – and quite intolerable – how an argument which merely dares to suggest a positive rather than negative application of social media is instantly branded as ‘technological determinism’. You could say it’s part of an academic sickness, that to be seen as ‘cool’ and ‘critical’ you can only subscribe to the most negative diagnoses of everything (Gauntlett, in McDougall, 2011:115).

As academics, we are bad at accepting partial victories, but at the moment, participatory culture is a partial victory in so far as a significant number of people (although we don’t agree on how to count them) have made a transition in their communicative power over the last decade through hard won battles to broaden participation (Jenkins, in Berger and McDougall, 2011: 25).

Henry Jenkins' 'transmedia education' (2010) offers a framework which is increasingly reflected in media education practice – at least in higher education – with students working across media forms to produce – and analyse – work which Jenkins defines as 'spreadable', 'immersive', 'mapped' and 'performative' (among other descriptors). We see the move to 'transmedia' as a helpful shift away from 'the media' – a starting point for a more radical return to textual fields as being about just 'life', without subject / object distinctions.

David Buckingham (2010) is more pessimistic about the capabilities of media education to realise the ambitions of 'critical media literacy'. Three 'wrong turns' are identified in his critique. Firstly, the shift to 'digital literacy' in the policy rhetoric and educational discourse dilutes criticality in the privileging of a competence model. Secondly, the 'Media Studies 2.0' intervention (Merrin, 2008 and Gauntlett, 2011) is derided as patronising and naïve 'techno-euphoria'. Thirdly, a renewed interest of media educators in a 'multimodal media literacy lens' (Instrell, 2011) is viewed as an unhelpful over-extension of linguistics into social theory. These three moves, Buckingham argues combine to undermine the potential of media literacy to develop critical thinking. In this dystopian narrative, technology, 'modes' and 'brave new world' claims for democracy are uncritically heralded and our educational response to them little more than a set of ill-defined new 'skills'. We argue, though, that the positions taken by Buckingham (and Laughey, 2011) with his call for a 'Back to Basics' return to Media Studies 1.0) on the one hand and David Gauntlett and Will Merrin on the other have been unhelpfully polarised in the debate – and it's 'retelling' and that another 'in between' space (or even a 'third way') is available to us if we bear witness to it (Berger and McDougall, 2012).

LIFE

Media Studies starts from the observation that media now permeate almost every moment of our existence. There is almost nothing that we do that escapes mediation. (Press and Williams, 2010: 194). Media Studies can only be framed by this precept, the study of everyday life. In which case the 'fault lines' between the subject and Cultural Studies are difficult to mark out. Teaching Media Studies after the media means looking awry from 'The Media' as a 'Big Other' which is separate to people and life and thus objectifiable, exclusive, alienating – just as the schooled construction of 'Literature' is discursively configured as different to everyday literacy practices. If everyday life is mediated and textual, then our subject is the study of (Textualised) Lives. We do not posit that broadband internet and social media have brought about any kind of paradigm shift or temporal 'rupture'. Rather, we argue that digital online media simply allows us to see more clearly (Kendall and McDougall, 2012) the mediation of everyday life and the complexity of being media literate in the world with others, to the extent that we are forced to ask more searching questions about the 'adequacy' of our pedagogy – new digital media are, then, a catalyst for a more reflexive media pedagogy. In its most simple terms, our 'pedagogy of the inexpert' is a handing over of power, of mastery, towards a more negotiated pedagogy where students and teachers exchange and negotiate

degrees of cultural capital – gamer student – experts working with teachers to theorise their gaming cultures, both surrendering some power in the construction of new kinds of ‘knowledge’ about game events and transmedia participations. This new model will embed the process of meaning making – as opposed to ‘the media’ (or its various forms of ‘content’) as central to critical media literacy. Our objective is to locate our practice ‘in between’ Buckingham’s rejection of the ‘Media 2.0’ thesis and the apolitical discourse of its more ‘emancipatory’ claims, mindful that “the internet’s influence is filtered through the structures and processes of society” (Curran, Freedman and Fenton, 2012: 179).

The difference in our model is clear and simple – we are concerned not merely with the content of the media curriculum or the status of our students as more or less ‘native’ in digital culture but rather with pedagogy, oddly neglected in the debate hitherto. Accepting that ‘mediation’ is a big part of social life, but sceptical about any radical potential in teaching ‘The Media’ as a ‘Big Other’ (Zizek, 1999) – akin to ‘Literature’ – we view media pedagogy *after the media* as a “redistributional public intervention” (Curran, Freedman and Fenton, 2012: 183).

TEACHING IN THE END TIMES

We start out here from the end –point of *After the Media* (Bennett, Kendall and McDougall, 2011) where a series of questions for text conscious ‘culture literacy’ were posed, for media pedagogy in the twenty-first century. These questions sought to move student from ‘text’ to ‘event’, to a rethinking of ‘spaces and places for consuming and producing textual meaning’ (*ibid.* 231). Just as ‘Media 2.0’ requires us to reimagine the idea of audience in relation to that of ‘producer’, so the pedagogy of the inexpert demands an equivalent reimagining of ‘student’ and ‘teacher’ – we find ourselves “in between lots of spaces’ (*ibid.* 239).

A contemporary ‘reboot’ of Media Studies through auto-ethnographic practice can be achieved by drawing on Jacques Rancière to conceptualise what such practice might look like in the digital realm. Where *After the Media* offered critique, here we provide application to three events. *A Separation* (Farhadi, 2011) narrates and frames both its subject-positions and its public and private spaces, *L.A. Noire* is understood as an (authorless) literary event and then we turn to a (perhaps) more disparate event in the form of the Occupy movement. Through these applications, we offer Media Studies new opportunities to re-ask long-standing questions of its objects (and events) of study; seeking to work with notions of ‘curating’ and ‘inexpertise’ and making use of the work of Rancière to transgress the unhelpful and outmoded boundaries we’ve hitherto constructed in education between ‘art’, ‘media’ ‘text’ and ‘politics’. Rancière’s notion of ‘lost adequation’ – the gap between the self-reflective practices of aesthetic discourse – whereby ‘representation’ is assessed on its own terms, away from ‘doing’ – constructing an empty space ‘in between’ creating and reception (2007: 95) is a pertinent conception for the ‘traverse’ Media Studies has found itself trapped in. When applied to ‘new’ media (relatively speaking) such as videogames, we can see a space opening up for a ‘re-adequation’:

The inner logic of the form is such that it invites people to play and in so doing opens up a form of experience that is resistant to, but not oppositional, in relation to the dominant societal logic ... in the way that they play with dissemblance and defy audience / player expectations, video games exceed mediatized entertainment in the direction of form. (Kirkpatrick, 2011: 44, 93)

Our argument is not that videogames are somehow 'different' in this way. Rather, we see this 'readequation' towards analysis of meaning making as helpful for the study of all mediated experience. New digital media forms do not disrupt this paradox any more than web 2.0 'ends' the media. Rather, 'Media 2.0' enables such a 'readequation' of the always-already embodied meaning making, obscured by both aesthetic discourse and 'the media'.

CURATION (1)

Rancière's eponymous essay in the collection *The Emancipated Spectator* (2011) raises useful insights into both questions of pedagogy, referring as he does to his earlier work *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991) and into notions of the relation between particular cultural products, however expanded or 'after' that might be, and its audience. *After the Media* described the 'classic' Media Studies categories as, following Jacques Derrida (1967), *under erasure*, in that they are unstable but still held to be useful established discourses. Going further, we now raise the question of what an expanded 'post-critique' would look like - do auto-ethnographic artefacts exemplify and foster adequate engagement and critical media literacy? Should we foster pedagogy and assessment that allow for students to be aware of codes of signification and how they work but then play with or deconstruct those very codes by inscribing themselves into the assessment? How might students' auto-ethnographic artefacts play with or scramble 'regimes of representation'?

'After the Media' was a deliberate attempt to "foreground... the social practice aspects of reading", (Bennett, Kendall and McDougall, 2011: 225) rather than fetishizing 'the text' and to draw on "contingent playfulness that characterises the life-world experiences of young people" in which 'the text is deeply embedded in the practices of social and cultural life" (*ibid.* 226), proposing a pedagogy that can "invert...the dynamics of traditional investigative endeavour of text-conscious subjects from a concentration on text to a focus on audience" (*ibid.* 232). Any assessment forthcoming from this proposed pedagogy would be different from either textual analysis or mere 'production', concerned rather with being "process rather than content oriented" (*ibid.* 232).

So we are concerned here with capturing such a process. Kristin Ross (2007) discusses the status of an artwork in a commodity market rather than a unique crafted artefact in an educational setting:

In the art world especially, a prevalent post-Situationist context has led to a form of morose but pleasurable political resignation in the face of the all-consuming nature of the commodity and the market, a market that saturates, conditions, and determines the production and reception of artworks. In a related development, the tenacious remnants of Baudrillard's thinking can be found lurking throughout the discourse of art criticism, proclaiming the bankruptcy of art in a world where everything has devolved into image. (Ross, 2007: 2)

Ross's insights are two-fold, circumscribing a familiar stalemate or dead-end of both cultural production and cultural theory. From one corner, a familiar plight of 'Oh, no, everything I do is appropriated', of the market absorbing opposition into style for its own hegemonic ends; from the other, the harassing voice of theory confirming the futility of cultural production because of a march of the spectacle striding over any meaning. It is this attempted avoidance of self-referential *mise en abyme* that auto-ethnographic artefacts address, inscribing the reception and reinterpretation of cultural exchange – mediation – on the everyday and the personal. Students' media work will not present *critique* of 'the media' but semi-autonomous re-inscriptions, aspects of their production and existence. At the same time, they locate (or reframe) media 'in context' – their 'conditions of possibility' (Foucault, 1972: 46).

If we are to see the production of artefacts without the event of their presentation, the dialogues, and without the personal stories, as offering a traditional *critique* of media, the objects are in danger of duplicating their seductive power. Given this, their essential 'amateurness' or 'inexpertise' may then in fact be their strength, remaining unduplicatable by what they are critiquing – showing a 'knowing' meta-awareness of representation without claiming to do so from outside the process.

If the inexpert status of auto-ethnographic artefacts as alternative forms of assessment is their strength rather than their offering a rational negation that can be exposed to co-option by media representation, then, in play with genre or conventions of representation, such 'curiosities' add an element of 'uncanny' into anything that looks more 'commodified'.

Media learning is here constructed in (dialogic) events – conversations around assemblages – a process that is able to talk us, teachers and students, out of the two corners Ross outlines above, the flattening into image and the political resignation in the face of the market. These, 'assemblage-events' offer the opportunity to present textualised lives, embracing disorientation and loss of mastery towards a 'frivolity' that "undoes and is undone" (MacLure, 2006: 6).

Pleaching

Now, turning to Rancière's notion of the "emancipated spectator" (2011) we will explore the possibility that the assemblage event in digital form might explore and represent how media, in their expanded state, 'work' and how a student might 'curate' their response to texts. Assemblage-events, as we have called them, are processes. Our notion of the assemblage event, drawing on conceptions of dialogues around auto-ethnographic artefacts that employ metaphor and analogy, is best described as 'pleaching'. To pleach is to interweave, making or renewing (such as a hedge, or arbor) in so doing. Rancière describes how in the modernist theatre, both staging and performance "intend to teach their spectators ways of ceasing to be spectators and becoming agents of collective practice" (2011: 7-8) that offer insights into how we might theorise a pedagogy in which students can 'curate' their textualised lives:

Theatre is presented as a medium striving for its own abolition ... this self-vanishing mediation is not something unknown to us. It is the very logic of the pedagogical relationship: the role assigned to the schoolmaster in that relationship is to abolish the distance ... to replace ignorance by knowledge. (Rancière, 2011: 8)

The facilitation of students to emancipation, following Rancière's argument, requires that the teacher "must always be one step ahead" (*ibid.*), in other words re-distancing knowledge because the student:

...is the one who does not know what she does not know or how to know it ... he is the one who knows how to make it an object of knowledge at what point ... knowledge that cannot simply be ordered in accordance with the ascent from the simplest to the most complex (ibid. 8-9).

Radical media pedagogy, the 'adequate model' required for this journal, cannot maintain 'stupefying distance' that can 'only be bridged by an expert' (*ibid.* 10) "the ignorant schoolmaster is named thus ... because he has uncoupled his mastery from his knowledge ... he does not teach his knowledge, but orders them to venture into the forest of things and signs" (*ibid.* 11, emphasis in the original). Following this, our notion of a 'curatorial' understanding helps us move towards an understanding of how self-crafting or curating an event from student's textualised lives will be a conscious act of 'indiscipline' – a 'not-knowing' or opening interpretation to an ellipses or that which it might not be yet. Less interpreting a text with theory, or presenting work for 'validation' than thinking the object itself as a method or as a theory. We do Media Studies, then, by wilfully ignoring the rules and discourses of Media Studies, itself the problem, to disrupt the logic of the 'stultifying pedagogue' who is insisting we speak a common (active) language about (contained and 'knowable') texts.

CURATION (2)

In order to exemplify our pedagogy of curation, we offer three 'exhibits' to model our new modes of practice in different contexts – a more 'traditional' Media Studies example (a film), an emerging but still neglected field (game studies) and a less obviously 'textual' event in the form of a 'movement'. In each case, we provide a strategy for facilitating 'curatorial self-presentation' – towards a more embodied media literacy. For each example, we firstly apply the 'end-point' questions from *After the Media* to the event in question, secondly present the teaching of such curation as the work of the 'ignorant schoolmaster' – to extend our strategy for inexpert pedagogy – and thirdly describe the implications for students' work – understood now as 'assemblage events' in relation to the constraints of contemporary 'Subject Media' – the institutionalised form of Media Studies.

Exhibit A: A separation

*He doesn't even know you are his son
But I know he's my father*

A Separation is a film of many 'not-knowings'. Phillip Kemp notes that the film "pays us the compliment of letting us make up our own minds" (2011: 77). In that sense, apart from the opening scene shot from the point of view of the divorce judge, the handheld camera "roams about freely, framing and reframing tight groupings of people in confined spaces, shifting perspectives just as the balance of argument shifts between them. No one viewpoint is privileged" (*ibid.*). In other words, both the camera work and the narrative 'builds in' and thus curates ellipses. If this film was to be 'explained' by recourse to 'narrative conventions' it would share similarities with Film-Noir's conventions, the audience must be open to 'not-knowing' for most of the film, just as it shares with the cinematographic conventions of noir camera shots; actors are filmed through doors, window frames, blinds, courtrooms; and even an immediate quasi-documentary style.

Yet the film is doubly indisciplined, especially in its politics. It does not play with genre by referencing convention as postmodern cinema might nor is it overtly 'political' in the sense that a modernist film might be. The film's only overtly political moment is when Simin is asked why she does not want raise her daughter in Iran, she relies 'Because of the conditions.' The judge then replies, 'What conditions?' To which she does not reply, leaving another impasse of not-knowing. Godfrey Cheshire (2012) accounts for the film's opened inexpert politics when he describes this scene:

If Farhadi were to skewer Iranian officialdom, he might have started here. However, his intent, it seems clear from the context, is neither to make nor avoid a political statement, but rather to show how such situations play out in Iran. Dissent (Cheshire, 2012: 78)

The phrase 'play out' seems a perfect description of the film's indiscipline, its politics expanded beyond conventional notions of political cinema, just as 'neither to make nor avoid' seems another useful way of describing how the film might be thought of opening out boundaries or curating possible interpretations.

Its status as a film in national and international cinemas is further indisciplined, we, again, do not know if its commercial and critical success emerges from the conditions of possibility validated by both 'stultifying logic' of the schoolmaster, by Western art-house schedulers and by Iran's authoritarian regime. To paraphrase Rancière, how does a film come to be considered philosophical or political? This not-knowing opens the film's status and more importantly, its interpretation out to something that might help us move from seeing the film as text waiting for an explanation, to exploring a much more active notion of openness in the way it organises its own spaces, in the way characters open and connect to each other, in the way the text and characters might 'curate'. This could then offer insights into newer more emancipated pedagogic literacies. Posing the critical questions from *After the Media*, we emancipate or open the discussion from how audiences might experience the text away from expert discourses that discuss narrative conventions, camera work, its genre, its status in international symbolic, cultural and commodity exchange – the traditional concerns of 'Subject Media' (McDougall, 2004) – towards a curation of how *A Separation* – in our textualised lives – can tell the different stories of an event (arising from Nader's father's Alzheimer's), around competing versions of 'the truth'.

If we can and should only be inexpertly open to the 'not-knowing', then what better tentative image than that of Simin's headscarf: worn in doors even in female company yet within the representational regime of cinema, of Iranian cinema under an authoritarian regime, so presumably not taken off. As Western spectators, we cannot know.

So although an activity following from students viewing *A Separation* might be more difficult to 'curate' due to its status as more traditional exhibit, we propose asking students to script or film a series of 'outtakes'. Fictional and de-centred scenes students envisage were discarded from the film act as pleaches that re-inscribe the text with their responses to it, as if opening or emancipating the film to making further meaning(s) that other audiences and themselves might make. The pleached film then becomes presented as part of an auto-ethnographic assemblage, like a digital version of a 'Cabinet of Curiosities'. Students are not required to 'explain' the new film but instead present the 'outtakes' as accounting for the event for their peers. Less *A Separation Redux*, more the event opened and emancipated.

Exhibit B: *L.A. Noire*

Videogame play is, above all, an act of performance and as such has always been an awkward exclusive category for the conceptual 'vertical discourse' (Bernstein, 1996) of Media Studies and, in particular, 'audience'. Gamers, in our previous research (Kendall and McDougall, 2009) have demonstrated an explicit and 'knowing' meta-awareness of how to play against, with or despite game narrative, a playful, enacted and embodied criticality that resonates with the (postmodern) 'pick and mix' reader of texts – dialogic reading practices that offer possibilities for 'being' that are difficult to pin down as 'reception'. Such 'parology' (Lyotard and Thebaud, 1985) – new moves in the game that disrupt orthodox analyses of 'effects' and of reading itself – provide compelling evidence that there is no singular 'way of being' in a game event. This has obvious implications for the 'key concept' of audience in media education.

In taking *L.A. Noire* as our second exhibit we are forced to confront its dissemination as an event which strives to be a text – in other words, here is a game designed and marketed as 'literary'. Understood in this way, we might view this game as being the 'easiest' to study within the frames of reference of conventional Media Studies – the game has a clear set of genre conventions, intertextuality is thickly layered, there is discernible 'representation' of gender, place, time. We might credibly think of *L.A. Noire* as (authorless) literature (Berger and McDougall, 2012). And yet, in the act of playing, the 'audience' must always-already disrupt any such arrangements.

A reading of this event derived from literary / filmic analysis will recognise *L.A. Noire's* appropriation of conventions from American film noir texts of the 1940s and 1950s, as well as later texts such as *Alphaville* (Godard, 1965) and *L.A. Confidential* (Hanson, 1997). The novels of Elmore Leonard and James Ellroy also contribute to this 'sphere' of influence. Unlike these novels and films, of course, *L.A. Noire* is an author / auteur-less digital event which is pre-designed but 'written', in narrative terms, only when read (played). The intention to 'digitally transform' the 'hard-boiled detective novel' might call us to further

examine the relationship of exchange that exists between linear and digital texts – another ‘in between’, another trace of ‘Media 1.5’. But more interesting, for our project, is an exploration of how gamer-students and Media teachers might work with *L.A. Noire* to reconfigure dynamics of expertise, begin a remediation of the curriculum and respond to the digital transformation of what we think it means to ‘read’ in order to think differently about the function of texts and the nature of textual ‘authority’ in the digital age. Put simply, surely there is no better contemporary example of the ‘ignorant schoolmaster’ than the teacher working with the gamer-student on an academic deconstruction of a (digitally transformed) ‘book’ they are unlikely to read (or even be able to). Only by conceiving of the game experience as event, we argue, can we be free of such constricting discourses of expertise. In Slavoj Žižek’s words (to which we’ll turn), the dispersed event gives us the ‘red ink’.

The player / reader embodies Cole Phelps, performing as a detective, investigating and making judgments about corruption. As we can discern from this student / gamer / blogger, the status of the ‘audience’ for this event is complex:

Sticking to the standard that is set by a game which carries film noir characteristics, the main protagonist is a flawed justice-seeking detective. The interesting twist however is that we, the players, watch his rise, fall and eventual redemption. We see him love and we see this reciprocated, but equally we see him despised, as his ‘bad behaviour’ is uncovered. Phelps is an interesting character to play, especially as through the facial mapping technology we play as a digitised actor rather than an avatar. (Dunning, ‘Digital Transformations’ blog post: Berger and McDougall, 2012)

Curating, the emphasis is on resisting any notion that *L.A. Noire* is an unusual event, with identified (and exceptional) ‘twists’ in its generic and formal properties – (authorless) literature, a ‘novel’ which is read through gameplay, but rather to understand it as revealing various ‘in between’ states that have always-already existed in media reception and exchange but have been obscured by analysis of apparently ‘contained’ texts.

I suppose in terms of looking at it as a text or otherwise looking at it as what you might call different types of text reader relations and I compare that to say ‘a book’ and does the author control the meaning of the book, audience reaction and it’s not too dissimilar in terms of interrogating who controls the game and arguably on the surface at least it’s the gamer that controls the game but then you’re in a fictional world of which are set by somebody else so I don’t know if it’s that dissimilar to looking at any other texts. (Teacher, Digital Transformations interview: Berger and McDougall, 2012)

Well it’s a little bit different with games in the sense that in one sense I was trying to rush through and get the story and find out the story so I didn’t do any of the side visions as I was trying to get through the story but to cover everything and find all the un-lockable stuff you could be spending hours and hours on it so it is different in that sense because I know that you can read into a novel and if you read it front to back you can teach about it but with the game you can play it but to unlock everything to think you’re going to be teaching about it I think that would take a lot longer. (Student, Digital Transformations interview: Berger and McDougall, 2012)

Researching the potential for *L.A. Noire* to be ‘taught’ as an authorless novel, interview data yielded from participating students and teachers offered differing views on the

question of the 'inexpert' – whether the teacher must acquire 'mastery' of the game. However, responses to questions about the 'status' of *L.A. Noire* as a novel were more consensual – moving away from the simple affirmative to a shared dismantling of the premise of the question – a shared understanding of 'indiscipline'; we might suggest. Media students curating this event would, then, find parodic meaning-making in the act of returning the complex event, despite itself, to the status of a straightforward hard-boiled novel, responding to Rockstar Games act of textual recoding – the '*Collected Stories*' (Rockstar, 2011) by producing an intertextual range of artefacts that, in each case, undermine the complexity of inter-event signification. A short 'Noir' story based on the game, a 'cheat's guide' or walkthrough for reading / watching *Double Indemnity*, and then a machinima film derived from a 'non-narrative' or 'ludic' game which transposes the gameplay into it's other – a genre vignette out of *Mario*. Such a 'redistributional public intervention' *does* critical media literacy – turning the language games of media in on themselves, but from within their modes of representation, reproducing – through curation - the always-already excessive nature of transmediation. In simpler terms, parody becomes the 'order of things' – every act of curation is an exhibition of the conflict between form, aesthetics and analysis – the self-regarding language game of 'critique' is made dynamic by this deliberate inversion of category – novel, film game, genre. By undermining – through parodic amplification – the notion that it matters whether a game is 'like a novel', deconstruction becomes an energy – a 'cheat's guide' for *Double Indemnity* is more than mere provocation – the critical questions asked by *After the Media* are laid bare – what is reading, what is play, what is it to 'cheat', might reading 'Literature' be a game with rules? Is York Notes a walk-through?

Exhibit C: Occupy

Occupy is certainly a (dispersed) event and as such, a greater departure from orthodox ways of seeing 'text' than our other exhibits. However, the 'turn' we offer – from analysis and / or practice to 'curation' is arguably best made by situating such a 'movement' as a template for making sense of the concept hitherto known as 'reception'. Zizek, addressing the occupiers in Zuccotti Park (Blumenkrantz et al., 2011) spoke of the lack of a discourse through which to exercise freedom:

We have all the freedoms we want. But what we are missing is red ink: the language to articulate our non-freedom. The way we are taught to speak about freedom – war on terror and so on – falsifies freedom. And this is what you are doing here. You are giving us all red ink. (Zizek, in Blumenkrantz et al., 2011: 68)

How, then, can media students doing work with Occupy be part of this project to create red ink? The connection is this – for Occupy to galvanise, the event mobilised a new way of thinking about space – *Occupy Everything*. Curation pedagogy is in keeping. Textual dispersion – in the form of event assemblage, *physically* and *spatially* textual – is political. Joining the Occupy Research Collective (<http://occupyresearchcollective.wordpress.com/>) and contributing – through the dissemination of 'live' transmedia work – enables students to read / research the event from the inside of participation, again to 'curate', rather than to 'know'. Of course, we are working here in the realm of the ideal – the reimagining of pedagogic space. This is not possible to articulate in the idioms of

the language games of benchmark statements, quality assurance and the unit-measure discourse of accreditation – where a quantitative value or equivalence is attached to media work – the number of webpages that equate to an essay of particular volume, the accountability of and for an individual contribution to group production. Instead, we are working with what John Baldacchino (2012) calls ‘exit pedagogy’. This ‘third way’ conception resonates with our sense of being in between media and audience, teacher and student – a rich open space for new practices. Neither ‘vocational’ nor ‘academic’ neither obsessed with ‘critique’ or technological determinist notions of a paradigm shift, neither a return to the power of ‘the media’ or a claim that the media have ceased to be – instead a deliberate ignorance of the idea that there can be a knowable media outside of us. For Baldacchino, ‘exit pedagogy’:

... does not affirm a symmetrical dualism between conservative and progressive liberal and critical pedagogy. An exit pedagogy moves by ways of slippage that seek the continuous referral of such symmetries by simply setting them aside. Its forms of reason are satire and comedy. (Baldacchino, 2012: 192)

Operating within the Occupy research collective – at once inside (activist) and outside (student, critic), the boundaries between these modes – and between subject / object, doing and reading, being and ‘knowing’, media, text, event, student, teacher – all cease to matter as we look awry. The curation of an assemblage – always-already temporary and artificial – of the moving Occupy event, through direct participation *in* it and simultaneous mediation of it – is thus an act of (frivolous) multiplicity.

CONCLUSIONS: EMBODIED, ENGAGED, CRITICAL

How, then, does our model of curation develop ‘inexpert’ pedagogy for Media Studies and provide an ‘adequate model’ for media literacy education in 2012 (a stated theme for this journal)? Curating the mediation of everyday life in the form of assemblage-events does not posit a temporal shift, claiming that ‘the media’ has ceased to be. Rather, this strategy is akin to the postmodern – a way of thinking (and teaching) that resists recourse to the idea of ‘the media’ as external to mediated/ing agents in social practice. As our students are such agents, this will have profound implications for our educational work with them and hence for a model for media literacy.

The preservation of an unhelpful set of precepts for media education has, we have observed, hindered and obstructed critical media learning in the same way as the idea of ‘literature’ has imposed alienating reading practices in schools (Kendall and McDougall, 2011). Despite ourselves, media educators have undermined the legitimation of studying popular culture by starting out from the wrong place and clinging to our ‘Big Other’ in the form of ‘the media’ – the object for our ‘critical’ gaze. The technological developments of the first part of this century are merely a catalyst for us seeing more clearly the problematic ‘fault lines’ between media / audience, student / teacher, expert / apprentice. A departure from the colonising effects of English education and aspects of the Social Sciences and a strategic engagement with elements of art pedagogy that create spaces for ‘indiscipline’

and emancipation. Such a move allows the deliberate further erosion of boundaries between categories – media and us, media and life, media and art, form and concept, text and event. Understood in this way, media education is renewed as an incomplete project, requiring (urgently) the removal of ‘the media’ from its field of reference in order for antidote in the form of a more politicised pedagogy from which students can better come to be reflexively media literate with and in their textual lives.

To conclude, we offer three strategic priorities for our community of practice. Firstly, we must turn our gaze from both the ‘objects’ of study and ‘tools’ that shape our discipline and look instead at the social practice of media learning as the design process – the ‘work’. Second, we must see the paradox in dismantling the concepts formally known as ‘the media’ and ‘the audience’ whilst leaving the categories of ‘teacher’ and ‘student’ intact and it is for this reason that we turn to Rancière’s ‘ignorant schoolmaster’ to expand and refine our ‘inexpert’ pedagogy. Thirdly, we must bear witness to contemporary textuality as primarily a mode of curation and attend to this in our work. In this article we have exhibited this approach by suggesting how students might engage with assemblage-events rather than texts, textuality rather than ‘production’ and participation rather than critique, interventions towards a more situated and embodied ‘model’ for media literacy.

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PEDAGOGIJA 'OČUVANJA' ZA MEDIJSKE STUDIJE: KORAK DALJE PREMA NESTRUČNOM

Ben Andrews :: Julian McDougall

SAŽETAK U suvremenom kontekstu digitalno posredovanih svjetova (lifeworlds) u nastajanju je obrazovni 'model' za participativno učenje i medijsku pismenost (Jenkins, 2010; Gauntlett, 2011; Fraser i Wardle, 2011). Autori ovoga rada smatraju da je glavni problem koji utječe na njegovu 'opravdanost' taj što su nastavni sadržaji i vještine privilegirani u odnosu na pedagogiju. Autori su već prije ponudili 'pedagogiju nestručnih' kao model za discipline koje su usmjerene na tekst, kao što su primjerice medijske studije (no model nije ograničen samo na medijske studije). Takva strategija izmiče 'medije' iz našeg fokusa i gleda iz drugog kuta kako da razvije nove načine rada sa studentima – da 'pokaže i objasni' posredovanje tekстом i dekonstruira što to znači čitati i stvarati medije, i što znači 'biti' u medijskom posredovanju. U ovom članku autori dalje razvijaju taj pristup prema modelu 'očuvanja' (curation). Shvaćeno na taj način, studenti 'pokazuju' medijsku pismenost u novim prostorima – ne tako da pribjegavaju vještinama, kompetencijama ili analitičkom raskrinkavanju svojstava teksta, nego da pokazuju, da očuvaju trenutak stvaranja tekstualnog značenja i preuzimanja značenja, ali kritičkim prihvaćanjem nastojanja da se održi i očuva protok značenja kao svojevrsne vještine.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI

MEDIJSKA PISMENOST, PEDAGOGIJA, OČUVANJE (CURATION), RANCIERE

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