

**JOURNALISM AS A HUMAN RIGHT:
THE CULTURAL APPROACH TO JOURNALISM**

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Cultural studies and journalism overlap in important respects. They are both interested in the mediation of meanings through technology in complex societies. Both investigate ordinary everyday life: journalism from the point of view of reportable events; cultural studies from that of ordinary lived experience. They both display emancipationist tendencies: journalism as part of the modern tradition of liberal freedoms, cultural studies as part of a critical discourse developed around struggles over identity, power and representation. But the tradition of journalism *research* that has grown up within university programs has tended to focus less on the overall purpose of journalism in modern societies and more on its purpose as a professional occupation in an industrialised and corporate mode of production (Gans, 2004). Cultural approaches have played only a minor role in this tradition. Indeed there is a tendency for cultural and journalistic approaches to be seen as either adversarial or mutually exclusive, despite (or because of) the fact that they share a common interest in the communication of meaning within societies characterised by conflict (Green & Sykes, 2004).

This chapter seeks to perform as well as to describe a cultural approach to journalism. It opens with an account of how cultural studies has approached journalism as an object of study. It is the overall approach – which is critical not quantitative – that is important, rather than any specific set of research findings. The chapter goes on to ‘perform’ a cultural approach by proposing that journalism should not be seen as a professional practice at all but as a human right.

The cultural approach to journalism

Cultural studies emerged in the 1960s as a critical, intellectual and educational enterprise. Its purpose was critical not professional. It was founded on teaching not research. As an oppositional discourse it was not devoted to improving the expertise of practitioners; it sought to empower *readers* not journalists. Therefore 'journalism research' performed on behalf of the profession, or for news organisations, or as part of the PR industry, was not its main priority.

British cultural studies (Turner 2002) grew directly out of a perceived inadequacy of modern frameworks of knowledge, whether disciplinary (e.g. political science, economics, sociology and literary studies), or activist (e.g. Marxism), to explain how social change occurred or how it could be encouraged, and for whose benefit. Existing frameworks were based upon *economics* and *politics*, characterising the human 'subject' of modernity as the *worker* and the *voter*, and focusing emancipationist struggles on the workplace via the labour movement and trade unionism (economics), and the ballot box via Labour Parties in parliaments (politics). But by the mid-twentieth century neither of these struggles had precipitated the predicted social transformation and popular emancipation.

Meanwhile, established explanations of the role of culture in society (e.g. literary studies) seemed to ignore culture's impact on both economic and political developments, focusing instead on aesthetic matters. Culture was seen by modernist political and economic analysts as an epiphenomenon, an effect not a cause of change; and by modernist cultural theorists as an antidote to the political and economic

direction of the day, not an engine of it. For literary-based approaches, the ‘subject’ of modernity was not the worker or voter but the *reader*.

There was a split between politico-economic and literary-aesthetic approaches to culture, which found institutional form in the division between social sciences and humanities. It is noteworthy that journalism programs in higher education are to be found on both sides of that divide. Early college-based journalism training schemes were largely literary (Hartley, 1996: 247-8), their purpose being to turn out professional writers. But journalism programs are now likely to be located in social science faculties (somewhere between communications and business) or in departments of politics and government. Journalism research is the progeny of these disciplines.

The ‘project’ of cultural studies too was to integrate the economic (worker), political (voter) and cultural (reader) spheres as a coherent object of study, and to investigate why and how culture may affect the apparently determinant spheres of economics and politics. If working-class people didn’t behave as their economic and political ‘class interests’ dictated they should, was there something about their culture that promoted conformism or could promote change? Was culture – after all – causal (Williams 1961)?

It was at this point that cultural analysts interested in social change started to look in detail at the concept of subjectivity, shifting attention from ‘the worker’ and ‘the voter’ (or ‘masses’) to ‘the consumer’ in the communicative form of ‘the audience.’ In order to understand why social change did not follow from activism at the factory

gate or via the ballot box, the impact of industrialised forms of communication (popular publishing, newspapers, cinema and broadcasting) on the subjectivity and consciousness of popular readers and audiences was quickly identified as a potential stumbling block. Was journalism, which from its own perspective was a beacon of liberal-democratic freedom, in fact an impediment to the emancipation of classed, raced, gendered and otherwise 'Othered' subjects? Was the nightly news part of an apparatus of power and control (Hall *et al.* 1978; Ericson, Baranek & Chan 1987)?

The cultural approach to journalism was interested in the subjectivity of readers and audiences of popular media in order to assess the ideological, political, and economic impact of news media, as part of the apparatus of global corporate communications. However the social-science/ humanities disciplinary divide kicked in again here. The structural and institutional aspects of that apparatus – the operations of the state, corporations and power-elites – were taken up in studies of the political economy of the culture industries, news media among them. Some critics have regarded political economy as part of the project of cultural studies while others have seen it as a distinct tendency (Miller 2001). Meanwhile cultural analysts have drawn on literary, linguistic and semiotic traditions to investigate how subjectivity is fixed in language, and how unequal power relations in modern societies are conducted on a day to day basis, both in everyday life and via the mass media. They were interested in the production and circulation of meaning in society, in order to answer this question: if power operates to 'subject' people in various ways, how is it done communicatively? How is power transmitted through texts like newspapers and television broadcasts? This led to the practice of 'critical readings' or 'demystification' of media texts including journalism (Hartley 1982). The cultural approach to journalism has

therefore been interested from the start in the *textual* relations between a powerful ‘addresser’ (media corporations, government agencies) and emancipation-seeking ‘addressees’ (audiences, readers). Such textual relations of ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’ (Hall 1973; Hall, Connell & Curti 1977) were investigated in detail to try to understand how meaning was conveyed or constructed in large-scale media, what some of the dominant meanings were, and what needed to be done to emancipate subordinate groups from being ‘subject’ to them.

Cultural studies’ founding interest in economic and political determinants of change entailed a focus on social class, especially the working class, but over time this extended to gender, ethnicity, race, first peoples, sexual orientation, nation, age-group, and to identities formed around ‘taste-cultures’ like music (mods, punk) or fandom (Trekkies). This attention to identity among consumers and audiences in popular culture has produced much of what is recognised as cultural studies.

Journalism *as such* was not its object of study. However, it was in the context of identity politics that ‘user-led’ and ‘consumer-created’ journalism first became a significant topic, via the zines of subcultures and countercultures, and the counterpublic spheres proclaimed in the feminist, anti-war and environmental movements (Felski 1989).

Journalism was incorporated into cultural studies not as a *professional* but as an *ideological* practice. News texts (including photos and audio-visual forms of reporting) were analysed for their semiotic, narrative and other communicational properties, in order to identify what causes the political or social impact that critics believe they have observed; and what resources ordinary people may have or build to

resist the same, or to pose and create alternatives. The context of reception is as important in this assessment of journalism as is the context of production. That context is seen as a community (culture), not a market (economics) or a constituency (politics).

The cultural approach to journalism is not a disciplinary project and is not associated with an agreed methodology. Because of its heterogenous and interdisciplinary nature, one of its distinctive features over the years has been ‘reflexivity,’ which in brief means recognizing the position of the investigator both politically and as a knowing-subject. Indeed, it is an interventionist form of analysis; its proponents want to change the world, not merely to understand it – many of its writers seek to produce activists.

Journalism as a human right

In order to ‘perform’ the cultural approach, and to show that the universalist ambitions of liberal journalism can be integrated with the emancipationist claims of cultural studies, the rest of this chapter takes up the challenge of the ‘bold hypothesis’ advanced in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), especially that of the radically utopian-liberal idea that ‘everyone’ (no exceptions!) has the right not only to seek and receive but to ‘*impart*’ (communicate) ‘information and ideas’:

Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (UN 1948).

As the British journalist and editor Ian Hargreaves has also put it:

In a democracy everyone is a journalist. This is because, in a democracy, everyone has the right to *communicate* a fact or a point of view, however trivial, however hideous (Hargreaves 1999: 4).

Hargreaves' real challenge, like that of the UDHR itself, is to society at large. But it's also a challenge to journalists and journalism educators; therefore to journalism research. If 'everyone is a journalist,' then how can journalism be *professed*? If its real extent is 'everyone in a democracy,' then journalism research needs to extend its horizons beyond the occupation of journalist or the news industry as presently constituted. If 'everyone is a journalist,' then there's a challenge to cultural studies here too. For the *consumer* (reading public) is transformed into the *producer* (journalist). What happens when the 'reading public' (audience or consumer) of modernity turns into the 'writing public' (user, 'prosumer' or 'ProAm') of global interactive media (Leadbeater & Miller 2004)?

Journalism as an ethnicity

Until recently, the means have not been available to turn the UDHR's 'universal human right' into a 'right that can be exercised by a lot of humans.' Instead, *journalism* has exercised that right on behalf of the public. In 'representative' democracies we have grown used to 'representative journalism' – 'our' freedom to impart is done by them on everyone's behalf (the 'public interest'). Like 'representative politics,' this has become an increasingly professionalized, corporatised and specialised occupation, and increasingly remote from the common life and lay population it represents.

Meanwhile, journalism has grown up throughout the modern period as an occupation with a strong culture of separation between insiders and outsiders. Indeed, what with their ‘nose for news,’ their ‘gut feeling’ for a story, and the idea that good journalists are ‘born not made’ (Given 1907: 148), there’s a sneaking suspicion that journalism may be experienced by insiders more as an *ethnicity* than as a human right. Indeed, journalists are beginning to conform to the definitional status used in Australia and elsewhere to identify Aboriginal people: to qualify as such, you need to: i) be descended from, ii) identify and live as, and iii) be accepted by a particular community which wants to recognise, preserve and transmit its unique cultural heritage (ADAA 1981: 8). Left to themselves, journalists are a tribe.

A corollary of this distinction between journalism’s ‘we’ community and its outside is that journalism research is routinely confined to the study of the insider perspective. Journalism education, likewise, means training for jobs in existing newsroom organisations. Few if any J-schools educate for journalism as a human right; but many assume that anyone who hasn’t practiced journalism as a newsroom employee is not competent to profess journalism, nor should they be allowed to educate those for whom it will become a primary occupation. The result of this is that journalism research and education have become part of a *restrictive practice*. They are designed to keep outsiders *out* of journalism.

It may be protested at this point that that is a highly desirable situation, because journalists ought to be trained to high standards, and entry into the profession ought to be restricted to those who can do a good job, as in other professions like medicine and the law. That is a persuasive argument, but unfortunately it conforms neither to the

facts of journalism as practiced in many countries (where the right ‘look’ can trump good training), nor to the interests of societies that espouse individual freedom and liberal democracy. The societal objection to professionalism is that restricting journalism to those who’ve qualified by whatever process is tantamount to licensing the expression of ideas, which is simply anti-democratic. In some countries, training itself is viewed with suspicion by editors, owners and even many senior journalists, for whom it is not a profession but a trade to be learnt on the job. As a result it is still possible to work as a journalist without any professional training. At the same time, the majority of journalism graduates do not go on to work in newsrooms. The laudable desire to have competent practitioners and an explicit understanding of the practice is directly at odds with both industry and democratic imperatives.

J-schools’ own consumers, meanwhile, suggest a very different possibility. Many undergraduates take journalism degrees as a new form of the general arts degree, one with practical skills and engagement with political and business applications. They may have no the intention of gaining entry to the (increasingly bureaucratised and proletarianised) corporate newsroom. They are already acting as though ‘everyone is a journalist,’ and honing some critical skills without wanting to ‘be’ journalists.

Journalism as a transitional form

Scholarship about the production side of news has obscured the fact that despite its longevity (about 400 years), journalism ‘as we know it’ may be a *transitional form*, constructed upon the technical impossibility of achieving its democratic potential, namely that *everyone* has a right to *practice* it. During the mechanical and broadcast phases of modernity, journalism depended on the printing press or electronic media

production techniques, where increasingly heavy capital investment was needed to achieve wide-scale reach and ratings. It developed a *one-to-many* model of *mass* communication; the antithesis of the right to individual freedom of expression which it purported to represent.

But now the interactive phase of modernity has begun to take technical shape and unsurprisingly journalism has become one of the first ‘victims’ of post-broadcast interactive media, starting with the internet (Matt Drudge), but quickly burgeoning to encompass various user-led forms regardless of technological platform including e-zines, blogging and what Axel Bruns (2005) calls ‘collaborative’ online journalism. Journalism has transferred from modern expert system to contemporary open innovation – from ‘one to many’ to ‘many to many’ communication.

So: out with journalism as an ‘ethnicity’; in with journalism as a human right. If journalism is a *human* right then it is necessary not only to theorise it as a craft that ‘everybody’ can practice, but also to extend what ‘counts’ as journalism beyond the ‘democratic process’ model to encompass much more of what it means to be human; especially the world of private life and experience, and the humanity of those lying outside favoured gender, ethnic, national, age or economic profiles that are targeted by corporate news media. Such an eventuality has been thoroughly ‘rehearsed,’ as it were, in the alternative and social-movements media, the underground or countercultural press, community broadcasting, fanzines; and also in ‘cultural’ or ‘entertainment’ forms of mainstream journalism including fashion, lifestyle, consumer and leisure formats (Lumby 1999). These forms employ many of the world’s journalists, but they barely rate a mention *as journalism* in J-Schools, which remain

wedded to ‘watchdog,’ ‘fourth estate’ or ‘First Amendment’ models of journalism as the representation – and representative – of the democratic process (Gans, 2004), and concomitantly dismissive of non-news or ‘lifestyle’ journalism which is equated with feminised consumption and for that reason despised.

Journalism and culture

Research into journalism as a human right, a *general capacity for communicative action*, has not yet been established. But ‘notes towards’ it have been rehearsed in a branch of inquiry that focuses on the media consumer and the context within which the commodity form of news is taken up into people’s everyday lives to become culture. This is in fact the very place where cultural studies first came in (Hoggart 1957; Hall *et al* 1978). Cultural studies approaches journalism where the latter becomes *meaningful*. It is interested in the moment when political economy, textual system, cultural form and ideology converge upon the point of consciousness, the point where cultural identities are forged in the alloy of symbolic and economic values. The cultural approach wants to know what journalism means in the context of its social and cultural uptake. But in contemporary society (mechanico-electronic modernity) journalism as a *practice* is separated from journalism as *meaning*. There has thus been a division of intellectual labour, where journalism research concentrates on the producer and practice (understood as ‘public affairs’), and cultural studies on the consumer and meaning (‘private life’), and both tend not to dwell on the fact that the ‘practice’ and ‘meaning’ of journalism ought to be understood as the same object of study.

In cultural studies, consumers are not conceptualised as passive or ‘behavioural.’ Like journalists they too are agents – in fact their *sense-making practices* are what make journalism meaningful *as* social uptake (such practices begin with ‘decoding’ and may end at the ballot box, the bargain or the barricade). Everyone’s position is structural and governed in many ways, but at the same time it is creative, productive and causal; it is *action* not *behaviour*. Here then, in a cultural context, are found *actions constrained by power*, the *making* of sense using classed, raced, gendered and socio-economically shaped subjectivity within everyday life. So the cultural approach to journalism starts from the ‘wrong’ end of the value chain. Instead of beginning with origination – the ownership, manufacture or ‘authorship’ of corporate news – the cultural approach typically starts at its destination, with the readers/audience or consumers of news media, understood as part of ‘culture.’ From this cultural perspective consumers may be seen as the ‘reading public’ – successors to the early modern ‘republic of letters’ (Hartley 2004a; 2004b). They are not reduced to the status of an ‘effect’ – whether of marketing, media or political campaigning. In the cultural approach, ordinary people’s interactions with journalism and news media are investigated within the rhythms and ‘personal politics’ of everyday life, in order to study the ‘anthropological’ process of sense-making and identity-formation in modern societies, including ‘cultural struggles’ and ‘identity politics’ that frequently don’t even rate a mention in mainstream news media, much less in J-Schools.

Everyone’s a journalist

The UN Declaration of journalism as a human right is aspirational, a challenge not a description. It represents an ideal type of liberal democratic polities. If it is to mean anything in practice it needs to be championed, extended, used and defended. As

Mick Dodson (then Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in Australia), said in reference to the right of Indigenous peoples to self-determination: ‘in the world of the real-politic, neither the existence, nor even the legal recognition of a right are sufficient to guarantee its enjoyment’ (Dodson 1994). Many of the most progressive and important initiatives in journalism since Milton (1644) were undertaken by men and women who claimed journalism as a human right *by practising it*. Without permission they started to publish journals. From this point of view, journalistic history is an accrual of discourses and practices organized around the simple *exercise* of that right. But there are many forces or powers working to limit the realisation of the UN Declaration, including most of what counts as contemporary journalism, which from this perspective is an *impediment* to its aspirations.

For if ‘everyone’ is a journalist there can be no theory of journalism based on its *professional* production, on its *industrial* organization (including ownership and control), its *textual* form (from news to PR) or even its *reception*, for none of these is essential.

- The *professionalization* of journalism is among other things a restrictive practice designed to create scarcity of labour and therefore work for the already-professionalized.
- The *industrialization* of media limits those who can communicate on a society-wide basis to the tiny number who can afford the cost of entry into ‘mass’ media.

- As a *textual system* accrued by custom and practice over several centuries, journalism has taken on some generic characteristics that work powerfully to exclude various forms of expression from what counts as journalism.
- The *regulation* of media is used both correctively and protectively to limit journalism – to redress defamation, obscenity and the like, or to protect identities and minorities from opinions that are legislatively deemed too hideous to be allowed journalistic expression.
- The right to express opinion or to gain information has been *constrained by power* – in practice it is not neutral as to gender, class, race, age etc. The ‘logic of democratic equivalence’ may inspire struggles by various social movements to extend the right to women, workers, people of colour, children etc., but universality is never achieved in practice and even small extensions require struggle and leadership.

Quite a few entrepreneurs have found work and wealth, and some have exercised political or cultural power, by increasing the scale, efficiency and productivity of media communication. Such achievements – even up to the scale of ‘empires’ – cannot be excluded from a theory of journalism but neither can they be its foundation, for the model of journalism that is established as definitive at one moment can be countermanded the next instant by someone having a different idea that catches on, as witness the current ascendancy of personal journalism (blogs) and search-engine journalism (Google News).

If everybody is a *journalist*, then everyone has a right not just to express but also to *circulate* information and opinions that they actually hold, even when these are seen

by others as harmful, ‘hideous’ or wrong-headed. Their information doesn’t have to be true and they don’t even have to believe that it is (that’s a limit-test for tolerance!). So no theory can safely presume that journalism as communication is in fact the very thing that most seems to characterise it: i.e. a *realism* – what I have called elsewhere the ‘sense-making practice of modernity’ (Hartley 1996). That is, a mode of discourse devoted to truth or at least truthfulness, characterized by impartiality, empirical observation, documentary evidence, a willingness to retract falsehoods and correct mistakes, and plain style (prosaic not poetic). If the right to express ideas and to circulate opinions is truly democratized, then some of what appears as journalism will be barefaced lies, or partial, prejudicial opinion asserted in the teeth of evidence to the contrary. Journalism as the ‘first draft of history’ can be delusion, fiction, propaganda or some anti-real faith-based fundamentalism designed to advance (for instance) a political, racial or religious cause. But all of these worries already apply to journalism ‘as we know it,’ so the extension of journalism to ‘humanity’ will similarly tend to shift the burden of ‘journalism ethics’ along the value chain. Instead of cultivating trust in brand-name mastheads or credible journalistic by-lines, and instead of assuming that journalistic ethics must be located in the consciousness of producers, journalism as a human right puts the onus of ‘ethical’ journalism on readers-who-are-also-writers, to exercise doubt, scepticism and discretion in their reading practices or ‘consumption’ of news (a latter-day version of *caveat emptor*) as well as in what they themselves utter. In this model, which already obtains in the blogosphere, communicative ethics are dialogic, not a corporate KPI.

A Writing Public

Opinion and information become journalism only when they are circulated among a public. Media technologies and a literate ‘reading public’ are both needed to ‘impart’ them, which is why journalism is a modern phenomenon, unknown in pre-modern societies. Historically, in direct opposition to the Declaration, access and even capability have not been evenly distributed among ‘everyone.’ While modern mass media, both print and broadcasting, have been very efficient at gathering populations to ‘read’ on page and screen, such that more or less everyone in the old democracies is at least exposed to journalism, they have been less successful in extending the practice of journalism so widely. Modernity has been a ‘read only’ era, not a ‘read-write’ one for most citizens. However, consideration of just this problem demonstrates the importance of the UN Declaration because it makes clear that modernity remains an ‘incomplete project.’ Effort is required to extend the practice of journalism to ‘everyone.’ However, when that is done, or even imagined, the nature of what we habitually understand to be journalism changes completely. Journalism research therefore has to look towards the *history* of ways in which ‘everyone’ has – or has not – been brought into the public domain of information and opinion, and towards the *culture* in which ‘everyone’ is located in order to practice their right to communicate. It has to investigate the *uses* of public information and opinion in democratic or democratizing societies.

The ‘reading public’ or ‘republic of letters’ was one of early journalism’s great creations, dating from the age of Johnson, Addison and Tom Paine in the modernising 18th century (Hartley 1996; 2004b). It was extended to a mass reading public during the industrialising 19th century. For its part, cultural studies was launched by Richard Hoggart’s *Uses of Literacy* (1957), a study of the ‘reading public’ when the latter had

reached mass scale and the information media had achieved mass entertainment status. Ever since, cultural studies has been preoccupied with the moment at which media production becomes communication and culture – the moment of ‘use’ in the circumstances of ordinary life.

Now the time has come when the idea of a ‘reading public’ (extending ‘reading’ to include audio-visual, oral and written literacy) can be seen for what it really is – a halfway house towards full ‘read-write’ literacy (see Ofcom 2005). The time has come, in short, to think about the *writing public* (again, including creation by means other than writing). Combining the interests of journalism in the democratic process, factual reporting and compelling stories about the real, with the interests of cultural studies in critical activism within the context of power, lived experience and ordinary life, it is time to re-found journalism studies to address the ‘writing public.’

Globalisation and a ‘redactional society’

A problem yet to be faced here is that unless a ‘reading public’ is formed around it, the human right to ‘impart’ information may not be realisable, simply because there are more people writing than reading. If everyone is ‘speaking,’ then who’s ‘listening’ – and on what kind of apparatus? That problem resolves itself into the question of editing (or ‘redaction’) – a journalistic practice that is swiftly becoming the defining art-form of the age. I conceptualize contemporary society as ‘redactional’ (Hartley 2000). The editorial practices of the media, for example, may reveal presuppositions about the culture and the various groups within it, enabling conclusions to be drawn about how meaning is ‘sourced,’ and explaining differences in the treatment of identities from business leaders and celebrities to foreigners and Indigenous youth.

Generalizing from such investigations, a ‘redactional society’ is one in which *editorial* practices determine what is understood to be true and what policies and beliefs should follow from that; and what is the contemporary equivalent of beautiful (e.g. innovative, artistic, sexy, dark, entertaining, cool, original or strange) and how desires should be ordered around that. Such a scenario has emerged out of the combination of late twentieth-century economic and technical ingredients – the globalization of media and entertainment content and the beginnings of mass scale in the use of interactive communication. Editorial practices are required to make the potentially overwhelming and chaotic possibilities of such plenitude into coherent packages for users, whether these are individuals, businesses or even nations.

This is part of a larger argument about long-term shifts along the ‘value chain’ of meanings (Hartley 2004a), where what was accepted socially as the source of meaning – and thence legitimacy – has drifted from author (mediaeval), via text (modern), to consumer (now). In medieval times the source of meaning was God, the ultimate author(ity). In the modern era meaning was sourced to the empirical object or document, the observable evidence. But now, meaning is sourced to popular readerships or audiences, and is determined by the plebiscite (Hartley 2006).

In contemporary societies, where values, truths and meanings are fragmented into the number of sovereign citizens or consumers that make up a total population or market, there is no explicit or agreed mechanism (authority) for deciding which should prevail apart from weight of numbers. So elaborate mechanisms have evolved to *scale up* the myriad sources of meaning, and these are proliferating across many areas of public and mediated life. They include *redaction* and *the plebiscite* (Hartley 2006).

Redaction is the art form of editing, where existing materials are brought together into a new form. Journalism has begun to change from news-gathering to a redactional function: a prime job of the journalist is to sift existing data and make sense of that for readers, not to generate new information. The process is evident in Google News, which edits thousands of news websites into one, presenting the top stories around the world via an algorithm (not a journalist but a sort of automated plebiscite) that ranks them a by number of occurrences on the internet and by recency (news value).

Globalisation of digital content consumption also entails a society in which ‘everyone is a journalist’ or can be. Not only can they express an opinion or circulate information via read-write media forms such as email, blogs, websites, SMS and the like, but their views can be gathered and processed into collective forms, ranging from the question of the day on Sky News to ‘best of...’ competitions run by media organizations like the BBC.

But in the meantime, what counts as *journalism* has so massively expanded that it is unrecognizable as *news*. No longer confined to the investigation of wrong-doing in politics, decision-making in government and business, or achievement in sport and entertainment, journalism in non-news areas has rapidly outgrown its parent.

Corporate communication, PR and marketing are routinely performed by journalists and as journalism: Ian Hargreaves himself became both a ‘spin doctor’ and a regulator: as a director of corporate affairs at British Airports Authority plc, and a board member of the regulatory authority Ofcom (motto: ‘serving citizen-consumers in the digital age’). Ofcom itself has been charged by legislation with promoting ‘media literacy’ in the UK, which it takes to mean promoting access, understanding

and creation of media across digital and mobile platforms (Ofcom, 2006). Fashion, travel, celebrity, make-over and lifestyle shows on TV are among the most envied jobs for aspiring journalists and among the most popular cultural forms. Magazines are more dynamic than newspapers (which have begun to function as magazines, at least at weekends). Information exchange in specialist areas, the traditional province of magazines, has migrated to the web, where there is so much information on any given special interest – genealogy, for instance – that new websites and magazines are spawned to help people navigate it. In short, a society in which everybody is a journalist begins to be imaginable, whether their practice is direct or ‘sampled’ (‘mashed-up’) via some *plebiscitary* or *redactional* representation. This is the terrain that a cultural theory of journalism needs to investigate.

Immediately, questions arise, all of which are good for further *research*:

1. How to *access* the right to write – questions of LITERACY in new media and not just technical skills but the full array of creative competence that goes beyond *self-expression* to compelling *communication, description and argumentation* (Popper), extending ‘literacy’ from ‘read-only’ to ‘read & write’;
2. how to *organise* and edit the billions of pages of writing – not just technical questions about scaling, data-mining and archiving, but deeper questions about how to edit them for a media-saturated population who are producers as well as consumers; these are questions of REDACTION;
3. how to *represent* facts and opinions back to society – questions about how opinions can be scaled up; which are questions of the PLEBISCITE;

4. how to *tell* the truth, and how to tell when it is being *told* – questions of communicational ETHICS;
5. How to hold together ‘court’ and ‘groundlings’? – dialogically linking diverse and even conflictual readerships in a truth-seeking discourse about what’s happening now? This requires research into the practice of READERSHIP in a context where utterance is valued above understanding (the hive over wisdom);
6. In an era when *everyone* is a journalist, where are the ‘greats’ and how do they emerge into visibility? This raises the question of journalism’s appeal and communicability as a ‘textual’ experience for readers – what used to be called ‘LITERARINESS.’ What is good journalism; how can that be *universally* promoted?

So-called ‘user-led innovation’ will reinvent journalism, bringing it closer to the aspirational ideal of a right for everyone. Journalism will be reinvented, but judging by what is currently done in J-schools and in the name of journalism studies, the last people to know may be professional journalists.

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