



THE CHANGING NATURE OF INTELLECTUAL PRODUCTION

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Introduction

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to meet with the editors of *Thesis Eleven*. They sat down with a small group of students and faculty to discuss the journal, how it began, its history, and current projects. During the discussion, one person asked the editors, Peter Beilharz and Trevor Hogan, what the political purpose of the journal was. They gave the person who had posed the question a funny look and answered that that was of no real concern to them (Peter and Trevor) or something to that effect. A few months before that, a friend had begun to forward me postings from a listserv that exclaimed upon the journal *Telos*'s "rightward" turn. Both of these events made me reflect upon the nature of political journals, why people start them, what purpose they serve, and whether their reason for being has changed over time. The answers to any of these questions would likely not be the same for all political journals, but I believe they are useful questions that are not asked enough. More attention is paid to the intellectual or the intellectual's discourse than to how that discourse is materially organized.

As academics, we almost take journals for granted. They seem to have always been there, an integral part of the scholar's life whether as a welcome outlet for one's research findings in hopes of reaching an audience or as a reminder of the centrality of publication to tenure. In the governance of each discipline's relations of knowledge and success, an academic knows which journals carry the most prestige. An academic's worth often is measured by statistics that track the number of citations an article generates. Some scholars (Agger, 1990; Barrow, 1990; Luke, 1999) consider this



system of valuation an insidious process that confines scholarship and celebrates those that best know how to play the publication game.

Journals designed to foster scholarly conversations that circulate largely within academia serve a purpose perhaps different from the small, non-academic political journal. Not many people outside academia or even outside political science may be interested in an article like “The Electoral Implications of Candidate Ambiguity,” which appeared in the February 2009 issue of the *American Political Science Review*. Many more may have read Randolph Bourne’s 1917 article “Twilight of Idols” that protested against the United States’ entry into World War I as well as the support of that decision by prominent intellectuals such as John Dewey. That essay appeared in a small and short-lived journal, *Seven Arts*.

Maybe at one time if you had something to say and wanted to be able to say it without needing to rely upon someone else to get your words out there, then you might have started your own journal. Or as Irving Howe, the founder of *Dissent* remarked, “When intellectuals cannot do anything else, they start a magazine” (Cohen, 2004). Presumably, it would have been a restricted production, because to be any larger would require capital. Since the journal was a small publication and because it probably spoke to a particular viewpoint, it probably would never have achieved a large audience. For example, *Partisan Review*’s audience remained stable around 8,000, while *The Public Interest* had an audience of around 10,000 in its later years, and *Dissent* has reached an audience as large as 12,000. Compare these numbers to a publication like *The New York Review of Books*, which has a circulation of around 280,000.

The small-run, print niche journal has come in many varieties and forms. There have been financial differences, ideological differences, style differences, time differences (is the case of *Seven Arts* in 1917 the same as *n+1* in 2005?), and content differences – some considered themselves literary, some cultural, some political, and some a combination. It is hard then to consider them as a single case and to try to assess their function as “the small-run, print niche journal,” rather than as *Seven Arts*,



the *New Masses*, *Dial*, *Partisan Review*, *Monthly Review*, *Encounter*, *Dissent*, *The Public Interest*, *Commentary*, *Ramparts*, *The National Review*, *The Progressive*, *The Minnesota Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Threepenny Review*, *Signs*, *Telos*, *n+1*, etc.

A brave or naïve few still choose to start small, print journals, but a large number of these are purely literary publications. However, there are exceptions, such as *n+1* begun in 2005 that prints fiction but also engages in what can be considered political questions. But I will not speak here on the relationship between literature and the political. That is a subject for another paper.

What I would like to focus on is the role of the small, independent political journal, publications that regularly tackle political questions whether philosophically, theoretically, empirically, polemically or maybe do all those things and more. As books like Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals* (1987), Barrow's *Universities and the Capitalist State* (1990), and Agger's *The Decline of Discourse* (1990) state, intellectual engagement with the public has been replaced by a professionalization of the intellectual confined to the university. Commodity fetishism has been replaced by footnote fetishism, and theory only serves to generate more theory. Since, as Horkheimer (1972) makes clear, critical theory produces no material achievements for the theorist, the professionalized intellectual cannot waste his/her time on such an endeavor.

The Changed Materiality of Communication

The changed materiality of communication also affects the intellectual's position and the possibility for critical engagement, maybe more so for those that consider themselves on the Left. As McLuhan stated, the medium is the message (McLuhan, 1962). To reverse the quip, does the message depend upon a certain medium? And, as Kittler said, form affects content. Television is not a form; it is a home to many forms, teleplays, movies, commercials. The Internet is also not a form, but the home to some old forms, print articles now digitized, video clips, music, and some new forms,



electronic mail, listservs, and blogs. But these forms do not appear to have the same editorial functions that older forms had. Arguably, they may not even be considered “forms,” as traditionally understood. The loss of form may then also signal a loss of content as knowledge, rather than as mere information. Again, the small hermetic print journal as a preserver of form may keep the possibility of content as knowledge alive. The role of the intellectual as critical theorist may then be to maintain traditional, or old, or even “conservative,” materialities of communication against the new. This may now be revolutionary thinking in the face of so much revolutionizing.

Considered as a type of monastic practice, a place of retreat, where theorizing may more closely resemble literary production than political intervention, the small, print political journal might keep the flame of critical thought alive but is less likely to light anything on fire, as any spark produced may be quickly snuffed out by more dominant mediums. But even this may be valuable. Bourdieu sees intellectuals as having two competing claims upon them, one, the autonomous protection of their cultural position and works, and two, political engagement in the social totality (Bourdieu, 1989). He believes, as stated in “The Corporatism of the Universal: The Role of Intellectuals in the Modern World,” that protecting their autonomy from political and economic power is necessary to intellectuals’ political engagement, and serves in a way to recharge their batteries. If intellectuals sit along a spectrum from disengagement to engagement, their position may depend upon historical circumstances. A retreat then into the cultural to preserve their autonomy would not preclude the intellectual from later reengaging with the political. Gramsci (1971; Morrow, 1991) also saw intellectuals as intermediaries between culture and politics, although perhaps this mediation was more synchronous than the diachronic mediation that Bourdieu’s theorization implies. Further, if a retreat into a small hermetic print journal is necessary to preserve the intellectual’s autonomy, then such a movement must indicate that other avenues for communication are not an option, that they have been too overtaken by economic and political power.

The small, print political journal, essentially independent of academia, functions as a particular site of transmission within a media ecology now becoming dominated by the digital. These journals are the material products of specific individuals with differing goals, agendas, and political doctrines, specific institutions, specific technologies, and specific processes of production and distribution. They are collectively produced and collectively understood. If they have been transformed or eclipsed, then why is this so and what implications does this transformation carry? How does the political economy of intellectual production affect their publication? As Philip Elliott argued almost thirty years ago, market logic has made outlets for intellectual thought more obsolete.

The results of relying on these forms of the market [which reduces supply to meet effective demand] are already apparent in the press where the only viable form of journalism is that founded on definable markets as in the leisure interest magazine field....By contrast the political journal and political content is being squeezed out and with it one locus for the operations of critical intellectuals, one forum through which they have contributed to the formulation of policy within the nation state. In so far as politics is not a consumable product, there is no advertising revenue on which political journalism can rely for the support of its services (Elliott 1982, 249).

If independent political journals are lost, then do we also lose the capability for some discourses, for the transmission of certain ideas, or for certain modes of inquiry?

For example, Debray argues that the spread of socialism as a doctrine depended upon mediums of transmission that have largely been eclipsed (2007). These included print media, such as partisan presses, but also modes of transmission that more closely joined author to means of production. In addition, cultural and intellectual production had not yet been commodified to the extent they are today, so that, Marx's *Das Capital* could withstand a lag of twenty or thirty years from production to transmission, while today most books have a life expectancy of three months if they are successful and three weeks if they are not. Therefore, Debray argues that "[t]he crisis for socialism, then, is that even if it can resume its founding principles it cannot return to its founding cultural logic, its circuits of thought-production and dissemination" (2007, 27). Not only does this



mean the loss of a political program but also, as Cooney argues, for members of a journal like *The Partisan Review*, the loss of a unified, and perhaps unifying, viewpoint,

Socialism delivered a comprehensive explanation of the world, a unified viewpoint. . . . The political program of socialism was really of little interest in itself, but as a framework to unify culture and politics, as a ready-made critique of the present system, as an incentive to art through its vision of the future, socialism was intellectually very useful (1986, 21).

Again, this demonstrates some identity between a political doctrine, or more broadly, a cultural logic, and a particular organization of intellectual production.

With the demise of communism as a viable political model and the loss of faith in any sort of radical socialism, the small, political journal lost its organizing principle. For *Telos*, the loss was deeply felt.

This is why, even though we were always marginal to it, the demise of the New Left was such a devastating blow to the *Telos* project. It pulled the eschatological rug from under our feet and precipitated a far-reaching reexamination of the very relation of theory and praxis that had been our starting point (Piccone 2008, 248).

The editors of *Dissent* and the *New Left Review* have made similar comments. Mitchell Cohen, one of the current co-editors of *Dissent*, commented that “if it was difficult to be on the left while communism continued, it also hasn’t been so easy to redefine the left in communism’s wake” (Cohen, 2004). Similarly, Perry Anderson of the *New Left Review*, editorialized in the first issue of the second series of *NLR*, that “the environment in which *NLR* took shape has all but completely passed away” (Anderson 2000, 9). Recognizing this loss of reference point, Anderson remarks that the journal can only renew itself by “some distinctive and systematic approach to its state today” (Anderson 2000, 9-10). In other words, a new map must be created.

Piccone, the editor of *Telos*, however, recognized that his journal should have been redrawing the theoretical map at the time the Left was “collapsing,” instead of waiting for its final “death knell” to ring.

the project of a phenomenologically grounded dialectic...was set aside in favor of developing an analysis able to grasp recent history somewhat more comprehensively than had hitherto been done by the New Left. In retrospect, this

preliminary postponement, which eventually turned into a practical abandonment of the global philosophical project (it turned out to be an abandonment, since we never bothered to go back to it), was a strategic mistake (Piccone 2008, 240).

Explicitly Marxist journals, such as *Monthly Review*, *Capitalism*, *Nature*, *Socialism* and *Rethinking Marxism*, among others, patently lose all relevance to contemporary society. Even those journals critical of Marxism lost a reference point with the collapse of Marxism as an organizing principle. The process of reorientation can be a devastating one for journals, and without a strong editorial leadership, journals may flounder or fail. Further, in an attempt to reorient, the diversity of viewpoints arising on the left continues to expand. Stretching the left into so many different directions seems to weaken it as a whole, and the independent, radical journal may be obscured among so many voices. To assess what impact the loss of the small, independent political journal could have, we first need to ask what purpose that journal serves, political or otherwise.

The Political Journal as the Material Organization of Theory

Gramsci recognized the importance of journalism, both newspapers and journals, to the long struggle for a new consensus. The journal was one forum for the organic intellectual. As Landy states, “Gramsci’s conception of the role of journalism cannot be separated from his central project of bringing the work of intellectuals to the masses and hence of extending information and criticism to the people” (Landy 1986, 66). His perspective on the role or function of the press was closely tied to a specific political program or intervention. A journal did not have to be doctrinaire, but it had a political purpose.

In contrast, today, journals that tackle political questions may not claim to have a political purpose or agenda, they may not be tied to any political party or movement, and over their life spans, they may embrace a variety of political ideologies or positions. What then is their reason for being? Should they now be lumped together with journals of criticism, literary or otherwise? Is it enough that they participate in a culture of critical discourse? Or that they create a forum for so-called rational dialogue?

Gouldner, who coined the term “culture of critical discourse,” wrote that the purpose of his journal, *Theory and Society*, was

‘to nudge open the interface between theory and politics, not to plead some special politics but to enable theory to assume a broader human relevance and to enrich everyday life no less than technical interests...We do not conceive of theory-making or of politics as enclaved forms of heroism but, along with cultural criticism, they are taken to be part of everyday life, helping to make it meaningful, manageable, and bearable.’ (quoting Gouldner, Lemert & Piccone, 1982, 741).

Making theory more relevant is surely a well-intentioned aim. But it still begs the question to what end? Further, as Lemert and Piccone explained, Gouldner’s model for theoretical work was neither that of the scientist nor the politically engaged intellectual, but that of the artist. “Gouldner lived first and foremost as a writer” (Lemert & Piccone 1982, 741). But a writer for whom or to whom and why? As an artist, was Gouldner’s work a form of “art for art’s sake” (Bourdieu, 1993)? Many who have read Gouldner or who knew him would probably not consider him politically disengaged. But how does the role of artist or writer intersect with that of the political?

Pierre Bourdieu helped create two journals, *Liber: The European Review of Books* and *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*. He considered each to be an institutionalized site of regulated dialogue (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As Wacquant remarked,

The active promotion of such institutional sites of rational dialogue becomes all the more important in light of the unprecedented threats that symbolic producers face today. These threats include the increasing encroachment of the state and penetration of economic interests into the world of art and science; the consolidation of the large bureaucracies that manage the television, press, and radio industries, forming an independent cultural establishment that imposes its own standards of production and consumption; and the tendency to strip intellectuals of their ability to evaluate themselves, substituting instead journalistic criteria of topicality, readability, and novelty (1992, 58).

In other words, preserving journals as sites of critical discourse or rational dialogue may be enough in light of the changed materiality of intellectual production that has been overwhelmed by new media. They are places where intellectuals can fight back against the dumbing-down of discourse. The topic or political program of their interventions may



be less important than their objective form or character. As Bourdieu explained in an unpublished introductory editorial to *Liber*,

Intellectuals never create political movements but they can and should help. They can give authority, invest their cultural capital. Nowadays generally they don't. Good minds are frightened by the media and hide in their academies. Public forums are taken over by half-intellectuals—like the postmodernists—who invent emotive quarrels and false problems which waste everybody's time. The idea of *Liber* is to create a safe place in order to coax good minds out of hiding and into the world again. Intellectuals tend to overestimate their abilities as individuals and to underestimate the power they might have as a class. *Liber* is an attempt to bind intellectuals together as a militant force (1992, 57 n.104).

Gouldner's and Bourdieu's rationales for journals and theoretical work seem to suffer from a form of paralysis, or maybe, limbo, which is understandable. Wary of a vanguard role for intellectuals as much as of totalizing political doctrines, both men focus on a procedural rather than substantive hope for the value of the journal. I believe something similar can be said of *Thesis Eleven's* editors. This is not to say that any of these journals or their editors lacked political beliefs or did not desire certain political outcomes. However, they were less likely to put forward any specific political program. Further, a culture of critical discourse can definitely be of value in and of itself, especially when opposed to the uncritical or solely polemic discourse that circulates in the mass media. But as Garnham questions, "[t]he problem, however, remains as to whether this culture of critical discourse is necessarily tied to a progressive political project" (1995, 367-368).

Still, when the outlines of progressive political projects have become more fuzzy and their aims have become more slippery, the "barrier between practical politics and academic ideation" may be too high (Inglis 1996, 89). For many journals on the left, the loss of the New Left meant the loss of an anchor. As Perry Anderson argued, when he resumed his role as editor of the *New Left Review*,

political journals have a different reason for being, that makes renewal beyond their first impetus a test specific to them. They stand both for certain objective principles, and the capacity of these to decipher the course of the world. Here, editorial fade-out is intellectual defeat. Material or institutional pressures may, of course, cut off any periodical in its prime. But short of such circumstance, political



journals have no choice: to be true to themselves, they must aim to extend their real life beyond the conditions or generations that gave rise to them (Anderson 2000, 4-5).

These certain objective principles that Anderson mentions may be at the root of the problem. Commonly, they are associated with ideology. The question of journals as the material organization of theory is closely tied to the larger questions of what is the nature of theory and also ideology.

The so-called “end of ideology” seems to speak to a change in our understanding of the nature of theory. It may have been first declared by Daniel Bell, but the question of the relation of theory to practice is much older. Perhaps, the persistence of certain political journals is due to a need to consider the questions raised by such declarations. The dominance of neoliberalism has led to a large amount of pessimism among its adversaries. Neoliberal capitalism has strengthened, composed itself and stabilized (despite the recent economic crisis) and has few vital opponents here in the United States and across the Atlantic.¹ This, in turn, causes some to question the effectiveness of their ideologies, since they have no historically contemporary anchor to hold on to. In a simplified version, if communism did not work in the Soviet Union, then communism needs to be either rethought or discarded. If the New Left has had little to no success in the U.K. or the U.S., then we need to rethink or discard the New Left, which ostensibly already threw out the Old Left. This creates a rather tall ash heap of history with so many ineffective ideologies piled on top of one another.

At the end of the 1950s/early 1960s, there was a merger of the *University and Left Review* and the *New Reasoner* in the U.K., and the *New Left Review* was created. In May 1968, *Telos* began in the United States. The recovery of Marx/ism, particularly Western Marxism, in both journals, was largely due to a different understanding of the nature of theory and ideology and their relation to practice. In the U.K., the emergence of cultural studies at Birmingham and Williams’s cultural materialism created a cultural

¹ Capitalism’s advance has also resulted in cheaper publishing that has multiplied the available avenues for critique, yet it has also hyper-multiplied the commodification of thinking and knowing, creating a literary political economy, where the value of its work is more tied to its profitability than its inherent quality.

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The Academification of Political Theory and Journals

A change in the academic landscape over the past half-century has interfered with the time and space necessary for critical thought to develop and evolve. Beginning around the end of the Second World War, more and more intellectuals gravitated toward the safer environs of the university. This is a migration well-documented by Russell Jacoby in his book *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (1987). This “retreat” into the university led to, what some have described, as a substitution of “a struggle over syntax” for “the struggle for social justice” (Sanbonmatsu 2004, 67). Similarly, Agger describes theory now as “an academic specialty, not a mode of address to the political world” (1991, 133). Jacoby describes the inward turn as the “fetishism of theory” (1987, 173). Maybe to put it more kindly, intellectual struggles for meaning became internalized within academia largely as struggles within and around disciplinary traditions.

Discontent within the confines of many academic disciplines resulted in challenges to the dominant forms of the disciplines. Often, these challenges resulted in the founding of new disciplinary journals that positioned themselves as alternative to and critical of the disciplines’ flagship journals. I will briefly review a few cases within the disciplines of political science, geography, anthropology, and women’s studies, the latter a special case since its discipline was arguably not yet born. Even though my focus will just be on these four areas, many other disciplines experienced similar contestations over meaning within their fields.

The political turmoil of the 1960s challenged the established notions of what political science should study and how it should study it. Indeed, was it “government,” “politics,” “political studies,” or “political science”? Unrest within the discipline for its failure to consider many of the political changes occurring and its professed apolitical quality, an irony not lost on many, led to the formation of the Caucus for a New Political Science in 1967. The members of the Caucus then created the journal *New Political*

The CNPS was formed in order to help make the study of politics relevant to the struggle for a better world. As an educational organization, it offers a forum for diverse positions within the framework of this struggle. At the same time, it recognizes that political study and criticism, if it to be effective, must ultimately transcend the barriers of professionalism and become a function of the community as a whole. Accordingly, New Political Science seeks access to general as well as specialized audiences (Aims).

However, after an independent existence that lasted about 15 years, professional pressures pushed many in the Caucus to change the journal and the association. *New Political Science* is an academic journal now professionally published by Taylor and Francis. Any access that CNPS may gain to general audiences through such a forum would probably be best described as accidental.

Antipode, the radical journal of geography, was founded in 1969 by the Union of Socialist Geographers. By the early 80s, the Union had become an official subsection of the Association of American Geographers and “the flow of articles to their journal, even the interest in it, flagged” (Jacoby 1987, 181). The journal now has joined the ranks of many of the other once marginal alternative disciplinary journals as it has been published by the scholarly press, Blackwell’s, since 1986 (Jacoby, 1987).

The first issue of *Cultural Anthropology* appeared in February 1986, launched by the newly formed Society for Cultural Anthropology, a body within the parent organization, the American Anthropological Association. The impetus for the journal was a response to the perceived “sense of malaise since the decline in enthusiasm for a number of 1960s theoretical initiatives, including French structuralism, Marxism, and cognitive studies” (Marcus 1991, 122). It reflected a “general trend of fragmentation into specialized groups within the AAA during the 1970s and 1980s” (Marcus 1991, 122).

But these “alternative” disciplines recognize that they are firmly situated within the currents of the disciplinary mainstream.

Cultural Anthropology, while making common cause with those in cultural studies and cultural criticism broadly conceived, nonetheless recognizes the importance



of siting critique and exploration of other possibilities within the frame of given disciplinary traditions. Initiatives within disciplines are as important as those that apparently float free in self-styled interdisciplinary space (Marcus 1991, 124).

In fact, as an editor of the journal maintains, marginality in such an instance is illusory as these “carriers of the new are ultimately rooted in and connected dialectically to their originating disciplines” (Marcus 1991, 127)

The feminist journal *Signs* was founded in 1975 at the University of Chicago, “consciously modeled on ‘rigorous’ academic journals” (Sanbonmatsu 2004, 85). Feminists occupied marginal positions within the academy, and the journal founders’ decision to create an academic publication housed within an elite university’s press likely gave the journal the imprimatur of serious thought. However, as one critic observes, the journal represented a “marked contrast with the impassioned discourse of *Frontiers* and similar grassroots journals,” perhaps a sacrifice of content for form (Sanbonmatsu 2004, 85).

These journals, as alternatives to the traditional disciplinary publications, have tried to maintain a marginal position as an effective place from which to launch a critique of the discipline but still remain within the discipline. As attempts at destabilizing the dominant traditions of their disciplines, they have had their productive moments. They represent a visible challenge to disciplinary norms, provide an outlet for divergent views, and seek to expand the interest in their disciplines. However, the inward turn that they represent marks a loss for political praxis, as few outside these disciplines read their journals, or could follow the arguments presented if they were to read them, and as the contributors to the journals lose contact with everyday life. In essence, a proliferation of academic sub-disciplines, alternative associations and critical journals has failed to produce any real challenge to the dominance of capitalism, even as their emergence has occurred simultaneously with capitalism’s ascendancy. Thus, these critical attempts of reform or renewal have multiplied the number of scholarly publications and arguably have taken readers and writers away from the small, radical journals that once would have remained independent of the university.

The Loss of Critical Distance in the Onslaught of Information

Jameson's account of postmodernism argues that "distance in general (including 'critical distance' in particular) has ...been abolished in the new space of postmodernism" (1984, 87). This argument demonstrates the futility of locating the Archimedean point where critique can be its most effective. In other words, as Scott Lash argues in *Critique of Information*, we no longer can practice a transcendental critique but must instead be "immanent in the information itself" (2006, 574). Here, I believe some of the answers lie in the nature of our current Information Order and the torrents of bytes of information produced. The crowded field has resulted in a profusion of voices claiming to act as representatives for ever smaller populations or larger populations that are less defined. The small, independent political journal is not gone like Atlantis. It is more like a real place obscured by the clouds.

Two articles, "So Much for the Information Age" and "Seduced by Information" recently appearing in *The Chronicle for Higher Education*, commented on the effects of the new Information Order, (Gup, 2008; Summers, 2008). The author of the former, a professor of journalism, marveled at how students that represent a generation deeply a part of our "celebrated information age" could at the same time have a severe lack of knowledge of current events or their place in the world (Gup, 2008). The second article argued that new media do not represent such a radical break from the print era, yet perhaps our slavishness to information has become more consuming with its omnipresent availability (Summers, 2008).

Similarly, an article in a recent issue of *Poets & Writers*, titled "Way, Way Too Much Information," highlighted the price creativity pays when "information is getting harder and harder to avoid" (Bures 2008, 13). The article also mentions a recent study released in 2007 by the International Data Corporation that estimates global data creation at 161 exabytes in 2006, or "twelve stacks of copies of War and Peace, piled from here to the sun" (Bures 2008, 14). Despite our ability to produce so much information, we seem unable to produce valuable information, or recognize it when we



do. Further, how can we make sense of all that information or use it in some productive way? What role can the small, political print journal play in curating or navigating this information onslaught?

Our ability to make sense of our world requires some sort of framework, or, map, which is perhaps something that the independent journal can provide. Another method to help orient us is the process of remembering. As Adorno remarked,

‘All reification is forgetting,’ and criticism really means the same as remembrance – that is, mobilizing in phenomena that by which they have become, and thereby recognizing the possibility that they might have become, and could therefore be, something different (2000, 150).

Debray also emphasizes the need to look back, and goes so far as to say that only through the medium of print can such a process of remembering be effective. To quote,

The revolutionary act *par excellence* starts from a sense of nostalgia, the return to a forgotten text, a lost ideal. Behind the ‘re’ of reformation, republic or revolution – of rehearsing, recommencing, rereading – there is a hand flicking through the pages of a book, from the end back to the beginning. Whereas the finger that presses a button, fast-forwarding a tape or disc, will never pose a danger to the establishment (Debray 2007, 9).

A look to the past provided the foundation and beginnings of *Telos*. As Piccone stated, “We began to search for forgotten and repressed texts that we had occasionally seen mentioned in passing or referred to in stray footnotes” (2008, 235). Does our current hyperpace and new media allow for such a perusal of the past? Or as Debray argues, have we lost the capability for revolution due to our current mediasphere?

Journals as workshops provide a space for craftspeople to create, keeping the past in mind, as time-served techniques and skills of craftsmen, but also improving upon those techniques, keeping thought from reifying into so many fragments. The idea of the craftsman(woman) within his/her workshop brings to mind notions of slowness, work, a persistent and evolutionary play with ideas but a continuity of technique. Richard Sennett in his recent book, titled *The Craftsman*, treats the concrete practices of the craftsman “as like laboratories in which sentiments and ideas can be investigated” (2008, 20).

To return to Jacoby,

[t]he rhythm of the lives of intellectuals permeates their writings. This is not surprising. If telephoning supplants letters and cafes yield to conferences, thinking itself – its density and parameters—may echo the shifts (1987, 31).

But I do not want this argument to resort to a print versus digital construct. To simplify things to the argument that criticism can only retain the power of critique in its traditional format is unsound and nostalgic. I do not believe that the form of digital media, specifically the Internet, is inherently incapable of producing criticism that can be transformative. Moreover, print and digital media can sometimes work in a symbiotic relationship that increases both the quality of content and its visibility.

For example, the electronic journal, *Fast Capitalism*, a journal “about the impact of rapid information and communication technologies on self, society and culture in the 21st century,” recently published an issue dedicated to the topic of the April 16th shootings at Virginia Tech. Owing to the journal’s unique format, it was able to publish a variety of critical and thoughtful views on the subject that were largely unheard and/or ignored in the mainstream media. Now, the journal has a print book titled *There is a Gunman on Campus: Tragedy and Terror at Virginia Tech* available from Rowman & Littlefield Publishers that republishes the issue’s articles and also includes new contributions on the subject. By first broaching the topic in a digital form, *Fast Capitalism* was able to publish marginal perspectives on a controversial issue that can now also be found in print.

While the nature of intellectual production is always changing, for better or worse, that does not mean that we can ignore its transformations. As scholars or theorists, we must pay attention to the materiality of our discourse. Further, we need to continue to interrogate the viability of critical thought, whether embodied in a small, print political journal or elsewhere, in our current hypermediated age.

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