

## 0.1 Chapter 1: capitalism: Media

### 0.2 Media

## 1 On the Role of Cheerful News

We've grown up expecting that the task of the news is to introduce us to important information which we will need to lead our lives and by this we tend to mean information relating to problematic dynamics at the level of national and international life (a war, a debt crisis, the resignation of a politician).





And yet, one kind of news story which is oddly, and often embarrassingly popular is one which lies entirely outside the remit of news as serious people define it. It is a story in which an attractive or accomplished person is witnessed going about a minor task of daily life. The story may pivot around an event of complete ordinariness, there is a complete absence of drama, suffering or hysteria. Perhaps they've gone out to buy some bread or maybe they are walking the dog. It may be quite sunny. The dog looks happy. The flowers are out. Anne Hathaway has, for example, recently been spotted going out for a walk with her chocolate labrador and a lot of people are interested and charmed.

We might want to look at 10 or 15 photos relating to this and some news outlets wisely satisfy our interest.



#### **1.0.0.0.1 Still we want a bit more:**



**1.0.0.0.2 And a bit more**





AKM-GSI/Splash News

### **1.0.0.0.3 And a bit more still**

Sweet though the photos are we might catch ourselves wondering what on earth we are doing spending our time looking at them. The feeling is we should be doing something more important, more worthwhile.

We shouldn't feel bad. The doubts we might feel about looking at pictures of Anne Hathaway walking her dog are largely caused by accidental snobbery. We are liable to look down on an activity which, if it were presented to us in a museum, we might take very seriously. And yet what we're doing here looking at a pleasant person talking a walk is not fundamentally different from the pleasures available in an art gallery. If we went on a special trip to Giverny to see Monet's paintings we'd hardly think we were doing something a bit low-brow or pointless.

Yet when we look at his lovely *Wild Poppies near Argenteuil* we are in many respects doing exactly the same as when we look at Anne and her dog.



#### **1.0.0.0.4 Monet looked at people going for a walk in a field**

Its just that when a frame is put round a picture and when it becomes famous we are much more generous to it (and to ourselves) and appreciative of what it has to offer.

Monet was a great artist in part because he wanted to draw our attention to times when nothing important seems to be going on. In the Wild Poppies picture its just an ordinary day; theyve probably gone on the walk hundreds of times. Monet is telling us that in just looking at someone going for a walk we are doing something worth taking seriously.

If the task of the news is to tell us important things, then we shouldnt define importance too narrowly. Part of what we need is to stay hopeful about the human project. Hope is an achievement and we find it in these sort of scenes scenes where no one is dying or suffering, where things are attractive, where there is an absence of sickness and in which everyday, quiet, ordinary contentment is glimpsed.