



A critical approach to French *médiacultures* theory

Post-critical sociology of media and cultural studies in France

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ABSTRACT

What's new in Cultural Studies in France these days? Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in a research tendency long neglected in this country, in particular with the publication in French of some fundamental texts and a new critical reading of these in the framework of the new '*médiacultures* theory' propagated by a group of young researchers. In this article, we present *médiacultures* theory and consider its strengths and weaknesses. Much to be welcomed is its epistemological subjection of high culture products to the same analysis as mass culture. Nonetheless, the omission of reception contexts and the simplification of Marx's and Gramsci's insights into the socio-political dimensions of culture – these being authors who deeply influenced Anglophone Cultural Studies research – have meant that the work currently being done in *médiacultures* is not as far-reaching as it might be.

KEY WORDS

French theory ■ social uses ■ medias ■ public sphere ■ influence ■ supremacy

'Cultural Studies' has never been a paradigm much prized by French social scientists (Mattelart and Neveu, 2003). Although Richard Hoggart's book, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957, translated into French as *La culture du pauvre*) was published in France in 1970 on the initiative of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, the major works in Cultural Studies, with a few

exceptions (particularly thanks to the journal *Réseaux*), have not been much translated. It was not, finally, until the present decade that French readers at last had access to the principal founding texts of this research tendency. Recently, there has been a new and increasing awareness of Cultural Studies, thanks to the initiative of a dynamic group of young researchers centred around Hervé Glevarec, Eric Macé and Eric Maigret. These scholars undertook a project to make a wide range of the most interesting texts of this research tendency available to French researchers and students (Glevarec, Macé and Maigret, 2008), and have also brought forward in their own work new developments in the sociology of media and culture, drawing extensively on the contributions of Cultural Studies. We should therefore take this opportunity to welcome their initiatives, and above all their proactive publication policy, pursued in conjunction with Editions Amsterdam, Armand Colin and the *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel* (INA). The researchers actively involved in this scholarly translation enterprise (translation in the Latourien, as well the usual sense of the word) have pursued their project with a conviction and seriousness that could serve as a model for many other strands of social science research.

We should certainly, however, also pay tribute to their own writings, which are among the most original to be published recently and which offer new developments to the sociology of media and mass culture in France – a field not best known for its productivity and originality. In employing, as we have in French, the term '*médiacultures* theory', we refer to the recent research of these scholars. Within this work, we are particularly interested in the most complex theoretical and empirical elements, i.e., those most specifically linked to 'mediation by the media', the 'original matrix of Cultural Studies' (Macé, 2006b). We shall thus leave aside the work they are also pursuing on the issue of culture in its widest sense (see, for example, Glevarec, 2005). Within the framework of this article, we would like to pilot a critique of '*médiacultures* theory', some of the premises of which seem to us questionable, to say the least – that is, they seem to us eminently worthy of interest, but also to need challenging on their contradictions and omissions. The richness of the interpretative frameworks generated would appear to invite extensive further development. To mention just a few aspects, the concepts of the public sphere, of the avatar and of post-critical sociology, as these are used in *médiacultures* theory, are all possible points of entry to a discussion of the proposed heuristics. For the present, we would like to make an initial rapid evaluation of the theoretical positions mobilized and to identify their major stumbling blocks. This is, of course, just the beginning of a worthwhile discussion.

Médiacultures theory

The first element of theoretical positioning to point out is perhaps the one in opposition to which *médiacultures* theory has sought to establish itself. Such ‘negative moments’ are often essential resources for the sociological imagination. In order to evaluate conceptual advances and empirical contributions, it is often necessary to understand researchers’ dissatisfactions and how these lie behind new approaches aimed at resolving the doubts adhering to previous structures. In the pantheon of defining ‘enemies’ of the *médiacultures* scholars, then, we find Bourdieu’s sociology, including its most recent developments, especially when these deal with the cultural question (Bourdieu, 1979; Lahire, 2004). This is apparently the major pole of repulsion, accused of the worst ‘scientific infractions’ – reductionism, special pleading, elitism, poverty-obsession, et cetera. While the charges levelled at Bourdieu’s sociology are sometimes exaggerated, this perceived need to grasp the concept of ‘culture’ in a more than anthropological sense does allow us, on the one hand, not to dismiss out of hand the cultural products of the media and culture industries and, on the other, to develop an analytical perspective that does not see *representation* as in opposition to *practice*. Furthermore, it allows us to view culture in terms of power relationships and ideological stakes whilst not lapsing into an approach which mystifies the concept of the masses. In a general way, they come down heavily here on the whole of critical thought: Karl Marx, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Roland Barthes are all criticized for holding one-dimensional, disconnected and reductionist views of culture. These crucial milestones, which should be discussed elsewhere in detail, do nonetheless allow them to take useful steps, such as that of not confining themselves to the most ‘legitimate’ media subjects (news, discussion, et cetera), but also tackling less ‘cultivated’ media products, such as television drama, entertainment shows and advertising. A careful consideration of the cultural industries field also has the advantage of underlining the fact that the culture most widely known today (the ‘common culture’) is ‘produced not by institutions, but by the transnational dynamics, uncertainties and versatility of the market’ (Macé, 2008: 12).

As well as the sizeable legacy of Cultural Studies, to which we will return later, the theoretical influences of the *médiacultures* scholars are to be found in a varied range, to say the least, of different ‘ologies’ – sociologies such as those of Alain Touraine, Edgar Morin and Bruno Latour; anthropologies such as that of Michel de Certeau, and even politologies

such as that of Nancy Fraser – which they attempt to bring together in order to consider anew the role played by mass culture in the advanced capitalist societies of ‘second modernity’ (Beck, 2001). Some of the theoretical connections they make are bold and even rather disconcerting. Initially, it is difficult to imagine the work of Stuart Hall or Raymond Williams reformulated in terms of actor-network theory, whose main instigator, Bruno Latour, makes no distinction between critical sociological approaches and conspiracy theories (Latour, 2005: 72). However, this is just what Eric Macé attempts: ‘all representation is never anything more than the objectivised product and precipitate of social relations and conflicts of definition which are thus “bent into shape” and which, every time they are used, reorganize the contours of the world in which they find themselves’. Furthermore, ‘this is what we are studying when we study sociology’ (Macé, 2006a: 11). We must recognise that the link between Cultural Studies, which reaffirms that all social relations are indeed founded on a principle of asymmetry, and Latour’s sociology, which, quite to the contrary, is constructed on a principle of symmetry which enjoins us not to consider society as necessarily implying inequalities, is a feat which verges here on theoretical syncretism. Equally, it is astonishing, to say the least, to see conceptual similarities discerned between the sociology of Alain Touraine and the Marxist-influenced legacy of Cultural Studies. Touraine’s theorization of the new social movements, after all, insists on the cultural nature of their demands and that these are not reducible to the antagonism between labour and capital; ‘a social movement’, Touraine tells us, ‘is the effort of a collective actor to take control of the “values”, the cultural orientations, of a society by opposing the actions of an adversary with whom it is bound up in a power relation’ (Touraine, 1992: 277). This formulation may seem not too distant from the Gramscian view of the struggle for hegemony, but in fact this conception of social movements has absolutely nothing in common with the class struggle as seen from a Marxist perspective. Although Touraine (and his followers) see social movements as consisting of a social conflict (i.e., the struggle against a social adversary) and a cultural vision (i.e., a vision of the realization of cultural values), they see social forces as fighting one another no longer for control of the means of production, but rather over the results of cultural production – information, education, health, and so on. A ‘cultural Left’ would thus tend here to take the place of a ‘social Left’ (Fraser, 2005). Not only does this diagnosis appear, at least, to be somewhat out of sync with the nature of social conflict in recent years (in France and elsewhere), but it is also clear that this approach does not, finally, have much in common

with the definition of hegemony as a ‘social movement’, as found for example in Gramsci or Hall. It also seems scarcely compatible with the work of social historian Edward Thompson (1988), who, while emphasizing the cultural dimension of social antagonism, i.e., working class demands for ‘recognition’ (Honneth, 2000), certainly does not state that these are essentially cultural conflicts. The strength of Thompson’s work lies indeed in the way it shows the extent to which social struggles are also based on moral expectations, but this insistence on a symbolic dimension never leads him to reduce social conflicts to a normative process now only loosely linked to material conditions.

Such contradictions notwithstanding, the *médiacultures* scholars have created a theoretical core comprised of concepts organized into an analytical system which is, finally, coherent. This enables them to put forward the bases for a sociology of the media, defined as a ‘post-critical’ sociology of ‘mediated social relations’ – relations which i) arise from a double mediation by the public sphere and by the cultural industries and ii) contribute, along with other kinds of social relations, to the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1989). From this perspective, ‘media messages convey not the existence of a single dominant ideology received from on high, nor yet the crazed tyranny of an independent communication sector playing by its own rules, but simply a state of compromise which tends to favor the multiple hegemonic aims of a bourgeoisie in ‘unstable equilibrium’, obliged to co-exist with mass media that have relatively autonomous processes of their own – even if these are dependent on an upper socio-professional realm – and obliged to struggle with the many resistant sectors of society which simply do not accept definitions of reality carried by the media and even exert some weight on their formulation’ (Maignet, 2005: 27). *Médiacultures* theory sees the main lesson to be drawn from Stuart Hall’s reading of the concept of hegemony (Gramsci, 1978) as lying in the way it apprehends social relations as forms of conflict taking place in the field of culture and having more to do with power than with ideological domination. Furthermore, this power ‘has no guarantees, both because of the contradictions within the dominant groups and because of the resistance of subordinated groups’ (Macé, 2005: 47). To be more precise, ‘the exercise of power within social relations constantly gives rise to conflicts of definition between legitimization and delegitimation, naturalization and problematization, transgression and disqualification (...), between the power of the institutionalized and the dynamic of the institutionalizing agency, the performativity and the subversion of codes (...), between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic viewpoints’ (Macé, 2005: 47–48).

'Cultural turn', ideology and reception

One of the principal theoretical supports on which *médiacultures* theory relies is thus the famous 'cultural turn' (Chaney, 1994), first described, it is generally agreed, by Stuart Hall. The 'cultural turn', considered by this group of scholars to be the transition from a conceptualization in terms of ideology to an approach in terms of hegemony, cannot however be defined as a total abandonment of the concept of ideology. As Armand Mattelart and Erik Neveu emphasize, as soon as culture is viewed within a problematic of power, the concept of ideology becomes a central one: 'to reflect on the ideological content of a culture amounts to nothing less than attempting to grasp, in a given context, how value systems and the representations inherent in these serve to stimulate processes of resistance to or acceptance of the *status quo*, how discourses and symbols provide groups of people with a consciousness of their own identity and strength or contribute to the "alienating" quality of their acquiescence to dominant ideas' (2003: 38). The *médiacultures* scholars' criticism of the concept of ideology is based in fact on far too rapid a reading of *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels, 1975), which they analyze from the standpoint of a pre-Marxist interpretative framework more appropriate to the *Manuscripts of 1844*. While the young Marx saw reality and praxis (infrastructure) as the same thing and as the opposite of ideology (superstructure), this is no longer precisely the case in his later works, which demonstrate more ambiguity – ideology does not come from nowhere, but actually proves to be a product of the concrete bases of existence. It is certainly not useful to recap in great detail the various possible exegetic orientations of Marx's writings, but a less mechanistic reading of this question of ideology is broadly possible as soon as we grant the existence, from a more Weberian perspective, of a process of legitimization, that is an attempt to justify a social order that works towards the acceptance of that order (Ricoeur, 1997).

If the media are where social antagonisms are expressed, this is because they stand in an obvious relationship to ideology, that 'repelled concept' with which the *médiacultures* theorists maintain such a stormy relationship – from fear, no doubt, that any reference to this may be read as a concession to Marxist or, worse, Bourdieu's theory, an acceptance of the principle that the thinking or the culture of the dominant class are also the dominant thinking and culture. From Gramsci to Hall, however, the concept of ideology is obviously central, since 'it is precisely in relation [to] social conflicts that the media have an essential social function: to define the situations which will affect the balance of social

forces through “consensualizing” the very terms through which every social situation will be debated, to define situations which will influence the balance of social forces’ (Beaud, 1984: 292). In other words, the media have the power to establish the interpretative frameworks through which debate, and thus collective representations themselves, are structured. They deal in legitimization, serving as a type of ‘tribunal of words and ideas whose hearings are pre-set to be supportive of the *status quo*’ (Beaud, 1984: 292). The main reference here for *médiacultures* theory is obviously Stuart Hall’s famous programmatic text, *Encoding/decoding* (1973). In this text, which he went on to amend many times and to develop further, the British scholar clearly posits the existence of ‘dominant ideologies’, whose encodings are not homogenous and which, above all, audiences do not decode any more homogenously. These decodings may be of a ‘dominant’, ‘negotiated’ or ‘oppositional’ nature, depending on whether the meaning inscribed in the coding is shared, disputed or rejected. These alternatives are nonetheless concretized within the framework of a ‘closure of meaning’ (preferred meanings which are not, however, required meanings) since production and reception are connected: ‘they are differentiated moments within the totality formed by the social relations of the communicative process as a whole’ (Hall, 2008a: 29). Elsewhere, he adds, ‘Thus we must say that the work of “ideological reproduction” which they perform is by definition work in which counter-acting tendencies – Gramsci’s “unstable equilibria” – will constantly be manifested. We can speak, then, only of the *tendency* of the media – but it is a systematic tendency, not an incidental feature – to reproduce the ideological field of a society in such a way as to reproduce, also, its structure of domination’ (Hall, 2008b: 59–60).

While *médiacultures* theory gives central importance, in its theoretical development, to the question of different modes of reception (since the ‘programme’ of reception is never completely encoded in symbolic production), the situation is quite different when it comes to empirical studies which are not much interested in systems of perception or interpretative filters. In his study of ‘society and its [televisual] double’, Eric Macé makes it clear from the first lines of his introduction that the ‘reception’ of television is not at all what interests him (Macé, 2006a: 9). We thus find nothing about what people may do with *médiacultures*, how these may be discussed, rejected, incorporated, taken as models, et cetera. However, ‘the notion of decoding invites us to take seriously the fact that audiences have different social statuses and cultures and that watching or listening to the same programme does not in itself imply coming away with a similar meaning or memory of it’ (Mattelart and Neveu, 2003: 35).

The conflictualist constructivism of which *médiacultures* theory claims to be a follower here dispenses with the social uses of mass culture and considers only the dyadic relationship between the cultural industries and the dominant media. This positioning seems strange, to say the least, when Cultural Studies is otherwise so consistently referenced. At the heart of Richard Hoggart's work, for example, we find the idea that the 'texts' of cultural industries have no direct influence on working class individuals because these individuals mobilize categories of subjectivity which lead them to develop an 'uncommitted media use', thus revealing a certain distance from the meaning encoded in the messages to which they are exposed. Hoggart's work, then, places emphasis on the ways in which working class people act and think, and stresses that social meaning always emerges from the practical meanings which go together with a class culture, whilst not being bounded by it.

So what should we think of this lack of interest in audiences' reception dynamics? Admittedly it is not always possible or useful for a researcher to consider processes of encoding and decoding as a minimum programme of study. Perhaps, however, taking account of the social culture of audiences is also a problem for anyone who may consider that individuals' interpretative filters (values, principles and other kinds of world view) cannot be seen as directly linked to the positions occupied by these individuals in a social space – that is, to the role they play within social relations (in particular those of production). Is there not a paradox here, which *médiacultures* theory will find it difficult to get beyond? Frankly not, if we venture the hypothesis that the theory, although it never makes an explicit judgement on this point, implies a vision of individuals as subjects (Touraine, 1992), that is as beings in the process of emancipating themselves from the social, as entrepreneurs of their own lives, asserting their individual specificities and proclaiming their different particularities in the face of dominant social realities. Certainly, the Cultural Studies tradition makes the view of an active subject/reader its own (Morley, 2008), but it also emphasizes the polyphonic framework (i.e., the 'interdiscursive' value system) of reception, which also plays a role in establishing meaning. In a commentary on a text by Morley, Glevarec clearly notes, however, that it is important to take account of the 'political/ideological system of reference within which members of an audience are positioned as actors who are *also political*' (Glevarec, Macé and Maigret, 2008: 135). But this principle seems hardly to be implemented elsewhere. The *médiacultures* scholars find in studies of the reception and symbolic interpretation of media texts above all an opportunity to

distance themselves from the theory of habitus, offering ideology an autonomy and an effect of its own. Hall, however, clearly asserts that the uses of media texts are framed 'by structures of understanding, as well as being produced by social and economic relations, which shape their realization' at the reception end of the chain and which permit the meanings signified in the discourse to be transposed into practice or consciousness (to acquire social use value or political effectivity) (Hall, 2008a: 29). Morley, meanwhile, although he clearly stipulates that decodings cannot be deduced directly from the class position of the audience, by no means rejects the explanatory force of social position. In his view this is a question of 'how social position *plus* particular discourse positions produce specific readings; readings which are structured because the structure of access to different discourses is determined by social position' (Morley, 2008: 138–139). These various assertions show that we are, then, not so far here from Bourdieu's concepts of appropriation, through which 'social agents, and objects in so far as they are appropriated by these agents, and thus constituted as property, are [notably] located in a distinct and distinctive place within social space which may be characterized by the position it occupies in relation to other places' (Bourdieu, 1997: 161).

Hegemony and resistance

As we have just seen, one of the central arguments of Cultural Studies is that culture is a fundamental part of social antagonisms. It is one of the basic loci of power, and also of the confrontation of power, and thus appears as a sphere where social change can come together. This means looking again at the binarism which views superstructure and infrastructure as opposites and the mechanistic approach which make ideology and the media into all-powerful authorities. The Birmingham School has tended, from a Gramscian perspective, to emphasize in particular the repertoires of 'receptive' defence (cognitive and cultural filters) available to individuals whom capitalist ideology can never render completely submissive to its industrial-cultural apparatus. This (correct) insistence on people's resistance to media and advertising representations and on their capacity for insubordination, in order to extricate themselves from trivial forms of autonomy, has nonetheless tended to obliterate the other aspect of hegemony, that is the process of trying to construct new power relations both in the media and cultural sphere and also, above all, in society as a whole. For Gramsci, hegemony was something that organized itself on an ideological level around the exercise of cultural

power over different classes which are not in power, and also through the ‘seizure of [cultural] power’ by counter-hegemonic groups within the framework of a generalized seizure of power.

We can see in the recent French developments in Cultural Studies not only an obliteration of this aspect, but a further shift, since the attention of these scholars is mainly focused on the construction of mass culture as a result of antagonistic social relations. Their interest is no longer in the sociology of social relations in which culture and the media fully combine, but rather in the anthropology of a collective imagination which is able to reflect the social antagonisms characteristic of the passage from first to ‘second modernity’. The ideological terrain is perceived here less as a major factor in antagonistic social relations than as the site of a particular struggle, that of conflicts of definition. This leaves us wanting to understand the relationship these have with the social conflicts that they are purported to translate. The passage from social conflicts to *médiacultures* takes place, we are told, by means of two inextricably linked processes of mediation by the public sphere and by the cultural industries. This implies social struggles which are multiple (and not reducible to the contradiction between capital and labor) and which, appearing in public space, are taken up and worked upon by the cultural industries because these need to be attentive to society to calibrate their products in pursuit of success.

If we take seriously this assertion of an ascendant, two-fold mediation, then *médiacultures* are not, on the one hand, a reflection of ‘real’ social relations, but more precisely of relationships which have broken the publicity barrier and become part of the agenda of the dominant media. This would necessitate, at the very least, locating and understanding the linked processes of the media and cultural industries production fields. These appear, however, not to be of much interest to our post-critical sociologists, who place more emphasis on symbolic than on organic systems. We are very far, here, from the ‘cultural materialism’ of a Raymond Williams attempting to hold together the analysis of culture and the critical examination of the economic conditions of its production (Williams, 1966). On the other hand, the question of the exercise of hegemony disappears in favor of a reformist analysis of democratic practice, whose liveliness may be measured by its capacity to produce ‘subaltern counter-publics’. So it is no longer a matter of considering the role played by mass culture in the lives of the individuals exposed to it (the place of symbolic production in social reproduction), but of considering its impact on the public sphere.

Furthermore, the question is completely absent of counter-hegemony (the hegemony of subaltern groups), and its means of symbolic production. Alternative forms of production of information and culture do not appear to concern the *média cultures* scholars at all. Their proxy references to Gramsci dispense with a significant part of the work produced by the author of the *Prison Notebooks* on the need for a 'total journalism', which would seek to educate, provoke and stretch its audience with a view to helping them gain intellectual and moral autonomy and giving them the capacity for a wider political consciousness. For the broadening of the struggle also takes in the production of content (discourses, images, et cetera) in order to engage with social reproduction and symbolic domination. Resistance, from this point of view, is not so much a matter of active audience members/consumers capable of freeing themselves from a form of false consciousness, but rather of individuals organized collectively and demanding a right to communication, working to establish a culture that is critical, and that endorses experimentation with alternative media practices that can be part of ideological struggle and can answer hegemonic symbol production.

So what has become of those antagonistic social relations we were told about at the beginning? They have been assimilated into representations, because society, as Eric Macé tells us, does not exist and only its double has any reality. This is not entirely a new theme, since Alain Touraine had already announced the disappearance of the social and the arrival of information as the new, non-social, centre of our culture: 'the mass production and distribution of cultural goods now occupies the place occupied by material goods in an industrial society'. And, he adds, 'in this society, to wield power means to forecast and change opinions, attitudes, behaviours, to mould personality and culture, and thus to enter directly the world of "values" rather than remaining in the realm of utility' (Touraine, 1992: 283–284). The approach to hegemony developed here has lost its class-based dynamic. Following the theories of representation developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001), it comes down to a purely symbolic space where struggles which are ultimately relationships of representation are discerned and constructed. And resistance, no longer having any emancipatory goal, can be content to play itself out essentially in the symbolic field, since, we are told, it is purely in the space of culture that the most crucial demands and conflicts are settled. The study of public disagreements, media representations, the products of the cultural industries and the experience of audiences is not, however, all one and the same thing. These are not just so many avatars

of social relations, but dissimilar, yet interlocking social realities which, although they effectively make up one system, are not therefore mutually equivalent. The 'conflictive construction' of reality which reveals itself through the mediation of the cultural industries and the dominant media is the product, in particular, of choices made in response to the rules governing professional fields whose degree of autonomy is also subject, in part, to economic processes. In *Encoding/decoding*, Hall describes well these professional processes and states specifically, with regard to the process of media communication and the production of messages: 'Using the analogy of *Capital*, this is the "labour process" in the discursive mode. Production, here, constructs the message. In one sense, then, the circuit begins here' (Hall, 2008a: 27).

In the introduction to their Cultural Studies anthology, Hervé Glevarec and his colleagues write that a sociology of *médiacultures* must consider how to develop 'ways of interrogating practices and representations (...) which are sensitive to questions of power and empowerment and always viewed in conjunction with other domains of practice and representation' (2008: 8). One heterodox manner of reformulating this assertion might be to say that it is important to pay attention i) to the conflictive relationship between hegemony and counter-hegemony and the forms of power emerging from this dialectic in democratic space, and ii) to the fact that the social relations at work in this process must be viewed in conjunction with the social relations active in other locations, for example in public media spaces (to study social antagonisms is also to consider the struggles of interpretation they are bound up with). Equally important, however, may be to show from a materialist perspective the extent to which what is at stake in public media spaces is also a factor in what is happening in democratic space. In other words, it is not only a question of showing how the two spaces reflect one another (as in 'society and its double'), but of showing where these factors are particularly closely linked within the hegemonic/counter-hegemonic process.

Furthermore, if we are to take seriously the concept of hegemony, we must recognize that it describes a form of power resulting from a process that swings between the consent of the dominated to the values of the prevailing social order and their ability to resist this same social order. It thus implies that there exists a basic level of 'cultural connivance' between dominant and dominated groups which allows asymmetrical social relations to be legitimated. The question that then becomes central is that of hegemony's construction, the particular forms of mediation that allow it to emerge and thus the functioning of the different 'hegemonic apparatuses' (Buci-Glucksman, 1975), which include, obviously, the media. It is thus extremely useful to acknowledge the importance of 'understanding the

forms of representation that societies provide of themselves, which are linked to the kinds of power exercised in those societies' (Beaud, 1984: 9). This perspective, moreover, must not be severed from one that views media as part of the general development of social relations. If we are to continue to view the hegemony problematic as valuable and to accept its full political force, the kind of sociology we most need is surely one that tackles the social uses of media production. However, *médiacultures* theory, despite its obvious foundation in Cultural Studies analyses that opened up this field, seems willing to go scarcely further along that path than declarations of intent.

Translation by Jean Morris

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