



未名社科·媒介与社会丛书（影印版）

Critical Readings:
Media and Gender

批判性读本： 媒介与性别

〔英〕辛西娅·卡特（Cynthia Carter）

〔美〕琳达·斯泰纳（Linda Steiner）

编



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总 序

媒介是神奇的,社会也是神奇的,媒介与社会的耦合生产出无限的神奇。从涂尔干《宗教生活的基本形式》关于“社会”与唤起社会意识的符号与仪式共生的理论来看,媒介使社会显得神奇的过程也造就了自身的神奇。

人类在现代大众传播成为现实之前对于“神奇”的感知是经由巫师及其巫术的转化来实现的。澳洲土著在图腾舞蹈的狂热中感受到超个人的社会力量的存在。满身披挂的萨满用舞蹈和神歌请灵降神,让已经消逝的显露原形,让凡人通常不可见的显现真身,让千山万水之遥的即刻大驾光临。借助巫术,时间和空间的障碍可以暂时克服,过去的、未来的都可以在现实中出现,墓室中的、仙山上的都可以召唤到面前。

这些神奇经验在现当代越来越彻底地被大众媒介所造就,电视、网络等图像传输技术在其中发挥着关键作用。大人物像变戏法一样总跑到百姓居室内高谈阔论,历史的亡灵在荧屏上召之即来,挥之即去。媒介使常人具有千里眼、顺风耳,看见那原本遥不可见的,听清那从前根本就听不到的。媒介是神奇的,它在社会中的运行有如巫术。几百年的现代化对世界“祛魅”,结果我们看到人类社会所集聚的全部的“魅”都汇聚于媒介,并被媒介无限放大。

长期耳濡目染,媒介的神奇人们已经习以为常了,就像前现代的人对巫术习以为常一样。但是,这个过程一直都是知识界探讨的课题。现代大众媒介的各种新形式从一开始出现的时候就会被知识界作为新事物加以关注。从较早的照相、无线电广播到电影、电视,再到近年的新媒介传播,关于大众传媒研究、文化研究、虚拟社会研究的知识生产就一直紧随媒介发展的步伐。媒介研究在发达国家已经形成庞大的群体和细密的分工,这个群体既能够追逐传播领域的新事物,也能够通过专业的眼光让人们习以为常的许多方面显出怪异来,从而引发众人的注意和分析的兴趣。我们国内的媒介研究在这两个方向上都需要培育自己的能力。

依靠现代大众媒介运行的社会是一种机制极其不同的社会,中国社会正在越来越深地涉入其中。

高科技媒介的威力以不断增强的方式发挥出来,世界虽然还成为不了地球村,

但是人与人之间的联系方式、人与各种层次的共同体的联结机制都发生着变化。

社会因媒介成为可能,因新媒介而成为新的可能。社会是个人之间相互挂念、相互意识到而成为可能的。在短暂的一天和有限的一生里,个人在多大范围里意识到多少他人的存在、记挂多大范围的他人,这是靠媒介运作的结果。基于集体意识和共同想象而形成内在联系的社会,是存在于媒介(运作)中的。在中国境外的许多城市,华人移民在本地新闻中看到唐人街的春节表演而确证自己与华人群体的认同,全世界的中国人因为春节文化的展演而想象自己属于一个十多亿人口的同一体。网络新媒介创造了新的人际联系方式,虚拟社区借助新媒介产生出来,人们之间隔空互动,与传统真实意义上的面对面交流的主要差别只是不能“臭味相投”而已。

媒介见证社会实体的存在。人类共同体因为联合国的新闻、国际救灾行动的画面而被呈现;国家共同体因为制造媒介事件的奇观(spectacle)而被世人记住;地方共同体因为地方风物、特产或节庆被传播而知名;行业罢工、同性恋群体因为游行的极端表演而受注意。优势的存在是在媒介中具有正面形象的实体。

媒介见证社会力量的博弈。各种社会力量要竞争,最好的方式是围绕媒介、借助媒介展开能见度高的竞争,展开正面形象的竞争。国际政治的软实力、国内政治的亲民形象、商业竞争的名牌效应、文体明星的商业价值……都是靠媒介的舞台定位的。社会力量竞争的王牌是通过媒介制造“奇观”,造成举世瞩目的效果。制造“9·11”事件的组织选择纽约世贸大厦为目标,是因为他们不仅要使行动成为媒介事件,而且还要使媒介事件具有奇观效应(spectacularity);美国占领伊拉克,对媒介画面进行筛选,突出精确打击的画面,限制伊拉克平民死伤的画面,既在避免负面效果,也在凸现战争奇观。强势的社会力量是媒介中的主动力量。

媒介毕竟是社会的媒介。媒介为社会中的人所运用。人具有神性和魔性。社会既是温情的港湾,也是邪恶的渊薮;社会既以公正相标榜,也以不平等为现实。运行于社会中的媒介也兼具人性和社会的两副面孔。媒介制造人间奇迹:新闻报道能够让尼克松总统下台,能够让孙志刚事件改变弊端连连的城市收容制度,能够让绝望中的重症患者借助社会力量得到救治……媒介也产生遗憾和问题,媒介暴力、媒介色情、媒介偏见一直层出不穷。

媒介是社会的舞台、社会的缩影,媒介本身就是社会。媒介被政党看作一个特殊的战线,一个意识形态斗争的领域。主导的力量会设法控制公共舆论的导向和社会议题的设置,其他的社会力量或附和、追随,或批评、抵制。弱者有弱者的媒介武器和媒介阐释策略。沉默或参与,是一次选择。参与而主动解码,借题发挥,进而用反讽来消遣权势,则潜藏着无数持续的选择。大众媒介在社会的运行中产生着层出

不穷的问题。

媒介不仅是信息、思想、政治,也是经济。从事媒介行业的人也是经济动物,媒介也是经济利益的集散地。媒介造就百万富翁、亿万富翁,造就中产阶级,造就报童、报摊,当然也造就自己的消费者群体。这是一个不断膨胀的产业。新媒介成为新的产业,往往使原有的一切产业具备新的形式和运作机制。媒介产业是其他产业发展的助推器。世界是人的天地,也是产品的库房。产品世界的秩序是由媒介按照品牌进行编码和排列的,从而形成“物的体系”,以此支撑着人的世界成为一个多样而有序的“消费社会”。

媒介是一种信息产业,是一个经济领域的范畴。媒介又是现代文化,因此媒介作为经济就应该更加准确地被称为文化经济(文化工业)。媒介卷入的是共同体集体利益和共同体内部的利益、地位、声望的分配问题,因此媒介涉及的问题是政治经济学的问题。这些问题在社会博弈过程中消长,媒介成为社会进步的助力,有时也为社会制造解决问题的障碍。媒介与社会,纠结着人类伟大的成就和太多的问题。凡此种种,我们就让有心人、术业有专攻的人去一一论说其中的究竟吧。

是为序。

高丙中、杨伯澍

2007年8月,北京大学

SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Critical Readings: Media and Gender offers an exciting introduction to a wide range of research approaches, each of which continues to shape the ongoing development of feminist and gender-sensitive scholarship. Care has been taken by Cynthia Carter and Linda Steiner, the editors, to select contributions which demonstrate the conceptual and methodological richness of these diverse approaches. While no one volume can claim to be comprehensive in its scope, this one succeeds in highlighting important interventions while, at the same time, providing a sound basis for future enquiries.

This Reader begins with an introductory essay by the two editors, both of whom are leading figures in the field. This essay maps the contours of feminist media theory from the 'images of women in the media' approaches prevalent in the 1970s through to contemporary discussions of masculinity, globalization and cyberspace. Next, the Reader divides into three sections, each engaging with issues central to critical investigations into gender and media forms, practices, institutions and audiences. The contributions to Part I, *Texts in Context*, provide a historical analysis of configurations of femininity in advertising, an examination of the feminization and sexualization of the popular press, news reporting of sexual violence, portrayals of lesbian characters on television, and 'tough' images of femininity in women's magazines. Part II, *(Re)Producing Gender*, focuses on the various ways in which gender is continuously reconstructed across different media sites. Chapters address the impact of media monitoring on media imagery of women, the representation of women in the rock music press, how women reflect on their own media practice, the commercialization of

contemporary masculinities, and women's involvement in the development of the Internet. Part III, *Audiences and Identities*, explores men's use of pornography, Aframerican and Latina women's depiction in Hollywood cinema, women's negotiation of soap opera narratives in everyday life, daytime talk shows, and girl gamers in the brave new world of cyberspace. Looking across the range of the Reader's chapters, spanning as they do some thirty years, it is readily apparent how strategically significant this kind of work is for ongoing efforts to improve the quality of women's and men's lives today.

The *Issues in Cultural and Media Studies* series aims to facilitate a diverse range of critical investigations into pressing questions considered to be central to current thinking and research. In light of the remarkable speed at which the conceptual agendas of cultural and media studies are changing, the series is committed to contributing to what is an ongoing process of re-evaluation and critique. Each of the books is intended to provide a lively, innovative and comprehensive introduction to a specific topical issue from a fresh perspective. The reader is offered a thorough grounding in the most salient debates indicative of the book's subject, as well as important insights into how new modes of enquiry may be established for future explorations. Taken as a whole, then, the series is designed to cover the core components of cultural and media studies courses in an imaginatively distinctive and engaging manner.

Stuart Allan

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CONTENTS

SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS FOR READINGS	xiii
1 INTRODUCTION TO <i>CRITICAL READINGS: MEDIA AND GENDER</i> <i>Cynthia Carter and Linda Steiner</i>	1
2 MAPPING THE CONTESTED TERRAIN OF MEDIA AND GENDER RESEARCH <i>Cynthia Carter and Linda Steiner</i>	11
PART I TEXTS IN CONTEXT	37
3 FROM MRS HAPPYMAN TO KISSING CHAPS GOODBYE: ADVERTISING RECONSTRUCTS FEMININITY <i>Myra Macdonald</i>	41
4 THE POLITICS OF THE SMILE: 'SOFT NEWS' AND THE SEXUALIZATION OF THE POPULAR PRESS <i>Patricia Holland</i>	68
5 MURDER, GENDER AND THE MEDIA: SEXUALIZING POLITICS AND VIOLENCE <i>Saraswati Sunindyo</i>	87

vi		CRITICAL READINGS: MEDIA AND GENDER	
6		OLD STRATEGIES FOR NEW TEXTS: HOW AMERICAN TELEVISION IS CREATING AND TREATING LESBIAN CHARACTERS <i>Marguerite Moritz</i>	104
7		PRETTY TOUGH: THE CULT OF FEMININITY IN WOMEN'S MAGAZINES <i>Sherrie A. Inness</i>	123
		PART II (RE)PRODUCING GENDER	143
8		THE IMPACT OF MONITORING MEDIA IMAGES OF WOMEN <i>Margaret Gallagher</i>	148
9		THE GREAT ROCK AND ROLL SWINDLE: THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE BRITISH ROCK MUSIC PRESS <i>Helen Davies</i>	162
10		LOSING FEAR: VIDEO AND RADIO PRODUCTIONS OF NATIVE AYMARA WOMEN <i>Carmen Ruíz</i>	179
11		THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF MASCULINITIES: FROM THE 'NEW MAN' TO THE 'NEW LAD' <i>John Beynon</i>	198
12		WOMEN AND THE INTERNET: THE NATURAL HISTORY OF A RESEARCH PROJECT <i>Anne Scott, Lesley Semmens and Lynette Willoughby</i>	218
		PART III AUDIENCES AND IDENTITIES	241
13		KNOWING PORNOGRAPHY <i>Robert Jensen</i>	246
14		SAPPHIRES, SPITFIRES, SLUTS AND SUPERBITCHES: AFRAMERICANS AND LATINAS IN CONTEMPORARY HOLLYWOOD FILM <i>Elizabeth Hadley Freydberg</i>	265
15		WOMEN AND SOAP OPERA: RESISTIVE READINGS <i>Mary Ellen Brown</i>	287
16		FREUD VS. WOMEN: THE POPULARIZATION OF THERAPY ON DAYTIME TALK SHOWS <i>Jane Shattuc</i>	307

17	WHAT GIRLS WANT: THE INTERSECTIONS OF LEISURE AND POWER IN FEMALE COMPUTER GAME PLAY <i>Heather Gilmour</i>	328
	GLOSSARY	345
	MEDIA AND GENDER VIDEO RESOURCES	353
	INDEX	355

1

INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL READINGS: MEDIA AND GENDER

Cynthia Carter and Linda Steiner

Why Study Media and Gender?

The media are important for many reasons, including their long acknowledged power to represent 'socially acceptable' ways of being or relating to others, as well as to allocate, or more usually withhold, public recognition, honour and status to groups of people. Already in the 1860s, for example, feminists in the UK and USA who were arguing for more progressive and egalitarian definitions of womanhood complained bitterly that the newspapers and magazines of the day either ridiculed or ignored the so-called 'New Woman' – women who sought greater social, educational, political and economic rights. The suffragists (or 'first wave' feminists) of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were nearly unanimous in calling for the establishment of their own periodicals – which many regarded as being crucial to the political campaigns around increased rights for women, one of the most important being the vote (see Holland, Chapter 4 in this volume, for a discussion of women's historical relationship to the news). A century later, US feminist Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) emphasized the impact of popular women's magazines, whose articles, fiction and advertising celebrated a very particular form of domestic, suburban femininity, one that operated in a sphere almost completely separate from that of men. In so doing, magazine content naturalized the idea that women's 'normal' sphere of operation and influence is not only completely separate from that of men, but also less socially valued (see Macdonald, Chapter 3 in this volume).

It was not until the 'second wave' of the women's movement in the 1960s

that systematic research into media images of women flourished. Almost immediately, feminist scholars and activists began to examine how women were being portrayed in a wide array of media forms – including films, prime-time television dramas, newspapers, pornography, news magazines, Saturday morning cartoons, women's and girl's magazines, popular music, comic books, advertising and soap operas. The concern was that the sexist messages of these media forms socialized people, especially children, into thinking that dichotomized and hierarchical sex-role stereotypes were 'natural' and 'normal'. Feminists quickly realized that effective challenges to certain standard ways of representing women in the media and popular culture depended on being able to provide empirical evidence of sexism. Scholars following this line of inquiry intended to use their research to help explain why more women were not successful in the public work world, especially in professions that were dominated by men. They also hoped that their studies might elucidate why so many women apparently felt unable to transcend their second-class citizenship in society, a status based on a prevailing assumption that unpaid domestic labour was less socially and economically valuable than paid labour in the public sphere.

Critical forms of feminist inquiry emerging in the 1970s went even further by examining the ways in which media representations supported the interests of two interlocking systems: patriarchy and capitalism. A highly productive concept informing some of this research was that of hegemony. For Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci (1971), the notion of hegemony provides an explanation of how and why 'dominant' classes in society have to constantly renegotiate their powerful positions in relations to the 'subjugated' classes. To maintain power, these élites must rule by winning public consent for an economic system that privileges those already in dominant positions, rather than maintaining their control through coercion or repression. When the hegemonic definitions and ways of being of the powerful are naturalized and made to seem 'normal', they are presented to everyone as if no other definitions are possible – in other words, as 'common sense'.

The media are instrumental in the processes of gaining public consent. Media texts never simply mirror or reflect 'reality', but instead construct hegemonic definitions of what should be accepted as 'reality'. These definitions appear to be inevitable, 'real' and commonsensical. Thus, media images dissemble the extent to which they are aligned with the interests of powerful groups in society. Feminists have redeployed the notion of hegemony in order to argue that most of us cannot see how patriarchal ideology is being actively made to appear as 'non-ideological', 'objective', 'neutral' and 'non-gendered'.