

Life in Media: On the Opportunities for a Good Life in Our Digital Environment*

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It's truly an honour for me to participate in these kinds of events, especially in India. Western, Global North academia needs to imbibe more insights from other parts of the world and need to walk the talk of de-westernising the field. I'm very much interested, and inspired to participate in the International Seminar in order to start a dialogue and to learn. I would like to use this opportunity to address a couple of very basic issues, about understanding, studying, and doing something with the media in our lives.

We are at a really interesting moment in time, in which the whole world is talking about media, and therefore it should make studying media and mass communication incredibly important; but nobody seems to be talking to us. This begs the question, why should we have media studies and mass communication research to begin with?

It strikes me that in a lot of our literature nobody actually answers this fundamental question. In our field, we have media studies generally in humanities fields, and mass communication research more from a social science perspective, even though one could argue both these disciplines focus on the same things, just generally using different methods, and to some extent different theories. But what is it that we do, actually?

I've often been in meetings with colleagues where this question was raised, and everybody would start laughing, and then opt to talk about something else. So let me be a bit blunt and propose a definition for our field. This attempt is very much based on the work that I was privileged to do with Professor Denis Mc Quail on his handbook, and currently working on the next (8th) edition that's going to come out within a couple of years. Then I would like to offer, very briefly, my own contribution to this field and literature like the 'media life' perspective that I've been working with for the last 10-15 years, which

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then leads to what I find is the most interesting conundrum for what we do: how to study media when we live in a digital environment? If media is all around, if you are in media, you can't step out of it to study it - which is an interesting problem to have; to study something that we can't observe. In conclusion, I want to offer three suggestions of how we can do that and those suggestions also speak about our responsibility as media students and scholars, because I do feel we have an important responsibility in this world; a social responsibility.

I published a book (in 2012) called *Media Life* with Polity Press, a couple of years later (in 2017) I published a follow-up book (titled *Leven in Media*, with Amsterdam University Press) in Dutch, and in July 2023 my new book *Life in Media*, comes out with The MIT press. The overall story of these books is very much inspired by the students that I've lucky to teach from (and in) all over the world, who consistently have been telling me for the last decades that when I was telling them about the Internet or mobile phones or film or newspapers and they would always tell me, yeah, but that's not how we think about media, that's not what media feel like, and it struck me at some point that, rather than me trying to convince them that media are something distinct and real, and live outside of, that we can look at and study and unpack; what if they were right? What if their affective (and material) notion media can be a valid and useful starting point for analysis? This is at the heart of all my work. It aims to be a sort of combination of both a materialist and a phenomenological perspective on media.

So, why we study media at all, especially in a context where everybody in the world is talking about media and every academic discipline is doing work on media. I mean, we have psychologists talking about and studying media. We have neuroscientists, talking about media. We have biologists, we have physicists, we have, of course, engineers and programmers. We have sociologists and anthropologists and economists, political scientists. Everybody seems to be publishing about, and making claims about, media and mass communication. So why should we have a separate fields of media studies and mass communication research?

In terms of realtime relevance, it is possible to highlight to six current developments determining people's lives around the world that demand and would benefit from media specific analyses, that can best be understood from a particular media studies and mass communication research perspective.

First of foremost, we all have experienced the pandemic, and Corona will always be with us. When Corona, the COVID-19 virus, got the status of a pandemic as announced by the World Health Organization (WHO), at that

same press conference the argument was made by the WHO that parallel to the pandemic there was an equally fatal ‘infodemic’ happening in the world, as the access to (and sharing of) wrong or bad information about the virus was killing people. That conflation of a virus that infects your body makes you sick and possibly kills you with information swirling around this interconnected-networked world as being the same thing, the same phenomenon, for me was very much a statement that we cannot understand anything - even something that kills us - outside of media anymore.

Secondly, at the moment we are witnessing the horror of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. I think, regardless of our political perspective, we all want peace. What is salient about this horrible war is that it is a hybrid war, one of the first observable realtime hybrid wars in history, even though the concept of hybrid warfare is as old as the ancient Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta. Hybrid war is fought in media and through information manipulation, propaganda and those kinds of things. Secondly, it is waged through the media and technological infrastructure. The bombings of television stations, of telecommunications centers, of mobile connectivity towers and so on are examples of this. Only at the end a hybrid war is being waged by tanks, guns, bombs and soldiers. The notion of hybrid warfare again points to the centrality of media to any kind of meaningful analysis of what is actually going on both from the perspective of the attacker Russia, as well as the defender Ukraine.

The current concern about surveillance capitalism around the world begs a media centric analysis. Importantly, we participate in and we co-create a surveillance capitalist world. Orwellian metaphors of omnipresent surveillance beg for a strong analysis from the perspective of media and everyday life. The incredible, overwhelming role and power of technology companies and platforms in the way we participate in the world today, and the shift towards the metaverse and platformisation; all are based on the simple premise that everything we do in life will flow through these online and interconnected technologies that we all carry in our pockets.

A fourth issue worth mentioning here are the recurring concerns starting, I would say especially in the early 1990’s, about media being a ‘problem’ for people and media enslaving us, including discourse around media addiction, whether it is games, or mobile communication or pornography, or, media in general as being addictive. Typical examples are projects being done around the world – especially in college classrooms - where people are asked to switch off all their media devices for a day or for a week and to document the consequences, with people often feeling like drug addicts having withdrawal symptoms. And this is used as evidence that media are bad for us, instead of acknowledging that we use media primarily to connect with other human

beings. In other words: we use media to be human. But that has now become a problem. This asks for a media studies and mass communication research perspective.

And finally, the global debate on AI - Artificial Intelligence, especially in its generative iteration - reminds me of every single debate about the rise of a new technology, whether it was in the 1600s, the rise of mechanical machines, in the 17th and 18th century, the rise of industrial technologies and in the 20th century, the rise of mass media and the internet and today the rise of AI. We are repeating the same discourses such as: will this make human beings obsolete? Are the machines going to take over? Are we expected to fuse with our technologies and lose our humanity? It is a recurring debate, revisited throughout history, and what it lacks is a media and communication scholarship perspective.

I have seen few, if any media scholars talking about this in public. However, many have developed incredibly and beautifully nuanced perspectives. But I don't see them in public. We don't have a seat at the table and policy circles and governance debates, yet all these major, global themes clearly demand and substantiate a disciplinary specific approach and perspective – one that we, in media studies and mass communication research, clearly have to offer. In order to have such a voice, we need to articulate it clearly, and confidently.

Maybe we can look back at history just for a moment. How did media studies and mass communication research start? Where did it come from? And where are we now? Let us go back to the notion that media are a problem. I mentioned that the discourse around media addiction got its impetus in the early 1990s. Actually, the concept of Internet addiction was a joke. It was just an American psychiatrist who, just for fun, put that on his blog. And then somehow, it ended up in policy documents in the United States, and then all over the world, as if it is a real thing. Trust me, it isn't. But it's interesting to study that history.

I'm not saying, there isn't such a thing as deeply problematic media use, but to talk about it in terms of addiction, is equally problematic. But we do have to acknowledge that the study of media started in the early twentieth century out of a concern or out of a perspective that media was a problem that needed to be solved.

The problem of propaganda, of indoctrination, of people who would listen to the radio, and would believe anything that they would hear, the propaganda posters used for the first and second world wars - making people just follow leaders without questioning, without thinking for themselves. This was the power that media was supposed to have.

When we started to look at the results from all those studies in the fifties and sixties quickly we realised that; no, that's not actually what media do. One of my favourite stories was when the United States finally decided to enter the Second World War it needed to convince its troops that it was a good idea to get on boats and planes and travel all the way to Europe. Nobody in the United States was travelling to Europe at that time, since there were no passports and no commercial flights. So you have to convince an entire generation of young boys to just ship off to the other part of the world to get killed. How do you do that? So the idea was to use media during the training of soldiers. During basic training they were put into cinemas and there would be videos played about the heroism of fighting a war and of killing Germans and being victorious and waving the American flag. The assumption was this is how media work: these scared young kids, they would see these beautiful images, and they'll go off to war and be high-fiving all the way down. Of course, this is not what happened. Of course they were scared to death while approaching Normandy Beach. They're human beings. Media, absolutely, do nothing to change that at all. Media only serve to amplify their fears. This doesn't take anything away from the heroism of the young men and women who are fighting in these and many other wars, it just suggests that the way media generally work is not to change our humanity – it is more likely media amplify and accelerate our humanness in all its different guises.

With this anecdote I am just saying that the assumption that media would change soldiers' minds and their feelings is deeply flawed and unsupported by the evidence. So in the seventies, in mass communication research, new models were developed. In 1971, Wilbur Schramm published his famous interactive model of communication, featuring a lot of arrows going in a lot of different directions. It was not just Schramm's model - such models and theories were the works of a collective, not an individual. Around the same time, Stuart Hall in cultural studies came up with his encoding-decoding model, and together with colleagues advanced the notion of a circuit of culture. This was in 1973, and again in this model lots of arrows were going in lots of different directions; the overall point being that we started to realize that media don't do something to us. People do something with the media, but how exactly that works? Well, it's complicated.

And then in the eighties and nineties we were faced with a problem, because, on the one hand, we sort of knew that media is a really big deal and watching a lot of TV changes people's minds. But we also have all this evidence that suggests that people aren't directly influenced or impacted by media.

It was at a time where academics started taking about the political economy of the media much more seriously. The fact that TV worldwide is controlled by

only a handful of corporations, and the fact that the Internet is being colonized by corporate capitalists became a concern. So (critical) political economy, which is a more nuanced way to talk about media effects, is quite powerful as a perspective in our field. Today, one could argue that media studies and mass communication research, in almost every single study one way or another (especially when it comes to research on automation, roboticization, algorithms, AI, and so on) is fundamentally about the same question: what is our human agency in an age of intelligent machines, of ubiquitous and pervasive media?

Where is the human in an all-encompassing media environment, in a digital environment that is driven by data, algorithms and artificial intelligence? Where do we still have power and agency and autonomy? Is it still there? And if so, how can we articulate, express and affect it? Media studies and mass communication research came from a long history of considering media as a problem. And now it's primarily focused on finding a place for us in a comprehensively mediated world, and that makes it supremely relevant.

So what makes us different as disciplines dedicated to the study of media and mass communication is that we've stopped seeing media as a problem, and have developed a much more richly textured, nuanced way to talk about media and mass communication in people's lives and in the ways society works. All our adjoining disciplines such as economy, anthropology, sociology, and so on, tend to see media as a comet hurtling towards us and if we're not careful, it will destroy us. So the perspective outside of media studies and mass communication research is very much that media are seen as something that happens to us, that disrupts what we do and who we are, and that needs to be dealt with, to be defended against. You will see this perspective also very much part of media and information literacy programs all over the world, especially for school children. Media is something that you have to arm yourselves against.

On the other hand, in our field we acknowledge that people make worlds happen in and through media. In other words, the focus on human agency and media is always about how people make meaning, how people find community and how people are able to change their lives and change the world for the better for them, for their group or for their collective or that community or better- in a more abstract sense- for the common good. We ask, how are people using media to create worlds?

And this doesn't mean that I am just naively optimistic, and that media are okay. Absolutely not, in fact, quite the opposite. It's just that my concern

is not about media as existing and acting somewhere from the outside, changing my life. I acknowledge that I participate in it, and I co-create this world, this life in media. I have communication power, as Manuel Castells once called it. I have the agency to articulate what is necessary and to help where I can.

As mentioned before, I believe, we don't live with media, but in media. The distinction is that if you live with media, the assumption is that you can also live without the media. You can switch on and off the media. However, that is an illusion. It's like the delete key on the keyboard of your computer. It doesn't delete anything. The delete key is the illusion. Because everything you type gets archived, coded, stored or shared by the technology behind the screen. But it feels pretty good to see something deleted on a screen, and that's the illusion of control – similar to the idea that we can effectively switch media off. You can't switch off your devices - even physically, only if you are lucky, you can turn your devices into a standby mode.

Living in media (as documented in the 2023 book *Life in Media*) puts forth three fundamental propositions:

Media *disappear*

Media are what we *do*

and

we *love* media.

First of all, media *disappear*. Media disappear in a number of different ways. For example, an old telephone device is obsolete now, becoming subsumed into generic 'smart' devices that look nothing like a 'telephone' (and include a wide variety of other formerly distinct devices). Average number of hours that people spend with media in different studies over the last couple of years is reportedly around 10-12 hours a day. In other words, we spend more time using media than doing anything else in life. In the late 1970s when media time use studies were first conducted in various parts of the world the number not much different. So we haven't started using media more today because of streaming services, internet or mobile phones or any of that. We've always spent most of our time with media.

The difference is that we're less likely to know what media we're using because they all flow in and around us. We live not with distinct media. So when you ask people, how much time you spent watching TV, the question makes little or no sense to a lot of people anymore. Because what is TV? TV is all around

us. We become media when we use media technologies that we swipe or talk to, and that respond to us. Our body becomes the remote control, joystick, mouse and keyboard. So that's another way of arguing that media disappear.

Secondly, media are what we do. There is almost nothing in the world and in our daily lives that doesn't involve media either directly or indirectly. We use some kind of device to talk about things informed and inspired by stuff that we got through media. Our relations are managed and maintained through media. Even our love is mediated, and it is important to appreciate how deep that mediatization is. Back in 2006, Time made all of us its 'person of the year', and it put a mirror on the front page of its magazine, designing the cover as a YouTube screen. So we were looking at ourselves, suggesting that we were in control of the information age. That might have been a bit naive. But the point is salient that we are the heart of the digital environment. We are the source of our media environment rather than the media transmitting messages at us.

Another example of how media are what we do is to consider how people all over the world use media to change the(ir) world. When the first Avatar movie came out people used its storyline and imagery to tell the story of protests - whether in Palestine, in parts of India, or in the Amazon Rainforest. Social media played a profound role during the Arab spring, and older media - such as pamphlets and music - have been instrumental in revolutions and social movements for centuries. The profound role media play in all of this demonstrates how people appropriate media to make significant changes in their environment.

My point is that any development in the world today from a tiny aspect of managing a friendship or a macro-level development such as overthrowing a government cannot be understood outside media. Another reference to be made here is the global refugee crisis. The role of refugees and forced migration (due to war, famine, and climate change) in the world is a profound one, made all the more poignant because the role of media in the lives and experiences of refugees, for example in terms of how refugees navigate 'Fortress Europe' which is only by leaving everything behind except their smart phones, while the EU invests heavily in surveillance and control information and communication technologies.

The third aspect of my overall 'life in media' argument is the acknowledgement that we LOVE media. People's primary relation with media is deeply affective, emotional, and looks a lot like love. For example, I do an exercise with my where I ask them to write down in just a few words about the characteristics of their ideal romantic partner. What should they be like?

And then I ask my students to change every reference to them, or him or her, to a reference to their favourite media. And then you realize we want the same thing from the people, the devices and the experiences we love so much. They have to be dependable and they should be there for you when you need them to make you laugh and offer a source of comfort, and so on, and so forth. The point for me in this silly exercise is to encourage people to appreciate that any rational discourse about media should imbibe people's love for media. It's that intense. And it is that intimate and this is where our discussion about the role and impact of media (on society and everyday life) should start. The late Roger Silverstone wrote a beautiful book in 1990, 'Why study the media?' wherein he makes a passionate appeal for taking what he calls the *erotics* of media seriously. In other words, the profoundly intimate and intense feelings and experiences with, about and for media people have can be summarised as media erotics.

It's a wonderful time to be a media scholar, but a problem remains: how do you study media when you can't really see media anymore? How do you study something that you love? How do you study something which in turn influences, impacts, and inspires everything you do? If you want to say something about media and you type it in a word processor, the word processor forms our idea, just as presentation software like PowerPoint and Keynote structures our thinking. Would I come up with other ideas if I didn't use specific hardware and software packages? To some extent: yes. So that's an interesting conundrum. How do you study something and talk about it while you're in it?

I want to leave you with three points.

1. The Glitch

A glitch occurs when a piece of software doesn't work the way it supposed to be. When you open an app in your smart phone, it asks for downloading the new version as they fixed some bugs. That reminds us that everything in digital is an unfinished project. Being immersed in the digital is unlike watching TV in 1980s, or reading a newspaper in the 1920s. What we see or do online is always based on an unfinished product. It is always under development or under construction. We always experience glitches when the 'digital' breaks down.

From a feminist theory perspective, glitches are moments that can be experienced when dominant discourses such as patriarchy break down. When something horrific happens, such as someone getting molested or raped, we say, that is horrible – but nothing much gets done about it, nothing much

changes. But then there are moments when all of a sudden the public perspective on such heinous acts changes, and a country rallies in support of women, demonstrations and other public displays of anger and disgust follow – most often expressed in media - pressuring authorities to do something about it. Then you can say that that's a glitch in the social fabric of a community. And that's exactly a perspective that we can use in media.

Focusing on glitches, on the inherent messiness and blurring potential of media brings profound perspective – possibly much more than describing or trying to coherently theorize the digital. Interestingly, a focus on glitches, blurs and mess reveals that media break down all the time. Such breakdowns do not just happen in terms of hardware and software – also in the business of media things tend to fail much more than succeed. For example, what is interesting is that the vast majority of everything that streaming services like Netflix put online fail to reach an audience. And so shows and franchises get cancelled all the time. As much of the creative decision-making of such services tends to be based on vast user databases and supersmart algorithms (governed by AI applications) that are supposedly all-powerful, one wonders whether AI is really ready take over the world, replace us and to do everything better, to predict everything that is going to happen. That's a glitch right there, though not so apparent.

The biggest media industry on the planet is the global digital games industry. It's super powerful and everybody plays games. A prominent glitch in the games industry is that while everybody in the world plays games, the way women are represented in games still suggests we're living in the 1980s. With some exceptions – such as *The Last of Us* and the *Horizon Zero Dawn* franchises, both turned into TV series – the industry still operates in a devastatingly backward way. At the moment there are numerous lawsuits and collective actions in the games industry worldwide, as game developers protest an often toxic work environment, advocating better representation and equal rights. This is a glitch in the games industry, this time from a production point of view. The advertising industry also has a horrible track record when it comes to diversity and inclusion. The World Federation of Advertisers launched a diversity, equity and inclusion census in 2021, finding that majority of practitioners from minority backgrounds, people with disabilities, and women are not just underrepresented, but actively discriminated against throughout their careers. Yet another example is facial recognition software that reproduces every known human bias like racism, sexism, ageism and so on. So there are glitches everywhere, and it is by focusing on these we can make media visible (and accountable) again.

2. Uncanniness

Uncanniness is not just fundamental to the human condition, it is consistently generated and amplified through living in a digital environment. My point is that the worldwide fascination with disinformation and fake news and debates about whether something is real or not lacks an appreciation of the uncanny nature of being. For example, everybody is talking about generative AI (such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, Midjourney, etcetera) and how it is scarily accurate in reproducing and accelerating human creativity (as well as amplifying human bias and prejudice). Its ability to conjure more-than-human realities in the digital environment makes us wonder whether reality finally becomes out of touch. There does not seem to be a real choice anymore between truth and fake. Everything is a negotiation, requiring complex navigation and compromise – which is disconcerting. That feeling is the benchmark of uncanniness. Our challenge, as I see it, is to embrace it rather than trying to make it go away. To explore the normative, pragmatic and contextual nature of truth and reality, instead of (as journalists would and are supposed to) fact-checking a good story to death.

My argument is that instead of debating indefinitely about the authenticity or unreal nature of something, we should say, let it go. Stay with the trouble, and embrace the discomfort of unfamiliarity and see what it teaches you.

I will share one little anecdote to elaborate this point. In December 2021, Keanu Reeves and Carrie-Ann Moss embarked on a public relations tour to promote both the release of the fourth Matrix film (titled *Resurrections*) and the earlier release of the Unreal Engine 5 tech demo *The Matrix Awakens*. The film continues the plot-line of questioning boundaries all-too-easily drawn between humans and machines, and between reality and a computer simulation thereof. The demo features a minigame where you play as Reeves and Moss, fighting off agents while driving through a vast photorealistic city. In one of the interviews – with American technology news website *The Verge* – the two actors discuss the uncanny experience of seeing themselves as avatars, pontificating about a possible future where they can just ‘stay home’ while their avatars star in all kinds of projects. The conversation quickly moved on to philosophizing about the digital world ‘that is becoming more and more real’, for example, addressing the already well-established practice in the film industry of archiving one’s digital self for future reference (and commercial exploitation). When asked how they feel about this near-complete blending of the virtual and the real, Keanu Reeves offered a story of having dinner at a friends’ house and trying to explain the premise of the Matrix franchise to a clueless teenager. As he talks about the struggles of his character – Thomas Anderson or Neo – figuring out the truth of his life in a virtual world and a

real world, his friends' daughter asks him why this is important: 'who cares if it's real?' Reeves considers her indifference 'awesome' to whether a digital life is more or less real than an analogue, embodied and physical one, whereas Moss remains quizzical. The girl's trivialization of any meaningful distinction between the real and the virtual in the context of digital life, Keanu Reeves' awe of how much such a perspective opens up opportunities for expression and experience, as well as Carrie-Anne Moss' incredulity – strike at the heart of my argument for embracing uncanniness when studying media.

3. The dizziness of freedom

The dizziness of freedom, a concept taken from the work of Søren Kierkegaard, is when we experience something shockingly destabilizing, making us feel vulnerable, and question the nature of reality. An example would be when you drive a car on a highway. You're going really fast, and all of a sudden you realize that if you go this fast and only tilt the steering wheel a little too much to one side or the other the car will crash, and you probably will die, and you might even cause hardship for other people as well. It is an intense feeling that you imagine without consequence and you are absolutely free to think so, while it simultaneously upsets everything about life and the nature of existence.

Not so long ago, Mark Zuckerberg introduced us to his vision of the Meta verse, an interconnected media that we would all experience to see, and to connect and to be informed and to be entertained. There is something off about this version of future. It is not imaginative at all. It is neither the real world, nor the virtual-real world. This does not allow you the dizziness of freedom. It is seamless and spotless and it has nothing to offer.

I would like to quote Humberto Maturana, a Chilean biologist, who in the late seventies wrote,

“I think that the question that we human beings must face is that of what do we want to happen to us, not a question of knowledge or progress. The question that we must face is not about the relation of biology with technology(..) nor about the relation between knowledge and reality (..). I think that the question that we must face at this moment of our history is about our desires and about whether we want or not to be responsible for our desires”.

This encapsulates our responsibility, our need to be dizzy of the freedom, that we have in this new media environment. I think that kind of radical imagination, of choosing to be vulnerable in this (digital) space), is the absolute key for me.

We desire something of this world. We want this world. Perhaps the only thing you desire is to be close with the person you love, someone who lives on the other end of the world. Or maybe your desire is to fight climate change. Either way, media are inevitably involved. Part of taking responsibility for that desire is to take the role of media in it seriously. And how are we going to do that? We have to force ourselves to radically imagine alternate futures, not just the future of unimaginative metaverses, nor surrender to the prospect of all-powerful AI.

From Q&A

The ‘older’ theoretical perspectives are still important in our discourses today and we need all of that. At the heart of Toronto School, the work of scholars such as Marshall McLuhan and Harold Innis contains an appreciation that a shift in the dominant technologies of mass media correlates with a shift in the ways the entire societies make sense of themselves. It doesn’t mean that technology forces us to do something that we don’t want to do. The Media Life perspective is in many ways a reworking of Toronto School, but it is a bit softer when it comes to the determination of technologies. See for example, when you break up with your partner and tell him or her face- to-face or by using an e mail or text message about your decision, the effect is different in all cases. In a media life perspective, I suggest that we should recognise and appreciate this difference while recognizing that in an all-encompassing digital environment, all media sit side by side and interact and generate a different kind of sociality. Not a better or worse one, but a different one.

My ambition in this work is to combine both material and phenomenological perspectives of media. The physical, experiential, aesthetic and affective aspects of media structure the nature of what our digital environment is, and feels like. These two fields - materialism and phenomenology - have developed more or less independently. It is fascinating to consider and interpret different theories of media and (mass) communication in terms of their potential to blur boundaries, integrate materialist and phenomenological frameworks, and offer insights into our contemporary environment. The Brazilian scholar Luiz Beltrão, for example, developed a theory of “folkcommunication” in the 1960s to account for interpersonal and group forms of cultural expression preceding and existing next to mass and industrialized forms of communication, always shaping and influencing each other. The Nigerian scholar Frank Okwu Ugboajah coined a somewhat similar notion of “oramedia” in the African context (in the 1980s), emphasizing the interaction between print and electronic mass media with various forms of Indigenous media, including opera, music, dance, drama, poetry, and folktales. Around the same time, Régis Debray proposed the term “mediology”

(*médiologie*) in France in 1979 as an entire field of study focused on the fuzzy zone of interactions between technology and culture. These are but some examples of ‘older’ theories that offer much in the way of sensemaking of current convergent media practices.