

Editorial

In *The Gay Science* (1974/1887), a collection of rhymes, poems, and aphorisms, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote:

The pen is stubborn—sputters hell!
 Am I condemned to scrawl?
 Boldly I dip it in the well,
 My writing flows, and all
 I try succeeds. Of course, the spatter
 Of this tormented night
 Is quite illegible. No matter:
 Who reads the stuff I write?

Nietzsche's poem vividly expresses the dilemmas of writing: pleasure, frustration, excitement, doubt. I felt the need to consult this poem again, while contemplating what to write in this editorial. We have done many theme issues in the *CJC* over the past four years; however, this particular issue is comprised of a "mixture" or miscellany of pieces. Miscellaneous issues are not governed by some overarching theme or concept envisioned by the editor. They are a selection and sampling of work that has made it through the rigorous, sometimes excruciating, and hopefully generative process of peer review. It is always more difficult writing an editorial for an issue that does not have an explicit theme. So why bother? Après Nietzsche, who reads the stuff an editor writes? After all, any summary on offer pales in comparison to the real thing: the article.

We have made much in our field of the difference between ritual and transmission models of communication. The writing of a journal's editorial for a journal is not merely a means to convey information to potential readers of the *CJC* (whoever you are!, I cry out with Nietzsche) and to draw them into the content—or to provide a context for that content. It is a ritual process, a quarterly intellectual commitment to return to a set of texts, the residues of a prior, and often intense, email relationship sometimes peppered by the occasional "skype" or phone call.

After an article has found its way into the secure hands of our copy-editors and designers, editorializing and summarizing offers the chance to contemplate, once again, the extraordinary contributions and commitments of researcher-authors who have laboured to bring their ideas into appropriate written form with all of the many features that we use to communicate, including tables, figures, video and sound, images and words.

Developing that most rudimentary of organizational templates, a table of contents imposes an arbitrary order, and often an unintended hierarchy, onto a galaxy

of ideas. Patterns do gradually emerge, although it is doubtful whether readers, in a digital age of picking and choosing, actually go through the journal from cover to cover.

Roland Barthes has reflected, in *Writing Degree Zero* (1981/1968), on writers who were contemporaries, who shared “language at the same stage of its historical development” yet used utterly different “modes of writing,” where everything separates them: “tone, delivery, purpose, ethos, naturalness of expression.” Barthes concludes that to live at the same time, and to share a language, is a “small matter” when compared with the modes of writing that are so dissimilar “and so sharply defined by their dissimilarity” (p. 15). I am not in complete agreement with Barthes, for this is the Roland Barthes at the height of his structuralist phase, determined to avoid any recourse to the term “history.” But I still like what he suggests, for it addresses, in part, the dilemmas of ordering content for and writing an editorial for an issue with a mixture of articles.

Barthes reminds the reader that although modes of writing may be very different, they are comparable in their difference, if only in one aspect: “they owe their existence to one identical process, namely the writer’s consideration of the social use which he has chosen of his form, and his commitment to this choice” (1981/1968, p. 15). I grit my teeth at the use of the masculine pronoun, but I do accept this wisdom. Barthes captures the challenge of writing an editorial on works that are often strikingly dissimilar, yet somehow are connected, at a myriad of points, even if only through a shared commitment to communicate the outcomes of their research inquiries.

Although separated by philosophical commitments to structuralism and existentialism, both Barthes and Jean-Paul Sartre (1974/1959) suggest that to write is a form of commitment, if not an act of blind faith. In choosing not only what to say in their research but how to say it, every author lays bare their commitment to a subject, a dialogue to an imagined reader, and an engagement with past ideas and present ideals in this very fluid field of communications. To paraphrase the words of Laurel Richardson (1994, p. 516), writing is not just a mopping-up procedure done at the end of the research process; it is, in itself, a method of inquiry, a process of ongoing discovery and, I would add, of re-discovery.

This issue opens with the contribution of Sandra Gabriele and Paul Moore, a historical look at the weekend newspapers’ special editions the *Sunday World* and the *Saturday Globe*. They carefully examine these mass cultural forms and situate the newspaper as an intrinsic part of popular culture. One intriguing facet of their contribution is their invocation that we consider the question of circulation as an “empirical and conceptual problem.” The authors’ difficulties in finding materials that have been preserved from the period also illustrate the challenges of researching media forms that may have been dismissed as ephemeral—and hence of little consequence—because of their articulation to what were, at the time, new forms of leisure and entertainment.

Rather than turning to other work on the news (this is reserved for later), we next present two very interesting critical examinations that bring us to more gustatory form of communications. Charlene Elliott’s article “Healthy Food Looks

Serious” takes up the question of how food packaging communicates, and what its colour and formatting and design are saying. In her focus groups with children, she unravels the discourses and assumptions that children make about what is healthy and what is not. If it is fun, if it is bold and colourful, it can’t be nutritious—or so it is assumed. Elliott’s excellent pilot study invites further reflection and research on the reasons why, despite the best efforts of government policy-makers to address the “crisis in obesity,” we may be sending out mixed messages to our children. Her work indicates that perhaps we should spend more time listening to them.

Karine Vigneault’s study of the war on obesity and the promotion of functional foods tackles the production of how these rationalizing discourses attempt to bypass the moralizing, admonitory tone. Offering a Foucauldian reading of the creation of good citizen-subjects in governmental discourses, Vigneault delves into the operations of discursive regulation. Her provocative reading of government documents detects a shift toward a risk-reducing agenda, which attempts to rationalize its advice by pointing out the socio-economic costs, or environmental costs, of “bad eating” habits. While this trend is part of a longer history of the development notions of the moral citizen as a disciplinary subject, it is also a turn away from its former mode of address. Vigneault’s paper poignantly captures a dilemma for those who are addressed in these discourses: we are seduced by invocations to fulfill individual desires and pleasures, yet warned at every turn to be responsible and to act rationally and in moderation.

Subjectivity, subjects, subjectification are terms near and dear to post-structuralist writers such as Gilles Deleuze. How these processes work within different media technological practices is the object of the analysis of political Facebook sites conducted by a team of researchers from Ryerson’s very active and innovative *infoscape* lab. In their co-authored piece, Ganaele Langlois, Greg Elmer, Fenwick McKelvey, and Zachary Devereaux examine three examples of the presentation of political campaigns and public issues (in Ontario) as they exist on this extraordinarily influential social networking site. Their study uses new visualization technologies to map the complexity of networked relations. The authors’ interest is not content of the sites—in this their work harkens back to the problem of circulation posed by Gabriele and Moore—but the way that the technology is structured and is structuring. The result is the double articulation of code and politics. These network systems influence new malleable configurations of “the public” not as a normative entity but as a new modality or assemblage both produced and limited by technological possibilities. In their research they articulate a key tension between the “me-centric” dimension of Facebook’s software architecture and its more extensive reach into formations of “issue-publics,” a term they adopt and adapt from Maurizio Lazzarato.

Large amounts of public money have been spent establishing government services online. As Michael Felczak, Richard Smith, and Geoffrey Glass note, despite the money spent and the successes espoused, few studies of government online (GOL) have been conducted. Their article adds to a slowly growing body of critical work in Canada on the topic; however, their specific focus, unlike that

of the previous authors, is normative in character, articulating ideals of “the right to communicate and the communication of rights,” ending with a series of policy recommendations. In this ambitious article they evaluate policy documents, deploy a structured questionnaire, and examine government websites. This multi-methodological approach leads to a conclusion that the government has not lived up to the ideals articulated by the authors. Left out are lower-income Canadians, non-profit organizations, and users who do not have access to the requisite proprietary software that undergird these sites. A technology that purports greater access may be blind to how it limits, and shapes, participation, echoing some of the conclusions of the previous paper, albeit in a completely different way.

Critical evaluations of technological promises recur in Kirsty Best’s article “When Mobiles Go Media,” a fascinating study of technology and design. Best integrates the perspective of the intended users into a discussion of why the specific applications on a device may or may not be adopted. Based on interviews with users of mobile devices, Best argues that one of the central desires of users of mobile devices, and more importantly their applications, is to experience a form of control and “presence-to-hand.” Best considers the concept of technological “affordances” a vocabulary that tends to be prominent in the world of design, which she situates in relation to more well-known theories in communications, including actor-network theory, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of ritual and taste, and of course phenomenology, which stresses the embodied experience of communicational processes.

Likewise, Pierre Bélanger and Véronique Desjardin’s research-in-brief outlines some of the features of a lucrative but volatile sector of the cultural industries, the fashion magazine. Zeroing in on three publications, *Loulou*, *Elle Québec*, and *Clin d’Oueil*, they interview magazine executives and peruse the documents produced by industry analysts. An intriguing sketch is provided of how the magazines, at this very moment, are coping with the challenge of online environments, including the complementary distribution of content over the Web and the use of new formats such as blogs, which give a magazine a life between its monthly print runs. In work that resonates with the research of Best, they also provide a timely account of the use of mobile devices. As they suggest, subscriptions to print publications may be declining, but this may not be an immediate indicator that the magazine as a form will fold. The relationship between print, online, and mobile does not necessarily result in one media form cannibalizing the other, but may be one of complementary co-existence.

And rounding out this issue of *CJC*, two articles address the continuing relevance of print media and news content to the field. Joshua Greenberg and Sean Hier’s lengthy study of multiple newspapers explains how the framing of news coverage of the use of CCTV cameras and video surveillance in public spaces potentially shapes the “cultural resources” people use to make sense of an issue. In a study of 10 newspapers over a six-year period, they pinpoint the limits of this coverage and the potential implications of these limitations, and discursive shapings, on public policy. To cite just some of the limits excoriated in their study, public spaces (such as streets and downtown cores) are conflated with private

spaces used by the public, such as banks and malls; the coverage itself tends to be episodic, based on the occurrence of specific events that trigger a momentary interest; privacy issues are jettisoned as irrelevant; and evidence exists that CCTV surveillance is only effective in protecting property, rather than preventing harm to individuals. As such, they contend in a cogent and convincing analysis that the coverage of these issues has been inadequate, offering a poor resource for Canadians to make sense of this complex issue.

Sandra Jeppesen's "From the 'war on poverty' to the 'war on the poor'" brings us back to the news, media participation, social class, and democracy. She examines, with passion and commitment, the values underlying the depiction of poverty and the poor in two very different news sources: one more conventionally mainstream, the *Toronto Star*; the other from the world of alternative media and politics, the Ontario Coalition of Poverty's websites. Jeppesen's moving article combines an astute analytic voice with an experiential tone that not only makes her position clear, but also works from her own subject position and affective affiliations. Offering pointed methodological advice that is both ethically and politically motivated toward social justice, she suggests that critical discourse analysis would be enriched by participatory action research that proactively includes the research subject in the research process.

I end this editorial, and set of ruminations on the process of writing an editorial, with a reminder that journalists in the field risk their lives in the line of work. In 2003, the Canadian-Iranian journalist Zahra Kazemi died while in custody in Iran. In June of this year, the Canadian journalist and documentary filmmaker Maziar Bahari was arrested while on assignment, covering the Iranian elections for *Newsweek*. He has been detained in an Iranian prison and was seen for the first time in a mass trial of over 100 Iranian opposition politicians and activists accused of involvement in post-election violence in August. He was brought before the court without a lawyer and without Canadian consular representatives. It is my sincere hope that by the time this issue goes to press, Bahari, a graduate of Concordia's Communication Studies program, will be allowed to return to his home in Toronto.

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