

CULTURE INDUSTRIES: CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS

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Irresistibly enchanted by a seeming grassroots cornucopia—struck by the digital sublime—many cybertarian technophiles attribute magical properties to today's communications and cultural technologies. These beguiling toys are said to obliterate geography, sovereignty, and hierarchy in an alchemy of truth and beauty. A highly deregulated, individuated post-modern cultural world supposedly makes consumers into producers, frees the disabled from confinement, encourages new subjectivities, rewards intellect and competitiveness, links people across cultures, and allows billions of flowers to bloom in a post-political Parthenon. In this Marxist/Godardian wet dream, people fish, film, fuck, and fund from morning to midnight; the mass scale of the culture industries is overrun by consumer-led production; and wounds caused by the division of labor from the industrial age are bathed in the balm of Internet love.

True believers in technological liberation from corporate domination argue that the concept of the culture industries in particular and the categories of radical social theory, such as those of political economy, class, dialectics, emancipation, and socialism, are outmoded and need to be replaced with and displaced by novel theoretical and political perspectives, ones that are better suited to the kind of post-industrial world we live in, a world where the creative sector—among other things—is stimulated via small businesses and new machines permit person-to-person and person-to-population communication.

This thread presents a different agenda for studying culture and the culture industries in particular, one that is grounded in a distinctly cultural studies materialist reflexivity. Cultural studies is probably best understood as the politically committed, theoretically grounded, and radically self-reflexive and historical-materialist analysis of cultural processes and practices, where the commitment to imagine a humane, socialist society has always been a guiding assumption in the field from its early formations in post-war Britain. We understand Cultural Studies not just as an academic discipline, a particular approach within the wider field of the study of culture (one with implicit, but distinctive epistemological assumptions and ways of working); it is also a political project that seeks to construct what Larry Grossberg calls somewhere a "radical political history of the present."

TOWARDS A CULTURAL STUDY OF THE CULTURE INDUSTRIES:
A Research Resources Guide/Chart

RECEP
SCRIF
GENE
POLLU
PEOP
PLAC
HISTC
LAW
BUDG
DEBA
POLI