



Reconnecting Political Disconnection Editorial

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Abstract

This editorial introduces both *JOMEK Journal* itself and also the specific concerns of this first issue, *reconnecting political disconnection*. It first situates the journal in the context of the (potential, if not always actual) nexus of journalism studies, media studies and cultural studies, arguing that although this group of fields are often thought to be closely connected, in many respects they operate as distinct disciplines, at a distance from each other. Outlining the complexity and pitfalls of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, the editorial argues that *JOMEK Journal* seeks to be a place in which researchers in each of the fields of journalism, media and cultural studies might encounter the work, thought and interventions of the others. It proposes that the potential significance of this kind of (contingent) connection is not unrelated to the question of politics itself, the theme that animates the articles juxtaposed within this issue.

Contributor Note

Paul Bowman teaches cultural studies at Cardiff University. He is the author of *Post-Marxism versus Cultural Studies* (2007), *Deconstructing Popular Culture* (2008), *Theorizing Bruce Lee* (2010), *Studi culturali* (edited and translated by Floriana Bernardi, 2011), *Culture and the Media* (2012) and *Beyond Bruce Lee* (2013). He is editor of *Interrogating Cultural Studies* (2003), *The Rey Chow Reader* (2010), *Rancière and Film* (2013) and issues of the journals *Parallax*, *Social Semiotics*, *Postcolonial Studies* and *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. With Richard Stamp he is co-editor of *The Truth of Žižek* (2007) and *Reading Rancière* (2011). In the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies he is Director of Postgraduate Research Studies and Director of the Race, Representation and Cultural Politics Research Group. He is also co-Director of Cardiff University's Re-Constructing Multiculturalism Research Network, founder of Cardiff University's Interdisciplinary Film and Visual Culture Research Centre (IFVCR), and Founding Editor of *JOMEK Journal*.

The first issue of a new journal carries a burden of responsibility. It will set a tone, a standard and style, and indicate an orientation. To echo the words of Jacques Derrida, in coming first, it may be taken to presage or determine what will come later.

But this will be the case only if the project is conceptualised as *one* – as univocal and continuous – like a single authored monograph. However, *JOMECS Journal* does not aspire to be univocal or continuous. It is conceived as a place in which the contiguous but not simply continuous fields of journalism studies, media studies and cultural studies can collide.

Although often lumped together, the fields of journalism studies, media studies and cultural studies are palpably distinct. Despite often being concerned with ostensibly the same things and the same sorts of problematics – issues of culture and society organised by matters of politics, ethics, legislation, aesthetics, technology, identity, voice and representation, and so on – it is nevertheless obviously true that journalism studies, media studies and cultural studies amount to three or more discrete disciplinary fields. In other words, although it would *seem* to be the case that such fields as journalism, media and cultural studies *are* (or *should be*) connected because they seem so ‘naturally’ related or affiliated, it is nevertheless the case that they are often hermetically sealed off from each other. Such is the nature of academic disciplines, or the force of disciplinarity: fields build up and lay down conventions, protocols and procedures, and these become policed and enforced.

Disciplinary procedures gain the force of propriety, and any other approach that does not conform to the set procedures is all too easily regarded as improper – hence, excluded or (to put it less dramatically) ignored, dismissed, or written off as irrelevant (Mowitt 1992; Bowman 2007).

JOMECS Journal was conceived of in full awareness of such problems of disciplinarity; problems which make even supposedly ‘closely connected’ fields like journalism studies, media studies and cultural studies operate at either respectful or uninterested (or even contemptuous) distances from each other. It regards contexts, terrains, fields, discourses and disciplines as constitutively and surely irrevocably organised by divisions and lines of difference. For this reason, it does not seek to be univocal or unified in its form and content. *JOMECS Journal* will not always publish the same sorts of things. It will not always be heavily or even necessarily empirical. It will not always be theoretical, linguistic or philosophical. It will not always be statistical or numerical. It will not always be aesthetic, sociological or culturalist. Rather, it will happily mix things up: there will be different styles of issue, each involving different forms of scholarship. Within individual issues, there may well be a range of different disciplinary approaches to a shared theme. This is less to try to heal some primal wound or primeval rift between different schools, styles, disciplines, orientations and approaches, than it is to try to enable a chance encounter. Some readers may never have come across a journalism studies approach to an issue that is

nevertheless close to their heart. Others may never have dreamed of looking into work in cultural studies or critical or cultural theory. And some may scoff at any suggestion that they could or should research media studies work. Such is the power of *disciplinary enclaving*.

Disciplinary protocols and disciplinary spaces are both enabling and limiting. Any approach to any subject will always be limited, contingent and therefore in a sense biased. But in an era where even internet search engines now tailor search results to deliver what some automated algorithm reckons the (re)searcher will be most interested in, it seems worthwhile to juxtapose the expected with the unexpected, the same with the different, the familiar with the unfamiliar. This will of course produce some controversy. For, given every field's acknowledged or unacknowledged investments in what it deems to be the 'proper protocols', there is basically no way that any true interdisciplinary work or production could ever be entirely 'proper'. There can be no cross-disciplinary consensus about what is best, proper, right, or correct (Derrida 2003; Bowman 2008).

Nevertheless, *JOMECS Journal* hopes, through various forms of interdisciplinarity and cross-disciplinary juxtapositions, to enable chance encounters and possibly to produce new relations. It is interested in opening up, rather than consolidating. It does not seek to be destructive, or to disconnect established disciplinary lines and circuits; but rather to forge new connections.

This is one reason why this first issue is entitled 'reconnecting political disconnection'. Its implicit rationale is that most if not all researchers, teachers and other scholars working in any and all of the fields and subfields of journalism studies, media studies and cultural studies are likely to have some interest in the question of what might be termed political connection and disconnection.

As the first call for papers put it: Winter 2010 to Summer 2011 saw surprising political processes and events; massive political upheaval and transformation in formerly undemocratic countries, on the one hand, and the apparent ineffectuality of widespread discontent and protest in many 'democratic' countries on the other. At the same time, new and old forms of media and journalism technology and practice had disparate effects: some appeared to enable political connection, movement and transformation, while others worked to disconnect, close down and preserve stasis. This issue of *JOMECS Journal*, 'Reconnecting Political Disconnection', therefore invited contributions which would engage with what there is to be learned from these complex conjunctions in which new and old forms of journalism, media, cultural and political practice converge and operate in often contrary ways.

This call elicited a diverse range of responses – both from all over the *geographical* world and from all over the *disciplinary* world(s) of journalism, media and cultural studies, and from all 'levels' of the academic strata: from postgraduate students to lecturers to senior professors. This was great news for this first issue, because it has

enabled it to become truly eclectic in its form and content, from the outset.

In response to the statement of a certain 'political' problematic – that of connection (how to connect, what is connected with what, and with what effects) – work came in which engaged with this problematic via a plethora of examples and approaches. Among the articles selected for publication, all share a concern with the question of 'political connection'. But they offer a wide variety of responses, in terms of their style, their disciplinary investments, and their execution. Hopefully, their collection (and connection) here may foster or forge either new connections or new understandings of the possible mechanisms of reconnecting political disconnection, both across disciplinary enclaves and between institutional academia and other social and

institutional contexts and scenes, of journalism, media and culture.

The editors would like to extend sincere thanks, first of all, to Professor Justin Lewis and all others in the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University, for both facilitating and actively supporting this project. Secondly, many thanks are owed to the many respected academics who lent their support and gave their vote of confidence by agreeing to join the Editorial Board and Advisory Panel of what was, at the time, nothing more than a name and a few paragraphs describing what *JOMECE Journal* would try to become. Finally, huge thanks are owed to James Cemas, in the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University, for the invaluable practical help and support that has made this issue, and *JOMECE Journal* itself, come into existence.

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