Ironic Citizenship, or Coping with Complicity in Spectacular Society
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At this historical juncture what we are faced with is "coping with complicity in spectacular society." Networked cultures and practices of dissent represent a plurality of activities that demonstrate how we cope with and productively recuperate our complicity in spectacular society. Because we tend to recognize, experientially and thus intuitively, the immense planetary problems created through the structures of global capitalism and its attendant state institutions (not to mention the media itself), our reality is inevitably one of complicity. However, this complicity, when accompanied by an ironic approach to truth and politics, engenders a correlative critique of spectacular relations[1] and offers the potential for thinking new possible relations within the social and political registers.

Before outlining the theoretical insights we've gained from our two years of qualitative research, we offer a summary of this project "Rethinking Media, Democracy And Citizenship: New Media Practices And Online Digital Dissent After September 11" (funded by the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council, 2005-08.

Over the last two years of studying the motivations of people engaged in "digital dissent," we have gained insight into the nature of social movements and political engagement as distributed through online networks. Our key research questions included: *How are digital media being used creatively to create communicative networks for political debate and social activism? What are users' and producers' motivations for engaging in online political engagement? Do online participants feel they have a public voice and/or political efficacy? To what extent is/was frustration with mainstream media a motivation online political activities and digital productions?* During Year One (2005-06), we analyzed four web-based networks of circulated dissent: (1) the 150 finalists of MoveOn's Bushin30Seconds campaign, 30-second movies that address a

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[1] *"The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images."* (Debord 1967, section 4)

range of post 9/11 political concerns; (2)Web-logs that engage political discussion of media representation of U.S. foreign policy, particularly with respect to the invasion of Iraq ; (3) Online discussions (threads, blogs, comments posted to blogs) that address Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show*, with particular focus on Stewart's 2004 appearance on the CNN talk show *Crossfire*; (4) Independently-produced viral videos that address diverse political issues related to U.S. policy. We developed a validated survey using non-probabilistic convenience sampling, and administered the 70 question survey to 157 bloggers and viral video producers. During Year Two, we conducted 35 semi-structured interviews.

In brief, our findings include the following. Across the survey of 157, the primary motivations of online producers were the following:
• make a statement/express myself/be heard
• express anger and frustration with current events or political issues
• influence others (especially to influence election results)
• offer "corrective" function to counter mainstream media

In contrast to the notion of digital publics being only so much "chatter," across thirty five interviews with bloggers and online video producers, my research team and I discovered that web-based communities sparked by political commentary such as *The Daily Show* (TDS) with Jon Stewart are vibrant and translating into action. Our survey of 157 producers evidences that more than half agree that, "My online political activity has caused me to take action in my local community (e.g., protest, boycott, etc.)." A majority, 60 percent, say that "My online participation in political forums has led me to join at least one political gathering or protest. Since becoming active online, 29% are "more active in 'offline' political activities," and 63% "spend about the same amount of time in 'offline' political activities."

The findings from the discourse analysis, our survey, and interviews of digital dissent producers, position us to (a) describe the motivations of online political producers and artists engaged in political multimedia work that seeks to counter dominant and corporate mainstream media (MSM); (b) disavow misconceptions that online citizenship practices detract from offline political organizing; (c) illuminate specifically the function of political satire and irony in an age of complicity with the spectacle. As modes of poesis, satire and parody engender a genre of political sensibility that arguably constitute significant counterpublics, and most

certainly construct a de-naturalizing critique. From this large body of qualitative research, we have come to these following ten theses.

1. Everyone 'knows' the extraordinary lies of spectacle. We are certain only that we are being lied to.[2] Yet there is simultaneously (some would say contradictorily) a profound desire for truth-telling and accountability in terms of historico-political narratives. Along with the unaccounted-for political, the media is also held responsible for being the site where the struggle to define reality is being waged.[3] Like the end of Polygraph: "Americans are Dying for the Truth"[4] (a polemic which only follows after the genius use of the visually arresting image of scientific authority that proves the gut-level knowledge of lies), the demands for accountability arise in response to the flagrant and audacious disregard of politics. American political narratives increasingly produce *the* historical record for a massive proportion of our lived reality, and the historical knowledge of counter-power rarely finds a home in the public domain. However, despite the power maintained by White House, CentCom, and corporate media vectors, there is an increasing proliferation of plural narratives, and through the development of digital technologies we see the construction of a

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[2] *"What postmodern theory and practice together suggest is that everything is that always was "cultural" in this sense, that is, always mediated by representations. They suggest that notions of truth, reference, and the non-cultural real have not ceased to exist, as Baudrillard claims, but that they are no longer unproblematic issues, assumed to be self-evident and self-justifying. The postmodern, as I have been defining it, is not a degeneration into 'hyperreality' but a question of what reality can mean and how we can come to know it. It is not that representation now dominates or effaces the referent, but rather that it now self-consciously acknowledges its existence as representation—that is, as interpreting (indeed as creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it." (Hutcheon 1989: 32)*

[3] *Wark's 1994 term "media vector" aptly describes how different directions and sources of information collide and relationally inform and shape one another. There is no "fact" or "object" to be located.*
… one deals less with the object of a media event than with its trajectory. …In the Gulf war, the object caught both journalism and critical analysis off-guard because it was never where it was supposed to be. Modes of discourse which still want to 'grasp' the facts, or get 'to the bottom' of 'things' have a hard time with objects endowed with electric mobility. Hence the need for an analysis which does not 'look' at 'things', either factually or critically. (Wark 1994)

[4] *One of the 150 Bush in 30 Seconds ads (MoveOn.org) we studied closely in our research project.*

public archive that arguably did not exist previously in the public domain as a resource or historical account—e.g., allowing potential of remix, etc. to reveal the aberrations of spectacle as it shapes historical record.

The desire expressed by publics for politicians and media to 'tell the truth' is held in paradoxical contradiction to the 'postmodern sensibility' (or, 'widely shared skepticism' towards authority as it attempts to exert control through spectacle) that all narratives are constructed, that all the world's a fiction.[5] The paradoxical desire for truth alongside awareness of truth's impossibility is a hallmark of this stage of spectacular complicity.[6]

2. The revealing of the emperor's nakedness is in part due to the overabundance of the spectacle itself[7] and the concomitant shift from citizen to user (a shift recognized by *Time Magazine*, by corporate plunder of user-generated content, and by network and communication theorists). To offer a new account of the old subject we must turn away from the binaries of producer/consumer and content/audience which fail to explain (among other things) interactivity, proliferation of production and expression, and the fundamental break in the possibilities of who generates spectacular production -- because of the complex synchronicity of

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[5] *"But no one really believes the spectacle." (Debord, Comments, 1988, 60)*
[6] *As Linda Hutcheon describes in similar terms, "Postmodernism aims to be accessible through its overt and self-conscious parodic, historical, and reflexive forms and thus to be an effective force in our culture. It's complicitous critique, then, situates the postmodern squarely within both economic capitalism and cultural humanism—two of the major dominants of much of the western world." (1989: 13)*
[7] *"The diffuse spectacle accompanies the abundance of commodities, the undisturbed development of modern capitalism….Irreconcilable claims crowd the stage of the affluent economy's unified spectacle; different star commodities simultaneously support contradictory projects for provisioning society…" (Debord section 65, 1967/1983). In this section, Debord describes not only the perpetually deferred unity which drives desire within the spectacular society where each fragment keeps luring us towards the dream of the whole, but speaks as well to the central effect of contradiction and irreconcilable claims that are inherent to spectacle. The centrality of irreconcilable claims and contradiction to the spectacle is captured by Colebrook's notion that, at its best, "the most complex forms of irony intensify contradiction; they do not clearly contradict the true or the logical in order to present themselves as in opposition to what is said; they do not allow for a truth or sense behind the speech act. The speech act produces a conflict of sense, expressing both sides of an assertion with equal force." (Colebrook, 166-67)*

interconnected planes of production.[8] User-generated content has radically changed theories of communication that relied on producer/consumer, so that we now can trace "a non-representational politics of relations." (Lovink and Rossiter)[9]

3. The diverse means of mutating the signifiers and meanings of the spectacle within the user-generated relations illustrates the ("non-democratic but not anti-democratic networks"[10]) non-representational politics of relations. The theory of spectacular society requires further nuance and update since Guy Debord's publication of *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* in 1988, which developed his early analyses of spectacle initially published in 1967.[11] To build on this theory, we must attend to the issue of surveillance as telling its own secret and plotting its own demise into a monstrous aporia of nodes which can be collected but remain largely unmonitored.[12] (A brief example: The U.S. bureaucrats in charge of Al-Hurra cannot even staff the propaganda station with Arabic speaking functionaries and as a result accidentally broadcast a free half hour of an enemy terrorist leader. One American is fired, and another is hired to replace them who also does not speak Arabic.) The means of mutating and modulating political engagement that can create a distance from spectacle, can include blogs, political satire, digiart, agitprop, and tactical media. Bloggers tend to feel the most community; professional journalists express the greatest hope.[13] Meme and viral producers—artists and

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[8] *The new phenomenon or scale of interactivity stands in contrast to Debord's 1967 description of spectacle: "But the spectacle is not identifiable with mere gazing, even combined with hearing. It is that which escapes the activity of men, that which escapes reconsideration and correction by their work. It is the opposite of dialogue." (section 18)*

[9] *Ten Theses on Non-Democratic Electronics: Organized Networks Updated, Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter (2007)*

[10] *Ten Theses on Non-Democratic Electronics: Organized Networks Updated, Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter (2007)*

[11] *"In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation (Debord 1967 section 1)*

[12] *"Surveillance spies on itself, and plots against itself." (Debord Comments 1988: 84)*

[13] *Our survey and interviews (Rethinking Media and Democracy, funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council 2005-08) revealed this difference between the experience of bloggers and meme/viral video producers. See Survey Results www.meganboler.net. The observations about journalists' sense of hope come from the in-depth interviews conducted with Amy Goodman (Pacifica-Democracy Now!), Hassan*

agitprop artists—tend to feel isolated. The lonely crowds[14] - those who are compelled to examine and critique the necessary contradictions of complicity within the spectacle - turn to satire as a practice which follows along with "the empty square." As Deleuze explains in a 1967 article "How do we recognize structuralism?", the empty square is the location of a *problematic*.[15] The empty square is the very possibility of forming a problem that intersects a variety of different planes or registers (government, the family, race, gender, class, etc.) — without falling victim to an apathetic passivity *nor* filling in the square of meaning with any final determinant (the desire to fix cause and thus determine course of action too simply). MSM fixates on either of these options, creating a discourse of truths and final solutions that makes any critique within their own discourse or on their own terms all but impossible.

4. The appeal of satire and irony[16] is in large part the "frank admission of complicity" with the spectacle. Beginning with its self-assignation

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Ibrahim (Al Jazeera), and Deepa Fernandez (WBAI-Pacifica) for the forthcoming edited book Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times (MIT Press 2008, ed. Megan Boler).
[14] *"…all the goods selected by the spectacular system are also its weapons for a constant reinforcement of the conditions of isolation of 'lonely crowds.'" (Debord 1967, section 28)*
[15] *Deleuze first evokes a concept of seriality as component of structuralism in his essay "How do we recognize structuralism?" where he advocates a serialization of structure as a means of overcoming the double-bind of positivism and determinism within the structuralist project. Because the structure implies several series, Deleuze shows through his concept of serialization that the determination of the primary series (which is the primary signification and determines the signifiers of the other series) relies on the empty square (or the object = x). Therefore, because the object = x cannot be shown to belong solely to one series – if it could, it would not operate – the determination of the primary series can never be conclusive. In this sense, we can see how the object = x opens the series to further serialization, opening a way for the 'structuralist hero' to think through structures without being determined by their logic of construction. In fact, it could be argued that it is precisely the object = x that emerges as the permanent transfer engendered by the nomad line, or the line of flight, in A Thousand Plateaus.*

[16] *To define these terms in brief, satire is commonly understood as literary, dramatic, or visual art intended to critique vice, folly, or abuse. While frequently comedic and using humor and wit, its primary intent—particularly and in its best instances I would argue in the case of political satire—is to call attention to the wrongs committed by those in power. Satire uses various devices, ranging from irony to buffoonery, derision and grotesquery. Many argue that satire is set apart from other comedy by its clear moral outrage—the attempt to point out vice or abuse through the stated or implied measure of what is morally right or a value that should be strived for by those who are targeted in the satirist's critique. Parody at its simplest is a stylistic imitation that serves to call attention to and ridicule the original style. In skillful parody, the original style is so aptly-*

of "fake news," (*The Daily Show* is known as "the most trusted name in fake news") Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert of *The Colbert Report* (CR) insistently assert that they are merely comedy and not news, have no partisan agenda, and claim no outside of the spectacle of commodity.[17] They assert their complicity in the following ways: by referring to their corporate owners; by dismissing their own authoritative claims; by asserting either explicitly or through the spectacle of performance that are theatre and not news; by recognizing the immediate contradiction of the very fact that they exist and appear through broadcast at all ['I would not exist but for the corporation that feeds me']. Then, on this plane of contradiction, they unfold myriad layers of ironic and satirical nuance that begin to satisfy the craving for what we might call, with a nod to Foucault, an "effective history of the recently past."[18] Perhaps the historical movement of Marxist analysis to foreground the contradictions of socio-economic life has found its contemporary counterpart in the plurality of attempts, from viral videos and digital art to TDS and CR, to demonstrate the multiplicity of interactions and power structures that backform the complicity we all experience.

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imitated and pushed to its extreme, that the viewer sees not merely a silly imitation but a scathing critique of the satirist's target (Stephen Colbert's comic adoption of FOX News personality Bill O'Reilly's character is a clear example of an extraordinarily skilful parody). Irony is one style used within satire, generally understood as the use of language to say one thing and mean another. Irony is frequently the aspect of satire in which one finds discussions about the necessity of shared cultural meanings in order to "get" the joke or play on words and meaning.

We are interested not only in this basic sense of irony, but cases that exemplify where "the most complex forms of irony intensify contradiction; they do not clearly contradict the true or the logical in order to present themselves as in opposition to what is said; they do not allow for a truth or sense behind the speech act. The speech act produces a conflict of sense, expressing both sides of an assertion with equal force." (Colebrook 166-67)

[17] *TDS and CR stand in distinct contrast to Hutcheon's description of television as primarily "commodified complicity" and in lacking the critique that characterizes her notion of postmodern paradox: "Most television, in its unproblematized reliance on realist narrative and transparent representational conventions, is pure commodified complicity, without the critique needed to define the postmodern paradox." (Hutcheon 1989:10)*

[18] *Although the distinctions between a Marxist analysis of contradiction and a post-modern sensibility regarding complexity should not be collapsed as a simple historical difference, there is nonetheless a clear continuity along this line of critical engagement.*

5. The post-2001media landscape is but the confirmation of the necessity of a "contradictory" life -- the spectacle of terrorism[19] and the abuses of the exportation of democracy represent the modulation of foundational ideologies from previous epochs as they shift into postmodern landscape of oligarchies and corporations. Within this landscape, the premise of the news "telling the truth" has lost all credibility as we recognize the impossibility of non-contradiction. This is well-exemplified in an exchange between JS and Bill Moyers in 2003: " I do not know whether you are practicing an old form of parody and satire...or a new form of journalism. Stewart replies, "Well then that either speaks to the sad state of comedy or the sad state of news. I can't figure out which one. I think, honestly, we're practicing a new form of desperation...."July 2003(Bill Moyers Interview of Jon Stewart, on Public Broadcasting Service) This new form of desperation is precisely the creation of a gap, or affective moment of satirical performativity that allows a space for thinking the empty square, or of unfolding the problematic of politics on new terms (not just 'Leave Iraq or Stay', but how do we actually conceptualize the subtleties of this war and on what terms should we engage with its illegitimacy --- NOT on the terms of the MSM!) In this sense, the "contradictory" elements foregrounded by post-modern satirical practices cannot be resolved through any dialectical synthesis, but instead reveal the complexity of the overlapping networks of power and our participation within them.

6. MSM not only upholds a naïve-seeming correspondence notion of truth [i.e., such correspondence theory is increasingly eyed with skepticism--despite the usefulness of strategic essentialism and measures such as "those who watch TDS and CR are the 'best informed' says PEW study"[20]], but any such correspondence theory

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[19] "The story of terrorism is written by the state and it is therefore highly instructive. The spectators must certainly never know everything about terrorism, but they must always know enough to convince them that, compared with terrorism, everything must be acceptable, or in any case more rational and democratic."
(Debord, Comments, 1988: 24)

[20] Viewers of Jon Stewart's The Daily Show and Stephen Colbert's The Colbert Report rank number 1 in the "best informed American public." However, note as well a (methodologicaly-questionable) study which received extensive press attention in spring 2006 on "the daily show effect," evidencing that a sample of college students became "more cynical" from viewing The Daily Show.

(through its discourse of fairness and facts) assumes an overly simplistic morality of right and wrong that insults postmodern sensibilities of complexity and contradiction which the spectacle itself cannot help but make obvious. In short, attempts to *hide* the spectacle do not *sell*, and many audiences are so savvy that in PR and advertising, truth and sincerity are 'in': e.g., on Youtube ads are only praised when they are not posted by the advertisers as ads selling a product; rather, their critical acclaim occurs when they are posted by users as contributions to the recognized media spectacle.[21] This sense of insult when complicity is *unrecognized* is losing readers/viewers by the droves, creating the "problem" of media literacy as conceived and the near impossibility of a pedagogy of media to suit current sensibilities. The irony and satire of fake news suit this particular user best: we would rather follow the empty square than fill it in simplistically/ deterministically; but we risk losing faith, hope, optimism and falling into the second accident of structuralism—apathy. Satire such as TDS and CR is the salvation for many in North American and increasingly other English-speaking audiences of users,[22] because at its best it allows the ambiguity of meaning that resonates with our lived experience of hyper-contradiction. We disagree with the current order, with the current regime, with the current administration, but the complexities of our reality prevent us from articulating--as FOX

"The six news sources cited most often by people who knew the most about current events were: "The Daily Show" and "The Colbert Report" (counted as one), tied with Web sites of major newspapers; next came "News Hour With Jim Lehrer"; then "The O'Reilly Factor," which was tied with National Public Radio; and Rush Limbaugh's radio program. (April 16, 2007, Best-Informed Also View Fake News, Study Says, by Katharine Q. Seelye New York Times, April 16 2007)[20]
*In counterpoint, see also the (methodologically questionable) academic study that claimed the "daily show effect"—that those who watch TDS will be cynical in voting patterns: "**The Daily Show Effect Candidate Evaluations,Efficacy, and American Youth"**Journal of American Politics Research.*
[21] *May 2007 National Film Board "Meet the Insiders" panel discussion on advertising, Toronto.*
[22] *We have highlighted TDS and CR because of their public and popularized spectacular place in the current political climate within North America. These are but two examples of the kinds of satire and irony used to shift relations to spectacle. Other examples are included in our research (see www.meganboler.net) and we would also mention On the Map, Avi Lewis' new show on CBC and the use of remix, ironic, sarcasm; Saddam-Rumsfeld viral video (get cite); National Security Archive of George Washington University, as public archive for the development of effective histories of American policy http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/the_archive.html*

News might demand of us--a perfectly honed and sound-byte ready "answer" to these problems.

7. The layers of irony reflect at their best the complexity of an analysis that is able to breakdown the chains of signifiers that create a play and pleasure in reflecting in spite the horrors that (a) require the reflection and enable its meaning and (b) indicate that things could get worse. Returning to Deleuze's concept of the empty square, we can see the importance of maintaining both of these positions simultaneously – that is, provoking the desire to engage with a problematic, and, making this provocation compelling in the sense that it retains a sense of movement (i.e., things could, and very often are, getting worse).

8. We experience the profound sincerity of the court jester and satirist as most trustworthy when—with values consistent with their court jester, satiric nightly critiques of the spectacle of politicians and media—they express calls for democracy, justice, fairness of representation, pubic responsibility of media and politicians within the ironic stage of the real. This occurs when the court jester steps from his usual stage into another 'real' staged context—e.g., Jude Finesterra of the Yes Men on BBC; Jon Stewart on *Crossfire*; or Colbert at the White House Press Correspondent's Dinner.[23] When these demands for accountability are made in public forms that reveal the emperor's nakedness with *tactics that get play*, the de-naturalizing critique gains teeth and its bite becomes effective—revealing the complicities of the spectacle in public to the public. Too much sincerity depresses and won't sell; but strategic sincerity builds on trust. To the extent that sincerity is

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[23] *In 2004, the top-cited blogosphere media story in 2004 (www.BlogPulse, Year in Review) was the appearance of Jon Stewart on CNN's Crossfire talk show. 600,000 people watched the television broadcast and millions watched the online streaming of Jon Stewart skewering the talk show hosts for debasing journalism in the name of political debate. In this episode, Stewart appeals for "civilized discourse," a "responsibility to public discourse," and to "stop hurting America" with partisan hackery and theatre that masquerades as news on CNN. In 2006, Stephen Colbert was an invited keynote speaker/performer at the Washington D.C. annual White House Press Correspondent's Dinner. Colbert's masterful parodic performance delivered a scathing critique of George W. Bush and his administration—with Bush himself sitting three feet away from Colbert, and in front of hundreds of White House and other political figures. There was an extensive mainstream media blackout covering the event, but it has become a second watershed moment in public media and political critique.*

used[24] it says, "it could get worse." This is perhaps the closest satire comes to a call to action: playing on the sincerity that it demonstrates through the already-admission of complicity and the platform of an impossible truth ("fake news"), contemporary political satire at its best forms an "effective history."

9. The effective incitement to reconfigure action or social relations can be measured in part through counterpublics and their formation. I interviewed an established blogger who began streaming Daily Show clips when his Macintosh wouldn't interface with the Comedy Central site, and decided it would be a service to other Mac users to post clips in Quicktime format. As a result, he unexpectedly began to get voluminous traffic from readers around the globe. I asked him if he thought that his site resulted in any action. It was a surprise to me to hear him report that in fact, as he learns from the ongoing conversations and comments posted on his website, that because of viewing and discussing *The Daily Show* many member of this progressive community have been led to activism. Another blogger was inspired to go join Cindy Sheehan's protest in Crawford because of the conversations engaged through his Daily Show postings. Other examples of these effective reframings of spectacle include Jon Stewart on Crossfire, and Stephen Colbert and the White House Press Correspondent's Dinner as watershed moments of scathing public critique of media and the political administration; the PEW study of TDS/CR viewers as the "most informed" Americans. From these examples, only a few among the many we have found in our research, it is clear that the satirical tactic of problem-formation cannot be reduced to a laughable political critique; instead, it can engender a new commitment to engaging in practices that contest relations within spectacular society.

10. From such effects we can move at least to the hope provided by effective history of the recently present: longer sound bytes; creation of a pause and a gap; context; engendering of reflection[25]

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[24] *This sincerity is akin to Rorty's problematic assumption of the private ironist who publicly asserts a strategically essential reference to democracy, freedom, justice as a pragmatic stance (1989).*
[25] *Hutcheon's definition suits this reflexive function of satire and irony as a window that opens onto the effective history of the recently present: "This is the confrontation that I shall be calling postmodernist: where documentary historical actuality meets formalist self reflexivity and parody. At this conjuncture, a study of representation becomes, not a study of mimetic mirroring or subjective projecting, but an exploration of the way in which*

as a practice that occurs as part of process of both watching and/or producing news/facts; creating a counterpublic or viral rhizomatic rupture in which the spectacle is revealed in new light through watershed moments of public and counterhegemonic critique. Through the offering of effective history, the spectacle's exhausting evacuation of history is channeled into mutated remix that creates conditions for different social relations within the contradictions of the spectacle.

Foucault argues for the importance of effective history, stating that this method of historical knowledge production "Deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting."[26] If knowledge is made for cutting, we can see the development of political satire as a potent breach, break, or fracture in our spectacular mediascape that occasions a shift in our concepts of politics and truth that lingers after the punchline, beckoning us to reconsider the complexities that populate our daily lives and experience. Without giving up hope on solutions, we are encouraged, with often biting irony, to follow the empty square and complicate the discourses of the MSM.

Political satire cannot be dismissed simply as a medium complicit with the monstrous media power that sustains it because it is precisely this often-stated complicity with power that makes the truth of the fake news so effective. Without any pretense to easy solutions, and without suggesting that turning away from our political realities will make them go away, an ironic citizenship can help engender new effective histories that allow us to better navigate the complexities of our own complicity within

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narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self, in the present and the past." (1987: 7)

[26] *Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-memory, Practice, translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press), 1980, p.154, quoted in Stephen Turpin, "Interpellative Tautologies: A Critique of Hegel's Philosophy at the University of Berlin," MA Thesis, Department of Philosophy, Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2005.*

spectacular society. In sum, perhaps the satirical cut of "truthiness"[27] is now a necessary tool for critique, since, as Foucault says, "Nothing is more inconsistent than a political regime which is indifferent to the truth; but nothing is more dangerous than a political system which pretends to prescribe the truth."[28]

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[27] *"Truthiness" was popularized through Stephen Colbert's invocation in 2005, making it one of the top words of the year in 2006. "Truthiness is meant to "describe things that a person claims to know intuitively, instinctively, or 'from the gut' without regard to evidence, logic, intellectual examination, or actual facts." (Wikipedia)*

[28] *Michel Foucault, Dits et Écrits II – 1976-1988 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2001), p. 1497.*

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