Book Review: Edited Clean Version

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Raiford Guins
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Amid the celebration of Web 2.0 and digital technologies more generally, it is easy to believe that we have entered an era where all information is at our fingertips. At least in the United States, censorship has generally faded as a concern alongside the proliferation of new, networked communication outlets. Indeed, the literature over the last decade suggests that overzealous copyright extensions and enforcement are the greatest threats to expressive freedom (Boyle 2008; Lessig 2006), not the censoring hand of the state. In this account, through the affordances of digital media, citizens enjoy unprecedented access to all kinds of art and entertainment and even have the ability to become active creators of content (Jenkins 2006).

In *Edited Clean Version*, Raiford Guins does much to complicate paradigmatic accounts of the Information Age. Guins convincingly demonstrates that despite the lack of scholarly attention censorship is not only still with us, as an institution it evolved in accordance with neoliberal strategies of governance. Contemporary censorship works through what Guins calls ''control technologies,'' digital artifacts with affordances for self-regulation that are built ''*in* our media technology as functions of choice to protect and serve users....'' (p. xiii). One of the great strengths of Guins's approach is his freeing of the concept of censorship from the study of any specific medium, as control technologies are central to digital production and consumption across mediums such as film, television, radio, and video games. In emphasizing designed-in affordances, Guins's work joins that of other scholars who locate the potentials and possibilities for regulation in the forms and code of media technologies themselves (Aneesh 2006; Galloway

2005; Lessig 2008). Yet, unlike the body of scholarship on copyright, this book is less concerned with culture being "wired shut" (Gillespie 2007) than the consequences of it being theoretically infinitely open.

Guins draws from Foucault and Deleuze to show how control technologies "empower" citizens by creating the possibilities of choice. This is an illusory freedom, however. Control technologies, the techniques for using them, and the practices around them enable us to govern ourselves in the absence of the heavy hand of the state. Building from Foucauldian "governmentality" theory and Deleuze's work on the sieve-like "modulations" (p. 4) of control, Guins demonstrates how the rationality of governing in the digital era entails individuals practicing censorship to regulate their own lives. In delineating this new, productive form of power, Guins shifts our attention away from state censors that act on the production and distribution of media and toward the ways that citizens are institutionally and technically vested with the responsibility to exercise their own control at the point of consumption.

A number of detailed case studies illustrate these practices of censorship. First, Guins analyzes the techniques and technologies that afford the "blocking," "filtering," and "sanitizing" of content. The V-Chip, revived in public policy after the "wardrobe malfunction" incident during the 2004 Super Bowl halftime show, is intended to empower parents and guardians to "block" objectionable content. Meanwhile, a number of services provide responsible individuals with the opportunity to "filter" content on the Internet, while others credential and thus "sanitize" online information for wary consumers. Just as the shift to affordances of control empower citizens to become their own censors, cultural producers also have a wider range of tools at their disposal to limit their own expression, whether motivated by moral or monetary concerns. While digital media are commonly associated with radical openness, Guins usefully shows how control technologies allow film producers to easily "clean" content to achieve desired ratings and designers to "patch" video games to subject content to parental control.

While Guins provides a compelling look at the evolving institution of censorship, this book does not quite articulate the relationship between control technologies and those that are less about empowering neoliberal citizens than the digital enforcement of social norms and law. This is an increasingly central concern in the work of scholars across a range of disciplines, most visibly in studies of search engines (Introna and Nissenbaum 2000) and the literature on copyright regulation. With respect to the latter, the logic of explicitly disciplinary technologies such as digitally encrypted DVDs and MP3s that dictate the specific use of cultural goods appears to be the opposite of the control

technologies that provide users with the agency to self-govern. The metaphor here is not the Deleuzian "highway" that provides freedom modulated by control (Guins p. 6) but the physical enclosure of inmates behind prison walls (Gillespie 2007, 8). These disciplinary technologies in turn are developed, deployed, and mandated by cultural industries, engineers, and policy makers that regulate through code how media is to be consumed.

Yet, the reading of censorship in this book opens a host of productive questions that scholars can bring to research in other domains. For example, in his theoretical discussion, Guins invites readers to think about the move from discipline to control in evolutionary terms, where during transitions there are contradictions in the logics of governance encoded in digital artifacts. Given this, one may wonder whether we are seeing the first steps toward a post-disciplinary logic of copyright. This may help explain why some cultural producers are dropping digital restrictions on their wares and quietly cutting back on prosecutions of copyright violators. In essence, consumers are being "empowered" to freely share, remix, and rework the professional cultural goods that extend the market share and profit of producers.

In sum, the power of *Extended Clean Version* lies in its broad applicability for thinking about technologies of control and the logic of neoliberal governance. Guins provides a durable analytical framework for thinking through issues central to contemporary media production and consumption. At the same time, it is a wonderfully engaging, highly readable, and theoretically rich study that is both rigorously argued and accessible.

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