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Cultural Resistance or Corporate Assistance: Disenchanting the Anti-Capitalist Myth of Digital Piracy

Since the debut of Napster.com in the end of last millennium, digital piracy has been celebrated by cultural studies scholars as a formidable grassroots policy of cultural resistance which not only symbolically dismantled the copyright regime as the institutional foundation for the global dominance of major media conglomerates but also economically destroyed the worldwide distribution networks on which the culture industry's discursive power is materially based. However, this utopian optimism not only overestimated the "creative destruction" raged by digital piracy but also underestimated media conglomerates' co-opting efforts through their responding digital policy. Highlighting its critical role in propelling the digital transformation in the US movie and music industries and in promoting Hollywood's aesthetic and stardom hegemony in mainland China, this paper argues that rather than undermining the cultural logic of capitalism, digital piracy as a form of anti-capitalist grassroots policy has indeed consolidated corporate media's dominant position in the cultural landscape.