

The Cinematic Mode of Production: Towards a Political Economy of the Postmodern

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Abstract *Cinema marks a profound shift in the relation between image and text – indeed it is the watershed of the subjugation of language by image. Cinema as an innovative shift in both industrial capitalism and cultural practice marks, therefore, the restructuring of language function in accord with the changing protocols of techno-capitalism. The ‘talking cure’, otherwise known as psychoanalysis, is itself a symptom of cinema. As a precursor for TV and computing and Internet, cinema transacts value transfer across the image utilising a production process that can be grasped as founded under the rubric of what I call ‘the attention theory of value’. The deterritorialised factory that is the contemporary image, is an essential component of globalisation, neo-imperialism, and militarisation, organising, as it were, the consent (ignorance of) and indeed desire for these latter processes. Thus ‘cinema’, as a paradigm for image-mediated social production, implies a cultural turn for political economics. It also implies that it is the interstitial, informal activities that transpire across the entire surface of the socius as well as in the vicissitudes of the psyche and experience that are the new (untheorised) production sites for global capital – and therefore among the significant sites for the waging of the next revolution.*

But all the story of the night told over,
And their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancies images,
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

(A Midsummer Night's Dream (the movie))

The Cinematic Mode of Production

The term ‘Cinematic Mode of Production’ (CMP) suggests that cinema and its succeeding, if still simultaneous, formations, particularly television, video, computers and Internet, are deterritorialised factories in which spectators work, that is, in which they perform value-productive labour. In the cinematic image and its legacy, that gossamer imaginary arising out of a matrix of socio-psycho-material relations, we make our lives. This claim suggests that not only do we confront the image at the scene of the screen, but we confront the logistics of the image wherever we turn – imaginal functions are today

imbricated in perception itself. Not only do the denizens of capital labour to maintain themselves as image, we labour in the image. The image, which pervades all appearing, is the *mise-en-scene* of the new work.

What is immediately suggested by the CMP, properly understood, is that a social relation which emerged as 'the cinema' is today characteristic of sociality generally. Although something akin to cinematic spectatorship first appeared in the late nineteenth century as the built-in response to a technological oddity (emerging in conjunction with the clumsily cobbled together image-production mechanisms necessary to that situation), it surreptitiously became the formal paradigm and structural template for social, that is, becoming-global, organisation generally. By some technological sleight of hand, machine-mediated perception is now inextricable from your psychological, economic, visceral and ideological dispensations. Spectatorship, as the development and fusion of the cultural, industrial, economic and psychological, quickly gained a handhold on human fate and then became decisive. Now, visuality reigns and social theory needs become film theory.

At the moment, in principle, that is, in accord with the emerging principles of late-capitalism, to look is to labour. The cinematicisation of the visual, the fusion of the visual with a set of socio-technical institutions and apparatuses, gives rise to the advanced forms of networked expropriation characteristic of the present period. Capitalised machinic interfaces prey on vision. Recently, corporations such as FreePC, which during the NASDAQ glory days gave out 'free' computers in exchange for recipients' agreement to supply extensive personal information and to spend a certain amount of time online, strove to demonstrate in practice that looking at a screen can produce value. For the past decade, I have argued that the historical moment has arrived which allows us to grasp that looking is posited by capital as labour (Beller 1994; 1995; 1998; 1999a; 1999b). If, in the early 1990s, the idea was difficult for academics to fathom, corporations have been faster on the uptake. What I call 'the attention theory of value', finds in the notion of 'labour', elaborated in Marx's labour theory of value, the prototype for the source of all value production under capitalism today: value-producing human attention. Attention, in all forms imaginable and yet to be imagined (from assembly-line work to spectatorship to Internetworking and beyond), is that necessary cybernetic relation to the *socius* for the production of value for late capital. At once the means and archetype for the transfer of attentional biopower (its conversion into value and surplus-value) to capital, what is meant today by 'the image', is a cryptic synonym for the new relations of production founded upon the expropriation of attention. The history of the cinema, its development from an industrial to an electronic form, is the open book in which the history of the image as the emergent technology for the leveraged interface of bio-power and the social mechanism may be read.

The world-historical restructuring of the image as the paradigmatic social relation is currently being acted upon in practice by large corporations. However seductive the appearance and however devastating the consequences of the capitalisation and expropriation of the image relation (of the imaginary itself) may be for the vast majority on the planet, this exploitation is in keeping with the developmental logic of capital and must therefore be understood as business as usual. For the new thing that is now the image and its

attendant attentional productivity sustains the perpetuation of extant gendered, nationalised, waged and enslaved labour. That extraordinary innovation goes hand in glove, or better, tongue in cheek, with the intensification of world oppression may conveniently be understood in Giuseppe di Lampedusa's (1991) assessment of the dialectics of domination: 'Things must change in order to stay the same'. The image structures the visible and the invisible, absorbs freeing power and sucks up solidarity time. The mode of domination shifts in order to maintain violent hierarchical society. As spectators begin to value their attention (their attending), corporations struggle to get more of what they previously got for nothing. In 1999, for example, in the *San Jose Mercury News* Mypoints.com advertised with the copy 'We'll pay you to read this ad'. At the same moment another website banner displayed disembodied roving eyes with the caption 'We'll pay you for your attention'. It should come as no surprise that 'bellweather' Internet company Yahoo, which has always considered itself a media company, recently hired Terry Semel, former chief of Warner Brothers studio, to head its operations.

The failure of some of these dotcom corporations should not lead us to believe that this new era of corporate designs on our attention was a temporary speculative error. As Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, is (understandably) fond of pointing out, just because 2,700 automobile manufacturers folded in the early twentieth century doesn't mean that the car was a bad idea [sic] (it was).¹ Besides, in hindsight, mass media corporations, have long given out 'free' content over the airways in exchange for viewer attention that would then be marketed to advertisers. Remember TV? Additionally, as Benedict Anderson (1991) has forcefully suggested with respect to the relationship between print media and the creation of nations, even those contents for which we paid a delivery surcharge in coin, had a productive effect, and therefore something like a production agenda, far in excess of the single instance of consumption. Because of the transformation of sociality by and as visibility, film theory is today confronted with the task of writing a political economy of *culture as mode of production*.

Nowadays, as it enlists viewers to build the pathways for its infrastructure, both as fixed capital and in themselves, Corporate America consciously recognises that ramifying the sensual pathways to the body can produce value, even if the mechanisms of value-production have not been fully theorised. Sensuo-perceptual contact between body and social mechanism, what Sean Cubitt (2000) refers to as 'cybertime', provides opportunities for value-extraction for capital. That gap between the actually existing practice of stealing human attention and a radical theory of this practice exists in part because there is no money in theorising the mechanisms of value-production as a dialectical relation, just as for Marx there was money neither in the labour theory of value nor in Marxism. Put another way, the generalised blindness with respect to the economicisation of the senses is constitutive of hegemony. This leveraged theft of sensual labour is the post-modern version of capital's

¹ Bezos was likely citing Joint Economic Committee Staff Report, Office of the Chairman, Connie Mack (November 2000) 'Entrepreneurs Creating the New Economy', www.senate.gov/~jec.

dirty secret; the spectator is the Lukacsian subject–object (consumer–producer) of history. What are the consequences of reconceptualising ‘passive’ spectatorship as active production, production currently inextricable from neo-imperialism and militarisation for capitalist and/or revolutionary practice?

The history of advertising, with its utilisation of psychoanalysis and statistical methods to sell product elucidates the uses capital makes of cultural theory. At the level of engagement with the body (as desiring subject, as unit of the mass market) there are plenty of theories, but at the level of profit-taking, pragmatics provides the bottom line. Advertising powerhouses use psychoanalytic techniques under the rubric of ‘theatre of the mind’, and only the marginalised think to argue with success. Thus the logistics of social production in general, and the conceptualisations thereof, remain difficult to grasp, profitably buried as they are under the surface of simulation. Probably the most eloquent and realistic image of the current situation of social production via the image as the pre-eminent social relation, which is publicly available, is to be found in the late capitalist social realist film, *The Matrix* (1999). That film depicts a situation in which the computerised (incorporated) control of the sensual pathways to our body have reduced us, from the point of view of the system, to sheer biopower, the dry-cells enlisted by the omnipresent spectacle to fuel an anti-human artificial intelligence. Whatever life-energy we put into the world is converted into the energy to run the image-world and its illusory logic while we remain unknowingly imprisoned in a malevolent bathosphere, intuiting our situation only through glitches in the program. Our desires for deviance, our bouts with psychopathology, even our fantasies of wealth and power represent such glitches, but as is well known to advertisers, media-moguls and Cold-War policy makers alike, these mini-revolutions can also readily be made to turn a profit for Big Capital.

Such a relation of the senses and particularly of the visual to production did not emerge overnight, and providing a theoretical and historical account is one principle purpose of my work on cinema. Looking has long been posited as labour by capital: in the present moment it is being presupposed as such. The lagging of a critical theory of the mode of exploitation behind the practice of exploitation is no longer tenable, if it ever was. Overcoming this epistemic lag-time is another aim here, one bound up with the revolutionary potential contained in deeper understanding of how the world goes on as it does and in whose interests. The transformative saturation of the visual realm by techno-capitalism, which gives rise to the terms ‘virtual reality’, but also, I would argue, to ‘visuality’, was itself produced. The transformation of the visual from a zone of unalienated creative practice to one of alienated labour is the result of capital accumulation, i.e., the historical agglomeration of exploited labour. By the ‘alienation of vision’ I do not mean that there have not existed prior scopic regimes which structured sight. Rather I have in mind Marxist notions of separation and expropriation endemic to commodification. This estrangement of the visual, its new qualities of ‘not belonging to me’ characteristic of the cinema and its dissociation from ‘natural language’, is simultaneous with the semi-autonomisation of the visual or what we call ‘visuality’. Furthermore, the maintenance and intensification of the transformed situation indicated by the idea ‘visuality’, remains essential to capital’s expansion and valorisation. The show must go on. But despite the

world-historical truth of this claim it remains difficult to write sentences written in the key of Marx: 'Communism is the riddle of history solved and knows itself to be this solution'. The streamlined, scaled back, post-modernised equivalent reads, 'The attention theory of value is the riddle of post-global capitalism properly posed, and has a germinal contribution to make to counter-hegemonic struggle'. At the most basic level, grasping mediation as the extraction of productive labour (value) from the body radically alters the question of visual pleasure by contaminating it with the question of murder.

Materially speaking, industrialisation enters the visual as follows: early cinematic montage extended the logic of the assembly-line (the sequencing of discreet, programmatic machine-orchestrated human operations) to the sensorium and brought the industrial revolution to the eye. Cinema welds human sensual activity, what Marx called 'sensual labour', in the context of commodity production, to celluloid. Instead of striking a blow to sheet metal wrapped around a mould or tightening a bolt, we sutured one image to the next (and, like workers who disappeared in the commodities they produced, we sutured ourselves into the image). We manufactured the new commodities by intensifying an aspect of the old ones, their image-component. Cinema was to a large extent the hyper-development of commodity fetishism, that is, of the peeled-away, semi-autonomous, psychically charged image from the materiality of the commodity. The fetish character of the commodity drew its energy from the enthalpy of repression – the famous non-appearing of the larger totality of social relations. With important modifications, the situation of workers on a factory assembly-line foreshadows the situation of spectators in the cinema. 'The cut', already implicit in the fragmentary production assembly-line work, became a technique for the organisation and production of the fetish character of the commodity and then part of a qualitatively new production regime long misnamed consumerism. Consumers *produced* their fetishes in the deterritorialised factory of the cinema. As in the history of factory production, in the movie theatre we make and remake the world and ourselves along with it.

Of course the interiorisation of the dynamics of the mode of production is a lot more complex than the sketch above might allow. Cinema took the formal properties of the assembly line and introjected them as consciousness. This introjection inaugurated huge shifts in language function. Additionally, the shift in industrial relations that is cinema indicates a general shift in the organisation of political economy, and this change does not occur because of a single technology. The development of cinema marks deep structural shifts and accommodations in a complex and variegated world. Certainly, the world-historical role for cinema demands a total reconceptualisation of the imaginary. The imaginary, both as the faculty of imagination and in Althusser's sense of it as ideology, the constitutive mediation between the subject and the real, could be grasped as a work in progress, provided, of course, that one sees the development of capitalism as progress. Numerous works on the mediatic organisation of the Western imaginary exist and the scale of its restructuring by technology is being more and more clearly grasped. Heidegger's works on technology and the world picture could be read this way, as could the work of someone like Baudrillard.

In psychoanalytic film theory, such as Christian Metz (1982), the cinema is believed to engage the dynamics of an existing psyche. Metz argues that 'cinema is a technique of the imaginary' (1982: 3) and indeed modifies spectators through a system of 'financial feedback' (1982: 91). However, the scope of today's (counter)revolution – a revolution which at first glance might appear merely as a technological shift – emerges from a reversal of these very terms: *the imaginary is a technique (a technology) of cinema*, or rather, of mediation generally. Such a reversal de-ontologises the unconscious and further suggests that the unconscious is cinema's product: its functions, which is to say, its existence as such, emerge out of a dynamic relation to techno-capital (technology being understood here as sedimented, alienated species being). Thus Metz's sense of what the spectator does in the cinema, 'I watch, and I help' (1982: 93), can be grasped as an intuition about the labour required for the modification of a cybernetic body organized through financial feedback. This labour is human attention building a new form of sociality: hardware, software and wetware. At nearly the same moment of the Metzian shift, albeit with different purposes in mind than my own, Jean-Louis Comolli, in his canonical essay 'Machines of the Visible' (1985: 140), comes out and, in an echo of the Althusserian theory of the subject, says explicitly that 'the spectator . . . works'. However, while the participatory and even contestatory roles of spectators in the 1970s and 1980s was understood as an artifact of the technology, the mode of engagement with a commercially available pleasure was understood as being at once particular to the cinema, and as optional, rather than as comprising a structural shift in the organisational protocols of globalising (totalitarian) capital.

My own work specifically addresses the cinematic image as machinic interface with the *socius* emerging as a response to the crisis for capital known as 'the falling rate of profit'. I continue to see the commodity-form, the money-system and capital's violent hierarchical domination as the limit questions faced by our species. The ongoing crisis that drives capital to continual, infinite, expansion, that is, the falling rate of profit, results in the century-long fusing of culture and industry. The expansion of capital, once markedly geographical and now increasingly cultural (corporeal, psychological, visceral), deepens, to borrow Stephen Heath's (1985: 6) words, the relation of 'the technical and the social as *cinema*'. Cinema becomes a means to extend the range and effect of capitalised machinery. The cinematic mode of production becomes the necessary means of extending the workday while reducing real wages. 'Elevating' commodity production to the visual realm, cinema extracts human labour and pays in the scrip of fun (enjoy[n]ment). Cultural pathways, including those mapped under the categories of race, gender, sexuality and nation, are thus being subsumed as media of capitalist domination – zones of oppression which capital exploits for its own purposes. Thus in an act mimetic of the relation between cinema and culture, where cinema subsumes culture and renders it productive for capitalism, the concept of the CMP would organise the major theoretical contributions of the works cited above, as well as many others here overlooked, under its own rubric. In what follows I highlight some of cinema's horizons of transformation, while suggesting that 'theory' as the critical thought which follows on the heels of philosophy's demise was film theory all along.

The social logic of cinema

The CMP would argue that cinema is, in the twentieth century, the emerging paradigm for the total reorganisation of society and (therefore) of the subject. From a systemic point of view, cinema arises out of a need for the intensification of the extraction of value from human bodies beyond normal physical and spatial limits and beyond normal working hours – it is an innovation that will combat the generalised falling rate of profit. It realises capitalist tendencies towards the extension of the work day (entertainment, email), the deterritorialisation of the factory (cottage industry, TV), the marketing of attention (to advertisers), the building of media pathways (formerly roads) and the retooling of subjects. Understood as a precursor to television, computing, email and the World Wide Web, cinema can be seen as part of an emerging cybernetic complex, which, from the standpoint of an emergent global labour force, functions as a technology for the capture and redirection of global labour's revolutionary social agency and potentiality.

Utilising vision and later sound, industrial capital develops a new, visceral and complex machinery capable of interfacing with bodies and establishing an altogether (counter)revolutionary cybernesis. This increasing incorporation of bodies by capital co-opts the ever increasing abilities of the masses to organize themselves. As a deterritorialised factory running on a new order (the superset) of socially productive labour – attention – cinema as a sociological complex inaugurates a new order of production along with new terms of social organisation, and thus of domination. 'Cinema' is a new social logic, the film theatre the tip of the iceberg, the 'head of the pin'. Cinema in its traditional, institutional sense is but one iteration of the generalised mediation of the material world by images. The mystery that is the image announces a new symptom for analysis by contemporary political economy. Production enters the visual and the virtual enters reality. Labour as dissymmetrical exchange with capital is transacted across the image.

Under the rubric of the CMP, 'cinema' refers not only to what one sees on the screen or even to the institutions and apparatuses which generate film but to that totality of relations which generates the myriad appearances of the world on the six billion screens of 'consciousness'. Cinema means the production of instrumental images through the organisation of animated materials. These materials include everything from, actors, to landscapes, to populations, to widgets, to fighter-planes to electrons. Cinema is a material practice of global scope, the movement of capital in, through and as image. 'Cinema' marks the changeover to a mode of production in which images, working in concert, form the organisational principles for the production of reality. The whole regime of classical value production extends itself into the visual. While Warren Sack rightly muses, 'Children born now will wonder how previous generations just sat in front of the screen without anything to do', something was still being done.² What may be first recognised in its mature form in the cinema, is *media's capitalisation* of the aesthetic faculties and imaginary practices of viewers. Social practices were converted into mediations of capital. These were not simply

²Warren Sack, private conversation.

harnessed, but like land under the regime of ground rent, reconfigured through abstraction. Below I will indicate the co-extensive world-historical determinants for the simultaneous socio-technological articulation of consciousness and cinema, and further suggest that not only are consciousness and cinema mutually determined by the constraints of capitalist production but that they increasingly function on a continuum.³

For a first order approximation of the generalised cinematisation of social relations one might turn to the cinematic dynamics of social production implicit in (posited by) the shifting terms of the interpellation of subjects by an increasing number of institutions and apparatuses (the state, multinational corporations, politicians, the corporate 'media', boards, etc.) variously invested in the expansion of capital. Take, for example, the observation common during the last couple of decades that everyone is concerned with their 'image'. The term is no mere figure of speech, but rather a 'condensation', in Freud's sense, a matrix of partially unconscious forces that means something else. What is meant by this condensed metaphor, produced and utilised by contemporary consciousness in the dream work of everyday life, neurotically and now (since World War Two) psychotically pursuing the conditions for its own perpetuation, can only be fully elaborated if we take consciousness itself as the desperate measure to account for the dreams dreamt by, in, through, and as the contemporary world-system. In doing so, I am in no way endeavouring to delimit the variations of consciousness that are possible from the outset, nor to patronise what can be thought and felt. Rather, in the context of the production and reproduction of society under capitalist domination, I am trying to register the shifting terms of language-function and subject formation in the emerging media-environment. Tracing the increasing marginalisation of language by images in 'Language, Images and the Postmodern Predicament', Wlad Godzich (1994: 367–68) puts it thus: 'Where with language we have a discourse on the world, with human beings facing the world in order to name it, photography substitutes the simple appearance of things; it is a discourse of the world. . . . Images now allow for the paradox that the world states itself before human language'. To register the crisis that the proliferation of images poses for language and thus for the conscious mind would be to agree with Godzich that today language is outpaced by images. 'Images are scrambling the function of language which must operate out of the imaginary to function optimally' (1994: 369). The overall effect is the radical alienation of consciousness, its isolation and separation, its inability to convincingly language reality and thus its reduction to something on the order of a free-floating hallucination, cut away as it is from all ground.

This demotion of language and of its capacity to slow down the movement of reality suggests, when linked to the rise of image technologies, that the radical alienation of language, that is, the alienation of the subject and its principle means of self-expression and self-understanding, is a structural effect of the intensification of capitalism and, therefore, an instrumental strategy of domination. Bodies become deprived of the *power* of speech.

³By 'consciousness' I am referring to modern(ist) consciousness i.e., modern subjectivity – a mode of knowing *vis a vis* a way of being presently in decline.

Horkheimer (1982), Adorno (Horkheimer and Adorno 1986) and Orwell (1950) already argued along similar lines at mid-century. This image-consciousness, or better image/consciousness participates in what for Walter Benjamin (1985) would be the fascistic rendering of an intensified auratic component, theorised as 'simulation' or 'the simulacrum', to nearly every aspect of social existence in the technologically permeated world (Baudrillard 1982). Beyond all reckoning, the objective world is newly regnant with an excess of sign value, or rather, with values exceeding the capacities of the sign. Such a promiscuity of signification, what Baudrillard called 'the ecstasy of communication', implies, in short, the radical instability and unanchoredness and inconsistency of consciousness such that consciousness becomes unconsciousness by other means. Language just can't process all that visuality, the very *process* of contradiction – it's like trying to eat your way out of a whale, which, of course, is somewhere you don't belong in the first place. That's why 'you' is such a hard thing 'to be'.

Thus to 'win the imaginary for the symbolic', as Metz (1982: 3) described the task of film theory means today codifying the cinematicity of domination for consciousness. A rendering that reveals cinema as a new paradigm of socio-material organisation would answer Fredric Jameson's (1990) thoughtful imperative: 'Perhaps today, where the triumph of more utopian theories of mass culture seems complete and virtually hegemonic, we need the corrective of some new theory of manipulation, and of a properly post-modern commodification', with an analysis of the image as the cutting edge of capital, and 'media-ocracy' as the highest stage of capitalism (to date). To rethink the paradigm that is the cinema means to inscribe the material basis of visuality in the unthought of the image and to disrupt its affect of immediacy, plenitude and truth. This inscription of the materiality of the virtual must traverse not just technology as it is ordinarily understood, but social relations: psychology, migration, the masses. Though not everything is an image, nearly everything is (co)ordinated by them.

For example, one could take Adorno's observation about the culture industry as 'psychoanalysis in reverse' as a thesis on the history of consciousness – in which industrial culture produces not just the modern psyche but psychoanalysis. The unconscious, in say, Lacan, appears through the breakdown of the symbolic order (parapraxis in Freud), but is theorised as being inaugurated scopically (the mirror, the *objet petit a* are, functionally, images). On the whole, the psychoanalytic situation of linguistic breakdown conforms to Godzich's description of language confronted by images. If the technological is the repressed of the theory of the unconscious (and a re-reading of *Four Fundamental Concepts* could demonstrate this) then cinema would be, to play on a formulation of Lacan (1981), 'in it more than it;' in other words, *psychoanalysis is itself the symptom* – of cinema.

Visual economy

To understand the material history of the spectacle, one must elaborate:

1. the emergence of cinema out of industrial capitalism;
2. the re-organisation of the *socius*, the subject, and the built environment by the image in circulation; and

3. the utter reconfiguration of capital-logic and hence of labour and accumulation in and as 'visuality'.

If the spectacular, the simulated and the virtual are not somehow eminently productive of culture, and if culture is not, again, somehow, eminently productive of capital (in the strict sense of 'productive' as utilised by political economy) then all the hoopla over post-modernism is simply wrong.

Let me then add a few periodising markers in order to indicate the general fit of cinema with cultural shifts. What I call 'The Cinematic Mode of Production' begins with the codification of early cinema and psychoanalysis, (but also behaviourism) and culminates, as it were, in the post-modern and the advance of new media. Thus the CMP begins with the historical moment in which the concrete technology of cinema is codified simultaneously with the abstract, socio-subjective and bureaucratic technologies of monopoly capital (Edison) and continues into the present. The CMP spans the three fundamental movements in capitalism as specified by Ernest Mandel (1996), beginning in the shift from steam-driven motors to electric and combustion motors, and continuing through the changeover to electronic and nuclear powered apparatuses that is still occurring. Cinema spans the three great machines ages, each one marking, for capital, a dialectical expansion over the previous stage. These stages are, associated with market capitalism, the monopoly stage or the stage of imperialism and post-modernity or the stage of neo-imperialism and what one might call neo-totalitarianism, respectively. Somewhat crudely put, it could be said that cinema has its origins in the shift from market to monopoly capital and reconstitutes itself in the shift from monopoly to multinational capitalism. Another useful index to the character of these transformations in the evolving logics of capitalised production and circulation is the mode of image making itself: the indexicality of the photograph, the analogue electronic signal, and the digital image.

The CMP would propose that both cinema and capital employ the same abstract, formal structures to realise their functions. The becoming-image of the world, or rather the increasing dematerialisation of the commodity *is also necessary for capital development*. Capital's fundamental transformation during the twentieth century is cinematic, that is, it becomes visual. Cinema, and its circulation of the image, provide the archetype for the new order of capital production and circulation generally. My analysis of the structure and dynamics of the cinematic apparatus is nothing less than an exploration of the industrial extension of capital's 're-mediation' and reconfiguration of the functioning of the body through the historically achieved interface known as the image. The mining of human bodies of their power has always been the goal of capital. The continuing 'liberation of the productive forces' depends upon the continuing non-liberation of the producers. Contemporary visual culture (what appears and what does not) secures this dialectic.

When in capitalist production the worker's product confronts him or her as 'something alien', a new order of perceptuo-imaginary pyrotechnics is inaugurated, the order which leads Marx to introduce the category of fetishism. This consequence of alienation is precisely the phantasmagoria of the object, the part which stands out in place of the whole as a totality of process, the supplemental excesses of a history rendered invisible yet

smouldering within the material. The fetish is the severance of community *appearing* as an object. It is the activity which the object undertakes as a medium for severing consumer from community. It is violated subjective and intersubjective activity. Of course it is essential to recall here that the experience of this phenomenon is not without its pleasures, its ecstasy. Indeed one might see in commodity fetishism a kind of severance pay, a conciliatory pleasure in the mode of Platonic longing for a lost wholeness, in which commodity as missing piece promises wholeness, completion, repletion. This relation between human beings which first appears on a massive scale during the industrial revolution as a thing, finds its higher articulation in the spectacle which Debord describes as the false community of the commodity.

If the commodity-object is an impacted social relation in which the subjective contribution of the human worker is effaced, so much the more for the image. Andy Warhol registers this change in much of his work, but perhaps never more elegantly than in the Campbell's Soup silk screens. These soups are indeed condensed: objects formed by the condensation of farming technologies, migrant labour, canning process, trucking, warehousing and supermarketing. Warhol grasps the mass-produced object as an icon of reification, effectively peeling the label from the can, and allowing it to circulate unencumbered. This free-floating signifier of an already reified condensation dramatizes the mode of appearance for the soup, a soup which as long as it is to remain a commodity must also remain invisibly locked in a hermetic tin. In increasing the distance between the label and the use-value, Warhol registers the ascendancy of image over materiality, distancing yet further whatever human subjective elements comprise the soup proper while dramatising the subjective pyrotechnics of the image-commodity itself. Where once a portrait would have been displayed, there hangs an image of a commodity, itself a higher order of commodity.

Warhol underscores the ascendant dimension of the commodity-image by *reproducing* it, not as an anonymous designer, but as an artist. By inscribing the image at a distance, he also inscribes its social effects, he becomes the representative of a representation. Like previous art icons, Warhol is an author of an imagistic relation, but unlike others he is an author who does not immediately appear to create an original text, he only grasps it through reproduction. But this imaging of the image relation is his genius. In the post-modern the image always occurs twice, the first time as commodity, the second as art.

As importantly as the subjective labour which goes into the production of images *qua* objects – in both the objectification that becomes the referent and the imagification that becomes the image in circulation, *human subjectivity is bound to the image in its very circulation*, and that in two very different ways. It is here that we see moments of the valorisation of capital. First, our gazes accrete on the image and intensify its power. Take, for example, the case of a work of Vincent Van Gogh. The 50 million-dollar fetish character is an index of visual accretion, that is, of alienated sensual labour resultant from the mass mediation of the unique work of art. All that looking sticks to the canvas and increases its value. To develop that relation has been the job of the painter, and remains the strategy of producers of unique works of art. The traditional

labour theory of value cannot explain this hysterical production of value, only a theory that accounts for the systemic alienation of the labour of looking can. Second, and equally significant, in viewing the image we simultaneously and micrologically modify ourselves in relation to the image as we 'consume' it – a misnomer if there ever was one, since images equally, or almost entirely, consume us. They *eat* the viewer half-way. If this production of both value and commodity-self (as worker, as consumer, as fecund perceiver) through looking is indeed the case then the emergence of visual culture must be set in relation to the development and intensification of commodity fetishism.

Globalisation, affect and negation

The assertion that global production is coordinated through the screen of capital (the screens of the many capitals) is operationally correct, and, if one considers the role of CNN, international cable stations, computers, Hollywood film, international advertising, etc., may perhaps seem intuitively obvious. The development of a new order of visibility and of a visual *economy* is signalled here by a qualitative shift in the character of capital. This shift is colloquially known as post-modernism. Even in its early stages capital was already cinematic, for example, 'capital', in the work of Marx, was the screen of appearance for all politico-economic and therefore social metamorphosis. In Marx's representation (*darstellung*) of capital process, all that is solid melts into air precisely on the screen of capital; each moment of production as well as of world history is marched across the mediating frame that capital provides. In short, like Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera*, Marx's 'capital' films social practice, and in fact, that is, in practice, it was precisely through the framework of capital that the social was grasped. Cinema is first posited by capital, and then presupposed.

As noted, photography and the cinematic apparatus are no mere perks or spin-offs of industry as Tang was to the space program. Visual technologies developed the key pathways for capital expansion, increasing as they do the speed and intensity of commodity circulation, as well as historically modifying the visual pathway itself, transforming the character of sight. The visual as a productive relation for capital, clears the way for the institution of what Fredric Jameson (1991: 6) identifies as 'constitutive features of postmodernism': 'a new depthlessness', 'a weakening of historicity', 'a whole new type of emotional ground tone' under the heading of 'intensities', 'the deep constitutive relationships of all this to a whole new technology which is itself a figure for a whole new economic world system' and 'mutations in the lived experience of built space itself'. This cultural turn called post-modernism may be defined as the subsumption of formerly semi-autonomous cultural sphere by capital. This subsumption of culture registers the change of state necessary to 'economic growth', or simply 'development' (neo-imperialism) in the latter twentieth century. Culture became a scene, and is fast becoming the principle scene (the *mise-en-scene*) of economic production. Without the reorganisation of the visual (and thus of the affective) the massive, global immiseration currently in existence could not be effected. The destruction of wealth through warfare, the massive sale of goods produced at near-slave wages could not be maintained. The post-modern distortions,

which are actually spatial, temporal and corporeal *transformations*, and hence new forms of social relations, are created and sustained through a generalised extension of the capacity to mediate vision and to prolong the interface between human beings and social machines.

The new order of visibility marks a transformation of that relationship between bodies and machines previously epitomized by the assembly-line. Visual images of cybernetics such as those found in *Robocop* or *Terminator* are actually the interfaces themselves. The hypothesis here is that the new locus of the dissymmetrical exchange (exploitation) characteristic of M-C-M where the second M is larger than the first is the imaginary. Labour is done in what Althusser calls an imaginary relation to the real, but in an utterly transformed because massively mediated imaginary and with effects that are no less material for all that. The large-scale technological mediation of the imaginary is also a material shift.

For an answer to the question: 'how do you get capitalism into the psyche, and how do you get the psyche into capital?', we should look to the cinematic image, which, as mediator between two orders of production (political economic and the psycho-symbolic) describes the historically necessary, mutual articulation of consciousness and capital expansion. It is only by tracing the trajectory of the capitalized image and the introjection of its logic into the sensorium that we may observe the full consequences of the dominant mode of production (assembly-line capitalism) becoming 'the dominant mode of representation' as cinema: the automation of the 'subject' by the laws of exchange. This transformed situation of the subject demands a thoroughly new epistemology almost as urgently as it demands new forms of transcendence. If we combine such a thesis with Guy Debord's (1983: §21) insight that 'the spectacle is the guardian of sleep', then it becomes clear that the terrain of cinematics is at once macro- and microscopic, that is, world-systemic, economic and historical, as well as individual, perceptual and psychological. The mode of production is one with the repressed. Cinema is an orchestration of the unconscious and the unconscious is a scene of production. Dreamwork turns out to real be work. It is important to remember here that the category 'cinema' is now detached from the film industry and its array of institutions and provides *a figure for the orchestration of material production by images*.

How does this cybernesis function? Antonio Negri (1994: 139) describes post-modernism as the "'real subsumption" of society in capital' and affirms that the 'form of value is the very "communication" which develops among productive forces'. He then raises the following question:

If 'communication' constitutes the fabric of production and the substance of the form of value, if capital has become therefore so permeable that it can filter every relation through the material thicknesses of production, if the laboring processes extend equally as far as the social extends, what then are the consequences that we can draw with respect to the law of value? (Negri 1994: 139)

Negri's stunning 'Twenty Theses on Marx' from which this passage was taken, ultimately answers the question by calling for the radical wresting of

'social cooperation' (labour) from 'productive command' (capital). These extremely promising categories and the work which informs their constitution demands significant attention. However encouraging Negri's assertion is, that the history of the proletarian power is asymmetrical with the history of capitalist power and that what he calls 'the proletariat' has therefore never been in lockstep with capitalist exploitation, Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the culture industry is not adequately dispensed with in Negri's model.

Horkheimer and Adorno (1986: 137) claim that human interiority has been effectively liquidated and replaced by the culture industry: 'the inflection on the telephone or in the most intimate situation, the choice of words in conversation, and the whole inner life . . . bear witness to man's attempt to make himself a proficient apparatus, similar (even in emotions) to the model served up by the culture industry'. They have been criticised for giving an inadequate account of different modes of reception and use of mass-mediated cultural production by the incredible variety of consumers extant, but Negri himself almost inadvertently proposes a grim addendum to the Frankfurt school architectonic that 'Amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work' (1986: 137). In his words, with respect to the development of capital, 'every innovation is the secularization of revolution' (Negri 1994: 146–7). This statement, meant to underscore the creative and liberatory power of workers strikes me as also providing the appropriate negative dialectic for thinking about image-culture as a system: the creativity of the masses, their quests for empowerment, fulfillment, and why not say it, 'freedom', in the image, are absorbed and rendered productive for capital. What a century ago I. P. Pavlov observed as 'the freedom reflex' is harnessed by capital for alienated production. New affects, aspirations and forms of interiority are experiments in capitalist productivity.

With this recuperative aspect of capital in mind, along with the rise of the emergence of visuality as I have described it thus far, it would be important not to abandon the dialectics of negation. Thus far, only the negative dialectic allows us to think the political economy of the visual and hence the paradigm of a global dominant. Negation, however, has very serious limits which may ultimately include it as among the psychopathological strategies modulated by Hollywood. In conceiving the cinematicity of production, the fabrication of affect as well as the valorisation of images by watching them must be grasped as a new order of production slated by visual economy. The cinematicity of capital dialectically re-ordains the categories of political economy, meaning that it leaves its older forms extant (wage-labour, circulation, capital, use-value, exchange-value, etc.) while bringing them to a higher level of articulation. It also, in ways that exceed the scope of this essay, re-ordains the key operators of race, gender, sexuality and nation. The commodified object tends toward the image, money tends toward film and capital tends toward cinema. People are slotted in accordingly as value-producing media for the new visual economy – as if living in accord with pre-ordained scripts or programs. Thus, as I have only suggested here, the labour theory of value which has been in Marxism the basis on which capital was valorised during the production process and also the basis on which revolutionary action was predicated, must be reformulated as the attention theory of value, that is, as

the productive value of human attention. This reformulation leaves labour as a subset of value-productive attention while positing the development of a new order for creating and cementing the *socius*. Furthermore it accounts for the capitalisation of forms of interstitial human activity ('women's' work, 'desiring-production', experience, survival) which previously fell beyond the purview of the formal scene of value production, meaning the workplace. Additionally, such a new order of production not only extends the working day and therefore combats the falling rate of profit, it instantiates new orders of commodities such as air-time and vision itself, whose values are measured, for example, by a statistical estimate of the size and now the 'quality' of an audience (Andersen 1995).

Visual, psychological, visceral and haptic events are the pathways for new kinds of work, new kinds of machine–body interfaces, which simultaneously instantiate an effective reality or media-environment for the subject-form (and its fragments) as a context for its action, and valorise capital investment. When appearance itself is production, the ostensible immediacy of the world always already passes through the production-system. Cinema is a deterritorialised factory which extends the working day in space and time while introjecting the systems language of capital into the sensorium. Cinema means a fully-mediated *mise-en-scene* which, like the magician's forced deal, structures human choice by providing the contexts and options for responses that are productive for capital. Yet we must remember that it is humanity who made the cinema, despite the masters of global appearance's claims to the contrary. The star is not out there, but s/he is of ourselves. Cinema is the secularisation of a world historical revolution in human interaction that contains in *potentia* the material realisation of a universal disaffection with capitalist domination and oppression. As it stands it is the leveraged management and expropriation of humanity's 'freedom reflex', the desecralisation of human communion. In solidarity with all those who have fought and continue to fight against the racism, sexism, homophobia, fascistic nationalism and developmental ideologies that have justified the dirty work of capitalist accumulation, we must organise ourselves and the parts of ourselves that aspire not for justification of things as they are but for justice.

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