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Name of Designated Person authorising scanning: Beckie Colman

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1 Introduction: Theory – Some Signposts

Dialectic of Enlightenment

It is now some sixty years since Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno first published *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the book that was to be the handbook of critical theory. Critical theory's classic dialectic grew from the study of the *ancien régime*: of feudalism, absolutism, of *gemeinschaftlich* social relations. The dialectic developed from the analysis of a regime in which social position was fixed by birth; in which serfs were tied to the soil; in which an absolutist monarch ruled through the mediation of aristocracy and Church; in which men fought and died for King and religion. From this medieval darkness of necessity arose *Les Lumières*, bringing light and transparency to what was darkness and obscurity, bringing the rationally established rights of man into a space where previously there were only obligations, legitimated not by reason but by tradition. From this darkness of necessity rose the freedom of possibilities of social mobility, so that birth did not fix social position generation after generation. Breaking with the cyclical time of peasants' crops and nobles' migration from country house to court emerged a temporality of progress and possibility. Killing off a vengeful God and putting the potential of humanity in his place, Enlightenment arose dialectically out of

darkness also in markets, in freedom of expression, in burgeoning citizenship, in the emergence of *le peuple*, opening up a space of autonomy, of emancipation, where once there had been chains. This was Enlightenment. Enlightenment for critical theorists was an emancipation of outer nature, of inner nature and of social nature.

But Enlightenment contained within itself a contradictory logic: a logic in which its core values turned into their opposites. Enlightenment here for Horkheimer and Adorno becomes a new darkness of myth – as quality turns to quantity, freedom to necessity, autonomy to determinacy and emancipation to new chains. With the removal of Church and King, man himself took on powers to realize his potential in a number of arenas. With Enlightenment and the demythification of outer nature, science – Galileo, Newton – took on the ability, the power, to know nature. Human inner nature was emancipated from the Church's teachings on morality and original sin. For its part, social nature was liberated from the unholy trinity of kings, priests and nobles. Indeed, with the rise of the social contract, natural rights and the people, the very meaning of society changed. Previously associated with gatherings of the upper classes at balls and banquets and other exclusive settings, society came to mean the people, the rights-bearing citizens of the newly emergent public realm. But Enlightenment's dialectic turned emancipation into domination. Enlightenment's enabling power was changed into a new darkness of power as domination. *Savoir*, or knowledge, became linked to *pouvoir*. This was not emancipatory knowledge. Man's power to explore nature became his power to use nature as an instrument, to commodify and deplete it. The emancipation of man's inner nature was transformed into institutional power over inner nature as the clinic, the prison, the school and the factory normalized and disciplined. In social nature this reversal was the most extreme, as bureaucratic and authoritarian power allied to a new brutality in racial ideologies underscored the rise of fascism.

One major sphere in which the dialectic of Enlightenment played out perniciously for Horkheimer and Adorno was in the realm of the *culture industry*. The point for critical theorists was that a previously autonomous or relatively autonomous sphere now itself came under the industrial principle. This meant that culture, once a space of freedom, came under the principle of instrumental rationality, became instrumental in the hands of Hollywood and the emergent monopoly concentration of capital in publishing, recording and advertising. It meant that culture, previously a source of edification, the *Bildung* of human potential, turned into a machinery of control, whose main goal was the expenditure of resources in the interests of the financial profitability of corporate oligopolies. Culture took on the same principle of accumulation already widespread in the capitalist economy. Now the logic of the factory colonized the dream factories of the culture industry.¹ Now culture, previously associated with the development of human subjectivity,

became objective like any other commodity.² The implication for Horkheimer and Adorno was that culture, previously a site for critique and a place of non-identity, became subsumed under capitalism's logic of identity. In this identity-logic, the heterogeneity – the grain of the artwork – is reduced to identical units of utility; the qualitative, internal values of things are reduced to identical units of exchange-value and quantities of money. Industrialized culture, for Horkheimer and Adorno, is homogenized culture. In homogenized culture one unit is like every other. One unit, in its nature as commodity and instrumentality, is identical to any other. This was the principle of identity that Horkheimer and Adorno deplored. It was the principle against which critique was to be launched. For critical theory, with the proletariat incorporated into the newly 'organized capitalism' from the First World War, the only place for critique had been culture, which was autonomous from the principle of identity, from the atomism and normalization of the economy. But now, with the rise of the culture industry, this atomization also invaded culture, creating what Marcuse (1991) later called 'one-dimensional man'.

Horkheimer and Adorno's theory of culture industry is one of the founding sources of what later has become known as cultural studies. Its resonance has been of course much wider, throughout the human sciences. In this book – on *global culture industry* – we argue that things have moved on since the time at which Horkheimer and Adorno were writing. This is a book not about culture industry but about *global culture industry*. This is a book that follows, or tracks or traces seven cultural objects – *Toy Story*, the Wallace and Gromit short feature films, Nike, Swatch, *Trainspotting*, Euro '96 and young British artists (YBA) – as they move through a great number of transformations in a great number of countries. This book disagrees with Horkheimer and Adorno's thesis. This is nothing new. Indeed, classical cultural studies, that is the British, Birmingham tradition (Hall 1980; Hall and Jefferson 1993), was born out of disagreement with critical theory, in the sense that culture – and the media – was argued to be a site for resistance as much as it was for domination. But we disagree with Horkheimer and Adorno not so much to argue that the social uses of cultural objects and media representations can be used for resistance as well as for domination. Our disagreement with Horkheimer and Adorno is not so much that they were wrong, but that things have moved on. Indeed, we think that theories of both domination through, and resistance to, the culture industry were right. We think however that – since the time of critical theory and since the emergence of the Birmingham tradition in the middle 1970s – things have changed.

We think that culture has taken on another, a different logic with the transition from culture industry to *global culture industry*; that globalization has given culture industry a fundamentally different mode of operation.³ Our point is that in 1945 and in 1975 culture was still funda-

mentally a superstructure. As a superstructure, both domination and resistance took place in and through superstructures – through ideology, through symbols, through representation. When culture was primarily superstructural, cultural entities were still exceptional. What was mostly encountered in everyday life were material objects (goods), from the economic infrastructure. This was true in 1945 and still so in 1975. But in 2005, cultural objects are everywhere; as information, as communications, as branded products, as financial services, as media products, as transport and leisure services, cultural entities are no longer the exception: they are the rule. Culture is so ubiquitous that it, as it were, seeps out of the superstructure and comes to infiltrate, and then take over, the infrastructure itself. It comes to dominate both the economy and experience in everyday life.⁴ Culture no longer works – in regard to resistance or domination – primarily as a superstructure. It no longer works primarily as hegemonic ideology, as symbols, as representations. In our emergent age of global culture industry, where culture starts to dominate both the economy and the everyday, culture, which was previously a question of representation, becomes *thingified*. In classical culture industry – both in terms of domination and resistance – mediation was primarily by means of representation. In global culture industry instead is the *mediation of things*. And this is the central thesis of this book. The book is thus an exploration of global culture industry in terms of a mediation of things.

Towards Global Culture Industry

Let us outline how we think things have changed – how global culture industry differs from culture industry – in a set of theses. In doing this, we do not want to claim that classical culture industry has disappeared. Indeed, in most situations there are impure admixtures of the global and the classical or ‘national’ culture industry, of the mediation of representations and the mediation of things. This book’s focus though is on the emergent. So let us list some changes in a set of theses and then – in the following chapter – address the method that we have tried to follow in the research and the book. The method itself is inseparable from the emergence of global culture industry: from the emergence of things become media, of media become things.

From identity to difference

In Horkheimer and Adorno’s culture industry the assumption was that cultural products, once fabricated, would circulate as commodities, as identical objects, and in their movement would contribute to capital accumulation. As people purchased the objects, they would atomize them, constituting them as the atomized subjects necessary to the reproduction of capitalism. In global culture industry this changes. Products no longer circulate as identical objects, already fixed, static and

discrete, determined by the intentions of their producers. Instead, cultural entities spin out of the control of their makers: in their circulation they move and change through transposition and translation, transformation and transmogrification. In this culture of circulation (Lee and LiPuma 2002), cultural entities take on a dynamic of their own; *in this movement*, value is added. In global culture industry, products move as much through accident as through design, as much by virtue of their unintended consequences as through planned design or intention. In changing, cultural entities themselves become reflexive in their self-modification over a range of territories, a range of environments.

The products, the objects of Horkheimer and Adorno’s culture industry, were determinate, that is, determined. The objects of global culture industry are indeterminate. To be reflexive (or reflective) is to be indeterminate (Beck 1992; Beck et al. 1994). The objects of culture industry were determinate, not just in being determined, but in their effects. They had determinate effects on social subjects. In determining their audience, they slotted those subjects into the reproductive cycle of capitalism, the nuclear family, the proper place of the home. The objects of global culture industry are also indeterminate in this second sense. We, as social subjects, relate to them in an indeterminate mode. This does not mean that capitalism is not reproducing on a global scale now. It only means that it is reproducing differently. Now the much less determinate objects of global culture industry encounter the characteristically reflexive individuals of today’s informational capitalism (Castells 1996; Kwinter 2001; Adkins 2002; Lash 2002; Urry 2003; Thrift 2004). Determinacy, in Horkheimer and Adorno’s sense, is a question of ‘identity’. Indeterminacy is a question of ‘difference’. In global culture industry, production and consumption are processes of the construction of *difference*. In culture industry, production takes place in the Fordist and labour-intensive production of identity. In global culture industry, it takes place in the post-Fordist and design-intensive production of difference. Yet the paradigm of indeterminacy and difference in global culture industry is less a question of resistance than a way in which capital successfully accumulates.

Commodity to brand

The way in which global culture industry operates through brands is a central theme of this book. If culture industry worked largely through the commodity, global culture industry works through brands. The commodity and the brand are largely sources of domination, of power. The commodity works via a logic of identity, the brand via a logic of difference. How is this the case? A good is a commodity to the extent that it is characterized by exchange-value. The exchange-value of a good is an abstraction from its use-value. A good’s exchange-value is expressed in abstract equivalents, in money. Exchange-value is thus a question of

quantity, use-value of quality. Commodities have value in units of abstract equivalence. Goods are commodities to the extent that they exchange, not for other goods, but for money, for units of abstract equivalence on markets. But as a consumer you cannot go to a market and buy a brand. Brands do not typically exchange at all. They are only for sale on capital markets, where their value is a function of the expected future profits above those contributed by all other assets (those that produce the commodity) (Interbrand et al. 1997).

The commodity is produced. The brand is a source of production. The commodity is a single, discrete, fixed product. The brand instantiates itself in a range of products, is generated across a range of products. The commodity has no history; the brand does. The commodity has no relationships; the brand is constituted in and as relations (see Lury 2004 for the argument that the brand is a set of relations between products). The commodity has no memory at all; the brand has memory. The products in which a brand instantiates itself, indeed actualizes itself, must somehow flow from the brand's memory, which is the brand's identity. The Nike brand, for example, has largely succeeded in actualizing itself in football (soccer) products; it has done less well in golf products. Football seems to relate more easily to Nike brand identity and memory than does golf.

Goods as commodities are all alike. They are distinguishable only by the quantities of money for which they exchange. Brands are not alike. Brands have value only in their difference – their distinctiveness – from other brands. Commodities only have value in the way they resemble every other commodity. Brands only have value in their difference. Brands thus are singular or singularities: commodities are homogeneities. The commodity has only exchange-value in Marx's *Capital*: it is abstract and homogenous, expressed in units of equivalence. Marxian use-value is concrete, singular and qualitative. Thus your personal laptop computer or your private copy of Marx's *Capital* is a use-value, dog-eared, with your own marginal scribblings. The brand, like the use-value, is also a singularity. But it is not a concrete, but an abstract, singularity. The brand – say Boss, Nike or Sony – is not the same as my suit, my trainers or my laptop. But your relations with the brand are part of its value.

The commodity is dead; the brand is alive: it comes into being (it becomes) through the generation of a series or range of goods. The brand, constituted in its difference, generates goods, diversified ranges of products. The commodity is determined from outside; it is mechanistic. The brand is like an organism, self-modifying, with a memory. Thus the commodity is characteristically 'Fordist' and works through the production of large numbers of the same product. Brands work through, not generalized Fordist consumption, but through specialized consumption, and the production of many different goods. Commodity production is labour-intensive; branded goods production is design-intensive (Lash and

Urry 1994). The commodity works through reproduction of identity; the brand through evermore production of difference.

What kind of value is at stake? A good has use-value as a concrete singularity. It has exchange-value (is a commodity) as an abstract universal, or homogeneity. It works as a (part of a) brand, it has, in Baudrillard's sense, 'sign-value'. A good works for me through my hands-on use of it. It works as a commodity in terms of how much money I bought or will sell it for. The brand functions as a sign-value through its and my difference. This difference is generated by (my relation to) a brand. Use-value and the commodity are qualities of products. Sign-value and the brand are not qualities of products: they are qualities of *experience*. This experience is situated at the interface – or surface – of communication (Moor 2003; Lury 2004) of the consumer and the brand. It is a part of events; it is eventive (Malik 2005).

In brief, commodities work through a mechanistic principle of identity, brands through the animated production of difference (Fraser et al. 2005). Thus processes of invention are of necessity central to the brand. Yet the brand's cosmology of difference and invention is at the same time the source of a reassembled system of domination. Global culture industry's emergent regime of power results in inequalities, disparities and deception rarely encountered in Horkheimer and Adorno's classical age.

From representations to things

For Horkheimer and Adorno, culture, though 'industrialized', was still in the superstructure. Horkheimer and Adorno were writing in the heyday of manufacturing capitalism. The principles of the economy, that is, of utility and exchange, had invaded and colonized the cultural superstructure. In this context, culture no longer represented the unique, was no longer autonomous, an end-in-itself. It instead became subsumed in homogenous units, each one identical to the next. Culture had become a utility, a means for something else; it was administered. Culture had become subsumed in the means–end rationality of the commodity. But global culture industry and informational capitalism is less a matter of the base determining the superstructure than the cultural superstructure collapsing, as it were, into the material base. Hence goods become informational, work becomes affective, property becomes intellectual and the economy more generally becomes cultural.⁵ Culture, once in the base, takes on a certain materiality itself. Media become things. Images and other cultural forms from the superstructure collapse into the materiality of the infrastructure. The image, previously separated in the superstructure, is thingified, it becomes *matter-image* (Deleuze 1986).

In Horkheimer and Adorno's culture industry, mediation was predominantly through representation. In global culture industry, we have the *mediation of things*. Horkheimer and Adorno's culture was commodified. But these were commodified representations and not cultural things.

Mediation by representation is quite other to the mediation of things. The object of art is different from an object like a hammer in that we engage with the former primarily in terms of meaning, while the latter is a matter of doing or ‘operationality’. Painting and sculpture are media or mediums, as writers like Rosalind Krauss (1999) insist. They are media before the age of the mass media of communications. But they are media only insofar as their value is primarily cultural: only insofar as their value has to do with meaning. When media become things, however, they no longer exclusively have cultural value. They come very importantly to have use-value and exchange-value.

There is such a thingification of media when, for example, movies become computer games; when brands become brand environments, taking over airport terminal space and restructuring department stores, road billboards and city centres; when cartoon characters become collectibles and costumes; when music is played in lifts, part of a mobile soundscape (Hosokawa 1984; Bull and Back 2004). Media objects in everyday life come to rival manufactured objects. We deal with media as representations – painting, sculpture, poetry, the novel – in terms of meaning. When media become things, we enter a world of operationality, a world not of interpretation but of navigation. We do not ‘read’ them so much as ‘do’ them (*‘Just Do It’*), or do with them. This was already incipiently the case with the ‘mass media’, newspapers, radio and television. Their ubiquity, and the fact that they were not confined to a separate space, as was art, the museum, cinema or indeed the university, meant that they were already encountered as things. They were much more ready-to-hand already than are mediums such as painting or sculpture. What was incipient with the emergence of mass media has become the axial principle of global culture industry. In global culture industry, what were previously media become things. But also, what were things become media.

This book is about seven products in the global culture industry. Four of these cultural objects – Wallace and Gromit, *Toy Story*, (the movement of) young British art(ists), *Trainspotting* – are media become thing-like. Young British art, for example, comprises in part installations, or multi-media spaces. The typical representational space of the picture frame has won only one Turner Prize in the past decade. The dress styles, merchandise and toys for *Trainspotting*, Wallace and Gromit and *Toy Story* have come to rival the films in their visibility. And Disney, Warners and Universal are incorporated in the object spaces of retail outlets and theme parks, parallel to the branded object spaces in airports, shops and department stores. In the case of our three other objects – Nike, Swatch and global football – things, or thing-events, become mediated. When, for instance, Nike’s Swoosh logo appears on the (media images of the) cap that Tiger Woods wears in golf competitions,⁶ Nike trades on a whole series of mediated connections. These connections help make the space

and time, the flows, in which Nike products (and people) move. In spaces such as Niketowns, Nike’s logos – including the word ‘Nike’ and associated words, symbols and acronyms, including ‘Swoosh’, ‘AirJordan’, ‘Total Body Conditioning’, the tag line ‘Just Do It’ and the graphic mark that is known as ‘Jumpman’, among others – do not only mark a line of products, they are also built into the very architecture and fittings of the building. But at the same time, as Jarvis, an assistant in the Los Angeles Niketown, and himself owner of numerous pairs of Nike shoes, said to us, Niketown isn’t a store at all; it is ‘an experience’. In other words, the physical environment is the setting for immersion in a highly mediated brand experience; very concretely, it is the installation of sensation.

Four of our cultural objects have thus ‘descended’, as it were, halfway from the superstructure, and the other three have ‘ascended’ halfway from the base. They meet in the middle in something like a ‘media-environment’. In this in-between zone a material environment (such as a football stadium) has become mediated. And mediums (the films and art) have descended into the environment, as merchandise, as installations. Image has become matter and matter has become image: media-things and thing-media. At stake is a true industrialization of culture. What Horkheimer and Adorno called industrialization was only in fact commodification. It was the commodification of representation. It is the thingification of media that brings the principle not just of the commodity but also of industry into the heart of culture itself. This runs in parallel with the ‘culture-ification’ of what previously was industry. The above-mentioned design-intensivity and ubiquitous research and design is the culturification of industry: the mediation of things. Thus culture industry entails thing-mediation. And the flux and flow of globalization is what is created by the movements of things-become-media and media-become-things. As we will see in the course of this book, the properties of such movement, such flux and flow (Appadurai 1996), are just as central to global culture industry as the coming together of media and things.

From the symbolic to the real

In *The Matrix*, Keanu Reeves is, by day, Thomas A. Anderson, a software writer in Metacortex, a software firm in turn of the twenty-first-century Chicago. Anderson ‘pays taxes’, he ‘has a social security number’. By night he is hacker-alias ‘Neo’, developer of myriad illegal applications, of countless ‘computer crimes’, which he sells to gangs of cyber-punks, hidden on discs stored in his copy of *Simulations and Simulacra* (Baudrillard 1994). Neo, already uncertain which of his two worlds is dream and which is reality, is contacted by Carrie Anne Moss’s Trinity. She proposes to him that his night-time obsession is her life-long project, that both of them are searching for the answer to the question, ‘What is the Matrix?’ ‘The answer’, she says to him, ‘is out there. It’s looking for you and it will find you.’ Next day, at work, Neo receives a recorded-delivery mobile

phone, on whose other end is Trinity's mentor (and virtual father), Laurence Fishburne's Morpheus. Morpheus tells Neo not only, 'I've been looking for you', but also that 'they're coming for you'. 'They' are the Matrix and their agents, especially their special agent, Smith. Hugo Weaving's agent Smith, together with the Chicago police, capture Anderson/Neo. Smith knows Morpheus is on to Neo, and he knows why. Morpheus knows that Neo is 'the One', who will lead the battle against the Matrix and save the besieged city of Zion. Smith is a machine in the Matrix's future age of the machines. Zion is the last bastion of humanity. Smith and the Matrix want to use Neo to get at Morpheus, 'the most dangerous man alive', a 'known terrorist', and 'help bring him to justice'. They know Neo will soon be with Morpheus. Smith thus inserts a bug, a spidery machine, in Neo through his navel.

Neo wakes up from this 'dream', is phoned by Morpheus and is instructed to wait under Chicago's Adams Street Bridge. Trinity and friends collect him in a car and extract the spider bug from his stomach. Neo remarks, 'Jesus Christ. This thing is real', and is taken to meet Morpheus, who greets him with the words: 'Welcome to the real world.' Neo asks Morpheus, 'Where are we?' Morpheus responds, 'The question is not where, but when.' The answer is that 'we', and the real world, are somewhere in 2199. In contrast, the world of 1999 is a dream, is what social and cultural theorists call *the symbolic*, the world of representations, of ideology (Zizek 1997). The Matrix, the machines, in the real of 2199 are pulling the strings in the dream world of the symbolic of 1999. But this symbolic has extraordinary powers. Though it is 'only a neural interactive simulacrum, a dream-world', 'It is everywhere', intones Morpheus to Neo. The Matrix pulls a world 'over your eyes to blind you'. 'You are a slave, born into bondage.' In the first half of the twenty-first century, Morpheus continues, the humans celebrated their achievements with the full development of AI. But the machines gained their autonomy and the war between the humans and the machines was begun. In this war, it was 'we [the humans] who scorched the sky', destroying the sun, to deprive the machines of solar energy. But the machines switched their energy source to the heat generation of human bodies and, by the end of the twenty-second century, have come to devise ways of growing human beings in fields. The Matrix's goal is to reduce human beings into batteries for machines. The triumph of the machines is the triumph of the Matrix, who, via the special agents, who are 'sentient programmes', want to close down the last bastion of resistance in Zion. Zion is the 'last human city', underground, near the earth's core, where there is still – in the absence of the sun – sufficient heat to sustain human life. The Matrix's plan is to tap into the access codes of Zion's mainframe computers. Zion is served by a number of hovercraft-like ships, which 'broadcast pirate signals'.

Smith lectures the captured Morpheus: the development from 'your (human) civilization to our (machine) civilization' is a question of 'evolu-

tion, Morpheus, evolution'. But Neo, 'the One', is even further evolved than Smith. On entering what Morpheus calls 'the desert of the real', he is trained through a set of programs to enter 'replication'. As 'the One', he is on the side of the humans, but is more than a human, and more than a machine. He can do all of Smith's moves and transformations – indeed, he destroys Smith at the end of the film by entering his body, as in Cronenberg's *Scanners* – exploding him from the inside. The Matrix's agents, though they are self-organizing, are 'still based on rules'. There is still an irreducible element of mechanism in the machines. 'The One', in contrast, is a rule finder. He is guided by Morpheus, and by the Oracle, who prophesized his coming. But he must 'walk the path'.

In its entirety, *Matrix* plays off an opposition of the symbolic and the real. The symbolic is above ground. There is still sun. It is Chicago in 1999. The real is underground, in the bowels of the earth: there is no sun. The main characters have a double existence: in Chicago's sunny twentieth-century symbolic and in the darkness of the real, Morpheus, Tank, Dozer, Cypher, Neo and Trinity exist in the real, strapped in chairs in Morpheus's ship, unconscious, connected to electrical terminals. The connections between the symbolic and the real, the 'exits', are in Chicago's subway stations. Connection to the real from the symbolic is by mobile phone, but the truth, the real, is in the mind. The real is not extensive, but intensive. The appearance(s of the symbolic) 'are a mental projection of a digital self', which is where the real action is. Zion rangers like Morpheus and Trinity, 'unplug people' from the (symbolic) matrix to join the struggle in the real. The symbolic is the place of the sense-world, of 'electrical signals interpreted by the brain'. In the real, humans eat tasteless gruel with all necessary vitamins and minerals for the brutal struggles of its sunless desert.

Horkheimer and Adorno's classical culture industry worked through the symbolic, through daylight, the light of Enlightenment and other ideology, through the pleasure of the text, and of representation. Global culture industry is a descent of culture into the real: a descent into the bowels, the brutality, the desert of the real. The real is more evolved than the symbolic. It is brutal, but a question less of body than of mind: bodies are merely energy sources for the mind's real. The inner and underground space in which the human hacker-ships operate is the 'service and waste systems of cities that once spanned hundreds of miles' transmuted into 'sewers' at the turn of the twenty-first century. The real is brutal, a desert, a sewer, a waste-and-service system, below the subways, under the underground. The cosmology of waste and sewage is also that which structures Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (1998). DeLillo's protagonist works in the waste industry and sees the world in terms of a cosmology, a metaphysics of flows of waste. DeLillo's real is this 'underworld' of waste.

Classical culture industry occupied the space of the symbolic: global culture industry the space of the real. Culture industry is Hollywood's

dream-machine, global culture industry brute reality. Global culture industry deals in simulations, but these escape the symbolic, escape representation, and as intensity, as hyperreality, enter a real in which media become things. The symbolic is superstructural: it is a set of ideological and cultural structures that interpellate subjects in order to reproduce the capitalist economy and the (Oedipal) nuclear family. The real is not superstructural; it is not even structural. The real is base. It is in excess of the symbolic. This excess is abjected, spewed out downward through exit-holes into the desert of the real. For Georges Bataille (2000), the abjected was Marx's lumpenproletariat, who made no contribution to the reproduction of capital. To be abjected into the real was to be ejected – out of the bottom (Bataille's 'solar anus') of the symbolic space of form into the *informe*, the formlessness of the real. Global culture industry operates in this space of the real. In the symbolic, signification works through structures to produce meaning. In the desert of the real, signification works through brute force and immediacy. Meaning is no longer hermeneutic; it is operational, as in computer games – that is, meaning is not interpretative; it is doing, it is impact.

Things come alive: bio-power

Culture industry for Horkheimer and Adorno worked through the logic of the commodity. In global culture industry we deal with *singularities* (Appadurai 1986). Singularities are very much the opposite of Horkheimer and Adorno's atomized and atomizing cultural goods. Such atoms work on a principle of Newtonian *mechanism*. For Newton and Descartes, simple bodily substance was atomistic: atoms are identical to each other, they are externally caused. Opposed to the atom were the *monads* of Leibniz (1992). Adorno's commodities are atomistic; the global culture industry singularities are monads. The monad presumes that simple substance is difference. Monads are all different from each other because each carries its own trace. This trace is a monad's memory, its path dependency.⁷ Atoms are the stuff of simplicity; monads are the stuff of complexity. Monads are self-organizing and, in this sense, reflexive. The atomized products of Horkheimer and Adorno's classic culture industry worked like mechanism. The self-transforming and self-energizing monads of global culture industry are not mechanistic, but vitalistic. Thus, Arjun Appadurai can speak of a social *life* of things (1986). In global culture industry, things come alive, take on a life of their own. Cultural objects as commodities, as atoms, are mechanisms. Singularities for their part are alive.⁸

Horkheimer and Adorno's culture industry is a locus of power, a power that works mechanistically, through external determination of subjects. In global culture industry, power works vitalistically. Vitalist power is *bio-power* (Foucault 1976). Mechanistic power works through the fixity of being. Vitalist or bio-power operates through becoming and movement.

Thus power leaves structures and enters flows. Bio-power, as opposed to 'mechano-power', works through the becoming of self-organization. Not only do resistance or invention operate through movement and becoming in the global age, so too does power. Mechano-power ensures the reproduction of capitalist relations, the family and the proper place (of privacy, propriety and property). As a guarantor of reproduction, mechano-power works through a principle of identity. Bio-power, as Foucault insisted, works through production. It is chronically productive. If reproduction is tied to identity, production is tied to difference, to invention. Bio-power does not stop subjects from producing difference. It is effective through the production of difference by subjects. Brands are not in an ideological or representational (or symbolic) superstructure; they work not transcendentally, but immanently, in the arteries of society. Bio-power, in working through arteries, is less mechanistic than physiological.

Bio-power of the global culture industry works on subjects as if it were monads. But there are two types of monads. There are Leibniz's monads which were closed systems: systems, as he noted, with no windows, no doors. These monads are self-causing, self-determined by their own traces. There are, on the other hand, singularities, which are monads with windows and doors. They are doubly open systems, abstract machines, rhizomes, multiplicities (Deleuze and Guattari 1999; Lazzarato 2002). Global cultural products and subjects can operate either as closed systems or as singularities. Brands are often operationally closed; that is, they work through a kind of exclusion. For example, BSkyB in Britain has used premiership football in this way. You incorporate the object (football). You mediate and brand it. You achieve a monopoly. You exclude others. And you make the viewers pay. But brands can sometimes take on windows and doors. As closed systems, they incorporate aspects of the environment, but they do not form syntheses or connect with other systems. Once they have windows and doors, and form such doubly open systems, they become singularities.⁹

Extensity to intensity

Cultural goods in Horkheimer and Adorno's classical culture industry were commodities, equivalent atoms. These were subject to the laws of Newtonian mechanism. Such goods take on the shape of what Descartes understood as *res extensa*. For Descartes, body and mechanism were a matter of *res extensa* and mind of *res cogitans*. Here we have extensive substance on the one hand and thinking substance on the other. For Descartes, extensive substance was atomistic, and thinking substance monadological. The Latin *res* is a question of substance but also of property. Thus property in manufacturing capitalism (and culture industry) comes largely under the heading of *res extensa*, but in information capitalism and global culture industry, property – that is, intellectual

property, – comes under the heading of *res cogitans* (Castells 1996). In this sense, the information economy is based on the materialization of *res cogitans*. Intellectual property is its legal expression and regulation. Once materialized, *res cogitans* is no longer inside us. As the materialized immaterial, it becomes *res intensiva*. Now extensity is counterposed, not to *cogitans*, but to *intensity*. The point is that the products of the classical culture industry functioned as extensities; those of the global culture industry function as intensities.

For Marshall McLuhan (1997) the intensive was not just thinking substance, but the entire human sensorium, a multimodal notion of sense. For him, the global network, or ‘village’, of media and communications was the ‘outering’ of the sensorium. It was the extension of intensity, or of matter-image. In this view, subjects encounter not a signifying structure, or even the materiality of the signified, but the signified or sense itself as it is materialized. This is communication. This is information. The media environment, or mediascape, is a forest of extended intensities, of material signifieds around which subjects find their way, orient themselves via signposts.¹⁰ Thus Horkheimer and Adorno’s culture industry recalled the extensity of a landscape; today’s global culture industry has the intensity of a mediascape, is a scape of flows (Appadurai 1996). The information economy is an intensive economy, an economy of intensities (Thrift 2004); the media environment is an intensive environment.

The rise of the virtual

The brand experience is a feeling, though not a concrete perception. Thus Walter Benjamin talks about the colour of experience (Caygill 1998). What Benjamin is saying is that you may perceive the painting, say, as an object, but what you *experience* is non-objectual – that is, colour. This is the experience of an intensity. Brands may embrace a number of extensities, but they are themselves intensities. Brands are in this sense *virtuals*. As *virtuals*, they may be actualized in any number of products. Yet the feeling, the brand experience, is the same. Brands typically involve trademarks. The trademark in intellectual property law must be in the public domain. Thus David Beckham as brand is in the public domain. But though they are in the public domain, brands themselves are not perceived. As *virtuals*, they are ineffable. In semiologist Peirce’s sense, brands may be icons. Peirce (1978) understood signification in three modes, via symbol, index and icon. Symbols signify in a Saussurean manner, through the differences among signifiers in a signifying structure. An index signifies much more immediately. Signals are very much motivated by the thing they signify. Thus a baby’s cry is an index, as is a train signal, or the thud a punch in the jaw makes. Icons do not for Peirce signify through resemblance, as is commonly held; instead, the sign denotes the object by being like it, and the interpretant represents the sign as a sign of *qualitative possibility*. Symbols are mediatedly attached to

objects, and signals quite immediately attached. But icons need not be attached to objects at all.¹¹ Brands, working through the intensities of their iconography, are one way in which contemporary power works.

In global culture industry, not only the mediascape, but also the cityscape takes on intensive qualities. Architecture and urbanism become less a question of objects and volumes. Urban space becomes a space of intensities. These intensities, which are virtual, describe a certain topology. They describe a space of multimodal experience, not just that of vision, a space of virtualities and intensities that actualize themselves not as objects but as events. Thus Bernard Tschumi speaks of ‘event-architecture’ (2005), while in Rem Koolhaas’s *Harvard Guide to Shopping* (2001) architecture becomes increasingly surfaces of communication, intensities, events. Global culture industry is a matter in this sense of object-events. Our cultural objects are self-organizing systems, sometimes operationally closed, at other points emergent, singularities forming connective syntheses, at many points actualizing themselves in events. Contemporary culture – unlike that of the classical culture industry – is ‘event-culture’.

Horkheimer and Adorno’s culture industry was dialectical. We are today, perhaps, less dialectical than metaphysical. Dialectics presumes ontological difference: between spirit and matter, being and beings, superstructure and base, same and other, friend and foe. Metaphysics is instead a monism, an immanence of spirit-matter, of superstructure-base. The ontological difference of dialectics is displaced by metaphysics’ ontology of difference. In this ontology of difference, simple substance itself is difference. This simple substance as matter-image, as difference, is the stuff of global culture industry. The *Weltanschauung*, the *episteme* of global culture industry, is no longer that of dialectical but of metaphysical materialism, based on the materiality of the monad, the reality, as in *Matrix*, of mind. This is matter as multiplicity, matter not as identity but as difference.