the bad guys and the (apparent) liberation of the world from post-Fordist mechanisms of control. Nonetheless, Neveldine/Taylor don't exactly leave us with exalted hopes. We never quite leave gamespace behind; when Tillman finally kills Castle, one of the latter's henchmen acknowledges him with a curt "well played, Kable." And the last shot of the film, before the credits, shows Tillman, with his wife and daughter, driving into the dark mouth of a deep tunnel. The screen cuts to black, and we see the flashing message from an old-style arcade video game: "GAME OVER – INSERT COIN." The message is echoed by a familiar monotone robot voice. The film itself has gamed us; we are still trapped in the world it depicts.

Neveldine/Taylor do accomplish one thing, however. They trace out for us the system of audiovisual entertainment that is one major facet of the control society within which we increasingly find ourselves enmeshed today. They don't "critique" this control society – if anything, they gleefully embrace it. But they offer us something that is arguably better than critique: they provide a kind of cognitive and affective map of contemporary gamespace. They point up its extensiveness, its affordances, its limitations, and the degree of our unavoidable complicity with it. *Gamer* strongly resonates with McKenzie Wark's assertion that "only by going further and further into gamespace might one come out the other side of it" (Wark 2007, 224).[86]

6 Coda

"Corporate Cannibal," *Boarding Gate*, *Southland Tales* and *Gamer* have almost nothing in common – except for the fact that they all belong to, and they all express, a common world. This is the world we live in: a world of hypermediacy (Bolter and Grusin 2000, 33-34) and ubiquitous digital technologies, organized as a "timeless time" and a "space of flows" (Castells 2000, 407-499), through which "divergent series are endlessly tracing bifurcating paths" (Deleuze 1993, 81). Such a world cannot be *represented*, in any ordinary sense. There is no stable point of view from which we could apprehend it. Each perspective only leads us to another perspective, in an infinite regress of networked transformations – which is to say, in an infinite series of metamorphoses of capital. We find ourselves in a chronic condition of crisis; the "state of exception" (Agamben 2005) has itself become the norm. The repeated experience of disruption, or "creative destruction" (Schumpeter 1943, 81-86), is a necessary part of capital's own perpetual self-valorization and rejuvenation: it will go on, whatever the human cost. "Corporate Cannibal," *Boarding Gate*, *Southland Tales* and *Gamer* all bear witness to this state of affairs.

We live in a world of crises and convulsions; but this does not mean that our world is anarchic, or devoid of logic. If anything, the contemporary world is ruthlessly organized around an exceedingly rigid and monotonous logic. For everything in the postmodern world is subject to the tendential movement of "real subsumption."[87] All impulsions of desire, all structures of feeling, and all forms of life, are drawn into the gravitational field, or captured by the strange attractor, of commodification and capital accumulation. There is no difference, in this respect, between images and sounds on the one hand, and more palpable objects and markers of identity on the other. Everything moves

along the same vectors of modulation, digitization, financialization, and media transduction. The movement is all in one direction; and yet it is also without finality. "The circulation of money as capital is an end in itself, for the valorization of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The movement of capital is therefore limitless" (Marx 1992, 253). The proliferation and dissemination of images and sounds, together with other material and immaterial goods, is an endless process of circulation, with no content other than the self-reflexive reiteration of the mark of capital itself, in the form of trademarks and brand names. In the words of Marshall McLuhan, it is "a medium without a message, as it were, unless it is used to spell out some verbal ad or name" (McLuhan 1994, 8). In McLuhan's time, "General Electric" was spelled out in light bulbs; by 1990, "IBM" was spelled out in atoms. Today, everything seems to come with a corporate logo and a brand name.

Another way to put this is to say that the very experience of real subsumption is what makes our world a common one. It doesn't matter which particularities are being subsumed; but only that they are all subsumed in the same way. The regime of capital today is indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, channelling Nietzsche, "a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 34). We live in a world of extreme diversity and multiplicity: but the basic *condition of possibility* for this profusion is the functioning of money, or credit, as a single standard of value or "universal equivalent" (cf. Marx 1992, 162). The proliferation of variations, and of consumer choices, is underwritten by a more fundamental homogeneity. Money and credit make it possible for anything to be exchanged with anything else. In the realm of digital media, binary code functions in a similar manner. For this code is a universal equivalent for all data, all inputs, and all sensory modalities. Everything can be sampled, captured, and transcribed into a string of ones and zeroes. This string can then

be manipulated and transformed, in various measured and controllable ways. Under such conditions, multiple differences ramify endlessly; but none of these differences actually *makes a difference*, since they are all completely interchangeable.[88]

It is easy enough to deplore this situation on moralistic or political grounds, as high-minded cultural theorists from Adorno to Baudrillard have long tended to do. And it is tempting to wax nostalgic, and mourn the passing of a more vital, and more temporally authentic, media regime, as film theorists as diverse as David Rodowick (2007) and Vivian Sobchack (2004) have recently done. But such responses are inadequate. They are too wrapped up in their own melancholic sense of loss to grasp the emergence of new relations of production, and of new media forms. They miss the aesthetic poignancy of post-cinematic media, with their "peculiar kind of euphoria" and "mysterious charge of affect" (Jameson 1991, 16, 27). Also, these critiques denounce the symptoms of cultural malaise – Horkheimer and Adorno's "instrumental reason," or Žižek's "decline of symbolic efficiency" – without paying sufficient attention to the processes of exploitation and expropriation that generate such symptoms.[89] And they look toward the illusory comforts (or at least the relative explicability) of older modes of production, instead of taking the full measure of capitalism's "constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation" (Marx and Engels 1998, 54).

In order to come to grips with social and technological change, we need a "constant revolutionising" of our methods of critical reflection as well. In this regard, cultural theory lags far behind actual artistic production. Creative works like "Corporate Cannibal," *Boarding Gate*, *Southland Tales* and *Gamer* are several steps ahead – in relation to both technology and political economy – of all our attempts (mine included) to place them, theorize them, or account for them. These multimedia

works are *prophetic*, in the way that Jacques Attali once proclaimed music as being: "Music is prophecy. Its styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code. It makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible, that will impose itself and regulate the order of things" (Attali 1985, 21).[90] Today, post-cinematic works are directly engaged in this sort of proleptic exploration.

Writing a third of a century ago, Attali opposed the audible to the visible, and championed the deterritorializing force of "noise" against the reterritorializing effects of the visual image. At the time, he was right to put things in this way. The entire twentieth century was characterized, as McLuhan argued, by a shift away from visual (perspectival, linear) space, and towards an "acoustic space" that is "dynamic, always in flux, creating its own dimensions moment by moment" (McLuhan 1997, 41). This means, among other things, that sound – rather than image – was the leading edge of change, the modality in which new cultural forms first emerged. It is no accident that, in the last decades of the century, music was the first aesthetic realm to display the radical mutations, in both production and consumption, that emerged from new digital technologies. Today, however, in the twenty-first century, these changes have become ubiquitous. They have fully taken hold in the realm of moving images, and indeed in every aspect of our lives. We now live in the midst of an *audiovisual continuum*. With so many different articulations of sounds and images, and with digital transcoding as the common basis for all of them, it no longer makes sense to posit a global opposition between the audible and the visible. The prophetic function of art, its ability to "explore...the entire range of possibilities in a given code," no longer has a privileged relation to any particular sensory modality, or to any particular art form.

This is why works like "Corporate Cannibal," *Boarding Gate*,

Southland Tales and *Gamer* are so important. In their engagement with new technologies and new media forms, no less than in their explicit content, they explore the *possibility space* of globalized capitalism, mapping this space both cognitively and affectively. They trace the lines of force that generate and shape the world space of capital; they follow its tendential movements towards limitless expansion; and, conversely, they try to locate its sticking points, its intermittencies and interruptions.[91] Grace Jones as "corporate cannibal" consumes everyone and everything she meets, following the inner logic of capital itself. She hopes thereby to "make the world explode." That is to say, she makes a dangerous wager: she bets on the extreme possibility that capital's own virulent nihilism might lead to its downfall. For her part, Sandra in *Boarding Gate* follows the "lines of flight" that contemporary finance capital seemingly makes available to us. She learns, however, that every escape is also a new trap. Continually outrunning the dangers that threaten her, she manages – just barely – to survive. But at the end of the film, she moves beyond mere survival, to something like a moment of decision. The wager here is that such a defection from the logic of capital can be sustained in spite of everything. *Southland Tales* pushes the logic of media saturation to the point of apocalyptic self-destruction, while leaving uncertain the prospect of a subsequent renewal. Richard Kelly's wager is that sheer hypermediated excess can push the logic of the "society of the spectacle" to the point of exhaustion and breakdown. Finally, Neveldine/Taylor wager on the game of wagering itself,pushing it to the end despite their knowledge that it is fixed. None of these works discovers an "outside" to capitalism; and none of them offers anything like revolutionary hope. But they all insist, at least, upon exhausting, and thereby perhaps finding a limit to, the totalizing ambitions of real subsumption.

Thus "Corporate Cannibal," *Boarding Gate*, *Southland Tales* and *Gamer* all explore the labyrinthine nightmare of the

contemporary world system. They all operate on the premise that the only way out is the way through. The world of real subsumption is a world without transcendence; the only way, therefore, to get 'beyond' this world is to exhaust its possibilities, and push its inherent tendencies to their utmost extremity. This means that these works produce their own version of what Benjamin Noys has called *accelerationism*: "an exotic variant of *la politique du pire*: if capitalism generates its own forces of dissolution then the necessity is to radicalise capitalism itself: the worse the better... What the accelerationists affirm is the capitalist power of dissolution and fragmentation." Accelerationism therefore aims "to exacerbate capitalism to the point of collapse" (Noys 2010). Rather than deploring our actual state of (semi-permanent) crisis, the accelerationists imply that capitalist crisis has never gone far enough, and that *this* is why they have so far only served to re-energize and reboot the movement of capital accumulation, rather than (as Marx at one point hoped) exploding it altogether.[92]

Noys is quick to point out the obvious deficiencies of accelerationism as a political strategy. On the one hand, its virulent radicalism – at least on the level of rhetoric – is not matched by any suggestions as to how the convulsive death of capitalism might actually lead to liberation, rather than to barbarism, massive destruction, or some other form of universal catastrophe. On the other hand, accelerationism risks a paradoxically conservative return to "the most teleological forms of Second International Marxism" (Noys 2010): that is to say, to the complacent evolutionist belief that, in and of themselves, the economic "laws" of capitalist development will inevitably and automatically lead to the supersession of capitalism by socialism. This sort of optimism is scarcely even thinkable today – although some traces of it persist in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's argument that globalization, real subsumption, and biopower are themselves inadvertently creating the necessary (if not sufficient)

preconditions for communism and the self-rule of the multitude.[93]

In spite of all this, my argument comes down to the assertion that accelerationism is a useful, productive, and even necessary aesthetic strategy today – for all that it is dubious as a political one. The project of cognitive and affective mapping seeks, at the very least, to explore the contours of the prison we find ourselves in. This is a crucial task at any time; but all the more so today, when that prison has no outside, but is conterminous with the world as a whole. As Jameson suggests, today we suffer from an "increasing inability to imagine a different future"; we find ourselves trapped by "the universal ideological conviction that no alternative is possible, that there is no alternative to the system" (Jameson 2005, 232). What we need at such a moment, he adds, is precisely "a meditation on the impossible, on the unrealizable in its own right...a rattling of the bars and an intense spiritual concentration and preparation for another stage which has not yet arrived" (232-233). I am not sure that the accelerationist strategy of emptying out capitalism through a process of exhaustion is really what Jameson has in mind here; but I think that such a strategy does respond, in depth, to the condition that Jameson so cogently describes. When we are told that There Is No Alternative, that it is not possible even to conceive "alternative arrangements of daily life" (Clover 2009, 2), then perhaps there is some value in the exhaustive demonstration that what we actually have, right here, right now, is not a viable alternative either. In this way, accelerationist aesthetics points to the "disruption," or the radical "break," without any positive content, which is all that remains for Jameson of the Utopian gesture today (Jameson 2005, 231-232).

Writing in the age of cinema, Walter Benjamin suggested that the value of film resided in its "shock effect...which, like all shock effects, seeks to induce heightened attention" (Benjamin 2003, 267).[94] In a similar way, in the post-cinematic age emerging

today, media works like the ones that I have been discussing can be valued for what could perhaps be called their *intensity effect*. They help and train us to endure – and perhaps also to negotiate – the "unthinkable complexity" of cyberspace (Gibson 1984, 51), or the unrepresentable immensity and intensity of "the world space of multinational capital" (Jameson 1991, 54). This is accomplished through the accelerationist strategy of plumbing the space of capital to its vertiginous depths, and tracking it into its furthest extremities and minutest effects. Just as film habituated the "masses" of Benjamin's time to the shocks of heavy industry and dense, large-scale urbanization, so post-cinematic media may well habituate Hardt and Negri's "multitude" to the intensities arising from the precarization of work and living conditions, and the unleashing of immense, free-floating and impersonal, financial flows.[95]

The result of such an accelerationist exploration of the spacetime of capital should be, as Jameson puts it, "to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system," so that "we may again begin to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects" (Jameson 1991, 54). Beyond this, Jameson expresses the hope that cognitive mapping (to which I would add affective mapping as well) may help us to "regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion" (54). I am not bold enough to claim that "Corporate Cannibal," *Boarding Gate, Southland Tales* and *Gamer* have in fact accomplished anything like this. And I certainly do not claim – as scholarship in the field of "cultural studies" is sometimes wont to do – that these media works, or my discussion of them, or the reception of them by others, could somehow constitute a form of "resistance." I do not think it is possible to make such a leap, because aesthetics does not translate easily or obviously into politics. It takes a lot of work to make them even slightly commensurable.[96]

This difficulty of translation is precisely why an accelerationist aesthetics makes sense, even if an accelerationist politics does not. "It is the business of the future to be dangerous," Whitehead said (Whitehead 1925/1967, 207); and one important role of art is to explore the dangers of futurity, and to "translate" these dangers by mapping them as thoroughly and intensively as possible. This is not easy, since there is always a risk that the work will get lost within the spaces that it endeavors to survey, and that it will become yet another instance of the processes that it is trying to describe. "Corporate Cannibal," *Boarding Gate, Southland Tales* and *Gamer* all take on this risk; and these works' accomplishments, as well as their limitations, are up to the full measure of their ambitions. This is what makes them exemplary works for a time when – despite the astonishing pace of scientific discovery and technological invention – the imagination itself threatens to fail us.

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Endnotes

1. Strictly speaking, Deleuze and Guattari say that the work of art "is a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects" (1994, 164).

2. I am implicitly drawing upon Jonathan Beller's account of what he calls "the cinematic mode of production," or the way that cinema and its successor media "are deterritorialized factories in which spectators work, that is, in which we perform value productive labor" (2006, 1). The cinema machine extracts surplus labor-power from us, in the form of our attention; and the circulation and consumption of commodities is effected largely through the circulation and consumption of moving images, provided by film and its successor media. Beller gives a highly concrete account of how media forms and culture industries are central to the productive regime, or economic "base," of globalized capitalism today. However, I think that he underestimates the differences between cinematic and post-cinematic media: it is these differences that drive my own discussion here.

3. My terminology here is somewhat differently from that of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, who have done the most to develop the concept of affective labor. For Hardt and Negri, "unlike emotions, which are mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and to mind. In fact, affects, such as joy and sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism" (2004, 108). This seems wrong to me, precisely because there is no such thing as "mental phenomena" that do not refer equally to the body. The division between affect and emotion must rather be sought elsewhere. This is why I prefer Massumi's definition of emotion as the capture, and reduction-to-commensurability, of affect. It is this reduction that, among other things, allows for the sale and purchase of emotions as commodities. In a certain sense,

emotion is to affect as, in Marxist theory, labor-power is to labor. For labor itself is an unqualifiable capacity, while labor-power is a quantifiable commodity that is possessed, and that can be sold, by the worker. Hardt and Negri's own definition of affective labor in fact itself makes sense precisely in the register of what I am calling labor-power and objectified emotions: "Affective labor, then, is labor that produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion. One can recognize affective labor, for example, in the work of legal assistants, flight attendants, and fast food workers (service with a smile)" (108).

4. In the first half of the twentieth century, Fascism and Nazism in particular are noteworthy for their mobilization of cinematic affect; though arguably Soviet communism and liberal capitalism also mobilized such affect in their own ways. Much has been written in the last half-century about the Nazis' use of cinema, Goebbels' manipulation of the media, and the affective structure of films like Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. But already in the 1930s, Georges Bataille pointed to the centrality of affective politics in his analysis of "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" (Bataille 1985, 137-160). And Walter Benjamin explicitly linked this fascist mobilization of affect to its use of the cinematic apparatus in his essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" (Benjamin 2003, 251-283), especially when he diagnoses fascism's "aestheticizing of politics" (270). Part of my aim here is to work out how the post-cinematic manipulation and modulation of affect, as we are experiencing it today, differs from the mass mobilization of cinematic affect in the early and middle twentieth century.

5. Affect theory, or "non-representational theory" (Thrift 2008), is usually placed in sharp opposition to Marxist theory, by advocates of both approaches. I am arguing, instead, that we need to draw them together. This is precisely what Deleuze and Guattari attempted to do in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983). The attempt was

not entirely successful, but it seems prescient in the light of subsequent "neoliberal" developments in both affective and political economies.

To put this in a slightly different way, I am largely sympathetic to Bruno Latour's insistence that networked social processes cannot be explained in terms of global categories like "capital," or "the social" – because these categories themselves are what most urgently need to be explained. As Whitehead says, the business of philosophy "is to explain the emergence of the more abstract things from the more concrete things," rather than the reverse (Whitehead 1929/1978, 20). The only way to explain categories like "capital" and "the social" is precisely by working through the network, and mapping the many ways in which these categories function, the processes through which they get constructed, and the encounters in the course of which they transform, and are in turn transformed by, the other forces that they come into contact with. But explaining how categories like "capital" and "society" are constructed (and in many cases, auto-constructed) is not the same thing as denying the very validity of these categories – as Latour and his disciples, in their more uncautious moments, are sometimes wont to do.

6. Jameson explains the difference between knowledge and representation by referring to Althusser's notorious distinction between "science" and "ideology" (Jameson 1991, 53). But however unfortunate his terminology, Althusser is really just restating Spinoza's distinction between different types of knowledge. Spinoza's first, inadequate kind of knowledge corresponds to Althusser's ideology, and to the whole problematic of representation; while his third kind of knowledge, of things according to their immanent causes, *sub specie aeternitatis*, corresponds to Althusser's science. The same Spinozian distinction is the basis for Deleuze and Guattari's contrast between "cartography and decalcomania," or mapping and tracing, where the latter remains at the level of

representation, while the former is directly "in contact with the real" [(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 12-14).

For a close look at practices of affective mapping, and their difference from Jameson's "cognitive mapping," see Giuliana Bruno.

7. As Eleanor Kaufman, commenting on Deleuze and Guattari, puts it: "The map is not a contained model, or tracing, of something larger, but it is at all points constantly inflecting that larger thing, so that the map is not clearly distinguishable from the thing mapped" (Kaufman 1998, 5).

8. I am using "diagram" here in the sense outlined by Foucault and by Deleuze. Foucault defines a diagram as "a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men... [The Panopticon] is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance, or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system; it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use" (Foucault 1979, 205). Deleuze cites this definition, and further elaborates it, in his book on Foucault (1988, 34ff.) and elsewhere.

9. Three additional things need to be noted here. In the first place, Harman's discussion does not privilege human subjectivity in any way. His descriptions of how objects exceed one another's grasp in any encounter applies as much "when a gale hammers a seaside cliff" or "when stellar rays penetrate a newspaper" as it does when human subjects approach an object (Harman 2005, 83). When I use a knife to cut a grapefruit, the knife and the grapefruit also encounter one another at a distance, unable to access one another's innermost being. In the second place, I do not have any privileged access into the depths my own being. My perception of, and interaction with, myself is just as partial and limited as my perception of, and interaction with, any other entity. And finally – although in this respect I am going

against Harman, who argues for the renewal of something like a metaphysics of occult substances – the withdrawal of objects from one another need not imply that any of the objects thus withdrawn actually possess some deep inner essence. The argument is that all entities have more to them than the particular qualities they show to other entities; it says nothing about the status or organization of this *more*.

10. Specifically, Hooker compares the viscous materiality of Jones' video image to the way that a pool of oil fills half the space of the gallery, mirroring the ceiling, in Richard Wilson's installation piece *20:50* (Hooker 2009).

11. Some of these earlier videos can be found at the director's website (http://www.nickhooker.com), and on his MySpace page (http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=130368407).

12. Modulation is initially an analog process, as in the amplitude modulation (AM) or frequency modulation (FM) of radio waves. In analog modulation, "certain *dimensions* of one medium are modulated to serve as imprints bearing the variations of another medium, thereby *transmuting* the original form's embodiment without *transforming* these formal variations." When modulation becomes digital, however, an additional step is added: "in digital we both transform *and* transmute the medium," breaking the chain of analogical resemblances by a translation into binary code, so that variation is not just controlled, but also *coded* and reductively *homogenized* (Shores 2009).

13. Deleuze says that, where the older mechanisms of confinement, foregrounded in Foucault's disciplinary society, are *analogical*, in the emerging control society, with its continual modulations, "the various forms of control...are inseparable variations, forming a system of varying geometry whose language is *digital*" (Deleuze 1995, 178).

14. I am thinking here, in part, of Laura Mulvey's discussion of

how "the cinema is divided into two parts...split between its material substance, the unglamorous celluloid strip running through the projector on one side and, on the other, entrancing images moving on a screen in darkened space." Mulvey aligns this formal division with the "fundamental, and irreconcilable, opposition between stillness and movement that reverberates across the aesthetics of cinema." She further associates moving images with the narrative drive of mainstream fictional films, and stillness with the avant-garde project of bringing "the mechanism and the material of film into visibility" (Mulvey 2006, 67). Mulvey is interested in considering how the transfer of cinematic works to digital media allows for a renewed contemplation of them, precisely because our ability to freeze the frame at any moment makes the cinematic dialectic between stillness and motion more accessible to us. I am trying to look, instead, at the ways in which recent digital video works like "Corporate Cannibal" reject both sides of the stillness/movement dichotomy, and operate according to a different logic: one aligned not around stillness and motion, but around the composition of forces, modulation, and feedback.

15. Actually, Harvey describes three conceptions of space. The first is the *absolute space* of ordinary perception; this is Cartesian-Newtonian space. The second is the *relative space* of Einstein and modern physics. *Relational space* is the third. Harvey emphasizes that it is not a question of determining which of these three would be the "true" concept of space, but of understanding how "space can become one or all simultaneously depending upon the circumstances. The problem of the proper conceptualization of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it" (Harvey 2006, 125-126). I am interested here in how the practices of what Deleuze calls the "control society," and the mechanisms of digital media, participate in, and are themselves in turn affected by, the social construction of relational space.

16. The non-indexicality of digital video has lately perturbed

many film theorists, including Rodowick (2007). For my own earlier take on this issue, see my article "Emotion Capture: Affect in Digital Film" (Shaviro 2007).

17. Filmmakers such as Godard, and film theorists from Eisenstein to Chion, have been concerned with exploring the multiple relations between sound and image, and especially with pointing out how images and sounds are recorded on separate devices, so that their synchronization is an illusion – or at the very least an artifice created after the fact. But digital video is no longer limited by the image/sound dichotomy. "The components of the image" (Deleuze 1989, 225-261) are multiple; and regardless of the sensory sources from which they have been sampled, they are all transcoded into the same indifferent binary code, which then becomes material for new constructions. Not only is digital video *composited* rather than edited, so that it has to do with "a palimpsestic combination of data layers" rather than with "contiguous spatial wholes as blocks of duration" Rodowick 2007, 169); in addition, an input of one sensory mode can become an output for another, as is the case with music visualization programs – which generate patterns similar to those in some of Hooker's earlier music videos.

18. In an article about Andy Warhol, I argue that Warhol's multiple portraits of Marilyn Monroe, all made after the actress' death, dramatize the fact that "even Marilyn Monroe, you might say, was never entirely successful in playing the role of 'Marilyn Monroe'... This discord between the performer and the role, or between the empirical person and the ideal of beauty that she is supposed to incarnate, may well be regarded as the cause of Marilyn Monroe's tragic death, no matter what the actual facts of the case. Marilyn's flesh simply could not bear what she was supposed to be." Warhol's Marilyn portraits, with their numerous random variations, generated by the imperfections of the silkscreening process, illustate "the failure of the enactment to match the role. And this is why these paintings are all pictures of

Marilyn's death" (Shaviro 2004, 134).

Evidently, Jones has succeeded where Monroe did not: in negotiating the gap between the existential person and the celebrity icon. Monroe's endeavor to close the gap, and to live her incarnation as a star, inevitably failed, with tragic consequences. Jones, instead, affirms and even replicates this gap, with an ironic performance strategy of *disidentification*. As Francesca Royster puts it, "Jones' adoption of hypersexualized, animalistic, machinic, and apparently degrading positions act as what Jose Munoz calls 'disidentifications' with the toxic aspects of dominant ideology of black womanhood" (Rosyter 2009, 84). Instead of trying to *become* her celebrity role, therefore, Jones precisely *performs* its impossibility and distance.

19. Of course, this sort of rhythmic experimentation is a wider tendency of Afrodiasporic music in general, throughout the second half of the twentieth century. James Brown is not commonly counted as an Afrofuturist; but when he transforms himself into a "Sex Machine," he is in fact expressing both robotic, mechanistic repetition and superhuman, polyrhythmic dispersal at one and the same time.

20. The classic account of this process remains that of Eric Williams (1994). The industrial capitalist mode of production, with "free" workers selling their labor power to capitalist owners, would seem to be more or less incompatible with formal slavery. But this does not contradict the claim that accumulations of wealth under slavery were a crucial part of the "primitive accumulation" that capitalism needed in order to take off on a global scale. Nor does it contradict the observation that "residual" pockets of slavery continue to exist today within an overall capitalist economy. For "primitive accumulation" is a recurring and continuing phenomenon of capital accumulation, rather than just a "stage" that would precede the establishment of capitalism *tout court*.

21. Of course, mainstream visions of the Singularity – the

most famous of which is probably that propounded by Ray Kurzweil (2005) – are utterly depoliticized, and express little more than adolescent white male power fantasies of infinite potency, and of entrepreneurial accomplishment writ large. I discuss this hegemonic science fiction of the Singularity in a recent essay (Shaviro 2009). Afrofuturist reimaginings of the Singularity, however, transmute it into something crazier and more fantastic, approaching the "ironic political myth" and skewed utopianism of which Donna Haraway writes (Haraway 1991, 149).

22. That is to say, they move away from personal emotion and towards an expression of asubjective, unqualified, and intensive affect.

23. Jean-Paul Goude's music video for the song also deserves commentary. It is a rapid montage of surreal sequences, many of then taken from commercials that Goude made with Jones. There is a strong emphasis on the transformation and distortion of Jones' body through various techniques of (analog, at that time) editing, and on the actual, physical process of producing these distortions. The video even begins with a series of close-ups showing the process of cutting up a photograph of Jones, and then pasting in fragments taken from other copies of the photo, in order to elongate the shape of her face. In this way, "Slave to the Rhythm" video prefigures, by analog means, the distortions that "Corporate Cannibal" produces digitally. The earlier video both displays Jones' body/image as a commodity, and shows the labor required to produce that commodity.

24. I take the term *premediation* from Richard Grusin (2004). Needless to say, this does not mean that our future existence has actually been determined for all time, or that the system of capital is so complete, and so totalizing, that nothing whatsoever can exist outside of its control. It does mean, however, that there is no *pure* otherness, no gesture or position so radical that it cannot possibly be recuperated. We cannot avoid

the risk of recuperation, because every possible change or difference has already been accounted for within capitalism's own calculus and commodification of "risk." Our future has been mortgaged – both literally and metaphorically – to high finance. As Deleuze puts it, in the control society "a man [sic] is no longer a man confined but a man in debt" (Deleuze 1995, 181). In consequence, even if we can imagine all sorts of possible futures, we seem unable to imagine one that would really *make a difference*, in terms of our relation to capitalism. As Slavoj Žižek memorably puts it, "today it's much easier to imagine the end of all life on earth than a much more modest change in capitalism" (Taylor 2005). The desperate vagueness of currently popular Nietzschean, Levinasian, and Derridean invocations of uncertainty, undecidability, and radical alterity seems to me to confirm, and to be symptomatic of, this fundamental failure of imagination. We don't seem to be able to come up with anything concrete that would be independent of the logic of financial flows.

25. In the passage I cite, Deleuze is actually describing the construction of space in the Longchamp and Gare de Lyon sequences of Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket*, in which "the hand ends up assuming the directing function...dethroning the face... vast fragmented spaces [are] transformed through rhythmic continuity shots which correspond to the affects of the thief. Ruin and salvation are played on an amorphous table whose successive parts await the connection which they lack from our gestures, or rather from the mind" (Deleuze 1986, 108-109). The situation in Assayas' films is somewhat different, since in the world of transnational capital neither human gestures nor actions of "the mind" are able to track, much less create, the connections that link fragmented spaces together. These connections are no longer forged by human bodies acting directly, but rather operated by means of digital technologies of computation and communication. Ruin and salvation are still

very much at stake in Assayas' films; but these outcomes are themselves digital and 'machinic.' They no longer seem to have any relation either to individual initiative, or to spiritual faith. These changes are also correlated with recent changes in the nature of what Deleuze calls *any-space-whatevers*; I discuss these latter changes below.

26. I have previously discussed the dilemmas of Bazinian realism in the digital age in my article "Emotion Capture" (Shaviro 2007).

27. Deleuze does not mention Marc Augé, but refers the concept of *any-space-whatever* (*espace quelconque*) to one (otherwise largely unknown) Pascal Augé (Deleuze 1986, 109 and 122). Charles Stivale (2006) discusses this confusion, and suggests that "Pascal" may have been Deleuze's slip for "Marc." However, Stivale also includes an email from Les Roberts claiming that the name "Pascal" is in fact correct, and that Marc Augé had nothing to do with Deleuze's formulation. Be that as it may, the link between Deleuze's *espace quelconque* and Augé's *non-lieu* has entered the literature, as Stivale shows.

28. Translation slightly modified.

29. And in a period of economic crisis, the transformation of frenetically active business centers into decrepit urban ruins can be almost instantaneous. Simon Jenkins (2009) describes one such transformation, as the global crisis of 2008-2009 puts a halt to extravagant building projects in Dubai. Jenkins explicitly compares the hypermodern, half-built or soon-to-be-abandoned, future ruins of Dubai to the past ruins of Detroit.

30. There is a hidden affinity between the aesthetics of Deleuze and of Adorno. For both thinkers, the authentic work of art resists an otherwise ubiquitous culture of commodification, by virtue of its force of negativity (Adorno) or of counter-actualization (Deleuze). Deleuze's account of how modernist art works to "prevent the full actualization" of the event to which it responds (Deleuze 1990, 159), and to reverse "the techniques of

social alienation" into "revolutionary means of exploration" (161), echoes Adorno's insistence that it is "only by virtue of the absolute negativity of collapse" that art can "enunciate the unspeakable: utopia" (Adorno 1997, 32). For both thinkers, and despite their radical differences in vocabulary, art restores potentiality by *derealizing* the actual. The question that haunts aesthetics today is whether such strategies of derealization are still practicable, in a time when negation and counter-actualization have themselves become resources for the extraction of surplus value.

31. This is precisely why, as Jameson argues, the "world space" of transnational capital cannot be represented. In proposing that this irreducibly plural and unintuitable space can nonetheless be *mapped* in terms of "open boxes" and "sealed vessels," I am hijacking a schema that Deleuze introduces in entirely different circumstances. For open boxes and sealed vessels are the two correlative forms of organization that Deleuze discerns in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (Deleuze 1972, 103-115). I am undoubtedly doing a certain degree of violence to Deleuze's schema when I transfer it from Proust's early-20th-century modernist novel to Assayas' early-21st-century postmodernist film. However, my implicit argument here is that Deleuze (who detested the term "postmodern") nonetheless generally tends to characterize modernism and modernity in ways that actually apply better to more recent social and cultural formations.

32. The difference between formal and real subsumption is that, in the former case, pre-capitalist or non-capitalist forms of labor, and of socialization, continue to exist – even though their products or outputs are appropriated by capital, so that surplus value may be extracted from them. In contrast, in the case of real subsumption, all aspects of the labor process and of social life are themselves directly "rationalized" according to capitalist imperatives. In such a situation, "all of nature has become

capital, or at least has been subject to capital" (Hardt and Negri 2001, 272). The capitalist system no longer has an "outside." Foucault makes a related point (even though he never uses the term *real subsumption*) when he discusses how neoliberalism reverses the traditional relation between the economy and the State. Where traditional liberalism called on the State to regulate, and insure the fair functioning of, the market, neoliberalism instead "asks the market economy itself to be the principle, not of the state's limitation, but of its internal regulation from start to finish of its existence and action. In other words, instead of accepting a free market defined by the state and kept as it were under state supervision...the [neo]liberals say we should completely turn the formula around and adopt the free market as organizing and regulating principle of the state... In other words: a state under the supervision of the market rather than a market supervised by the state" (Foucault 2008, 116). State functions are not just managed in the interests of capital, but are themselves directly organized according to market principles and imperatives. I follow Hardt and Negri (2001, 254-256) in arguing that, in globalized, post-Fordist capitalism, real subsumption has largely displaced formal subsumption. However – somewhat in contrast to Hardt and Negri – I think that real subsumption is best understood as a continuing *tendency*, rather than as a finally attained state. For capitalism always needs to expand. It will stagnate if it cannot discover new "outsides": new sources of labor to exploit, new sources of raw materials to appropriate, and new markets in which to sell its goods. There is always still some remainder, some aspect of human life or of the world, some reservoir of subjectivity or objectivity, that has not yet been appropriated by capital in the ongoing process of "primitive accumulation."

33. For Marx, the secrets of the valorization of capital, and of the exploitation of labor, can only be unveiled when we "leave this noisy sphere [of circulation], where everything takes place

on the surface and in full view of everyone, and follow them into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there hangs the notice 'No admittance except on business' " (Marx 1992, 279-280). But affective labor – a category that includes film acting – is productive only to the extent that it is a public *performance*. It cannot unfold in the hidden depths; it must be visible and audible. We see it displayed right in front of us, both in 'real life' and on the screen.

34. The society of real subsumption is one in which something like Gary Becker's neoliberal vision of society has largely been actualized. Becker regards all aspects of intimate and personal life as "markets" for the investment of "personal capital" (Becker 1978). One's choice of a life partner is, for instance, a business decision, an investment made in the hope of maximizing future earnings. Drug addiction, crime, racism, and so on, are all explained by Becker as rational choices made in order to maximize utility, or to get the best possible returns on one's self-investment. As Foucault puts it, Becker defines "*homo oeconomicus* as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings" (Foucault 2008, 226). This means that consumption is, itself, really just another form of production: "The man of consumption, insofar as he consumes, is a producer. What does he produce? Well, quite simply, he produces his own satisfaction" (Foucault 2008, 226). Fredric Jameson similarly emphasizes that Becker's neoliberal vision "is in reality a production model" (Jameson 1991, 267). For Jameson, "Becker's model seems to me impeccable and very faithful indeed to the facts of life as we know it" under late capitalism; it is only "when it becomes prescriptive" that it leads to "the most insidious forms of reaction" (269).

35. Hoberman doesn't much like *Boarding Gate*, and doesn't really 'get' the film as all; but his description of its style is more or less accurate, as long as we take it in a more positive sense

than he intended. We might also say, as Claire Perkins does, paraphrasing Jonathan Romney, that the film "updates the notion of the *cinéma du look* – that term used in a mostly disparaging sense by critics to describe a strain of 1980s French cinema whose spectacular visual style and perceived lack of ideological depth is understood as something directly influenced by media including television, music video and advertising" (Perkins 2009, 1). Assayas 'redeems' the *cinéma du look*, as it were, by explicitly turning it back upon its own unacknowledged presuppositions.

36. The quintessential postmodern example of this genre might well be Luc Besson's *La femme Nikita* (1991). Evidently, the narrative category of the Eurotrash thriller overlaps with the cinematographic category of the *cinéma du look*.

37. Hayek, of course, makes his argument about "dispersed bits of incomplete and frequently contradictory knowledge" in the course of a polemic against the very possibility of socialist economic planning. But one can appreciate Hayek's warnings about the limitations of individual knowledge, even without sharing his faith in the "marvel" of the "price system" as an automatic mechanism for "solv[ing] problems which we should not be able to solve consciously" (Hayek 1948, 86-87). Where Hayek idealizes the market as the solution to the problem of limited, perspectivist knowledge, one may invert his formulation, and say instead that it is precisely the institution of the "free market" as a "world system" that produces the sort of "individual" for whom such limited knowledge is a problem. From this perspective, Hayek's account of the limitations of explicit knowledge confirms Jameson's observation that transnational capitalism cannot be understood in terms of "existential experience" (Jameson 1991, 53). One can then go on to question Hayek's own extremely circumscribed notion of rationality, and his implicit, empiricist assumption that the only possible form of explicit knowledge is the existential one.

38. Argento's role in *Boarding Gate* is roughly analogous to

those of Connie Nielsen in *Demonlover* and Maggie Cheung in *Clean*. For an overall discussion of female subjectivity in Assayas' trilogy, see Claire Perkins (2009).

39. It might seem like a desperate (or disingenuous) oxymoron to credit Argento with being consciously unselfconscious, and wholehearted at an ironic distance. But I cannot think of any better way to describe the disorienting effect of her performances of "femininity," not only in *Boarding Gate*, but also in Catherine Breillat's *The Last Mistress* (2007) and Abel Ferrara's *New Rose Hotel* (1998), as well as in the films in which she directed herself: *Scarlet Diva* (2000), and *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things* (2004).

40. For Baudrillard, seduction is a sort of metaphysical striptease, a play of simultaneous revealing and concealing. In opposition to this, consider the "radical disillusion" of Argento's cameo appearance as a stripper in Abel Ferrara's *Go-Go Tales* (2007): the pole-dancing act of Argento's character culminates in an artfully provocative French kiss that she exchanges with her Rottweiler. Here, the play of seduction is itself détourned into a literal "obscene transparency."

41. I am drawing here on Paolo Virno's sense of labor in the post-Fordist era as *virtuosity* (Virno 2004, 52-71). Such skill in performance has a double function. On the one hand, it answers the corporate demand for flexibility and versatility. Virtuosity "characterizes...the totality of contemporary social production. One could say that in the organization of labor in the post-Ford era, activity without an end product, previously a special and problematic case...becomes the prototype of all wage labor" (61). On the other hand, and at the same time, virtuosity is an expression of *general intellect* as the ultimate source of value. General intellect has an "exterior, social character" (38); it involves the entire "communicative capacity of human beings" (65); it belongs to everyone. Today we all face continual pressure, both inside and outside the workplace, to embody and display

our share of general intellect as fully and intensively as possible. This is necessary, in order that general intellect may be extracted from us, and privatized, as a new sort of surplus value. Throughout *Boarding Gate*, Sandra is obliged to demonstrate, in exacerbated form, the performative virtuosity that is compulsory in neoliberal society.

42. Translation slightly modified.

43. Gilles Deleuze uses this phrase from *Hamlet* to describe the Kantian revolution in philosophy, as a result of which time is freed from its classical subordination to movement (Deleuze 1984, vii). This liberation of time, the unveiling of "time itself, 'a little time in its pure state'" (Deleuze 1989, 17), is the key to what Deleuze calls the cinematic *time-image*, in which "we enter into temporality as a state of *permanent crisis*" (112). Both *Donnie Darko* and *Southland Tales* are concerned with such a sense of temporality in crisis, or temporality *as* crisis; though I want to suggest that the latter film moves 'beyond' the Deleuzian time-image in order to articulate a new regime of images and sounds, and a new mode of temporality.

44. Although Barack Obama was elected President on promises to reverse Bush administration policies, and although he has curbed some of its worst excesses, at this writing (2009) the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, surveillance remains widespread, and the White House still endorses the use of preventive detention without trial.

45. In other words, science fiction is a kind of "realism": but it is a realism of what Deleuze calls the *virtual*, rather than one of the actual here and now. For Deleuze, "the virtual is fully real" on its own account; but it is a special sort of reality, "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract, and symbolic without being fictional" (Deleuze 1994, 208). I discuss science fiction as a realism of the virtual, which "addresses events in their potentiality," in my book *Connected* (Shaviro 2003a, xi and passim).

46. Ironically, very few people have seen *Southland Tales* on the big screen; in its limited release to movie theaters, it was a calamitous flop. The film disappointed fans of *Donnie Darko*, because it was so oblique and disjointed narratively, and because it was impossible to "identify" with any of the characters in the way that so many viewers did with *Darko*'s eponymous protagonist. As I will argue below, *Southland Tales* is no less empathetic to its characters than *Donnie Darko* is; but this empathy no longer takes the form of traditional cinematic "identification." As for film critics, *Southland Tales* had a few enthusiastic supporters among them: J. Hoberman (2007), Manohla Dargis (2007), and especially Amy Taubin (2007). But the majority of critics rejected it, perturbed by its loose ends, nonlinearity, and resolutely post-cinematic forms. Links to other reviews of the film can be found at <http://www.mrqe.com/movies/m100064789?s=1>. I can only hope that *Southland Tales* will find a new audience, thanks to its recent DVD and Blu-Ray releases.

47. The film critics Richard T. Jameson and Kathleen Murphy include the shot of G. I. Joe in their list of "favorite moments" from the movies of 2007: <http://movies.msn.com/movies/2007review/moments_2/>. It is worth noting that much of the recent theoretical discussion of *cinephilia* has been concerned with "the cinephiliac moment": that is to say, with the way that cinephiles tend to focus upon, and even obsessively fetishize, particular shots, instants, or details of a film, which they extract and isolate from the film as a whole (Keathley 2006, 29-53). But *Southland Tales* is edited in such a way that each of its moments is, as it were, *already* thus extracted and isolated for cinephiliac delectation. Kelly simultaneously overloads us with "information," and disperses that information in such a way that we cannot bring it together, and grasp it as a whole.

48. The notion of *weak ties*, originally proposed by the sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973), has been applied to the

Internet by such network theorists as Duncan Watts (2004) and Albert-László Barabási (2003). If anything, the concept has been overused in recent years. I use it here only as a marker in order to help describe what I see as the dominant aesthetic of post-cinematic media forms, in which links and correspondences proliferate, without coming together in the unity of an overarching structure. Although the concept was originally meant to describe social links among individuals, I think it is useful as well to describe the way in which documents are loosely connected to one another via hyperlinks.

49. Emerson originally called his review "Is It Even a Movie? "; but he subsequently changed the title to: "Southland Tales: No Sparkle, No Motion." As he explains: "I don't want to sound like one of those people who says, for instance, 'Rap isn't even music! ' Not my intention. So I changed it." I am recalling Emerson's original title not to embarrass him or take him to task, but precisely to suggest that he was right in apprehending that, in a certain sense, *Southland Tales* isn't quite a movie any longer – and that this is probably what put him off when he watched it.

50. On a scene by scene basis, Kelly doesn't necessarily depart from the norms of what David Bordwell describes as the style of "intensified continuity" in recent American films (Bordwell 2002). But to the extent that this is so, it only shows the limitations of Bordwell's formalist claim that "nearly all scenes in nearly all contemporary mass-market movies (and in most 'independent' films) are staged, shot, and cut according to principles which crystallized in the 1910s and 1920s" (24). Indeed, Bordwell is accurate in describing how physical action is made intelligible within a single scene – not just in recent American film, but in television and music video as well. The trouble is that Bordwell takes far too narrow a view of expressive form in moving-image media. There are other modes of articulation in audiovisual media, in addition to the one that Bordwell privileges: tracking the locations and movements of

physical bodies in space. These other modes range from the modulation of the audiovisual spectator's moment-by-moment affective response on a micro-level, through the organization of spectatorial identification with characters or personas on a medium level, all the way up to general narrative organization on the macro-level. On all these levels, there is a much greater variety in regimes of vision and audition, and in modes of address, than Bordwell's shot analysis is able to account for. And this is especially the case with works produced using the new digital technologies, as well as with television, video, and computer-based media, and with films like *Southland Tales* that adopt the procedures of these post-cinematic media.

51. Deleuze uses this word to describe Leibniz's conception of the divergence between incompatible worlds (Deleuze 1993, 59ff.). The question is not whether two events or instances contradict one another; it is rather whether the two events can take place in the same world, or whether they necessarily imply different timelines. "Incompossibility is an original relation, distinct from impossibility or contradiction" (62). For the clash of contradiction can only take place within a given single world; the divergence of worlds or timelines exceeds any possibility of mere contradiction. Where Leibniz presents God as chosing the best among incompossible worlds, Deleuze sees in modern art and philosophy the simultaneous affirmation of all the incompossibles (81).

52. I take the concept of *flat ontology* from Manuel DeLanda, who uses it to characterize a view in which all entities at all scales have the same degree of reality and the same sorts of properties: "while an ontology based on relations between general types and particular instances is *hierarchical*, each level representing a different ontological category (organism, species, genera), an approach in terms of interactive parts and emergent wholes leads to a *flat ontology*, one made exclusively of unique, singular individuals, differing in spatio-temporal scale but not in

ontological status" [(DeLanda 2002, 47). DeLanda hedges on the question of whether Deleuze's ontology is really a flat one (DeLanda 2002, 178, 195). This is because he objects to Deleuze's willingness to speak "without hesitation" of entities such as "society" and "science," which DeLanda rejects as illegitimate, pre-given "totalities" (178). However, I would argue that a flat ontology only makes sense if it operates all the way up, as well as all the way down. DeLanda offers no good philosophical grounds for his reluctance to accept that "society" is just as much an individual, or a real entity, as are the "individual decision-makers, individual institutional organizations, individual cities, individual nation-states" (195) that form a population and thereby make it up. DeLanda's flat ontology is equivalent to what Deleuze calls *univocity*: the proposition that Being speaks with "a single voice," that "Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said," even though those things *of which* it is said "are not equal" and "do not have the same sense" (Deleuze 1994, 35-36).

53. At least one website, *Life in Motion*, identifies Dion and Dream as the Two Witnesses ("*Southland Tales* and Unanswered Questions," <http://oasis1315.wordpress.com/2009/03/16/southland-tales-whatta-flic/>). Other websites, however, suggest that the Two Witnesses are Ronald and Boxer – precisely because they are the ones who witness the murder of Dion and Dream (e.g., "Everything You Were Afraid To Ask About *Southland Tales*," <http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/feature/2007/12/19/southland_tales_analysis/print.html>). The former of these readings seems to me to be the more accurate one. Dion and Dream, as performers, are the ones who give "testimony" about the hypocrisy of their society, as the Biblical Witnesses are said to do. Ronald, together with his "brother"/double Roland, has the properly Messianic role in the film; and Boxer is his prophetic precursor, sort of a John the Baptist figure.

54. The analog cinematic image is indexical, in the well-known

sense defined by André Bazin; but the digital image is not. Where the cinematic image is a copy, the digital image is rather a simulacrum. Deleuze distinguishes the copy from the simulacrum as follows: the copy imitates, more or less faithfully, the model of which it is a copy; on the other hand, even if the simulacrum "still produces an *effect* of resemblance...this is an effect of the whole, completely external and produced by totally different means than those at work within the model" (Deleuze 1990, 258). The copy (or the Bazinian image) is mimetic in the deep sense that its production is continuous with the existence of its model; the cinematic image "shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction" (Bazin 2004, 14). But in digital simulation, this is no longer the case; the effect of mimetic resemblance is produced by means that are not themselves mimetic or resembling. The digital image gives us only "the pseudorealism of a deception aimed at fooling the eye (or for that matter the mind); a psuedorealism content in other words with illusory appearances" (Bazin 2004, 12). Even if Hollywood mostly uses digital imaging techniques for the purpose of achieving a convincing "perceptual realism," as Stephen Prince argues (1996), the result is still a simulacrum rather than a 'legitimate' copy.

55. The work of a younger-generation Hollywood blockbuster director like Michael Bay could usefully be examined in the light of these distinctions. Bay's films – in contrast to those of Spielberg and Zemeckis – eschew considerations of continuity almost entirely, in favor of disjunctive cutting engineered so as to maximize shock. In Bay's films, as Bruce Reid puts it, "edits seem random, every rule of film grammar is tossed out the window, and the headlong rush of movement forward is all." Bay's aesthetic is based upon the faith that you can "splice any two shots together and they'll match." The result is a cinema that is entirely incoherent, and yet "immediately legible to anyone" – as

Bay's high box office numbers prove (Reid 2001). Or, as Charlie Jane Anders puts it, the lesson of Bay's cinema is "that once the world is reduced, forever, to a kaleidoscope of whirling shapes, you are totally free. Nothing matters, effect precedes cause, fish spawn in mid-air, and you can do whatever you want" (Anders 2009). Using the tools of digital editing and compositing, together with CGI, Bay makes films that are utterly disjointed, and yet unfold in such a "smooth space" that these disjunctions scarcely matter to mass audiences. Even in mainstream popular cinema, we now have films that, in Deleuze's terms, evidence "a new status of narration," in which "narration ceases to be truthful, that is, to claim to be true, and becomes fundamentally falsifying" (Deleuze 1989, 131). Bay's films, no less than the art films of the Deleuzian *time-image*, reject organic unity, and are littered instead with gaps and false accords.

56. In the original version of *Southland Tales* shown at Cannes in May 2006, the tone of Timberlake's voiceover was apparently more sarcastic; Kelly says that, in reworking the film for its 2007 commercial release, "I also had Justin rerecord his narration to be more like Martin Sheen's in *Apocalypse Now*. I had him do it really deadpan" (Steuer 2007).

57. This is the case, for instance, in Robert Aldrich's *Kiss Me Deadly*, a film that is referenced several times in *Southland Tales*. The stentorian, masculine voice of the villain, Dr. Soberin, is heard throughout; but we do not get to see his face until the very end of the movie. The film emphasizes "the invulnerability of that voice during the extended period of time when its source remains invisible, and its abruptly actualized mortality the moment its source comes into view" (Silverman 1988, 62).

58. For the notion of the "audiovisual passage," I draw upon the work-in-progress of Carole Piechota (2009). At certain privileged moments in many recent American films, she writes, the director "subordinate[s] the image to the counters and tempo of the music" (21). A familiar pop song is played in its entirety; its

excessive insistence within the film addresses, and affects, the viewer/listener directly, demanding an immediate emotional response. Interpellated in this way, the viewer/listener cannot understand the song just as an expression of the protagonist's sensibility. The music overflows the diegetic situation in which it arises, and to which it ostensibly refers. "As these passages frequently last for several minutes (often the length of a pop song) and either lack or downplay dialogue, the perceiver is left with more time to acknowledge or contemplate her bodily and affective experiences" (22).

59. See Timberlake's videos with Rihanna ("Rehab," directed by Anthony Mandler, 2007), Ciara ("Love Sex Magic," 2009, directed by Diane Martel), and Madonna ("Four Minutes," 2008, directed by Jonas & François). These videos may be contrasted with the videos from Timberlake's own *FutureSex/LoveSounds* album, which Joshua Clover convincingly describes as a "homosocial" exchange between Timberlake and his producer Timbaland: "The album itself, both in its sonic intertwinings and lyrics, is almost entirely about the great love between Justin Timberlake and Tim Mosely, who basically sing, rap and murmur romantic, sensual phrases to each other for about an hour, climaxing mid-album with the slinky, beautiful 'What Goes Around...' " (Clover 2006). In this case as well, sexual intensity seems to be conjured out of almost nothing. It's as if the glamour and heat were not anchored in Timberlake's physical or empirical presence, but arose precisely out of the gap or distance between that actual presence and the endlessly reproduced, fluttering image of Timberlake as pure media product. The aura doesn't come from the performer himself, so much as from the *production process* in the course of which he is transfigured. The old Hollywood manufactured celebrities, of course. But Timberlake's post-cinematic celebrity is different, in that it openly attaches itself to the actual process of manufacture, rather than just to its result.

60. Though I am still using the word "image" here, this must be understood in a multimedia sense, as Deleuze uses it towards the end of his second *Cinema* volume: the audiovisual image can be a "sound image" as well as a "visual image" (Deleuze 1989, 241-261).

61. The classic reference point for these matters is Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972). Trilling sees authenticity as a modernist invention, while sincerity has a much longer genealogy. As Orlando Patterson summarizes it, updating Trilling's distinction for the twenty-first century: "sincerity... requires us to act and really be the way that we present ourselves to others. Authenticity involves finding and expressing the true inner self and judging all relationships in terms of it" (Patterson 2006). Today, I think that we have good reason to be suspicious of claims to authenticity: in the first place, because such claims rely upon a modernist sense of depth which is no longer tenable in an age of universal commodification or "real subsumption"; and in the second place, because "authenticity" has become entirely a category used by advertising and marketing. Sincerity, however, has a much wider range of application; it does not presuppose the existence of any "true inner self" to which one must remain faithful at all costs. A fiction, fabrication, or construction may well be sincere, even though it is evidently not authentic.

62. So understood, Harman says, sincerity is "a universal structure that is inescapable by any entity, one that is present at all moments in all parts of the universe" (Harman 2005, 136). I find this useful as a background assumption, in opposition to the universal cynicism that is sometimes assumed in accounts of the "postmodern." But I still claim that sincerity is manifested in different ways, and to different degrees, as objects relate to other objects, or more generally to their surroundings.

63. I am, of course, taking the notion of a "cultural dominant" from Fredric Jameson, who uses it to describe the way that a particular form may be "a dominant cultural logic or hegemonic

norm" in a given historical period, without thereby implying "an idea of the historical period as massive homogeneity." The notion of a "cultural dominant" thus leaves things open for understanding the play, as well, of "what Raymond Williams has usefully termed 'residual' and 'emergent' forms of cultural production" (Jameson 1991, 3-4,6).

Today, cinema is undoubtedly a residual cultural form – which doesn't mean that it is going to disappear any time soon. The technological innovations of such directors as Robert Zemeckis, Michael Bay, and James Cameron are attempts to reclaim hegemonic cultural status for the movies. I am arguing here that, in contrast to such mainstream directors, and precisely thanks to their low budget, exploitation-feature market niche, Neveldine/Taylor actively affirm the residual status of the movies, and link this directly to certain emergent cultural practices, in a way that does an end run around the cultural dominant. (This dominant can best be described as involving pervasive digitalization, ubiquitous algorithmic procedures, the hyperrealist simulation of images and sounds, and incessant, 24/7 networking). *Gamer* is so profoundly *actual*, or contemporary, because of the way that it simultaneously highlights the cultural dominant, and evades it or works around it. I do not claim that this evasion is automatically subversive, resistant, or oppositional – at least in the way these terms have been commonly understood. But I want to suggest that the film's unflinching insistence upon "this exact moment" opens the way to a consideration of alternatives to our current condition of "capitalist realism" (Fisher 2009).

64. The strategy of ironic recycling is central to the work of such important contemporary directors as Quentin Tarantino and the Coen Brothers. In a different way, the current international style of "contemplative cinema" (Tuttle 2009) is also a strategy of nostalgic recycling – though in this case, what is being recycled is neither classic Hollywood (the Coens) nor low-

budget exploitation fare (Tarantino), but rather the art films of the 1960s.

65. As one pseudonymous blogger complained in his review of the film: "I thought the film viciously exploited stereotypes in creating its media obsessed future-world. Every character who plays games in the film is portrayed as either a complete pervert (Ramsey Moore), a douche bag (Logan Lerman), or just plain evil (Michael C. Hall). Not really a surefire way to get the real gamers of the world to rally around your film, now is it? " (agentorange 2010). It should be noted, however, that Neveldine/Taylor are clearly working from a position of close familiarity with gaming environments; their satire has little to do with the moralistic condemnations of gaming one often finds in the mainstream media.

66.Second Life's website boasts of the fact that the world of the game is "user-created" (http://secondlife.com). In practice, this means that the work of designing the virtual world is in fact performed by the very people who pay to "own land" and otherwise participate in it. For a fuller discussion of this process, see my article "Money for Nothing: Virtual Worlds and Virtual Economies" (Shaviro 2008).

67. *Gamer* was largely shot using the RED ONE digital camera system (http://www.red.com/cameras/). The cameras were handheld, and the directors frequently shot scenes while holding the cameras and following the action on rollerblades. The action sequences were shot by as many as seven cameras simultaneously; this extensive coverage gave the directors sufficient material for their rapid-fire editing. Nearly all the action sequences in the film were shot live; Neveldine/Taylor made very little use of green screens and CGI (Kara 2009). For technical details of the film's production, see the discussion by the website Videography (2009).

68. The most famous use of the subjective camera in classical cinema is that of Robert Montgomery's *Lady in the Lake* (1947),

shot almost entirely from the POV of the protagonist. The result is not empathy, or identification with the protagonist, but rather a general feeling of distance and unease. In the absence of a reverse shot, allowing us to see the protagonist looking, we do not feel anchored in the diegetic world of the film. Today, the subjective shot is almost exclusively used in horror films, in order to convey the POV of the monster – following the example of the shark's-eye POV shots used by Steven Spielberg in *Jaws* (1975). To see through the monster's eyes is precisely not to see the monster, but only its victim. The audience is titillated by an uncanny sense of complicity with the monster; but this is very different from the way that identification with the protagonist generally works in mainstream narrative film. I have previously considered the strange qualities of the first-person POV shot in a discussion of Kathryn Bigelow's highly reflexive use of this technique in her 1995 film *Strange Days* (Shaviro 2003).

69. Indeed, early filmmakers and film theorists explicitly celebrate the movie camera's separation from, and transcendence of, merely human (subjective, first-person, fully embodied) vision. For Dziga Vertov, the camera operates "in a manner wholly different from that of the human eye"; it is no longer "forced...to copy the work of the eye," but is instead liberated "for the exploration of the chaos of visual phenomena that fills space" (Vertov 1984, 15-16). For Walter Benjamin, "clearly, it is another nature which speaks to the camera as compared to the eye... a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious... It is through the camera that we first discover the optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis" (Benjamin 2003, 266). In both cases, the camera gives us a point of view which cannot be identified with that of any of the characters within the diegesis.

70. It is André Bazin, of course, who champions a cinema that seeks "to do away with montage and to transfer to the screen the

continuum of reality" (Bazin 2004, 37), and "to make cinema the asymptote of reality" (Bazin 2005, 82). This implies, however, "that it should ultimately be life itself that becomes spectacle in order that life might in this perfect mirror be visible poetry, be the self into which film finally changes it" (Bazin 2005, 82). It is a cruel historical irony that, today, we would seem to be getting closer than ever before to Bazin's ideal of an "integral realism" (2004, 21), or of a seamless continuity of spectacle, not by embracing the real, but by getting rid of it altogether, and putting in its place an entirely simulated world. The problem, as Bazin himself is well aware, is that no "transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction" (2004, 14) is ever complete enough so as to obviate the need for montage and for selection. Something has always been left out; and some degree of editing is always needed in order to compensate for (or to supplement, in Derrida's sense) that which has been left out.

Computer games, unlike films, escape this dilemma to the extent that their worlds are generated algorithmically from the beginning, rather than being selected from a pre-existing reality. The problem is that, thus far at least, no digitally rendered world has quite attained the sensorial richness of the actual world we live in; and therefore no digital simulation has achieved Bazin's dream of "the reconstruction of the reconstruction of a perfect illusion of the outside world in sound, color, and relief" (Bazin 2004, 20). Recent spectacular films like James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009) seek to overcome this difficulty by combining computer animation with motion capture of the gestures, expressions, and movements of flesh-and-blood actors

71. How do we *judge* the ontological difference between analog and digital media, and in particular between celluloid movies and first-person computer games? David Rodowick covers much of the same ground as Alexander Galloway, but comes to radically different conclusions. For Rodowick, "typically a subjective traveling shot in film is one kind of long

take, but not characteristic of the mobile frame itself. It lends itself to the multiplication of points of view and, through the camera, enjoins the spectator to partake of a multiplicity of perspectives through mobile viewpoint. Alternatively, perceptual immersion in virtual worlds amplifies a certain form of skepticism. Indeed, it produces a form of monadism in which there is no present other than mine, the one I occupy now; there is no presence other than myself" (Rodowick 2007, 171-172).

In effect, Rodowick claims that old-style movies are morally superior to newfangled video games, in much the same way that André Bazin made a claim for the moral superiority of mise-en-scène over montage. In Rodowick's argument as in Bazin's, the ambiguity and freedom of interpretation allowed by the movies (or by mise-en-scène) is set against the fixity and single meaning imposed by video games (or by montage). In addition, Rodowick draws on Stanley Cavell's notion of film as "a moving image of skepticism" (Cavell 1979, 188). But where the movies "pose both the condition of skepticism and a possible road of departure, the route back to our conviction in reality" (Rodowick 2007, 69), video games for Rodowick do nothing but imprison us yet further in "a certain form of skepticism," which is to say, a situation of total alienation from the world.

I find Rodowick's polemic here as dubious as it is remarkable. He is right to insist upon the radical ontological difference between celluloid film and the newer digital media. But he imposes an *a priori*, univocal reading of the meaning and possibilities of the digital – although he would never accept so reductive an argument in the case of film. Rodowick fails to give us an account of digital ontology that is anywhere as open, sensitive, and generous as were Bazin's and Cavell's accounts of the ontology of photography and film. My hope, in discussing the ways that a digital film like *Gamer* moves between the realms of the movies and of computer games, is that I may at least begin the task of working out a more adequate account of the ontology

of the digital.

72. This is according to the Internet Movie Database: "The opening montage of time-lapse shots and other scenes of the world where we see ads for Kable and/or graffiti of Ken Castle overlaid on buildings or walls are mostly taken from Ron Fricke's wordless film *Baraka* (1992), for example, the shots of the Giza Pyramids, India, homeless man sleeping under a bridge among others" (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1034032/trivia).

73. As quoted on the website "Spirit of Baraka" (http://www.spiritofbaraka.com/ron-fricke).

74. This is the reason why "science fiction" has today come to be pretty much the equivalent of social realism. In one sense, the most intense aspect of our lives today is our sense of futurity, of continual innovation and continual product turnover; and yet this futurity has no other content than "more of the same," or what Ernst Bloch called "sheer aimless infinity and incessant changeability... a merely endless, contentless zigzag" (Bloch 1986, 140). Thus, we are always being urged to upgrade our computers, which fall quickly into obsolescence through the force of Moore's Law; we are always looking for the next fad, the next cool thing, to such an extent that all fads and fashions seem to exist simultaneously. This urgency without change, or novelty without difference, is an expression of the commercial product cycle that dominates all aspects of our lives; it is the equivalent, on the level of content, to genre-conformity on the level of form. As with every other aspect of its production, the strategy of *Gamer* in this regard is not to offer a critique, but to embody the situation so enthusiastically, and absolutely, as to push it to the point of absurdity.

75. There are many issues here that merit further discussion. For one thing, I have deliberately left open the question of whether the filmviewer's "identification...via empathic mirroring" be thought about in psychoanalytic terms, in affective terms, or even in neurological terms (via the currently much-

discussed phenomenon of "mirror neurons"). For another thing, *Gamer*'s central conceit of players controlling the actions of real-life avatars foregrounds the question of how the so-much-vaunted interactivity of computer games – and of Web 2.0 technologies more generally – is in fact intertwined with its obverse: the increasing sense, in a speeded-up and highly networked society, that we are in fact being constrained, or even operated, by *remote control*. And for yet another thing, the experience of remote agency, or involvement at a distance, might well be thought in terms of Graham Harman's notion of *vicarious causation* (Harman 2007). For Harman, the world is "made up of vacuum-sealed objects" (194), which can only contact one another allusively and aesthetically. Every contact happens at a distance, Harman says; "two objects must somehow touch without touching" (204).

76. It should be noted that this murder footage also appears elsewhere in the film, in other contexts. For instance, the Humanz initially gain Simon's attention by showing him a fragment of the murder sequence, looped and repeated – despite the fact that this takes place well *before* they retrieve the scene from Kable's memory. At this point in the film, the audience cannot make sense of the sequence – just as, within the diegesis, the Humanz could not possibly have access to it yet. In addition, when the sequence is shown to Simon, it is clearly marked as surveillance footage, with a timestamp and the words "Exhibit 11" (suggesting, perhaps, that it was used as evidence in Kable's trial – which would explain its availability, but at the price of undermining the later plot point in which the Humanz urgently need to retrieve the sequence from Kable's mind). These markings are lacking when the sequence reappears as a literal transcription of Kable's memories.

Of course, this sort of ambiguity is not unusual, particularly in exploitation movies, where the filmmakers frequently take such shortcuts, either out of sloppiness or because they hope the

audience won't notice. But in *Gamer*, such accidents and/or cheats are themselves meaningful, and almost systematic. The fact that a transcription of Kable's intimate (and perhaps repressed) memories should be indistinguishable (aside from the timestamp) from objective videocam surveillance footage is an important part of the movie's explicit point.

77. This is confirmed by the directors' commentary on the *Gamer* DVD.

78. I am sympathetic to Daniel Frampton's suggestion that a film itself may be said to think – independently of the thoughts either of characters within the film, or of the filmmaker as *auteur* (Frampton 2006). However, in determining *how* a film thinks as well as *what* it thinks, we need to pay more attention than Frampton does to questions both of media ontology, and of the ways that economic and social forces invest a given film.

79. Once again, I find Rodowick's distinctions between analog movies and digital games useful, even though I do not share his melancholy nostalgia for the former: "We recognize the perceptual power of photography and film retroactively as a disappearing or vanished world; we are drawn to digital or interactive screens as a will to grasp a future that is always running ahead of us and pulling us forward in its slipstream... Technological innovation always seems to run ahead of the perceptual and cognitive capacity to manipulate them for our own ends. It is the failure to arrive at what always comes ahead" (Rodowic 2007, 176). In this way, "the modularity, incompleteness, and mutability of the digital electronic image, as well as its inseparability from an interactive screen, are equally expressive of this temporal state that draws us toward the future rather than engaging us with the past" (177).

Gamer's actualism does indeed express a sort of orientation towards the future that cannot be described in the traditional terms of duration, or of a horizon of expectations. Futurity is more like a combination of transience and incipience. It is already

implicit within the Here and Now. The future is always coming towards us; it never actually arrives, but it continually gives us an ever-more-vivid sense of its ever-impending arrival. This is one reason for the extremely stylized fragmentation that is characteristic of recent action films by such directors as Tony Scott and Michael Bay, and that Neveldine/Taylor hone to so concise a point in *Gamer*.

80. The only way to eliminate the ping is to eliminate the controller, and allow the avatar autonomous freedom of action. Such is the case with Hackman, the mad killer whom Castle sends into Slayer for the express purpose of bringing down Kable. Hackman adds an unpredictable, rogue element to the game, but he also remains entirely a tool of Castle. When Hackman first encounters Kable, in prison, he sings a grotesque version of the song "I've Got No Strings" (from Disney's *Pinocchio*). The song emphasizes the fact that Hackman is not directly controlled by any outside gamer, and hence not subject to the delays of the ping; but it also perhaps suggests that he is still a puppet nonetheless. As for Kable himself, when the Humanz free him from his controller, he uses the opportunity to escape from the Slayer gameworld altogether. We later learn, however, that this release from control is only temporary. We also discover that Kable remained under surveillance during the entire time that he was acting freely; by tracking Kable, Cable's men are able to locate the Humanz's headquarters, and wipe them out. In effect, the online gaming definition of "ping" as network latency is simply replaced by the (slightly older) computing definition of "ping" as a notification signal passed by one computer to another. In either case, what would seem at first glance to be a gap or interruption in the seamless operation of the network turns out, upon further examination, actually to facilitate control.

81. Darko Suvin first defined science fiction as a literature of "cognitive estrangement" in a book published originally in 1972

(Suvin 1979). More recently, Carl Freedman has extended and expanded this definition (Freedman 2000). While the notion of cognitive estrangement, with its deliberate echo of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, works well for the mid- to late-twentieth century literary science fiction discussed by Suvin and Freedman, the historical limits of this concept (or practice) need to be recognized. In a world where the cultural and economic spheres largely intersect, where modernist distanciation techniques are routinely used in advertising and publicity, where the media address spectators and users affectively, bypassing the cognitive altogether, and where the aesthetics of rupture and shock have themselves become entirely normative, the whole question of subversion in art and culture needs to be radically rethought.

82. I am thinking here of Ian Bogost's notion of the *procedurality* of computer- and technology-based works in particular, but more generally of all cultural artifacts in the digital age (Bogost 2006, 46). Bogost's procedural forms, like Franklin's executive ones, depend upon rule-based "unit operations" and manipulations of symbols. Bogost later extends this to a concern with "procedural rhetoric" as a basic new-mediatic form of persuasion and control (Bogost 2007).

83. David Bordwell is unsurpassed when it comes to exploring film stylistics in detail. But he is flat and unconvincing when he tries to explain his observations in cognitivist terms. In classical fight sequences, he argues, "the stylistic orchestration of the fight trips off optical, auditory, and muscular responses in our bodies, while the pauses give the movement a chance to echo" (Bordwell 2008). That is to say, Bordwell claims that the orchestration of motion through space and time in classical fight sequences is beautiful and effective because it stimulates the human sensory-motor system in a certain normative way. But such an account is entirely inadequate to the aesthetic intensity of action sequences by directors like Siegel and Mann – or for that matter, Peckinpah and Woo. These classical fight scenes articulate time and space in

such a way as to establish an *ontological consistency* that goes well beyond sensory-motor stimulation. And this consistency is anything but normative; it is rather a singular concatenation of "extraordinary points of view" (Deleuze 1986, 15). As Deleuze insists, classical (movement-image) and modern (time-image) cinema alike depend, not upon the normative completion of the sensory-motor circuit, but rather upon its unanticipated *breakdown*: "an *interval* appears – a gap between the action and the reaction," or between stimulus and response (Deleuze 1986, 61).

In contrast to both classical and modern cinema, post-continuity filmmaking abandons the ontology of time and space; it no longer articulates bodies in relation to this. Instead, it sets up rhythms of immediate stimulation and manipulation. The shots are selected and edited together only on the basis of their immediate visceral effect upon the audience moment to moment. There is no concern for any sort of pattern extending further in space and time. This is precisely why – as Bordwell complains – post-continuity action editing gives us only the impression of "a vague busyness, a sense that something really frantic but imprecise is happening" (Bordwell 2008). In other words, and quite ironically, it is Michael Bay's cinematic practice, utterly deplored by Bordwell, that really conforms to Bordwell's cognitivist view of a cinema that works to "trip off optical, auditory, and muscular responses in our bodies." Conversely, the practice that Bordwell (rightly) celebrates for its cinematic mastery resists being understood in Bordwell's reductionistic terms.

84. According to the directors' commentary on the *Gamer* DVD, the film was made on a budget of $50 million – not a tremendous amount by current Hollywood standards, but well above the low end, and considerably more than the directors had at their disposal for their two *Crank* features.

85. Thanks to Seb Franklin (2009b) for demonstrating, and working through, the ways in which Deleuze and Guattari's

notion of "minor literature" is particularly applicable to media counter-practices in what Deleuze calls the control society.

86. It is precisely because *Gamer* is an action-oriented exploitation flick, rather than a movie that seeks to express the psychological interiority of its characters, that it is able to provide us with something like what Fredric Jameson calls a "cognitive mapping" of postmodern capitalism, giving us "some new heightened sense of [our] place in the global system" (Jameson 1991, 54).

87. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri define "real subsumption" as the moment when "labor practices and relations created outside of capitalist production" are no longer "imported intact under its rule" (which is what happens in merely "formal subsumption"), but instead "capital creates new labor processes no longer tied to the noncapitalist forms, and thus properly capitalist" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 229). Hardt and Negri suggest that globalized capitalism not only "involves a general passage from formal to real subsumption," but also provokes "a reciprocal movement... from the real subsumption to the formal, creating not new "outsides" to capital but severe distinctions and hierarchies within the capitalist globe" (230). As I have already suggested, however, I think that it is better to conceive the whole process as a *tendential* movement from formal to real subsumption. A tendential movement is just that: a tendency and not a fatality. It is never entirely accomplished, both because it is always opposed by what Marx calls "counteracting factors," and because it never achieves any sort of teleological closure, but always reproduces its own tensions on an expanded scale. Marx develops his theory of tendential processes in *Capital* volume 3 (Marx 1993, 317-375).

88. If we accept Gregory Bateson's famous definition of *information* as "a difference which makes a difference" (Bateson 2000, 459), then we might say that the current Internet information glut is really a condition of maximal indifference or

entropy.

89. Today, of course, such processes particularly take the form of the disaggregation and precarization of labor, the aggressive privatization of public and common goods, the dominance of finance over production, and the continuing "primitive accumulation" of previously untapped and uncommodified areas of life and experience. Behind all these lies the neoliberal credo, which inverts the relationship of part and whole: instead of the market being understood as a part of society, all social processes are now exclusively understood in terms of the market. The nineteenth-century roots of this synecdochial inversion are traced in great detail by Karl Polanyi (2001); the recent neoliberal reinvention and intensification of the reversal is dissected by Foucault (2008). The economic crisis that started in 2008 has, alas, not led to any rethinking of this fundamental assumption.

90. These lines come from the first edition of Attali's book, originally published in French in 1977. They are omitted from the (as yet untranslated) revised edition of 2001.

91. An earlier Marxist theory would have spoken here of capitalism's "crises" and "contradictions." In recent years, we have learned, to our cost, that crises and contradictions work more to reinvigorate capitalism than to endanger it. Mainstream neoclassical economics still tends to use equilibrium models; but actually existing capitalism is *metastable* rather than truly stable (cf. Simondon 2005). It functions as a *dissipative system* (cf. Prigogine and Stengers 1984), operating most effectively, and reproducing itself on an expanded scale most successfully, in far-from-equilibrium conditions.

92. Noys locates accelerationism particularly in certain theoretical texts originally written and published in France in the 1970s: Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), Jean-François Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy* (1993), and Jean Baudrillard's *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1993). He sees the

accelerationist theorizing of these texts as an understandable, if ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to "stay faithful to the libertarian effects of May '68 that involved the breaking-up of pre-existent moral and social constraints, especially in education, sexuality, and gender relations," while at the same time resisting the process by which this libertarian impulse was recuperated within the post-Fordist "new spirit of capitalism" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007). The question of what value accelerationism might have today, thirty-five years after the fact, is one that I am trying to answer here in explicitly "aestheticist" terms.

93. Despite my general sympathy for Hardt and Negri's position, I find it difficult to credit their claim that the movement of real subsumption – involving the increased precarization and fragmentation of labor, and the horrific development of a "society-based capital in which society as a whole is the chief site of productive activity," and hence of expropriation or surplus value extraction – somehow leads to a situation in which "labour-power is thus no longer variable capital, integrated within the body of capital, but is a separate and increasingly oppositional force" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 292). It would seem, rather, that labour-power is more integrated within the body of capital than ever, insofar as it is now 'on call' 24/7, with its leisure time as well as its formal work time, and its common social activity as well as its particular laboring tasks, harvested for the extraction of relative surplus value.

94. The more literal alternative translation suggested in the Notes to Benjamin's *Selected Writings* is perhaps better: the shock effect of film, like all shock effects, "seeks to be buffered by intensified presence of mind" (Benjamin 2003, 281). The point is that the shocks of industrial, capitalist modernity are accelerated by the cinematic apparatus, thus allowing spectators to adapt themselves, and habituate themselves, to such shocks. Thus "humanity's need to expose itself to shock effects represents an adaptation to the dangers threatening it" (281). We are presented

in the modern world with "new tasks of apperception"; film trains us to master these tasks by creating the conditions under which "their performance has become habitual" (268).

95. I have taken the phrase "free-floating and impersonal" from Jameson (1991, 16), but applied it to the financial flows themselves, rather than just (as Jameson does) to the structures of feeling associated with them.

96. I am thinking here, of course, of Bruno Latour's principle that "there are no equivalents, only translations... If there are equivalences, this is because they have been built out of bits and pieces with much toil and sweat, and because they are maintained by force" (Latour 1988, 162). Or, as Graham Harman summarizes this principle of Latour's, "there is no such thing as transport without transformation" (Harman 2009, 76).