

||
24/7

Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep

Jonathan Crary

|||

HOBART & WM SMITH COLLEGES
WARREN H. SMITH LIBRARY

MAR 22 2017

GENEVA, N.Y. 14456



VERSO

London • New York

N
72
.56
C733
2014

This paperback edition first published by Verso 2014
First published by Verso 2013
© Jonathan Crary 2013, 2014

All rights reserved

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4

Verso

UK: 6 Meard Street, London W1F 0EG
US: 20 Jay Street, Suite 1010, Brooklyn, NY 11201
www.versobooks.com

Verso is the imprint of New Left Books

ISBN-13: 978-1-78168-310-1 ✎
eISBN-13: 978-1-78168-311-8 (US)
eISBN-13: 978-1-78168-476-4 (UK)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Has Cataloged the Hardback Edition as Follows

Crary, Jonathan.

24/7 : terminal capitalism and the ends of sleep / Jonathan Crary.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-78168-093-3 (hardback)

1. Art and society. 2. Time and art. 3. Capitalism—Social aspects. 4. Civilization, Modern—21st century. I. Title. II. Title: Twenty-four seven.

N72.S6C733 2013

304.2'37—dc23

2013005056

Typeset in Electra by MJ Gavan, Truro, Cornwall
Printed in the US by Maple Press

CHAPTER THREE

In a well-known work of art there are some significant and early anticipations of the 24/7 temporalities discussed so far. The British artist Joseph Wright of Derby produced a painting around 1782 titled *Arkwright's Cotton Mills by Night*. It has been reproduced in many books on the history of industrialization, to illustrate—often misleadingly—the impact of factory production on rural England (an impact that was not widely felt for many decades). The painting's strangeness comes in part from the understated but distinctly anti-picturesque implantation of six- and seven-story brick buildings within an otherwise untamed and wooded countryside. As historians have noted, they are structures without precedent in English architecture. Most unsettling, however, is the elaboration of a nocturnal scene in which the light of a full moon illuminating a cloud-filled sky coexists with the pin-points of windows lit by gas lamps in the cotton mills. The artificial lighting of the

factories announces the rationalized deployment of an abstract relation between time and work, severed from the cyclical temporalities of lunar and solar movements. The novelty of Arkwright's mills is not a mechanical determinant, like the steam engine (they were powered exclusively by water) or the recently fabricated spinning frames. Instead, it is a radical reconceptualization of the relation between work and time: it is the idea of productive operations that do not stop, of profit-generating work that can function 24/7. At the particular site shown in the painting, a human labor force, including many children, was set to work at the machines in continuous twelve-hour shifts. Marx understood how capitalism was inseparable from this reorganization of time, specifically the time of living labor, as a way of creating surplus value, and he cited the words of Andrew Ure, the Scottish advocate of industrial rationalization, to amplify its importance: it was "the training of human beings to renounce their desultory habits of work, and to identify themselves with the unvarying regularity of the complex automaton. To devise and administer a successful code of factory diligence was the Herculean enterprise and noble achievement of Arkwright."¹

The spectral disjunctions in Wright of Derby's image underscore Marx's account of capitalism's dissonant relation to the agrarian milieus in which it arose. Agriculture, Marx insisted, "could never be the sphere in which capitalism starts, the sphere in which it takes up its original residence."² The cyclical temporalities, whether seasonal or diurnal, around which farming had always been based constituted an insurmountable

set of resistances to the remaking of labor time on which capitalism depended fundamentally from the start. The "natural conditions" of agrarian life prevented the necessary control over the time of production; hence the need for an unprecedented "residence," unencumbered by the long weight of customs and rhythms that reached far back into prehistory. The first requirement of capitalism, he wrote, was the dissolution of the relation to the earth. The modern factory thus emerged as an autonomous space in which the organization of labor could be disconnected from family, community, environment, or any traditional interdependencies or associations. Agriculture, as Marx presciently observed, would only be able to be industrialized retroactively.

Arkwright's Cotton Mills conveys the physical proximity of these two spheres, one natural, one invented, and also a sense of their incommensurability and fatal incompatibility. Only after capitalism had established its abstract order everywhere else—in fact, only after the destruction of World War II—could it fully impose itself on agriculture, with a factory-farming model applied to both animals and crops. More recently, corporations such as Monsanto and Dupont have achieved the final overcoming of Marx's "natural conditions" with genetically modified and patented agricultural materials. But this relatively early image of an irreconcilable adjacency nonetheless counters the notion of an "industrial revolution" that devastated the countryside and quickly herded rural laborers into cities and factories. Instead there was a protracted and piecemeal deterioration of older forms and spaces.

To be clear, I am using Arkwright's mills, as visualized by Wright of Derby, to designate, not the rationalization of manufacturing, but a broader homogenization of time and a conceptualization of uninterrupted processes that override natural and social constraints. Clearly, over the next one hundred years, into the later nineteenth century, the actuality of factories operating twenty-four hours a day was the exception, not the rule. It was in other spheres of economic modernization that non-stop and denaturalized organizations of time became pervasive. Alongside the large-scale restructuring of labor and production in the 1800s were the intertwined projects essential to the growth of capital: the acceleration and control of both circulation time and communication time. During the late 1830s and 1840s these included the build-out of transportation routes, most importantly railroads, but also of canals, and of tunnels through mountain ranges, as well as the enhancement of steamship speed and performance. There was also the parallel development of telegraph networks, and this initial period saw the first wire transfers of money, in the mid 1840s, and the completion in 1850 of an underwater cable across the English Channel. Around 1858 Marx is able to make some of his crucial formulations on the significance of these developments: "Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the physical conditions of exchange—of the means of communication and transport—the annihilation of space by time—becomes an extraordinary necessity for it."³ Yet it must be emphasized that what was important for Marx's analysis was not simply the technological

achievement of faster speeds for the shipment of goods or the attainment of near-instantaneous communications. Rather, if circulation was an essential process of capital, it was because of "the *constant continuity* of the process." In effect, Marx is positing 24/7 temporalities as fundamental to the workings of capital; he understood that these durational processes were also metamorphic. Within this "constant continuity" occurs "the unobstructed and fluid transition of value from one form into the other." That is, value was in a state of unending transformation, appearing "at one time as money, at another time as commodity, then again as exchange value, then again as use value." These networks operated on principles that would remain in force through numerous technological materializations, up to the present. They were not simply neutral high-speed conduits; rather, they were alchemical instruments for generating the abstractions integral to capitalism, which was necessarily destined to be global. Not just manufactured goods but languages, images, forms of social exchange were all to be remade to ensure their compatibility with these systems. It was hardly to be a one-time transmutation, for with each successive upgrading and expansion of these networks, new forms of fluidity and convertibility emerged.

But for the next century and a half (roughly from the 1850s to the 1990s) the metamorphoses and accelerations of an always globalizing capitalism only slowly and partially impose themselves on social and individual life. Modernity, contrary to its popular connotations, is not the world in a sweepingly transformed state. Rather, as some critics have shown, it is the

hybrid and dissonant experience of living intermittently within modernized spaces and speeds, and yet simultaneously inhabiting the remnants of pre-capitalist life-worlds, whether social or natural. Wright of Derby's image is an early revelation of modernity's concurrence and contiguity of ultimately incompatible systems. Factory manufacturing, for example, did not abruptly extinguish the long-standing diurnal rhythms and social ties of agrarian milieus. Instead there was an extended period of coexistence during which rural life was incrementally dismantled or subsumed into new processes. There are endless instances of the durability, even if broken and impaired, of older forms, values, techniques, and hierarchies within capitalist modernization. Fredric Jameson suggests that, even by the early twentieth century, "only a minute percentage of the social and physical space of the West could be considered either fully modern in technology or production or substantially bourgeois in its class culture. These twin developments were not completed in most European countries until the end of World War II."⁴

While one might debate the pervasiveness of modernization at various points in time, Jameson's periodization reminds us that the nineteenth century and a good part of the twentieth were effectively a patchwork of disjunct spaces and times, some rationalized and shaped by new institutional and market-based requirements, while in many others premodern patterns and assumptions obdurately survived. Especially significant is the provisional designation of 1945 to indicate a historical turning point. On the mundane level of historical specificity this means

recalling, for example, that the Nazis, while developing their V-2 rockets, simultaneously depended on 1.5 million horses for essential military transport.⁵ So much for the truism of twentieth-century "mechanized warfare." More importantly, as writers from Ernest Mandel to Thomas Pynchon have shown, World War II, in its destructiveness and global impact, was an unprecedented event of homogenization in which outdated territories, identities, and social fabrics were obliterated. It was the making, wherever possible, of a *tabula rasa* that would become the platform for the latest phase in the globalization of capitalism. World War II was the crucible in which new paradigms of communication, information, and control were forged, and in which connections between scientific research, transnational corporations, and military power were consolidated.

During the century and a half preceding World War II, one of the ways in which the disparate texture of incomplete or partial modernization can be mapped is through Foucault's account of disciplinary institutions. As he notes, one of the central problems confronting post-revolutionary states and other powerful interests at the start of the nineteenth century was the control and management of potentially unruly populations that had been torn out of premodern milieus and patterns of labor. A technology of power emerges that introduced dispersed methods of regulating the behavior of large numbers of people—in factories, schools, prisons, modern armies, and later in the office spaces of proliferating bureaucracies. Especially in the second half of the nineteenth century and

into the twentieth, these were places where individuals were literally confined for long portions of the day or week (or much longer, in the case of prisons) and subjected to an array of mandatory routines and procedures. They were also sites of training, of normalization, and of the accumulation of knowledge about those confined or employed.

But in spite of Foucault's description of disciplinary institutions as a "carceral continuum" blanketing society as a whole, one key element of the historical period in question is the parallel existence of times and places that are unregulated, unorganized, and unsupervised. The problematic notion of everyday life, elusive though it may be, is a valuable overarching way to characterize the shifting and imprecise aggregate of times, behaviors, and sites that effectively constituted layers of *unadministered* life, life at least partially detached from disciplinary imperatives. Even if one attributes a *longue durée* historical status to everyday life, imagining it as an a priori underpinning of all human societies, it should nonetheless be obvious that its possibility and actuality are dramatically transformed by the rise of capitalism. Its material foundations undergo rapid metamorphoses, driven by economic specialization and the privatization of individual experience. However, even amid such changes, everyday life is the repository onto which abiding rudiments of premodern experience, including sleep, are relocated.

For Henri Lefebvre, repetition and habit had always been essential characteristics of the everyday. It was inseparable from cyclical forms of repetition, of days and nights, seasons

and harvests, work and festival, waking and sleeping, creaturely needs and their fulfillment. Even as the actual textures of agrarian society were steadily eradicated, everyday life stubbornly retained, in its structure, some of the invisible recurring pulsings of life being lived. Many of the consequences of capitalist modernization, as they took shape in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, seemed antithetical to the everyday in that they were fundamentally accumulative, anti-cyclical, and developmental, and also brought with them programmed forms of habit and repetition. There is a volatile and blurred interplay between the mundane layers of the everyday that have endured since premodernity and the gradual insinuation of institutionally generated forms of routine and monotony that contaminate or displace experiences with links to older patterns. The social and dialogical milieus of the fair or marketplace are displaced by shopping, the periodic occurrence of festival is replaced by commodified leisure time, and an endless sequence of specious needs are fabricated to debase and humiliate the simple acts of sharing through which human appetites had long been gratified or fulfilled. One of the values of Lefebvre's work is its refusal of an overtly antagonistic relation between modernity and the everyday. The everyday is at once too fugitive, too uncircumscribed to be imagined as a field of counter-practices to the codes and institutions of modernization. Even though, at various points in history, the everyday has been the terrain from which forms of opposition and resistance may have come, it is also in the nature of the everyday to adapt and

reshape itself, often submissively, in response to what erupts or intrudes in it. Some have asserted that its passivity has also been its historical resilience, but over the last two decades this belief has been more difficult to sustain.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the idea of everyday life was a way of describing what was left over, or what remained in the face of economic modernization and the increasing subdivision of social activity. The everyday was the vague constellation of spaces and times *outside* what was organized and institutionalized around work, conformity, and consumerism. It was all the daily habits that were beneath notice, where one remained anonymous. Because it evaded capture and could not be made useful, it was seen by some to have a core of revolutionary potential. For Maurice Blanchot, its dangerous essence was that it was without event, and was both unconcealed and unperceived. In French, the adjective “quotidienne” evokes more strikingly the ancient practice of marking and numbering the passing of the solar day, and it emphasizes the diurnal rhythms that were long a foundation of social existence. But what Lefebvre, Debord, and others also described in the 1950s was the intensifying occupation of everyday life by consumption, organized leisure, and spectacle. In this framework, the rebellions of the late 1960s were, at least in Europe and North America, waged in part around the idea of reclaiming the terrain of everyday life from institutionalization and specialization.

However, with the counter-revolution of the 1980s and the rise of neoliberalism, the marketing of the personal computer, and the dismantling of systems of social protection, the assault

on everyday life assumed a new ferocity. Time itself became monetized, and the individual redefined as a full-time economic agent, even in the context of “jobless capitalism.”

In a brief but influential text from 1990, Gilles Deleuze proposed that the notion of disciplinary society was no longer an adequate model for explaining contemporary operations of power.⁶ He outlined the emergence of what he called “societies of control,” in which the institutional regulation of individual and social life proceeded in ways that were continuous and unbounded, and which effectively operated 24/7. He argued that, in disciplinary society, forms of coercion and surveillance occurred within specific sites—the school, the workplace, and the family home—but when occupying the spaces between these sites one was relatively unmonitored. It is possible to identify these various intervals and unregulated spaces as assorted components of everyday life. But a control society, according to Deleuze, was characterized by the disappearance of gaps, of open spaces and times. Mechanisms of command and effects of normalization penetrated almost everywhere and at all times, and they became internalized in a more comprehensive, micrological way than the disciplinary power of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. He leaves no doubt that the emergence of this regime of control corresponds to transformations in the world-system of capitalism, to the shift from production to financialization. He also states that any recent technological transformations are only symptomatic, that they are a manifestation of “a mutation in capitalism.”

As influential as Deleuze's text became, it is clear with hindsight that disciplinary forms of power did not disappear or become superseded, as he maintains. Rather, the continuous forms of control he identifies took shape as an additional layer of regulation alongside still functioning and even amplified forms of discipline. *Contra* Deleuze, the use of harsh physical confinement is greater today than at any time previously, in an expanding network of deliriously panoptic prisons. His evocation of open, amorphous spaces without boundaries is belied by the brutal deployment of walled borders and closed frontiers, both of which strategically target specific populations and regions. Also retrospectively, it can be noted that Deleuze did not address the intensifying overlap between control society and consumer society's proliferating manufacture of individual needs, far beyond the products and commodities that were obligatory even in the 1970s. Nonetheless, in affluent sectors of the globe, what was once consumerism has expanded to 24/7 activity of techniques of personalization, of individuation, of machinic interface, and of mandatory communication. Self-fashioning is the work we are all given, and we dutifully comply with the prescription continually to reinvent ourselves and manage our intricate identities. As Zygmunt Bauman has intimated, we may not grasp that to decline this endless work is not an option.⁷

In a small book by Guy Debord published a year and a half prior to Deleuze's essay, one finds some strikingly similar conclusions. In his *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, Debord identifies a new intensity and comprehensiveness with

which individual existence has been penetrated by effects of domination. He is not proposing a paradigm shift of the sort suggested by Deleuze, but rather indicating that there has been a modification in the nature of spectacle, a move from the *diffuse* spectacle of the 1960s (the label he used to characterize consumer societies in the West) to what he sees as a global *integrated* spectacle. The key difference is that in the 1960s there were still areas of social life that remained relatively autonomous and exempt from effects of spectacle, while at the time he is writing (around 1990), there are none. Everyday life is no longer politically relevant, and it endures only as a hollowed-out simulation of its former substantiality. "Beyond a legacy of old books and old buildings . . . there remains nothing, in culture or in nature, which has not been transformed and polluted, according to the means and interests of modern industry."⁸

At the time, Debord and Deleuze were writing against the grain. The "short twentieth century" was coming to an abrupt end, between 1989 and 1991, with what to many seemed like hopeful developments, including the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of a bipolar, Cold War world. Along with the triumphalist narratives of globalization and the facile declarations of the historical end of competing world-systems were the widely promoted "paradigms" for a post-political and post-ideological era. Twenty years later, it is difficult to recall the seriousness with which these fatuous claims were made on behalf of a West that seemed poised to effortlessly occupy and refashion the entire planet. Not by accident, this was also the

moment when the vague entity then magically evoked as cyberspace appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. It was heralded as an unprecedented set of tools with nothing less than the power to reinvent the self and its relation to the world. But even by the mid 1990s, the promotional retro-psychedelic euphoria had vanished, as it became clearer that though cyberspace was, in fact, a reinvention of the self, it was transnational corporations doing the reinventing and transforming.

But that moment of the early 1990s was decisive less for anything novel or unprecedented than for the fulfillment and consolidation of systemic possibilities that were incipient in Arkwright's mills, and which became only partially realized with the transportation and communication networks of the nineteenth century. By the end of the twentieth century it had become possible to see a broader and much fuller integration of the human subject with the "constant continuity" of a 24/7 capitalism that had always been inherently global. Today, the permanently operating domains of communication and of the production and circulation of information penetrate everywhere. A temporal alignment of the individual with the functioning of markets, two centuries in developing, has made irrelevant distinctions between work and non-work time, between public and private, between everyday life and organized institutional milieus. Under these conditions, the relentless financialization of previously autonomous spheres of social activity continues unchecked. Sleep is the only remaining barrier, the only enduring "natural condition" that capitalism cannot eliminate.

In the late 1990s, when Google was barely a one-year-old privately-held company, its future CEO was already articulating the context in which such a venture would flourish. Dr. Eric Schmidt declared that the twenty-first century would be synonymous with what he called the "attention economy," and that the dominant global corporations would be those that succeed in maximizing the number of "eyeballs" they could consistently engage and control.⁹ The intensity of the competition for access to or control of an individual's waking hours each day is a result of the vast disproportion between those human, temporal limits and the quasi-infinite amount of "content" being marketed. But corporate success will also be measured by the amount of information that can be extracted, accumulated, and used to predict and modify the behavior of any individual with a digital identity. One of the goals of Google, Facebook, and other enterprises (five years from now the names may be different) is to normalize and make indispensable, as Deleuze outlined, the idea of a continuous interface—not literally seamless, but a relatively unbroken engagement with illuminated screens of diverse kinds that unremittingly demand interest or response. Of course, there are breaks, but they are not intervals in which any kind of counter-projects or streams of thought can be nurtured and sustained. As the opportunity for electronic transactions of all kinds becomes omnipresent, there is no vestige of what used to be everyday life beyond the reach of corporate intrusion. An attention economy dissolves the separation between the personal and professional, between entertainment and

information, all overridden by a compulsory functionality of communication that is inherently and inescapably 24/7. Even as a contemporary colloquialism, the term “eyeballs” for the site of control repositions human vision as a *motor* activity that can be subjected to external direction or stimuli. The goal is to refine the capacity to localize the eye’s movement on or within highly targeted sites or points of interest. The eye is dislodged from the realm of optics and made into an intermediary element of a circuit whose end result is always a motor response of the body to electronic solicitation. It is out of this context that Google and other corporate players now compete for dominance over the remains of the everyday. Some will argue that what constitutes everyday life is continually recreating itself, and that today it is flourishing in specific areas of online exchange and expression. However, if one accepts that a meaningful notion of everyday life is inseparable from its fugitive anonymity, then it would be difficult to grasp what it might have in common with time spent in which one’s gestures are all recorded, permanently archived, and processed with the aim of predetermining one’s future choices and actions.

There is a well-known critical tradition, going back to the late nineteenth century, which identifies the standardization of experience as one of the defining attributes of Western modernity. Initially, the idea of routinization was drawn from the industrial workplace and its requirement of the continuous performance of repetitive actions and tasks. At the start of the twentieth century, the notion was expanded to include crucial

aspects of emerging mass societies, such as the uniformity of state and corporate bureaucracies and the impact of mass-produced goods within a modern culture of consumption. However, for much of the previous century, the spheres of work and of leisure, of the public and the personal, had maintained, in appearance or reality, some degree of distinctness and separation. Despite the often oppressive routinization and habit, life for many was a differentiated texture of variegated routines that were woven in and out of at least some unregulated spaces and times. Habit, in this sense, is a way of understanding actual social behavior as located somewhere between the imagined extremes of a manipulated society of sleepers and a mobilized nation of “awakened” individuals. Of course, in discussing the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I am referring to several unique and specific historical phenomena as well as to the habits they produced: for example, the many strategies for mechanizing and rationalizing human activity in work environments and the standardization of many forms of cultural consumption. Part of my larger argument is that important convergences of these areas have been a crucial part of neoliberal initiatives since the 1980s. The result is the emergence of forms of habit that are inevitably 24/7 and reciprocally tied to mechanisms of power that are equally “continuous and unbounded.”

In the early 1900s, the problem of habit within modernity was troubling for many philosophers and social theorists who believed in participatory democracy. Of these, John Dewey is one of the best known, in particular for his concern that forms

of automatic, habitual behavior accompanying industrial modernity clashed with the possibility of an intelligent and reflective citizenry on whom a democratic politics depended. However, Dewey's way out of this impasse was to insist, with his characteristic optimism, that habit in its modern guises could produce its own overcoming. Novelty and communication, he argued, would inevitably discourage repetitive patterns. "Each habit demands appropriate conditions for its exercise and when habits are numerous and complex, as with the human organism, to find these conditions involves search and experimentation . . . By a seeming paradox, increased power of forming habits means increased susceptibility, sensitiveness, responsiveness."¹⁰ Dewey's deep understanding of the social nature of habit had convinced him that a society was defined, in essential ways, by the habits out of which it was composed, and clearly this was one reason why the reform of early education was of such importance to him; he believed that "intelligent" or collectively beneficial habits could be nurtured pedagogically. But Dewey, born in 1859 (the same year as Henri Bergson, who shared many of these concerns), was part of a generation whose intellectual formation occurred when it was still possible, if not excusable, for the idea of novelty to be explored independently of the logistics of capitalist production and circulation. In the mid twentieth century, it would have been more difficult for him, or others, to evade how the new was effectively inseparable from its monotonous reproduction in the service of the present against any truly different future. By the 1950s, the production of novelty, in all its dispiriting

forms, had become a central enterprise of advanced economies all over the globe.

When Dewey died in 1952, aged ninety-three, the manufacture of new forms of habit had begun to include some essential elements of what would become the 24/7 control society outlined by Deleuze, or the integrated spectacle of Debord. Just as the nighttime lighting in Arkwright's factories was an early hint of future alignments of lived temporalities with market needs, so the mass diffusion of television in the 1950s was another turning point in the market's appropriation of previously unannexed times and spaces. One can imagine a pairing of Wright's painting, each of its factory windows illuminated by the oil lamps that allowed work to proceed continuously, with a mid-twentieth-century image of a not dissimilar multi-story building with windows lit by the glow of television sets. In both cases, there is a transformational relation between a deployment of light sources and the social construction of time. The cathode ray tube was a decisive and vivid instance of how the glare and gossip of a public transactional world penetrated the most private of spaces, and contaminated the quiet and solitude that Arendt believed essential for the sustenance of a political individual. Television quickly redefined what constituted membership in society. Even the pretense of valuing education and civic participation dwindled, as citizenship was supplanted by viewership.

One of the many innovations of television was its imposition of homogeneous and habitual behaviors on spheres of life that had previously been subject to less direct forms of control. At

the same time, it was the setting in place of conditions which would subsequently be essential for the 24/7 “attention economy” of the twenty-first century. Appearing amid the delayed shocks of World War II, television was the site of a destabilization of relations between exposure and protect- edness, agency and passivity, sleep and waking, and publicness and privacy. Because of the pervasive need for a semblance of continuity and social cohesion in the aftermath of Hiroshima and Auschwitz, the radical disruptiveness of television was generally overlooked. Instead, normalcy and coherence were attributed to this new televisual world beheld in common, in which anything could be coupled with anything whatever. It was the omnipresent antidote to shock. Much more decisively than radio, television was a crucial site in which the enormous inequality of scale between global systems and the local, circumscribed lives of individuals became quickly naturalized.

The relatively sudden and ubiquitous reorganization of human time and activity accompanying television had little historical precedent. Cinema and radio were only partial anticipations of the structural changes it introduced. Within the space of barely fifteen years, there was a mass relocation of populations into extended states of relative immobilization. Hundreds of millions of individuals precipitously began spending many hours of every day and night sitting, more or less stationary, in close proximity to flickering, light-emitting objects. All of the myriad ways in which time had been spent, used, squandered, endured, or parcellized prior to television

time were replaced by more uniform modes of duration and a narrowing of sensory responsiveness. Television brought equally significant changes to an external social world and to an interior psychic landscape, scrambling the relations between these two poles. It involved an immense displacement of human praxis to a far more circumscribed and unvarying range of relative inactivity.

As many critics have shown, television is hardly an autonomous technological invention. Its scientific and mechanical premises were available to engineers in the 1920s, yet it took on its post-World War II forms only in the context of a commodity-based and US-dominated global economy, and of a new demographic mobility in patterns of daily life.¹¹ As disciplinary norms in the workplace and in schools lost their effectiveness, television was crafted into a machinery of regulation, introducing previously unknown effects of subjection and supervision. This is why television is a crucial and adaptable part of a relatively long transition (or changing of the guard), lasting several decades, between a world of older disciplinary institutions and one of 24/7 control. It could be argued that, during the 1950s and '60s, television introduced into the home disciplinary strategies modeled elsewhere. In spite of more uprooted and transient lifestyles following the war, television's effects were anti-nomadic: individuals are fixed in place, partitioned from one another, and emptied of political effectiveness. At least partially, this corresponds to an industrial model of being set to work. Although no physical labor occurs, it is an arrangement in which the management of individuals overlaps

with the production of surplus value, since new accumulation was driven by the size of television audiences.

In retrospect, during this period of twenty years, perhaps longer, from the early 1950s into the 1970s, television in North America was remarkably stable as a system, with a small number of channels and durable programming formats, and without a continual stream of competing technological products. Networks had their offerings conform to traditional sleep patterns of human beings, with their nightly sign-offs—although in retrospect the after-midnight test-pattern seems like a placeholder for the inevitable 24/7 transmissions soon to come. Whether this phase corresponded to post-war American world hegemony and to the monopolistic framework of the broadcasting industry has long been debated. By the late 1970s, perhaps earlier, the word “television” conveyed and encompassed far more than the objects and networks literally denoted. Television became a nebulous but loaded figure for evoking the texture of modernity and a transformed everyday life. The word concretized, in something localizable, broader experiences of de-realization. It alluded to the decay of a more palpable immediate world and to how the spectral dislocations of modernization had been normalized as a familiar presence in the most intimate aspects of our lives. Television incarnated the falseness of the world, but it also eliminated any position from which a “true” world could be imagined. It demonstrated effects of power that could not be explained within the familiar poles of coercive and non-coercive, despite the many characterizations of television as an instrument of behavioral control,

from “influencing machine” to “image-virus.” Instead of a television-saturated culture diminishing individual agency, its pervasiveness made clear that agency itself is a mutable and historically determined notion.

This post-war era of television was clearly over by the mid 1980s. Even as early as 1983, the wide availability of the VCR and the standardization of VHS, video-game consoles, and fully commercialized cable TV significantly altered the positions and capabilities of what had been television up to then. In the middle of the 1980s the marketing of the personal computer had begun, and by the early 1990s this ubiquitous product would symbolically announce the advent of a society of control after an extended transitional phase. The 1980s are often characterized as a period during which there was an abandonment of the merely receptive or passive role of the original television viewer. In its place, according to this version, emerged a more creative user of a far larger field of media resources, who was able to intervene purposively in the utilization of technological products, and by the early 1990s able to interface with global information networks. The interactive possibilities of these new tools were touted as empowering, and as intrinsically democratic and anti-hierarchical—although much of the force of these myths has since been deflated. What was celebrated as interactivity was more accurately the mobilization and habituation of the individual to an open-ended set of tasks and routines, far beyond what was asked of anyone in the 1950s and '60s. Television had colonized important arenas of lived time, but neoliberalism

demanded that there be a far more methodical extraction of value from television time, and in principle from every waking hour. In this sense 24/7 capitalism is not simply a continuous or sequential capture of attention, but also a dense layering of time, in which multiple operations or attractions can be attended to in near-simultaneity, regardless of where one is or whatever else one might be doing. So-called “smart” devices are labeled as such less for the advantages they might provide for an individual than for their capacity to integrate their user more fully into 24/7 routines.

However, it would be misguided to suggest that there was ever a complete break with the supposedly passive and receptive model of television. A tendency in recent media theory has been to qualify or suspend the language of rupture or discontinuity in discussing the relations between “old” media and “new” digital technologies. Instead, older models and arrangements are understood to persist in various forms of hybridity, convergence, remediation, or recuperation. Regardless of what specific theoretical explanation is used, it is clear that television, or at least crucial elements of what it used to be, have been amalgamated into new services, networks, and devices in which its capabilities and effects are continually modified. Nonetheless, as recent statistics on viewing habits indicate, a significant chunk of our current 24/7 world is filled with the televisual. Nielsen numbers for 2010 show that the average American consumed video content of various kinds for approximately five hours a day. Some of those hours coincide with other activities and apparatuses, just as one’s relation to video

now entails a range of managerial tasks and options, as discussed in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge, even if it cannot be quantified, the persistence and durability of some of the original conditions that defined television’s relation to a perceiver.

In 2006, researchers at Cornell University released results of a long-term study containing some hypotheses about the reorganization of television in the 1980s. The research project assembled data to suggest a correlation between television viewing by very young children and autism.¹² One of the most urgent problems in autism studies has been to explain the extraordinary and anomalous rise in its frequency beginning in the mid to late 1980s. From the late 1970s, when autism occurred in one out of 2,500 children, the rate of incidence has risen so fast that, as of a few years ago, it affected approximately one in 150 children, and showed no sign of leveling off. Genetic predisposition, enlarged diagnostic criteria, prenatal events, infections, parental age, vaccines, and other environmental factors have all been proposed as possible factors. The Cornell project was unusual in its expansion of “environmental” to include something as universal and apparently innocuous as a television set. Obviously, television had been pervasive in North American homes since the 1950s: Why then might it have markedly different consequences beginning in the 1980s? The study proposes that a new coalescence of factors occurred in that decade—in particular, the widespread availability of cable TV, the growth of dedicated children’s channels and video cassettes, and the popularity of VCRs, as

well as huge increases in households with two or more television sets. Thus conditions were, and continue to be, in place for the exposure of very young children to television for extended periods of time on a daily basis. Their specific conclusions were relatively cautious: that extended television viewing before the age of three can trigger the onset of the disorder in “at risk” children.

The broader implications of this study were unacceptable to many, and it was the object of attacks and official ridicule. It made the heretical suggestion that television might have a catastrophic *physical* impact on the developing human being—that it could produce extreme, permanent impairments in the acquisition of language and in the capacity for social interaction. It more than hinted at the transformation of what had been *metaphoric* characterizations of television as a communicative pathology into real effects and consequences. Regardless of what future research may prove or disprove concerning a link between television and autism, the Cornell study foregrounded crucial experiential features of the apparatus. For one, it indicated the obvious: that in growing numbers, television and screens of many kinds are becoming part of the waking environment of younger and younger children. More importantly, it bypassed the notion that television is something one *watches* in some attentive manner, and instead provisionally treated it as a source of light and sound to which one is *exposed*. Given the fragility and vulnerability of very young children who were the object of the study, it means reconsidering exposure in terms of lasting physical damage to the nervous system.

Television, as Raymond Williams and others showed, never simply involved choosing to watch discrete programs, but was a more promiscuous interface with a stream of luminous stimulation, albeit with diverse kinds of narrative content.¹³ The precise nature of the physiological attraction of television has yet to be specified, and may never be, but a huge amount of statistical and anecdotal evidence obviously has confirmed the truism that it has potent addictive properties. However, television posed the unusual phenomenon of an addictiveness to something that failed to deliver the most basic reward of a habit-forming substance: that is, it provides not even a temporary heightened sense of well-being or pleasure, or a gratifying if brief fall into insensate numbness. Moments after turning on a television, there is no detectable rush or charge of sensation of any kind. Rather, there is a slow shift into a vacancy from which one finds it difficult to disengage. This is a decisive trait of the era of technological addictiveness: that one can return again and again to a neutral void that has little affective intensity of any kind. In the widely noted study by Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi, the majority of their subjects reported that extended TV viewing made them feel worse than when they did not watch, yet they felt compelled to continue their behavior.¹⁴ The longer they watched, the worse they felt. The hundreds of studies on depression and internet use show similar kinds of results. Even the quasi-addictiveness associated with internet pornography and violent computer games seems to lead quickly to a flattening of response and the replacement of pleasure with the need for repetition.

Television was only the first of a category of apparatuses with which we are currently surrounded that are most often used out of powerful habitual patterning involving a diffuse attentiveness and a semi-automatism. In this sense, they are part of larger strategies of power in which the aim is not mass-deception, but rather states of neutralization and inactivation, in which one is dispossessed of time. But even within habitual repetitions there remains a thread of hope—a knowingly false hope—that one more click or touch might open onto something to redeem the overwhelming monotony in which one is immersed. One of the forms of disempowerment within 24/7 environments is the incapacitation of daydream or of any mode of absent-minded introspection that would otherwise occur in intervals of slow or vacant time. Now one of the attractions of current systems and products is their operating speed: it has become intolerable for there to be waiting time while something loads or connects. When there are delays or breaks of empty time, they are rarely openings for the drift of consciousness in which one becomes unmoored from the constraints and demands of the immediate present. There is a profound incompatibility of anything resembling reverie with the priorities of efficiency, functionality, and speed.

There are of course numerous interruptions to the 24/7 seizure of attentiveness. Beginning with television, but especially in the last two decades, one became familiar with the transitional moments when one shuts off an apparatus after having been immersed in any televisual or digital ambience for an extended period. There is inevitably a brief interval

before the world fully recomposes itself into its unthought and unseen familiarity. It is an instant of disorientation when one's immediate surroundings—for example, a room and its contents—seem both vague and oppressive in their time-worn materiality, their heaviness, their vulnerability to dilapidation, but also their inflexible resistance to being clicked away in an instant. One has a fleeting intuition of the disparity between one's sense of limitless electronic connectedness and the enduring constraints of embodiment and physical finitude. But such dislocating moments were generally restricted to the physical sites in which non-portable apparatuses were available. With increasingly prosthetic devices, these kinds of transitions occur anywhere, in every conceivable public or private milieu. Experience now consists of sudden and frequent shifts from absorption in a cocoon of control and personalization into the contingency of a shared world intrinsically resistant to control. The experience of these shifts inevitably enhances one's attraction to the former, and magnifies the mirage of one's own privileged exemption from the apparent shoddiness and insufficiency of a world in common. Within 24/7 capitalism, a sociality outside of individual self-interest becomes inexorably depleted, and the interhuman basis of public space is made irrelevant to one's fantasmatic digital insularity.

- 7 For some of Levinas's many discussions of insomnia, see *Existence and Existents*, transl. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001; and *Otherwise than Being*, transl. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998.
- 8 See, for example, Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- 9 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958, p. 134.
- 10 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, transl. R. J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin, 1968, p. 33.
- 11 Roland Barthes, *The Neutral*, transl. Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 37.

Chapter Two

- 1 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, transl. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 107–9.
- 2 Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?* transl. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 21.
- 3 Fredric Jameson, Lecture at Film Society of Lincoln Center, New York, June 12, 2011.
- 4 See Bernard Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique Vol. 1: L'époque hyperindustrielle*, Paris: Galilée, 2004.

- 5 Bernard Stiegler, *Acting Out*, transl. Patrick Crogan, Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 39–59.
- 6 Paul Valéry, "Remarks on Intelligence," in *Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, vol. 10, transl. Denise Folliot and Jackson Mathews, Bollingen Series, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962, pp. 80–3.
- 7 See Tiqqun, *Théorie du Bloom*, La Fabrique: Paris, 2004.

Chapter Three

- 1 Andrew Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835), cited in Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, New York: International Publishers, 1963, p. 141. Marx quotes this same passage from Ure in *Capital*, vol. 1.
- 2 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, transl. Martin Nicolaus, London: Vintage, 1973, p. 669.
- 3 Ibid., p. 524.
- 4 Fredric Jameson, "The End of Temporality," *Critical Inquiry*, Summer 2003, p. 699.
- 5 Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won*, London: Norton, 1995, p. 5.
- 6 Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on Control Societies," in *Negotiations*, transl. Martin Joughin, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, pp. 177–82.
- 7 See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000, pp. 53–76.
- 8 Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, transl. Malcolm Imrie, London: Verso, 1990, p. 10.

- 9 See Christa Degnan, “Novell’s Schmidt Outlines ‘Digital Me’ Technology,” *PC Week Online*, March 22, 1999.
- 10 John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, Chicago: Open Court, 1925, p. 229.
- 11 On the competing institutional models of television in the 1930s, see my “Attention, Spectacle, Counter-Memory,” in Tom McDonough, ed., *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
- 12 Michael Waldman, Sean Nicholson, and Nodir Adilov, “Does Television Cause Autism?” NBER Working Paper Series, No. 12632 (2006).
- 13 Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, New York: Schocken, 1974.
- 14 Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Television and the Quality of Life: How Viewing Shapes Everyday Experience*, Abingdon, UK: Erlbaum, 1990.

Chapter Four

- 1 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, London: Reaktion, 2006, pp. 87–8.
- 2 See Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- 3 See my *Techniques of the Observer*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.
- 4 Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millenium*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 92.

- 5 Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, transl. James Strachey, New York, Avon, 1965, p. 606.
- 6 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, pp. 49–50.
- 7 André Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, transl. Mary Ann Caws and Geoffrey T. Harris, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990 (1932).
- 8 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. 1, transl. Alan Sheridan-Smith, London: Verso, 1976, p. 271.
- 9 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, transl. Mark Seem, New York: Viking, 1977, p. 256.
- 10 Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, transl. Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York: Zone Books, 1995, pp. 152–3.
- 11 Chantal Akerman, “On D’Est,” in *Bordering on Fiction: Chantal Akerman’s D’Est*, Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1995, p. 17.
- 12 George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society*, ed. Charles Morris, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934, p. 258.