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Transporting the Subject: Technologies of Mobility and Location in an Era of Globalization

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Travel Plans

"YOU HAVE RUINED OUR VACATION," MY STUDENTS TEASE at the close of a course on the cultural studies of gender and travel. Since inflicting guilt and eliminating pleasure are not the goals of the course, I remind them that critique is not necessarily a form of rejection. Critique of what one loves and knows best is what we learn to do in feminist studies, where so many of us begin our work by looking at the family. Feminists critique the family by deconstructing it, historicizing its structures and practices, analyzing its normalizing operations in specific contexts, and even reenvisioning or reworking it, but few of us reject our own families. So it is with an activity as complex and pervasive as travel. Moderns value mobility, especially leisure travel, and many of us take traveling for granted. But if travel is central to modernity, then the critique of travel must be a fundamental priority in contemporary critical practices. In this critical approach to deconstructing something that one engages deeply and cares about, the term *travel* signifies the multiple aspects of an expanded field including transportation and communications technologies, divisions of labor, and representational practices. Travel in this expanded sense leads to a theoretical practice, to theorizing subjects and meaning in relation to the varied histories of the circulations of people, goods, and ideas.

The relation between theory and travel is embedded in etymology. One of the older definitions of *theory* stemming from Greek antiquity refers to a "body of *theors* sent by a state to perform some religious rite or duty." These sacred envoys, while described as a "solemn legation," apparently were also marked by their splendid dress and sumptuous mode of travel. What is most interesting, given more recent developments, is that

the state-sponsored *theor* is also referred to as a "spectator," as "one who travels in order to see things." This history spurs James Clifford to describe theory as a "product of displacement, comparison, a certain distance" (177). That is, theorizing requires the authenticating activity of travel, moving to see things as a witness and an observer. Also linked to the allusion to the dress and appearance of the *theor* is the archaic sense of theory as a "sight" or "spectacle," tying the term even more firmly to another, *theater*. Looking and being looked at in turn may signal a performative dimension of knowledge formation that expands this interdisciplinary definition of travel even further. Certainly this emphasis on the empowering properties of the visual, so integral to modern notions of subject formation and perspective since the European Enlightenment, resonates in the classical terms for travel and theory.

But if theory can be defined as a kind of traveling, travel can be defined as a manifestation of pain or work. Etymologically, *travel* is linked to *travail*, or "labor, toil, suffering, trouble." Thus, in addition to the more commonplace meaning of taking a journey, *travel* evokes hard labor (including childbirth) and difficulty. This aspect of both travel and theory bears further examination: the labor of theorizing, the troubling of subjects of theory, or the work of travel and theory. Following this vein of etymological musing, Clifford defines travel as "a range of practices for situating the self in a space or spaces grown too large, a form of both exploration and discipline" (177). Edward Said also investigates the work of theory, its travel or travail, in his discussion of secular criticism and the production of knowledge. In his essay "Traveling Theory," Said argues that the circulation of ideas and theories is an "enabling condition of intellectual activity" in modernity (226). But the work of traveling theory is complex and not always easily accomplished. The successful transportation of theory or ideas, he argues, requires four stages:

> First, there is a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which

the idea came to birth or entered discourse. Second, there is a distance transversed, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into a new prominence. Third, there is a set of conditions—call them conditions of acceptance or, as an inevitable part of acceptance, resistances—which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be. Fourth, the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and space.   (226–27)

In this account of travel, there are references to birth, distance, resistance, incorporation, and transformation. I am most interested in Said's situating of theory, in the stress on location in his description of travel. Both Said and Clifford emphasize the locational imperatives of any notion of travel. As Clifford writes in an essay that can be read as a companion piece to Said's, "[L]ike any act of travel, theory begins and ends somewhere." To theorize, to critically engage or to know, one "leaves home" (177). The condition of estrangement or distance from a "point of origin" or field, discipline, national or cultural context, and so on has been identified as a foundational structure in modernist thought, and there is always more to be said about this complex articulation. But following Said's modernist and Clifford's postmodernist interventions into the production of theory and the work of the critic, I would like to focus on the imbrication of location in the discourse of travel. The trajectory of knowledge and ideas as they "begin and end somewhere" speaks to a vital aspect of subject formation in modernity. In the current moment in metropolitan life, when so much of the world appears to be linked by global media, transnational finance and culture, and other manifestations of contemporary mobility and speed, how do we understand "points of origin" and the "where" of "somewhere"? How do we theorize the locatedness of travel in an era of globalization?

Location is as difficult to take for granted as travel without an investigation of rhetorical and material histories. How subjects move or do not move tells us much about what counts as human, as culture, and as knowledge. In particular, how do globalized information technologies, with their incumbent machinery and heavily freighted divisions of labor, come to be characterized as transitory and light, as playful practices of subjectivity that enable users to slip the moorings of location and materiality? Cyberspace may appear to be the ultimate vacation from the Puritan work ethic and from grounded industries of liberal modernity, but a closer look reveals location and materiality in the mobility and disembodied discursive practices of new information technologies. Yet, as technologies of transportation and communication become more and more disembodied, more and more displaced from corporeality, and more and more a practice of mind or a simulation, the unified subject of the European Enlightenment is less and less a requirement. Whether or not we believe such a creature exists or ever existed, the shift in the paradigm of the subject is significant enough to warrant theorization.

Cyberphilia

> June 21st 1995. If a date is needed for the start of the New Nomadic Age, this is as good as any. Late that afternoon, at Hakodate in Japan, Flight No. ANA857 was stalled on the local airport runway. The reason—a hijack. In the following 16 hours, twelve phone calls from passengers using their mobile phones told police that the hijacker was aged 22–30, that he wore sunglasses, jeans and white sneakers, that he was on the upper floor of the aircraft and that he appeared to be lightly armed. Acting on this information, police stormed the plane and arrested the hijacker without ill effects except that a stewardess was slightly injured and one of the passengers, pop singer Tokiko Kato, complained of being "worn out and wanting to sleep." There could be no better example of the power of one of the early tools of the New Nomadic Age—the mobile

> telephone—to alter events. The phone is just the start of it. Over the next decade technology will deliver to us a range of tools that will give us all the facilities of our homes and offices—in our pockets.   (Makimoto and Manners 1–2)

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the rhetoric of cyberspace and information technologies relies heavily on a hyperbole of unlimited power through disembodied mobility. Whether we read theorizations of new cityscapes published by university presses or advertisements in magazines for wireless Internet connections, references to boundless space, unfettered mobility, and speedy transfers abound. In this heady environment, new technologies promise ever-increasing powers of transformation and transport—applied to information, business, and self—and the benefits of surveillance and tracking. More and more in this context, the concept of a person or of human beings appears to depend on the attenuated possibilities of cyberspace. If the heavy, even immovable, facts of embodied existence can be ameliorated or discharged through the creation of new identities on the Internet, for example, or through new collective personas or communities, then what or who counts as a person becomes transformed. The self is believed to have expanded capacities as soon as it is released from the fixed location of the body, built environment, or nation. But the self is always somewhere, always located in some sense in some place, and cannot be totally unhoused. New technologies appear to promise ever-increasing degrees of disembodiment or detachment, yet they are as embedded in material relations as any other practices. They require hard industries as well as light ones; in addition to the bright and mobile world of designers and users, human hands build the machines in factories that are located in specific places regulated by particular political and economic practices. Thus, in the production of the machinery and materials of cyberspace, another form of mobility can be discerned, that of labor in this moment of globalization. Determined by exigency, diasporas, and markets, this

mobility is more strictly bounded than the apparent *jouissance* of cyberspace. But an understanding of the history of concepts and metaphors of displacement in modernity brings these diverse mobilities into relation with one another. They cannot be reduced to the same thing, but they can be linked through representational legacies and political pasts and futures.

The rhetoric of cyberspace proposes a kind of travel that expands on a long history of metaphors of displacement. The emancipation of ideas promised by flows across borders and boundaries is a Western Enlightenment dream— no boundaries for the mind of the subject. In this structuring fantasy, the body may be imprisoned or constrained, but through print media or communications technologies ideas can move where bodies cannot or achieve mobility in ways that are denied to bodies. Or, driven out of a homeland, pursuing personal safety or economic stability, the exiled or immigrant body brings its ideas and theories with it. Which bodies? Under what conditions? In Western modernity, universalized displacement is so structurally foundational for the unified subject that any examination of the material differences and uneven social relations that create and depend on such distinctions is discouraged or mystified (Kaplan). From the democratic spatialization of the public sphere to the interiorized consciousness of the bounded individual subject, Western modernity since the Enlightenment tends to privilege mobility of one kind or another. If differences between mobilities matter, the stakes in one kind or another can be summoned into and out of view as a matter of political convenience. Most Enlightenment political philosophies and social structures share the tendency to celebrate mobility, oscillating among democratic, imperialist, and fascist notions of expansion and movement in various historical moments. Technologies emerge from this context and not the other way around. That is, the rhetoric of explanation and definition connected to most information and communications technologies is

drawn from the same pool of metaphors generated in and through Western modernity.

These circulations and expansions appear to be economically, politically, and intellectually beneficial, giving rise to innovation and new kinds of identities and communities. However, the movements can be viewed also as discrete, always uneven, and infused with power relations of tremendous complexity. Thus, contemporary power relations require fixed locations and mobile circulations—both aspects are a crucial dynamic in capitalist cultures across the span of modernity. Perhaps this tension between mobility and location in the promise of the Enlightenment prompted Theodor Adorno's mid-twentieth-century aphorism "Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible" (38). Certainly, Adorno was deploring the horrors of war and his own refugee experience. But the bittersweet pathos of displacement's enabling powers for the artist, the energizing jolt that influxes of new populations bring to the economies and cultures of the metropoles, and the emergence of postcolonial aesthetics and cultural practices can be traced throughout the social theories of the Frankfurt school as well as the work of Raymond Williams, for example. The intense contradictions of late capitalism, especially notable in the modernist frictions between old and new, have given rise to impossibilities of all sorts: wonderful, horrifying, frustrating, and worrisome. This postmodern condition, so famously celebrated and lamented by legions of critics and social commentators, can be seen as, if anything, the return of the Enlightenment's contradictions writ larger and more powerfully thanks to globalized practices such as media, communications, and transnational finance and business (Lyotard; Harvey). The oscillation and tension between the liberating promise of mobility and the security of fixed location is one of modernity's most enduring and complex oppositional binaries.

The value placed on mobility in representations of subjectivity in cyberspace or new technologies is not new, then, but can be seen to be

the full articulation of something old: travel. Travel proceeds from some point in space and time and endures across a span of places, to result in an arrival or a return to a fixed site. More specifically, following the concept of the voyage of the Athenian *theor*, foundational to Western culture is the idea that travel produces the self, makes the subject through spectatorship and comparison with otherness. Thus, in this ideology of subjectivity, distance is the best perspective on and route toward knowledge of self and others. Self-knowledge, standpoint, then requires a point of origin, a location that constitutes the subject as a viewer and a world of objects that can be viewed or surveyed (Gombrich; Curry).

Since the European Renaissance, the viewer's eye has been construed to be central to perception. This Cartesian visual scenario should not be oversimplified or generalized since it incorporates numerous versions and counterversions that subvert or complicate the distancing gaze or "scopic regime" of Enlightenment perspective (Jay; Poole). But it is reasonable to argue that sight is a privileged sense in the discourse of subjectivity and knowledge in Western modernity, providing significant metaphors for and influences on the design and implementation of technologies. The desire to visualize the invisible, to peer into otherwise occluded spaces of interiority or outer space, links exploration, expansion, and sight to the constitution of science and medicine in the modern period (Cartwright). The invention and use of the microscope, magnifying lenses, and other devices generated metaphors of internal or local exploration that resonated with the activities of economic and political expansion in the world at large, activities that required new technologies of mapping, navigation, and surveying. The current moment is no less concerned with visuality and technologies generated by modern scopic regimes. As Barbara Maria Stafford has said, communications technologies organize information in increasingly disembodied forms: "We communicate with images of people, with 'arti-

ficial persons,' existing as bites, bytes, and bits of optical and aural messages. Flesh and blood, or tactility, recede in the presence of mediated encounters" (26). Similarly, Donna Haraway has argued that the "perverse capacity" of Western Enlightenment vision distances "the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power" (188). Haraway warns that new technologies are without apparent limit, extending the worst tendencies of Enlightenment subjectivity—the rending of subject and object in the name of power:

> [T]he eye of any ordinary primate like us can be endlessly enhanced by sonography systems, magnetic resonance imaging, artificial intelligence–linked graphic manipulation systems, scanning electron microscopes, computer-aided tomography scanners, color enhancement techniques, satellite surveillance systems, home and office VDTs, cameras for every purpose from filming the mucous membrane lining the gut cavity of a marine worm living in the vent gases on a fault between continental plates to mapping a planetary hemisphere elsewhere in the solar system.   (189)

This descriptive explanation evokes the crowded and speedy vision of technoscience in advanced capitalism and, in particular, the normalized microminiaturization of science and surveillance in metropolitan daily life. Haraway charges that such a scopic regime begets "unregulated gluttony; all perspective gives way to infinitely mobile vision." She calls for a reconfigured socialist feminist praxis of objectivity to discipline vision and make manifest its situated materiality: "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object" (189–90).

The argument for "situated knowledge" as a new form of looking and knowing theorizes embodied spaces as ideal communities, whose members generate collaborative identities through learning "how to see faithfully from another's point of view," even, as Haraway puts it, "when the other is our own machine" (189–90). Who are

these truly different others in our world who will teach us their standpoint? Does metropolitan Western culture still produce truly different others who must be cast out in order to be reclaimed? Do the romantic narratives of banishment and rescue still serve the same epistemological function? To see faithfully, however, "from another's point of view" suggests something authentic and real, utterly distinct, that can be lovingly and attentively learned. In this regard, it is difficult not to think of Mary Shelley's scientist and his monster, engaged in their tragic Hegelian dialectic. If the other is always required for our making, then we must have a clear sense, first of all, that we are a discrete entity that is empowered to this extent and, second, that we can visualize and thus know the monster. That is, to continue the allusion, can Dr. Frankenstein and the creature acknowledge their kinship and shared culture through anything else besides horrified recognition and enraged rejection?

The pleasures of the possibility of this new relation beyond identification and rejection, figured as between plural subjects or subjects who are situated and embodied, are argued for in N. Katherine Hayles's study of the technoculture of "posthumans." Careful to distinguish herself from the glib "techno-ecstacies" of much of the discourse surrounding cyberspace, Hayles proposes an ironic use of the "ambiguities of the plural" that leads toward a posthuman collectivity, "an 'I' transformed into the 'we' of autonomous agents operating together to make a self" (6). The performative dimension of this conceptualization of we echoes Haraway's concern with the excesses of fantasies of dislocation and unlimited scopic powers:

> If my nightmare is a culture inhabited by posthumans who regard their bodies as fashion accessories rather than the ground of being, my dream is a version of the posthuman that embraces the possibilities of information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality, that recognizes and celebrates finitude as a condition of human being, and that under-

stands human life is embedded in a material world of great complexity, one on which we depend for our continued survival.   (Hayles 5)

Both Hayles and Haraway call for a reconsideration of embodiment as a way to counter the radical separation between knower and known, viewer and object. The detachment of body from pluralized situation results in commodification, individualism, and alienation. Because of technologies of distance and disembodiment, subjects are tracked, identified, charted, tabulated, pictured, and filed. In clusters of data recombining and sorting themselves endlessly in machines, subjects have an existence, a virtual reality, of which they are never fully aware (Poster). Simply stating distaste for a life as a bundle of data is not very effective. Few modern subjects can exist without any interface with aspects of data as identity. The state does not recognize or take care of subjects who cannot be hailed in this systematic process. Yet computer-assisted technologies of surveillance, tracking, and tracing of subjects have multiple facets. They not only imprison and oppress people but also provide them with consumer pleasures, prosthetic powers of imagination and subjectivity, as well as convenience and arenas of play. Do these contradictions augur hegemony or resistance?

Digital Transfers

In a piece published in *New Left Review* a few years ago, Julian Stallabrass takes a firm stand, claiming that cyberspace is nothing but "hi-tech Hegelianism." Arguing that data have changed dramatically under digitalization, he points to the printed phone book as an example of an older format—a material object that is portable but also heavy and awkward, requiring an understanding of the fixed order of the numbers. But in cyberspace, he argues, these conditions are transformed since information can be "extracted from its material support and purified" so that it can "be in many places at once, and sent at near the speed of light." Yet cyberspace

never does away with representation, because the only way to access or use the data is through "a sensorial form" (8). This tension between a desire for liberation from form and its recuperation in simulation haunts many of the discussions of cyberculture. As Stallabrass points out, there is always an unacknowledged or suppressed location in the midst of all this zippy mobility, primarily through the necessary assumption of visual form on the computer screen:

> The Hegelianism of the cyberphiles is not one of process, a form of becoming. [. . .] Rather, it is a fixed state in which the end of history and the total realization of mind is finally achieved: in this way it is a fixed Platonic form. Yet data, which must be handled in the visual arena of cyberspace, like numbers on the stock market, has already been abstracted from the real world and made fungible. Its particularity has already been stripped away in its reduction to number. In cyberspace, where it is given an apprehensible form, this data must be constantly animated, as if in a movie. Given that the function of virtual representation is tied to movement, a fixed perfection like that of architecture will certainly elude these forms. Yet even these clean, mobile cyberspace forms can never show the material suffering behind a row of financial figures, for this has been stripped away a long time ago in the very collection of data. When a form is restored to this data, the "reality" it adopts is utterly cleansed of anything that cannot be exchanged.   (9)

As Stallabrass argues, much of the discourse of mobility and displacement vis-à-vis the information technologies and cyberspace fixes and locates through the appearance of movement and flux. Yet in critiquing the romanticization of mobility, he reveals a deep yearning for a humanist representational practice. In asking how it might be possible to "show" the "material suffering behind a row of financial figures," he counters the dominant discourse, which evacuates the historical and material context from the things of this world, leaving behind static, alienated numbers, functions, or pure lines of rationality.

Is there another approach? The telephone is an instructive example. The gains in time, speed, and mobility it has brought still leave open questions of context and embodiment. As Peter Hugill has written, telegraphic messages lack "the expressive meaning inherent in human speech," and thus they are "subject to misinterpretation" (21). The problem of immediacy, recognition, and embodied resonance is present throughout the history of modern communications technologies. But Carolyn Marvin's account of the cultural effects of electricity suggests that people used devices like the telephone in ways that sutured time and space—such as the two women she describes who waltzed around a Western Union parlor in the late 1880s listening to the music of a hotel band through a telephone receiver (211). Stephen Kern says that the telephone not only allowed people to speak across great distances, it also encouraged them to "think about what others were feeling and to respond at once" (69). For all the wonderful examples of crazy people calling dearly departed relatives on the phone or European aristocrats fighting vainly to keep the technology for their own spectacles and amusements, in its infancy the telephone, finally, recuperated the dominant culture's communities of friends and families versus strangers along with other codes and practices of power (Marvin 197). If telephones "whet the appetite for visits," as Kern puts it, expanding lived spaces and intensifying experiences of both intimacy and separation, they also allowed men to "take liberties" with the unseen but palpably "present" female operators (215).

The shift in expectations and ideas about embodied corporeality, presence, and power in relation to communications technologies such as the telephone give us a good sense of some of the questions we might extend to new information technologies. As Kenneth Lipartito says, the telephone made possible a highly successful "techno-labor system" that segmented women

into lower-paying, limited employment as opera-
tors (1091). Thus, historical examples remind us
that embodiment does not always translate into
transformative practices. Yet gendered embodi-
ment in the matrix of mobility and location is ac-
complished in complex and uneven ways. For
example, the tension between distance and home
is worth considering in relation to the business
of phone sex, a profession that employs a good
number of women at the turn of this century.
Here the contemporary emphasis on subjects as
data finds its way into a debate about the relation
between workers and clients and the politics of
location in sex work. In her description of her
fieldwork with female phone sex workers, Sandy
Stone argues that the commercial transaction of
the world's oldest profession over the phone in-
volves a kind of data compression:

> Consciously or unconsciously, phone sex work-
> ers translate all the modalities of experience
> into audible forms. [. . .] The sex workers took
> an extremely complex, highly detailed set of
> behaviors, translated them into a single sense
> modality, then further boiled them down to a
> series of highly compressed tokens. They then
> squirted those tokens down a voice-grade
> phone line. At the other end of the line the re-
> cipient of all this effort added boiling water, so
> to speak, and reconstituted the tokens into a
> fully detailed set of images and interactions in
> multiple sensory modes.   (396)

On one level, we might argue that all com-
mercial sex involves a kind of compression and
tokenization, a playing out of signs and em-
blems in a fashion similar to that described by
Stone. What captures my attention in Stone's
discussion is the way she distinguishes between
information and bodies:

> [W]hat was being sent back and forth over the
> wires wasn't just information, it was *bodies*.
> The majority of people assume erotics implies
> bodies; a body is part of the idea of erotic inter-
> action and its concomitants, and the erotic sen-
> sibilities are mobilized and organized around

the idea of a physical body that is the seat of
the whole thing. The sex workers' descriptions
were invariably and quite directly about physi-
cal bodies [. . .].   (396)

Stone describes a form of travel—bodies com-
pressed into data and transported via "voice-
grade phone line" to some kind of proximity
and experience with other bodies elsewhere.
But we could also say that the sex workers'
work was about power and labor as well as di-
verse kinds of desire. We could also recognize
that there might be more to corporeality than
what can enter into the performance of this kind
of communication—such as the sex worker's
sneezing fit or hunger for lunch. Thus, the phys-
ical body at the heart of the communication re-
mains a matter of representation. Stone bases a
kind of resistance or progressive practice on this
notion of a cyborgian mobility that can be cor-
poreal in its eroticism and disembodied as an ar-
ticulation of specific technologies, arguing that
"a disembodied subjectivity messes with *where-
ness*. In cyberspace you are everywhere and
somewhere and nowhere, but almost never here
in the positivist sense," disrupting the location
technologies of the state, which struggle to
maintain the appearance of the "socially and
legally constituted individual" in the face of
continual slippage and flux (399).

The argument that positivist "whereness"
can be displaced to produce a subject who is
"many persons in many places simultaneously"
(400) resonates with recent observations that
territoriality is less and less viable or more and
more questionable (Keith and Pile; Gregory;
Pile and Thrift; Duncan). It speaks, as well, to a
desire for a transformation of the more con-
straining and oppressive aspects of advanced
capitalism. National governments use every lo-
cating and defining tool in their bag of tricks
to preserve their sovereignty through the polic-
ing of borders and to limit benefits through the
production of citizenship. The very technology
that promises so much to an inventive and pro-
gressive transgender theorist such as Stone also

allows surveillance and exclusion. If financial data and corporate practices are less and less bounded by the nation, if subjects perform in increasingly multiple ways in cyberspace, how do we account for the multitudinous locating and tracking capacities of digital information technologies? Is there a critical practice in between Stone's desire for transported multiplicities of pleasure and Stallabrass's desire for a way to import the suffering of multitudes into the transfer of data? Stone and Stallabrass call for a recognition of their concerns through engineering, if you will. Both need to see and feel the fungible, legible, and physical in such invisible transfers. Beyond the liberal constructs of the unified Enlightenment subject, Stone seeks pleasure and Stallabrass seeks justice.

Circuits

The deconstruction of the binary of mobility and location in the discourses of communications and information technologies, especially in digital or Internet transactions and processes, animates the question of embodiment in historically specific ways. Race matters in cyberspace, as do all the other identificatory epistemologies of the last several hundred years (Kolko, Nakamura, and Rodman). The figure of the cyborg, a mix of flesh and machine, has been discussed at great length by numerous commentators, and although I do not dwell on it in this essay, it is a vital player in these questions of the boundaries and binaries of modernity (Haraway; Gray; Balsamo; Bell and Kennedy). The attachment of qualities and characteristics to a body is strained to the limit by data compression, wireless transmissions, miniaturization, and other techniques and attributes of new technologies. The promise that the bulky devices of home and office will be transformed into tools that can fit in our pockets, glibly prophesied by Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners in their anecdote about the foiled airplane hijacking, only underscores the cyborgian moment.

I remain skeptical, however, of the value of cybertheorizing unless the travail, the labor, of these travels can be articulated more carefully. For example, I learn many things in Stone's smart and insightful essay, but I do not learn how much the phone sex workers get paid and whether it is enough to live on. Questions about divisions of labor cannot be left out of an inquiry into representational practices in information and communications technologies. Even in Stallabrass's critique of the idealism of much Internet commentary, there is no discussion of the people who make the devices that are used to achieve the dream of subjectivity (or to order plane tickets or to look up a book in a distant library). Who suffers, who troubles, who works these technologies of travel? To keep one's heart and mind, corporeal or cyber, on the subject of poverty and misery in the contemporary moment requires a shift of a certain kind. Following Gayatri Spivak's destabilization of radical chic in "Can the Subaltern Speak?," we can no longer simply summon resistance in the figure of the other to suit our critical needs. Politically progressive representation has figured these Frankensteinian creatures in despair and suffering alone—for example, picturing the victims of the global assembly line as geared only for production, their labor power usurped for the surplus value of the transnational corporation. Recent scholarship on the new proletariat sketches a somewhat different picture—a female worker, most likely, who by gender, age, and culture is marked for a specific kind of labor under flexible accumulation, who sends money home but also spends her wages on consumer goods (Schein; Kang; Sen and Stivens).

Whether it is the government, nongovernmental organizations, or well-meaning academics, everyone seems to have a view of the proper attitude toward and representational practice for the subject of poverty. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the left labor unions sought to discipline the female shirtwaist factory workers because of their flamboyant style and love of

fashion. They did not look like downtrodden victims of capitalism, although their wages were low enough. Nan Enstad has argued that working women in New York during this period were produced as subjects through consumption and that their identity and agency as political organizers and workers were hampered by the puritanism and masculinism of the socialist union leadership. Thus, subjects of labor history can be reconfigured in all manner of ways; the gendered politics of shopping and dress can challenge the methodologies of studying production and the origin of social change. In addition to gender and race politics in the United States, investigating the geopolitics of transnational divisions of labor can highlight the tensions between mobility and location, between consumption and production, and between resistance and hegemony for a more useful critical analysis of the workings of labor and technology, including their representation.

Transnational subjects are produced through location as well as mobility, certainly, as national economies dictate who moves to obtain work and who stays put. These subjects are not produced simply through the division between production and consumption. If there are new consumer subjects, new methodologies are required to understand them. Electronics workers or domestic workers in transit for work purposes do not have to be viewed as entirely separate from tourists or other kinds of travelers; a notion of travel as an expanded field in transnationality produces differently linked subjects. I am not arguing that the monied tourist is the same subject as the migrant worker or that the phone sex worker is the same subject as the academic conference goer. But a theorization of travel as a Foucauldian field with diverse points in tension with one another or even as a continuum with an origin and a discrete itinerary of sites rather than as the older binary of this versus that may engender more plural subjects.

For much of modernity, Western or metropolitan subjects have sought mobility as a pana-

cea for the constraints on identity in capitalist cultures. Yet a concern with location as the source of knowledge and identity has asserted itself in myriad ways. The paradox of standpoint—its Cartesian individualist and rationalist legacy along with its communitarian identity politics—propels theories of displacement and mobility. New information and communications technologies both continue and disturb this history. A deconstructive approach to cyberspace might articulate its divisions of labor and materiality, its travail in the sense of travel, along with its spectacles and pleasures. If theory travels, if knowledge remains linked to displacement, what will come to the fore when embodiment enters the circuit? The materiality of theory in an era of globalization may mean that subjects will travel to know in any number of ways.

Note

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