The Pinball and the Machine: Global Cultural Homogeneity and the Commodity Form

Donavan Muir*

In this essay, I argue that Arjun Appadurai’s “disjuncture,” as a form of maintaining cultural heterogeneity and difference, exists only in light of the shifting global paradigm. That is, globalization, commodity fetishism, and consumer cultures repatriates disjuncture and difference into an overall commodity schema; thus rendering disjuncture and difference as functional operations of the tele-present multiscaeps. In this sense, real disjunctures exist only in relation to a dying, pre-globalization paradigm since contemporary market forces and global cultural economies, by way of absorbing and repatriating disjuncture and difference, re-circulates difference as sameness thereby reconstructing social imaginations. [Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: <journal@transformativestudies.org> Website: http://www.transformativestudies.org ©2008 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]

KEYWORDS: Appadurai, Disjuncture, Homogeneity, Heterogeneity, Culture, Culture Industry, Social Imagination.

Introduction

Arguments concerned with the homogeneity and heterogeneity of global cultural economies vary greatly depending upon context. For example, the argument describing the homogeneity of culture within post-industrial, technologically advanced first-world nation states may not be made for developing or underdeveloped nations-states. The same can be applied to the heterogeneity of global culture economy since cultural differences between various nation-states or regional and local politics of

* Donavan Muir is an M.A. Student of Philosophy at San Diego State University in Mahayana Buddhism, Postmodernism, and 19th-20th Century Continental Philosophy. His research interests include existential phenomenology, critical theory, philosophy of technology, and social theory. Address correspondence to: Donavan Muir, 4547 Spring St., La Mesa, Ca. 91941, USA; tel: (619) 698-4846; e-mail: donavanmuir@hotmail.com.