

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

Donavan S. Muir
Graduate Student
San Diego State University
Philosophy

Published in:
Theory and Action (Vol.1 Issue.3, July 2008)
Fair Lawn, NJ: Transformative Studies Institute

1. Introduction

Arguments concerned with the homogeneity and heterogeneity of global cultural economies vary greatly depending upon context. For example, an 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 cultural economies since cultural differences between various nation-states or regional and local politics of difference tend not to fall under the same contextual rubric as those of post-industrialized nation-states. However, these arguments themselves are contingent upon certain context dependent and territorialized world-views. Thus, there is a problematic inherent in these arguments that is not only a result of context dependent and territorialized perspectives, but is a result of how we think of the globalization of culture and the ever increasing movement toward a globalized economic system of production and exchange.

On one hand, there is the view proposed by Arjun Appadurai who claims that, “the globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization, but globalization involves the use of a variety of instruments of homogenization.”¹ According to Appadurai, these instruments are the various “landscapes” (what I will hereby refer to as *multi-scapes* since landscape implies that these scapes exist on some terrestrial plane) that are “absorbed into local political and cultural economies, only to be repatriated as heterogeneous dialogues of national sovereignty, free enterprise and fundamentalism in which the state plays an increasingly delicate role: too much openness to global flows, and the nation-state is threatened by revolt.”²

¹ Arjun Appadurai. “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman eds. (New York: Columbia University Press. 1994), 334.

² Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture”, 334.

On the other hand, there are the views held by Paul Virilio, Theodor Adorno, and Jean Baudrillard that the globalization of culture is the same as homogenization insofar as globalization, and the various forces and multiscapes behind its proliferation has deterritorialized the ‘realm of the real’ by challenging, and often intentionally distorting, ordinary metaphysical sensibilities of reality. For example, Paul Virilio states, “In the realm of territorial development, ‘time’ now counts more than ‘space.’ But it is no longer a matter of some chronological *local time*, as it once was, but of universal *world time*, opposed not only to the local space of a region’s organization of land, but to the world space of a planet on the way to becoming homogenous.”³

There is no question that the globalization of culture is occurring in the direction of homogeneity. But the question is whether or not the homogeneity of global culture is merely consequential or explicitly intentional. In other words, is globalization of culture a consequential byproduct of global economic movement *or* is it intentionally formed to culturally legitimize this proliferating global economic world-view? Arjun Appadurai appears to suggest the former, namely, that the homogeneity of global cultural economy is an unintentional and consequential byproduct of globalization since evidence suggests that there are distinct, albeit minimal, cultural differences and disjunctures within global cultural multiscapes. Thus, in Appadurai’s view, global cultural flow and movement, “occur in and through the growing disjunctures between [the *multiscapes*] ethnoscaples, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes.”⁴ Under this view, a homogeneous global cultural economy is incomplete since there are heterogonous features laced within cultural differences and disjunctures. In this sense, Appadurai

³ Paul Virilio. *Open Sky* (New York: Verso Books. 2003), 69.

⁴ Appadurai, 332. These five “scapes” are what Appadurai refers to as “landscapes.” However, for the purpose of this essay, I refer to these scapes as *Multiscapes*.

argues two points where the homogenization argument fails. The first is that it fails to consider that cultural forces from metropolises that are brought into new societies become indigenized, transformed into particular social and cultural practices of difference, and are, in turn, made their own.⁵ The second is that “for polities of smaller scale, there is always a fear of cultural absorption by polities of larger scale, especially those that are nearby.”⁶

While Appadurai’s view is a sufficient argument, I contend that his notion of heterogeneity may soon come to a close. The delicate nature of this form of heterogeneous cultural transformation is becoming far too weak to sustain the cultural and economic bombardment from the tele-present⁷ global networks and multiscapes of post-industrialized, technologically advanced, economies. I also contend that Appadurai’s view falls short of providing an accurate description of global cultural economic movement. Namely, that global cultural movement does not flow, as Appadurai suggests, *but staggers according to the dictates of multi-scapes as manufacturer of cultural production, consumption, and the fetishism therein*. This is not to say that Appadurai is wrong in his overall assessment. It is only to say that he underestimates the tele-present structure of transnational and trans-local forces at play within the multiscapes. Thus, I argue that global cultural stagger is contingent and context-dependent upon the movements from within the multiscapes themselves.

To begin, I would like to state outright that I do not disagree with Appadurai on the whole. I firmly agree with Appadurai’s formulation of the multiscapes and their increasing role in the formation of the social imagination in the global cultural

⁵ Ibid., 328.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Paul Virilio. *Information Bomb* (New York: Verso Books. 2005), 9.

atmosphere. My primary contention is with the nature of difference and disjuncture in Appadurai's formulation. Moreover, my contention is not with Appadurai's formulation as such. It is to say that the world has drastically changed, including the multiscapes within it, since Appadurai's formulation of disjuncture. Therefore, this essay is meant to accentuate and extend Appadurai's argument by demonstrating that, at present, the heterogeneity of difference and disjuncture is coming to an end. This is not to say that disjuncture and difference do not exist, but that they have become absorbed into the overall schema of the commodity form. Thus, any heterogeneous attributes born from difference and disjuncture are repatriated and enframed not only by the state, but by the global cultural economic trends of market forces within the culture industry. Therefore, I will concentrate on two main features. The first is the formation of social imagination through the influence of multiscapes. The second is that, once the social imagination is formed and enframed, the notions of difference and disjuncture dissolve into the social practice of imagining.

2. The Formation of Social Imagination

The formation of any social imagination has within it the base of the culture industry as its foundation. That is to say, the culture industry, as a force for cultural homogeneity that repatriates and enframes cultural difference and disjunctures, is the undercurrent that runs throughout all social imagination, either positive or negative. In this sense, cultural differences exist within the social imagination, but today those differences exist only on the surface of things.

Cultural differences are the multiplicity of expressions of particular social groups within a regional time and space. But beneath these expressions lay a formation of

institutional features grounded in the global economic forces (the multiscapes) at play within the creation of social imaginations.

“The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms which direct us to something critical and new in global cultural process: *the imaginary as social practice*.”⁸ This is the view that Arjun Appadurai asserts as “central to all forms of agency.” Namely, that the imagination is, “the key component of the new global order.”⁹ But what does Appadurai mean by the imagination and how has it become the major force in global cultural development? Appadurai explains that there are five main dimensions of global cultural flow that are central to the formation of social imaginations. These dimensions are (1) ethnoscapescapes; (2) mediascapescapes; (3) technoscapescapes; (4) finanscapescapes; and (5) ideoscapescapes. It is in these multiscapes that form the building blocks of *imagined worlds* – the multiple worlds constituted by historically situated imaginations of persons and groups around the world.¹⁰ Therefore, the image, imagined, and imaginary are formed thorough the interplay between these multiscapes as social practice on a global scale. To be clear, however, I will briefly describe what Appadurai means by each of these multiscapes and their role in developing the imagined worlds in which we live and practice.

An *ethnoscape* is “the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups [that] constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations as a hitherto unprecedented degree.”¹¹ This is meant to indicate the nature of human movement, either by choice or need, as a “direction to fit” both

⁸ Appadurai, 327.

⁹ Ibid., 327.

¹⁰ Ibid., 329.

¹¹ Ibid.

imagined worlds or the realities of living in a fluid world of global capital. Thus, the stability of communities based on kinship, friendship, work, leisure, places of birth and residence are warped by the increasing demands of both fantasy (the imaginary) and reality within the global cultural sphere.¹²

A *technoscape* is defined by Appadurai as the fluid global configuration of high and low, mechanical and informational, technologies that move throughout previously impervious boundaries with tremendous speed.¹³ To Appadurai, the distribution of technology is not driven by any obvious economies of scale, political control, or market rationalizations.¹⁴ It is driven by the “increasingly complex relationships between money flows, political possibilities, and the availability of both un- and highly skilled labor.”¹⁵

The *finanscape* is the mysterious and rapid disposition of the global capital landscape composed of currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations that “move mega-monies through national turnstiles at blinding speed, with vast absolute implications for small differences in percentage points and time units.”¹⁶

Mediascapes, while intimately tied to *ideoscapes*, refer “both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information,” such as newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film production companies, and “to the images of the world created by these media.”¹⁷ These images involve many complicated inflections depending upon mode, hardware, audience, and “the interest of those who own and control them.”¹⁸ According to Appadurai, the most important feature of mediascapes is

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 330.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

that they provide “large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapas to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics is profoundly mixed.”¹⁹ As a consequence, the worlds of the real and the fictitious become blurred. The more an audience is distant from the actual experience of life, the more likely it is “to construct imagined worlds which are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if they are assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world.”²⁰ Therefore, Mediascapes tend to be “image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality” that provide elements of life out of which internal or external scripts of the self or Other can be formulated.²¹ This also applies to Ideoscapes since these scripts construct “complex metaphors by which people live” and “constitute narratives of the Other.”²²

Thus, an *ideoscape* is the linking together of a consecutive series of images that tend to be political in nature and deal with the established “ideologies of the state” or the “counter-ideologies of movements” with the implicit intention of “capturing state power or a piece of it.”²³ Appadurai notes that ideoscapes tend to involve narrative “elements of the Enlightenment worldview” such as freedom, rights, and democracy.²⁴ But, the diasporic nature of these terms throughout the world, including enlightenment ideology itself, has “loosened the internal coherence” of the “Euro-American master-narrative” to the point that various political cultures have been organized around different keywords.²⁵

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 331.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

These five features are intended to demonstrate how a social imagination is formed and explicate the conditions under which global cultural flows occur, namely, that global flows, “occur in and through the growing disjunctures between ethnoscaples, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes.”²⁶ While the idea of disjuncture is crucial at this point, as we will see later in this essay, I would like to continue with explaining the construction of social imagination.

As I mentioned above, global cultural economies don't flow as Appadurai suggest but staggers according to the interplay and relations between multiscapes. Moreover, cultural stagger is not to be understood only as a consequence of a human actor's experience within the multiscapes. Cultural stagger is a form of movement that is a cultural *product* of the interwoven nature of the multiscapes. Thus, cultural movement no longer flows between the disjunctions of multiscapes since this implies that there is a “real” time and space – the between – in which cultures maintain a flow of mobility. Cultural stagger indicates that the time and space in which culture can exist and move has been removed due to the proliferation of tele-present space-time.²⁷ It is a tele-presence, according to Paul Virilio,

of the era of the globalization of exchanges [that] could only be established across the widest possible gap. This is a gap which now stretches to the other side of the world, from one edge to the other of present reality. But this is a meta-geophysical reality which strictly regulates the tele-continent of a *virtual reality* that monopolizes the greater part of the economic activity of the nations and, conversely, destroys cultures which are precisely situated in the space of the physics of the globe.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., 332.

²⁷ Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb*, 9.

²⁸ Ibid., 9.

As a consequence, “we are not seeing the ‘end of history,’ but we are seeing the end of geography.”²⁹ Thus, the technoscape, that organizational and administrative web that interconnects all multiscales, has dwarfed ordinary time and space to point zero.³⁰ Therefore, culture does not move as such. It staggers, rebounds, and reflects, instantaneously, the dominate multiscales that determine its movement within a shrinking world.

To make this point clear, I’d like to offer the following analogy. Suppose there is an ordinary pinball machine. This pinball machine is composed of a plane – the area of time and space – on which the pinball rolls or flows (ordinarily called a “playfield” by the gaming industry). On this plane are firmly placed bumpers, flippers, ramps, and traps (hereby referred to as “determinates”). These determinates – once encountered by the pinball – ricochets, pushes, and throws the pinball into other areas on the plane to encounter other determinates and so on. Lastly, and after there is considerable interaction between the pinball and determinates, the pinball recedes into a staging area to await another round of play.

If we apply Appadurai’s multiscales to the pinball machine, the pinball itself represents cultural flow or it can represent an individual human agent, and the determinates represent the various multiscales. However, the plane represents the interconnected technological organization and administration of all parts including the determinates and the staging area, on which the pinball freely moves about. Thus, the pinball (individual human agent or culture) flows between determinates (mediascape, ideoscape, and finanscape) on a plane (technoscape). Furthermore, the area (time and

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 10.

space) of the plane between determinates represents the disjuncture between determinates and the staging area (ethnoscape) in which the pinball lays in wait for play.

If we extend this analogy to my argument, the pinball machine drastically changes form. I argue that, when the plane (technoscape) increases in breadth and scope in its relations and interconnections with the determinates (mediascape, ideoscape, and finanscape), the plane increasingly *shrinks* in area (time and space) according to the strength and dependence of the interconnections between all parts of the pinball machine. Thus, the pinball (individual human agent or culture), after it is prepared to come into play from the staging area (ethnoscape), gets “thrown” onto the plane. It instantaneously interacts with the various determinates which are so close to one another that there is longer any real area to flow on the plane. As a consequence, the pinball instantaneously and rapidly staggers between determinates until it ceases (if at all) to flow altogether and falls back into the staging area once again.

What is the pinball imagining while it is in play within the machine? This may sound like a strange question but if we return to the initial state that this analogy represents, we get a striking conclusion. What it means is that the imagination, either in the human agent or in a cultural economy, becomes formed based upon a contingency of interactions within the multiscapes. In other words, social imagination, and the space-time in which it staggers, always already contains traces of the interactions of the multiscapes. Moreover, the more instantaneous and continual the interaction, the more the imagination is enframed by the multiscapes themselves. So much so, in fact, that the individual human agent or the culture becomes the product of said interactions. This is precisely what Theodor Adorno means by the effects of the culture industry. He states,

“The total effect of the culture industry is... the progressive technical domination of nature [that] becomes mass deception and is turned into a means for fettering consciousness. It impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves.”³¹ Thus, when Appadurai claims, “that cultural forces from metropolises that are brought into new societies become indigenized, transformed into particular social and cultural practices of difference,”³² he neglects to emphasize what actually happens in this cultural transaction.

What happens, I argue, is the cultural forces and practices from these metropolises have within them the production and consumptive fetishisms, administered by the culture industry, that then get imparted into indigenized cultural practices at home. Thus, an undercurrent of the culture industry is laced throughout the “fettered consciousness” of indigenized cultural practices that reveal themselves through social imaginations. Therefore, while these social practices are “made their own,” as Appadurai suggests, through an incorporation of indigenous cultural norms and those cultural forces derived from metropolises, it nonetheless indicates that the traces of productive and consumptive fetishisms derived from the culture industry are firmly established in the libidinalization of social imaginations, either consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously. Thus, the social imagination and the indigenized cultural flow and movement that proceed from this imagination become products of the multiscapes into what Herbert Marcuse calls the “Happy Consciousness.” To Marcuse, “Happy Consciousness – the belief that the real is rational and that the system delivers the goods – reflects the new conformism which is a

³¹ Theodor Adorno. *The Culture Industry* (New York: Routledge Classics. 2001), 106.

³² Appadurai, 328.

facet of technological rationality translated into social behavior.”³³ Therefore, the pinball once again gets shot out on to the plane and begins its stagger.

But what does this mean in relation to cultural disjuncture and difference? First, this implies that disjunctures no longer exist in Appadurai’s sense on the term. Second, and most importantly, it means that cultural difference is tempered, relegated, and absorbed by the instantaneous and continual cultural forces from within the culture industry, administered by the proliferation of technological networks of administration as a delivery mechanism of value-laden images, thereby fashioning social imaginations.

3. Disjuncture

According to Appadurai, “people, machinery, money, images, and ideas now follow increasingly non-isomorphic paths... but the sheer speed, scale and volume of each of these flows is now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture.”³⁴

What Appadurai means by disjuncture is that, “one cannot come to a given situation with a strong prior sense about how the causal flows [between multiscapes] work.”³⁵ In other words, one cannot come to a complete and definitive formulation of the interplay and collusion between multiscapes. I contend, however, that one does not have a prior sense because there isn’t one to be had. Any notion of a prior sense of causality of flowing interconnections between multiscapes is instantaneously overcome due to the mere speed of their interactions, as Appadurai mentions above. But this does not necessarily mean that there is a disjuncture. Thus, disjuncture seems to imply an epistemological dilemma in understanding and perceiving the flow of global networks of

³³ Herbert Marcuse. *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press. 1964), 84.

³⁴ Appadurai, 332.

³⁵ Arjun Appadurai. *Illusion of Permanence* “Perspecta 34” <http://www.appadurai.com/interviews.htm> (Accessed on July 14. 2002).

capital and cultural movement. Therefore, to understand the tele-present nature of the interrelations of multiscapes as instantaneous relationships, one must suspend his or her prior causal metaphysics; to shift one paradigm for another. Disjuncture exists only if these multiscapes are understood as independent entities that exist in linear time and space since it assumes that there is a time and space outside of the multiscapes themselves. Thus, disjunctures exist only within a dying paradigm. Therefore, since each multiscape cannot be viewed in isolation from others, what is needed is a new way of understanding these flows beyond our prior sense of causality; to be understood as a new paradigm. In this sense, disjuncture is only a recognition that one paradigm is in the process of being replaced by another. Thus, disjunctures between multiscapes exist only within a dying paradigm.

4) Difference

Cultural difference is a central theme in debates among post-colonial thinkers and post-structural sociologists. For example, arguments regarding the coming of a global universal monoculture are attacked on all fronts by post-structuralists as neglecting to recognize the “disruptively contingent and different” attributes within cultures.³⁶ While I agree with the post-structuralists in this regard, I argue that the notion of difference is itself repatriated into the overall schema of mass culture. In this sense, difference becomes sameness.

What I mean by this notion of difference is that it becomes a function of the productive and consumptive fetish practice of the culture industry. The absorption of differences become critical aspects of commodification of culture the world over. Culture

³⁶ Gary Browning. *Lyotard and the End of Grand Narratives* (Cardiff, United Kingdom: University of Wales Press, 2000), 5.

becomes kitsch and differences become tele-present manifestations of consumption.

Thus, “difference is conceptualized as compatible with and even functional for capitalism.”³⁷

Moreover, the differences within the ever so present ‘Other,’ through the proliferation of images that beget social imaginations, eventually morph into the same. As Jean Baudrillard succinctly puts it, “With modernity, we enter the age of the production of the other. The aim is no longer to kill the other, devour it, seduce it, vie with it, love it or hate it, but, first, to produce it. It is no longer an object of passion, it is an object of production... The fact remains that otherness does not come in short supply and, for want of living otherness as destiny, the Other has to be produced imperatively as difference.”³⁸ In other word, not only is the Other (or Otherness) a signifier for production, it is signified *as* product. Thus, difference, in this view, is another term for *that which is also produced*.

Another way of understanding the absorption of difference into the commodity form is all those images that signify the opposite for that which is being produced. For example, take the person who is in charge of luring college students to apply for a credit card. This person, as a tactic of luring students to sign at the dotted line, offers a T-shirt emblazoned with the bust of Ernesto “Che” Guevara free of charge. What is wrong with this scenario? The problem with this scene is that difference is different unto itself, it no longer stands in opposition. The image, that which signifies opposition in this case, has now been incorporated by the very production of that to which the image stands in opposition. This small example indicates that difference is now in opposition to itself

³⁷ Shane Gunter. *Capitalizing on Culture* (Toronto: Toronto University Press. 2004), 249.

³⁸ Jean Baudrillard. *The Perfect Crime* (New York: Verso Books. 1996), 115.

since it has been absorbed into the commodity form. Stuart Hall states, “In order to maintain its global position, capital [finanscape and ideoscape] has had to negotiate and by negotiate I mean it had to incorporate and partly reflect the differences it was trying to overcome.”³⁹ As a consequence, “the commercial character of culture causes the difference between culture and practical life to disappear.”⁴⁰ Therefore, the notion of difference has itself become a floating signifier that is “made available for any use or meaning that may be attached to it.”⁴¹ Ultimately, what this means is that the “immunity from critical reflection and judgment that concepts such as difference and polysemy have traditionally enjoyed in cultural studies must come to an end.”⁴²

This does not mean, however, that cultural difference does not exist. It only means that cultural difference does not have within it the qualities that are usually prescribed to it since cultural difference no longer has an independent, dialectical signification. Cultural difference exists on the surface of a more critical foundation of multiscape influence. Thus, cultural difference has within it the seedlings of global economic and institutional features that transform and negotiates those differences, if not negates them altogether. In this sense, the multiple forms of global cultural economies are expressions of globalization itself and the various multiscapes of which it is composed.

5) Summary

Arguments against global cultural homogeneity are valid but only up to a critical point. They are meaningful arguments until they reach a crescendo where the argument itself fractures in relation to the multitude of paradoxes and internal contradictions that

³⁹ Stuart Hall. “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity” in *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* Anthony D. King, ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1997), 29-31.

⁴⁰ Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 61.

⁴¹ Gunter, *Capitalizing on Culture*, 250.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 250.

are revealed through the hidden market fetishisms that are firmly seated in global cultural economies. While, at the same time, cultural heterogeneous forms come about as differences to globalization and the cultural attitudes therein. But this does not mean that these differences are immune to the ever so tele-present influence of the global cultural marketplace. In fact, most cultural differences have already within them the undercurrent of multiscape influence. This is most notably revealed in the formations of social imagination where we find cultural attitudes vying for positions as players within this global economic network. Moreover, it can be seen in the very formation of social imaginations themselves as particles of influence, where ideoscapes, mediascapes, ethnoscapes, and finanscapes supply the content while the technoscape delivers the message. Thus, cultural differences only exist at the surface of this deep interplay of multiscapes within global cultural economies.

Thus, cultural heterogeneity arguments end up circulating within their own frameworks and implode in Baudrillard's sense of the term. The challenge, then, is to demonstrate a global cultural economy where the undercurrent of hidden fetishistic market forces of multiscapes within its cultural body and imagination are absent.

While this challenge can be answered by demonstrating global cultural economies that exist outside of the global reach of tele-present multiscapes, it does not mean that these economies will not soon come to an end, if not already. Take, for example, the indigenous tribes of east Africa where they slowly become enframed and reified as commodified objects within the spectacle of tourism. But, at the same time, those who argue cultural heterogeneity could claim that even though these tribes serve a particular function in the tourist culture industry, their culture is maintained intact. However, I

argue that a culture cannot maintain a meaning outside of its terrestrial environment. Therefore, since the environment itself serves as a deterritorialized function of the commodity form (the spectacle of tourism) the meaning of that culture becomes altered by the influence and undercurrents of said environment. This is one example of the repatriation of global cultural difference into the commodity form by way of the culture industry and the multiscapes therein.

It is important to note the problem of disjuncture in this context since it demonstrates the problem of knowledge within shifting paradigms of global cultural economies. Disjuncture signifies the dilemma in understanding the shift in paradigm concerning global cultural economy. While disjuncture is an important concept to grasp, it nonetheless signifies the dying nature of an old paradigm. Thus, disjuncture signifies the death of the arboreal paradigm of understanding global cultural economy as it shifts to the rhizomatic.

This is par for the course for those who argue cultural homogeneity. The formation of social imagination is an inevitable byproduct of the culture industry on a global scale. The tele-present influence of multiscape not only influences the formation of social imagination, but it is involved as sole arbiter of its production. This includes the notions of disjuncture and difference within global cultural economies. Disjuncture, then, is dying, in Appadurai's sense of the term, since globalization and the multiscape forces that move within it have transversed the disjunction itself by ushering in a new rhizomatic paradigm. Thus, disjuncture, since it is derived from a dying paradigm, no longer is applicable to global cultural economies on the whole. Its applicability is sufficient only insofar as it is an attempt at understanding what has happened. Thus, I

contend, one should not expect an answer since any semblance of an answer is lost in the passing paradigm.

Likewise, cultural difference has lost its difference. It has been absorbed into the overall schema of global culture that has repatriated difference itself into the global cultural fetishisms of production and consumption. Thus, cultural difference, mediated by the multiscape influence of production and consumption, loses its power to the undercurrent of difference as sameness.

6. Conclusion

It may seem that my interpretation of Appadurai implies a form of economic determinism. Clearly, the power accorded large scale economies do have deterministic features in their influence on global cultural economies. Like Appadurai, I think that these systems of economic dominance are not completely totalizing and closed systems as of yet. There is room for global cultural play, though staggering, between multiscapes. However, global cultural economies must become aware of the increasing influence of the multiscapes within cultural formations and social imaginations. Thus, emerging cultural forms must maintain a *conscious* awareness of multiscape influence and circumvent multiscape absorption through active and perpetual play of antagonistic differences and disjunctures. Appadurai's disjunctures imply that they are created by organic and contextual evolutions in light of the expansion of the multiscapes.⁴³ What I'm suggesting here is spontaneous and perpetual global cultural formations at play within the enframing tendencies and fetishisms of the culture industry and its engine – the multiscapes.

⁴³ This is not to say that Appadurai's argument is limited to this assessment. It is only to say that the disjunctures noted by Appadurai suggest a context dependent formulation in light of the multiscapes. That is for the most part, disjunctures are not conscious cultural reactions but unconscious cultural formations born as contingencies of multiscape influence.

I do not pretend to offer a narrative of global cultural activity to counter the homogenization push by the multiscapes since such narratives are quickly usurped by the culture industry and the multiscapes almost as soon as such narratives are articulated and constructed. But, perhaps global cultural formations may need to recall distinctive and antagonistic cultural attributes like those employed by Guy Debord and the Situationists. In this regard, the Situationist's notion of *détournement* offers the kind of cultural activity I'm suggesting. Perhaps global cultural economies can employ a diasporic "aesthetic language."⁴⁴ Aesthetic languages, I argue, may offer global cultural economies the ability to consciously radicalize the diasporic nature of language within global cultural economies – adding to them the qualities of perpetual spontaneity, play, antagonism, and velocity as a form of global cultural *détournement* – which can serve as potential circumventions of global cultural homogenization and, thus, altering the structure and nature of the coming paradigm.

However, there is a risk. The culture industry and multiscapes have the uncanny ability to invert cultural antagonism, irony, difference, and play; thus, succumbing said irony, difference, and play to interpretations (performed primarily through ideoscapes and mediascapes) to serve their interests. This does not mean that global cultural economies should not create unique antagonistic cultural attributes in the face of the culture industry. It is only to say that those cultural movements must have the unique qualities of perpetual spontaneity, play, antagonism, and velocity to circumvent inverted interpretations, enframing, and the fetishistic nature of the multiscapes.

⁴⁴ Fredric Jameson. "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" in *The Jameson Reader* Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks, eds. (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2000), 129-30.

Arguments concerning cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity are far from being exhausted. Most would agree that there is a common thread between these arguments. This common thread is centered within the notion of maintaining a meaningful and vibrant multiplicity of global cultural forms; forms that can maintain a critical distance from the efforts of globalization. While I argue this is an unlikely conclusion, it does not mean it shouldn't be in our thoughts and actions because, after all, and for better or for worse, we could always slowly dismantle the pinball machine using new, playful, and creative cultural tools; thereby, allowing the pinball to roll freely – limited only by the forces of nature and human creativity – beyond the multiscapes, contingent disjunctures, and repatriated differences.

WORKS CITED

- Adorno, Theodor. *The Culture Industry*. (New York: Routledge Classics. 2001)
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy* in “Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory” Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, Eds. (New York: Columbia University Press. 1994)
- _____. *Illusion of Permanence*. (Interview with Perspecta 34. July 14. 2002.
<http://www.appadurai.com/interviews.htm>)
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Perfect Crime*. (New York, NY. Verso Books. 1996)
- Browning, Gary. *Lyotard and the End of Grand Narratives*. (Cardiff, United Kingdom.: University of Wales Press, 2000)
- Gunter, Shane. *Capitalizing on Culture*. (Toronto, Canada. Toronto University Press. 2004)
- Hall, Stuart. “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity” in *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* Anthony D. King Ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1997)
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Jameson Reader*. Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks Eds. (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2000)
- Marcuse, Herbert. *One Dimensional Man*. (Boston: Beacon Press. 1964)

Virilio, Paul. *Open Sky*. (New York: Verso Books. 2003)

_____. *Information Bomb*. (New York: Verso Books. 2005)