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GEOPOLITICS AND CINEMA

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Sometimes capitalism doesn't feel very advanced, does it? At least not in a positive sense, given the part it has played in environmental destruction, animal brutality, war, discrimination, inequality, and exploitation. We can say with some certainty, however, that capitalism has been with us a long time, that it has changed and expanded its nature and reach, and that it remains both laden with crisis and blessed with success.

The last century and a half of capitalism has been characterized by the global military, cultural, and commercial power of the United States. Some say those times are over, because we occupy a multipolar world with equally powerful economic actors in the European Union and China, while new media technologies are breaking down old forms of dominance. This chapter argues against those positions. They might be true one day. They aren't now.

Of course, there is an ongoing debate about how new and comprehensive global exchange is – whether we are witnessing a return to the *status quo ante* of a century ago, prior to the era of state-based economic nationalism. For the massive protectionist walls constructed after the Great War were in stark contrast with earlier, freer exchange. The remarkable obsession of the last hundred years with controlling and systematizing immigration, citizenship, and the division of labor, in ways that militate against human freedom of movement while facilitating mobility of investment, are strikingly different from the past (Hirst *et al.* 2009). The work of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, its successor – the World Trade Organization (WTO) – and various regional, multilateral, and bilateral agreements to dismantle, or at least regularize, such protections has done much to create a global economy, but questions remain about how genuinely new this is.

It is certainly true that the political economy of culture is more thoroughly international than ever, due to the ability to transmit entertainment and information fulsomely and rapidly via satellite, cable, and air. Such exchange is accelerating remarkably with the advent not only of new forms of communication but deregulated markets in meaning, as television and musical texts in particular rocket around the world at the speed of a Google search: world trade in the culture industries increased from \$559.5 billion in 2010 to \$624 billion in 2011 (United Nations Conference 2013). Intellectual property remains a limiting factor, but state restrictions on the ownership and control of the media are in long-term decline.

Amongst the media industries, cinema has always been an international capitalist enterprise, thanks to the export of both texts and technologies. At the same time, film has

transcended the market, via home movies and the *avant garde*, and drawn on mixed models, from state-supported cinemas to film schools. Such forms of life are as much artisanal and amateur as they are industrial and institutional. And while people buy tickets and subscriptions to watch movies inside the corporate market, they also do so via piracy, sharing, satellite, and broadcast television, paying in kind via their consciousness and their time rather than as consumers.

This chapter is principally concerned with Hollywood, perhaps the most powerful cultural industry the world has seen in terms of its wealth, reach, and influence. I'll trace its connection to geopolitics and economic, theoretical, political, and technological threats to its dominance.

Los estados pinche unidos

In 1820, the noted British essayist Sydney Smith asked: "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue?" (1844: 141). Three decades later, Herman Melville opposed the US literary establishment's devotion to all things English. He contrasted its Eurocentrically cringing import culture with the need to "carry republican progressiveness into Literature, as well as into Life" (1850).

Unsurprisingly, the US became an early-modern exponent of anti-cultural imperialist, pro-nation-building sentiment and developed its cultural and communication capacities by rejecting intellectual-property regimes. By the turn of the twentieth century, decades of protectionism and an increasingly large and affluent population had created robust culture industries. Overseas expansion soon became necessary because of a saturated domestic market, so the US government and Hollywood discarded their opposition to global policing of copyright (Miller *et al.* 2005; T. Miller 2010b; J. Miller 2011; Maxwell and Miller 2011).

The semiosis of Hollywood texts began to matter, as both messengers and signals of the nation's importance. By the 1930s, the film industry's peak association referred to itself as "the little State Department," so isomorphic were its methods and ideology with US policy and politics. This was also the era when the industry's self-censoring Production Code appended to its bizarre litany of sexual, racial, and narcotic prohibitions and requirements two items requested by the 'other' State Department: selling the US' way of life around the world, and avoiding negative representations of any "foreign country with which we have cordial relations" (Powdermaker 1950: 36).

Once the Cold War was underway, the CIA's Psychological Warfare Workshop employed future Watergate criminal E. Howard Hunt, who clandestinely funded the rights purchase and film production of George Orwell's anti-Soviet novels *Animal Farm* (1954) and *1984* (1956) (Cohen 2003). Producer Walter Wanger trumpeted this meshing of what he called "Donald Duck and Diplomacy" as "a Marshall Plan for ideas . . . a veritable celluloid Athens," because the state needed Hollywood "more than . . . the H bomb" (1950: 444, 446). Industry head Eric Johnston, fresh from his prior post as Secretary of Commerce, saw himself dispatching "messengers from a free country." President Harry Truman agreed, referring to movies as "ambassadors of goodwill" (quoted in Johnston 1950; also see Hozic 2001).

To US Cold Warriors like the professional anti-Marxist Ithiel de Sola Pool (1983), cultural conservative Daniel Bell (1977), and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski (1969), communications technologies guaranteed US cultural and technical power across the globe. And today, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's consultancy firm advises that the US must "win the battle of the world's information flows, dominating the airwaves as Great Britain

once ruled the seas” (Rothkopf 1997: 38, 47). Ex-National Intelligence Council chair Joseph Nye has promulgated the embarrassingly penile metaphor “soft power” to describe the use of culture as propaganda (2002) and the State Department has established “regional media hubs” to forward its project of *Leading Through Civilian Power* (2010: 60–61).

But today, the US appears to be perennially in crisis. Everyone seems certain that an Asian century is succeeding the American one. Hollywood is also said to be diminishing in importance (more money is made in electronic games, and more films are made in Nollywood and Bollywood). But the reality is – sorry – that the military might, economic importance, environmental impact, and cultural influence of the US have never been greater (Miller 2010a). China and India have many leading software engineers in addition to huge armies of labor, but they lack the domestic venture capitalists, the military underpinnings to computing innovation, and the historic cross-cultural appeal of more established cultural powers.

The contemporary era may one day be known as an Asian century. But it is worth remembering:

- Many Asians choose to live in the US.
- US ties to massive and growing economies in Latin America are profound and deepening.
- Its links with Europe continue to develop.
- It has massive new military bases across Africa and the Arab world.
- Its currency is the world’s reserve.
- It has most of the world’s wealthy and powerful people.
- What *goes on* in the US remains the topic of governmental, military, commercial, financial, academic, media, and popular fascination everywhere in a way that is not true of any other country.
- Every child in school in China is required to learn English.

US languages, forms of life, consumerism, imperialism, and screen texts proliferate as never before, and attempts to suggest otherwise are absurd. This is, so far, a second American century, and Hollywood both indexes and perpetuates the fact.

The Motion Picture Association of America (2014), the peak body representing the major studios, notes that Hollywood receipts around the world “reached \$36.4 billion in 2014” – a record. China has been moved effortlessly into the center of the industry’s overseas sales, its reserve army of productive labor now matched by a reserve army of audience labor: “more middle-class movie-goers are being minted every day.” Hollywood box office in China increased 34 percent in 2013, “the first international market to exceed \$4 billion” (Anon 2013b). Hollywood pictures drew the highest audiences for films on television in twenty-seven nations across all continents in 2009, while fully 80 percent of TV programming for children outside the other white-settler colonies and China comes from the US (Siwek 2011; Best *et al.* 2011; Boyd-Barrett 2006; Anon. 2009; Osei-Hwere and Pecora 2008: 16, 19; Götz *et al.* 2008).

The global market is, of course, affecting where and what Hollywood produces. The opportunity to draw on the New International Division of Cultural Labor (NICL) is at play here, as state subsidies and skilled and pliant labor are available across the globe (Fröbel *et al.* 1980; Hjort 2013; Miller *et al.* 2005). And international audiences favor texts based on expensive, visceral spectacle rather than the culturally specific genres of sports or comedy.

Blockbusters, which are now staples among the few movies actually produced by the majors, generally draw on already-popular, ensemble, multi-generic formats with international appeal. So “[e]ighteen of the all-time 100 top-grossing movies (adjusted for inflation) were sequels, and

more than half of those were released since 2000” (Davidson 2012). Such movies minimize character development, narrative complexity, and dialog. They are driven by the global *lingua franca* of testosterone, adventure, and multiculturalism. Profits can be sky-high, but immense investment is needed. In 2005, average expenditure on a fiction feature film by a major studio was \$96 million – a four-fold increase in two decades (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2008: 16).

The desire to spread the risk of blockbusters internationally is a corollary. As a consequence, Hollywood is in full exploitative flight, drawing on the NICL as part of its restless search for free money (Grantham 2011):

finance in the US and international film industry [i]s filled with soft money from Europe[:] co-producing (co-financing) US pictures directly (as happened in Germany), or by bringing US or international production to Europe by using the co-production structure in the case of the UK model. In both cases the extent of money diversion was considerable. In 2000 alone ... approximately \$3 billion or 20 per cent of the entire US expenditure in film and video production was sourced from media companies and private equity film funds listed on the German “new economy” stock exchange Neuer Markt. ... Even after the Neuer Markt’s collapse in 2000/2001, German private equity continued to flow into the US industry, with German film funds raising EUR 2.3 billion in 2002, EUR 1.76 billion in 2003 and EUR 1.5 billion in 2004.

(Morawetz et al. 2007: 436)

Co-production is also part of a restless quest for the Asian market (meaning China and India) (Rasul and Proffitt 2012: 567). In 2009, Steven Spielberg received over \$800 million from the Indian company Reliance Big Pictures (Ganti 2012: 344). Such localization is not a loss of power, but a strategic and tactical means of opening new markets. LA rarely loses control of the NICL.

‘Smaller’ Hollywood pictures also need global funders. Their average cost in 2005 was over \$39 million for films produced by project-based firms affiliated with the majors (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2008: 16). Here, too, financing is frequently achieved through co-production, this time via cultural policies originally designed to counter Hollywood hegemony:

Begun as a tool of resistance to the dominance of U.S. films, [European] film funds were initially designed to support “high quality” movies that provided an artistic voice for domestic auteurs, an outlet that could not be supported by the mass market. . . . In the past two decades, discourse has begun to support public film policy that, instead of supporting individual local auteurs, favors the grooming of a local film industry workforce and foreign direct investment into local facilities. . . . In this way, public film support, particularly in Europe, shifted to encourage foreign productions to shoot on location domestically and to partner with local production companies

(J. Miller 2011: 1019)

So Hollywood’s story seems to be one of renewal. But what of the resistance mentioned above? How does Hollywood’s international impact sit with the powerful geopolitical denunciations of US economic and screen power presented by dependency theory and cultural-imperialism critique?

Dependencia and cultural imperialism

Given their experience of the Monroe Doctrine since 1823, it is no surprise that Latin Americans created a theory of dependent development in the 1940s. They argued that attempts to move from agrarian to industrial societies had foundered because developed nations in Western Europe and the US exploited cheap labor and raw materials elsewhere through multinational corporations (MNCs) that expropriated surplus profit to their metropolitan headquarters, thereby preventing the formation of local capital. These radical critics of capitalist modernization thought the transfer of technology, politics, and economics had become unattainable, because MNCs united business and government to regulate cheap labor markets, produce new consumers, and guarantee pliant regimes (Reeves 1993: 24–25, 30).

Dependency theory gained adherents across the Global South over the next three decades in reaction to the unreconstructed institutional narcissism of the US, which ignored the fact that developed societies at the world core had become so through their colonial and international experience, both by differentiating the metropole from the periphery and importing ideas, fashions, and people (Prebisch 1982; Cardoso 2009).

But despite the power of this critique, it never attained hegemony in policy debates. Formal *political* postcoloniality rarely became *economic*, apart from some Asian states that pursued permanent capitalism, known as Export-Oriented Industrialization, and service-based expansion. And after the capitalist economic crises of the 1970s, even those Western states that had *bourgeoisies* with sufficient capital formation to permit a welfare system found that stagflation undermined their capacity to hedge employment against inflation (Higgott and Robison 1985).

Historic policy renegotiations conducted by capital, the state, and their rent-seeking intellectual servants in political science and economics saw anxieties over unemployment trumped by anxieties over profits, labor pieties displaced by capital pieties, and workers called upon to identify as stakeholders in business or customers, not combatants with capital (Martin 2002: 21; Miller and O'Leary 2002: 97–99). These reforms redistributed income back to *bourgeoisies* and metropolises: reactionaries favored individual rights in the economic sphere of investment, but not other *fora*. Today's privileged citizens are corporations, and people are increasingly conceived of as self-governing consumers (Anon. 2004).

The outcome has been disastrous. In the two decades from 1960 to 1980, most of the Global South was state-socialist, or had a significant welfare system. Per capita income during that period increased by 34 percent in Africa and 73 percent in Latin America, while the standard deviation of growth rates amongst developing economies from 1950 to 1973 was 1.8. In the decades since these political economies shifted to neoliberalism, the corollary numbers disclose a drop in income across Africa of 23 percent and an increase in Latin America of just 6 percent, while the standard deviation of growth has climbed to 3.0, because of China and India's successes. In 1997–98, the richest 20 percent of the world's people earned seventy-four times the amount of the world's poorest, up from sixty times in 1990 and thirty times in 1960, while 56 percent of the global population made less than two dollars a day. In 2001, every child born in Latin America immediately 'owed' \$1,500 to foreign banks, as if this were part of original sin. For a tiny number, that would amount to a few hours of work once they attained their majority. For most, it would represent a decade's salary (Ocampo 2005: 12–14; United Nations Development Program 2004; Sutcliffe 2003: 3; García Canclini 2002: 26–27).

But the neoliberal dream has endured. US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick announced to the WTO in 2001 that compliance with trade liberalization was an acid test of

attitudes to terrorism, and the US Government's 2002 *National Security Strategy* referred to a "single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise." Identical *nostra* animated the next Administration (Holland 2005; The White House 2002, 2010).

Nevertheless, on the cultural front, nineteenth-century US critiques of cultural imperialism as per Melville still resonate (elsewhere) in everyday talk, cultural and telecommunications policy, trade unions, international organizations, public diplomacy, anti-Americanism, and post-industrial service-sector planning (see Schiller 1976, 1989; Beltrán and Fox de Cardona 1980; Dorfman and Mattelart 2000). They are exemplified by Armand Mattelart's stinging denunciation of external cultural influence on the Global South:

In order to camouflage the counter-revolutionary function which it has assigned to communications technology and, in the final analysis, to all the messages of mass culture, imperialism has elevated the mass media to the status of revolutionary agents, and the modern phenomenon of communications to that of revolution itself.
(1980: 17)

A latter-day cultural-imperialism thesis turned Melville's original argument *volte face*. It said that the US, which had become the globe's leading media exporter, was transferring its dominant value system to others, with a corresponding diminution in the vitality and standing of local languages, traditions, and national identities. Lesser, but still considerable, influence was attributed to older imperial powers, via their cultural, military, and corporate ties to newly independent countries.

The theory attributed US cultural hegemony to its control of news agencies, advertising, market research, public opinion, screen trade, technology transfer, propaganda, telecommunications, and security (Primo 1999: 183). In addition, US involvement in South-East Asian wars and its adherence to the Monroe Doctrine in the Americas led to critiques of interventions against struggles of national liberation and targeted links between the military-industrial complex and the media, pointing to the ways that communications and cultural MNCs bolstered US foreign policy and military strategy, which in turn facilitated corporate expansion.

During the 1960s and 70s, cultural-imperialism discourse found a voice in public-policy debates through the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), where the Global South lobbied for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). UNESCO set up an International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems to investigate North-South flows and power. It reported in 1980 on the need for equal distribution of the electronic spectrum, reduced postal rates for international texts, protection against satellites crossing borders, and media systems that would serve social justice rather than capitalist commerce (Mattelart and Mattelart 1998: 94-97).

But UNESCO soon ceased to be a critical site for NWICO debate. The US and the UK withdrew from the Organization in 1985 because it denounced Zionism as racism and supported state intervention against private-press hegemony, and the three decades since have seen UNESCO distance themselves from NWICO in the hope of attracting these countries back to the fold. The US rejoined in 2003 in time to make noises about the Organization contemplating a convention on cultural diversity that might sequester culture from neoliberal trade arrangements – the wrong kind of globalization, as it might be democratically rather than plutocratically driven. The US argued that texts were not culture, which it defined as the less commodifiable and governable spheres of religion and language. Then the Organization

recognized Palestine as a state in 2011, and the US again refused to pay its dues (Gerbner 1994: 112–13; Gerbner *et al.* 1994: xi–xii; State Department 2011).

NWICO was in any event vulnerable, due to its inadequate theorization of capitalism, postcolonialism, class relations, the state, and indigenous culture, in addition to its complex *frottage* – a pluralism that insisted on the relativistic equivalence of all cultures and defied chauvinism, but rubbed up against a powerful equation of national identities with cultural forms. NWICO denied the potentially liberatory and pleasurable nature of different takes on the popular, forgot the internal differentiation of publics, valorized frequently oppressive and/or unrepresentative local *bourgeoisies* in the name of maintaining and developing national cultures, and ignored the demographic realities of its ‘own’ terrain. For example, alternatives to Hollywood funded under the sign of opposition to cultural imperialism frequently favored exclusionary, art-house-centered hegemony who privileged ‘talent’ over labor, and centralized authority over openness. As mentioned above, this led not only to public subvention of indolent national *bourgeoisies*, but permitted oleaginous Gringos to fund offshore production through the NICL via proxy locals (Miller *et al.* 2005; J. Miller 2011).

The ongoing power of Hollywood is not only germane to changing geopolitics. It is part of the existing fabric of that geopolitics, as we showed in the *Global Hollywood* project (Miller *et al.* 2005). The state is intimately involved in Hollywood hegemony, and *vice versa* buttressing the ideology and might of the US. It has geopolitical effects on the young, on animals, and on the environment. Consider this finding from the World Health Organization:

From 2008 to 2010, 14 nations or their sub-units awarded an estimated US\$ 2.4 billion to producers of 93% of the 428 films, mainly developed by companies based in the United States, which achieved top box office status in Canada and the United States. Half of these films featured tobacco imagery. Over three years, subsidized with US\$ 1.1 billion in tax credits, these films delivered an estimated total of 130 billion tobacco impressions to theatre audiences worldwide.

(2011: 8)

As per the findings enumerated above and others, Hollywood appears to take vast amounts of money from MNCs to assist in the mindless addiction of new generations to dangerous drugs (Polansky and Glantz 2009). And a horrendous history of the animal abuse discloses systematic barbarism (Anon. 2013a).

Hollywood also does environmental violence. The first major scholarly study of the industry’s despoliation, conducted on behalf of Los Angeles’ Integrated Waste Management Board from 2003 to 2005, concluded that motion-picture production generated more conventional pollutants than any other industry in the city, thanks to its massive use of electricity and petroleum and release of hundreds of thousands of tons of deadly emissions each year. In California as a whole, film- and television-related energy consumption and greenhouse-gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide) are about the same as those produced by the aerospace and semiconductor industries (Corbett and Turco 2006). Then there is the entire question of Hollywood’s global carbon footprint and deliberate despoliation of the environment for textual purposes (Maxwell and Miller 2012).

Technology and cybertarianism

But let’s explore the counter-argument that decenters Hollywood and the US, based on the notion that a new era of geopolitics has been radically transformed not only by Asia’s

cheap, pliant labor and emergent, nationalistic middle classes, but by technology. Is today's world transmogrified by innovative cultural and communications technologies that tame and change Hollywood?

There is nothing novel about this venerable utopianism. New media are routinely regarded as signs of progress that can transcend nation-states, moving history towards a common humanity. In 1935, Rudolf Arnheim predicted that television would bring world peace. By enabling viewers to share simultaneous global experiences, from railway disasters, professorial addresses, and town meetings to boxing bouts, dance bands, carnivals, and aerial mountain views – a spectacular montage of Athens, Broadway, and Vesuvius – TV could surpass the limitations of linguistic competence and interpretation to show each spectator that “we are located as one among many” (Arnheim 1969: 160–63). It would bring an end to chauvinism and imperialism.

This reads remarkably like today's neoliberal prelates celebrating the boundless potential of new as opposed to middle-aged media: Facebook predictably features “Peace on Facebook,” which will “decrease world conflict” through inter-cultural communication, while Twitter self-effacingly describes itself as “a triumph of humanity” (Anon 2010: 61). *Time* magazine exemplified this love of a seemingly immaterial world when it chose “You” as 2006's “Person of the Year,” because “You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world” (Grossman 2006). On the liberal left, the *Guardian* is prey to the same touching warlockcraft: someone called “You” headed its 2013 list of the hundred most important folks in the media.¹ Rupert Murdoch was well behind, at number eight.²

The comparatively cheap and easy access to making and distributing meaning afforded by internet media and genres is thought to have eroded the one-way hold on cinema that saw a small segment of the world as producers and the larger segment as consumers. New technologies supposedly allow us all to be consumers and producers (prosumers) without the say-so of gatekeepers. The result is said to be democratized media, higher skill levels, and powerful challenges to old patterns of expertise and institutional authority (Graham 2008; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). But again, this idea is older than it appears, and entirely unrelated to the internet. The concept of the prosumer derives from the right wing of US politics in Ronald Reagan's time (Toffler 1980).

Cybertarian discourse takes one or several of the following tacks:

- Because of new technology and consumption, concentration of media ownership and control no longer matters – information is free, thanks to multi-point distribution and destabilized hierarchies.
- Consumers are sovereign and can transcend class and other categories.
- Young people are liberated from media control.
- Creative destruction is an accurate and desirable description of economic innovation.
- Marxist political economy and ideology critique deny the power of audiences and users and the irrelevance of boundaries.
- Cultural-imperialism critiques miss the creativity and resilience of national and sub-national forms of life against industrial products.
- Media-effects studies are inconsequential – audiences outwit corporate plans and psy-function norms.

In cybertarian fantasies, everyone and no one is a cultural producer in the traditional, quasi-institutional sense, just as everyone is simultaneously an unpaid worker and a paying customer. And indeed, Hollywood sometimes does tremble in the face of what has happened over the

last twenty years to middle management in the recorded music industry, thanks to file sharing, MySpace, and YouTube (remember Artist & Repertoire [A&R] people who used to hang around music venues looking and listening for hipness to describe next day in the office? They're on the scrapheap, displaced by direct marketing to corporations by artists).

But therein lies the key for Hollywood not only to survive but to prosper. Fans write zines that become screenplays. Interning grad students in New York and Los Angeles read scripts for producers, then pronounce on whether they tap into audience interests. Precariously employed part-timers spy on fellow spectators in theaters to see how they respond to coming attractions and report back to moguls. End-user licensing agreements ensure that players of corporate games online sign over their cultural moves and perspectives to the very companies they are paying in order to participate (Miller 2014).

Intellectual correctives to cybertarian fantasies are thankfully at hand. File under history. Orwell described and criticized such media-centric utopias a decade after Arnheim (i.e., seventy years ago) in ways that resonate as a startling riposte to the claims made for social media:

Reading recently a batch of rather shallowly optimistic "progressive" books, I was struck by the automatic way in which people go on repeating certain phrases which were fashionable before 1914. Two great favourites are "the abolition of distance" and "the disappearance of frontiers". I do not know how often I have met with the statements that "the aeroplane and the radio have abolished distance" and "all parts of the world are now interdependent."

(1944)

So what might the digitization of production and post-production do to Hollywood's dominance? Will this brave new world destabilize the most successful culture industry in history and reshape the globe?

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2008: 10), new film technology will make for:

- integrated production and post-production;
- redefined and relocated duplication;
- new means of distribution;
- closer integration of film and TV.

Hollywood hegemony will probably gain from reduced costs of duplication and distribution, despite the apparent risk of easier market entry by competitors. The costs of production and distribution have long protected them by restricting new entrants, because the labor-intensive nature of film production, whether on- or off-camera, necessitates major financing (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2008: 77). Perhaps most importantly, the cost of broadband in the Global South is 40.3 percent of average individual Gross National Income (GNI). Across the Global North, by comparison, the price is less than 5 percent of GNI per capita (International Telecommunication Union 2012: 4). Geopolitics won't change thanks to the newer media unless material inequalities change, too.

Conclusion

We find ourselves in the midst of global economic and environmental crisis. Today's dominant explanatory and policy models are largely insensitive to unequal wealth, influence,

status, and carbon use. They don't measure up to critical theories of dependent development, underdevelopment, unequal exchange, world-systems history, center-periphery relations, cultural imperialism, postcolonialism, and environmental impact (Kavoori and Chadha 2009; McPhail 2009). Such counter-discourses struggle against the institutional force, hegemonic media status, and academic endorsement of dominant forms. Across the Global South, vigorous and inventive tactics and strategies, based on these vibrant critiques of structured domination in communications, provide a sharp reminder that there is another way (Bycroft 2011; Kapur and Wagner 2011; Bolaño 2012).

This chapter has implicitly and explicitly excoriated dreamers. That said, utopias must be part of our deliberations – or what's a heaven for? But they must be couched as citizenship rights, not entrepreneurial fictions, and grounded in appropriate historical and theoretical narratives. The United Nations rightly calls for “two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development (quoted in United Nations Development Program 2009).

How can these aims be achieved? A clear-headed analysis of unequal exchange of cultural textuality, technology, environment, and labor should be our starting-point – not fantasies about Asian centuries or technologically-driven transformations. Cybertarianism is the latest technological determinism – reinvented with retreads each time it is rolled out; seemingly new, but relying on the built-in obsolescence of gadgets and theories that imbue historical forgetfulness and fealty to capital.

Hollywood continues to fill screens, minds, waterways, bodies, air, and soil with ideological messages and toxic material by-products and product placements. Its status as a coeval agent of US imperialism remains clear and must be identified as such as a preliminary to serious change.

Notes

- 1 See <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/sep/01/you-them-mediaguardian-100-2013> (accessed 1 October 2015).
- 2 See <http://www.theguardian.com/media/series/mediaguardian-100-2013-1-100> (accessed 1 October 2015).

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