TOWARD A SPATIAL MATERIALISM OF THE "MOVING IMAGE:" LOCATING SCREEN MEDIA WITHIN CHANGING REGIMES OF TRANSPORT

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During the summer and fall of 2002, the Japanese automaker Toyota ran a television advertisement in the U.S. for its latest mini-van. The ad begins while the mini-van, idling at a stoplight, is joined in the adjacent lane by a 1960s-vintage Chevrolet Impala, an icon of a by-gone genre of "family car" and of a once proud stage of American auto-mobility (mythologized in films such as American Graffiti and the TV-series Happy Days), and subsequently an icon of the subaltern "hood," the Mexican-American "low-rider" and gang-banger. The ad contrasts the owners/drivers of the two vehicles. The owners/drivers of the van are a white, middle-class (presumably) nuclear family – a middle-aged man (presumably the father) behind the steering wheel, a woman of the same age (presumably his wife) seated in the front passenger seat, and the barely discernible heads of (presumably) their children in the backseat. Seated in the retro-vehicle aside the van are two shadowy male figures. After exchanging furtive glances, the drivers of the Chevy demonstrate their road prowess, making their vehicle rock and gradually elevate slightly by means of a hydraulic suspension system, in the fashion of "car-dancing" and "car-hopping." The van's driver, not to be outpaced in the display of bravura, responds by elevating his van completely off the pavement before it accelerates skyward, leaving the Chevy's occupants to stare in amazement. The source of the van's spectacular feat of pure auto-mobility (the purely transported self) – the van's true guiding, "intelligent" force/driver – is revealed to be the extra-terrestrial being from Steven Spielberg's ET, who blinks naively between the two children in the back seat. All three of the back-seat passengers are spectators not only of this street-scene but of the Spielberg film, which they were watching on the van's backseat video screen. The van's turbo-charge, its secret street-weapon (capable of distancing the van from the potential perils of urban encounters with more primitive road technology) turns out to be, after all, its ability, through the most "intelligent" technology, to accommodate a more fully transported self – the well-behaved family-vehicle, the parents whose extra-terrestrial road-freedom, hyper-mobility, and transcendence of urban gridlock relies upon the integration of a back-seat video monitor for managing the behavior of the children.

This essay's intervention/contribution to a special issue about media-in-"transition" has only partly and peripherally to do with screen media and their spectators. Furthermore, while the essay is interested in the historical "transition" of cinema and media that this ad represents by constructing various differences (between a film block-buster and its twentieth-anniversary re-release, between cinema, television, and the "moving image" then and now, between futurist and retro-fitted forms of "transport-ing" spectators through cinema/media), the essay considers a somewhat different set of questions than have driven film or media studies/histories, which have directed so

much attention to the relation between representation and a mode of production or between representation and ideology, which have understood cinema/media only or primarily in terms of consumption and/or spectatorship, and which overemphasize the distinctiveness – the discrete history and "transitions" – of media or cinema. The Toyota-ad certainly does capitalize on a new regime of production and distribution that is about delivering consumers from one media site or one media industry to another, here linking television advertising to promotions for films (and a film whose eponymous character, ET, was used twenty years earlier in television ads for another product, Reese's Pieces candies). The ad therefore affirms a common theme from histories of a post-1960's Hollywood system of production and distribution: the ad's televisuality as yet another instance of product tie-in, of delivering consumers/spectators from one medium (TV) to another, and of the corporate and technological synergy for linking one medium into another (what are the differences between TV and cinema any longer?). There also is a longstanding vein of film/media criticism and historiography that would explain this ad and its power/effects in terms of its ideological or hegemonic work, read through the ad's formal/representational practice (e.g., the play of gazes in and of the ad, or the ad's construction of a set of differences and identities recognizable to viewers/consumers). However, that Gramsci saw U.S. automobile production, "Fordism," as a way of describing a stage of capitalist production, distribution, and consumption, or that the (global) dispersion of U.S. automobile production over the last decades of the 20th century often serves as an example par excellence of a post-Fordist stage of capitalism, or that the ad's or movie's narratives of the transported spectator could be said to define a set of ideological-subject positions within changing/converging media forms, or that the ad represents the emergence of new media convergence as a new ideological apparatus, or that the ad epitomizes the Baudrillardian analogy of the "smart car" as the purest conflation of virtual and physical forms of transport (where the screen becomes the scene) do not allow me to address a set of questions about the "transitions" of cinema (or screen media) that my brief essay is interested in discussing because this vein of media critique tends to understand cinema/media as technologies whose capacity for control, for producing effects, for mattering, has mostly to do with the particular economy, form, and history of cinema and/or media. One alternative model or counter-point to this tendency is what I have called elsewhere a spatial materialism of screen media.[1]

A spatial materialism of screen media directs attention to the place of screen media within an arrangement of social/activity spaces. There are several implications of this heuristic that deserve brief (albeit schematic) clarification. One concerns the conception of the social. Rather than considering the social purely or primarily in terms of media practices, and rather than understanding the social as an ideological formation or as its opposite (material conditions of social relations), a spatial materialism understands the social as a spatial distribution/production of resources and facilities that are themselves a condition for social meaning, agency, and control. A spatial materialism, in this respect, builds upon Henri Lefebvre's conception of social space as produced (in part by capitalist economy and by cultural representation) and as productive of various practices.[2] In describing social space as productive, Lefevbre thus gestures toward an alternative to the base-superstructure binarism upon which various forms of modern social theory and cultural criticism have relied. Social formation and agency cannot be reduced to a single motor or condition, space being produced – and made productive –

through multiple social practices. Furthermore, a spatial materialism is not about substituting a spatial for a historical conception of the social, or about seeing geography and history as binary categories, but about recognizing the historical contingencies of the social as spatial arrangement and about the spatial distribution/arrangement of resources and facilities as productive of historical possibilities – as a condition for "making history."

A spatial materialism of screen media not only begins with the question of locating media – of discovering where media matter – but, in so doing, it de-centers the screen as the primary or only locus of attention for media studies. There are at least two ways of thinking about the implications of this. One is somewhat methodological, focusing on the screen as part of a built environment rather than discussing screen practices purely as matters of form, representation, meaning, and ideology, and of culture understood in those terms. A spatial materialism of the televisual, for instance, would consider how particular technologies of televisuality are integral to the material construction of particular sites – room, houses, malls, parking garages, retail stores, bars, airports, fitness facilities, sports facilities, or (as I want to discuss below) cars.[3] Recognizing that any site of televisuality matters in its connectedness to other sites (as part of "networks"), a spatial materialism also would recognize how these sites pertain to larger scales or technological zones,[4] such as suburbs, cities, regions, or global networks. A spatial materialism also would assess the instrumentality or mattering of media/communication technologies through these sites and zones, considering how their spatial organization and governance relied upon the particular – strategic and tactical – emplacement of technologies therein. What, in other words, has the material construction of domiciles and the running of suburban households around televisual technologies to do with the spatial organization and management of urban parking garages through video surveillance monitors? How does these become co- or inter-dependent spaces within an environment built upon/through the strategic/tactical emplacement of screen media?

A second implication concerns the question of subjectification. In de-centering (or attempting to locate) screen media, a spatial materialism of screen media is concerned with spectatorship mostly as a momentary engagement within the paths and relative mobility of social actors. While the screen may be increasingly part of life in early 21th century societies, its uses are not uniform, nor is the screen ubiquitous (despite the pronouncements of some epochalist/postmodernist accounts). Spectatorship is, in other words, not merely the only way of understanding spectators, who perform other activities in their everyday lives, nor is spectatorship purely a function or a matter of one's engagement with a general screen technology (there are, for instance, different applications of screens and fenestration).

Most importantly, however, a spatial materialism's focus on the site where screen media are engaged within the routes of the everyday lives of social classes, bodies, and populations moves away from the question of the power of screen media over a subject-spectator to a question of the relative physical access and relative mobility of social classes and populations to and from these sites – across an environment and within a socio-spatial arrangement of screen media "facilities" (i.e., those places/zones that are available to these classes and populations). What, for instance, was involved in making nickelodeons available to women, or women with children, or middle-class women, during the early twentieth century in the U.S.?[5] And what did that accessibility have to do with the regulation of women's mobility and access through places outside the

movie theater, i.e., from home, and through cities or particular zones of cities previously unavailable to them? How did the emplacement and distribution of movie theaters across particular zones of U.S. cities during the 1950s (e.g., drive-in movie theaters in the new predominately White, middle-class suburbs, as counterpoints to movie theaters for African-Americans in other parts of the city – away from the suburbs) contribute to a socio-spatial arrangement – a dispersion of facilities, and a social-governmental contract about where particular classes and populations could and should go, where they felt secure and thus capable of enjoying themselves, of recreating. The question of how, for instance, television came to matter within the construction of the suburban house/household during the 1950s and 1960s in the U.S. had to do with a set of possible sites available or unavailable to different classes and populations outside homes and across cities. A spatial materialism, in this respect, is not just about the emplacement of screen media but of how mobilities become productive of social space and of broader socio-spatial arrangements that govern the lives (the movements and intersections) of various classes and populations. As I intend to explain below, social mobilities/travelings are productive of social space and the distribution/arrangement that regulates access.

Both of these implications point to historical as well as spatial considerations. A spatial materialism's concern about how spaces are produced, fashioned, organized, secured, and managed, or how spaces become productive of livability, recreation, privacy, security, and governance for particular classes and populations, both involve figuring out how the production of space has occurred amidst emerging and residual distributions/arrangements that relied partly upon screen media technology. That movie theaters in the old downtown areas of U.S. cities during the 1950s became sites of struggle over practices of racial segregation had everything to do with a changing forms of access and mobility by different classes and populations in different zones of these cities. Or that the struggles at these sites contributed to the transformation during the early 1970s of certain downtown theaters into facilities where young White and African-American movie-goers watched Blaxploitation and Kung-fu films,[6] or that urban movie theaters were transformed between the 1960 and 1980s into various cultural facilities (discos, coffee shops) that sustained/hastened program of urban gentrification which displaced an underclass and racial populations that occupied these zones during the period of mass suburbanization, all are examples of how the formation of new social spaces occur through/over prior ones, and how social spaces become productive of changing paths and mobilities.

The historical issue of the technological transition (transformation) of screen media that this special issue takes as its object of study is not a separate matter from the question of transit – of access and mobility, and just as importantly of how screen media have been integral to forms/technologies of mobility, of how screen media move and transport bodies in their relation to available forms and technologies of mobility. The Toyota advertisement offers one way of thinking about this issue not only because it recasts the automobile (or more precisely the mini-van, which has its own cultural pedigree and social history in the U.S.) as a theater on wheels, but also because it makes explicit the changing relation between the house (as an enclosed, relatively fixed sphere of watching screen media) and the forms of transport such as the automobile on which a particular regime of housing and household have relied. If the domestic sphere has been a space from which one is connected to other sites through television, then

how has it produced, and been produced by, social uses and cultural forms of transport outside the home? That the TV ad for the Toyota mini-van represents the relation between cinema/television and mobility as new, as a "new media convergence" perpetuates an epochalist impulse (evident also in writing about new information technology) that ignores the longstanding (albeit changing) relation of screen media and spectatorship to regimes of mobility, and the even more longstanding relation between communication and transportation, which has been central to the organization and governance of modern societies.[7] In this sense, it also is worth recognizing how the ad's formulation of a new convergence occurs through changing regimes of mobility.

In a certain sense, these were questions and issues that Raymond Williams addressed in his argument (against McLuhanism and a technological determinism of "media") that television emerged, when it did, where it did, the way it did, and as rapidly as it did, within new regimes of privacy and mobility – what he termed "mobile privatization."[8] Williams's introductory chapter about technology and society is instructive for this special issue on the "transitions" of screen media because he emphasizes television as a technological assemblage of emerging and residual technical devices that coalesced into a "social technology" and a broad set of social investments. Williams's account of television's historical relation to mobile privatization is decidedly an account of a new socio-spatial arrangement wherein domestic life was increasingly situated "at a distance," though Williams is more interested in explaining television than in explaining television's instrumentality within this arrangement. Nor did he elaborate substantively the various forms of mobility to which the expression "mobile privatization" refers. Although Williams's account of television recognizes the role of tele-technologies such as television (technologies for sensing/knowing over distance) in articulating privacy and domesticity to mobility, the account stops short of considering the changing relation between technologies of mobility and the tele-visual technologies (the social technologies of screen media), or of considering how tele-technologies were becoming integral to the emerging ideal in the U.S. of the "mobile home" and privatized mobility.

Lynn Spigel, has suggested that the emergence of portable television in the U.S. (a rapid development over the 1960s) marked a new relation between the interiority and exteriority of the domestic sphere as well as a new relation to self. Discussing the new relation between interiority and exteriority of home, she concurs with Williams's account that television developed as a means of bringing the outside world into the home, of fashioning the home as theater, but she notes that particularly during the 1960s television's portability was represented as part of an emerging mobility associated with home-life and life from home – a transformation of the "home theater" into the "mobile home" and a "vehicle of transport:"

> While early advertising promised viewers that TV would strengthen family ties by bringing the world into the living room, representations of portable receivers inverted this logic. Rather than incorporating views of the outdoor world into the home, now television promised to bring the interior world outdoors.[9]

Spigel suggests that the representation of television's portability, in relation to fashioning the home as mobile (i.e., transporting oneself outside through a new television design-concept), contributed to a new social ideal and investment: "privatized mobility." While inverting Williams's term may not substantively change his term's reference

to a new regime of privacy and mobility, Spigel rightly demonstrates the importance not only of locating television on the paths to, from, and within households, but of considering how tele-technologies became integral to the movement of bodies that defined the relation of home to itself and to an outside. Furthermore, portable TV as "privatized mobility" (understood as a new relation between the interiority or exteriority of domesticity) suggests for Spigel a new relation to self, the smaller scale of portable TV representing and actualizing the personalization of TV-watching in a period before narrowcasting. (The personalization of the TV through its miniaturization and portability was, in this respect, a condition for the subsequent emergence of satellite/cable-TV and narrowcasting.) Elaborating the implications of a new relation to domesticity's interiority/exteriority and of a new relation to self, Spigel thus devotes considerable attention to the house as a "vehicle of transport"[10] in order to discuss gendered forms of access and mobility at home and from home. Her essay's focus on television in the domestic sphere, however, stops short of considering a development that was crucial to refashioning television and the home as conjoined/interdependent "vehicles of transport" (portable TV as an accouterment of mobile bodies and of homes designed for them): how the relation between transport and communication (a regime of tele-technologies such as television) pertained to auto-mobility as a broad social investment and ideal.

As Williams's account of television affirmed, television's rapid emergence was integral to and dependent upon a new relation between transportation and communication. Though he never specifically mentions the automobile and highway/freeway system as technologies shaping the new regime of mobility and privacy of tele-visuality in everyday life, it is not difficult to extrapolate from his account that television's rapid and particular development, in relation to programs of mass suburbanization, occurred through these and other mechanisms and practices of transfer – a broad socio-spatial arrangement predicated upon these mechanisms.[11] By "auto-mobility" I refer not simply to the car. The car has become easily the object most often identified with the term automobility. I am more interested in "auto" as a reference to the self (e.g., automatic/self-acting, auto-mated/self-generating, auto-nomous/self-sufficient) and in the articulation of "auto" to various practices, knowledges, and rules pertaining to mobility – to the transported self. In this sense, the car is one technology of the (transported) self which relied upon other technologies of transport (such as television) to accomplish – to shape the capacities of – particular forms of corporeal access and mobility through a socio-spatial arrangement.[12] How, in this respect, did the car, in its relation to television and other tele-technologies, support auto-mobility as a social investment and civic ideal (a form of active citizenship and a technology of "free individuals" and self-sufficiency), particularly in the U.S. after World War Two? This question does not presume that auto-mobility abruptly developed as an ideal after World War Two or only in those regions where television rapidly and massively became part of everyday life; on the contrary, it directs attention to the historical and geographic relation between the car and various tele-technologies such as television in part to rethink television's historic relation to the home or other enclosed, relatively immobile spheres of activity. The portability of television (as part of new relation between the interiority and exteriority of domestic life, and as part of a new relation to self) pertained to auto-mobility as a new, dominant social investment and civic ideal.

By considering auto-mobility (and televisuality and the car) this way also calls attention not only to the house as a "vehicle of transport" but to the car as a technology of

communication – as media understood within a different logic of mediation than has tended to drive media studies' emphasis upon the transformation of media within media practices. There are several points to make briefly on this issue. First, the car has always been an assemblage of communication technologies (e.g., tail-lights, turning indicators, license plates) that became part of car-design and use even before the advent of car-radios in the 1930s. Many of these devices have linked the freedoms of automobility, as driving, with programs and techniques of surveillance and governance – with driving as a form of ethical behavior (road conduct) and thus as a form of citizenship.[13] Second, in certain respects the application of the radio in cars (as a form of auto-mobility) preceded the emergence of television's application to the domestic sphere. Throughout the 1930s the radio in civilian cars became a portable/personalized form of entertainment, and by the late 1930s, the radio was a standard feature of cars in the U.S. Furthermore, as a portable technology of listening, linked to a technology of transport (that itself was used for numerous social activities), the car radio became linked with a technology of visuality. The car windshield, windows, and mirrors made driving with the radio a new form of personalized/privatized tele-visuality (i.e., visuality over distance). Third, the car in the U.S. could accommodate a number of passengers and by the 1930s was becoming a form of family-travel. Following the Second World War, cars increasingly were designed and promoted as family-vehicles (vehicles of a historical, social model of family). The station-wagon, for instance, was one of the technologies adapted to a new regime of mobility for a post-World War Two model of family-travel and family-touring. However, as the number of cars per family in the U.S. increased over the 1950s (i.e., as women and youth acquired their own vehicles), transportation became further personalized. The portability of television, therefore, pertained to a regime of mobility that surrounded – that lay outside – the house, even as the portability of television was linking the design and uses of the (suburban) house with driving. As a social investment and a civic ideal – as a practice of freedom, governance, and security – watching television and driving became inter-dependent technologies of citizenship suited for a new socio-spatial arrangement predicated upon a new regime of (auto-mobility). While the sociality and civic ideals of the "family television" and the "family car" survive, rearticulated (as the Toyota-ad demonstrates) to a new convergence of communication and transport, their survival occurs in relation to the forms/technologies of portability and personalization of both media/communication and driving.

Spigel rightly notes that television's portability adhered to the ideal of "active citizenship" formalized in part through Kennedy's New Frontier-era programs (e.g., of physical fitness and social involvement), but active citizenship was nothing short of a new way of enacting/performing citizenship through technologies of mobility that emphasized or were seen as "freeing" the self (and through portability and technologies of transport, as posing a new set of governmental questions/problems about governing and making safe bodies in motion). The transported self and its concomitant forms of citizenship (freedoms, self-governance, self-security) occurred as much through television's portability as through the personalization and portability of other media technologies and through various technologies of transport – in short, a regime of auto-mobility. In this respect, the link between active citizenship and auto-mobility has been integral to a changing reasoning in the U.S. about freedom and governance – about the reinvention of liberal governance. While tracing the historical trajectory of neo-liberalism lies beyond the limitations of this essay, my account of that trajectory would

emphasize both the contradictions of "active citizenship" during the 1960s (how the 1960s negotiated forms of social responsibility through a new entrepreneurialism) and the re-articulation and deepening of active forms of citizenship, along with the portability and personalization of communication/media technologies, after the 1960s. The television ad for Toyota is significant in this respect because it represents how the driving- and televisual-self converge at a new intersection of urban and suburban life as well as a new relation in the twenty-first century with the legacy/inheritance of forms of portability, personalization, and active citizenship – a regime of mobility and privacy – from the 1960s. The ad's promotion of new installations of screen media in the family-vehicle are about reinventing the "mini-van," as the 1980s version of the 1950s station-wagon (after the 1960s articulation of the van with the freedoms of "liberation-movements" and a "counter-culture"), but the ad also promotes a self/citizen/consumer whose possibilities depend upon navigating a changing socio-spatial arrangement (suburb, city, street, and the mobility of particular classes/populations) through a new convergence between media and transportation technologies. Auto-mobility in the 21th century U.S. refers to the articulation and hardwiring of physical and virtual travel, such that a July 2003 newspaper ad for the latest General Motors products uses the headline, "Putting the Pedal to the Microchip: Today's GM Cars and Trucks Are as Much about Brainpower as They Are about Horsepower," to list the numerous ways that their vehicles are improved through media/communication technology: "From DVD players that entertain the kids, to XM Satellite Radios that entertain you, [in addition to Global Positioning technology] we use technology to make driving better."[14]

"Improving" the car – making the car, video, and driver "smart" – is, in these examples, nothing short of a program for improving citizens as drivers of media and transport, of fashioning a new, inter-active consumer/citizen/self, and thus of advancing liberalism onto a changing socio-spatial arrangement wherein freedom, governance, and security are questions of how and where one can travel.

1   James Hay, "Piecing Together What Remains of the Cinematic City," in David B. Clarke (ed.), The Cinematic City (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 209-229; James Hay, "Locating the Televisual," Television and New Media, Vol. 2, no. 3 (August 2001), pp. 205-234.

2   Henri Lefebvre, La Production de l'espace (Paris: Anthropos, 1974); trans. The Production of Space (London: Blackwell, 1991).

3   Anna McCarthy, Ambient Television (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

4   Andrew Barry, Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society (London: Athlone, 2002).

5   Lauren Rabinovitz, For the Love of Pleasure (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

6   See James Hay, "Rethinking the Intersection of Cinema and Youth," Scope, http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/journal/ (June 2002).

7   Armand Mattelart, L'Invention de la communication (Paris : La Découverte, 1994); trans. The Invention of Communication (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

8   Raymond Williams, Television: Technology and Cultural Form (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1992).

9   Lynn Spigel, "Portable TV: Studies in Domestic Space Travel," in Welcome to the Dreamhouse:

Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 71.

10 Ibid., p. 65.

11 See John Hartley, The Uses of Television (London: Routledge, 1999).

12 James Hay, Jeremy Packer, "Crossing the Media(n): Auto-mobility, the Transported Self, and Technologies of Freedom," in Nick Couldry, Anna McCarthy (eds.), Media/Space (London-New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 209-232.

13 Ibid. See also James Hay, "Unaided Virtues: The (Neo-)Liberalization of the Domestic Sphere and the New Architecture of Community," in Jack Bratich, Jeremy Packer, Cameron McCarthy (eds.), Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003); Jeremy Packer, Mobility without Mayhem: Mass Mediating Safety and Automobility (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

14 New York Times (July 17, 2003), pp. 14-15.