

## When Commodities Attack: Reading Narratives of the Great Recession and Late Capitalism in Contemporary Horror Films

Sean Brayton

Correspondence: Sean Brayton, Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education, Associate Professor, University of Lethbridge, Canada

Received: October 7, 2013 Accepted: October 22, 2013 Available online: November 8, 2013

doi:10.11114/smc.v1i2.234

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11114/smc.v1i2.234>

### Abstract

This paper examines recent horror films in the US in relationship to the economic collapse of 2008 and the Great Recession. Using *Rubber* (2010) and *Iron Invader* (2011), it explores how the “killer commodity” resonates with working-class anxieties of dispossession and disposability, especially in the auto industries of the places where the films are set and produced: the US and France. The films tap into a rich tradition of presenting capitalist relations through occultist narratives, relying on “monsters” and mayhem to dramatize some of the conditions and confusion surrounding recent economic crises. The “absurd” use of animated objects—a psychotic pneumatic tire in *Rubber* and a Golem made of discarded automobile parts in *Iron Invader*—invites a wider discussion of capitalism and social theory, including Marx’s exposition of “dead labor” and commodity fetishism. On the one hand, the object can only come to life and terrorize the American town if the social history of its production is missing from the plot of each film. On the other hand, the discarded but “demonic” commodity is a frightening projection of objectified labor, one that doubles as an increasingly expendable but volatile worker found in the recent redundancies and protests at tire and automotive factories in the US and France.

**Keywords:** commodity fetishism, dead labor, horror films, Great Recession, automobile industry

### 1. Introduction

On 14 February 2008 workers at the Kléber (Michelin) tire factory in Toul, France, held two managers hostage for three days in protest of the company’s plan to cut 826 jobs. Though the incident occurred on the cusp of the global financial crisis and ended when the company agreed to increase redundancy payments, it initiated a wave of “bossnappings” and labor uprisings across France over the next two years. With the “Great Recession” in full swing by March 2009, bossnappings were widely reported at French factories owned by Sony, 3M, Continental Tires, Caterpillar and Scapa with similar events taking place in the spring and summer at Molex, Raguet and a Michelin plant in Montceau-les-Mines (Parsons, 2013). In early 2010, plant managers at Akers Metal, Pier Import, Siemens, Sullair Europe and Giraud International were held hostage by French workers incensed over planned cutbacks and redundancies (Kirk, 2009). By the end of March 2010 fifteen bossnappings were reported, offering an astounding display of French labor militancy unseen since May 1968 when workers occupied more than 122 factories, including four Renault auto plants (Streenan, 1993). As labor historian Nick Parsons (2013) explains, each of the events marked a strategic occupation of the factory and “symbolic violence” against managers and administrators of mostly foreign-owned plants in France. The most volatile confrontation occurred in March 2009 when workers at the Continental tire factory in Clairoux occupied civic offices and demanded that factory owners and politicians reverse the company’s decision to cut 1,120 jobs. Outraged by looming unemployment and corporate “bailouts” across Europe and North America, organizers set fire to piles of discarded tires in the office parking lot, marking an apparently hostile response to corporate predation during the Great Recession.

Less than two months after the last bossnapping incident, French director Quentin Dupieux released *Rubber* (2010), a minimalist horror film about a discarded pneumatic tire named Robert that becomes sentient and terrorizes a small town in the Mojave Desert. After awakening in a scrap yard, the tire discovers it has psychokinetic powers that allow him to destroy objects and any person that crosses his path. Enraged at the sight of a burning heap of unwanted tires—not unlike the rubber inferno in Clairoux—Robert grows especially nefarious and strikes out at the town folk. For many film critics, *Rubber* was an absurd(ist) experiment in French

comedy, a “silly thing” that resembled a “parody of a zombie flick ... where a discarded rubber tire rises up, like a reanimated corpse from beyond the great American automobile grave” (O’Sullivan, 2011, p. 5). At best, the film was praised as an offbeat art-house horror, as if “Luis Buñuel or Samuel Beckett made a ‘70s exploitation film” (Accomando, 2011, p. 3). Other critics, however, derided the film for these precise reasons, calling it a “drunken mash-up” that “gets caught in a rut, spinning its wheels and generating a whole lot of unpleasant smoke” (Meyers, 2011, p. 7). In light of Dupieux’s minimalism and postmodern aesthetic, most film critics situated *Rubber* in a *cinematic* rather than a *social* history, comparing the film to other anthropomorphic horrors like *Duel* (1971), *Christine* (1983) and *Maximum Overdrive* (1986). The tire, in other words, was disconnected from the conditions of its production.

At first glance, any relationship between *Rubber* and disgruntled factory workers at Michelin or Continental, for instance, may seem accidental and farfetched. On its own, the absurdist horror film is a commentary on spectatorship and exploitation cinema rather than a treatise on French labor politics. In the context of the Great Recession, however, the semiotic possibilities of *Rubber* are considerably narrowed; the film’s subversive meanings ripen in a leitmotif defined by class struggle and global economic crisis. In other words, there may be a critical dialogue between a French-produced horror film about a rampaging tire and labor uprisings at French tire and automotive factories, where seven of the fifteen bossnappings took place. The question arises, if popular culture provides a space where social and economic problems are revealed and concealed, what do recent horror films tell us about the Great Recession and financial crises? To trace a broader theme of “killer commodities” and economic turmoil, I situate *Rubber* alongside the US horror film *Iron Invader* (2011), where a Golem made of junked automobile parts terrorizes a small town in the throes of the recession. As I argue below, the “absurd” use of animated objects (the psychotic pneumatic tire and old car parts) invites a wider discussion of capitalism and social theory, including Marx’s exposition of “dead labor” and commodity fetishism. In both films, discarded but demonic car parts can be read as a narrative proxy for dispossession and disposability in the automobile industries, which were hit especially hard by the economic “meltdown” in the places where the films are set and produced: the US and France. While the effects of the economic crisis are geopolitically nuanced, *Rubber* and *Iron Invader* speak to common conditions of unemployment and expendability in both the US and French auto industries, providing ominous if unusual labor commentaries.

## 2. Method

More than merely entertainment, horror films often reflect and react against wider cultural trends, political paradigms and economic conditions. They do so, of course, in ambivalent ways; some films are progressive in imagining the collapse of a dominant social structure while other films are conservative in reasserting a stifling gender order of chaste femininity and heroic white masculinity (see Wood, 1989; Clover, 1993; Creed, 1993). Embedded within horror films are social and political anxieties that define the historical juncture in which they are made and consumed. Using what Douglas Kellner calls a “contextual cultural studies” approach, my analysis of horror films unpacks the meanings and ideologies of each text as symptomatic of specific socioeconomic settings. For Kellner, this involves “doing ideological analysis within the context of social theory and social history” and identifying moments in which the text produces paradoxical messages that encourage conformity and sometimes conflict with dominant social and political mores (1995, p. 103). Horror films, in particular, have the “definitive capacity both to disgust and fascinate” in a realm where the “frenzied subject of excess” is pitted against the “struggling moral subject” (Gelder, 2000, pp. 4, 3). Amidst the gore and gruesomeness of horror films, desires and disorders are magnified, drawing our attention to conditions and contradictions that are often overlooked or willfully obfuscated in more quotidian genres.

To draw out the connections between horror films and class politics, for instance, I rely on a textual analysis of both *Rubber* and *Iron Invader*. Though a textual analysis is often designed to explain how power relations are both present and absent within a text (i.e., film, television episode, novel, song, newsprint article, etc.), it also examines how certain meanings and ideologies become “naturalized through repetition” across the fields of both popular and political culture (McAlister, 2001, p. 8). In other words, a textual analysis questions “how the culture industries produce specific artefacts that reproduce the social discourses which are embedded in the key conflicts and struggles of the day” (Kellner, 1995, pp. 3-4). In keeping with this method, I read *Rubber* and *Iron Invader* within the historical moment of their production, which includes some virulent labor struggles, widespread layoffs and a recurring theme of expendability during the Great Recession. My analysis of horror films, then, works to explain how “cultural productions help make meanings by their historical association with other types of meaning-making activity,” like labor conflicts in the US and France and “redundancies” that followed the economic meltdown of 2008 (McAlister, 2001, p. 8). Evidently, my aim is not to uncover some hidden meaning of a text but rather to explain how the horror films articulate and mature in relation to other economic, political and cultural narratives of a specific historical moment.

### 3. Horror Films and Capitalism

Some of the underlying connections between horror films and (late) capitalism are well documented by film scholars, sociologists and cultural critics. Robin Wood's classic analysis of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), for example, draws out the horrors of capitalist production and dispossession of a group of deranged slaughterhouse workers. For Wood, "the psychotic family, representatives of an exploited and degraded proletariat" partake in cannibalism, which signifies "the logical end of human relations under capitalism" where "people have the right to live off other people" (1985, pp. 212, 219). Along related lines, Robert Arnold explores how the *Terminator* films reflect workplace anxieties during the late 1980s, especially fears of automation and obsolescence in the auto industry. As Arnold argues, *The Terminator* (1984) and its cyborg villain express acute phobias of technology at a time when the working class in the US had significant concerns over "job termination" and "replacement by a machine that [would work] better, faster, cheaper and without seeking better working conditions or higher pay" (1998, p. 24). In both *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and the *Terminator* series, "monsters" are created by capitalism, specifically factory production and a looming dehumanization of the workforce.

Evidently, the "monster" has been a prominent feature of horror, oftentimes emblematic of not only racial fantasies (see James, 1990; Newitz, 2006) but also industrial and intellectual production. In her sweeping survey of US popular culture, Annalee Newitz discusses how some of the most memorable monster stories—from *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), *Pi* (1998) and *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) to *Videodrome* (1983), *Nightbreed* (1990) and *American Psycho* (2000)—are salient allegories for economic contradictions "where making a living often feels like dying" (2006, p. 2). For Newitz, characters as diverse as "mad scientists", ghouls, vampires and zombies can be linked to the alienation of both physical and mental labor. The monster, in other words, is conditioned by the extraction of surplus value whereby capital takes possession of the worker's body and mind. And so the monster—most notably the zombie—often doubles as a cautionary tale against capitalist exploitation, on the one hand, and a proletarian uprising, on the other. As David McNally suggests, these occultist narratives of capital work to "disturb the naturalization of capitalism ... by insisting that something strange, indeed life-threatening, is at work in our world" (2011, p. 5). To this end, horror films often expose and dramatize the inner workings of capitalist accumulation and a labor process that is otherwise hidden. For McNally, this is readily present in a range of historical narratives beyond film, from Mary Shelley's prototypic *Frankenstein* (1818) and zombie folklore of West Africa to the monstrous metaphors of Karl Marx.

From hobgoblins and gravediggers to phantoms and specters, the paranormal was a recurring trope in much of Marx's work. More than merely decorative prose, his conjuring of the supernatural was used to reveal the real horrors of modern societies where objects became humanized and humans became objectified. Capital, Marx suggested, was like a vampire that feeds on "living labor" and conducts its most eviscerating exploits in the shadows of production; in the world of commodities "capital's bloodsucking is unseen" (McNally, 2011, p. 140). As an outcome of what he famously called the fetishism of commodities, the dead dominate the living. Here the commodity is the embodiment of "dead labor": a person's productive capacities petrified in an object s/he neither recognizes nor owns. When the social history of its production is concealed, however, the object gains "magical powers" and appears autonomous, autogenetic and untouched by human hands. It "stands opposed" to the worker as an "*alien being, as a power independent of the producer*" (Marx, 1932, p. 95). In the interests of capital, living labor seems to exist merely to service dead labor (tools, assembly lines, factories, computers, etc.), "to penetrate it with an animating soul while losing its own soul to it" (Marx, 1939, p. 455). The dead, then, dominate the living when the workday and conditions of production for the worker are dictated by the machine s/he produced, creating a real (not illusory) rift between living labor and its creations.

This particular tension between objects and their human creators assumes paranormal dimensions under capitalism and has become a popular subgenre within horror. Indeed, there are notable similarities between the "magic and necromancy" of the commodity in Marx's work and the demonic possession of objects and household appliances in a bevy of horror films (1976, p. 169). From a murderous laundry press in *The Mangler* (1973) and a demonic automobile in *Christine* (1983) to a carnivorous bedstead in *Death Bed* (1977) and a terrorizing kitchen appliance in *The Refrigerator* (1991), homicidal objects have often influenced the imagination of horror filmmakers in the US. But the pièce de résistance is Stephen King's *Maximum Overdrive* (1986), a campy horror film about machines, trucks and electrical devices that run amok and terrorize working-class communities in North Carolina after a rogue comet circles the earth. The film provides a sardonic and gruesome inversion of consumer culture (compounded by the soundtrack of "Who Made Who?" by AC/DC). Of course, in each of these films commodities do not merely dance at the marketplace, as they once did in Marx's analogy; instead, they maim and murder, turning the fetishism into a veritable nightmare!

#### 4. Horror Films of the Great Recession: “Dead Labor” and the Killer Commodity

As horror films and monster stories are rehearsed “over time, their meanings gradually shift to reflect changing social conditions and economic anxieties” (Newitz, 2006, p. 6). Although the “killer commodity” is not a recent development in horror, it acquires new meanings in an era marked by a scourge of unemployment, toxic mortgages and a frenzy of foreclosures that precipitated the global economic meltdown. While the causes and consequences of the economic collapse are most explicit in documentaries like *Meltdown* (2009), *Capitalism: A Love Story* (2010), *Inside Job* (2010) and *Detropia* (2012) as well as Hollywood dramas like *Up in the Air* (2009), *The Company Men* (2010) and *Margin Call* (2011), they have recently crept into horror cinema in coded ways. In the *Paranormal Activity* series (2007, 2012), *Insidious* (2010), *Dream House* (2011) and *The Innkeepers* (2011), for example, the trope of demonic possession and the haunted house resonates with the displacement and despair arising from the mortgage crisis in the US (Newitz, 2013). In many of these narratives, affluent families are tormented by the ghosts and specters of former inhabitants bent on “repossession,” forcing the families to downsize or foreclose on their mortgages entirely. The allegory of the specter is perhaps most prescient in *Vanishing on 7<sup>th</sup> Street* (2010), where a wave of mysterious shadows abducts the residents of a downtrodden and now-bankrupt Detroit, leaving a barren and post-apocalyptic cityscape. Alongside such horror films we find *Rubber* and *Iron Invader*, both of which provide a sardonic spin on “possession” narratives of late capitalism by referencing industries of material production caught in the crosshairs of downsizing and redundancies after 2008. As narrative companions, the films dramatize the effects of late capitalism in the automobile industry by appealing to the occult, specifically animated objects that appear to be under demonic possession. They also speak to a political economy of trash in late capitalism whereby communities are tormented by the objects they once discarded.

##### 4.1 *Rubber*

*Rubber* is a “conceptual horror comedy” that contains multiple plot lines that add to its surprising complexity. Though mostly an absurdist tale of a pneumatic tire that begins killing people in the Mojave Desert, *Rubber* is heavily self-reflexive, especially in its relationship to its audiences. It features a group of spectators positioned above the town watching through binoculars as the terror unfolds. The film opens with the town’s sheriff posing a series of purportedly rhetorical questions to the audience, concluding that “all great films, without exception, contain an important element of ‘no reason’.” Shortly after the sheriff’s disclaimer we meet Robert: the animated tire that lays half-buried in the desert. In the scrap yard, Robert is surrounded by rusted metal and debris as well as decaying appliances, furniture and car parts long since abandoned by their owners. The wasteland of scrapped commodities provides a visual commentary on expendability and obsolescence from which Robert emerges. It is, in fact, this notion of disposability that ignites the tire’s psychotic behavior. The real mayhem of the film ensues when Robert watches mechanics toss old tires onto a flaming heap of rubbish. He responds by maiming and murdering most of the town folk, but is eventually destroyed by Lieutenant Chad, who tosses the carcass of the tread at the last remaining audience member. It soon becomes apparent, however, that Robert has been reincarnated as a rickety tricycle, which awakens to recruit a brigade of fellow unwanted tires that heads for Hollywood.

Evidently, the “vulcanized vigilante” of *Rubber* displays a variety of human characteristics and even a name that is, in French, a near-homonym for the film’s title (Lacey, 2011, p. 7). Early in the film Robert wobbles upright and rolls through the desolate landscape to the chorus of “I Don’t Want to be Lonely” by the soul group Main Ingredient, implying that the tire is somehow searching for love and companionship. Indeed, the tire is rife with human emotion and is taken with curiosity, excitement, joy, fatigue and lust. It relaxes in a motel room, watches television, cleans itself and ogles the film’s French starlet bathing in a motel shower. Robert, it turns out, is heavily gendered in this scene of classic voyeurism. And yet Robert also feels pain and disappointment when struck by a careless driver and evicted from his motel room. The tire even admires its own reflection in a dusty mirror and reflects on his journey. He later becomes enraged at the sight of a burning pile of tire trash, a horrific event that precipitates the tire’s killing spree. Some of the human characters attempt to converse with Robert and pursue him as a wanted criminal. His fugitive status is satirically confirmed when a deputy asks Lieutenant Chad if the suspect is black, conflating the tire’s appearance with racial stereotypes of criminality. While the audience is encouraged to find “no reason” for the lively tire, and is thereby discouraged from engaging in critique, the animation of the object relates to specific phenomena under late capitalism, most notably commodity fetishism.

While domination was a defining attribute of pre-capitalist economic systems, “only under capitalism does this take the form of the dominance of *things* over men” (Pilling, 1980, p. 5). In the first volume of *Capital*, Marx explains how otherwise inanimate objects apparently spring to life at the marketplace, born of a social pathology known as commodity fetishism. As an object becomes disconnected from the conditions and circumstances of its

production, “the definite social relations between men” assume “the fantastic form of a relation between things,” allowing the object to become autonomous and anthropomorphic (Marx, 1887, p. 165). Objects like tables, coats, boots and tires confront each other and their makers as “things” independent of labor and the relations of production. For example, once a table emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will. (Marx, 1887, pp. 163-4)

In *Rubber*, the “grotesque idea” is double-coded to mean not only the consciousness of the tire but, moreover, its ability to consciously kill. What the characters perceive as a violent but no less real relationship with a tire is actually a relationship with the tire’s maker, the factory workers. Since the tire can only become animated and homicidal when severed from the workers that produced it, *Rubber* presents a cautionary tale of late capitalism that warns against the violence of abstraction as well as the obfuscation of labor and the conditions of production within and beyond the automotive industry. Here the animated commodity is a haunting repository of abstract or “dismembered” human labor (McNally, 2011, p. 4). It “assumes an external existence” and “stands opposed to [them] as an autonomous power ... an alien and hostile force” (Marx, 1932, p. 96).

The connections between the murderous commodity in *Rubber* and the violence of capitalism become more lucid alongside the real conditions of production at tire factories. Though often considered a “boon for humanity,” the rubber industry was synonymous with drudgery and “remained Dickensian until well into the twentieth century” (Tully, 2011, p. 51). Tire workers in the US and abroad were often exposed to harmful chemicals like benzene and carbon bisulfide, which induced hallucinations, as well as aniline dye that turned the workers’ skin blue from cyanosis (Tully, 2011). Blighted by a history of deplorable working conditions, colonial violence and exploitation in the Congo as well as notorious union-busting tactics (see Tully, 2011), the US tire industry was also shaken by the bankruptcies of Chrysler and General Motors (GM) in 2009. In the US, the economic collapse brought the closures of seven tire plants, resulting in 5,168 fewer workers in the industry than in 2004 (Weisman, 2009). In 2009, workers of fifteen tire plants went on strike against Goodyear’s closure of its factory in Tyler, Texas (Sullivan, 2009). At the same time, tire factories in France were besieged with violent confrontations and protests. Angered by the loss of 1,120 jobs at Continental Tire in Clairoux and 1,173 jobs at Goodyear in Amiens, rubber workers “stacked up and set fire to an enormous pile of tires” in 2009 and again in 2013 (Beardsley, 2013, p. 18). As a union leader in Clairoux proclaimed, “We’ve stopped being sheep. We’ve become lions” (Kirk, 2009). For five years, production at the Goodyear plant has been eclipsed by failed negotiations and frayed relations between management and workers, who remain opposed to an ostensibly Faustian deal that saves some jobs but “puts new strains on the workers” (Erlanger, 2013, p. 3). What this sketch suggests, then, is that rubber workers are both essential and expendable to the interests of capital, much like the pneumatic tire’s relationship to the automobile and modernity. Indeed, “beneath the surface impressions of this banal commodity we call rubber is a whole buried world of social relations” (Tully, 2011, p. 14).

In *Rubber* labor is mostly an “absent presence,” hidden from the audience but “embodied” in an object and “turned into a physical thing” (Marx, 1932, p. 95). Again, the tire can only come to life and terrorize the town if the social history of its production is missing from the plot. The unseen workers provide the commodity with life and the narrative with surplus value; no story exists without the animated tire, which cannot exist without human labor and its obfuscation. By this logic, *Rubber* presents an abridged reflection of labor history told through the exploits of the anthropomorphic tire, allowing us to trace the doubling confusion between the living and the dead. Whereas no industrial workers are present in the film, the tire itself contains human labor in a “reified” form, resulting in a “contradiction between the personification of objects and the representation of persons by things” (Marx, 1887, p. 128). Worn and discarded, the nefarious tire is a frightening projection of objectified labor; it doubles as an increasingly expendable but volatile worker found in the recent redundancies and protests at tire factories in both the US and France. Although *Rubber* supports a capitalist narrative where the commodity becomes “mystifying,” the film’s critical potential emerges when the mystifying commodity grows violent and seeks revenge on the other characters. In the film’s twisted but cautionary tale of late capitalism, the objectification and commodification of human labor creates not only an object fetish but also a physical threat to human lives, especially those of the working class.

In many ways, *Rubber* is rich with working-class signifiers: Robert’s first victim wears a denim outfit and leather work gloves and drives a 1970s Ford pick-up truck with a toolbox in the flatbed; Robert’s second victim works as a chambermaid and wears a faded teal uniform that matches the dusty and dilapidated exterior of the “Easy Rest Inn”; the mechanics wear sleeveless shirts, “trucker hats” and bandanas as they throw used tires onto a burning heap, a scene that sends Robert into tailspin of rage and revenge; after killing one character, Robert sits in a recliner to watch NASCAR racing, a sporting event embraced if not absorbed by southern redneck culture.

Although the animated tire can be read as an objectification of labor—a sympathetic and symptomatic symbol of the working class—*Rubber* is a far cry from a proletarian revenge narrative. Instead, it is the working class most victimized by Robert. The rural setting, kitschy motel decor and characters' wardrobes point to the class status of Robert's victims, who are clearly not affluent urbanites. The film's denouement, however, suggests a more directed assault as Robert and a gang of used tires roll through suburbia and perch beneath the famous Hollywood sign, poised to unleash terror on Tinseltown. While the ending suggests a version of violence targeting middle-class America and the culture industry, it is the rural folk that are "wasted" in the service of refining Robert's psychotic skills. In *Rubber*, the working-class characters are just as disposable as the tire itself. The film provides a twisted nightmare in which a quotidian product created, consumed and discarded by a working-class community returns to terrorize it.

But the film discourages the audience from drawing firm conclusions, class-based or otherwise. Before the mayhem unfolds, Lieutenant Chad delivers a prologue to the audience, asking rhetorically "Why don't the people in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* ever go to the bathroom or wash their hands like people do in real life? In *The Pianist*, why is Adrien Brody hiding from the Nazis when he can play such beautiful music?" The (misleading) answer, Lieutenant Chad reveals is "no reason" at all. His remarks aim to predigest *Rubber* for us, but neither he nor the director can determine the film's discursive effects, that is, how certain themes, settings and even objects relate to other texts and trends in popular and political culture. In other words, Lieutenant Chad, and perhaps Dupieux himself, treats the film as a fetish commodity disconnected from the social history of its production and reception, including widespread labor disputes in the tire industry. The film "seems to come to us as if by magic, and not out of social relationships and various means of production" (Newitz, 2006, p. 21). And yet *Rubber* hints at some power relations between the audience and producer, particularly when the diegetic viewers are poisoned by tainted turkey and left for dead. The impresario of the ordeal, however, is always off-screen and heard only through an assistant that speaks with him on a telephone ("Yes, Master! Very well, Master!"). So if Dupieux suggests that invisible but no less real forces guide the scenes of *cinematic* production, his "vulcanized vigilante" may suggest the same of *socioeconomic* production; both narratives are driven by unseen machinations.

#### 4.2 *Iron Invader*

Debuting on the Syfy network in February 2011—during a "recovery" period more aptly described as "economic malaise"—*Iron Invader* is set in the sleepy fictional town of Redeemer, Idaho, where the Great Recession has demoralized and disenfranchised the local residents. Set against a backdrop of "foreclosure" signs and abandoned houses, the first scene introduces us to Ethan and Jake, two brothers and construction workers struggling to "make ends meet" as they renovate a local inn. Mulling over mounting expenditures and overextended credit cards, the brothers witness a satellite plummet to earth and crash into a neighbor's farmland. Desperate to defray some of the costs of construction, the brothers retrieve the wreckage and sell the Soviet satellite to Earl, the owner of a local scrap yard where abandoned vehicles are disassembled and repurposed. An artisan of sorts, Earl is building an iron Golem from "old car parts" in celebration of the town's centennial anniversary. The satellite, however, is contaminated with "alien bacteria" that thrive on metal and "propel its host." The bacteria attach to and animate the Golem, which turns on the local residents leaving a trail of death and destruction in its stead. Held up in the local tavern, a handful of surviving residents ultimately defeat the "machine monster" by dousing the iron Golem in alcohol, which kills the unknown bacteria and returns Redeemer to a state of normalcy. Relationships are mended and estranged lovers are reunited but the town is left without the promise of economic recovery.

Unlike *Rubber*, where working-class signifiers *hint* at a general socioeconomic setting, *Iron Invader* draws explicitly on the lingering effects of the Great Recession and "economic malaise," from housing foreclosures and unemployment to outsourcing and failing businesses. As the town's bartender explains, "When times are hard, it's small towns like ours that usually get shafted." In Idaho the Great Recession exacerbated the state's protracted economic slump, with the average wage regularly ranking near the bottom of the fifty states (Roberts, 2013). From 2008-2011, Idaho's medium hourly wage dropped from 34<sup>th</sup> to 42<sup>nd</sup> in the US and was met with widespread layoffs at Ore-Ida Foods (300 jobs), Micron Technologies Inc. (7,000 jobs), Supervalu (100 jobs) and Hewlett Packard (320 jobs) (Roberts, 2013). In addition, the housing crash brought the timber industry to a grinding halt, effecting not only lumber mills but also construction in the state (Roberts, 2013). One labor spokesman described the troubles in the construction industry as "the heart of Idaho's recession," with a loss of 10,000 jobs from 2008-2009 (Bradbury, 2011, p. 1). For some economists, steady economic growth in the state is not expected until 2014 (Bradbury, 2011). These developments would suggest that while the economy is no longer in decline, the recession continues to be felt by the residents of Idaho in a popular and very real sense (Holley, cited in Saunders, 2011).

This struggling economy provides a formidable foe in *Iron Invader* (until the iron Golem becomes “possessed”). In some ways, the entire plot unfolds from the effects of the Great Recession. Without the mortgage crisis and downturn in construction, Ethan and Jake would not have required extra money from the infected Soviet satellite they pawn to Earl. And without Earl’s junkyard of abandoned car parts (he forages for a living) the alien bacteria would have no access to a larger, more suitable host: the iron Golem. While Earl explains how the Golem was built in celebration of the town’s centennial anniversary, he also tells the brothers how the “creature” was historically used to safeguard communities against outside threats. Alongside housing foreclosures, unemployment and generally “tough times,” it becomes clear that the iron Golem is also designed to raise the spirits of the downtrodden community. What was designed as a centennial symbol of working-class posterity, however, becomes possessed and terrorizes the residents of a town where opportunities for employment, prosperity and social mobility are scarce. In the sleepy Idaho community, there are multiple malevolent forces at work—both extraterrestrial and economic—that are consolidated in the figure of the iron Golem.

The Golem of *Iron Invader* taps into a rich narrative tradition that includes Jewish folklore, German pre-Romantic literature and cautionary tales of capitalism. The modern Golem is said to emerge during the thirteenth century as a clay creation designed to protect Jewish communities from anti-Semitic aggressors (Yair and Soyer, 2008). In each legend, a lifeless statue becomes sentient and animated to work in the interests of humans. The malevolent or demonic Golem, however, was born of a “will to increase power” and vividly emerges in Goethe’s “Der Zauberlehrling” (1797), where a sorcerer’s apprentice uses magic to animate a set of brooms to finish his chores (Yair and Soyer, 2008, p. 326). The Golem narrative—especially Goethe’s version—afforded Marx an effective narrative tool to explain how material objects became fetishized to the point of impending doom (McNally, 2011). Here the “soulless, unthinking, and seemingly obedient Golems of capitalism ... slowly and unconsciously developed a logic of their own, attaining an independent and ... malevolent essence” (Yair and Soyer, 2008, p. 329). Such an entity is readily apparent in *Iron Invader*, where the Golem built from scrap metal turns on rather than protects the residents of an economically-depressed town. To this end, “the Golems produced by men through unbridled capitalism would turn the latter into machines and the former into objects possessing autonomous spirits” (Yair and Soyer, 2008, p. 334). Importantly, the Golem was defined not only by its ability to serve and protect but also by its volatility and budding self-interest, causing great concern and consternation to its creators. In Marx’s application of Goethe’s classic tale, the Golem was an arbiter of death and destruction under capitalism and thus a warning against overproduction and commodity fetishism.

And yet the Golem has a more modern incarnation in the US, a version that originated in the steel towns of Pennsylvania during the early 1900s (Slavishak, 2008). Born of immigrant communities in southwestern Pennsylvania, the legend of Joe Magarac told of a giant steel worker made of molten who lived in the mill with “arms the size of smokestacks” (Slavishak, 2008, p. 269). With an unrelenting work ethic, however, Magarac “overproduced,” which forced the mill to lay off workers and close its doors. Desperate to save both factory and town, the burly steel worker melted himself in the factory furnace, “providing enough steel for the construction of a new mill and thus ensuring that production would continue in Pittsburgh” (Slavishak, 2008, p. 270). As Ed Slavishak notes, however, the legend of Joe Magarac is rife with ambiguities that suggest, on the one hand, a romantic celebration of the working class in Pittsburgh and, on the other hand, a warning against working-class delusion and the “unthinking acceptance of millwork” (2008, p. 270); that Magarac willingly sacrificed himself for the steel company is the subject of satire and ridicule.

Like the mythical mill worker in Pennsylvania, the Golem of *Iron Invader* is made of steel and connected to industrial production, but in more symbolic ways. Here the Golem is a product of various types of labor, built of course by the junkyard owner but also, in an ancillary sense, autoworkers; the giant figure is assembled from discarded car parts including a wheel hub, rusted muffler and driveshaft. That the monster is clearly and exclusively made of car parts provides an important if unwitting commentary on the auto industry during the Great Recession and a wider discourse of disposability. The crisis of the automotive industry in the US, for instance, was precipitated by the liquidity shortfall and credit crunch of 2008, resulting in a sharp drop in sales of automobiles. Widespread layoffs and plant closures prompted massive stimulus packages in both the US (\$17.4 billion) and France (€6 billion). After appealing to Congress for an additional “bridging loan” of \$21.6 billion only one month after the approval of TARP, GM’s “restructuring” plan eliminated 47,000 jobs while Chrysler cut 3,000 jobs (Krishner & Thomas, 2009; Owram, 2009). By the spring of 2009 both GM and Chrysler filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, with an estimated 3.1 million jobs hanging in the balance (McCracken & Stoll, 2008). Although the post-TARP business models of Ford, Chrysler and GM have replaced oversized “American Steel” with fuel-efficient “practicality,” sending the US auto industry on an alleged upswing, more than forty auto plants and parts factories have “temporarily” closed since 2008 (Vlasic, 2009). It seems autoworkers in the US

have become as expendable as the cars and parts they once built, making the monster in *Iron Invader* a grim and haunting symbol of labor and its discontent. The twin themes of economic despair and disposability are consolidated in the hodgepodge horror of the iron Golem.

Since the audience is introduced to Earl, his junkyard and the conditions of production early in the film, the Golem cannot possibly come to life without a paranormal or extraterrestrial force. Hence the appearance of the “alien bacteria,” which is first diagnosed by Amanda, the divorcee biology teacher who recently returned to Redeemer for a “fresh start.” After witnessing the carnage created by the “infected” Golem, she explains how the foreign parasite “is strong enough to propel its host ... using the metal to colonize.” Apparently, the bacteria invade and deplete the energy of a host, then scurry to find another body to possess and appropriate. In the parlance of a parasite, the virus bears a strong resemblance to capital, which “sucks up the worker’s value-creating power” and requires continuous growth (Marx, 1887, p. 598). As Amanda points out, although the bacteria find “basic nutritional needs” in the Golem they are also “attracted to something in our bodies ... extracting something from our blood.” In disbelief, the bartender jokes, “Oh, great! It’s vampire bacteria.” The remark is made in jest but pertinent to the film’s social commentary. The virus requires bodies for survival; it “lives only by sucking living labour and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (Marx, 1887, p. 598). Since the film does not imply an outbreak beyond Redeemer, the only blood drawn is that of the working class. As the Golem and green ooze exsanguinate the human body, the victim’s vascularity becomes increasingly visible, bringing dark blue veins to the surface of the skin. Here the virus and capital are synonymous in their effects on the body, which becomes “possessed” and disfigured. The bacteria thrive on the residents of the working-class community, leaving it lifeless and without spirit. Built from scrap metal, the Golem of *Iron Invader* embodies what capitalism does to its workers, who are both terrorized and made terrifying by the dehumanizing conditions of production.

*Iron Invader*, then, is a science-fictional variation on the popular “possession” narratives of horror films, where a demon, succubus or specter requires a human body for sustenance. As Mike Wayne points out, “The demon, like capital, is both utterly dependent on possessing a body and at the same time utterly indifferent and hostile to the body it enters” (2005, p. 210). Embodied in the Golem, the parasite’s first victim is a construction worker, who is eviscerated and left for dead in the unfinished framing of his stalled building project. In this case, death and disorder are situated rather poignantly in the half-built wreckage at the “heart of Idaho’s recession,” presenting an important analogy between violence, possession and capitalism. Like the animated tire in *Rubber*, the Golem of *Iron Invader* is suggestive of dead labor, which thrives on the same living labor it threatens. In a strange twist, dead labor ends up dominating living labor, taking on a life of its own at the expense of the workers. As repositories of accumulated labor, commodities become personified, an ontological inversion embraced by some of the captains of American industry. In 1939, for instance, Goodyear president Paul W. Litchfield captured a personification of US industry befitting of the iron Golem:

Think of our industrial structure as a living thing, the skeleton of which is composed of metal and cement, the arterial system of which carries a life stream of oil, and the flexing muscles and sinews of which are rubber. (cited in Tully, 2011, p. 17)

Just as the “world of things” becomes increasingly humanized, the “human world” becomes increasingly objectified (Marx, 1932, p. 91). And yet a rift emerges between objects and their creators, a classic symptom of alienation. As a parasite, the intergalactic virus of *Iron Invader* is a readymade reference to what Marx calls the “alien being” that confronts the worker with hostility.

That the alien bacteria are first explained by an Idaho school teacher is not with merit, especially in light of neoliberal practices that precipitate and compound the effects of the Great Recession and the alleged economic recovery. Less than a month after *Iron Invader* debuted, Idaho governor CL “Butch” Otter signed Senate Bill 1108, what democrats called “anti-teachers” legislation that aimed to “dilute the power of public employee unions” across the state by limiting collective bargaining rights and denying new teachers tenure (Vock, 2011, p. 4). Although “right-to-work” legislation and union-busting bills have appeared with increasing regularity since 2008—especially in Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin where teachers unions gained nationwide attention in reclaiming their rights to collective bargaining—the reaction in Idaho was unusual. In a state that spends less on public education than 48 others in the US and is not typically known for labor protests, thousands of teachers, students and activists marched at the State Capitol on 9 March 2011 to protest the neoliberal measures, reasserting the importance and labor rights of public teachers (Vock, 2012). If *Iron Invaders* invites a certain politicized interpretation of the Golem and the “alien bacteria” by setting its story in the Great Recession, it (perhaps unwittingly) encourages the audience to situate the characters in a broader economic climate as well. Incidentally, the town is spared only by the heroism of a biology teacher, construction worker, police officer and



barkeeper, all working-class folk. Symbolically, it is a struggle against capital and the reification of not only working-class bodies but also the proletarianization of the middle class (in the figure of the biology teacher). Whereas most of the working-class characters are slaughtered by the animated object in *Rubber*, they somehow prevail in defeating the Golem in *Iron Invader*.

And so it seems that *Iron Invader* presents a parallax of physical and intellectual labor, from carpenters and carmakers to craftsmen and teachers. To this end, the film seems to support a working-class sensibility *contra* the parasitic “blood-sucking” Golems of capitalism. Although the parasite is a suitable stand-in for capital and accumulation, the film is not without irony. Indeed, there is a glaring paradox between Marx’s insistence on communism as a panacea to the “magic and necromancy” of the commodity, for instance, and the film’s exposition of how the alien bacteria arrives on earth aboard a Soviet satellite. If communism is the “antidote” in the work of the former, it is the accomplice to terror in the latter. Some of the characters in *Iron Invader* deride the virus as a “commie creation” and assert nativism in their unflinching support of American-made products. While the film’s focus on a “foreign invader” presents a range of xenophobic messages—from the “red scare” to the “threat” of migrants in the US—it also supplants homegrown economic dangers with the more immediate extraterrestrial menace. Incidentally, the anachronistic references to communism in the film provide a pastiche nod to the “red scare” politics of science fiction films of the 1950s—such as *The Red Menace* (1949), *Red Planet Mars* (1952), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *The Blob* (1958)—all of which lend narrative props to *Iron Invader*. As a result, the “red scare” rhetoric of certain “townie” characters is designed to be nonsensical and anachronistic, a subject of comic relief rather than critical reflection.

### 5. Death, Disposability and the Violence of Capitalism

If commodity fetishism is used to guide a critical approach to each film, the connections between death and capitalism become magnified. Not only does the animated object conceal the conditions of production and the world of work; it also physically harms other characters, most notably the working class. The means of production, then, become the “means of domination” that “mutilate the laborer into a fragment of man” (Marx, 1887, p. 708). This phenomenon has been widely noted by sociologists and “shop rats,” who use the trope of death to dramatize conditions of production, what Harvey Swados called the “money-producing nightmare of endless terror” that left workers in a “state of suspended being” (1957, pp. 65, 143). The “nightmare” of production was especially pronounced in the writings of Ben “Rivethead” Hamper, who in the late 1980s described GM’s assembly line as a “malignant drudgery that entombed” the workers, inflicting them with “dementia and derangement” (1986, pp. 131, 48). Hamper explained how the mind-numbing monotony of the auto factory was “like a ballet for the dead” where the workers were “subhuman at best” and “looked like ghouls ... fresh off triple homicides” (1986, pp. 45, 105, 148). Here the underlying assumption is that working under capitalism results in “a symbolic death ... of individual freedom, of pleasurable, rewarding activity, and of a rich social life” (Newitz, 2006, p. 6). If workers are often deadened and dismembered by capitalism, they are also made “monstrous,” becoming what Hamper called “foul-smellin’ mutants who couldn’t tell dusk from dawn or harmony from homicide” (1986, p. 45). In this case, capitalism creates the conditions of monstrosity by which the workers are both terrorized and made terrifying.

Death and disposability abound in *Rubber* and *Iron Invader*, inviting us to reflect on the relationship between capitalism, excrement and rubbish. Both the tire and the Golem, of course, are made of junked commodities. Not only are the monsters anthropomorphic objects, they are the things that are no longer valuable. In short, trash returns to haunt the communities that disposed of it. But if the animated objects are born of “the hidden world of labor”, what does their disposability and “resurrection” suggest about working conditions and economic crisis (McNally, 2011, p. 260)? Like the tire and scrap metal, workers in auto plants, for example, are embedded in “a logic of human disposability” (Yates, 2011, p. 1679). Since “the worker transfers her value into the commodities she produces ... the wasting away of workers’ bodies is necessary for capital to accumulate as much profit as possible” (Yates, 2011, p. 1686). Like any other commodity—from tires and tables to cars and coats—labor is consumed and discarded when no longer valuable. Thus, labor is both disposable and instrumental to production and accumulation under capitalism. In both *Rubber* and *Iron Invader*, then, the communities are tormented by that which they dispose of: car parts. That the monsters of such films emerge from discarded auto parts cannot be disassociated from the bankruptcies, redundancies and downsizing of the US auto industry during the Great Recession.

So the haunting return of trash in *Rubber* and *Iron Invader* can be read in political ways as the return of the repressed, in this case the displaced and disposed worker. In a semiotic sleight of hand, the objects that once stood opposed to the other characters now stand in for them, a theme often observed of George A. Romero’s zombie films (Harper, 2002). The working folk of each film are threatened by not only the monsters of late

capitalism but also the possibility of *becoming* monstrous, of losing one's soul to an exploitative and dehumanizing mode of production. Of the two killer commodities, the tire is more emotionally complex, feeling pain, fatigue and desire. In fact, Robert becomes dangerous only after being abused and rejected by the human characters, inviting a somewhat sympathetic understanding of the tire. Whereas the tire becomes monstrous, the Golem is inherently threatening and provides a more obvious stand-in for the blood-sucking tendencies of capitalism. The bacterium lives primarily through the scrap-metal Golem, which enables the death and destruction of its own creators. Capital, in other words, always requires a corporeal host, which is then discarded after use (and abuse). The Golem is dead labor that does capital's bidding, even in death. But unlike other monster films that unleash zombies and vampires on the upper class, when commodities attack, they tend to strike most relentlessly at the working class. The transmutation between humans and objects marks the ultimate reification inasmuch as the body of the worker becomes what it creates. The villains of *Rubber* and *Iron Invader*, then, are symbols of objectified labor, which become worn, dirty and discarded. As a result, the films do little to demystify the commodity by valorizing labor; instead, they pursue commodity fetishism and reification to a terrifying brink. Here horrible things happen when a commodity becomes animated and (de)valued "without passing through the underworld of production" and the "mediation of labor" (McNally, 2011, p. 152).

## 6. Conclusion

While there is hardly a consensus across the political spectrum, many critics and politicians have recently praised the bailout of the auto industry, explaining how one of the largest financial catastrophes in US history was averted. Sales at Chrysler, Ford and GM (the Big Three) in the US have reportedly rebounded, climbing back from 10.4 million units in 2008 to 14 million units in 2012. Layoffs in the industry, however, have been more difficult to staunch. As Andrew Wilkinson and Miller Tabak observe, "the problem remains one of lackluster employment as profits return in the absence of jobs" (2012, p. 12). Just as American automakers recover, however, Detroit (the Motor City) declared bankruptcy in the summer of 2013. Along related lines, the tire industry has seen the closures of production hubs like Goodyear plants in Tyler, Texas in 2009 and Union City, Tennessee in 2011, resulting in more than 2,000 job losses. Although foreign manufacturers like Yokohama and Hankook have plans to open new tire factories in the US, with the promise of added employment opportunities, labor struggles continue to be a central issue in both US and French automotive factories. At the Goodyear plant in Amiens, the workers' struggle has become folkloric earning Amiens the title of "the Gaulios village": the town in the *Asterix* comic series that staves off Roman invasion against all odds (Erlanger, 2013, p. 10).

Class politics, as Newitz reminds us, often inform the monster trope in popular horror films and fiction. To this end, horror films are both symptomatic and constitutive of particular sociohistorical settings; *Rubber* and *Iron Invader* provide symbolic social commentaries on the recent economic crises in the automobile industry and the Great Recession. These horror films present a cultural space where our fears and fantasies are exercised and exorcised. As such, the genre of horror and the "killer commodity" provides a vernacular of critiquing economic exploitation and inequality by way of commodity fetishism and dead labor. Although *Rubber* and *Iron Invader* provide a rather grim portrait of labor and the future of the working class, they offset a dominant Hollywood narrative of the Great Recession that focuses overwhelmingly on the middle class, which includes films like *Up in the Air* and *Margin Call* as well as recent "haunted house" films in horror cinema. In the context of the Great Recession, *Rubber* and *Iron Invader* suggest that the effects of the economic collapse are most violent among the working class, including auto workers. Indeed, *Rubber* and *Iron Invader* are effective in visualizing the "unseen labours that feed the machinery of accumulation" (McNally, 2011, p. 156). *Iron Invader*, for instance, provides a symbolic commentary on the horrors of accumulation and disposability, capital's possession of the workers' bodies and the extraction of surplus value. In *Rubber*, we may find "the hidden circuits of capital through which human capacities become things, while things assume human powers" (McNally, 2011, p. 7). So while the most explicit Hollywood narratives of the Great Recession present a myopic interest in the middle class, *Rubber* and *Iron Invader* use animated objects and the trope of death and destruction to dramatize how the anxieties of dispossession and disposability haunt the working class as well.

## References

- Accomando, B. (2011). Rubber, KPBS, 20 May. <http://www.kpbs.org/news/2011/may/20/review-rubber/>
- Arnold, R. F. (1998). Termination or transformation? The Terminator films and recent changes in the US auto industry. *Film Quarterly*, 52(1), 20-30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1213355>
- Beardsley, E. (2013). U.S. boss offers blunt critique; French workers give fiery response. *NPR*, 28 February. <http://www.npr.org/2013/03/01/173067804/u-s-boss-offers-blunt-critique-french-workers-give-fiery-response>

- Bradbury, P. (2011). Construction: The heart of Idaho's recession. *State Impact—NPR*, July. <http://stateimpact.npr.org/idaho/tag/construction/>
- Clover, C. (1993). *Men, women, and chain saws: Gender in the modern horror film*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Creed, B. (1993). *The monstrous-feminine: Feminism, psychoanalysis, fictions*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Erlander, S. (2013). 2 tire factories with different trajectories reveal social schisms in France. *The New York Times*, 16 March. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/world/europe/fates-of-2-factories-show-social-schisms-in-france.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/world/europe/fates-of-2-factories-show-social-schisms-in-france.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)
- Gelder, K. (ed) (2000). *The horror reader*. London, UK, and New York, NY: Routledge.
- de Guerre, M. (director) (2009). *The end of men* [motion picture]. Canada: Red Apple for CBC.
- Hamper, B. (1986). *Rivthead: Tales from the assembly line*. New York, NY: Warner Books.
- Harper, S. (2002). Zombies, malls and the consumerism debate: George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*. *Americana*, 1(2). [http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall\\_2002/harper.htm](http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall_2002/harper.htm)
- James, E. (1990). Yellow, black, metal and tentacled: The race question in American science fiction. In P. Davies' (ed.), *Science fiction, social conflict and war* (pp. 26-49). Manchester, UK: University of Manchester Press.
- Kellner, D. (1995). *Media culture*. London, UK, and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kirk, M. (2009). *Inside the meltdown* [motion picture]. USA: PBS.
- Krishner, T., & Thomas, K. (2009). 47,000 jobs gone under GM restructuring plan. *Toronto Star*, 17 February. [http://www.thestar.com/business/2009/02/17/47000\\_jobs\\_gone\\_under\\_gm\\_restructuring\\_plan.html](http://www.thestar.com/business/2009/02/17/47000_jobs_gone_under_gm_restructuring_plan.html)
- Lacey, L. (2011). "Rubber crushed under its own weight," *The Globe and Mail*, 8 April. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/rubber-crushed-under-its-own-weight/article628475/>
- Lovell, G. (2011). "Rubber: Don't Treat on Me," *Cinemadope*, <http://cinemadope.com/midnight-spookers/rubber/>
- Marx, K. (1932/1961). Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. T. Bottomore (trans.). In E. Fromm's (auth.), *Marx's concept of man* (pp. 87-196). New York, NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing.
- Marx, K. (1939/1973). *Grundrisse: Foundations of the critique of political economy*. M. Niclus (trans.). New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Marx, K. (1887/1976). *Capital* (Vol. I). New York, NY: Penguin.
- McAlister, M. (2001). *Epic encounters: Culture, media and US interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- McCracken, J., & Stoll, J. D. (2008). GM blitzes Washington in attempt to win aid. *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 Nov. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122670818143330019.html#video%3DF63F44F3-4EC0-4D79-810B-2373E35CABAC%26articleTabs%3Darticle>
- McNally, D. (2011). *Monsters of the market: Zombies, vampires and global capitalism*. Boston, MA: Haymarket.
- Meyers, J. (2011). "Rubber: A self-reflexive and ironic trip down 'no reason' road," *Metro Times*, 27 April. <http://metrotimes.com/watch/rubber-1.1137841>
- Neidermeyer, E. (2008). Auto industry blamed for rise in unemployment. *The Truth about Cars*, 8 September. <http://www.thetruthaboutcars.com/2008/09/auto-industry-blamed-for-rise-in-unemployment/>
- Neocleous, M. (2003). The political economy of the dead: Marx's vampires. *History of Political Thought*, 24(4), 668-684. <http://ricardo.ecn.wfu.edu/~cottrell/OPE/archive/0604/att-0138/01-PoliticalEconOfTheDead.pdf>
- Newitz, A. (2006). *Pretend we're dead: Capitalist monsters in American pop culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Newitz, A. (2012). Has the housing crisis finally infected horror movies and television? *i09*, 13 March. <http://io9.com/5892968/has-the-housing-crisis-finally-infected-horror-movies-and-television>
- O'Sullivan, M. (2011). "Rubber," *The Washington Post*, 15 April. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/gog/movies/rubber,1178297/critic-review.html>
- Owram, K. (2009). GM, Chrysler restructuring plans cut more jobs. *Toronto Star*, 17 February.

- [http://www.thestar.com/business/2009/02/17/gm\\_chrysler\\_restructuring\\_plans\\_cut\\_more\\_jobs.html](http://www.thestar.com/business/2009/02/17/gm_chrysler_restructuring_plans_cut_more_jobs.html)
- Parsons, N. (2013). Legitimizing illegal protest: The permissive ideational environment and ‘bossnappings’ in France. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 51(2), 288-309. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2012.00899.x>
- Pilling, G. (1980). Marx’s ‘capital, philosophy and political economy. *Marxists*. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/pilling/works/capital/ch05.htm>
- Roberts, B. (2013). Idaho’s wages have stagnated for three decades. *Idaho Statesman*, 5 February. <http://www.idahostatesman.com/2013/02/05/2439246/the-history-of-idahos-great-wage.html>
- Saunders, E. R. (2011). Q & A: Boise State University economics professor Don Holley on recession v. recovery. *NPR State Impact*, 21 October. <http://stateimpact.npr.org/idaho/2011/10/21/q-a-boise-state-university-economics-professor-don-holley-on-recession-vs-recovery/>
- Shannon, J. (2011). “Rubber: When tires go bad,” *The Seattle Times*, 7 April. [http://seattletimes.com/html/movies/2014710275\\_mrrubber08.html?syndication=rss](http://seattletimes.com/html/movies/2014710275_mrrubber08.html?syndication=rss)
- Slavishak, E. (2008). *Bodies of work: Civic display and labor in industrial Pittsburgh*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Streenan, D. (1993). “Paris 1968: 25 Years ago, when France rebelled,” *Workers Solidarity*, 39. <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/ws93/paris39.html>
- Sullivan, P. (2009). Goodyear to close Texas tire plant. *CBS online*, 11 February. [http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-500395\\_162-2136685.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-500395_162-2136685.html)
- Swados, H. (1957). *On the line*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Tully, J. (2011). *The devil’s milk: A social history of rubber*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.
- Verniere, J. (2011). “Tired Rubber Premise will burn you,” *Boston Herald*, 29 April. [http://bostonherald.com/entertainment/movies/movie\\_reviews/2011/04/tired\\_%E2%80%98rubber%E2%80%99\\_premise\\_will\\_burn\\_you](http://bostonherald.com/entertainment/movies/movie_reviews/2011/04/tired_%E2%80%98rubber%E2%80%99_premise_will_burn_you)
- Vlasic, B. (2009). When auto plants close, only white elephants remain. *The New York Times*, 30 July. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/31/business/31factories.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>
- Vock, D. (2011). Idaho governor signs anti-tenure teacher law, *Stateline*, 18 March. <http://www.pewstates.org/projects/stateline/headlines/idaho-governor-signs-anti-tenure-teacher-law-85899377669>
- Wayne, M. (2005). Spectres and capitalism/spectacle and the horror film. In G. King (ed.), *The spectacle of the real: From Hollywood to reality TV and beyond* (pp. 201-212). Bristol, UK: Intellect.
- Weisman, J. (2009). US to impose tariff on Chinese tires, *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 September. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125271824237605479.html>
- Wilkinson, A. & Tabak, M. (2012). A deep dive into the link between auto sales and employment, *Business Insider*, 10 October. <http://www.businessinsider.com/auto-sales-and-employment-2012-10>
- Wood, R. (1985). An introduction to the American horror film. In B. Nichols (ed), *Movies and Methods* (Vol. II) (pp. 195-219). Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- Yair, G. & Soyer, M. (2008). The ghost is back, again: Karl Marx and the golem narrative. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 8(3), 323-343. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1468795X08092382>
- Yates, M. (2011). The human-as-waste, the labor theory of value and disposability in contemporary capitalism. *Antipode*, 43(5), 1679-1695. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2011.00900.x>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).