Modelling a Way of Life: Immaterial and Affective Labour in the Fashion Modelling Industry

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abstract

In this paper, I elaborate how modelling is a form of immaterial and affective labour. Using interview data gathered in from a study of the industry in the United States, I argue that models work to arouse affective flows. Modelling work, emerging as it did from the post-industrial shift toward service work and consumerism, (in which non-material goods such as services, ideas and images have become products of capitalist development and circulation), exemplifies tendencies found in immaterial labour as defined by Maurizio Lazzarato, and affective labour as outlined by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. These definitions, however, invite a tendency to elide affect and emotion. Yet affect, as a condition of the emergence of emotion, is a form of bodily vitality that does not reside in any particular subject, and the way models describe their work suggests an effort to engage with affect on a level below conscious awareness. I conclude that ignoring the non-subjective qualities of affective labour that certain aspects of modelling work illustrate misses an important dimension of affective labour's complex relationship with media technologies, where images attract affective engagements that fall in line with capitalist productive strategies.

Introduction

Models work in a fascinating space of liminality, in which the boundaries between images and reality are often blurred. By interviewing models, going to their casting calls, working at their photo shoots, and engaging in what one anthropologist has termed "deep hanging out" (Geertz, 2001: 107), I discovered that models do not just create alluring images that make us want to buy things. An examination of the history, structure, and practices of this industry[1] indicates that models work with affect in ways

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1   This study involves 54 interviews with models and those who work with them. Contacts were made using a snowball sample, in which each person interviewed was asked for two or more contacts to further interview. My focus was specifically on fashion models (there are specialized models who do parts and hair modeling, or those who do specific ages, such as child models, but they fell beyond the scope of this study). I interviewed 32 models (24 female and eight male), eleven modeling agents (or 'bookers' as they are known in the industry), two photographers, two advertising executives, two art directors, one designer, one PR agent, one casting agent, one makeup artist, and one production

that are more complex and somewhat less obvious than this simple one-to-one equation of consumerism. Theorizing the model as a threshold between the images consumers see of them and the work that goes into producing those images, I describe modelling as work that not only sells products, but also calibrates bodily affects, often in the form of attention, excitement, or interest, so that they may be bought and sold in a circulation of affects that plays an important role in post-industrial economies.

This paper sets out to explore affective and immaterial labour using the real world example of fashion modelling. In the first section of this paper, I will elaborate how modelling work conforms to immaterial and affective labour as understood by Maurizio Lazzarato and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri respectively. Second, I will present a more precise definition of affect, including an explanation of how and when affect is not just emotion, but rather, the condition of emergence of emotions. Finally, I will work through various examples of how modelling work may be used to refine these definitions, especially in terms of how media technologies engage with affectivity at the level of non-subjective flows, in a technical-affective link that modelling work helps to create.

Modelling as Immaterial and Affective Labour

Looking in from the outside, the job of modelling seems fairly simple. Legally, a professional model is someone who, "performs modelling services for; or consents in writing to the transfer of his or her exclusive legal right to the use of his or her name, portrait, picture or image, for advertising purposes or for the purposes of trade".[2] He or she will transfer the right to their image "directly to a retail store, manufacturer, an advertising agency, a photographer, or a publishing company".[3] The 'services' in question include "the appearance by a professional model in photographic sessions or the engagement of such model in live, filmed or taped modelling performance for remuneration".[4] In other words, models appear in person, or in photographs, either in advertisements or to promote commercial transactions.

What, in particular, makes this labour immaterial and/or affective? According to Maurizio Lazzarato, immaterial labour is labour, which "produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (Lazzarato, 1996: 133). With regard to the informational form, the skills used require "cybernetics and computer control" (*ibid.*), whereas the cultural forms of production involve a "series of activities that are not

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    assistant. Interviews were semi-structured, conducted in public places, and lasted between one to two hours. The interviews were taped with consent, transcribed, and manually coded. They were conducted between 1999 and 2004. The age range for the sample was from sixteen to 28 years old for the models; the other workers tended to be slightly older, mostly in their thirties and forties. A book length treatment analyzing this data is forthcoming from New York University Press (Wissinger, 2008).

2   Section 511, subparagraph 3, Chapter 668 of the New York State Labor and Compensation Law (1992).

3   *Ibid.*

4   *Ibid.*

normally recognized as 'work' – in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion" (*ibid.*). Immaterial labour also involves processes of "codification and de-codification" in which personality and subjectivity become involved in the production of value (Lazzarato, 1996: 135). Typical forms of immaterial labour include "audiovisual production, advertising, fashion, the production of software, photography, and cultural activities" (Lazzarato, 1996: 137).

Modelling work corroborates Lazzarato's description of immaterial labour in several ways. Modelling is part of the process of defining fashions, particularly through the practice of the fashion show; it fixes cultural standards through advertising; and guides consumer norms through representing a lifestyle grounded in luxury consumption. Models arguably work with codes: dress codes, gender codes, and fashion codes. They project personality and are valued for what many respondents referred to as 'attitude'; the products of their labour include advertising campaigns, fashion, and cultural images. Their labour is organized on a project by project basis, and teams are assembled around specific jobs, which are then dispersed after the project is finished. These teams consist of many players whose relationships with each other represent complex productive networks. Thus, in the modelling industry, it is quite common to find that "small and sometimes very small 'productive units' (often consisting of only one individual) are organized for specific ad-hoc projects, and may exist only for the duration of those particular jobs," which Lazzarato claims are typical of immaterial production (1996: 137). This complex web of relations is not readily evident in the typical image of a fashion model; models are usually depicted as if they are alone, staring out of a magazine page in a solitary moment of fashionable repose. This iconic image (think of Kate Moss, clutching a purse to her breast, or Linda Evangelista caught in the rain under a plaid umbrella) belies the teams of workers surrounding the model at any given photo shoot. Take a step back, outside of the frame, and there are crowds of people working with the model, organized in teams: the photographer and her or his assistants; the stylist(s) and their assistants; the make-up artist; hairstylist; the client whose product is being advertised; advertising agency personnel; the shoot's producer and assistants; possibly a set designer; a manicurist; a prop stylist; and perhaps personnel from the venue where the shoot is taking place. These are just the people in the room.

In addition, each of these 'creatives' work with an agency that manages their career, helping them to find work. Initially, the client hires a photographer, who then recommends the other members of the team. These workers are hired by contracting with their management agencies, a process that forms a significant portion of the work to assemble these teams for a particular project. The photographer, client, or advertising firm may have contracted the services of a casting agency along the way, to search for the model with exactly the right look or image appropriate for a particular picture. In this organization of work, reputation is the central hiring criteria, and must be built and maintained through managing relationships on an ongoing basis. Thus, as the theory suggests, social networks are a key component of the productive process; "immaterial labour constitutes itself in forms that are immediately collective, and we might say that it exists only in the form of networks and flows" (Lazzarato, 1996: 137).

Arguably, then, this form of labour produces not only images for clients, but also a series of relationships. Nevertheless, whilst Lazzarato's idea of *immaterial* labour describes some of the basic aspects of modelling, the notion of *affective* labour is far more descriptive of what models do. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri develop Lazzarato's concept into the idea of the 'immaterial paradigm' of labour (2004: 112). In this formulation, they identify overarching tendencies that take three specific forms, which are, the informatization of production (via computerization or robotics),[5] the rise of 'symbolic-analytical services' (management, problem-solving and routine symbol manipulation),[6] and affective labour, performed either through actual or virtual human contact or interaction, which produce "intangible feelings of ease, excitement, or passion" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 293). Health services and the entertainment industry, for example, both depend on outputs of affective labour such as caring and emoting. These types of services are usually in-person services, but the production and manipulation of affect or feeling can also be achieved through human contact that is virtual (such as the work of an actor appearing in a movie, or the work of a model appearing in a photograph).

The agency structure of the industry dictates that getting an agent is paramount, as it serves as the gateway to other relationships that can be career defining. An agent functions to manage a model's status. Status comes into play as professionals in these industries seek other professionals with whom they have interacted in the past, building their status through continued interaction (Aspers, 2001: 44). Reputation becomes very significant in determining the value of a person's work, and the value of a job lies just as much in the relationships produced by doing that job as it does in the actual financial amount paid to the worker.[7] Usually, a model develops these relationships on the job, which affords a very short time (sometimes just a few hours) to make a favourable (e.g. re-hirable) impression on the photographer, the stylist, the makeup artist, the client, the assistants, and/or the other models. Making this impression is key to getting rehired by some or all of the same people. Kay, a make-up artist, emphasized the importance of forming a strong relationship with a photographer in order to build a team:

> A lot of photographers have a lot of control as far as recommending their own team. People they have worked with, who they are comfortable with, and know what they'll get from them.[8]

Thus, many models 'work the room' as the saying goes, as they are acutely aware that they are expendable, sometimes even before a job is finished. It is not unheard of for a model to be fired from a job before the contracted time is up. One of the models I interviewed was working her way through graduate school, and described being kicked off a shoot for not being 'fun' enough, since she was reading her book between takes instead of chatting up the other members of the team.[9] This production of relationships

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5   See also Castells, 1996.

6   See also Reich, 1992.

7   It is for this reason that appearing in the editorial, or 'content' pages assembled by the editors of a fashion magazine pays far less well than regular commercial work for an advertiser or catalog. The assumption is that the gain in reputation and relationships formed with magazine editors and the photographers who work for them is more valuable than the actual pay received.

8   Interview with Kay, see table 1.

9   Interview with Kate, see table 1.

as one of the core activities of modelling work also speaks to Hardt and Negri's definition of affective labour as that which "always directly constructs a relationship" (2004: 147). Maintaining and building these relationships creates its own unique demands to which my discussion now turns.

The Working Day

The imperative to network extends beyond the workday to the social world of modelling as well. Many of my respondents saw going out socially as part of the job; model agents, for example, often organize dinners with models and clients, and throw parties that their models are expected to attend. Megan, a model agent at a prestigious agency claimed that, "Deals go down in bars frequently".[10] Julia, a veteran model with twenty years of experience was pragmatic about it, "They definitely have dinners, but it's business too. People who invest in modelling want to see what they are going to get".[11] In this manner, models and the professionals they work with engage in making relationships 'on spec' so to speak, socializing and conducting their lives with an eye toward making potentially lucrative associations with their peers, something they must be vigilant about. As one model put it, she pays attention to who is around her, whenever she is out of the house:

> I try not to, but if you're going out, even just down the block to go shopping, you don't want to run into somebody important. In that way, you are vigilant.[12]

The way my respondents described it, most of their work involves building relationships and forming networks, punctuated by brief moments of doing the 'actual' job of posing for the camera or walking a runway.

These practices are typical of what happens when immaterial labourers are not officially at work; "once the job has been done, the cycle dissolves back into the networks and flows that make possible the reproduction and enrichment of its productive capacities" (Lazzarato, 1996: 137). In other words, this kind of socializing produces new connections and inspirations outside the workplace, and brings new, and potentially valuable, collaborations back to it. In this sense, the porousness of the life/work divide is arguably one of the productive resources upon which a model's immaterial labour depends.

Another aspect of the porous life/work, leisure/labour divide found in modelling is the boundary-less working day. Many of the models I interviewed referred to their work as a job in which they are working all the time. Toni, a model in her mid-twenties who had been in the business for seven years explained: "First you have to distinguish what my job entails, which is keeping myself in shape, I consider going to the gym as part of my job, going to the manicurist and pedicurist".[13] Kate, who had worked in high-end

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10 Interview with Megan, see table 1

11 Interview with Julia, see table 1.

12 Interview with Brigitte, see table 1.

13 Interview with Toni, see table 1.

fashion houses and appeared in the top tier magazines, referred to her work in modelling as 'the life', noting:

> You're always on display; you have to put on that show 24 hours a day. It's not as though you can go to the office and then go home and relax. You're always watching what you eat. You're always worrying about how you're coming across, always worried about being seen at the right places at the right times. It's just never ending.[14]

This model is describing how she brings her entire life into the productive process; there is no 'outside' to her production, her life, her body, her sense of self are all engaged in producing her as a 'model' for work. Tina, a model for twelve years, said she "never drew the line between being a model and being herself".[15]

The quotes above indicate that the notion of what part of models' activities qualify as work, and what falls outside of the norm, is rather fluid. Models do not do paid work every day, but most of my respondents reported feeling as though they never had a day 'off'. Several of them reported working in bouts of fifteen hour days punctuated by long periods of unemployment, during which they needed to work to look for work, by making the rounds going to castings and 'go-sees'.[16] Most of my respondents were careful to point out that the level of unpaid work is quite high. Thus, in addition to the rather amorphous tasks of building relationships and maintaining one's body and image, getting jobs comprises a large portion of model's work activity, actually doing those jobs takes up far less time.

Models often work as independent contractors who are self-supervised. Contemporary fashion models are less mannequins than they are the CEO of their own corporation; as one booker said she told the models, "you are like a company; we are making an investment in you, and we want the investment to come back soon".[17] In other words, models are responsible for their own success, they engage in a form of labour that is "characterized by real managerial functions that consist in a certain ability to manage social relations […] [where] workers are expected to become active subjects in the coordination of various functions of production" (Lazzarato, 1996: 138). This is coupled with the requirement to invest their time and energy into the job in ways that are impossible to measure within the normal bounds of Monday through Friday between 9 and 5. This aspect of the work supports Lazzarato's observation that, for the self-employed worker, "it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish leisure time from work time," since, "in a sense, life become inseparable from work" (*ibid.*). This inseparability of life from work is especially evident on the modelling trip, in which a

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14 Interview with Kate, see table 1.

15 Interview with Tina, see table 1.

16 A 'go-see' is a kind of visual interview, in which the model goes to see a photographer or client in order to show that their pictures match their current physical appearance to possibly get work. So, for example, on a go-see for a bathing suit job, the model might be asked to put on a bathing suit so the client or photographer can see his or her skin or physique in person, to check for bruises or a change in body shape that might not appear in the model's portfolio, but would not recommend the model for the job.

17 Interview with Genevieve, see table 1.

model is hired to travel to a photographic location, to produce pictures in a specific backdrop.

Travelling is a constant in modelling work. Being hired for a photo shoot in an exotic locale is considered one of the perquisites of modelling, yet the already fuzzy lines between labour and leisure are blurred even more in this scenario. Brian, a photographer, would sometimes ask models to work for very little or for free when they are already on a trip, to build his photographic portfolio. Once, on a trip paid for by a client to shoot a commercial catalogue, he convinced a model to stay on in New Orleans at her own expense for a couple of extra days, to take more photographs after finishing the shoot for the client. He described the transaction: "she would get shots, and we got along, and she was like 'Yeah, I'll do it.'"[18] While models are not compelled to work this way, the power differential between model and photographer, as well as the attractiveness of getting more shots for their modelling portfolio, contributes to the models' willingness to work without pay. Arguably, the model may have been motivated to keep the photographer happy because she wanted to maintain a positive working relationship with him, to show that she was a willing worker, someone he would want to hire again. Gender, however, may also play a role in this transaction.[19]

The Precarity of Modelling

The Modelling industry is particularly sensitive to affective flow, with a volatile work environment in which, as the head of a major modelling agency observed several times during our interview, "You are only as good as your last booking."[20] Lazzarato has observed that "precariousness, hyper-exploitation" since the "cycle of production comes into operation only when it is required by the capitalist" (1996: 137). Similarly, Hardt and Negri observe that in the postindustrial or flexible economies immaterial labour is common, the labour is "flexible because workers have to adapt to different tasks, mobile because workers have to move frequently between jobs, and precarious because no contracts guarantee stable, long-term employment" (2004: 112).

Although modelling work is usually well paid, it is precarious insofar as models are usually hired by the day, with no promise of long-term employment. Often they are reminded that they are expendable. Modelling work can be tentative and contingent;

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18 Interview with Brian, see table 1.

19 A detailed discussion of gender issues falls outside the scope of this paper and warrants separate, focused attention. The fact that models are mostly female, and are considered ideals of beauty and femininity whose unrealistic bodily attributes have proved dangerous for young girls (see Beckford 2007) and the desire to be accepted as a beautiful model may drive them to accept working conditions that call on resources that fall outside the norms of what is considered 'work'. An attention to gender further acknowledges the general tendency not to acknowledge women's work as 'work' (see for example, Mies, 1998; Glazer, 1993; Hartsock, 1983; Hartmann, 1981; Federici, 1975), and also the feminist critique that claims immaterial labor theorists do not sufficiently deal with gendered structures that inform understandings of work and work practices, tending instead to lump widely different forms of work into the homogenous category of immaterial labor (see for example Precarias a la Deriva [undated]).

20 Interview with Dawn, see table 1.

one model I interviewed was so uncertain about her prospects that "when I started working, I was saving money like crazy because I always thought that my last job was my last job. I was convinced, and there is no way to know otherwise".[21] Models must be flexible and adapt to peripatetic travel, unpredictable schedules, and a wide variety of situations. Because of the lack of guaranteed work, a model might find him or herself working every day for months, without a break, trying to ride the wave before it ends. Julie, a model that worked in couture fashion said she started out this way:

> I got a British Vogue spread, and everything just started rolling. I was travelling all the time. I was in my apartment maybe one night a month. I was everywhere, all over the world, doing shoots.[22]

It is a business of fits and starts, long lulls, sustained by the lure of instant stardom around the corner. Similarly to the movie industry, in the modelling industry, the labour process relies on 'team work', whereby workers are assembled to create a product and then dispersed, only to perhaps be reassembled in a different configuration for a future project. This organization of work typifies industries that must "face the incalculable every day" (Prindle, 1993: 5) in the production of their product. Like the screen industry, or any industry whose product is artistic on some level, there are two problems: "the difficulty of predicting public tastes and the impossibility of exactly duplicating a hit" (Prindle, 1993: 5). For executives in these industries, "each choice is a stab in the dark, every decision a wager against unknown odds" (Prindle, 1993: 5). The project-based nature of the work represents how models are organized in an extreme form of just-in-time production, partly to address the unpredictable impact of the product as well as a way to accommodate the fickle extremes of personality found both at the managerial level, and the level of audiences or publics. In other words, the modelling industry is organized to accommodate the unpredictable and volatile qualities of affective flow, which I will discuss in detail in the second section of this article.

Hardt and Negri trace the emergence of the tendencies described above against the backdrop of developments in economics and culture in which the rise of the service sector and the shift to a consumer economy has typified what could be termed postmodern or postindustrial capitalism.[23] They claim this type of economy is characterized by biopolitical production, which is "immanent to society and creates social relationships and forms through collaborative forms of labour" (2004: 94), where "labour and value have become biopolitical in the sense that living and producing tend to be indistinguishable. Insofar as life tends to be completely invested by acts of

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21 Interview with Toni, see table 1.

22 Interview with Julie, see table 1.

23 The terms postindustrial, deindustrialized, postfordist, or postmodern capitalism are often used to describe the structure of contemporary capitalism. In the move to a postindustrial economy (Bell 1976), space was appropriated from "populist, manufacturing, or tawdry uses," and transformed into "'clean' entertainment, commercial, and residential zones preferred by professionals, managers, and white-collar workers" (Zukin, 1995: 115). The phrase "deindustrialization" has also been employed to describe the geographical shift in the centers of production from developed nations, to developing ones (Bluestone and Harris 1982). Additionally, the reorganization of mass production in favor of niche or just in time flexible production has been referred to as post-Fordist (Harvey 1989). These reorganizations of production have also been referred to as the "informatization" of production (Castells 1996, Aronowitz 1981).

production and reproduction, social life itself becomes a productive machine" (2004: 148).

Within this tendency for all of social life to become a force of production, all kinds of activities that were formerly coded as private, and outside of the domain of capitalist investment are increasingly pulled into its domain. For example, in biopolitical production, we see social reproduction being subsumed by capital, thus becoming a force of production, as socialization, therapeutic interaction, cooking, cleaning, childcare, and healthcare, for instance, are increasingly pulled into the domain of commodification. These sectors of social life are part of what Marx called the "general productive power" (1973: 705) that fuels the social factory, in which work and cultural, community, or biological activities understood to lie outside of work, are appropriated in the "expansion of capitalist control in order to structure all of society into one great social factory so that all activities would contribute to the expanded reproduction of the system" (Cleaver, 1979; 2000: 122). In this expansion, "capital tries to shape all 'leisure' or free-time, activities – language, literature, art, music, television, news media, movies, theatres, museums, sports, in its own interests" (Cleaver, 1979, 2000: 123).

In this expansion, Hardt and Negri claim that it is the

> common that appears at both ends of immaterial production, as presupposition and result. Our common knowledge is the foundation of all new production of knowledge; linguistic community is the basis of all linguistic innovation; our existing affective relationships ground all production of affects, and our common social image bank makes possible the creation of new images. (2004: 148)

They claim that this kind of labour's tendency to be common and shared makes it immeasurable and difficult to control. Yet, they acknowledge that exploitation proceeds apace, not in the form of expropriating surplus labour time, but in the form of "expropriation of the common" (2004: 150), making this the locus of surplus value.

According to this notion, fashion models arguably produce surplus value not in the form of hours worked over and above the amount of labour time required for their subsistence, but rather in the form of affective connections in which affective responses to their activities and images are stimulated across a variety of networks in which those images and activities are portrayed. These networks are cultural, personal, and communal, but also technical, insofar as models make human contact virtually when their images are circulated in media networks. Models work to stimulate interest in and attention to images by playing on forces that can consciously be perceived as desire, envy, or a need to belong (through being fashionable or 'in the know'); in so doing, they produce networks for affective flow that create community. They also, however, produce affective images, by tuning into a felt sense of vitality, aliveness, or engagement that takes no particular form, but taps into affective energy that is then conveyed via the virtual human contact of the image.

The Relationship between Affect and Emotion

'More energy!' 'Give it to me!' 'I've got to see the fire in your eyes!' Models are often admonished to produce energy in this way. Their work is more physically expressive than verbal; successful models can be exquisite communicators without saying a word. What I found most intriguing about their work is that in order to succeed, most models have to develop a kind of sixth sense about the kind of energy they work with; in so doing, they become attuned to shifts in energy occurring below the surface of awareness.

The work of the fashion model, as I have shown, clearly exemplifies tendencies in the structure and function of labour that is arguably immaterial and affective. At the same time, however, I have also found that the qualities particular to modelling work demand a more nuanced analysis to bring out specificities the more general theories of immaterial and affective labour have left relatively unexamined. As Emma Dowling has rightly pointed out, in the immaterial labour literature, "not much analysis appears beyond a definition of what affective labour is" (see Dowling, this issue), leaving it to others to detail its particular characteristics.

My argument is that the hitherto definition of affective labour as found in Hardt and Negri's work, which I outlined in the first section of this paper and to which I wish to return in more detail here, presents two problems. First, the use of the term 'affect' is imprecise; the examples Hardt and Negri give, of "legal assistants, flight attendants, and fast food workers (service with a smile)" (2004: 108) invite a tendency to elide their definition of affective labor with emotional labour, especially in light of existing studies of flight attendants' emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), the assistive work of legal assistants (Pierce, 1995), and labour performed in the service industries (Godwyn, 2006; Steinberg and Figart, 1999). Yet, differentiating affect from emotion is an important theoretical tool for understanding the non-subjective aspects of affective labour.

While it seems that much modelling work could easily be understood as emotional labour, the term describes only part of what it is that models do. Emotional labour, for example, deals with feeling management. Specifically, emotional labour is the "effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions" (Morris and Feldman, 1996: 98), or in Arlie Hochschild's well known formulation, the effort to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain an outward appearance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild, 1983: 7). Models do perform emotional labour, especially when they are asked to convey a particular emotion in the course of posing for the camera. This is particularly true of catalogue or commercial[24] models, for instance, who are most often asked to look 'happy' or 'content' while they show off the clothes, in a mode one model referred to as 'smiley'.[25]

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24 These are models on the lower rungs of fashion production, who are not well known, and work for lower level clothing catalogues such as *Sears, JC Penney,* or *La Redoute.*

25 Interview with Deedee, see table 1.

As models move up the fashion hierarchy, however, into the upper echelons of fashion modelling,[26] they often find themselves in situations where emotional labour is only part of their job. Frequently, models at this level are not given direction; instead they are called on to channel the mood and energy present in the room, to open themselves to the possibilities of the moment, to collaborate with the team assembled in the hope of capturing something unexpected, something that moves beyond the norm, toward the unknown. The models most adept at this are the ones who 'go with the flow', as one make-up artist described it:

> Some girls will get on the set and they'll just have a fabulous flow and variety and movement and they get it and they look at the outfit before and they look at the hair and the makeup before and they'll get on the set and they'll just…it's almost like watching an actress where there's no direction required they're just flowing with it, they get it and they've paid attention and the photographer can take pictures for over an hour and not have to say one word because everything is just wonderful.[27]

This example shows how models may convey emotion in the course of their work, but they are less frequently asked to convey emotion according to a specific script. In contrast to the flight attendant who has a specific reaction in mind, and works to produce that emotion both in him or herself and the passenger, a fashion model is not asked to capture and contain emotion, or direct it in a particular way. The work of models may resemble this activity periodically but, much of the time, fashion models are valued for their ability to unleash a wide range of responses, responses that might shift or be modulated faster than they can be subjectively recognized as emotions.

In my analysis, I use affect in this expanded register; I am careful to understand affect as a condition of emergence of emotion, and emotion as the capture, closure, and naming of affect. My perception is that Hardt and Negri do not follow this line of thought through to its specific implications for media technology's relationship to the body, although they do make a distinction between emotional and affective labour:

> Unlike emotions, which are a form of mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and mind. In fact, affects, such as joy and sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking. (2004: 108)

Focusing on the subjective qualities of affective labour minimizes an important dimension of the concept because it does not adequately explore affective labour's additional tendency to call on changes in energy that take place below the level of consciousness. Hardt and Negri do not theorize affect as a kind of energy that is not just subjective, e.g. not something one can consciously control.[28] This conception is important, however, for understanding the volatile nature of affect, and how it informs labour in the modelling industry. Affect is more than feelings or emotions: "it is energy, sensation and a force that drives things, that encourages bodily and social movements. It

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26 Models at this level usually work for the high fashion magazines, such as *Vogue, Elle, or L'Officiel.* They often model couture clothes and work for highly esteemed clients selling luxury goods, such as *Hermes, Chanel,* or *Louis Vuitton.*

27 Interview with Kay, see table 1.

28 In this sense, the body is not the sole cause of sensation or reaction, and affect is not the sole result of bodily cause, but rather, is socially caused (Zizek 2003: 28).

is human; it is what keeps everything else alive" (Wittel, 2004: 18). My framework for exploring affective labour has been shaped by Patricia Clough's concept.[29] She describes affect as,

> a substrate of potential bodily responses, often autonomic responses, in excess of consciousness...affect refers generally to bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, to engage, and to connect, such that autoaffection is linked to the self-feeling of being alive‹that is, aliveness or vitality. (Clough and Halley, 2007:2)

For Clough, affects are pre-individual bodily forces that increase or decrease "a body's capacity to act," and she seeks to "critically engage those technologies that are making it possible to grasp and to manipulate the imperceptible dynamism of affect" (Clough, forthcoming). These technologies include both biotechnologies that capture and make DNA available for commercial use, as well as what she calls 'new media' technologies, such as television and the internet. To further draw out the link between media technology and affective modulation, I called on Brian Massumi's notion that the affective realm lies between the levels of activity and passivity, between "volition and cognition," "mind and body," "quiescence and arousal" (Massumi, 2002: 33). For him, images are affective without necessarily having a subjective meaning. He posits the "primacy of the affective in image reception" (2002: 24) to say that there is a split between the qualities of the image and the intensity of the image, such that the image's content, its conventional meaning, does not necessarily correspond with its impact. Thus an image can have an effect that does not necessarily correspond to its meaning, or without meaning anything in particular to the viewing subject that it affects. In this formulation, media makes "affect an impersonal flow before it is a subjective content" (Massumi, 1998: 61). To feel the flow of affect is to feel the sense of "one's own vitality, one's sense of aliveness, of changeability" (Massumi, 2002: 36).

I also rely on the work of Silvan Tomkins (1963), recently revisited by Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank (1995). Tomkins understood affect in terms of specific physiological responses that in turn give rise to various effects, which may or may not translate into emotions. By naming various bodily states as affects, and theorizing how they might precede emotions, he opens up the possibility of analyzing pre-lingual, pre-individual responses that occur below awareness, and so, in a sense, are not conscious.[30] In this sense, affects, which I want to be careful to differentiate from the flow of affect, are mental and bodily states that are distinct from emotions because they refer to syndromes the body may experience whether or not the subject is conscious of that experience. The

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29 Which she develops drawing on theorists indebted to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Baruch Spinoza and Henri Bergson

30 Silvan Tomkins has documented nine affects which correspond to specific facial and bodily configurations which occur when the body experiences a particular affective syndrome in response to stimulus. These are Interest-Excitement, Enjoyment-Joy, Surprise-Startle, Distress-Anguish, Shame-Humiliation, Contempt-Disgust, Anger-Rage, Fear-Terror, and Dismell (a form of contempt) (Tomkins, 1963; cited in Gibbs 2002 340 note 3). The conscious experience of an affective syndrome of Anger-Rage, may range from total unawareness, if this reaction is too dangerous to be admitted to consciousness, to a sense of slight irritation, to a rapid escalation to overwhelming rage, depending on how the subject has been socialized to feel or not to feel their affective responses, that is to say, how wide the subject's "band of intensity" within their "affect profile" is (Gibbs 2002: 338).

flow of energy called 'affect' flows through the body; when that flow has an effect, affects result, the physical and mental syndromes in which heartbeat, skin sensations, and energy levels change. The unpredictability of affect's effects speaks to its material nature – it involves the biological, but is not strictly reducible to biology. In fact, a "circus of affective responses" (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 11) can result from a single stimulus, and differ in the same individual at different times. In sum, affect flows between bodies, producing affects within those bodies as it passes through, in a volatile, unpredictable process that is difficult to control.

To push the notion of affect to include an interim space between body and mind, physiological arousal and conscious realization of it, is a move toward exploring post-structuralist notions of the body. This 'affective turn' in social theorizing (Clough and Halley, 2007) builds on post- structuralist feminist accounts of the self and the body[31] which seek to destabilize this notion of the rational, self-governed subject in favour of a conception of self, body, gender, and materiality that does not assume the existence of a subject that resides in an "epidermally bounded container" (Goffman, 1986: 572), but rather the self as a "material semiotic node" (Haraway, 1991; 1997) that exists through interaction, ineluctably entangled in shifting networks of culture, power, language, and images.

Working with affect shapes the character of the modelling industry in several ways. Recall that a "circus of affective responses" (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 11) can be the result of a single stimulus. As I have shown in the first section of this paper, the work of modelling involves constant 'schmoozing' to build productive relationships. Modelling also tries to elicit unwavering commitment from its employees, demanding '24/7' readiness to work, whether or not there are jobs available. Common practices of modelling blur the line between life and work and modelling is characterized by precarity, deferred rewards and instability. Part of this precarity is due to affect's volatility; change can occur at any moment in the fashion industry, a quality succinctly expressed by the supermodel Heidi Klum in the reality television show *Project Runway*, "In fashion, you are either in, or you're out". Since there is no quantifiable output, modelling 'products' can be wildly overvalued (as in the case of the supermodels in the 1980s and 90s who made millions of dollars, more than any other models previously), or lose value almost instantly (as was the case, temporarily at least, with supermodel Kate Moss, when her reputation was threatened by a drug scandal).[32] Models act as conduits for energies that are volatile, unpredictable, and difficult to control, in an aspect of affective labour that arguably goes on below the level of consciousness. Many of the models could not explain exactly what they were doing when they worked, only

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31 Such as those found in the work of Elizabeth Grosz (1995), Judith Butler (1990; 1993), and Donna Haraway (1991; 1997).

32 In September of 2005, Moss experienced a "professional free fall, following publication by a London tabloid of a grainy video image said to depict her snorting cocaine at a London recording studio" (Trebay, 2005), after which several of her high profile clients yanked their campaigns. Less than a year later, however, she seemed to be in even more demand than ever, appearing in several high end campaigns (according to the author's informal accounting as of September 2006, in American *Vogue* she was featured in at least five, including such well known marks as Dior, Louis Vuitton, and Versace), as if the notoriety had boosted her career.

that they had to sense a 'way to feel',[33] to be 'vulnerable',[34] to be open to the unexpected. Julie, a model who had done many high fashion creative photo shoots described this sort of channelling as an almost out of body experience, saying:

> I'd go in my own little world. Like okay, it's not me anyway. It's weird! I mean, you are a thing. The thing. That's what Cindy Crawford calls herself. Absolutely. I read that somewhere and I was like, that's a perfect way of putting it. But it's true. You transform and you have to look at it, you have to observe it. You have to think of something to do, the way to feel, in that moment.[35]

In her experience, the energy level in the room was crucial to her ability to know 'the way to feel' for the shot; her ability to channel energy or be receptive to affective shifts was compromised by the lack of creativity common to catalogue shoots, which she found very difficult:

> That's why catalogue photos always look so terrible. Because someone is pinning you and they want no wrinkles, and they don't want it to look like that, and you kind of have to go, okay, I have to look nice anyway, and it's hard. [She laughs.] It's weird. So in that sense, catalogue is harder. I mean if you are wearing a polyester potato sack, or a muu muu, and you have to look good, then you kind of go, oh yeah, I'm going to get paid after this! That's what I'm smiling about![36]

Another model described this kind of channelling and modulating of affective flow in terms of how she had to feel it in her body in front of the camera:

> How do you just exude that image? It takes… I don't know, I'm just natural…You just have to know, like… [She demonstrated a druggy stare – her legs part at a splayed angle, she slumps back into a slouch, and she is looks up at me through her hair, but the look is unfocussed, like she has left her body behind]. You know what I mean? You just have to be familiar with your body and you umm… and I could totally be overanalyzing it and put way more thought into it than most people do, I don't know, but you just have to be familiar with your body…I can feel my body, like I can sit there and I know what it looks like.[37]

Clearly, models' affective labour involves the stimulation of bodily affects via several techniques. The work is supervisory and regulatory on the one hand, in terms of monitoring oneself or others in order to pick up on affective flow, but also involves the effort to let oneself go, to become a conduit of affective flow, thereby facilitating its movement. Cindy Crawford, a well-known supermodel during the 1980s, described this incident in which a photographer tried to get her to let go of her preconceived notions of what she should be doing, to get something new or unexpected from her:

> The first time I worked with him, he'd want you to do things like, you know, like can you be a rat? And then he would take pictures. This was in my big cover heyday, and I was like, oh my god, what if he runs this picture? I'm still not sure why he made us do that. I think it was just to break the [mood], so he got something different out of you. Because when you went from doing this [she

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33 Interview with Toni, see table 1.

34 Interview with Tina, see table 1.

35 Interview with Juile, see table 1.

36 Interview with Julie, see table 1.

37 Interview with Tammy, see table 1.

mimics being a rat by wriggling her nose and baring her teeth], at least you've broken the mood and when you went back to your more normal modelling, it kind of worked itself out.[38]

Arguably, if affects precede emotion, and the cultural sanctions, or personal definitions, which emotions bring with them, this photographer was trying to get the model to override the cultural sanctions or personal identifications she might have had if she had been asked to project a certain emotion. Perhaps this photographer was trying to get to something nonverbal, and somatic, to push the model beyond her comfort zone into a more vulnerable mode. In this moment of surprise or uncertainty, perhaps in the play of her features, or her bodily stance, the raw effect of chaotic bodily states with varying intensities, which have not yet been funnelled into culturally delineated modes of action, reaction, or other form of behaviour or expression, were more accessible to the camera.

Models' work with affect is twofold. On the one hand, they work to be sensitive to the flow of affect by opening themselves to affective shifts in the body that might then translate into an external change in demeanour, appearance, or attitude. These externalizations of affective flow can then be used to activate affective flow in others, which might perhaps then be captured as affects, and so on. Models work with affective flows both in person, or via virtual human contact made available through images. Especially when it comes to creating affective images, the job of a model is to be as open as possible to that flow, to keep it moving, without capping it off and defining it as any particular affect. As shown in the examples above, their work often involves efforts to amplify and modulate the flow of affect in ways that are not immediately assimilable to consciousness.

Affective Images and the Technical-Affective Link

The idea of a technical-affective link is an important element in the story of imaging technology's rapid expansion. Modelling work is intimately involved with imaging technologies, as it involves work to produce photographs or moving images of fashion, of lifestyles, of a way of being in the world. The exponential growth of the modes and types of images on offer has been matched by a corresponding growth in the number of models,[39] the amount they are paid,[40] and a global expansion of the modelling industry.[41]

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38 Cindy Crawford speaking in the documentary film, *And Again*, produced by Alvergue & Isabell, 2002

39 The number of modeling agencies has grown every year, for instance, since its first firm was incorporated in the 1920s. The number of agencies listed in the Manhattan Yellow Pages Business listings increased from eight to one hundred and twenty four between 1935 and 2000, with dips only during World War II and the recession of the early 1990s. There were one hundred and forty three modeling agencies listed in 2002. The 2006-2007 Occupational Outlook Handbook said that in 2004, models held about 2,200 jobs; the profession is expected to grow about as fast as average for all occupations by 2014.

40 Models' salaries have also increased. While superstar models in the 1960s, such as Penelope Tree, made $12 an hour and $60 a commercial, by the late 1990s, models of that caliber could make

While modelling growth is certainly related to that of the advertising industry's expansion in the shift to a consumer society, it is also implicated in the shift in media's functioning from "selling products to manipulating affect" (Clough, forthcoming). Here the technical-affective link is forged by the proliferation of images of models not just in fashion magazines and advertisements, but also walking runways, being interviewed backstage at fashion shows, shopping, going out, getting beauty treatments, or being talked about in the gossip pages. The modelling industry has been built on the increasing availability of imaging technologies such as photography, film and television, which not only increase the spread of affective labour, but also specifically work to modulate and articulate affect for productive ends. While Hardt and Negri do mention the idea that affective labour involves "virtual or actual" (2000: 293) human contact, including that produced by the entertainment industries, they have not to date explored the particularities of this relationship between affect and media technology. To really understand this aspect of modelling labour, it is necessary to think of affect as a kind of flow, as explained in the previous section of this article.

The speed and frequency with which the impersonal flow of affect is modulated has been intensified by the 24-hour availability of images on television and the internet that is now the norm, and is the result of a dramatic proliferation of image bombardment over the last several decades. Images are now available not only on television and movie screens, but also have been personalized through delivery through phones, ipods, DVD players and computers. This change in the mode of imaging, coupled with the increased speed with which these images come at us, has lead some theorists to postulate a shift from the 'cinematic gaze' (Mulvey, 1989) to the 'televisual glance' (Ellis, 1982; 1992), in which the subjective, meaningful quality of images becomes less important than the mere exposure to them. In the cinematic norm, images are edited together seamlessly to construct a narrative with which the viewing subject identifies, finding their subject position within the narrative structure (Silverman, 1996; Mulvey, 1989). In the televisual regime, "neither narrative nor stories are necessarily or primarily the way in which the viewer and television are attached to each other" (Clough, 2000: 99). With the televisual, in particular, comes the notion of automatic time, photographic time in which duration is conceived as instantaneous, moving faster than the subject, in which images are generated by imaging machines in an 'autonomous series' that "requires no interval to pass through a subjective formation" (Dienst, 1995: 160). Rather, images have a direct effect on viewers, making points of contact, leaving impulses, intensities, and perhaps actions in their wake.

In the televisual regime of imaging, the affectivity of images does not depend on subjective content or meaning, but rather on their ability to attract a 'televisual glance'

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$50,000 in a day (Bailey 1999: 139). In 1994, supermodel Cindy Crawford's gross earnings were estimated at $6.5 million (Tillotson 1995). By 1998, they reportedly reached $8 million; that same year, Claudia Schiffer topped out at $10.5 million (Woolley, 1999).

41 The global expansion of the modeling industry is reflected by the number of agencies with offices worldwide. The three agencies in New York City with long term dominance, IMG, Ford, and Elite, all expanded in the 1980s and 1990s. Elite led the way in global expansion in the 1980s, opening more than 20 offices starting in 1986 and as of 2003, had 31 agencies representing over 750 models. By the mid 1990s, Ford had opened offices in Paris and Milan, and IMG was offering models access to 70 offices in 29 countries.

(Ellis, 1982; 1992), no matter how fleeting. When images can attract this glance, this glance develops an attachment to being exposed to images, to watching television, hooking into the internet, or browsing magazines, regardless of their content. The way modelling work produces images that arguably build this technical-affective link speaks to what Clough has identified as a shift in the functioning of media, in which "the function of media as a socializing/ideological mechanism ha[s] become secondary to its continuous modulation, variation and intensification of affective response in real time, where bodily affect is mined for value" (Clough, forthcoming). There is a socialization of time as media makes "affect an impersonal flow before it is a subjective content" (Massumi, 1998: 61). I am arguing that this attachment is part of what models produce, in fact its pursuit is part of what drives the modelling industry, as it tries to channel volatile and difficult to control affective shifts that occur below the level of awareness, but produce bodily effects nonetheless, thereby attracting attention to, interest in, or engagement with images.

How this type of modelling work described above works to construct this link can be clarified by considering how Brian Massumi understands the affectivity of images. In his work on affect and images, Brian Massumi postulates that the "event of image reception" (Massumi, 2002: 24) consists of two levels, intensity and qualification. The intensity of the image corresponds to the "strength or duration" (*ibid.*) of its effect. The qualities of the image are fixed by the indexing to meaning by the viewing subject; this indexing involves some conscious involvement, as it might put the image into narrative, associating it with "expectations that depend on consciously positioning oneself in a line of narrative continuity" (*ibid.*: 25). Both intensity and qualification excite autonomic reactions, at the surface of the skin, the level of the heartbeat, or breathing in the moments of qualification, or attachment to meaning. The intensity of the image, however, does not correspond to these mixing of conscious and depth responses. The intensity of the image is "outside expectation and adaptation, as disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration, as it is from vital function" (*ibid.*). The moment of an image's intensity is not one of meaning, but of impact. This intensity often functions below the level of awareness.

Massumi points out that intensity is "qualifiable as an emotional state" (*ibid.*: 26) but before it is qualified (before affect is captured as emotion), it is a moment that is not passive, but not active either. Rather, it is a moment filled with "motion, vibratory motion, resonance… it is not yet activity, because the motion is not of the kind that can be directed (if only symbolically) toward practical ends in a world of constituted objects and aims (if only on screen)" (*ibid.*: 26). Affective flow, if it is read as intensity, as Massumi eventually does, is a reaction that occurs before the direction of aims and objects. It is not an activity that is directed toward anything in particular; it is the source of such actions, but the effect of affects is always indeterminate until after they arise as physical states.

Conclusion

In this article I have shown how modelling conforms to the descriptions of immaterial and affective labour found in the work of Maurizio Lazzarato and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. In addition, I have sought to clarify with regard to the modelling industry how affect is to be understood as something that is different from emotion and elaborate on an understanding of 'affective flow'. To understand affective flow as a more indeterminate process is to think about how it might be possible that models, as affective labourers, not only perform many of the activities Lazzarato, Hardt and Negri say are typical of immaterial and affective production; they also are involved in an aspect of this production that speaks to Clough's notion that the media have shifted in function from a 'socializing/ideological mechanism' to one where bodily affect is made productive for capital in a continuous intensification, variation and modulation of affective flows. Affect may only be viewed from this perspective if a clear delineation between affect and emotion is made, and the non-subjective quality of affective flow is taken into account. By highlighting this dimension of affective labour via the example of modelling work, I've sought to reveal ways in which these definitions of immaterial and affective labour, although accurate in some ways, ignore a rather insidious method by which capital appropriates the common, exploiting human vitality even below the level of conscious awareness.

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Table of Respondents

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Position	Gender
Maya	21	Caucasian	Model	Female
Brigitte	19	Caucasian	Model	Female
Tina	32	Asian/American	Model	Female
Toni	19	Caucasian	Model	Female
Kate	24	Caucasian	Model	Female
Julie	34	Caucasian	Model	Female
Tammy	18	Caucasian	Model	Female
Deedee	19	Caucasian	Model	Female
Genevieve	40s	Caucasian/ French	Agent	Female
Megan	33	Caucasian	Agent	Female
Dawn	45	Caucasian	Model agency owner	Female
Kay	40s	Caucasian	Make-up artist	Female
Cameron	27	Caucasian	Agent	Male
Leon	32	African American	Model	Male

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