

THE HIDDEN ABODE OF PRODUCTION

1. The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities'; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form. Our investigation therefore begins with the analysis of the commodity. (Marx)

2. We therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them both into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face, "No admittance except on business". Here we shall see, not only how capital produces, but how capital is produced. We shall at last force the secret of profit making. (Marx)

3. Although marketed goods have a richly-textured social composition, involving a co-ordinated production, distribution, and consumption system on a global scale, their social character is not immediately apparent Commodities are, therefore, a unity of what is revealed and what is concealed in the processes of production and consumption.

Marx called the fetishism of commodities a disguise whereby the appearance of things in the marketplace masks the story of who fashioned them, and under what conditions. Were it thought to be important for us to hear this story, our being deprived of it would constitute a systematic misrepresentation or distorted structure of communication within the world of goods itself. (William Leiss)

4. The fetishism of commodities consists in the first place of emptying them of meaning, of hiding the real social relations objectified in them through human labour, to make it possible for the imaginary/symbolic social relations to be injected into the construction of meaning at a secondary level. Production empties. Advertising fills. The real is hidden by the imaginary. The social significance of the marketplace is only possible after the social significance of production disappears beneath the structure of capitalist property relations. The hollow husk of the commodity-form needs to be filled by some kind of meaning, however superficial. (Jhally)