

'a genuine *tour de force*.'

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'The thesis is complex, but learned and presented with first-rate scholarship. Lash and Urry's study of the transformation currently being undertaken by advanced capitalism is an inspiration.'

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The End of Organized Capitalism argues that – despite Marx's and Weber's insistence that capitalist societies become increasingly more ordered – we now live in an era of 'disorganized capitalism'. The book is devoted to a systematic examination of the shift to disorganized capitalism in five Western nations (Britain, the USA, France, Germany and Sweden). Through the analysis of space, class and culture, Lash and Urry portray the restructuring of capitalist social relations that has resulted from this disorganization. They adduce evidence for the claims that in each of the nations there is a movement towards a *deconcentration* of capital within nation-states; towards the increased separation of banks, industry and the state; and towards the redistribution of productive relations and class-relevant residential patterns.

The lucid arguments and judicious comparisons in this book will be of great interest to students of sociology, politics, geography, economics and history.

Scott Lash and **John Urry** are both Professors in the Department of Sociology at the University of Lancaster. Their previous publications include Lash's *The Militant Worker* and Urry's *The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies*.

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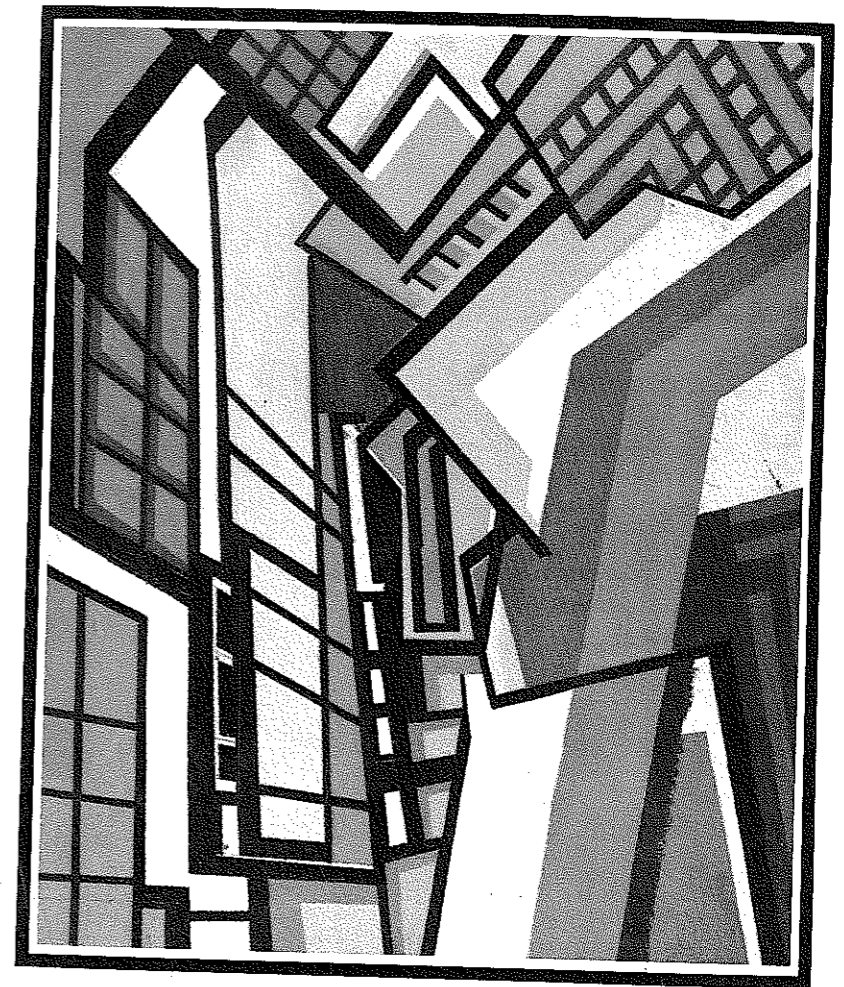
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The End of ORGANIZED CAPITALISM



Scott Lash & John Urry

If primary labour-market workers (the prototypical male, white, skilled, private and export sector workers) can sustain a high enough level of collective identity, as seems to be the case in Sweden and Germany, they will forgo certain advantages of sectionalism that can lead to split labour movements, and in particular splits between primary labour-market unions and public sector unions. In Britain at the moment, sectionalism and labour movement dualism seem to be on the cards.

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Postmodern culture and disorganized capitalism: some conclusions

The first part of this chapter is devoted to making some connections between the processes of capitalist disorganization and cultural changes, in particular the development of a post modernist culture. The second part is devoted to drawing together themes that we have stressed over this entire volume and giving a synthetic account of our conception of capitalist disorganization.

THE SOCIAL BASES OF THE POSTMODERNIST SENSIBILITY

In the last chapter we traced the disorganization of contemporary industrial relations, first to the decentralized shopfloor radicalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and then the shift from national bargaining to enterprise-level bargaining in recent years that has accompanied the demise of neo-corporatism. What such transformations assume, we suggested, is a fragmentation of working-class collective identity. But collective identity is also in part a *cultural* matter. Similarly in chapters 4 and 5 we traced a whole series of spatial transformations that are integral to the disorganization of capitalist societies. The significance of such spatial changes however is partly a question of how they are socially perceived. And such social perceptions are dependent on *representations* of space and thus on *culture*. In chapter 6 we spoke of the rise of the service class in part as a cause of capitalist disorganization. But the rise of this class is impossible without some dependence upon a range of *cultural* resources. Indeed it might well be true, as we shall suggest below, that the fractions of the service class are crucial in establishing a transformed cultural hegemony in disorganized capitalism.

We think thus in a book that has largely been a 'political economy' of

capitalist disorganization that each thematic social factor we have stressed is inevitably embedded in a *cultural* substrate. We think further that the contemporary cultural substrate bears certain features that can best be understood under the rubric of 'postmodernism'. We want then in what follows very briefly to address postmodernist culture, and draw some of the connections between it and the disorganization of contemporary western societies.

Let us underscore, however, that we are not arguing that there is any one-to-one, reductionist state of affairs in which postmodernist culture is somehow a reflection of the phase of disorganized capitalism. We are moreover not arguing that all or even the major part of contemporary culture is postmodernist. We do, though believe that postmodernism is an increasingly important feature of contemporary culture, and we intend to try in a preliminary fashion to show how it articulates with some features of disorganized capitalism. We thus intend – in considerations of post-modern culture sometimes as cause but mostly as effect of disorganization – to make some preliminary inroads into the 'political economy' of post-modernism.

We will address this issue by asking what the *social* conditions of postmodernism are. Or more specifically, what social conditions specific to an era of disorganizing capitalism are conducive to the creation of an audience which is predisposed towards the reception of postmodernist culture? Before we outline these conditions, we will briefly delineate what we mean by postmodernist culture.

Postmodernist culture may be distinguished from, on the one hand, 'classic realist' and, on the other, 'modernist' cultural forms. Classic realism on this account is grounded in the Quattrocento perspective in Renaissance painting in which a three-dimensional object is painted onto a two-dimensional canvas as if the latter were literally a window on the former; and in the narrative assumptions of the nineteenth-century novel. The birth of modernist culture which breaks with these assumptions takes place around the turn of the twentieth century. Modernist culture (Adorno's exemplars here were Picasso and Schönberg) is 'auratic' in Walter Benjamin's sense of the term. 'Aura' according to Benjamin assumed the radical separation of the cultural forms from the social: aura entails that a cultural object proclaim its own originality, uniqueness and singularity; it assumed finally that the cultural object is based in a discourse of formal organic unity and artistic creativity. Modernism is thus confined to high culture, while classic realism – in the popular novel, popular urban theatres, in cinema – comes also to pervade popular culture in the early twentieth century.¹

Postmodernist culture, for its part, like modernism departs from the visual and narrative assumptions of classic realism. But at the same time it, unlike modernism, is emphatically *anti-auratic*. Postmodernism signals the demise of aesthetic 'aura' in a number of ways.

- 1 It proclaims not its uniqueness but is positioned in a context of mechanical, if not electronic, reproduction.
- 2 It denies the high-modernist separation of the aesthetic from the social and any other hierarchical dualisms; and in particular it disputes the contention that art is of a different order from life.
- 3 It disputes the high-modernist valuation of such unity through pastiche, collage, allegory and so on.
- 4 Whereas high-modernist cultural forms are received by audiences in what Benjamin called a state of 'contemplation', postmodernist forms are typically consumed in a state of distraction.
- 5 Whereas high-modernist art is to be appreciated for the coherent use and the formal properties of the aesthetic material, postmodernist culture affects the audience via its immediate impact, via an 'economy of pleasure'.
- 6 Postmodernism in its challenge to aesthetic aura does not assume a high-modernist diremption of high and popular culture.

Given this definition, the first flourishings of post modern culture appeared in the historical avant-garde of the 1920s, in the critique of high modernism launched by, among others, the dada and surrealist movements. One major reason why the postmodern 1920s avant-gardes did not penetrate into popular culture was because a sufficient audience with the relevant predispositions was not present.² In recent decades such a popular-culture audience has however begun to take shape. Thus there has been the pervasion of postmodern forms in popular cinema, in which in the largest moneyspinning films post-modern 'impact' and 'spectacle' has progressively displaced the privacy of classic-realist narratives. Likewise in advertising and video, pictorial realism has been progressively replaced by dadaist and surrealist techniques of collage and montage. And also, there is to be found an intentional dissonance and shock value in punk and performance art.³

Let us turn now to the social conditions for the creation of an audience for each cultural forms. We will analyse these social conditions under three headings:

The semiotics of everyday life Postmodern cultural forms, we just noted, refuse the distinction between art and life, between the cultural and the real. We shall argue that an audience is sensitized to the reception of such cultural objects, because of a 'semiotics of everyday life' in which the boundary between the cultural and life, between the image and the real, is more than ever transgressed. Or because of a semiotics in which already cultural images, that is, what are already representations in television, advertisements, billboards, pop music, video, home computers and so on, themselves constitute a significant and increasingly growing portion of the 'natural' social reality that surrounds people.

New class fractions In this section we assume, with Pierre Bourdieu, that

goods are consumed for their symbolic power to establish invidious distinctions between one social class, or class fraction, and another. We then argue that sections of the service class use postmodern cultural goods to challenge traditionalist culture. That is, that postmodern cultural goods are in the 'ideal interests' of these 'new middle classes', who, in their rise, will benefit from the extent to which the whole of society comes to share their valuations of such cultural forms.

The decentring of identity We argue that the reception of postmodernist culture is enhanced by the decentring of subjectivity. We consider in this context several processes integral to the disorganizing process of contemporary societies, which foster such decentred identities and collective identities. These are (1) changes in the class structure, in particular the fragmentation of working-class community and the occupationally-structured experience of sections of the service class; (2) the influence of the electronic mass media; and (3) disruptions in our perception of time and of space in everyday life.

The semiotics of everyday life

Jean Baudrillard is perhaps the foremost figure to discuss the relation of post-industrialism to the sphere of culture. He gives an account of the transition from 'industrial capitalism', to 'consumer capitalism' and consumer capitalism is for him very much as disorganized capitalism is for us.⁴ Baudrillard analyses how this transition brings about what might be called a transformed 'semiotics of everyday life' which predisposes audience reception of post-modernist culture. Baudrillard uses the conventional semiotic 'triangle', where the signifier is an image, a sound, a word, or an utterance; the signified is a meaning, usually a thought or a concept; and the referent is the object in the real world to which both signifier and signified point. In industrial capitalism in this context, domination is effected through the referent which for Baudrillard is capital, both as means of production and as the commodities produced. In industrial capitalism then the 'social bond' is through the exchange of exchange-values; and the centrality of exchange-value itself is legitimated through use-value, or a set of arguments based around the maximization of utility.

What is then most important for Baudrillard about contemporary *consumer* capitalism is that we consume, no longer products, but signs: that we consume the signs of advertisements, of television; and that objects of consumption themselves have value for us as signs. It is the image, then, in contemporary capitalism, that is consumed, the image in which we have libidinal investment. The exchange-value of commodities thus has been transformed into a 'sign-value'. Signs – which comprise both signifier and signified – 'float free from the referent' or product, and domination and the 'social bond' are no longer through the referent but the sign.⁵ Moreover, our identities are constructed through the exchange of sign-values, and the means

of legitimation of the signifier (or the image) is the signified. Baudrillard's consumer capitalism has become a fully-fledged 'political economy of the sign'.

Domination through the sign takes place through the arbitrary assignments by established power of signifieds, or meanings, to signifiers. The type of signifieds in which Baudrillard is interested are not ordinary denotations or connotations, but fundamental ideologies or ultimate values.⁶ Domination through the sign or at least through discourse would characterize not just consumption but the sphere of production in today's service and information-based economies in which employer-employee relations are no longer so often mediated by means of production.⁷ Domination here is through the assignment of a single and univocal meaning or signified to the signifiers.

Resistance, by contrast, contends Baudrillard, takes place through the refusal of the 'masses' in contemporary consumer society to accept this connection of signifier to signified. Baudrillard's argument is that the masses reject the signifieds attached to media images, both by established power, as well as the signifieds which the left has promoted (such as 'the people', the proletariat). Instead, he contends, the masses accept *all* images in the spirit of *spectacle*; that is, they refuse to attach meaning to images which have been intended to carry meaning. Baudrillardian spectacle is no longer a universe of referent, signified or even signifiers, but of the 'model', of 'simulation' and of 'hyperreality'. What television broadcasts for example is not reality, but – through choice of subject matter, editing and so on – a *model*. The masses of viewers, he observes, are no more taken in by the putative reality of television images than they are by its meanings. They *know* that it is a simulation; they are cognizant of the hyperreality of the image; and they thrive on its 'fascination'. In their turn the masses simulate the models of media images, and in their conformity to media 'hyperreality', the masses become models themselves. Everyday life and reality itself then become 'imploded' into the hyperreality of the spectacle.⁸ Baudrillard's world of spectacle is a world of 'simulacra', that is, where there is no original and everything is a copy. The masses simulate the media which in turn hypersimulate the masses. It is a depthless world of networks of information and communication in which 'the sender' (TV, computers) is the receiver,⁹ and in which the subject like the media is a 'control screen', a 'switching centre'. It is a universe of communication networks in which information is purely instrumental in that it 'has no end purpose in meaning'.¹⁰

We agree with much in Baudrillard's analysis: with the importance of the sphere of consumption for the constitution of individual and collective identity; with the idea of post-industrial domination through communications in the sphere of production; with the idea that in contemporary capitalism what is largely produced – in the media, a large part of the service sector, in parts of the public sector – consists of communications and information. We agree also with his contention – and this is of course a hallowed idea whose

lineage stretches from Veblen to Bourdieu – that images rather than products have become the central objects of consumption. This point is borne out in research carried out by William Leiss on changes in advertising practices. Leiss examined national (as distinct from specialist) product advertising in two Canadian general circulation magazines from 1911 to 1980.¹¹ He found over this period and in particular after the Second World War a decline in printed text and a concomitant rise in visual imagery. He also found a decline in 'propositional content', that is of (often specious) arguments regarding the utility of the product to an 'almost purely iconic representation' of images put into juxtaposition with the product. In the early decades of Leiss's sample advertisements were intended to convince consumers to purchase manufactured products. With this aim they contained detailed descriptions of products, focusing on values of efficiency, durability, reliability and cleanliness. Women were cast in functional, if traditional roles, as they were instructed how to use the products in the household. In recent decades utility and functionality are increasingly dispensed with. Appeal is no longer to practical rationality, as a Watsonian behaviourist (or Freudian) conception of an irrationalist human nature is assumed. Instead of being cast in functional roles, women become sex objects and images which are helter-skelter attached to products like adjectives. Instead of being told how to use products, women are directed to use the product in order to be like the sex object associated with it; men to use the product in order to *have her*.¹²

The main problem however with Baudrillard's argument is that what he understands as the principle of cultural resistance in contemporary consumer society is in fact more often than not its principle of *domination*. That is, that domination in the semiotics of contemporary everyday life is not through the attachment of signifieds, of meanings to images by culture producers, but by the particular strategies of dominant social groups to *refuse* to attach any meanings to such images. That is, the implosion of meaning, subjectivity and the real world or the social is not primarily a way for Baudrillard's 'silent majorities' to resist domination, but instead a way that 'masses' are indeed dominated. It is plausible that the overload of sounds and images that we experience in everyday life, over the television, radio, walkman, billboards and bright lights, has helped create a sensibility to post-modern cultural objects in which meaning is devalued. But surely cultural producers, in for example today's cinema of the spectacle are aware of this change in the audience and produce films that cater to it. So our first point against Baudrillard is that dominant culture often operates itself through the delinkage of meaning from images. Our second point is that there is not anything necessarily disruptive, much less subversive, about masses who implode meaning and their subjectivities into flat hyperreality. In explanations of social movements, resistance is conditional upon coherent forms of identity, or more precisely collective identity. And by most accounts collective identities are constituted around ultimate sets of meanings. Finally, if subjectivity is imploded into the

unfortunately too lifelike Baudrillardian networks of communication and information, there is little place left from which to launch any type of substantive critique.

Simon Frith's recent work on popular music gives an excellent illustration of how cultural products which feature the primacy of image and spectacle can at one moment be disruptive of the conditions of consumer capitalism and at another moment function to reproduce just such conditions. Frith distinguishes 'rock' from 'pop' critiques of consumer society.¹³ The 'rock' critique, dominant until the 1970s, is an effectively 'modernist' critique of consumer capitalism in its preference for an auratic culture of authenticity, the natural, and live performance.¹⁴ The 'pop' critique by contrast is effectively post-modernist and grew out of the late 1970s and especially from punk.

Punk challenged the modernist and auratic dispositions of rock in a number of ways. It mocked the rock cult of the LP (long-playing record), whose original and auratic pretensions bore careful listening the first time through. Punk instead foregrounded the single; instead of originality, repetition was thematized, and to listen to a punk recording for the first time was like already having listened to it before.¹⁵ Whereas rock was essentially to be listened to, and thus consistent with modernist aurality, punk was a matter of the visual, the image; it was to be seen.¹⁶ Whereas rock propounded the modernist thematic of the creative artist, punk only entailed the learning of a few chords (and at that, badly), and at least some kids on any block were capable of that. While rock featured a modernist aesthetics of beauty, punk foregrounded an anti-aesthetic of discordant and intentionally nerve-jangling cacophony. Where rock promoted, especially in the LP, at least some notion of the (modernist) integral work of art, pop's avant-garde critique promotes the heterogeneous, in pastiches such as Malcolm McClaren's *Duck Rock*, which mixes together a number of previously recorded sound sequences.¹⁷ Whereas (typically American) rock artists had or seemed to have genuine connections with the popular communities from which they sprung, the (typically British) pop artist was from an art school background, and self-consciously differentiated him or herself from the masses in the audience. Thus a number of pop performers promoted an avant-garde and 'camp' (in Sontag's sense) consciousness of the image, sang in detached and ironic tones, and laid open sexual (and also racial) ambiguity. They expressed contempt for the mass audience they intended to shock, and self-referentially mocked their own popularity.¹⁸

The pop (and post-modern) critique of consumer capitalism through spectacle was, as Frith observes, but a short step from the celebration of music's commodity status. This has taken place via a pop music, quite disconnected with avant-gardes, whose rise to fame has been most of all dependent on the video. The replacement of the critical avant-garde by video-pop is partly explicable in terms of the late 1970s slump in record sales, itself explicable by the rise in youth unemployment but also by the new competition for youth

leisure time via home computers and video recorders. The record companies' response to this, notes Frith, was swift: they shifted to a younger market and promoted singles at the expense of LPs; they built on what had always been a visual orientation of this early-teens market and thus focused on promoting stars; and these now became 'multi-media performers' with heavy record company investment in videos.¹⁹ The response, though inconclusive, has been an increase in sales in the mid-1980s. But the new video-based music has meant 'the incorporation of pop into the aesthetics (and we would add, the politics) of advertising'.²⁰

We have then, partly via a critical analysis of Baudrillard's work, given an account of how the semiotics of everyday life in consumer (disorganized) capitalism predisposes an audience to the reception of post-modern cultural forms. The most important features of such a semiotics which bear affinities with characteristics of post-modern culture that we outlined are: the consumption of images instead of products; the new importance of spectacle at the expense of meaning; and a situation in which the boundaries between the realm of culture and everyday life itself are continually transgressed and blurred. Here the 'masses' not only 'simulate' the media, but popular culture, the media and pop music are themselves inseparable from the semiotics of everyday life, a phenomenon emphasized by Andy Warhol's photorealism in which paintings are not windows out onto the world but windows out onto the media, the advert, the image.²¹ It is an everyday experience of a reality which itself – through the walkman, video, television, adverts, styles – is already cultural and hence a hyperreality that creates an audience attuned to the anti-auditory and figural or spectacular nature of post-modernist culture.

New class fractions

Our central claims in this section will be that it is the developing service class which is the consumer *par excellence* of post-modern cultural products; that there is a certain 'hegemonizing mission' of the post-modern tastes and lifestyle of significant sections of this new middle class;²² and that there are certain structural conditions of the service class that produce a decentred identity which fosters the reception of such post-modern cultural goods. The best way to address these points is via Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the 'habitus'.

Bourdieu speaks of various classes and class factions as having a habitus. A class's habitus most importantly consists of a set of classificatory schemes. These are basically cognitive structures which themselves structure the 'orienting practices' and activities of agents. These schemes underpin, and are more fundamental than, consciousness and language. All social class habituses are grounded in two principles. The first is a principle of classification based on adjectives such as noble versus low which are themselves grounded in the opposition in the social order of elite and mass. The second principle is based on the opposition of light versus heavy; it is exemplified by the

distinction within elites of warriors versus clerics in pre-modern societies and bourgeois versus intellectuals in modernity.²³ Given this general framework shared by all social classes, Bourdieu's vision of class, taste and habitus is marked by the following features.

(1) Each class and class fraction has its own variants of the habitus, whose classificatory schemes are at the same time systems of ultimate values. The latter, Bourdieu insists, are dispositions of the body, 'visceral tastes and distastes in which the groups' most vital interests are embedded.²⁴

(2) Groups struggle to 'impose taxonomies most favourable to their own characteristics' on other groups and the whole of society; the dominant classes are usually most successful in this.²⁵

(3) There is a key role in these struggles for the institutions of culture, the educational system and intellectuals more generally.

(4) These 'classificatory struggles' are also struggles which determine the shifting boundaries, and even the existence, of the groups themselves. Groups mobilize their 'economic and social capital', Bourdieu claims, in order to exist, and to legitimate their own existence in the occupational structure.²⁶ Our arguments in chapter 6 about the service class's struggles to create space for itself in the occupational and industrial structure bear witness to this claim. We would like to extend this aspect of Bourdieu's framework and note that the new middle classes are characterized not just by different classificatory structures and perceived boundaries than other and traditional social strata, but by a looser, more fluid, in effect deconstructed and decentred 'group' and 'grid'.²⁷ It is both of these characteristics, we shall see below, which sensitizes these classes as an audience for postmodern culture.

(5) Bourdieu's classificatory struggles leave open the possibility for entire classes to experience mobility *vis-à-vis* other classes.

(6) These struggles have for stakes not of course only the shape of the habitus, but also 'material and cultural goods'. Bourdieu's central claim that we consume not products but symbols with the intention of establishing distinctions between ourselves and other social strata is in line with Fred Hirsch's arguments about 'positional' consumption, and the general debate about social limits to growth.²⁸ In the latter the distinction is made between traditional societies, in which most consumption is for subsistence and only elites engage in competitive consumption and advanced capitalism's democratization of competitive consumption. In this framework the postmodern cultural hypostatization of the image and spectacle has a contradictory role and unanticipated consequences. If in organized capitalism underconsumption, or an 'underload' of demands created the conditions for advertising and the consumption of and hegemony of the image, then in disorganized capitalism this now fetishized image is at least partly responsible for positional consumption and demand *overloads*. In this sense postmodern culture also had had *disorganizing* effects on western economies.

(7) The consumption of postmodern culture is not only contingent on given classificatory schema and a destructured habitus, but also on what Bourdieu calls the 'cultural capital' that a group possesses. Cultural capital is not just a matter of abstract theoretical knowledge but the symbolic competence necessary to appreciate certain works of art. Without the 1960s expansion of Western European higher education it is unlikely that groupings would possess the cultural capital necessary for the appreciation of postmodern high or even 'middlebrow' culture; in Britain, for example, such cultural magazines such as *The Face* and *New Musical Express* assume a rudimentary knowledge of aesthetic avant-gardes.

These comments made, we will consider the connections between the service class and postmodernism which can be drawn from Bourdieu's work on class taste patterns and lifestyles in France. The main divide that Bourdieu draws within the 'dominant class' is between 'intellectuals' (in his survey mainly higher education teachers and artists) and the 'bourgeoisie'. The former are high on cultural capital but possess little economic capital, while the latter are weaker on cultural capital and strong on economic capital. The primary classificatory schema of the habitus mentioned above which distinguished between elite and mass is at the same time to be understood as a distinction between culture (elite) and nature (mass). The second principle of classification which counterposes intellectuals and the bourgeoisie repeats this culture/nature opposition, with the bourgeoisie (nature) 'their material, base, this-worldly satisfactions' dependent for signs of distinction on the intellectuals (culture).²⁹ Thus Bourdieu contrasts the 'aesthetic-asceticism' of intellectuals' tastes for a spare functionalism/modernism in design with the sumptuous interiors of the bourgeois, and the intellectuals' liking for the spare sets of Parisian left-bank theatre with the bourgeois tastes for the baroque and indulgent sets of boulevard theatre.³⁰ Bourdieu interprets this as a symbolic subversion (by intellectuals) of the rituals of bourgeois order by 'ostentatious poverty'. This symbolic reversal of nature and culture takes place also in sport with the intellectuals' preference for mountaineering, hiking, walking, representing their taste for 'natural, wild nature', as opposed to the bourgeois' 'organized, cultivated nature'.³¹

Bourdieu elaborates a further grouping, the 'new bourgeoisie' which possesses considerable quantities of cultural as well as economic capital. It is comprised largely of private-sector executives, especially those active in the production of non-material products, in areas such as finance, or design. It is populated by individuals, unlike the bourgeois fraction of commercial and industrial employers, who are rarely from popular backgrounds. The new bourgeois, if in industry, is not in research and development but in finance; not in engineering but in marketing; not in production but in purchasing. He or she is part of an international class, is not only Francophone, but speaks English and reads the *Financial Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*; he or

she partakes in an 'international symbol market, and eschews champagne for whisky, and apparently indulges in 'California sports' such as hang-gliding, jogging and windsurfing.³² This new bourgeois according to Jameson imparts his ethos to post modern films like *Diva*.³³ According to Bourdieu, he or she has a good chance of setting the taste patterns for the dominant class in France.

Also highly important for postmodern cultural consumption is what Bourdieu calls the 'new petit bourgeois' (for us a member of the lower echelons of the service class). Bourdieu's new petite bourgeoisie includes 'all occupations involving presentation and representation' and occupations in all institutions providing symbolic goods and services. Much of this entails the 'symbolic work of producing needs' in advertising and sales, but also in public-sector jobs which involve the production of needs for public services as well as the provision of those services in for example day-care centres, drug abuse centres and in race relations.³⁴ This new 'cultural' petite bourgeoisie thus includes those active in medical and social assistance (marriage guidance, sex therapists, dieticians, vocational guidance) and those involved in direct 'cultural production and organization' (youth leaders, tutors and monitors, radio and TV producers and presenters, magazine journalists). The new petite bourgeoisie typically contains individuals whose quantity and quality of cultural capital does not tally well with other of their social characteristics, and especially individuals whose educational qualifications are lower than their social capital and social origins, and those who occupy 'positions which hold out the highest profits for non-certified cultural capital'.³⁵ This status-inconsistent new petit bourgeois can follow several career trajectories and strategies to success and often to membership of the new bourgeoisie. They, for example, often struggle to *create* jobs suited to their ambitions, even in the public sector in which semi-voluntary jobs have gained public-service status and local government finance. They can succeed through professionalization strategies, through struggles to legitimate new licences and certifications, partly through the promotion of a 'therapeutic morality' as legitimating ideology, in the case of for example, sexologists and marriage guidance counsellors.³⁶ They can, Bourdieu holds, finally succeed 'by the symbolic violence needed to create and sell new products' and/or through social capital which, in areas such as television, journalism and cinema, brings people into jobs, and the social capital of new contacts which once in jobs helps them to stay there.³⁷ That is, partly in compensation and as a means to overcome inadequate or inappropriate accumulation of cultural capital, a number of new petits bourgeois succeed through the promotion of needs for and the actual creation of post-modern cultural goods.

In promoting themselves, this new cultural petite bourgeoisie also encourages 'symbolic rehabilitation projects'; that is, they give (often postmodern) cultural objects new status as part of rehabilitation strategies for their own careers. In their work in the media, in advertising, in design, as 'cultural

intermediaries' they are taste-creators. Their own tastes, Bourdieu's survey shows, tends to be in not quite legitimate culture such as jazz and cinema. Their taste in painting is in the avant-garde (Dali, Kandinsky, Braque).³⁸ The new petits bourgeois, often downwardly mobile in terms of their original social capital and not accepted by the cultural-capital establishment, applies the 'cultivated disposition to not-yet-legitimate culture'.³⁹ Among intellectuals, they can find allies in newcomers to cultural-capital institutions; among left academics, in the new institutions of higher education which became pervasive from the 1960s, into whose classrooms the new petit bourgeois was finally admitted.⁴⁰ In the new institutions of higher education this newcomer *bas-clergé*, partly through a self-legitimation strategy *vis-à-vis* the established academy, has often played a radicalizing and democratizing role, either as Marxist or some variety of 'postmodernist'. The *mainstream*, however, of this postmodern petite bourgeoisie of cultural intermediaries perhaps as Bourdieu argues plays an objectively reactionary role. In possible alliance with the new bourgeoisie – whose international, anti-traditional and leisure tastes they share – the new petit bourgeois produces images that 'legitimate the lifestyle' of the new-bourgeois 'ethical avant-garde of the dominant class'.⁴¹

The decentring of identity

But this new petit bourgeois not only has a habitus which predisposes him or her to the reception and production of postmodern cultural objects, but, we recall, a pre-eminently *destructured* and *decentred* habitus. Thus he or she is low on 'grid' (i.e. classificatory structures) and lives for the moment 'untrammelled by constraints and brakes imposed by collective memories and expectations'. He or she is also low on 'group' (the strength of boundary between 'us' and 'them'), particularly, Bourdieu observes, in a refusal to be a petit bourgeois. This is at the same time a 'refusal to be pinned down in [any] particular site in social space.' These new cultural intermediaries would rather view themselves as 'excluded' or 'marginal'.⁴² The point in this context is that if this new petite bourgeoisie and new bourgeoisie – and they are particularly well placed to do so given their increasing numbers and strategic location as taste makers – are able hegemonically to imprint their postmodern cultural ethos on the habitus of other social classes. Thus Bernice Martin speaks of an effectively *destructured* habitus developing among the British working-class young with the 'birth' of adolescence from the late 1950s, and among middle-class youth more generally in the youth culture and rise of higher education from the 1960s. This she attributes to a 'liminality' which ensues with the decline of parental control in a period created when one is neither a child nor adult. She argues that a particularly extended period of liminality develops in the new middle classes in that they have a *destructured* habitus not only in youth but, due to the nature of their occupations as for example cultural intermediaries, in adulthood too.⁴³

Collective identities are structured through 'grid', that is classificatory schemata and 'group' – the boundaries set up to distinguish what is external to and what is internal to a collectivity. This decentring of identity in the working class and in the middle classes as well as in other collectivities is furthered by the effects of the electronic media. Collective identity, both group and grid, are based, as Meyrowitz notes, on 'shared but special information systems'.⁴⁴ Such information systems would be specific not just to social classes, but to gender, age, ethnic and regional groups. What especially television does is to minimize the importance of these separate and distinct information systems both through exposing individuals of all groupings to the general information system and through giving each age, gender, class grouping a chance to see the intimate spaces of the lives of other groupings, a chance which otherwise would not have been available.⁴⁵ In addition of course, isolation in one's living room will have a negative effect on the solidification of collective identity.

There are two rather contradictory outcomes of this. On the one hand, there is the facilitation of a postmodernist sensibility in that this decline in the boundaries of group and grid corresponds with the transgression of boundaries (between life and art, high and popular culture and so on) which are constitutive of postmodernist cultural forms themselves. This boundary is reinforced by television's own proclivity to break down the barriers between the 'frontstage' and 'backstage' regions of fictional and non-fictional figures. Moreover, as we noted, television is part and parcel of the Baudrillardian society of the spectacle, in which meaning is devalued at the expense of impact. On the other hand, this dissolution of collective identity which television fosters can lead to the development of more universalist identities of communicative rationality and the creation of public spheres in Habermas's sense of these terms.⁴⁶ There are several processes working in this direction. First, television offers individuals of a given age, class, gender or ethnic grouping a less selective diet of information than was previously available.⁴⁷ Second, television can offer increased public access to information which can augment the power of the public relative to authority.⁴⁸ For example, consider interviews with hostile foreign heads of state like Fidel Castro in the USA, or with Irish Republican Army (IRA) members in Britain, or above all the scenes from the war in Viet Nam which, entering American living rooms, contributed so considerably to the undermining of political authority. Third, new forms of universalism are encouraged. Television may well have sexist content, yet girls are, for example, able to observe a variety of both male and female patterns of behaviour with which they may identify or model themselves on, in a way that was impossible in a much more restricted pre-television culture.⁴⁹ Finally, the breakdown of particularist identities – both in the fostering of weaker group boundaries and the development of more generalist and universalist (grid) classificatory structures – would also entail that particularist legitimacy arguments would suffer losses in validity. Hence the

pervasion of universalist arguments based on the notion of human rights,⁵⁰ which in the USA for example grew in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, spread to the student movements and antiwar movements later in the decade, became a basis of feminism in the 1970s, and now, in the 1980s, is quite common in conservative political discourse.

The spread of television culture has been crucial in its spatial implications. But a set of *temporal* phenomena have been equally important in the decentring of identity and the development of the audience for postmodernist cultural forms. Here the temporal disruptions, incoherencies and inconsistencies involved in postmodernism's break with narrative realism is mirrored in the experienced temporality of everyday life. Thus Jean-François Lyotard, for example, celebrates the disappearance of 'metanarratives' in the postmodern era,⁵¹ whereas Frederic Jameson describes the loss of these *grand récits*.⁵² Jameson's position is particularly fruitful on this matter. He distinguishes postmodern 'pastiche' from modern 'parody'. Parody stands in a relationship to a 'linguistic norm' in real historical time; in pastiche however there is the disappearance of the original and real historical referent at the expense of a 'fragmentary group of ideolects'. This leads for example to a postmodern architecture without any knowledge of original meanings, that is, without any historical sense. The same, Jameson continues to argue, is true of our postmodern interest in nostalgic, as distinct from historical, films and in *la mode retro*, in which 'we are condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past which remain forever out of reach.' Pastiche then, for Jameson, fragments time into a 'series of perpetual presents'.⁵³ Jameson's more encompassing view is that our identities are constituted via a 'political unconscious', which itself is structured, not by Lacanian discourse, but through the temporality of *narratives*, and in particular through narratives studded with national political and class figurations. He argues for Marxism as the most valid of all these narratives, the most encompassing of the metanarratives. His despair is with a postmodernity in which narratives are displaced by spectacle and the unconscious suppressed through its flattening into a largely schizophrenic reality. The result is that history itself is suppressed and our identities and especially political and collective identities rendered incoherent.⁵⁴

Cultural conservatives such as Christopher Lasch and Daniel Bell develop a not wholly dissimilar argument. Not only has our sense of history been lost, they contend, but the narrative temporality of our immediate experience has disappeared. We no longer live our lives through identities imbued with the consciousness that I am the son of my father, who was the son of his father and so on. Our intragenerational narratives are equally forgotten. Fascination with immediate gratification in consumer society means that lifelong narrative projects like marriage dwindle into a succession of disconnected love affairs or a succession of marriages. With the putative demise of the work ethic, we no longer live our careers as lifelong projects with

a continuous temporality of causes and effects. Instead life becomes a succession of discontinuous events.⁵⁵

While this line of argument for a postmodern decentred subjectivity through the destruction of narrative temporality has considerable plausibility, we think that it has only partial application. Temporality in modernity is not only a narrative temporality, but a new experience of abstract and homogeneous time. This was the experience of the worker entering the factory who had such a time sense imposed on him or her by employers who imposed a similar temporality on themselves. It is less, much less likely that we have broken with this eminently modern and rationalist structuring of time. In fact it has probably increased in the move towards 'flexible specialization' in office and factory work which demands the self-imposed rationalization of abstract, homogeneous time, as well as in the sphere of consumption in which we increasingly parcel our leisure time and holidays into homogeneous blocks, in which we calculatingly plan sporting activities and exercise in order to enhance the image of our bodies. These last points are particularly telling in regard to the postmodern experience of time. Its individual blocks are increasingly abstract, calculated and rational, but its overall narrative perspective is less rational and has come to resemble a succession of disconnected events. Our temporality is in part then a 'calculating hedonism' in which these 'mini-rationalities' are packed into a larger and overarching irrationality.⁵⁶

A crucial effect then of the electronic media and spatio-temporal changes in our disorganizing capitalist societies has been the decentring of identities and the loosening or deconstruction of group and grid. The result has been, on the one hand, the creation of a sensibility conducive to the reception of postmodernist cultural objects, and on the other, the opening of possibilities for a more universalist and rational subjectivity. Note that we do not view postmodernism as at all necessarily reactionary in implication. Indeed the 'carnival' associated with Dionysian cultural forms has often been integral to political protest.⁵⁷ And we are at the same time well aware that the rejection of the possibly negative and totalizing consequences of communicative rationality will tend to have appeal in the context of the breakdown of the older, organized capitalist forms of identity and especially of collective identity.⁵⁸

In any event, if these arguments about the hegemonizing mission of this new petit bourgeois postmodern culture and the deconstruction of group and grid across social classes are true, the political implications may be vast. Postmodern ideology, on its negative side, its new-bourgeois side, is pre-eminently consistent with Thatcherism, Reaganism and, among the masses, with what Stuart Hall has called 'authoritarian populism'.⁵⁹ On its positive side it is antihierarchical and consistent with principles of radical democracy. It may have played a significant role in fostering the shopfloor revolts in Britain and elsewhere of the late 1960s and early 1970s, whose decentralized ethos was radical-democratic rather than simply class-ideological.⁶⁰

A radical-democratic ethos is shared by the various new social movements and would it seems to have to be a binding force to aggregate interests in any contemporary left counter-hegemonic political culture.⁶¹ In terms of cultural objects, cultural stakes and cultural needs, it would seem that strategies for a reconstituted left political culture, in an age of disorganizing capitalist societies, will have to take, if not take on, postmodernism very seriously indeed.

CAPITALIST DISORGANIZATION AND POLITICS

Having set out some of the recent transformations of culture which characterize certain advanced western societies we will in this second section of the chapter try to draw together the main themes of the book overall. We have analysed in detail five major western societies: the two most economically forward and relatively large western countries, Britain and France; the most 'organized', Germany; the most powerful and successful western nation, the United States; and that where social democracy has had most impact, Sweden. We have shown that the routes that each of these have followed have been different, but despite such variations organized capitalism has been established in each, at both the top and bottom of the society.

However, we have gone on to show that in the recent period there have been major transformations in the structuring of these western societies, transformations that have resulted from the operation of three parallel processes. First, individual national societies have been subject to a variety of 'internationalizing' processes from *above*. Among these are the development of new forms of economic organization – including global corporations with an international division of labour and high levels of vertical disintegration; the declining distinctiveness of companies producing fixed products for a given (generally) national market (whether financial or industrial); and the growth of new circuits of money and banking separate from those of industry and which are literally out of the control of individual national economic policies. Also important have been the development of new international state structures, and of modes of entertainment and culture which transcend individual national societies. Second, a variety of 'decentralizing' processes have in a sense undermined such national societies from *below* rather than from above. Many of the central structures and processes of key industries, classes and cities, which had produced a particular spatial fix of each national society have been dislocated. Processes involved here include the decentralization of population and industry; the declining attractiveness of mass organizations; the increased emphasis upon the 'local'; the pursuit of sectional interests; the declining salience of class; and the transgression of fixed boundaries by a set of new cultural forms. And third, the growth in the size and effectiveness of the service class has transformed such societies in a sense from *within*. Such a

class has realized considerable powers in each of the societies and this has led to a heightened significance of a stratification system based upon individual achievement, upon 'service' class issues in politics, on professionalization strategies, and on new cross-cutting forms of social division and cultural conflict. Our overall claim has been that each of these processes have been proceeding in each of the five societies under investigation. Existing analyses have at best tended to focus on only one process. We have also tried to develop a comparative argument: that each society can only be understood in terms of the particular way in which these three processes have historically intersected. In particular we have tried to trace the different paths along which these nations became organized capitalist societies; and given this pattern, attempted to explain to what degree, and in what forms, such societies have begun to 'disorganize'.

We were forced to work through this reconstructed periodization of western societies because of the inability of existing attempts to establish a satisfactory chronology. In the non-Marxist literature the main periods identified have been those of 'pre-industrial' and 'industrial' society. It is often further claimed that there is a process of *convergence* of industrial societies, particularly because of the mobilizing power of advanced technology. The main critiques of this have been either to emphasize the diversity of industrial capitalist societies and the resulting process of divergence, or to maintain that contemporary capitalism in at least some societies has moved into a new 'post-industrial' or 'de-industrial' period. In the Marxist literature the main periods identified have been those of 'competitive capitalism', 'monopoly capitalism', and 'late' or 'state monopoly' capitalism. Each of these periodizations suffer from a number of deficiencies. Firstly, they are reductionist in that the crucial determinant of each period is held to be the economy (whether in the form of technology or in terms of the monopolistic control of markets) and other social institutions and practices are presumed to take their characteristics from it. Secondly, such accounts do not take sufficient notice of the fact that capitalist social relations are necessarily embedded within individual nation-states, so that what may be true at the level of the world economy (increasing concentration in a sector) is not true at the level of each nation-state (where there might be increased competition). Thirdly, they do not consider the changing nature of class politics in such societies, and especially with the capacities and resources of such classes and indeed of other social groupings. Fourthly, they do not consider the spatial scale of such politics and especially whether it is locally, regionally or nationally organized. And finally, they neglect the changing nature of the state and its role in the structuring of the society and particularly of the forms of politics.

In this book by contrast we have employed a threefold periodization. We have argued that *each* western society has moved through three periods or